

# First Kids 1st: Every Native Child is Sacred

## *Background Information Sheet*

**First Kids First Partner Organizations (alphabetical):** National Congress of American Indians, National Indian Child Welfare Association, National Indian Education Association, and National Indian Health Board.

**Mission:** The mission of the First Kids First partners is to stand with our Native youth to create the conditions for a stronger generation today and tomorrow.

**Vision:** Our collective vision for a stronger generation of Native youth includes the following outcomes:

- **Healthy Lifestyles.** Our children must have the resources they need to develop strong self-esteem and the life skills needed to usher them into adulthood. One of these resources is good health. Children who are physically and emotionally healthy are more able to play, learn, and work.
- **Safe and Supportive Environments.** Children who have their basic needs met, including love, shelter, food, clothing, and play, are children who are more likely to go on to thrive, explore, learn, and dream. Our children must be protected from unsafe environments and supported by our communities.
- **Successful Students.** Children who are healthy, safe, and nurtured achieve to the best of their abilities. Our children need skilled teachers, sound curricula, and family involvement so they can gain the abilities they need for present and future fulfillment.
- **Stable Communities.** In order to invest in children and the community structures that support them, tribal governments must have options for economic development and flexibility to channel tribal and federal funds into programs that best support their members. The objective is to foster economically self-sufficient communities which can support community programs that provide basic support for children and families.

**Objective:** Our objective is to work as a collaborative network of national, Native organizations to equip our communities and to compel policy change toward improving the realities and opportunities available to our youth.

**Rationale (Why this effort is important):** While policymakers who know anything about Native youth tend to know about the risky behaviors that Native youth may engage in (e.g., unhealthy eating that leads to obesity and diabetes, substance use, suicide, school dropout), the focus of our work is to celebrate the strengths of our cultures and Native youth, while equipping Native communities to create the conditions for Native youth to thrive and compel policy and system change to improve the realities and opportunities available to Native youth. Over the last five years, our organizations have continued to work together toward the shared vision and policy goals we outlined in the Native Children's Agenda in 2010. We are the legitimate, representative, go-to organizations with a responsibility to steward the development of effective policy and practice for the benefit of our youth and communities in a long-lasting and sustainable way. As such, we are in a position to not only hold the systems that serve our youth accountable, but to foster community-to-community coordination to strengthen our collective capacity to meet the needs of our youngest members.