
Rural & Indigenous Community Committee (AZ ACEs Consortium) Meeting Notes – April 1, 2026

Date: Wednesday, April 1, 2026

Time: 1:00–2:00 PM (Phoenix time)

Location: Zoom [RECORDING](#)

Meeting: Rural & Indigenous Community Committee (R&I CC), AZ ACEs Consortium

Chair/Facilitator: Casandra Stouder (Diné/Seminole)

1. Purpose of the Meeting

The committee gathered to:

- Re-ground in the purpose of the Rural & Indigenous Community Committee within the AZ ACEs Consortium.
- Reconnect as a **working group**, not only a speaker series.
- Share current work in our communities related to ACEs, healing, and resilience.
- Lift up resources, projects, and upcoming events.
- Begin clarifying the core activities the group wants to focus on through the rest of the year.

This committee exists so rural and Indigenous voices, experiences, and leadership shape how Arizona understands and responds to ACEs, trauma, and resilience.

2. Introductions & “What Are You Working On That Touches ACEs?”

Members introduced themselves by name, role, community/organization, and shared how their current work connects to ACEs. Below is a summary of what was shared verbally and in the chat (not a complete list of all attendees).

a. Trainings, Programs, and Direct Supports

- **Lindsey Real Bird – Rezilient, Navajo County**
 - Current work through the **Rezilient Program** includes:
 - Trauma-informed, culturally grounded programming for youth and families.
 - Workshops integrating coping skills—beading, storytelling, and creative expression—as ways to process stress and build resilience.

- Building protective factors such as cultural identity, strong relationships, and community support systems.
 - Preparing presentations for healthcare workers on ACEs and strength-based approaches from the **Montana Institute**, including:
 - Science of the Positive
 - Positive Community Norms
 - Science of Positive Experiences
 - Transformational Leadership
- **Randy Begay – San Carlos Unified School District, Support Coordinator (Gila County)**
 - Planning a **parent education event: “Understanding Adverse Childhood Trauma (ACEs)”**
 - **Date:** Thursday, April 9, 2026
 - **Time:** 4:00–6:00 PM
 - **Location:** Rice Elementary Cafeteria
 - **Contact:** Alexis Gilson – (928) 475-2315 ext. 8063
 - Focus will be on helping parents understand ACEs and trauma, with a culturally informed approach for San Carlos families.
- **Adrian Reznik – Advocate for Infant/Toddler Mental Health (Maricopa County)**
 - Retired and now focusing on advocacy for infant and toddler mental health.
 - Centering early relational health and prevention of ACEs in the earliest years of life.
- **Rhonda Etsitty – Regional Coordinator, AZ PBS Education & Community Impact Division (Coconino County)**
 - AZ PBS offers resources and programming for families and young children.
 - Through the **AZ Early Childhood Workforce Registry**, RHonda supports scholarships for early childhood educators.
 - This work connects to ACEs by:
 - Strengthening early childhood education quality.
 - Connecting families and providers with resources that support mental health, resilience, and prevention.
- **School-based Trauma Work – K–5 setting**
 - One school professional shared that they are essentially running a “trauma center” inside a K–5 elementary school without the level of support truly needed.
 - Illustrates the intensity of trauma and behavioral health needs in elementary schools and the importance of system-level support.

b. Youth, Family, and Community-Based Projects

- **Diane Stuart Englehardt – School Counselor, Heartland Ranch Elementary (Coolidge District, Pinal County)**
 - Leading a “**Peace Path**” project on campus:
 - Funded through DonorsChoose.
 - Students and community members paint river rocks with positive messages.
 - **Espinoza Landscaping** will donate 2–3 tons of river rock for the Peace Path.
 - Purpose:
 - Provide a visual, physical path for conflict resolution, emotional regulation, and peer support.
 - Help children develop social-emotional and problem-solving skills in a trauma-sensitive way.
- **Waylon – Hualapai, based in Flagstaff**
 - Working to present at the **Hualapai Youth Council conference**.
 - Topics he plans to share:
 - Tribal cultural values.
 - Economic development focused on his reservation.
 - Civic engagement and the importance of voting.
 - Reminded the group that “**silence is not awkward in tribal societies**”, naming important cultural differences in group process and communication.
- **Feather Beatty – Tribal Regional Specialist, First Things First**
 - Serving: Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Tonto Apache Tribe, and White Mountain Apache Tribe.
 - Shared information about the **PAXIS Institute**:
 - PAX Tools and related trainings are currently **free in communities through AHCCCS**.
 - Audiences include behavioral health professionals, youth-serving programs, community organizations, youth recreation, and faith communities.
 - PAX Tools supports trauma-informed, resilience-building strategies for both adults and children.

c. Training, Community of Practice, and Organizational Change

- **Andi Fetzner – Co-founder, Origins Training & The Resilience Learning Community (Show Low, Navajo County)**
 - Involved with AZ ACEs since 2014.
 - Current work includes:
 - Virtual and in-person foundational ACEs trainings.

- Supporting organizations to shift culture toward trauma-informed and resilience-centered practices through customized curriculum.
 - Hosting community workshops through **The Resilience Learning Community**, offering:
 - Conflict resolution
 - STAMP skills
 - Money management
 - Other resilience-building “entry points”
 - Creating communities of like-minded people engaged in trauma and resilience work.
- **LaToya Beatty – First Things First Tribal Regional Specialist**
 - Serving Ak-Chin Indian Community & San Carlos Apache Tribe (Gila County).
 - Working at the intersection of early childhood systems and tribal communities to reduce ACEs through strong early childhood supports.
- **Mike Gaffney – Regional Outreach Coordinator, Arizona PBS / First Things First College Scholarship**
 - Serving Navajo & Apache counties, Navajo Nation, and White Mountain Apache Tribe.
 - Working on outreach and scholarship supports that can positively impact long-term outcomes for youth and families.

d. Legal and Policy Work

- **Carol Park Aden – Family Law Attorney, Community Legal Services (Phoenix-based, multi-county)**
 - Advises and represents survivors of domestic violence, especially in custody cases.
 - Highlighted the importance of legal supports and policy work as part of addressing ACEs and intergenerational trauma.
 - Shared a bill of interest:
 - **HB 2995** – Relevant to families, DV, and/or child welfare issues (members expressed interest in following and understanding this bill more deeply).

3. Resources Shared in the Chat

Participants shared links to several resources and events:

- **PAXIS Institute (PAX Tools, PAX GBG, etc.)**
Website: <https://paxis.org/>

- Free training currently available in many communities through AHCCCS.
 - **Peace Path – DonorsChoose Projects (Heartland Ranch Elementary, Diane Englehardt)**
 - Initial project:
https://www.donorschoose.org/project/peace-path/9243791/?utm_source=dc&utm_medium=directlink&utm_campaign=project&utm_term=teacher_3567055&rf=directlink-dc-2026-04-project-teacher_3567055&challengeid=22016018
 - New DonorsChoose grant:
<https://www.donorschoose.org/sl/6Amqtrees8>
 - **Comedy and Resilience Event – The Resilience Learning Community (shared by Andi Fetzner)**
 - Event information:
<https://resiliencelearningcommunity.com/event/comedy-and-resilience/>
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4. Emerging Themes & Group Priorities

Across introductions and chat, several themes emerged regarding what is most useful for this group going forward:

1. Story and Practice Sharing

- Ongoing space for members to bring:
 - What's working (programs, cultural practices, school-based strategies, etc.).
 - Real challenges they are facing in their own communities and organizations.

2. Culturally Grounded Tools and Trainings

- Sharing:
 - Indigenous-centered ACEs and NEAR science materials.
 - Training opportunities (e.g., PAX Tools, Montana Institute frameworks, Origins Training, AZ PBS resources).
 - Curricula and tools that are trauma-informed, resilience-focused, and culturally relevant.

3. Support and Problem-Solving

- Using part of each meeting as a consultation space, where a member can bring a specific situation and the group can:
 - Offer ideas, resources, and connections.
 - Highlight promising approaches from other tribal and rural communities.

4. Policy and Systems Advocacy

- Tracking key policy issues (e.g., **HB 2995**) that affect families, survivors of DV, and child welfare systems.
- Clarifying what messages the committee wants to lift up to the AZ ACEs Consortium about:
 - Needs and gaps in rural and Indigenous communities.
 - Successful models that should be supported and scaled.

These themes will help shape upcoming agendas and how the Chair reports out to the AZ ACEs Consortium.

5. Closing & Next Steps

- Members expressed appreciation for the shared space and ongoing connection.
- The committee will continue to meet **on the first Wednesday of each month from 1:00–2:00 PM (Phoenix time)** via Zoom.
- Future meetings will:
 - Include time for updates, resource sharing, and problem-solving.
 - Continue building a “living list” of community strengths, programs, and initiatives connected to ACEs, healing, and resilience in rural and Indigenous communities.

For questions, updates, or items you’d like on a future agenda, please contact:

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Chair, Rural & Indigenous Community Committee

AZ ACEs Consortium

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End of Meeting Notes – April 1, 2026
