

Family and Community Engagement in Young Children's Native Language Learning and Development
Family Engagement, Language, and Literacy Webinar Series

Dr. Christine Sims: Well, good morning. This is Dr. Christine Sims from the University of New Mexico here in Albuquerque. We'd like to welcome you to this webinar, the first of two webinars that we have developed. And, this is our first time, this is my first time doing a webinar, but I hope you will find the information that we have put together helpful to you all. To start off, we have a chat box with a question for everybody to think about, and not that there is any one right answer, but certainly a question that, I think, might jog our thoughts about how we think about our tribal languages.

And so, the question in the chat box is, "What does a healthy tribal language look like in a community or in a family?" And so, that can mean different things to different people. I know, from the perspective that I have heard from my own language community is how we think about our languages is very important, and we often talk about our languages as living entities, that they are not something abstract or sitting just in a book, that the healthiness of languages is when we hear them spoken, when we hear children, families, parents, elders using these as communication and as a way to engage one another in good talking relationships, good communication relationships. Those are perhaps some things that people think of as aspects of a healthy language. So, we just put that question out to everyone to think about, and as we go along through this webinar, there will be opportunities for people to post their thoughts in the chat rooms, and hopefully we will also then be able to address some of the questions you may have as we go along in this webinar. All right.

Joshua Sparrow: Thank you, Dr. Sims. I am Joshua Sparrow, the co-principal investigator for the National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement for the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care, and I want to welcome everybody who is logging on now to this webinar which is the first of two webinars on children's Native language learning and the role of engaging families and communities in children's Native language learning. The next webinar will be on May 9, so a week from today. I want to start by thanking all of you for joining, and for the work that you do, and I want to thank our presenters who will introduce themselves after we review the logistics with you. We are very fortunate to have a wonderful group of experts in this area from a number of communities around the country.

As you all know, there are more than 560 federally recognized tribes and many beyond that that aren't, and each one of them has its own culture and many, many have their own languages and they are all unique. So, although we cannot represent all of them in this webinar or next week's webinar, we have some wonderful experts from a number of communities who will share their experiences about engaging families and children and communities in Native language learning, looking at the opportunities and challenges for engaging families and communities in children's Native language learning, not because it could ever be done the same way anywhere else, but with a hope that it may spark your creativity and inspire new ideas or affirm the ideas that you are already familiar with and working with. Now, it is my privilege to ask each of our presenters today to introduce themselves, and we will start with Dr. Christine Sims from the Acoma Pueblo and the University of New Mexico who kicked us off just a few moments ago. And then, we will hear from our other panelists.

Dr Sims: Good morning, again. My name is Christine Sims, and as Dr. Sparrow mentioned, I am from Acoma Pueblo here in New Mexico. I am an Associate Professor here in the College of Education at UNM and I also direct the American Indian language policy research and teacher training center. So, welcome everybody.

Joshua: Mike?

Mike Richardson Haliwa-Saponi: [Tribal language] I want to welcome everybody today. I am honored to be here. I will not be presenting as some of the other panelists are doing, but we will be having discussions about some of those things that are talked about today. I am honored that there are people on this panel that I work with on a regular basis, and we do presentations and summits across the country. I am the national American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start collaboration director, and part of that entails language revitalization, which is something that is a priority for Region XI, but we are hoping those who are not from Region XI will take this back to your communities. Over 50 percent of our tribal children are not under Region XI, so a lot of this information that we are talking about today for parent engagement, community engagement can be used in any community. And so, we hope you get something from this. Language revitalization has become a huge thing. It brings out communities together. It improves the life of our people. It connects us to who we are. It has shown that it is a huge factor in working with special needs children, with children with disabilities, in behavior, in respect to elders and people that are older, and in respect to each other. So, there are a lot of benefits to language, and the people that are on this panel, I feel, they bring a lot to this, as well as the panelists coming up in the next panel next week. We started out as being one webinar, but there was just too much information to have within one, and now it is spread out over two webinars, and really, that's not even enough time for this, but we are hoping that some areas can be touched on that will impact everybody that's on this call. I was looking at the general chat and people from all over the country are coming into this, so we feel like there are things in this that can impact everyone, not only just our tribal children, but just our children in general. And, the information that comes from -- Dr. Sims is an icon in language. I am always honored to work with her, and then having Lana there at Jemez and the work that they have done brings a unique perspective to this panel. And then, the thing of developing teachers and adults who can speak the language so that our children can be taught is something that Howard will bring with his discussion today. So, we are very honored, and I thank everybody for being on this call and I thank our panelists again, and Dr. Sparrow, and those that have worked with him for putting this together today.

Joshua: Thank you, Mike. And now, if we can go to the next slide, I am going to ask a Lana Garcia and Howard Paden, if you would introduce yourselves please.

Lana Garcia: Good afternoon. My name is Lana Garcia. I am from the Pueblo of Jemez, and I have the privilege and honor of managing the Walatowa Head Start Language Immersion program. We are in our 5th year of full language immersion implementation, and I am just grateful to have this opportunity to share our journey with everyone that's on this webinar and to just offer any assistance that I can provide just from the experience that we have had for the past 5 years. So, thank you everyone for joining us. [Tribal language]

Howard Paden: [Tribal language] Hello, I am Howard Paden. I work at the Cherokee Nation Mentor/Apprentice Program, and it's really a pleasure to be involved in this. I see a lot of people in the general chat. It's good to hear from everybody, and I am hoping that we capture some of the things that we talked about in preparation of this webinar. It was some of the best conversations, I believe, that a lot of us have had being able to be in touch with the other language warriors throughout the United States and their different tribes and their tribal jurisdictions. So, it was good and I am I am hoping that if we can capture that itself, then I believe that this will be quite a treat.

Joshua: Thank you, Howard. For those who are just joining us, I am Joshua Sparrow, co-principal investigator of the National Center for Parent, Family, and Community Engagement for the Office of Head Start and the Office of Child Care, and this is the first of two webinars on Family and Community Engagement in Children's Native language learning. And we have the extraordinary privilege of having leaders in this field from a number of communities around the country. Dr. Christin Sims, Mike Richardson, Lana Garcia, and Howard Paden, who just introduced themselves. And it has just been an

enormous gift to be able to work together with this group to put together this webinar and next week's webinar for you, and I am just delighted to see how many people are joining us in the general chat and from all over the country. We have structured this webinar so that we will now move to laying the groundwork for engaging families and communities in children's Native language learning with an Introduction by Dr. Sims.

There then will be time for a discussion, and we will try to respond at that time to your questions in the chat box. We will then turn to Lana Garcia, who will tell us about her work at Jemez Pueblo, which has been a very important model for many. And again, will have time for questions and comments after her presentation of her work in her community, and then we will turn to Howard Paden who will talk about his important work in Cherokee Nation in engaging families and the community in children's Native language learning. Our learning objectives are to learn about the opportunities and challenges for engaging families and communities in young children's Native language learning and development. And, as we have said, these will have enormous variations from one community to another, and that's why another learning objective is to learn from the experiences of a range of Native communities, as well as understanding that there are many others that we would love to in the future as well, and just are not able to in the time that two webinars allow us. And finally, to identify strategies for engaging families and communities based on the experiences that our presenters will share with us today.

So, if we can go to the next slide, please. This is Head Start's Program Performance Standard with regard to tribal language revitalization, which I am sure many of you are familiar with, and let's now go to the next, and I will ask Dr. Sims to come back and to lead us in this introduction of laying the foundations for this work. Thank you. Dr Sims: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Sparrow. Well, one of the key questions and one of the key issues that we have been discussing, and certainly it's a part of the discussion going on in many of our tribal communities is the importance of Native language learning, especially among young children, and what we wanted to talk about today was why the development of language is such an important benefit, not only to children, but also their families, their parents, their relations, and their communities, but also the community as a whole. And, if we think about native language development among young children, I think it's also from the perspective of thinking 'How is it that we expect our children to grow as respectful, you know, care. People who -- People who, children who grow up to be people who are caring, who are respectful, and who eventually will be contributing members to our own communities. And so, the topic of child language development is so critical, especially when we think about it in terms of also cultural survival, because as many of us know and understand, you know, coming from tribal communities, we know that the two are intricately linked - language and culture. And so, these areas of development for Native children are especially important when we consider some of the realities, actually, of our languages today.

So, in this next slide, I am going to talk a little bit about the status of most of our Native languages today, and again, this might be preaching to the choir, we know that most all languages are in some stage of being challenged by a more dominant language which surrounds us, which in our case mostly is English. But the status of Native languages being learnt by children in today's world, we know, is in a very fragile state. I believe, even as early as early 1990s when Michael Krauss did his survey on the status of language, his estimate was that out of something like 175 Native languages in the US alone, that there were probably no more than maybe 20-25 languages in which children were actually learning these languages as their first language, meaning they were learning these at home even before entering formal schooling, and as many of us have come to realize in our own respective communities, the variation in terms of which generations still use the language, still understand it and still speak it, there is a wide variation of that in all of our communities. And so, one of the things I know that in my work with different language communities here in New Mexico, as well as in different parts of the US, we know that these efforts to

reintroduce Native language use has become one of the top priorities in our communities, and many of our efforts to revitalize and re-strengthen our languages as communicative languages have depended on getting to the younger generations in our communities. I think most of us would agree that if these languages are to last, then the speakers have to be generated from within our communities. So, we see many efforts today, there are different kinds - there are community based efforts, they might be school-based efforts, and of course more and more we are seeing efforts being targeted at the early childhood level, before children enter formal schooling.

So, the benefits to children, families, and communities are wide and broad. It's not just the idea that children learn phrases in the language, but there is much more to that, and I believe, like I said earlier, that the connection between culture and language is one of the key areas, because it is through cultural learning and the language that goes with that that helps guide children's learning and their development, and it also is the language that you use is also embedded in how we rear our children, how we nurture them, and how we go about teaching them, and those are all benefits that come with language teaching being done with cultural learning in mind as well. There are other benefits and Dr. Sparrow will probably talk about this later on in the webinar, but there are cognitive benefits meaning children's brain development, and we now have good research that shows that language learning lights up those synapses in the brain when children are learning new things. There is also the behavioral, the healthy and mental benefits of children learning about who they are, who they identify with in terms of their communities, how their social well-being gets developed as children are taught in a language. And, all of those benefits accrue to children in those early critical years of development before they even start formal schooling. And so, this is, kind of, the crux of what we are going to be talking about today.

So, one of the things that we know in terms of our languages is that we all come from unique culture and language backgrounds and as I said earlier, all of our language communities are at different points, if you can imagine a an imaginary line from communities that that are struggling because maybe there aren't as many fluent speakers left left as there once were, maybe at the end of this imaginary continuum is perhaps communities that still do have a good number of fluent speakers, especially among the adult parent generation. And then, somewhere in between some of our communities are at different stages where we may have different age groups who still use the language, but may perhaps not be finding that in younger age groups. So, there is a variety, there is a diversity. But one thing we know is that there are common challenges all of us face in terms of keeping our languages alive, and as well there are opportunities for children to develop their language learning, and to do this in the years in which they are at their most critical time when children develop all of these important skills. That's where we should also be paying close attention to help Native language learning and development takes place. Now, from our own cultural background, we also know that there are diverse perspectives about how we think of children, not only their development, but also how they go about learning things. And so, many of the most recent kinds of research that has been done by Native scholars including folks like Mary Eunice from Romero-Little from Arizona State University, who took a closer look at the way children, tribal children learn, and a lot of it involves observation a lot of it involves participation with adults, a lot of it has to do with observing mentors and things that happen in and around them. These are all different ways in which, you could probably say traditionally, many of our community taught young children. And so, some of those different perspectives may differ in some ways from... mainstream kinds of thinking about what we need to do with children when they are very young.

So, we shouldn't forget about those cultural foundations in terms of how we look at our children and how they learn, and how then we should teach them. There are also diverse cultural and linguistic practices, meaning that all of our communities have very unique features about how we use our languages. I'll try to remember to mention some of these later on when we talk about different ways that children are

socialized into our cultural backgrounds. But every culture has these unique cultural ways in which they use language, and children learn that by observing us, and they learn those ways that speakers use language by having the opportunity to hear that language being used. In all of our communities, we also know that we have various cultural and language resources. Some of our communities may be fortunate in still having fluent speakers and what I would call cultural experts, meaning our own grandmas and grandpas, or maybe our aunts and uncles that still are very much grounded in the language and the culture. But we also know that, again, like I said, in some communities maybe because it's just how we are all spread out perhaps in some communities or maybe we are now finding more and more families in urban settings. Well, all of these are variables in how available cultural and language resources are to our various families. There are also different approaches that are being used in different community context in terms of language teaching. And so, that may vary from.. school kinds of efforts where you have, you know, classes, or for children, or in some cases, which you will hear about later, cases where a full immersion school has been developed for children.

There might be dedicated times when children and families come together to do things in which language is part of the learning that happens. All kinds of different ways in which our tribes have tried to begin to address this issue of language teaching for young children and for families. I want to talk a little bit here about learning tribal languages because I think some of the things that we often think about in terms of how people learn language are often influenced either by our own experiences in learning a foreign language or perhaps our only, perhaps exposure in terms learning another language besides our own Native languages have been, you know, influenced by a lot of what we see are being done in school settings. But what we know about the language learning process, and we know now, and I wish that this would have been the case you know, 100 years ago, but we know now, first of all, that learning one or more languages is not a detriment to children's development. In fact, it's enhanced by having the opportunity to learn more than one language. And, actually, this is quite normal around the world in which other countries and other cultures, children are learning multiple languages - 2-3 languages even before they start formal schooling. And so, in our history of how, unfortunately, you know, in the past, especially through government efforts back in the 1800s, the idea of being able to use your Native language was something that was not honored or respected, and in fact the very opposite happened where attempts were made to squash Native languages. And so, what we know today is that language learning can be a benefit to young children.

It is something that happens naturally, especially when we think about our own children and how they learned their first language, whatever that was, it might have been English, it might have been a Native language, it might of been both in some cases, but what we do know is that children acquire that not from somebody sitting down and teaching them a lesson, a lot of the acquisition of language happens in natural context, and this is what's important to remember about native languages, and when we teach children, how is it that we can provide that kind of setting in which children will be exposed to hearing the language being used. We know that that process of coming together with people who are speakers of the language is very important because they are the models for how language is used in our language communities. That sociocultural aspect has to do with the fact that much of the way, fluent speakers of Native languages have learned their languages is primarily being in those contexts - different contexts, and where they were able to hear fluent speakers using language for different purposes. They might have heard it for informal means, meaning how you greet somebody that you see you know, in the village, or in passing, or on the road. It could be informal in terms of how you, greet a group of speakers who are from your community, how you take leave - just common everyday things that take place in community. Families are also the primary place, traditionally, where languages will be heard, especially if there were multiple generations coming together. Those would be some of the sociocultural contexts in which language would be learnt. Let me also add just one more point here. It also refers to the more formal aspects where children - young

people - might have heard or have been observant of language used in more formal settings like ceremonial use or traditional practices.

So, what this comes down to is that then children need these opportunities to hear and learn to use language in different ways. And, those are some of the principles of how we need to remember in terms of how we go about teaching language. There are many different communities who are doing many different things to ensure that young children are hearing and using these languages, and many of the examples that I have observed, and also what you will hear today, are about how these efforts actually support these concepts, these critical important concepts of being able to interact with adult speakers, providing opportunities for children to hear and observe that language being used, and then as they watch, as they listen, as they interact with speakers, they begin to use it themselves. So, this is one thing that we have seen in many of the efforts that are being made to establish these... language revitalization efforts in ways that make sense and that are appropriate for young children. So, one of the guest speakers that we have as a part of our panel today is, Lana Toya-Garcia, who you heard earlier in the introductions, and what she is going to do is to share with us some of the experiences with, the Walatowa Immersion Program that was established in Jemez Pueblo here in New Mexico. So, I am going to go to the next slide and let Lana, who is the director there of the Head Start Language Immersion Program, introduce herself some more, about her work, but also what's transpired in their work on the Towa language. Lana?

Lana: Good afternoon, everyone. Again, my name is Lana Garcia from the Pueblo of Jemez. Jemez is also known as Walatowa. We call it Walatowa, which means "This is the place." It's located about 50 miles northwest of Albuquerque. We have a tribal population of just under 4000 people. Very small. And, of which, 2500 actually live on Jemez land. Head Start has been in our community since the late 60s, and of course its purpose was to teach our children English and sadly that. And, I think a lot of tribal communities who do have Head Start programs and who have had these programs for that amount of time - since the 60s have accomplished this goal. And, today, our Head Start program is very different from when it first started. All the conversations around language, I think, first started in 1999 when a community session was held and it involved children, teen, youth, adult community members who were asked the question 'What do you envision for Jemez?' And, as far as education goes, language and culture were a really big part of the education. And so, and then in 2006, a language survey was conducted and that revealed that 80 percent of the population was fluent, but when they took a closer look at the data, at the ages of children, they saw a decrease in the fluency with Head Start aged children. And so, that began the efforts of really strengthening the language in that age group, and so, you know, that's been about 14 years since these conversations started and you know, we definitely, you know, 80 percent is a lot but we are still not exempt from the influences of English creeping into our communities and affecting our language and so, today we really see a shift in children's language. And when we started, I came on the scene in 2007, and it was really nice to come across this data, and really to just work with how what we need to do as a program to strengthen the language in our young children.

And, what really helped us was that the PhotoVoice Project, we had the opportunity of taking part in this research project with Dr. Eunice Romero. This was in 2008, and the PhotoVoice project really helped us to understand the socialization process of our young Jemez children. And, from the PhotoVoice project, we learned about- that there were 7 cultural learning foundations that children were taught from parents, from grandparents, from family members, and some.. the community, because the language, as Dr. Sims was saying earlier, we really feel that our language is alive and it's in the community. And so, the seven things that were identified that children needed to learn in order to be Jemez were cultural knowledge, gender specific knowledge, values, principles, spiritual beliefs, ceremonial knowledge, and our Jemez language. And, all these 7 things that I mentioned, they are not taught in the classrooms; these things are taught by they are taught within the family by, family members that are surrounding our children, and

also within the context of the community. And so, what we have really tried to develop in Jemez is an early childhood education that is traditional and authentic, and an education that honors the learning and teaching of Jemez children, and of course it is community-based. Through this process we have also had to focus on our professional development because, you know, in the beginning we all didn't, when we started, not everyone felt comfortable in, in teaching the language, I mean, and so we really had to focus on our professional development for our teachers and our entire staff because one thing that we have really learned is that this is a teamwork approach - it has to be. We cannot just leave this on the teachers because the children, our children in our building, we have our cooks there, our bus drivers, and they interact with the children on a daily basis.

So, it does not make sense for this to just be a classroom thing, it has to be a school-wide thing. And so, the professional development has always included the entire staff, from cooks, bus drivers, to our coordinators, and even to our maintenance crew, which is also, which they are not even a part of the education department, they're a part of a different department but, they honor what we are doing and so they make a point as well to speak the language to our children. And, when we first discussed about transitioning our program from dual language to full language immersion, there were a lot of opportunities where we had to gather our parents, - gather our traditional leaders, our tribal council community members through language forums, through parent orientations, through tribal council meetings. We have had to be transparent, we have had to really just educate them on the benefits of our children speaking more than one language, bringing those experts to our community and sharing their knowledge with our parents, our staff, our traditional leaders, you know, that has been one of the key things, I think, that is critical is that you really have to bring your families along with this language immersion program. And, what we've really developed is opportunities where families can be involved in our program through our parents, our Fatherhood and Motherhood nights that we have, our Policy Council and parent center meetings that we have, we really stress speaking the language, staying in the language, and we also ask families that are, that have English speaking family members to bring others to translate. I also use a PowerPoint and try to put everything up there where parents or whoever is there can follow the event from start to end, really, just again to protect our language, and we also want to make sure that no one is feeling left out. Another thing, I think, that was critical for us is getting the support of our Tribal Council - Tribal Council. So, back in 2012, they passed a resolution for us to become a full-language immersion program. And, that support from them has been so critical for us because for a lot of tribal communities, they have tribal elections every year. And so with this resolution in place it's really protected the work that we're doing, so that no matter who comes into office, the work that we're doing is protected and it continues.

So, that's also another, I think, pretty rare thing for us that I don't come across many communities where there's a resolution of sorts in place to support language programs or Head Start programs. So, that's really important. So, one of the conversations that we've also had has to do with once our children graduate, you know, where are they going to go? How are they going to be supported in other schools? And, you know, we've been presented with funding opportunities that have allowed us to have these conversations with our schools that are within our community. Children have about three choices where they can send their children once they graduate from Head Start. And so, it was really important for us to get those kindergarten teachers, first grade, second grade teachers, to include them in our professional development as well, because, like I said, once our children leave Head Start with the wonderful language and culture education, and they move on to, let's say, to our BIE school or our charter school, we want to make sure that the support continues, and that they have the resources to continue to support families and children in maintaining their language. And so, the education department -- our education department has been really just hands-on about, you know, providing professional development

opportunities for all our educators within our community. We meet about three times a year. We have planning days.

Our education retreat is coming up in June, where all the teachers are there, and we offer language and culture sessions. I know Dr. Sparrow also provided some professional development for our teachers, as well. So, you know, this language immersion approach really has to involve your whole community, I think, and that has been so helpful for us. It's wonderful when -- Last week I attended a Child Abuse Prevention conference that was hosted by the Social Services program. And, in the beginning of their program, they mentioned that they were going to be speaking in the language and that they would provide, you know, also the translating as well. And, that was to support and honor our Jemez language. And, I think that our Head Start program has a lot to do with this whole change in attitude with our language, and also know that, you know, our program has also had impacts on the Head Start rules and regulations, the performance standards which also now support tribal programs to have to incorporate language and culture with whatever the community needs. So, currently, right now, with our funding agencies, we're working on really showing or demonstrating our children's progress and how to do that in a way that honors and protects our children and our families, because I think when you're talking about assessing language, you have to be really careful, you know, I mean, with what, 5 years of doing this, I've had to change the way that we are assessing our language because we don't want to label children, we don't want to hurt parents. I think this ground that we're on, that we're working on now with developing these assessments has to be really thought out and really has to include our parents and everyone, again. You know, we're working with Dr. Sims right now on, really, developing those assessments, and it's there, we see it. Success for us is really seeing our children be contributing members of our community, and we see that. In Jemez, we have a very active traditional calendar where lots of opportunities are provided to bring the community together for our dances, our ceremonies, and within those ceremonies, you see our children. Our children are very active and involved. And, these are the things that we want to be able to share with our funding agencies, and show that our children are very confident and that they're proud of who they are, and it comes across in their singing and their dancing. I mean, we recently just performed for some guests that came to Jemez to observe our children, and we have to develop more dance regalia because everybody wants to dance. I mean, it's just a wonderful thing to see the children learning and really just being proud of who they are. You know, I did mention all of these already. Yeah, I really -- Dr Sims: So, Lana, one of the things that you mentioned and you just, kind of, shared with the audience. In the beginning, not everyone was on board, right?

Lana: Right. Dr Sims: And, even your parents were a real were a little bit hesitant, no,

Lana: Definitely. Dr Sims: when you all made the decision to go to transition to a full Towa immersion program. So, do you remember the story you relayed to me once about the mother who was reluctant to - about her child being in the program?

Lana: Yes. So, I had a mom who dropped off her child in the classroom, and she's not a speaker herself, so when she dropped off her child and she heard so much language taking place, she came to my office and she said that, "I think I need to withdraw my child from the class." And, I said, "Why?" And, she said, "Because there's too much Jemez being spoken". She hasn't heard that before and, you know, "we don't speak it at home. So, I think she's going to be really confused and, you know, I don't think this is the place for her." And so, I said, "Will you do me a favor?" I said, "Will you please just give it six months?" You know, I said, "What has she said? Does she like her teachers?" And, she said, "Yes." "Does she like her classmates?" She said, "Yes." And, I said, "Well, what's the problem then?" I said, "Please, just give her six months and you'll see." And, sure enough, right before Christmas break, she called me, and she had called to thank me for encouraging her to keep her daughter there because she said that her aunts had been having conversations with their daughter, and that, you know, she was just -- she just was so grateful that

she heard her daughter speaking and answering her aunts's questions. And, she was just looking at her like this precious jewel that she just couldn't believe that she was able to speak in the language with her elders, and that's another benefit that children are now able to speak to their grandparents. And, this is only one example. There are so many examples now where grandparents and uncles are thanking us at all our events because their nieces, their grandchildren are speaking to them. Dr Sims: Mm-hmm. Well, there's been a real shift --

Lana: There's been a real shift. Dr Sims: -- taking place in people's attitudes about children learning, and actually them using that language outside of the Head Start classroom setting, right.

Lana: Definitely. Dr Sims: And, again, just to mention, I have visited the Walatowa Head Start immersion program multiple times. And, every time I go there, it's amazing to see how confidently the children are in using this language. And, I don't know, I don't recall if Lana, you mentioned, but Towa is the only language spoken by Jemez Pueblo. No other Pueblo tribe speaks that language. So, they really had to address this issue of how are they going to make those changes that will enable a younger generation to have that firm foundation in the language. And so, this was Jemez's approach to addressing this issue. Okay, we're going to go on to the next slide. And, I see questions coming in that hopefully we're going to address here for a couple of minutes. I see some of these.

Joshua: Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Sims. Thank you, Lana. Such a rich presentation! The chat box has been so animated, and there's such expertise and passion represented in the questions and comments here. One of them was a question about in an immersion program, how to develop proficiency in English as well, and there were many other really important questions. I wanted to pull that out because that connects with Lana, what you just told us about concerns that parents have. And, I think that mothers have heard these concerns elsewhere in other communities from parents. And so, I wanted to ask both of you -- and Mike, you as well -- how you work with families, parents, other community members who have these kinds of concerns or misunderstandings about how children learn language, as well as the range of feelings that individual parents and families and community members may have about English as well as their native languages. So, Mike, are you on the mic?

Mike: Yes, I'm here. Yes, I'm here. I wanted to say, you know, leaning into that and say, and I may have missed this, Lana, if you'd said it, but I don't know if the audience understand that -- and I'll put it in the chat box -- that there's no written language for the Towa language. And, one of the things that I saw when I was out, your way of teaching -- the way your teachers teach, the way your community does things is very different from what we see in the written language versions of most of our tribes that use a written language. But I see that as something that impacts the community differently, and it's more a traditional way of teaching. And, even within your community, with all the language that's there, and I see this throughout the communities that I work in, that in reference to what Dr. Sparrow was saying and what came up in the chat box is that, really, we haven't seen where English is an issue. It's so much of it out there, and around them, and within their homes, and so forth, that even there within our immersion program, we haven't really seen a negativity for how it's impacting. And, I know Brooke would cover this a lot more next week with their immersion program, but if either one of you could speak more about, it would be wonderful. Dr Sims: So, thank you, Mike. So, one of the things that we know is that -- and in the case of the Jemez children, they already know English. They have developed English already. And, in most cases, many of our children learn English as their first language before when they come to Early Childhood or Head Start. So, the English is there. But I also have seen in some programs where they've dedicated time to doing things in English, and it might be a very small portion of time, but it's usually something that they do. programs are done where they have storytelling on Fridays and it's maybe two hours, and all of that activity takes place in English, but the rest of the time is dedicated to making sure that children get a chance to hear that native language being used and spoken.

Now, I also know that in many cases some of the programs may not have fluent speakers among their teaching staff. That's a real challenge because when, and I have seen other places where when that situation exists, then it's the adult speakers, the adults who become learners of the language, and in turn try to use that language as they pick it up with the children. But in that case, you're talking of, kind of, like a two-way thing here. So, there are variations in how people address these issues of different language competencies that adults bring. But certainly, the question of children learning English, it's true, they are surrounded by English every place they go. And, in more formal years when they actually enter formal schooling, there will be the question of how then they get supported in terms of transitioning into the academic English that they need for formal schooling processes. And, that is something that I know Lana and the program staff and the community have been thinking about and discussing, and moving ahead towards addressing that issue, because once these children transition out of Head Start, then they will go into a regular public or BIE school. Lana?

Lana: Yes. So, one of the things that our education department, Kevin Shendo, our education director, has really been doing is working with the public education department the, the New Mexico State Department, and just conversations of how we can continue to support our children as they transition to the BIE school or the charter school, or even the public education -- the public school, Jemez Valley, because once they go to these schools, the focus on reading and literacy is really just stuffed down their throats, and where children are reading by December. And so, what we're really working with them is changing their policies, their language around the testing. And, if children are learning their language, then how can they pass these tests that are all in English? And so, we're working with how to address these issues.

Joshua: So, before we bring Howard back into the conversation, I just wanted to say two more things that are my observations of your wonderful work, Lana. And, I hope it's okay to say them. I have had the incredible privilege of watching you in action. And, the first is, with your PhotoVoice Project. And this is something that other folks and other communities may want to learn more about and try out. You got parents and other community members, other family members, thinking about this question about language and culture and identity, and what it means to grow up to be Jemez in your community. And so, you ask them what do they think, and what is the story that they would tell about that. And so, I think that that helps build the foundation for people to come to you with their questions and concerns about English language proficiency, which is a very common one, and which, as Mike says, there's no evidence that that is an issue, because when children learn the structure of one language well, it prepares their brain to learn others and it gives them a template for other languages. But the other thing that I just wanted to mention is, and the story you just told us about when you said to this mother who had this concern, "Just give me six months," I think you were honoring her concern. You were respecting her concern, right, and you were building on the trust that you had already established with her to ask for some more trust. And, I think that that kind of work in the relationship is also really important to making it safe for people to raise what their questions are about 'What's this going to do?' 'Is this going to be okay?' 'How's this going to work?', -and for them to work with you to see where you can go together. - Right. So, I didn't want to put words in your mouth, Lana, but I'm not sure you would have said that yourself.

Lana: Right. Well, yeah, and I think that's a very accurate way of describing, in fact, you know, you only have to just take a team approach to make it work, you know, so parents have to be engaged in this, and parents are at the front in terms of whether they see this as a benefit to their children or not, and like we said in the beginning, not everybody was on board. There was some reluctance and some trepidation about whether you want to really do this or not. But I think as you give time for these efforts to emerge, they begin to grow, and when you have parents engaged in that process, it's even much better, rather

than to try to go it alone with one teacher or – it really takes a group team effort. And, I think one thing that's really important is build relationships that you're talking about, and we've worked really hard on asking the right questions and how to approach families when it involves language and culture because we don't want to offend anybody. And so, we have - at the beginning of the school year - we take a lot of time to -- if the goal is to finding out what's the language dominance of the home, how are we going to get those questions, how are we going to get those answers? These are things that we work on in our professional development, because having that relationship with those families is so critical because we love those kids and we want them, I mean, that's the main thing that we want to always get across, is that we love your children and they're important to us.

Joshua: Thank you, Lana. So, now we're going to bring Howard Paden back into the conversation, and Howard, who introduced himself earlier, is Program Manager for the Cherokee Language Master Apprentice Program. And, it fits really well with some of the questions that have been raised in the chat box and in this discussion about how one community's approach to supporting the development of adult fluent speakers to support the learning of children. So, you're up, Howard.

Howard: Well, I enjoyed that discussion. I had a hard time not to jump in, but I know that we're lacking sometimes on time, so, but the Master-Apprentice Program has been thought about and dreamed about for several years within some of the citizens of the Cherokee nation, and we had an opportunity back in, I think, it was January of 2014, to do some research and do a presentation to our Chief. And, at that time he allowed us to go forward.

First this half day is to get prepared, and then later, when we started to get budgets and that sort of thing, to get some students in. The Master/Apprentice Program, we call it [Tribal language] which means "Cherokee Language Planters." That's what that means in Cherokee. We've been involved, and many of the folks that are involved are parents of children that have been in our immersion school program at the Cherokee nation. So, it became really apparent to us that not only did we want for our children to speak, we thought it was very important for our young adults to start speaking. One thing we -- there is an aging population of speakers within the Cherokee nation. Of course, Cherokee nation is a large tribe. It has about 360,000 citizens. But when we started looking at how many people were now speaking, back in August 2014, we took a different approach where we called the citizens and speakers in tribal communities and asked them how many speakers were in their community, believing that a speaker that has been living in a small community would know exactly who all were speakers within their community. And, I think we got a pretty good number at that point. There was an estimation of about 2,464 speakers. The bottom portion of one of our counties that we really focused on is a hotspot that we were focusing on, and we did a, we had these big maps and satellite type photos that we took where speakers could come and look at, from a bird's eye view, which house was looked at, and they started identifying where the speakers were. In that sample, we found 512 speakers, and when we started getting their ages, we found that the medium age of our speaker population in that particular sample was in between 60 and 69. So, you know, we knew that there was a problem.

So, the Master-Apprentice Program is a two-year program. And, the idea is to not just create a proficient speaker in the language, but to create a teacher. The idea is that there's no need to just teach somebody how to speak or to become proficient or conversational in the language without them having the ability to teach this particular methodology. So, we've brought them in, and we've actually given them an educational stipend for them to be able to live during the process, and they stay for two years. - 8 hours a day, 5 days a week. And the goal is to try to stay in Cherokee. And so, it's really interesting. We've graduated two different cohorts now, and we've noticed that there has been major, major growth in their language skills. So, our language is a very difficult language. I think that on the scale, it's a Level 4. At the

time they rated it, they said if there was a Level 5, that they would put Cherokee in it. So, they estimated it, at that time, was 2,882 numbers of contact hours to become conversational in this language.

So, we tried to focus on 3,900 contact hours. So, the first year, the students learn as much as they possibly can, and then the second year, they begin to teach using that methodology. Now, that means that there are still speakers in the room, and there are still teachers in the room, but they're able to elicit, loop, scaffold, you know, to keep with the language. And so, it's been really successful. So, to achieve that in that amount of time, we've had to create a lot of things, and this hasn't been without challenge, because we've -- one thing, our community has been used to having language programs within the Cherokee nation for a long time, and we weren't hitting levels that we needed to, so we wanted to show the language community that it can be taught, because there was a lot of doubt, and our language is so precious that it's something we can't allow to slip through our fingers. As you see, this photo here, this is a mom of one of our participants in the program. She's a Native speaker, and her child is in our program, he's a little bit older, but he used to be a speaker. And, at the schools it's pretty rough here in Oklahoma, and he wasn't allowed to speak in the language when he started going to school. And so, he was kind of holding back around her, he wanted to be able to show her when he really thought that he's starting to get the grasp of the language.

So, he was holding back, but the community members were coming and telling her, "I've seen your son, and he was speaking Cherokee to me." So, this mom shows up out of the blue and says, "Now, I want to see what my child's doing". And, you know, this is a big old guy in his 40s, and that was a beautiful day for her to watch her baby speak our mother language again. So, our speakers are, you know, I think we're trying our best to build that faith back into that, "Hey, this is plausible". So, we have a lot of speakers stop by, and we like to give them gifts, and we like to hear their stories, and we cook for them, and this is fellowship. As you see this picture here, you know, stuff doesn't always come without challenges. And so, we received a little bungalow house to be able to start the program in, and so we had to knock out walls and redo things. So, we redo the floor and that sort of thing. So, we'd learned how to do that in our language, and so we said "Okay, we've got to make this work."

And so, we had a great opportunity to start using our skills and our language or building terms. So, we built the place. At this point, we're on our third cohort, and they have started going out to a lot of the elders' sites. Some of the community buildings have programs where elders are able to come and eat, and we've been able to start making friends and start using that for mentorship. At this point we've graduated six, and they hit levels that we didn't believe that we were going to hit. We built the program believing that we would hit an Intermediate Mid-level on the aptitude standards, and what we've found out is that we've hit Advanced Low, which was two steps higher than what we'd believed. So, now we're having to, kind of, change our standards, and try to make sure that everybody hits that, and how do we get to the next level after that. So, I'm trying to look through here, and I'll show you guys some of the standards that I was talking about. These are the different elders in our community. I know we will have a discussion here in this group about aptitude. So, what is unique, I have three children myself in the immersion school, and to be able to watch that change in my family, my babies wake up in the middle of the night and they can't, you know, because they dream in Cherokee at this point, and it's always good to have those conversations. My wife isn't particularly in any program to learn Cherokee, but she is really, really learning quick because our babies, when they wake up, they remain in Cherokee instead of being in English. So, here are the proficiency skills that we thought that we were going to hit Intermediate Mid-level.

And so, we've hit Advanced Low, which, as far as we know, is the highest that a program has helped somebody to get to thus far, and we've got a long way to go because you can see that above that is "Superior" and "Distinguished." But what is unique is that we're already starting to see that our participants are going into immersion school to be able to intern and that sort of thing, and so it's good

to have a younger group that comes in and relates with the kids. One thing we had discussed in our discussion earlier, and we're just hitting the very surface of it, is that things are totally different in the language. There was a time that my wife and I, we went to South America to become missionaries, and we learned Spanish, and although Spanish is a Romantic language, it was still different enough from English that there was a different worldview. Cherokee is so much different that I couldn't imagine now being... I can't imagine not trying my best to learn it. I've noticed there is a totally different value system that starts to come in, when our young people start to learn that. They begin to see the world different. They start hearing different tones. They get involved in community. They volunteer more because it's so holistic that they are able to, I mean, they start being able to troubleshoot things and look through the lens of a traditional language. It's totally different.

Like Ethan Petticrew was saying in the chat box over there, like, there's a worldview that we're trying to save that's beyond just the language, and key to that is absolutely the language. One thing that is interesting is the Cherokee language has, how English would have prefixes, suffixes, Cherokee language has prefixes, suffixes, infixes and circumfixes. And, the common verb, it conjugates 22,500 times, and this is a language that is 80 percent verbs. So, the detail of it is so massive that you subconsciously start learning these different rules that you can only receive in immersion-type processes. And, there are 72 different pronouns in Cherokee, so they start looking at things, not just – it affects their English even. But they want to be very, very detailed when they're trying to explain something, and I see sometimes that our students start to get frustrated and they just want to explain it back in Cherokee.

These are the two different hotspots of the language. We have one down south, around lower portion of Adair County, upper portion of Sequoyah County. And, they only have one in Delaware and Mayes County, that area there. So, a large portion of the speakers that we're working with currently is in the lower hotspot, but we have some that we're hoping to be able to start working with very, very soon in the upper portion, because there's a little bit different word usage, depending on where you're from. I think, looking at the time, we don't have a lot of time left – I think we'll go ahead and open that up for discussion, guys. And, I know we had a lot more to speak about.

Joshua: Thank you so much, Howard. I've been looking at the chat box, and it's just so rich with important questions and expertise. And, one of the comments was about how the elders might be feeling about what you're learning and the progress you're making, and if we think about families and communities from the perspective of different Native communities, elders are so important. So, I remember you shared with us one story about how you engage elders and how they have responded. And, the other question I had for you was, if you would be – you talked about how language is culture and culture is in the language, and I was wondering if you'd talk a little bit in the last couple of minutes about how the Cherokee language, in the way it refers to children, actually provides understanding for family and community members about who children are and what they need so that engaging families and communities in children's learning and health and development is actually inside the culture which is inside the language, so it's two separate questions.

Howard: Well, you know, that's the thing about Cherokee. You know, English is comprised of probably – we've borrowed from 11 different languages. And so, as we were talking earlier, you know, you can use the word "courage" that comes from the Latin term "cor" that means "heart," that lets you know that if you really understood Latin while you were using that word, you'd realize that hey, there's no way to have courage without heart, where Cherokee primarily comes from this one language, so every one of them tidbits is already built in that word that you're using, and the older the speaker, the more, I think, they understand that and see that from that worldview. What you're talking about is – that's one of our words, it's one of our words we use for children. There are actually seven different maturities, that's what some elders will tell you, but I was told that that particular word has the same root word as "to whittle" or "to

carve." So, the idea behind that is -- at least what the elders have told me, is that you're not, when you look at a child, you're not supposed to look at them as a, you know, if you wanted to be an NFL player, you're not supposed to look at your child and say "I'm going to make that child an NFL player." You're supposed to look at them, like, how somebody that was carving out of a piece of wood, that if you go and visit somebody that's whittling or carving, you say, "Well, what are you carving?" And, they will tell you, "I'm carving -- the wood will tell me what I'm carving," that you're supposed to look at that piece of wood and look and see what the maximum potential is for that. So, that's the same way you're supposed to look at a child, is to say "Okay, what is the maximum potential for this child?" And, if you wanted to be a lawyer and you didn't make it, that doesn't mean that you need to make your child a lawyer. Your child may be something totally different because God created him or her different than what he's created you, although he may have similar characteristics. Your job is to open your heart and your mind, and when you discipline your kid or anything, you have to look at that saying, "This child is unique -- this child is different. I may do some things different with this child than what I would do with maybe another child in the same home", because every one of them is so, so unique that you have to really free your heart and open yourself up to feel that way.

Joshua: Thank you, Howard. And, in our last couple of minutes, I wanted to ask Mike, and Lana, and Dr. Sims to comment on ideas for families and communities in support of children's Native language learning. And, to remind everybody that we'll be back next week with experts from other communities to share their experiences in engaging children and families in their children's Native language learning. So, Mike, Lana, Dr. Sims, Howard, final thoughts about how to engage families and communities in supporting their children's Native language learning?

Lana: So, one thing we do in Jemez is we share our lesson plans, and we also provide an activity. a monthly activity, a calendar of activities, where the parents know what the children are learning, and then also so when they get home they will help them to -- they will help them in promoting the language and give them something to talk about. And, for a suggestion about language use at home: make language something that becomes part of your everyday routines at home. You could choose a specific time, like getting the table ready for eating, or when it's time to get ready to go to bed, you know, learn some simple phrases that you can use routinely with your children, and do have fun with the language. Play games with your children -- send them on a scavenger hunt to look for things that you're beginning to teach them in the language.

Mike: And, you know, this is Mike Richardson, and I've been blessed to spend so much time with so many different communities, and I spent time with Howard, and I was honored that they invited me to come to their program and to sit in the little house they have there, which has a very homely feeling to it. But one of the things that I saw in that, as a community, the things that Howard and them are doing are pretty amazing because not only are they looking at the language, but how do they incorporate the different dialects across the community as well. And, I know some of the things they're doing is they're visiting those different communities there, and even in my work with The Eastern Band where there's a Cherokee dialect, there's a Bird Time dialect, there's a Snowbird dialect, and I know with Cherokee nation there's even more so, so the fact that they spend time with those elders and first speakers in those different communities enhances, I think, the overall tribal community as a whole, because it brings everybody together. And, one of the big things that we see out there is you got to have really thick skin when you're learning the language, especially tribal languages, because everybody will be correcting you. And, if the dialect's a little bit different, and we've even seen different dialects between different families within the same language group, so, you know, we tell people, nobody is wrong. It's just a matter of understanding how somebody else is approaching it or what they're saying. There's always that respect there that's given. But the work that Howard is doing there is really amazing. I do believe it's bringing a lot of the

communities together. You know, we're working together now to try to get more into the Head Start program there along with Sandy Turner. We all know she's on the call as well. So, I'm just honored to know these people, to learn from them, the stuff that Dr. Sims and Lana's doing, and the guests that'll be coming on next week as well. It's just really amazing, and if you could have heard just a dialog between the panel, just talking among each other, there was so much that could be gained from that, just talking about your different experiences in different areas. And, this is about the community, this is about parent engagement. When the children are involved, their parents are a big part of that, and sharing that with the parents and getting them involved enhances the overall community and it gives that child more of a status, of course, to learn the language and how it's going to impact them outside the English environment. We have been seeing where that impacts them and enhances them in every aspect of their life. This is all in your approach and what you use for that.

Joshua: You know, Mike, what we've found out is that – I've seen so many comments about boarding schools, and some of the stuff that many of our speakers have went through has just been – if I could just, there's no way to even express the stories that I've heard, the abuse that has happened because they spoke their language. But when we started, when we made a decision that 'Hey, this particular program is going to show indifference', I remember there was a time that there was a, "we should go and show indifference to speakers," and there was a time that a tornado came to our area, and so our crew got together and we said "We're going to try to go to every speaker's house that we can in that area and help clean up." So, we got chainsaws, we grabbed some baloney and some bread, and there we go. And, to sit there and spend time with them elders and to work beside them at their house, using our language, it's hard to think of anything less rich.

Joshua: Thank you so much, Howard, Mike, Lana, Dr. Sims. Thank you, all, for joining us for your important questions and comments and for the work that you all do. This has been such an honor to learn from all of you. And, we look forward to seeing all of you and your friends a week from now when we come back together again with folks working on children's Native language learning, engaging families and communities in that work, and a number of other communities. Thank you, all.

Lana: Thank you.