

## **FTF Early Childhood Summit**

### **Session 203: Lanna Flood Memorial Address**

#### **How COVID-19 is Impacting Services for Young Children and Families in Tribal Communities**

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic in tribal communities has received worldwide attention by people becoming aware of the high number of positive cases and death rates. This pandemic has exacerbated the disparities in tribal communities and has called people to action. In Arizona, many tribal communities took measures to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 including government shutdowns, stay-at-home orders and lockdowns which has also impacted how services are provided to young children and families.

#### ***History Overview***

To understand why the pandemic is so prevalent in tribal communities, it's important to understand American Indian history which is often not taught in the K-12 education system. Students may learn about the Trail of Tears, the forced relocation of tribes from their homelands east of the Mississippi to the west and Manifest Destiny or westward expansion. What is not often not taught or known is that American Indians and Alaskan Natives (AI/AN) have a government-to-government relationship with the United States, established through treaties and based on congressional authority. Federal laws and policies contributed to the genocide of indigenous peoples through forced relocations from their homelands, removal of children from their families, assimilation to "Kill the Indian, Save the Man," and sterilization of AI/AN women – all to extinguish people and their languages and cultures in the name of democracy. All efforts left out of the history books.

Through treaties, the federal government promised to provide education, health care and public safety in tribal communities, but these promises have been broken or underfunded for decades through systems of genocide which has destroyed families, communities, traditions, cultures and lifeways of indigenous peoples and has led to ineffective food systems, schools, health care and infrastructure. Tribes continue to fight to exercise their sovereignty, power inherent in a governing nation, in order to determine what is best for their people. During this time, tribes were faced with addressing the immediate needs of their communities due to COVID-19.

#### ***Tribal Communities***

In many tribal communities, there are many multigenerational homes, some including children. When someone tested positive for COVID-19, communities and tribal leaders were face with trying to find a place for individuals to quarantine so the entire family was not affected. Programs, including early childhood programs, were closed. Providers and services had to find ways to connecting with families despite lack of internet connection and access to technology in addition to lack to basic necessities such as water, food and other basic needs.