

Indigenous Knowledge : Founders of Early Childhood Mental Health and Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation (IECMHC)

Dawn A. Yazzie, MA, NCC

Framing our Discussion

- Cultural differences and commonalities among Tribal Communities whether living in urban areas, on ancestral lands, or on reservations.



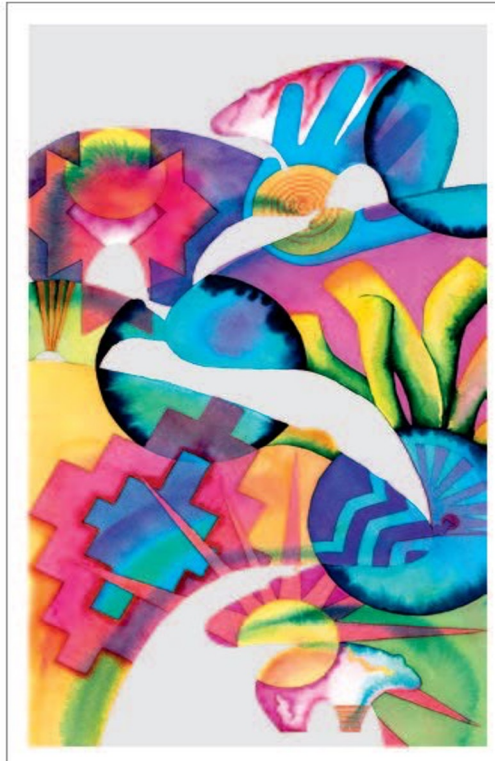
Holding Space for Resilience

- Always **pair historical trauma with historical resilience**. Shared history of trauma, AND resilience.



Photo: D. Yazzie

Framing our Discussion: AI/AN Cultural Wisdom Declaration National Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda - 2016



THE NATIONAL TRIBAL
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH AGENDA

DECEMBER 2016

- NTBHA - December 2016
- Gathering of federal and tribal organizations (Indian Health Services, National Indian Health Board, SAMHSA)
- Many tribes collectively acknowledged importance of mental health issues affecting AI/AN

What is Infant-Toddler Mental Health?

(also known as
social-emotional
development, early
childhood mental
health)

- Infant-early childhood mental health, sometimes referred to as social and emotional health, is the developing capacity of the child from birth to 5 years of age to **form close and secure adult and peer relationships; experience, manage, and express a full range of emotions;** and **explore the environment and learn**— **all in the context of family, community, and culture**. Strategies to improve I-ECMH fall along a *promotion, prevention and treatment continuum*.

- *ZerotoThree*

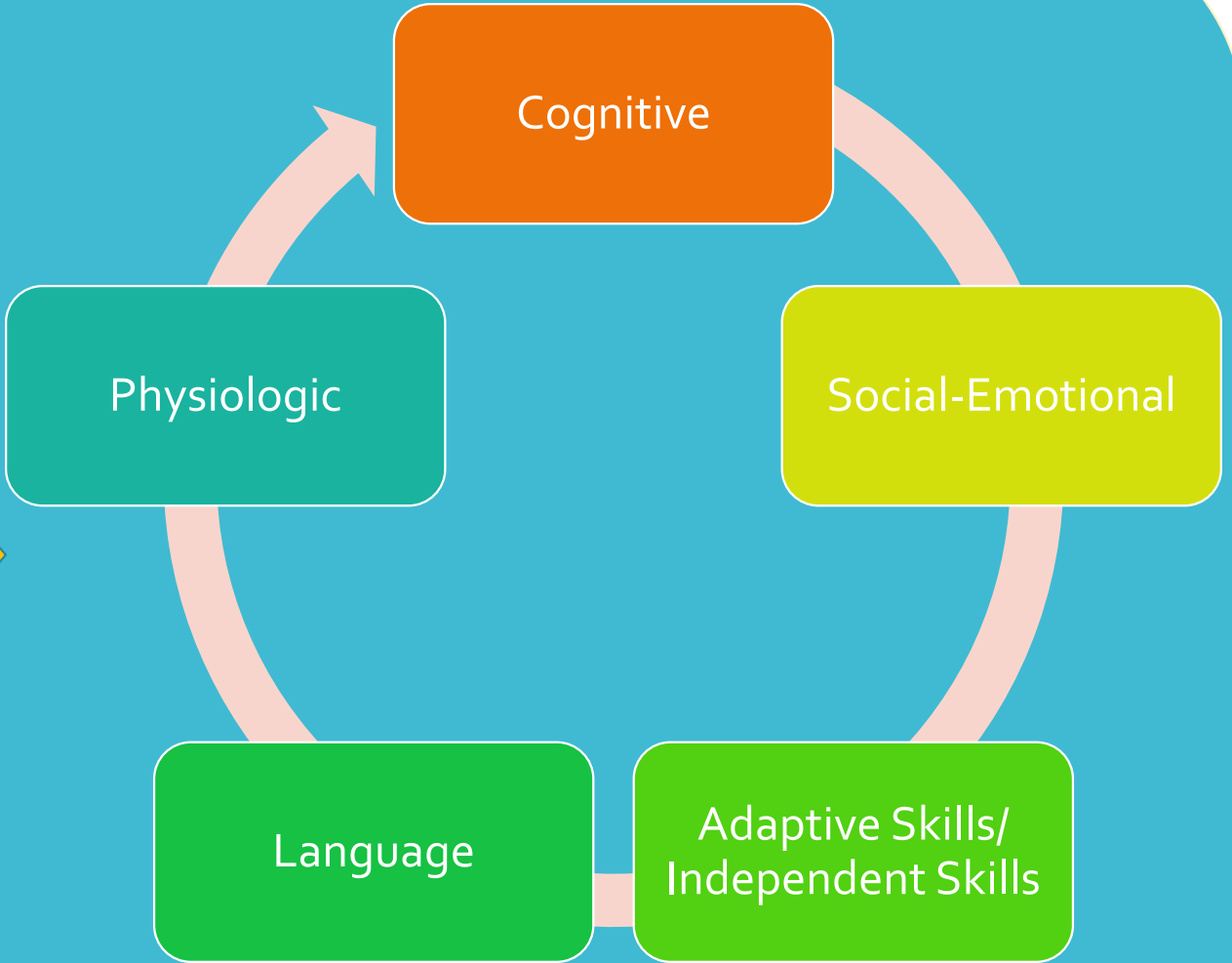
- **Relationships** – clan membership, birth, connected to nature/ universe
- **Emotions** – modeling: parents, grandparents, extended family
- **Environment/Growth**- home, animals, plants, trees, rocks, mountains, streams, rivers, lakes, clouds, wind, fire, geography, etc.
- **Family, community, and culture**- creation stories, ceremonies, songs, acknowledging seasons, stars/constellations, teachings, etc.

- D. Yazzie, 2021

Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health

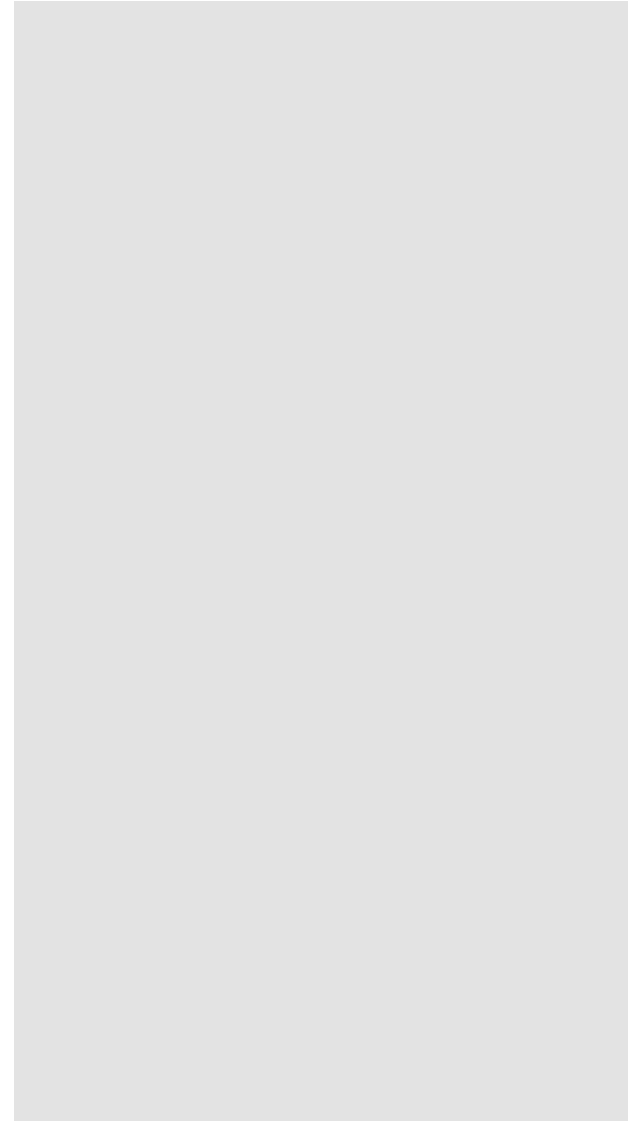
Children grow in these areas when they are in a good relationship with their caregivers/teachers

- Trauma-Informed Approach
- Developmental knowledge
- Attachment
- Self-reflection



Spirituality

Example: Navajo - Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon



In the womb.



Let's start with
brain
development.
When does the
brain begin to
develop?

- By 5 years of age, 90% of brain cells are connected.

Ancestral and Current Protective Factors

For thousands of years before European contact, Indigenous peoples had their own systems of care throughout the lifespan that integrated spirituality and all of nature in the universe. Many still have this way of being.

Doctors

Psychologists

Bone specialists

Midwives

Pharmacists

Forms of governing and justice

Systems of community/family support (PARENTING)

Stories/Kinship

Astrologists


Appropriate Services Starts with knowing Historical Context

- Doctrine of Discovery 1493
- Department of War 1789, Dept. of Int. 1823 (BIA), 1951 (IHS)
- Indian Removal Act 1830
- Boarding Schools 1860s – 1950's (present day, not mandatory)
- Allotment Act (Dawes Act) 1887
- Snyder Act of 1924 – voting, but for states it was different
- HHS – 1951 moved Indian Health Services from BIA
- Indian Relocation Act 1956
- Indian Self-Determination Act 1975
- Indian Child Welfare Act 1978
- American Indian Religious Freedom Act 1978
- ICWA being challenged - Supreme Court, other cases

“The latest research shows that humans have been living in North America and Tularosa Basin for at least 23,000 years. It was previously thought that humans arrived in North America closer to 13,500 – 16,000 years ago.” -Jan. 2022

Paradigm Shift:

- Reclaim Our History
- Unlearn western view of MH
- Integrate perspectives



White Sands has the largest collection of fossilized human footprints.
NPS Photo

The latest research shows that humans have been living in North America and Tularosa Basin for at least 23,000 years. It was previously thought that humans arrived in North America closer to 13,500 – 16,000 years ago.

This paradise of lush green life naturally captured the attention of the larger animals of the ice age. Plant eaters such as ancient camels, Columbian mammoths and Harlan's ground sloth came to Lake Otero to feast on the grasses and trees of the Tularosa Basin. This attracted fearsome predators known as the dire wolf and American Lion. These animals' footprints remained long after their departure of the wetlands of Lake Otero and eventually became fossilized.

The latest research shows that humans have been living in North America and Tularosa Basin for at least 23,000 years. It was previously thought that humans arrived in North America closer to 13,500 – 16,000 years ago.

Human Occupation of the North American Colorado Plateau ~37,000 Years Ago. - July 2022

- <https://www.nps.gov/whsa/learn/nature/fossilized-footprints.htm>

IECMHC: Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation

- What is IECMHC?
- IECMHC is a prevention-based approach that pairs a mental health professional with adults who work with infants and young children in the different settings where they learn and grow, such as childcare, preschool, home visiting, etc. Mental health consultation is not about “fixing kids.” Nor is it therapy. Mental health consultation equips caregivers to facilitate children’s healthy social and emotional development.

What do IECMH Consultants do?

IECMH consultants develop relationships with the adults and caregivers in young children’s lives to build adults’ capacity and skills to strengthen and support the healthy social and emotional development of children—early and before formalized intervention is needed.

Three types of IECMH Consultation services:

Child/Family

- Help adults understand and address the child's needs by developing an individualized plan with the teachers, director, parents, providers and/or home visitors

Classroom/Group

- Work with child care providers, teachers and home visitors to improve care offered to all children by helping to identify and address attitudes, beliefs, practices, and conditions that may be undermining quality relationships between adults and children

Programmatic

ASAM Continuum of Care - American Society of Addiction Medicine

ASAM CONTINUUM OF CARE

▶ ADULT



- .5 Early Intervention
- 1 Outpatient Services
- 2.1 Intensive Outpatient Services
- 2.5 Partial Hospitalization Services
- 3.1 Clinically Managed Low-Intensity Residential Services

- 3.3 Clinically Managed Population-Specific High-Intensity Residential Services
- 3.5 Clinically Managed High-Intensity Residential Services
- 3.7 Medically Monitored Intensive Inpatient Services
- 4 Medically Managed Intensive Inpatient Services

▶ ADOLESCENT




- .5 Early Intervention
- 1 Outpatient Services
- 2.1 Intensive Outpatient Services
- 2.5 Partial Hospitalization Services

- 3.1 Clinically Managed Low-Intensity Residential Services
- 3.5 Clinically Managed Medium-Intensity Residential Services
- 3.7 Medically Monitored High-Intensity Inpatient Services
- 4 Medically Managed Intensive Inpatient Services


www.iecmhc.org


Georgetown University Center for Child and Human Development Georgetown University

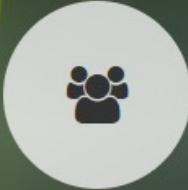
 **CENTER OF EXCELLENCE** FOR
Infant & Early Childhood
Mental Health Consultation
Growth. Advancement. Impact.

[HOME](#) [ABOUT](#) [RESOURCES](#) [TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE](#) [CONNECT](#)

Supporting IECMHC to **ADVANCE** and **IMPACT** the mental health of young children, their families and staff in early childhood settings across the country.

 ACCESS OUR RESOURCES

 REQUEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

 JOIN THE VIRTUAL IECMHC COMMUNITY

The CoE for IECMHC is a national technical assistance center dedicated to the **ADVANCEMENT** and **IMPACT** of the field of IECMHC through training, technical assistance and resource development.

FREE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE TO BUILD /ENHANCE YOUR IECMHC SYSTEM

www.iecmhc.org

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL <https://www.iecmhc.org/technical-assistance/>. The browser's address bar and tabs are visible at the top. The website header features the logo for the Center of Excellence for Infant & Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation, with the tagline "Growth. Advancement. Impact." and a navigation menu including Home, About, Resources, Technical Assistance, Connect, Virtual Trainings, and News. On the right side of the header, there are links for "Register for 2022 IECMHC Conference", "2022 IECMHC Conference Information", and "IECMHC Resources for Tribal Nations".

The main content area is titled "Request Technical Assistance" and includes an image of hands typing on a keyboard with question marks overlaid. A large button labeled "REQUEST TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE" is positioned to the right of the image. Below the image, the text reads: "Our concierge technical assistance is designed to advance the field by providing individualized technical assistance to IECMHC programs at any stage of development. This technical assistance is not designed for IECMH consultants. IECMH consultants [can find resources and support here](#)." A second paragraph states: "Please complete the following form to request technical assistance from a member of the CoE team. After completing the form, we will be in touch to schedule a time to discuss your needs. Please be as comprehensive as possible when completing the form. We look forward to working with you!" At the bottom of the page, there is a small accessibility toolbar with icons for screen reader, keyboard, and other assistive technologies.

Caregivers Need Tools and Support for Our Little Ones

Child care providers, home visitors, preschool teachers, families and communities could use more training and support to address infants and young children's social and emotional needs. Yet for preschool teachers, for example, research shows that:

Only 1 in 5

Preschool teachers have received specific training on facilitating children's social and emotional growth in the past year



Only 34%

Teachers believe they have the necessary skills to meet their students' mental health needs



Only 23%

Preschool programs have onsite or scheduled visits from mental health professionals



Children of Color
Are
Disproportionately
Affected

**African American
Children 18%**

Of all preschoolers
enrolled

42% Suspended

48% Suspended multiple
times

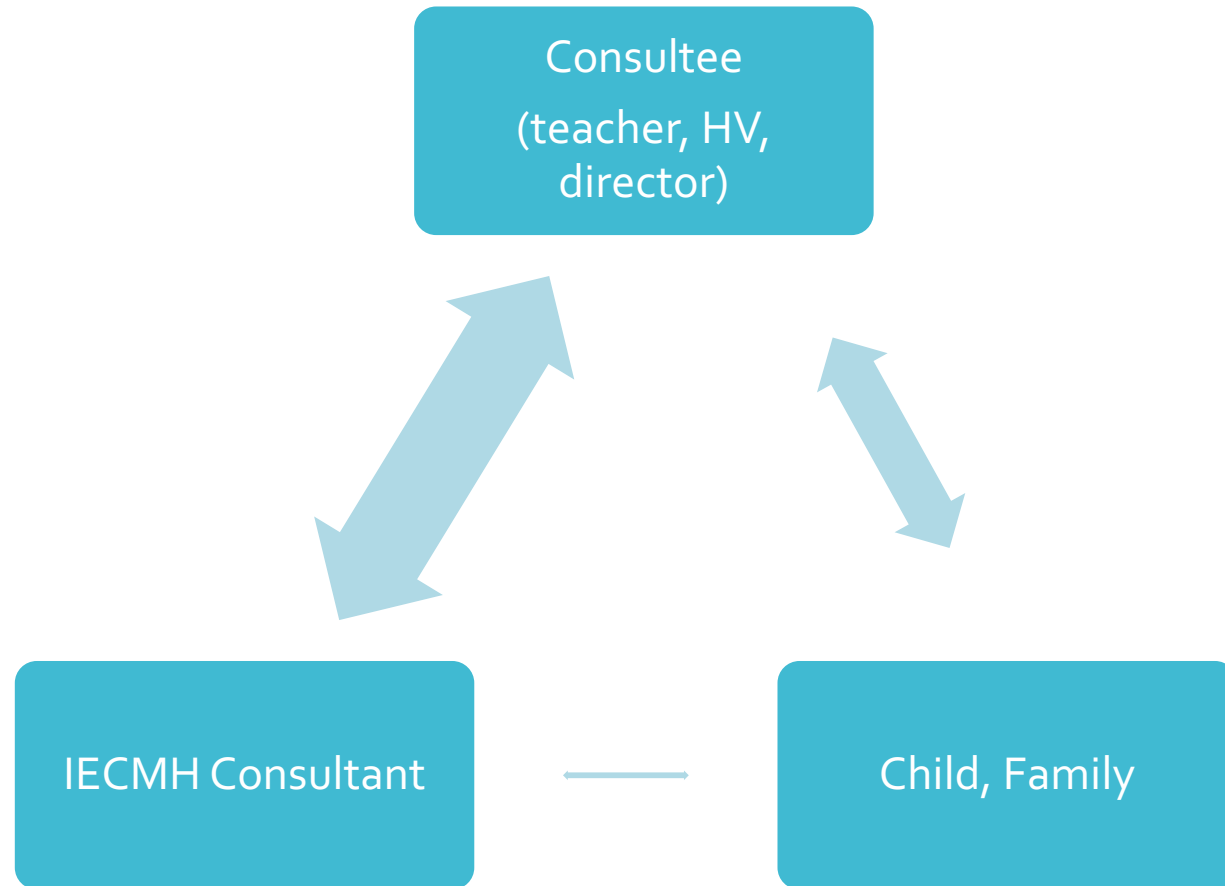
**American Indian /
Alaska Native, or
AI/AN Children 0.5%**

Of all preschoolers
enrolled

2% Suspended

3% Expelled

How does IECMH Consultation look?



The Consultative Stance :

Kadija Johnston
and Charles
Brinamen, 2026

10 Stances :

1. Mutuality of Endeavor
2. Avoiding position of sole expert
3. Wondering instead of knowing
4. Understanding another's subjective experience
5. Considering all levels of influence
6. All voices, especially child's voice
7. The centrality of relationships
8. Parallel process as an organizing principle
9. Patience
10. Holding hope

Consultative Stance in IECMHC –

Will this work
in IHS
funded/BIE/BI
A funded
programs?

10 Stances :

1. Mutuality of Endeavor
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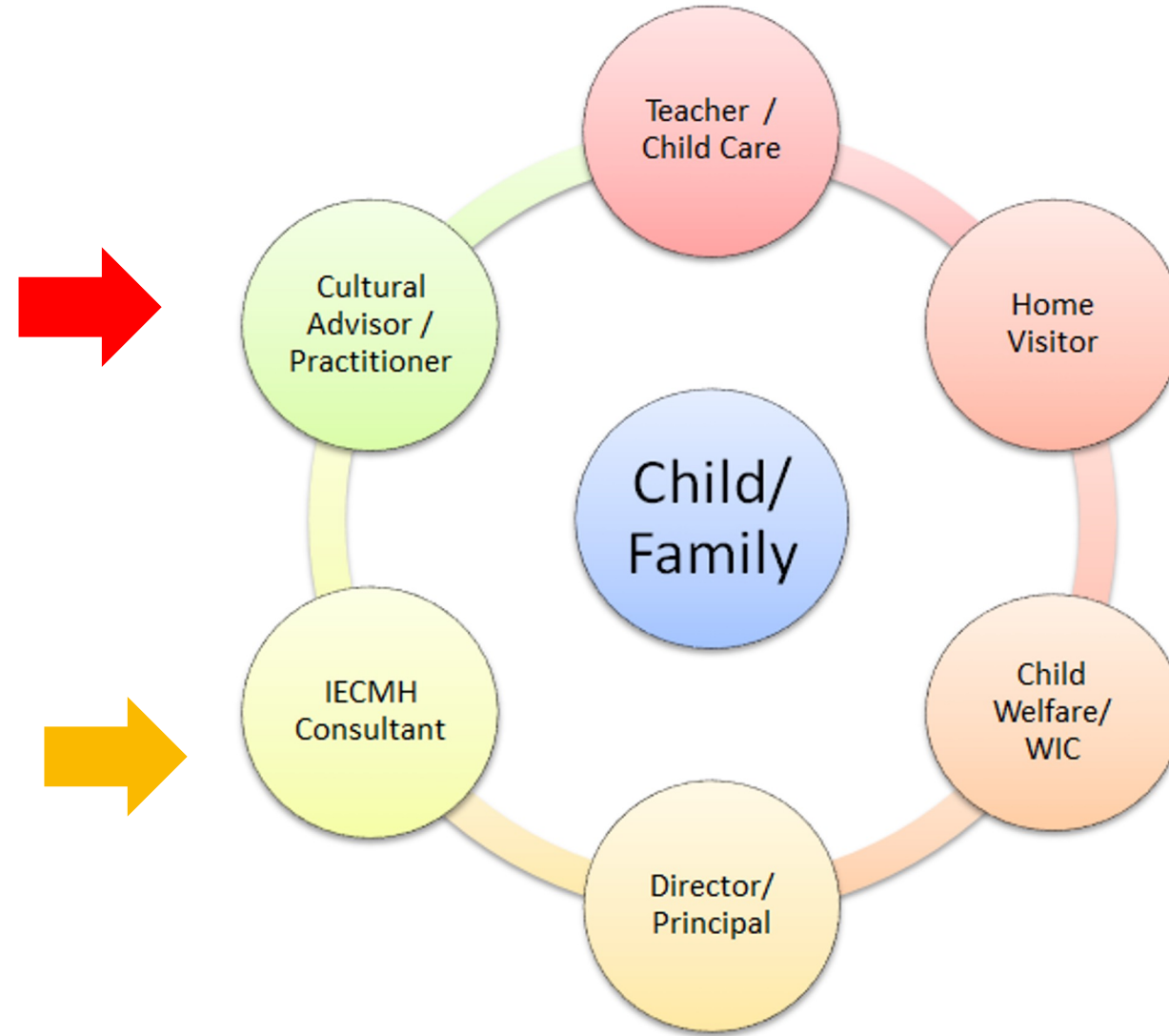
Similar Traditional Navajo Stance/Beliefs :

1. Ahilth kaa' iijee'
2. Adaa aholyah, doo adaadzoodlii da
3. Doo adaadzoodlii da, Saad adaa aholyah
4. Yik'itdiitiih doo hajooba'
5. T'aa althtsoh hazho'oh baa akoniidzin
6. All voices, especially child's voice
7. K'eh hwiindzinigii, k'eh bee go
8. Parallel process as an organizing principle
9. Patience
10. Hozho Nahasdlii'

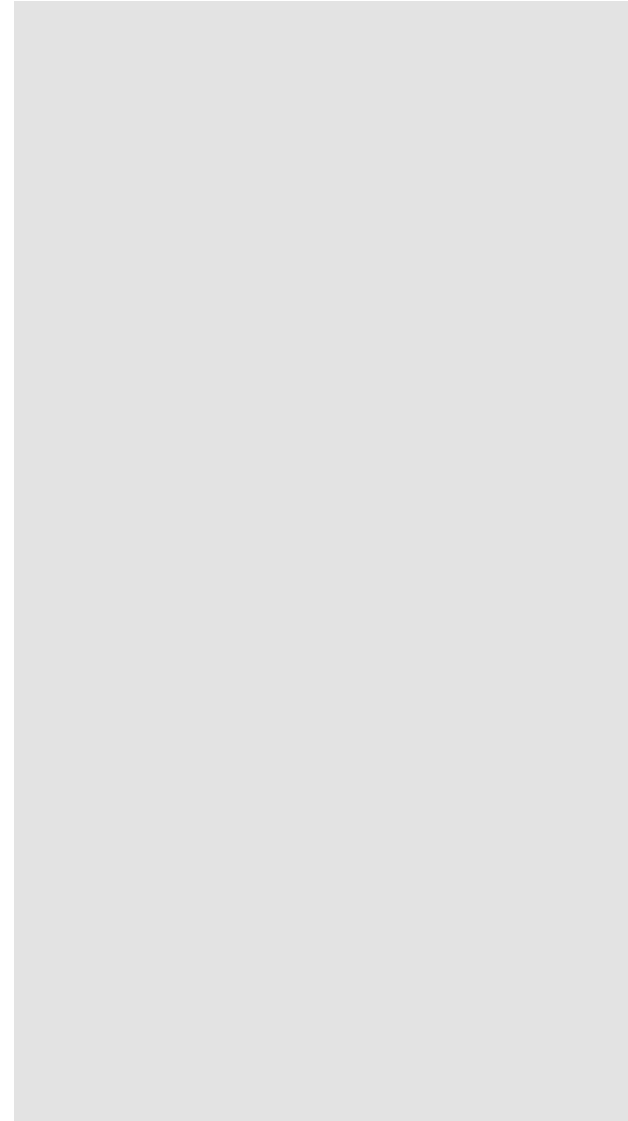
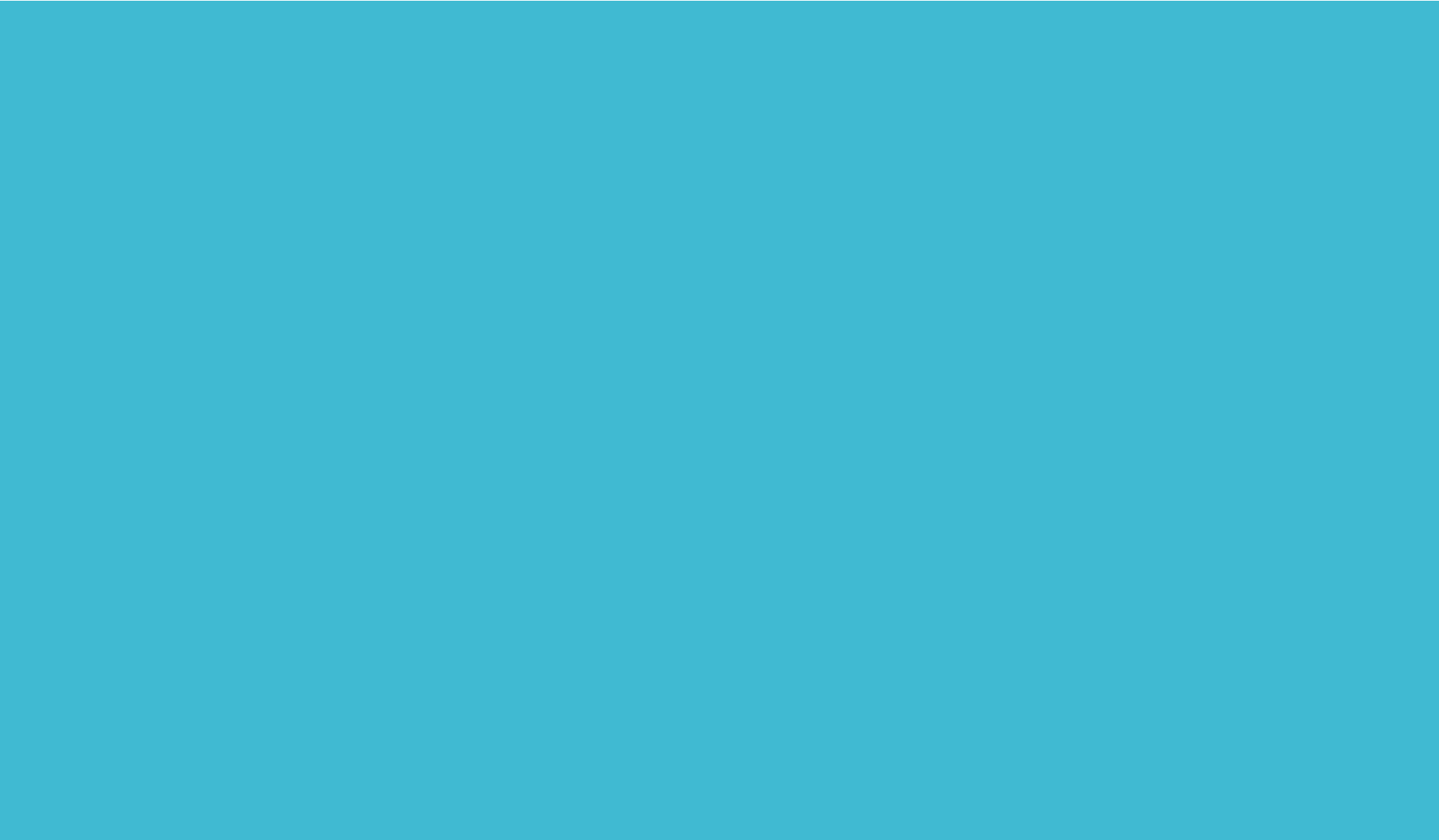
Diversity-Informed Tenets for Work with Infants, Children and Families

- 10 Tenets
 1. Self-Awareness Leads to Better Services for Families
 2. Champion Children's Rights Globally
 3. Work to Acknowledge Privilege and Combat Discrimination
 4. Recognize and Respect Non-dominant Bodies of Knowledge
 5. Honor Diverse Family Structures
 6. Understand That Language Can Be Used to Hurt or Heal
 7. Support Families in Their Preferred Language
 8. Allocate Resources to Systems Change
 9. Make Space and Open Pathways for Diverse Professionals
 10. Advance Policy That Supports All Families

IECMHC -
Everyone
brings
knowledge
and learns
from one
another



Example: Navajo - Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon



Relationships/Kinship is Central to Navajo Way of Life

Review:

What is the most important thing for young children's mental health?

Relationships
Relationships
Relationships

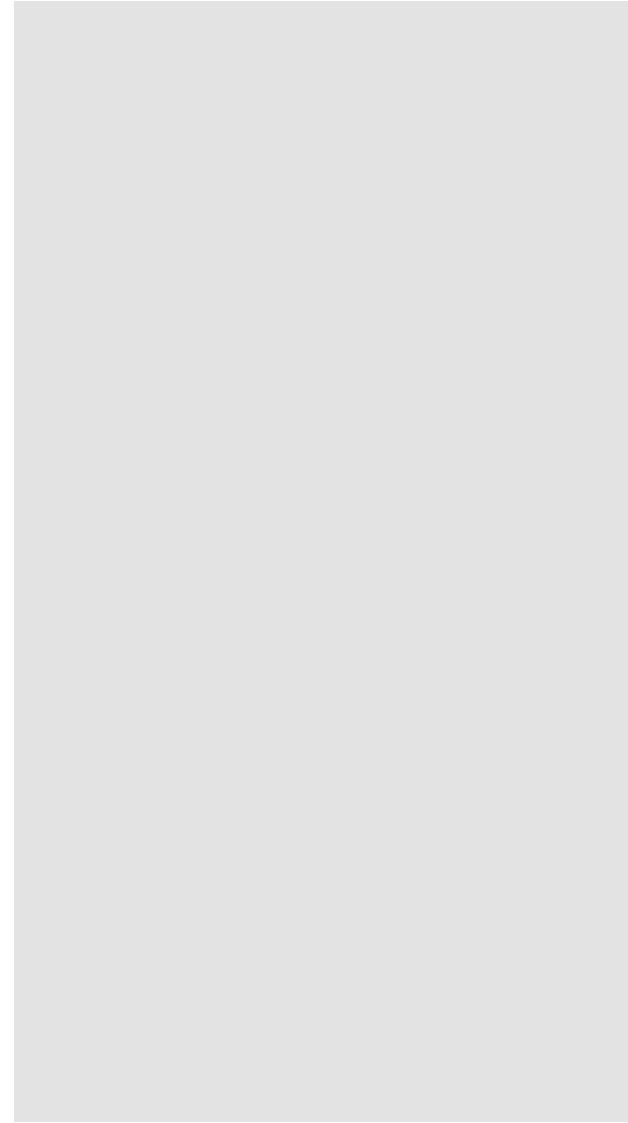
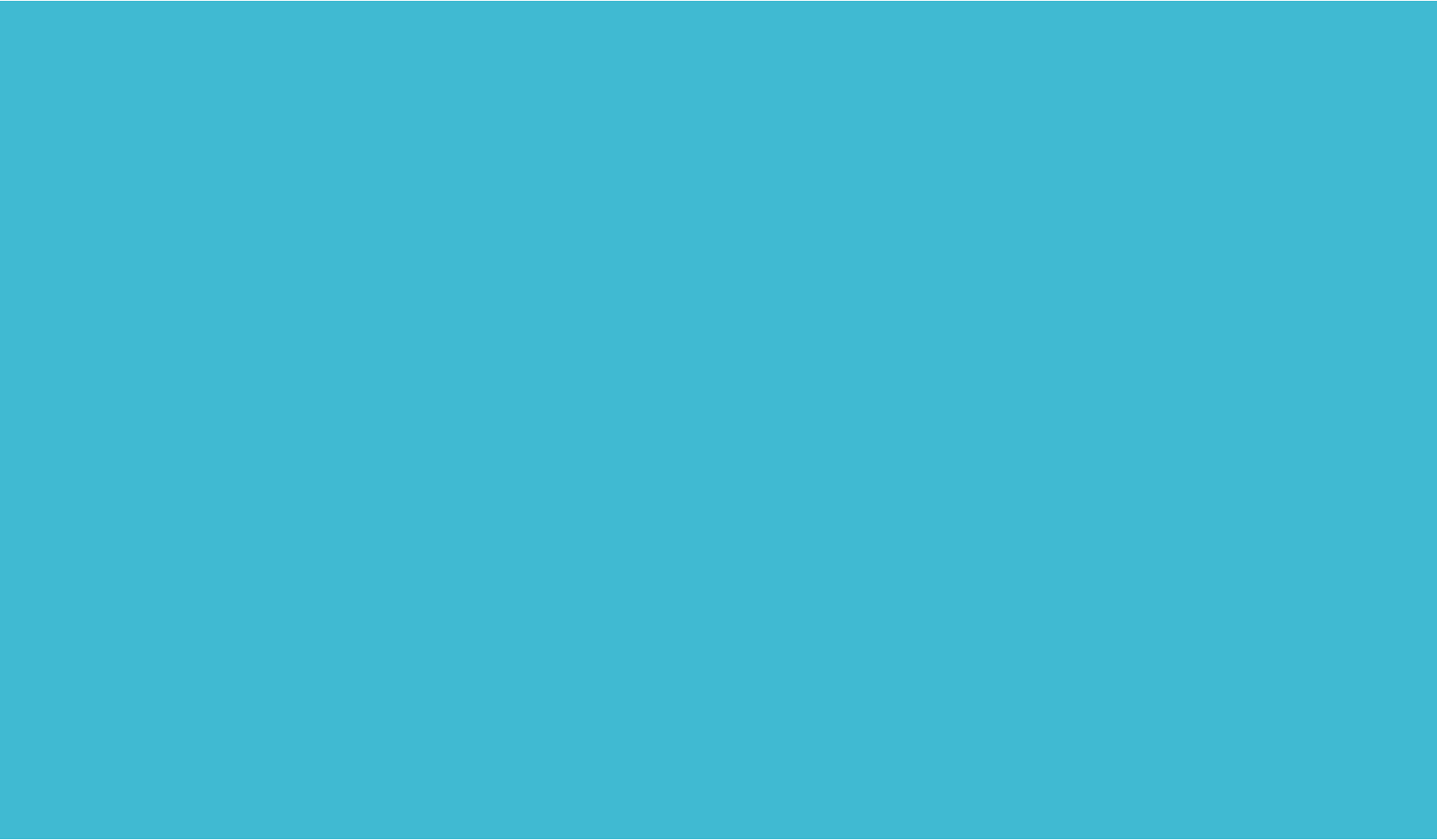
Natural Mental Health system tied into clanship, creation stories, spirituality:

- Clanship system, characteristics
- Addressing others through clan relationship
- Establish proper relationships through each other's clans, newly addressed as: mother, father, etc.

My Story : Holding Trauma with Resilience

- External Oppression – Navajo Long Walk, Boarding School,
- Internalized Oppression– mother and daughter relationships
- Lateral Oppression – early in career, understand it now
- Reflective Supervision as an IECMHC
- Learn about and find your own story, resilience
- Finding your voice, to raise underrepresented voices.
- How is your work connected to your history and your people?

Example: Sa'ah Naaghai Bik'eh Hozhoon



Culture of Trauma Due to Colonialism?

- Many books and articles in mental health field about reactions to trauma, healing trauma.
- *“My Grandmother’s Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mend our Hearts and our Bodies”* by Resmaa Menakem, MSW, LICSW - 2017
- *“Over months or years, unhealed trauma can become part of someone’s personality. As it is passed on and compounded through other bodies, it often becomes a family norm. If it gets transmitted and compounded through multiple families and generations, it can turn into culture.”*

There is always
hope.

Hundreds of years of challenges can
be countered through healthy
parent/caregiver-child **relationships**.

IECMHC is one evidence-based way to
strengthening relationships, building and healing
healthy attachment through the parallel process,
holding hope, (utilizing Consultative Stance).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqurstPL6kl>

Relationships
Relationships
Relationships

Hundreds of years of challenges can be countered through healthy parent/caregiver-child **relationships**.

IECMHC, evidence-based way to strengthening relationships, building and healing attachment through parallel process, consultative stance, way of being, etc.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OqurstPL6kl>

Resources

- Congress.gov
- Lieberman, Alicia F; Ghosh Ippen, Chandra; Van Horn, Patricia. (2015). *Don't Hit My Mommy! A Manual for Child-Parent Psychotherapy with Young Children Exposed to Violence and Other Trauma.*
- Myhra, Laurelle L. (2011). *"It Runs in the Family": Intergenerational Transmission of Historical Trauma Among Urban American Indians and Alaskan Natives in Culturally Specific Sobriety Maintenance Program,* Centers for American Indian and Alaskan Native Health, Colorado School of Public Health.
- National Archives
- Prucha, Francis P., Ed. (2000). *Documents of United States Indian Policy,* 3rd Ed. University of Nebraska Press.
- Manakem, R. (2017). *My Grandmother's Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending Our Hearts and Bodies.* Central Recovery Press.

Resources

Boris, N. W., Larrieu, J. A., Zeanah, P. D., Nagle, G. A., Steier, A., & McNeill, P. (2006). The process and promise of mental health augmentation of nurse home-visiting programs: Data from the Louisiana Nurse-Family Partnership. *Infant Mental Health Journal*, 27(1), 26-40. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1002/imhj.20078>

Goodson, B. D., Mackrain, M., Perry, D. F., O'Brien, K., & Gwaltney, M. K. (2013). Enhancing home visiting with mental health consultation. *Pediatrics*, 132(Supplement 2), S180-S190. doi: <https://doi.org/10.1542/peds.2013-1021S>

Johnston, K., Brinamen, C. (2006). *Mental Health Consultation in Child Care: Transforming Relationships With Directors, Staff, And Families.*