
Panel 2:

Early Childhood

Development..and what this means for Indian Country.



Hilary Gourneau, MS, B.S.Ed. (April 19th, 2023)

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OBJECTIVES

- SOVEREIGNTY
 - CULTURE & LANGUAGE
 - INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE
-

–
What does Head Start support?

**Why does understanding
and learning about our
children matter for Indian
Country?**

There is good evidence showing that effective early intervention can substantially **reduce the impact of poverty** on children's development when it is sufficiently intensive and reaches the families who need it the most.

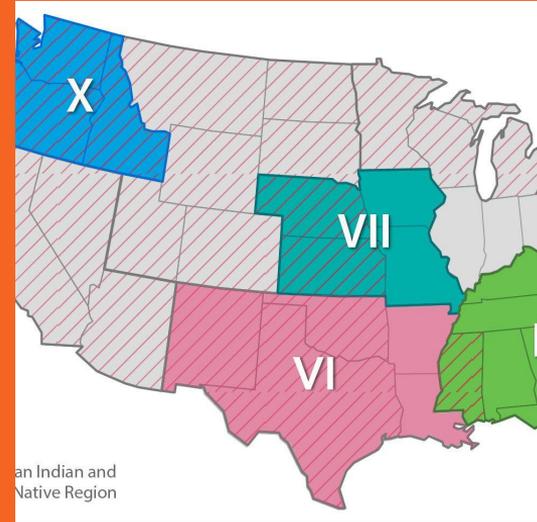
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Why do we need to focus on our early education needing to be unique, culturally appropriate, and holistic?

If we care about supporting all children to achieve their potential, then reducing child poverty *and* mitigating its effects...Poverty chronically deprives children of the resources necessary for them to thrive, as well as decreasing their resilience to stress and various physical illnesses.

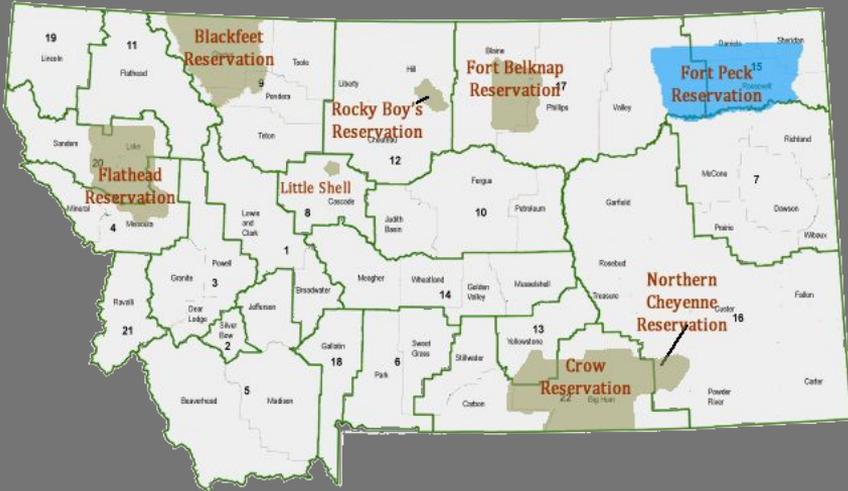
Head Start AIAN-Region XI,
currently **serves 154**
programs across 26
states, 72 % of AIAN
HS/EHS staff are Native, and
46% are current or former
Head Start
caregivers/parents.

*-We've learned to take care
of each other.*

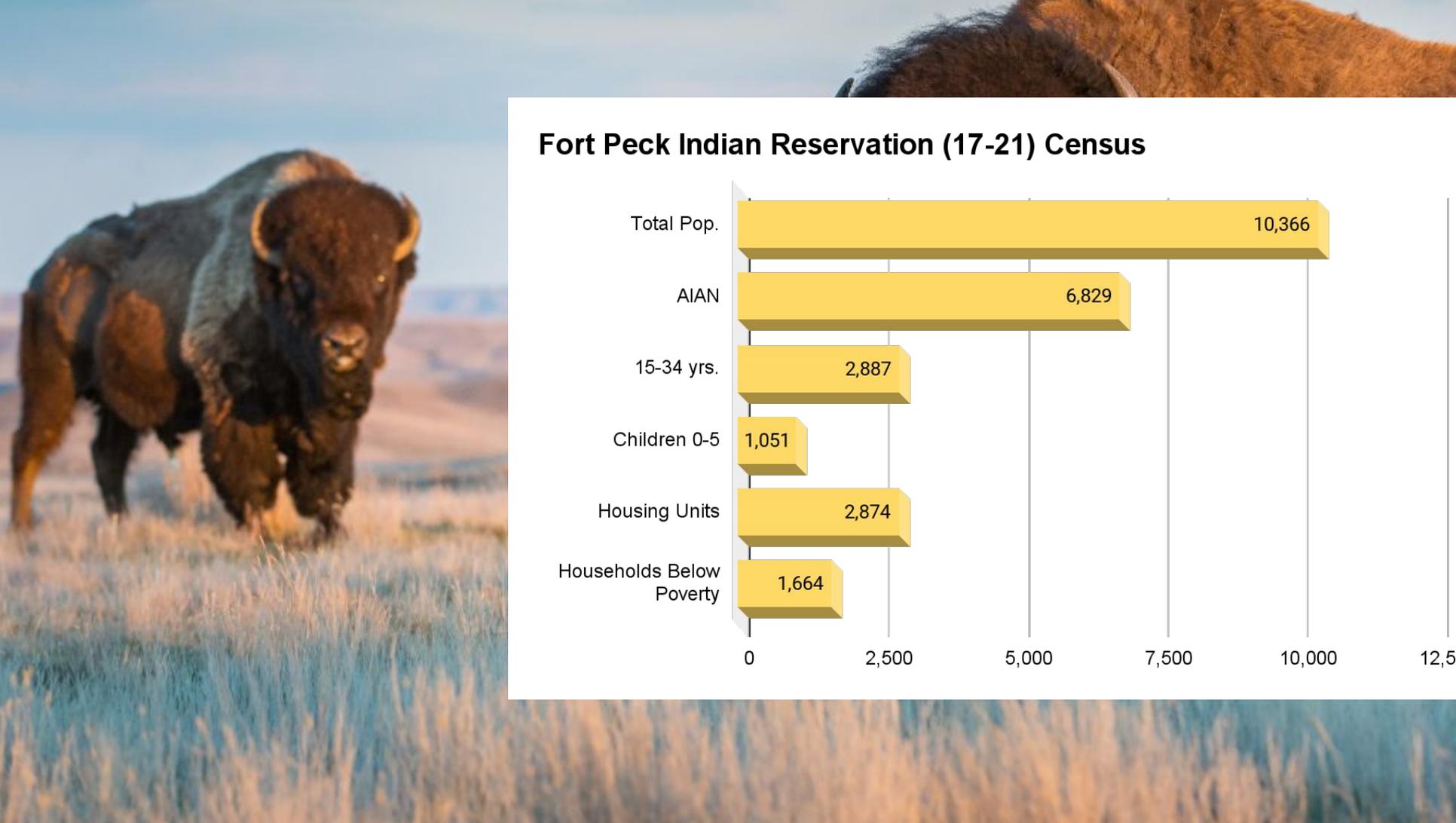


Fort Peck Indian Reservation

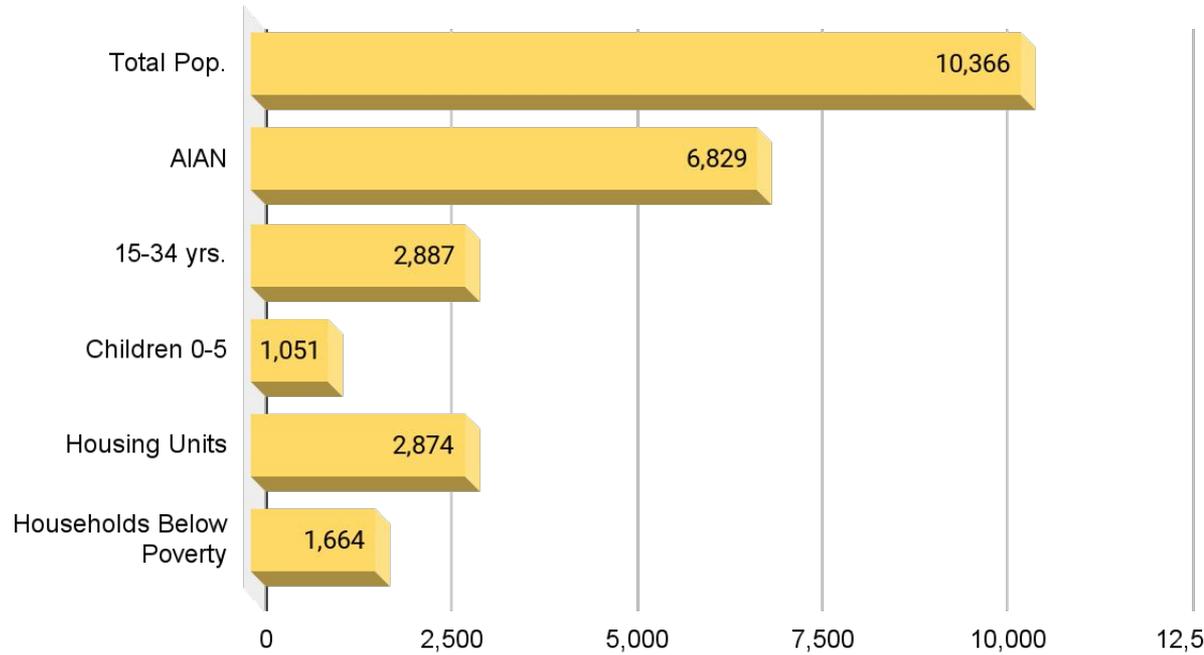
- 110 miles long and 40 miles wide, encompassing 2,093,318 acres (approximately 3,200 square miles).
- Around 12,000 Members and about 6,800 reside on or near the Reservation.
- Made up of 2 Indian Nations (Dakota & Nakota)



- Tribal Headquarters located in Poplar.
- Rural, 150 miles round-trip from the nearest Walmart.
- Major Transportation (US. HWY 2 & Amtrak).
- Tribal Community College available.



Fort Peck Indian Reservation (17-21) Census



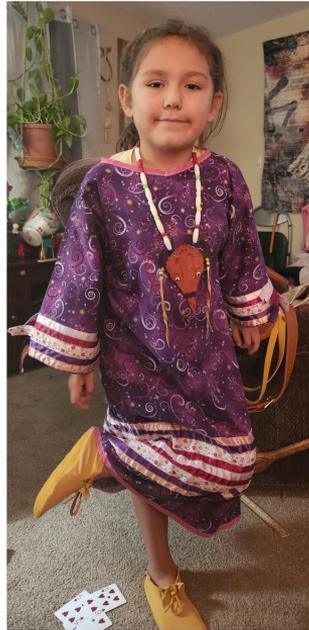
Early Childhood/Learning (Western Perspective)

- Early experiences 0-8 affect the development of the brain.
 - Positive factors, stable/ responsive relationships, safe/supportive environments.
- When full support is given to infants/children, they can reach critical milestones:
 - Third-grade reading proficiency
 - High school graduation and postsecondary education
 - Gainful employment
 - Lifetime physical and mental health and well-being
 - Avoidance of substance use disorder and crime



Early Childhood/Learning (Indigenous Perspective)

- Recognizing our Children are Gifts from Creator.
- We live by kinship system.
- Our creation stories are crucial to our identity as Native People.
- Grandparents are raising grandchildren.
- Historical/generational trauma affects the idea of “early learning” and their relationship to “education” and “school”.
- Indigenous Educators and Childcare Workers are crucial, to be reflected and seen is powerful.
- Having a cultural understanding from those who work with Tribal entities, is important.



Fort Peck Tribes Head Start

- Located on the Fort Peck Reservation.
- Head Start centers in 4 communities.
- Funded for 212 students.
- 95% served are Native students.
- Median Age of Teachers=63 years of age.
- Parent/Caregiver Engagement events.
- Majority feed into Public Schools, located on our Reservation.

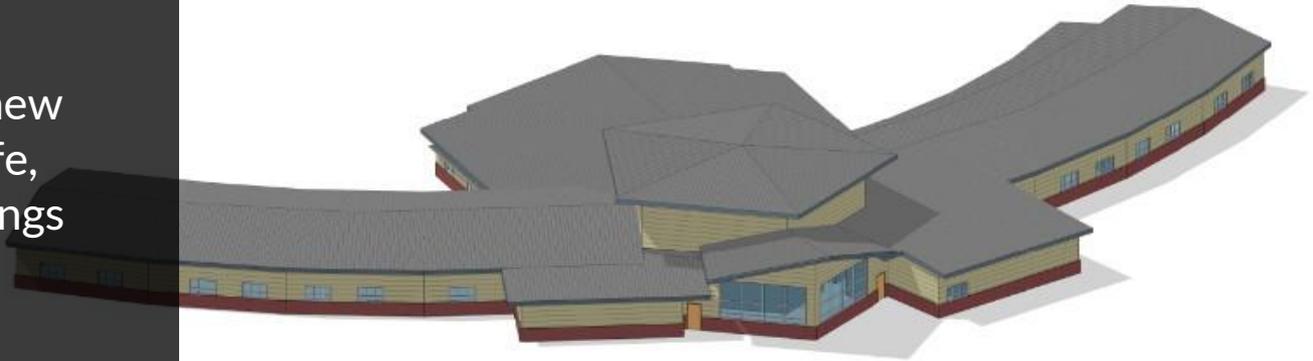


What have we done as a program and Tribe?

- Investing in our future by renovating & constructing new innovative, safe, healthy buildings for our Early Learners.



PERSPECTIVE - MASSING STUDY



PERSPECTIVE - MASSING STUDY

Creating an informed, competent workforce by collaborating with local TCCs, & other partners.

Integrating language and culture (Buffalo Curriculum, Native Elders, Community cultural events).

Rebuilding with purpose and intention.

Participating in Office of Head Start pilot program to increase Native data.z



Ways to support.

President Biden has prioritized relationships with Tribal Nations that are built on respect for Tribal sovereignty and self-governance, honoring federal trust and treaty responsibilities,

Implement an exception for all AIAN children in the early childcare setting to be allowed to participate in their educational settings as a part of their treaty rights.

Ways to support.

As part of the Biden/Harris, Initiated at the 2021 Tribal Nations Summit, the new White House guidance was developed with federal agencies, in consultation with Tribes and engagement with Indigenous peoples, to elevate Indigenous observations, oral and written knowledge, practices, and beliefs that promote environmental sustainability and the responsible stewardship of natural and cultural resources in federal policymaking.

Implement an exception for all AIAN to review current practices in early childcare policy and regulation to ensure that indigenous knowledge is implemented and embraced including CLASS instruments, Family Engagement Curricula, and Teaching Requirements.

Ways to support.

As part of the Biden/Harris, Initiated at the 2021 Tribal Nations Summit, ... (3)
Integration—integrating Native language revitalization in mainstream society, including in federal policies, and outlining the need to create Native language revitalization ecosystems;

Implement an exception for all AIAN to assert their Sovereign rights to identify secondary support for language speakers in the early childhood setting to begin integrating culture & language revitalization thereby reducing and mitigating language loss, poverty, and trauma immediately.

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Sources

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