Cultural Guide for the Development of Tribal Child Welfare Products

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Organizations, teams, and individuals developing Tribal child welfare products (e.g., forms, tools, activities) often find themselves needing some guidance about how to develop those products in ways that reflect and embrace Tribal culture and values. This *Cultural Guide for the Development of Tribal Child Welfare Products* offers some assistance, highlighting major questions and considerations in the following domains: Respect for Tribal Sovereignty; Historical Trauma and Historical Strengths; Respect for Tribal Values; Language; Leadership; Indigenous Ways of Knowing (IWOK) and Cultural Protocols; Relationship Building; Cultural Appropriation; Cultural Applicability and Cultural Tailoring; Reciprocity; Spiritual Protocol; and Targeted Community Service Provider Review of Tools.

Neither these domains nor this guide is exhaustive or encyclopedic; they are, rather, guides to help you in developing products. Part of the work necessary for product developers is learning about the communities they work in and working closely with those communities to ensure the success of the products. To that end, organizations and developers should devote resources toward training in cultural competency before sending people into Tribal communities. Resource contacts in Tribal communities can include a Tribal historic preservation office, cultural preservation office, or cultural advisory committee.

> " In the past, the United States government has attempted to extinguish our council fires and fragment and dismantle our family and social structure. During the post-reservation era, paternalism on the part of the United States government eroded much of our nation's culture, language and heritage. Nevertheless, the people never succumbed totally to the economic, educational, cultural and political pressures wrought by the United States government. The people's tenacious desire to remain free enabled them to maintain their distinctive identity. Rather than becoming Americanized, they chose to reconstruct and reorganize their nation. This code is drafted and enacted as a matter of deliberate choice in an effort to reconstruct and reorganize our institutions in the furtherance of our distinctive identity, culture and values."
>
> — *Oglala Sioux Tribe, Wakanyeja Na Tiwahe Ta Woope*
> *(The OST Child and Family Code, Ordinance No. 07-13, May 2, 2007)*

This statement from the OST Child and Family Code reflects the experiences and history of Tribal nations and Alaska Native villages and honors the resiliency that includes reconnecting to respective cultural values and lifeways. The language from the code represents the work of a local grassroots community group that included wise healers, elders, professional cultural

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historians, teachers, and leaders. They determined that a sovereign approach should be planned, designed, and implemented incorporating the highest ideals of Lakota culture. The cultural content of the code truly represents the concept of planning for the protection of Lakota children for the next 7 generations. This is an example of how important sovereignty and culture are for the protection of our Tribal children and families.

Why This Guide Is Relevant

Product development for Indigenous communities often fails to incorporate feedback from the communities themselves. This *Cultural Guide for the Development of Tribal Child Welfare Products* is intended to be used by those creating tools and products to examine critically and guide the development of these products and ensure their cultural competence.

Many Tribes do not have readily available the cultural information needed to be used for development purposes, so creating culturally centered tools and products can require building up a knowledge base to use in their development. As we create products or tools that will impact a Tribal community, it is akin to entering their camp circle, which requires honoring and observing critical cultural protocols. **This guide will help product and tool developers to retrieve and incorporate cultural knowledge.** Additionally, this guide is intended as an instrument to **assure that products developed collaboratively include acknowledgement and recognition of Tribal communities for their contributions** to the fields of child welfare, education, social services, research, and evaluation.

How To Use This Guide

Each of **the 12 domains below poses questions that should be considered throughout the development and implementation of any resource**. This tool can be used to assist with addressing and documenting the various components, but it is **not intended as a checklist**. The domains below, and the subsequent questions within them, may be adapted to honor respective cultural and community beliefs.

Note: The blank column to the right of each domain can be used to document adherence to the Tribal nation's cultural knowledge when developing products and tools. Use the column to list how you know whether you've addressed the question (or instruction) by specifying what outcomes or measures will indicate progress or success. Use the "Comments/Notes" section to describe the progress on those measures, what's left to do, what challenges you face, and how you might resolve them.

Additional Resources

Some resources to enhance your knowledge of the relevant considerations and context include:

- A Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities
  Children's Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Walk Softly and Listen Carefully: Building Research Relationships with Tribal Communities
  National Council of American Indians

- Research & Evaluation in Native Communities Resource List
  Capacity Building Center for Tribes

- Starting the Journey: Initial Considerations for Researchers Working in Indigenous Communities
  Center for Native Child and Family Resilience

The Twelve Domains

RESPECT FOR TRIBAL SOVEREIGNTY	
American Indians and Alaska Natives have a sovereign status, which includes a right to protect their cultural and spiritual knowledge. Tribal sovereignty is not exclusive to governance, but includes the inherent right to promote and protect Indigenous language and culture. Resources should (wherever possible) acknowledge Tribal sovereignty. For example, if data or information from a Tribe or Tribal community is being used to develop or modify a resource, permission for their use should be sought and documented. 1. Have you documented the names of everyone providing information and any permissions for using data, information, ceremonial practices, and resources that are Tribally specific? 2. If funding is obtained using Tribal specific data, are Tribal members beneficiaries of and actively engaged in the funded project? Are there Tribal members who have specific expertise in that area, and have you relied upon them for their expertise?	How you will know:
Comments/Notes:	

HISTORICAL TRAUMA AND HISTORICAL STRENGTHS	
American Indians and Alaska Natives have used their strengths to endure hundreds of years of oppression, genocide, federal policies, and mandates that have resulted in traumatic and devastating effects. The spirit of resilience, fortitude, and strength can lessen the effects of trauma on an individual, a community, and a nation and are resources to learn from. Each resource incorporates (where possible) a recognition and acknowledgement of the impact of historical trauma, including genocidal policies, while incorporating historical strengths of Indigenous peoples: 1. Does the resource recognize the intergenerational impact of historical trauma and include cultural healing? 2. Does the resource have the historical strengths of Indigenous peoples, e.g., acknowledgement of cultural resiliency and fortitude, as a foundation?	**How you will know:**
Comments/Notes:	

RESPECT FOR TRIBAL VALUES	
The principles and values outlined below are common to many, if not most, Tribal communities. Reviews should assure products/tools incorporate these to be consistent with common Tribal values. Insofar as these are values of the Tribe or community you're working with, have you assured their inclusion? • **Children are sacred:** Native children have traditional cultural rights that include treating them as sacred, with respect and honor. • **Respect and honor:** Acknowledge, respect, and honor the wisdom of elders, healers, ancestral teachings, each other, self, and all life. • **Generosity:** Share our ceremonies, traditional healing, and reciprocity practices within our Tribal communities. • **Protection of integrity of cultural knowledge:** Tribes determine the appropriateness of anything to be shared. • **Belonging:** The foundation or basis of belonging is spiritual attachment, which can be extraordinarily complex. This may include issues related to Tribal enrollment, membership, or citizenship; Tribal identity; identity loss; traditional culture-based gender identity; customary adoption; federal blood quantum; multiple Tribal ancestry; and extended family kinship systems that are impacted by historical trauma events. • **Relationship-based:** Acknowledging, establishing, and strengthening relationships are paramount to demonstrate the strong interconnectedness within Tribal communities.	**How you will know:**
Comments/Notes:	

LANGUAGE	
Tribal languages are threatened and at a critical juncture of extinction, so promoting the use of Tribal languages is truly essential. Learning and establishing methodologies to preserve the language is critical to maintaining the foundation and identity of the Tribe. Supporting the preservation or revitalization of language is everyone's responsibility. (A word of caution—it is important to recognize that Tribal language translation can be extraordinarily complicated due to the context and meanings attached to Tribal words. For example, Tribal languages are kinship based and form the foundation for Tribal cultural values, beliefs, and ceremonies.) 1. Do the products or tools promote the usage, development, and culturally appropriate application of Tribal language? 2. Have you determined whether there is a cultural protocol for the use of a Tribal language? 3. Is the language used expressed with appropriate context and with correct pronunciation? 4. Does the product or tool include Tribal language expressions, translations, and terms that promote the language? 5. Have you acknowledged the sources you used (e.g., dictionaries) to define any terms?	How you will know:

Comments/Notes:

LEADERSHIP

The concept of leadership in Tribal communities is a complex, sensitive issue. There are different categories of leaders, including non-elected natural leaders, elders, elected leaders, extended family leaders, spiritual leaders, and community leaders. It is important to identify the most appropriate leaders to review and provide feedback and support for the product you are developing. Urban Tribal communities have the responsibility to serve multiple nations. It would be important to engage the local urban-based community leaders.

Guidance for Recognizing the Role of Tribal Leadership in Product Development:

1. Leaders should be regarded as people who express cultural humility.

2. Leaders commonly do not refer to themselves as leaders unless elected. Otherwise, they are identified by the community.

3. Leaders consider themselves servants of the people.

4. Leadership looks forward to Seven Generations. They negotiate between different groups and are consensus builders.

5. Leaders have the power to accept or reject products relative to the responsibility of protecting and safeguarding Tribal sovereignty and the interests of individual Tribal members, families, communities, and the Tribe.

Read guidance and add any questions or comments to the "Comments/Notes" section below to stimulate discussion about next steps or questions you may have.

Comments/Notes:

INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING (IWOK) AND CULTURAL PROTOCOLS

There should always be a commitment to strengthen and preserve the integrity of the language and culture. Initial contact should include local community representatives to partner with and guide throughout the visit or process. Using traditional ways of understanding obtained from historically based experiences and generational knowledge passed down for centuries creates a process of continuity in a different format. The development of tools/resources (e.g., interview guides, Tribal educational and cultural resources, assessments, surveys, Tribal Child and Family Codes) should be grounded where possible in Tribal specific oral tradition, storytelling, and written narratives as the foundation (e.g., Winter Count, Star Knowledge, Totems, Petroglyphs, Cave Writings, Creation Stories).

Any tools should be developed in collaboration with each Tribal community and endorsed by their Tribal cultural leaders, elders, or wisdom keepers. Generally, cultural protocols include such things as:

1. A historical overview.

2. A historical chronology of critical traumatic events experienced by each community.

3. Acknowledgement of spirit-based beliefs/practices.

4. Orientation to explain visitor cultural behavioral expectations (e.g., elders are acknowledged and asked to speak first in gatherings; make every effort to accept all invitations and stay until the end of the event; relationship building is a priority; it is considered rude to interrupt or speak over others while someone is else is speaking; do your best to listen with an open mind and heart; observe respect for personal space and boundaries; reserve judgments informed by negative stereotypes).

5. Anticipating and respecting changes in agenda due to unexpected community or familial events. There should always be other options.

Read IWOK and Cultural Protocol guidance and add any questions or comments to the "Comments/Notes" section below to stimulate discussion about next steps or questions you may have.

INDIGENOUS WAYS OF KNOWING (IWOK) AND CULTURAL PROTOCOLS	
Should the Tribal community not have clearly defined cultural protocols, we offer the following recommendations if you are seeking Tribal input or review of products: 1. What, where, when, and who is appropriate to ask and NOT to ask? 2. What is the Tribal in-house process to obtain approval from the Tribe/program/community? 3. Identify or develop suggestions for visitors on how to build and nurture trusting relationships. 4. Who can speak for the Tribe/program/community? 5. What is the cultural, environmental, and political context of the tool being proposed? 6. When seeking input, it is important to have a trusted Native facilitator who is grounded in the specific content of the work that is being developed. 7. What works and doesn't work? 8. Can you find any previous lessons learned?	
Comments/Notes:	

RELATIONSHIP BUILDING – "ALL MY RELATIONS"	
The inclusive phrase "all my relations" is intended to recognize the inter-connectedness of Tribal members, kinship ties, Tribes/Tribal communities, and the earth as a living entity (Animal Nation, Winged Nation, and Star Nation) as appropriate; more generally, it recognizes ties among and between humankind. 1. Does the product promote inclusion of individuals, between individuals, and among differing sectors of communities? 2. Does the product recognize the importance of Tribal ceremonies, Pow Wows, and significant community events as critical to strengthening relationships? These events take precedence over routine visits, conference calls, and scheduled meetings or trainings. 3. Kinship-based relationships are the heart of families and communities and define our social and gender boundaries and responsibilities. Every effort must be made to preserve, share, and implement this knowledge within each community. Have you met this standard?	How you will know:

Comments/Notes:

CULTURAL APPROPRIATION	
Cultural appropriation speaks to "laying claim" to culture-based content material being utilized (data presentations, journal articles, etc.) and employing cultural practices without appropriate permissions or training: 1. Is the information being used from a specific Tribal community? Was approval sought/gained (Tribal Council or Tribal Institutional Review Board approval)? 2. What were the conditions: permission to use, identity protected, were there other protection issues that must be addressed? 3. Non-Native and Native visitors that are not Indigenous to that respective Tribe should not conduct nor facilitate Tribal traditional and spiritual events. Does your product protect against this?	**How you will know:**
Comments/Notes:	

CULTURAL APPLICABILITY AND CULTURAL TAILORING

The applicability of a particular tool may be limited to one Tribe (or a few), and a tool, or parts of it, may be inconsistent with or contrary to some Tribal cultural beliefs.

1. Have you asked participants if any part of this tool could be considered offensive or intrusive?

2. Does the tool seem like it would be applicable to all Tribes or families? If so, have you sought feedback from your specific audience(s) to determine whether it is?

3. Always be open to suggestions for revisions, tailoring, or adaptations as appropriate. If issues are identified but not all agree, work toward building a consensus.

4. The majority of all tools, interventions, and resources can and should be developed by the respective Tribe or culturally tailored to fit the community they are going to be used in.

5. Indigenous Tribal identity is different from Pan-Indianism. Each Tribal community's culture is unique to that community—in contrast to Pan-Indianism, which attempts to mold all Tribal identities into one. Have you avoided using one-size-fits-all viewpoints in developing your product?

Read Cultural Applicability and Cultural Tailoring guidance and add any questions or comments to the "Comments/ Notes" section below to stimulate discussion about next steps or questions you may have.

Comments/Notes:

RECIPROCITY	
Reciprocity as part of a stated or unstated agreement is important; for example, you will want to acknowledge community members sharing personal time reviewing documents, providing cultural advisement, or giving feedback on instruments, articles, tools, and products. Offering appropriate acknowledgement in the form of tangible and intangible gifts should not be considered as compensation, but an offering in honor of and respect for the Indigenous ways of knowing. A further option is leaving a gift of knowledge with a local Tribal member by, for example, teaching them how to conduct data collection, develop a culturally appropriate tool, or analyze data. 1. Does the process include clear communication about the individual's expectation of time and resources needed in exchange for what is being asked of the community members? 2. Is the communication clear and culturally sensitive about what will be offered to and asked of the community members?	How you will know:
Comments/Notes:	

SPIRITUAL PROTOCOL	
Spiritual healers have a unique, respected, and highly regarded role in the community that requires formal spiritual protocols when asking for their help. 1. Have you asked a trusted community member about for the protocol for requesting services or consultations? 2. Have you observed the protocols shared with you about how to bestow a gift to a traditional healer? 3. Recognize that Western contractual arrangements may not be appropriate; for example, a 30-day payment processing period may be inappropriate, especially in the case of a traditional healer who cannot ask for specific pay or compensation. Observe that cultural protocols may vary among Tribes.	**Read Spiritual Protocol guidance and add any questions or comments to the "Comments/Notes" section below to stimulate discussion about next steps or questions you may have.**
Comments/Notes:	

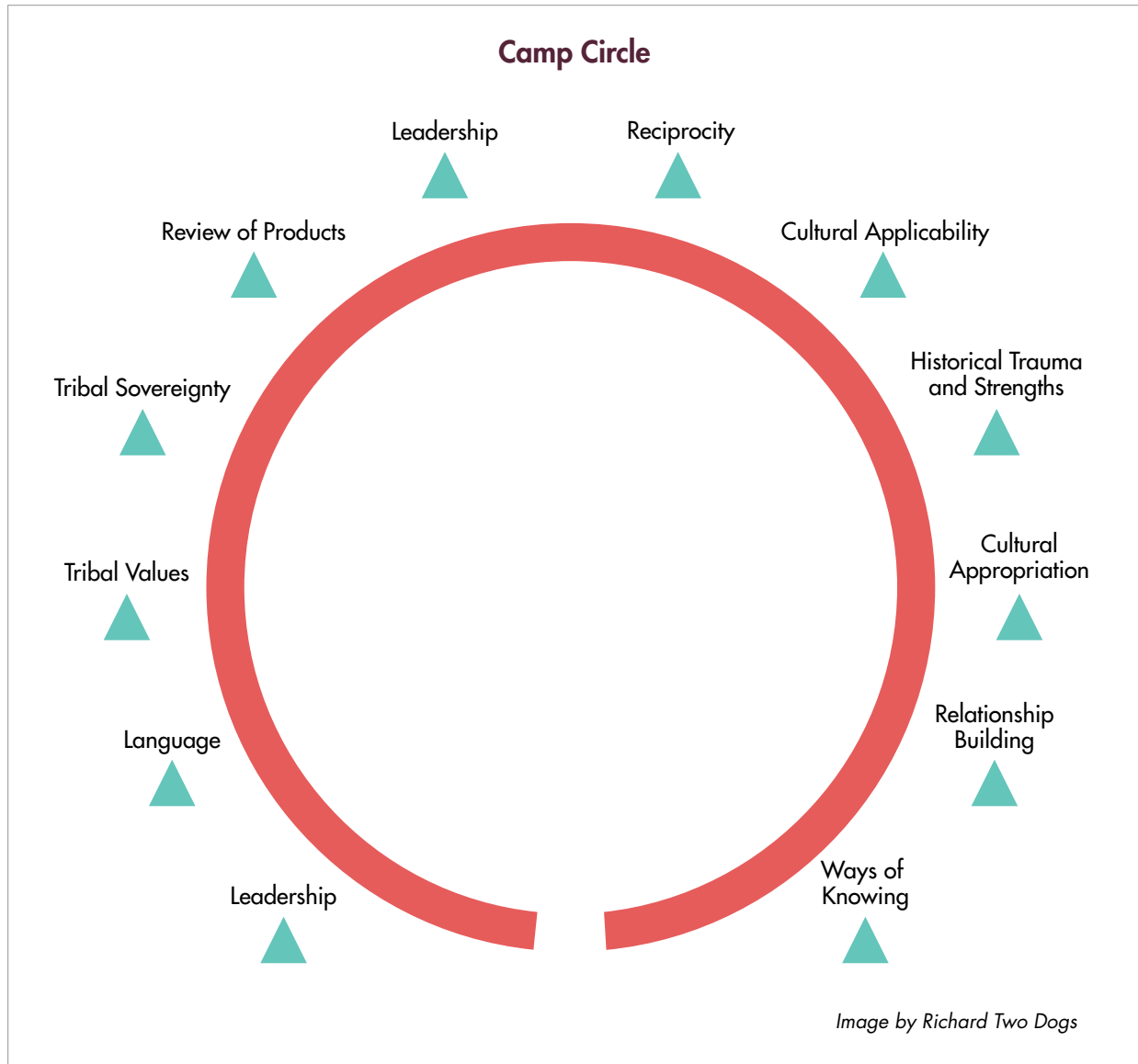| TARGETED COMMUNITY SERVICE PROVIDER REVIEW OF TOOLS	
Briefly describe the recruitment process of targeted community service providers for feedback and possible piloting of tools. Provide a summary description of their feedback and recommendations and any next steps as appropriate.	**Provide description in "Comments/Notes" below. Use additional sheets of paper if needed.**
Comments/Notes:	

The Camp Circle graphic found on page 16 is an example to illustrate the importance of understanding Cultural Respect when entering Tribal/Indigenous lands, reservations, and communities.

When an individual, program, or organization is proposing to do a project on Tribal lands or with Tribal communities, including ancestral territorial lands, reservations, and urban Indian communities, it is important to recognize, acknowledge, and respect the cultural protocols that are specific to the respective Tribes/Indigenous nations. It is understood that each Indigenous nation has their own set of protocols, spiritual laws, and custom laws, and those are to be respected and honored. The example in this graphic is for illustrative purposes.

Using an example from the Lakota people (Richard Two Dogs, 7/18/22), our ancestors camped in a circle, which is important to our people; it represents the circle of no end, where life will continue, where the ceremonies and protocols will be learned and sustained—which gives us our sovereignty. The place of honor was established in the west, and

this would be occupied by whomever is leading the camp. Historically, when a friendly Tribe/visitors entered, they enter from the east. They were welcomed, fed, and gifted, and the sacred pipe was smoked with them.

With respect to the Camp Circle, it is important to enter the Indigenous/Tribal Nation lands and communities by approaching the leadership in a culturally appropriate manner, advising of the purpose of their visit, and requesting a blessing and permission. The leadership roles include individuals who hold political seats, e.g., Tribal Chairpersons, or non-political community established roles, including elders, spiritual leaders, and community/extended family leadership positions. It is important to continue to inform and consult with the leadership of the respective Nation or community if it is an ongoing project or initiative. This is not to be confused with approval from an Institutional Review Board or Research Review Board, which is a process that would need to be complied with if the initiative is related to research on Indian lands. The domains listed in the Camp Circle represent the domains that are listed in this document.

Camp Circle

Leadership

Reciprocity

Review of Products

Cultural Applicability

Tribal Sovereignty

Historical Trauma and Strengths

Tribal Values

Cultural Appropriation

Language

Relationship Building

Leadership

Ways of Knowing

Image by Richard Two Dogs
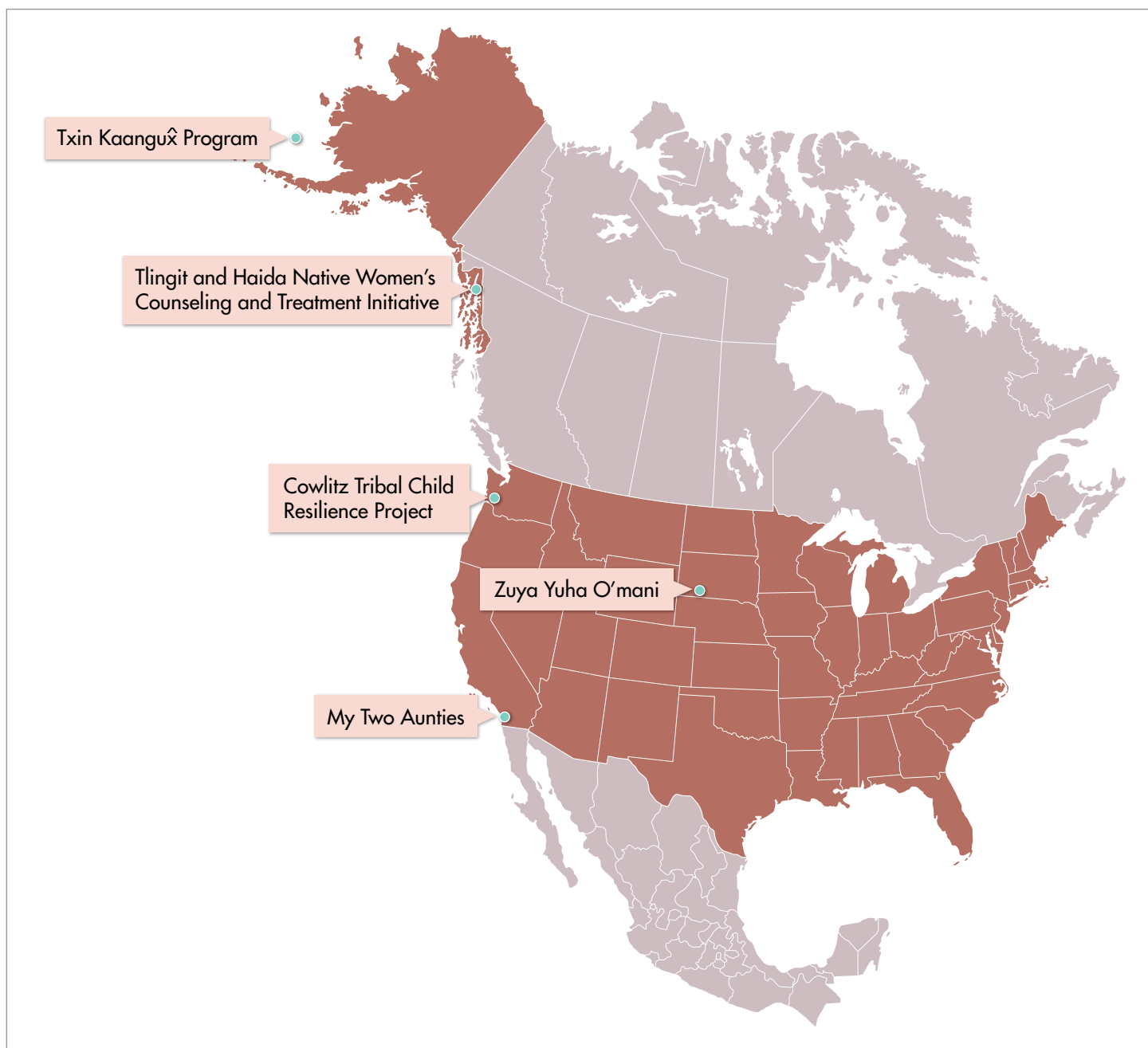
In Memoriam: Dr. Paulette Running Wolf

Dr. Running Wolf is an enrolled Blackfeet Tribal member professionally committed to the improvement of behavioral health services and systems in Indian Country. She was a counseling psychologist, an educator, an evaluator, a consultant who contributed to national projects, and an esteemed colleague.

She was a psychologist with over 30 years' experience in American Indian education and training, research and evaluation, and program development. Her time as an educator saw her teaching in a variety of settings, including elementary and secondary education, at two Tribal colleges, and as an Assistant Professor at Washington State University.

Dr. Running Wolf successfully implemented quantitative and qualitative outcome-based evaluations in numerous Tribal communities, both urban and reservation. She served on the Washington State Institutional Review Board and the Blackfeet Nation Institutional Review Board. She also was a member of the Tribal Evaluation Steering Team of the Children's Bureau's Child Welfare Research and Evaluation Workgroup, contributing to the group's publication, "A Roadmap for Collaborative and Effective Evaluation in Tribal Communities."

As a consultant, Dr. Running Wolf provided evaluation, community mobilization, and planning services in over 50 Tribal communities. She frequently served on federal and state policy making committees to ensure they included culturally competent approaches to mental health services, research, design, and evaluation. In addition, she was the lead developer and project manager for a SAMHSA contract, Native Aspirations, that addressed suicide, violence, and bullying in Tribal communities.

Dr. Running Wolf received a Bachelor of Science in Elementary and Secondary Education from the University of Great Falls, Montana; a Master of Education in School Counseling from Western Washington University, Bellingham; and a Doctorate in Counseling Psychology from the University of Wisconsin, Madison.

Txin Kaangux̂ Program

Tlingit and Haida Native Women's Counseling and Treatment Initiative

Cowlitz Tribal Child Resilience Project

Zuya Yuha O'mani

My Two Aunties

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This document is part of a series that presents the results of collaboration between the Center for Native Child and Family Resilience and five Tribal partner organizations to formalize, implement, and evaluate the partners' Tribal child welfare prevention and intervention strategies. For more information about this or the other programs, please visit the Center website, https://cncfr.jbsinternational.com.