

## Rural & Indigenous Community Subcommittee

### Arizona ACEs Consortium

Meeting Notes – May 6, 2026 | 1:00–2 PM (America/Phoenix)

Meeting Recording:

[https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/9\\_3j86QinkB1StUOG52q52bBWKEUu6hElj9nVgjhk3iDjwWXfHjailjr1eSlqCgy.tr7HwEkny2Pgeldi?pwd=DEOw1-vtS0mhOaSpwgAAIAAAAF Tp4BNnXIR61iKt0D9dw7ABgZ\\_XNsCxkej8CQWb5AyoYK-IZ8zTLMZK9B37CBoGMTAwMDAwNA](https://us06web.zoom.us/rec/share/9_3j86QinkB1StUOG52q52bBWKEUu6hElj9nVgjhk3iDjwWXfHjailjr1eSlqCgy.tr7HwEkny2Pgeldi?pwd=DEOw1-vtS0mhOaSpwgAAIAAAAF Tp4BNnXIR61iKt0D9dw7ABgZ_XNsCxkej8CQWb5AyoYK-IZ8zTLMZK9B37CBoGMTAwMDAwNA)

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### 1. Welcome, Introductions, & Check-In

1. Facilitator: Casandra “Cas” Stouder (AZ ACEs, Navajo/Seminole), joining from Yavapai territories (Prescott Valley).
2. Cas acknowledged the busy end-of-school-year period and expressed gratitude for members’ continued commitment to the subcommittee.
3. Brief check-in with participants about current workload and transitions, especially in school and early childhood settings.

### 2. Grounding & Meditation (Learning to Honor Our Rhythms and Cycles)

1. Cas led the group in a guided grounding exercise using Sarah Blondin’s meditation “Learning to Honor Our Rhythms and Cycles.”
2. Meditation focus:
  1. Honoring cycles of activity and rest.
  2. Permission to slow down and listen to the body.
  3. Reconnecting with personal rhythms as a foundation for resilience.
3. Meditation link (shared in chat):

<https://youtu.be/aFBX1S-ACuk?si=SWx9bSGVEYclCOF8>

Reflections from participants:

1. Michael related the meditation to gardening cycles (planting peas and potatoes), seeing parallels with growth, rest, and renewal.
2. Diane shared inspiration to create a “Be the Tree” yoga/grounding activity or grant for students focused on self-regulation and connection.
3. Judy noted the meditation was deeply relaxing and almost sleep-inducing, reinforcing the need for rest.

### 3. Contact Information / Networking

Participants shared contact information and roles to support collaboration across regions and systems:

1. Sandy Quintanilla – Dependency Program Coordinator, Coconino County Juvenile Court
  1. Email: SQuintanilla@courts.az.gov
2. Judy Livingston – Education Specialist (coach, trainer, monitor), CPLC AZ
  1. Counties: Maricopa, Pinal, Cochise
  2. Email: judy.livingston@cplc.org
3. Feather Beatty – Tribal Regional Specialist, First Things First
  1. Regions: Fort McDowell Yavapai Nation, Tonto Apache Tribe, White Mountain Apache Tribe
  2. Email: fbeatty@firstthingsfirst.org
4. Michael Gaffney – Regional Outreach Coordinator (Northeast AZ), Arizona PBS
  1. Focus: First Things First College Scholarships & AZ Early Childhood Workforce Registry
  2. Website: <https://azpbs.org/education>
  3. Email: Michael.j.gaffney@asu.edu | Phone: 480-532-5550

Additional participants included Adrian, Marlo, Diane Englehardt, and others.

### 4. Discussion: Integrating ACEs and Early Relational Health in Schools

Key topics and perspectives:

1. Screening & Data Collection in School Settings
  1. Diane raised the idea of including mental health/ACEs-related questions in early 45-day screenings for students, to better understand and support children's needs.
  2. Adrian expressed concern about potential stigmatization and how sensitive ACEs-related data might be used or misunderstood.
  3. Judy highlighted that many families are not familiar with ACEs and may not know what is important to share; she stressed the need for careful communication and education for families.
  4. Group acknowledged the importance of:
    1. Trauma-informed, non-stigmatizing approaches.
    2. Ensuring data is used to support, not label, children and families.
    3. Considering how questions are asked and who has access to responses.
2. Existing Surveys and Data Sources

1. Sandy mentioned the Arizona Youth Survey as a potential data source related to risk factors and protective factors.
2. Diane shared that some districts may no longer be participating in the Arizona Youth Survey, which may reduce available data in certain areas.
3. Early Relational Health & Head Start Practices
  1. Adrian emphasized early relational health—the quality of early caregiving relationships—as foundational for resilience and a key frame for understanding ACEs.
  2. Judy described Head Start procedures:
    1. Social service staff work closely with families.
    2. Systems are in place to identify needs and connect families with resources, though capacity and rural access can be challenging.
  3. Participants discussed the balance between screening, relationship-building, and respecting family privacy.

## 5. Indigenous and Rural Service Access Challenges

Cas and others named specific challenges facing Indigenous and rural communities, including:

1. Historical Trauma & Institutional Distrust
  1. Long histories of harm from government, medical, educational, and child welfare systems contribute to reluctance to engage with services.
  2. Importance of building trust, using culturally grounded approaches, and centering community voice.
2. Rural Access Barriers
  1. Long travel distances to prenatal and postnatal care.
  2. Limited local providers and mental health supports.
  3. Economic barriers (transportation, time off work, childcare).
  4. Reduced availability of specialized services in rural regions.
3. Strength-Based Example – White Mountain Apache Programs
  1. Feather shared about Thrive Birth to 5 and Resilient programs:
    1. Use crafts, group sharing, and family-centered activities.
    2. Create spaces for healing, connection, and supporting caregivers.
    3. Highlight the power of culturally responsive, community-based programming.

## 6. Cultural Practices and Trauma-Informed Models

1. Cas connected Indigenous circle practices—gathering in circles, sharing stories, relational accountability—to trauma-healing frameworks.
2. She referenced the neurosequential model (e.g., “regulate, relate, reason” / “rest, relate, respond”) and pointed out alignment with many Indigenous ways of knowing and being.
3. Cas introduced IndigenEyez (I-N-D-I-G-E-N-E-Y-E-Z) as an example of Indigenous-centered leadership and facilitation:
  1. Website shared in chat: [indigeneyez.com](http://indigeneyez.com)
  2. Focus: strengthen connection, ignite hope, inspire change through interactive, arts-based, and land-based approaches.
  3. Offers half-day workshops and Indigenous facilitation tools that can inform how we convene and design community activities.

## 7. Data Sovereignty & Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs)

1. Marlo (First Things First) highlighted Navajo Nation data sovereignty:
  1. Data about tribal communities is not publicly shared without appropriate approvals and processes.
  2. Importance of respecting tribal protocols around data, evaluation, and research.
2. Marlo and others emphasized Positive Childhood Experiences (PCEs) as protective factors that buffer ACEs:
  1. Strong, supportive family relationships.
  2. Feeling safe at home, school, and in the community.
  3. Connection to culture, language, and traditional practices.
  4. Opportunities for play, creativity, and joy.

## 9. Next Steps & Closing

1. Cas thanked participants for:
  1. Engaging in the grounding meditation.
  2. Sharing candidly about ACEs, PCEs, data, and Indigenous and rural realities.
  3. Bringing forward program examples and grant-related ideas (e.g., Be the Tree yoga, peace path, Thrive/Resilient models).

### Next Meeting:

1. Date: Wednesday, June 3, 2026

2. Time: 1:00–2 PM (America/Phoenix)
3. Cas email-invited everyone to bring pen and paper to the next meeting for a short activity at the beginning.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 2:02 PM.