CALIFORNIA

MARCH 19-20 ~ SAN DIEGO
HOMELESS EDUCATION
CONFERENCE
2026

HETAC
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STATE OF CALIFORNIA
SchoolHouse Connection

Strategies to Identify & Support Our Native American Students Experiencing Homelessness in California

Nikki Hannon & Jade Tyner

Nikki Hannon, M.Ed.

(Little Shell Cree/Blackfeet) is the Education Initiatives Specialist for SchoolHouse Connection. She was born and raised on the Blackfeet Nation in Montana. Nikki is passionate about supporting the needs of historically underserved students through building relationships with youth, creating communities of support, and advocating for students' rights. Nikki has over 17 years of experience working with Native American students, pregnant and parenting youth, and youth experiencing homelessness. She served in several capacities at the district level, starting out as the Director of Alternative Education where she collaborated with district and community leaders to create a dropout prevention program. She has since served as a certified K-12 school counselor, McKinney Vento and Foster Care Liaison, and the Director of the Parent Community Outreach program. nikki@schoolhouseconnection.org

Jade Tyner, M.A., L.E.P.,

Experienced Yurok educator and administrator with over 17 years in public education, specializing in culturally responsive practices, special education, and mental health services. She has provided training for schools, medical and mental health professionals, and regional center contractors, focusing on trauma-informed care, culturally inclusive assessment and education, and student well-being. As a dedicated advocate for Native American students and families, Jade works to bridge the gap between systems to create more inclusive and effective support structures.

ATyner@cde.ca.gov

CDE American Indian Resources and Support

Land and Reparations Acknowledgement

Full Sail Ahead: Supporting Students Navigating Smooth & Stormy Waters

Agenda

Historical trauma relationship to homelessness in Indian Country

Data Review

Outreach and Identification: Challenges and Strategies

Outreach and Partnering with Agencies

Objectives

1. Deepen your understanding of the impact of historical trauma experienced by Native American families and its relationship with generational homelessness;

2. Learn culturally responsive strategies for identifying Native American students experiencing homelessness in both rural and urban settings;

3. Identify strategies adaptable to their own school settings for supporting Native youth experiencing homelessness and;

4. Discover at least one new resource to provide support to Native American students experiencing homelessness.

Historical Trauma Relationship to Homelessness in Indian Country

Full Sail Ahead: Supporting Students Navigating Smooth & Stormy Waters

Types of Trauma

Acute Trauma-single event

Chronic Trauma-repeated or ongoing

Complex Trauma-Multi layered (racism, multiple and varied events, often interpersonal

Intergenerational-legacy of effect passed down from victim to descendants (natural disasters, Indian Boarding Schools)

Historical Trauma-entire group of people experience intergenerational trauma: due to race...there is an origin point for generational trauma

1813-1885
Pine Tree Woman

1841-1919
Amelia

1877-1954
Medore

1904-1997
Vena

1925-2015
Kenny

Sheryle

1830s-1850s

1850s-1890s

1870s-1930s

1930s-1950s

1950s-1960s

1830 Indian Removal Act: forced Eastern Native Americans to relocate West of the Mississippi

Trail of Tears (disease, starvation, exposure)

1870-1890 Indian Wars

"it is essential that the right of the Government to keep the Indians upon the reservations signed to them, and to arrest and return them whenever they wander away, should be placed beyond dispute"

- 1879 Carlisle Indian School~ model adopted by BIA

- General Allotment Act of 1887

- "Surplus land" sold (lost 90 million acres)

- 1924 Natives became "citizens"

1934 Indian New Deal: establish tribal government (chief, headmen, medicine men not recognized)

intended to acquire land back and improve quality of reservation life

Termination Era
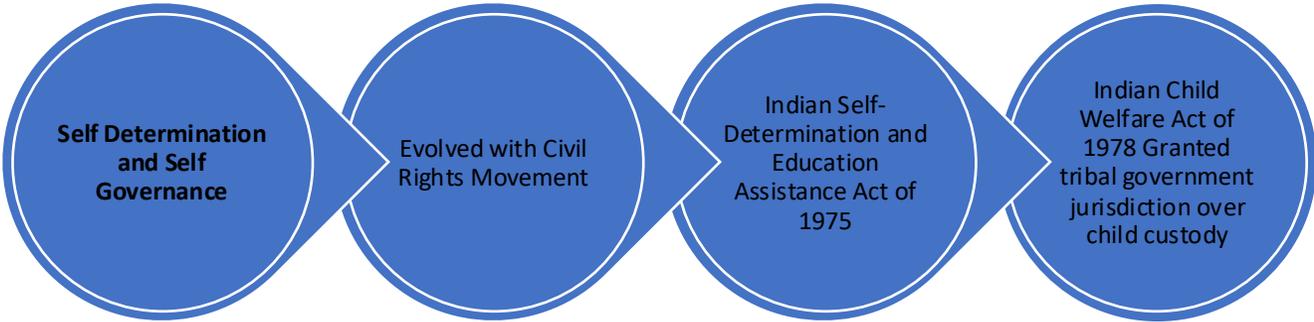
End federal trust responsibilities

1956 Relocation Act- from reservation to urban cities (another attempt to assimilate)

-30% Natives relocated

Full Sail Ahead: Supporting Students Navigating Smooth & Stormy Waters

8 Generations Later

1960s to Present

Self Determination and Self Governance

Evolved with Civil Rights Movement

Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975

Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978 Granted tribal government jurisdiction over child custody

• Tribal control over federally subsidized programs

Factors Contributing to Homelessness

Both urban and rural:

- Poverty
- Substance Abuse
- Mental Health Needs
- Trauma
- Violence

All Related to Historical Trauma

Understanding the Definition of Homelessness

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.
42 U.S.C. §11434a(2)

Can the student go to:

the same place (**fixed**)

every night (**regular**)

to sleep in a safe and sufficient space (**adequate**)?

Review of California Data

Full Sail Ahead: Supporting Students Navigating Smooth & Stormy Waters

Where Do They Stay?

- Students move between these situations during the school year

- Lack of shelter in most communities; fear of shelter

- Lack of motels/hotels in most communities; inability to pay

- Children and youth "staying with others temporarily" are extremely vulnerable to predation/harm but more difficult to identify
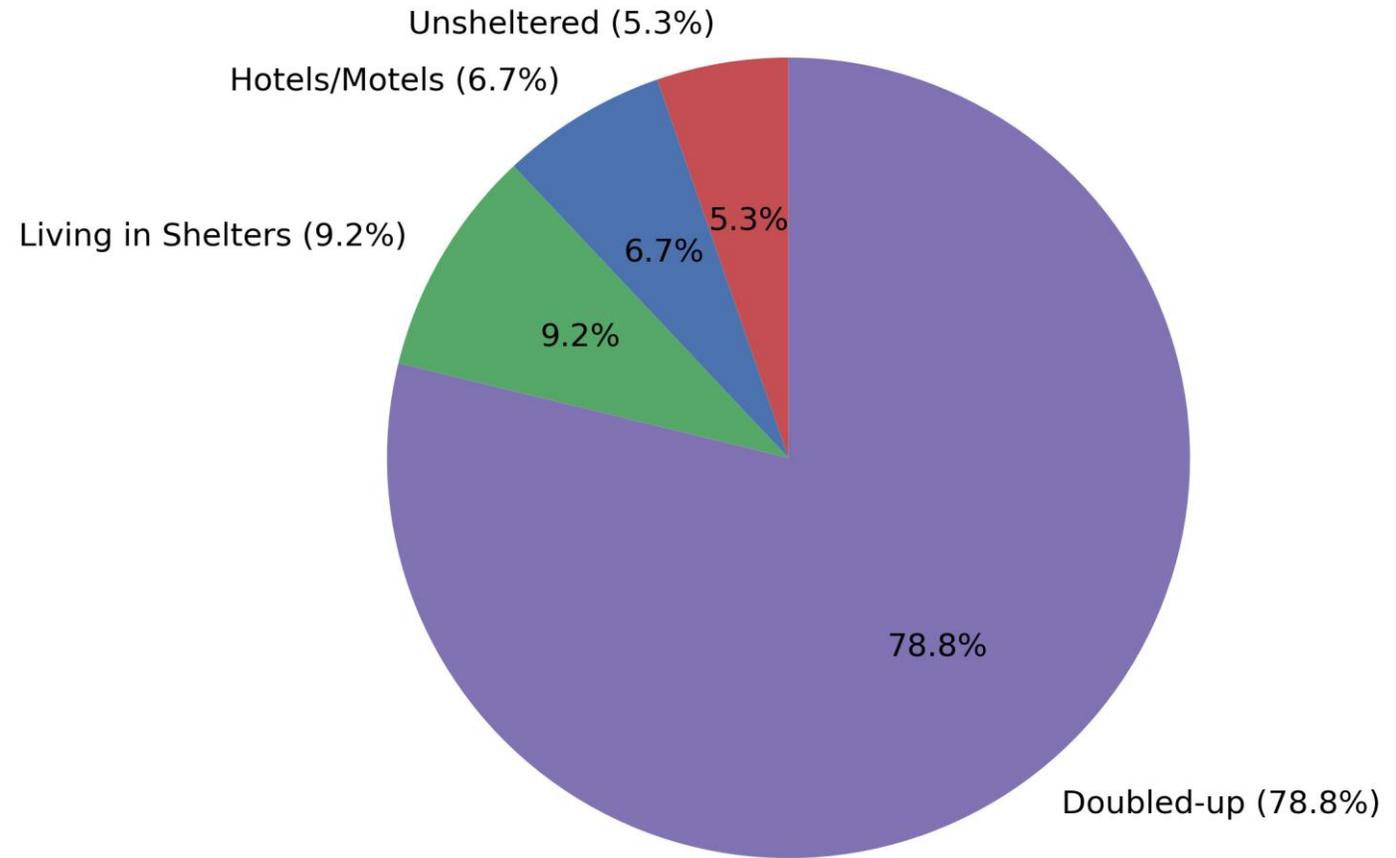
National Center for Homeless Education
DataQuest (CA Dept of Education)

Unsheltered (5.3%)
Hotels/Motels (6.7%)
Living in Shelters (9.2%)
5.3%
6.7%
9.2%
78.8%
Doubled-up (78.8%)

2024-25 McKinney Vento Student Data [DataQuest (CA Dept of Education))](#)

	Cumulative Enrollment	Homeless Student Enrollment	Doubled-Up	Shelters	Hotels/ Motels	Unsheltered
American Indian/Alaska Native	25,611	2,109	78.8%	9.2%	6.7%	5.3%
Statewide	5,965,383	298,254	83.8%	6.7%	5.6%	3.9%

2024-25 Homeless Student Performance Data

Performance Area	Results
English Language Arts	68.9 Points Below Standard
Math	121.9 Points Below Standard
College/Career Readiness	17.7% Prepared
Chronic Absenteeism	30.7%
Graduation Rate	77.1%
Suspensions (at least 1 day)	5.1%

Multi-Year Comparison McKinney Vento Student Data

GROUP	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
American Indian or Alaska Native	7%	7.8%	8.2%
Statewide	4.1%	4.7	5%

Outreach and Identification: Challenges and Strategies

Full Sail Ahead: Supporting Students Navigating Smooth & Stormy Waters

Mistrust of Educational Institutions

U.S. and California policies targeted Native children and families

Mission and state systems enslaved Native people, including children

Boarding schools used forced removal, abuse, and cultural suppression

Widespread child removal continued through adoption & foster systems

Many Native families view schools as extensions of government institutions

These histories shape generational mistrust of schools today

1929

1997

Sherman Indian High School- est. 1892 and still open

Anaheim Boarding School, closed 1885

Fort Bidwell Indian Boarding School, closed 1932

Fort Yuma Indian Boarding School, closed 1900

Greenville Indian Industrial Boarding School, closed 1923

Hoopa Valley Boarding School, closed 1934

Middletown Training School, closed 1887

North Fork Presbyterian Mission, no closing date available

Perris Indian School, closed 1904

Round Valley Indian School, closed 1924

St. Anthony's Industrial School for Indians, closed 1907

St. Boniface Indian School, closed 1974

St. Turibius Mission Boarding and Day School, closed 1905

Strategies for Outreach

Culturally Competent Staffing
- Staff should be trauma informed, culturally sensitive, and person-centered to provide services with unconditional positive regard
- Helpful if a Native themselves for lived cultural understanding; otherwise,
- Consult with local Tribal leadership

Establish Relationships
- Consistency with outreach
- ALWAYS FOLLOW-THROUGH on "promises"

Establish Space
- Ideally, this space reflects a place where cousins feel comfortable gathering, connecting~ especially for Urban youth
- Consider the name of your program~language is important!
    Aisspoommootsiiyop "We Help Each Other"

Identification Challenges

Cultural Choice vs. Circumstance supported by Cultural Norms

- **Misunderstanding** the definition of homelessness

  - **Especially substandard and doubled-up**

  - **"Temporary"**

- **FEAR** of self-identifying

- **MISTRUST**

- Moving around and changing schools

- Racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other biases

- Children under five are particularly invisible

Understanding Doubled Up

- **Indian Country**

On reservations, almost one-third of homes are overcrowded

Extended family & generosity IS cultural but homelessness IS NOT

- **Sharing housing of others**
  - Due to loss of housing OR
  - Economic hardship OR
  - Similar reason

- **Not a doubled up situation:**
  - Mutual decision to live together for mutual benefit~ **true multigenerational housing**

Stronger kinship ties may also be a contributing factor for larger households; however, many individuals "doubling up" on housing would rather be in a home of their own if they had the opportunity (Housing Assistance Council, 2013).

Understanding Unsheltered= Substandard

Substandard housing makes up 40% of on-reservation housing (compared to just 6% of housing outside of Indian Country)
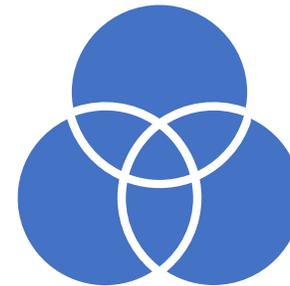
When you're surrounded by something for generations, it feels "**normal**" and acceptable so our standards of "**adequate**" are skewed and "**normalizes**" generational homelessness

Understanding Unsheltered= Substandard Cont.

How do you "define" substandard housing?

According to the *U.S. Department of Education's Non-Regulatory Guidance for the Education for Homeless Youth and Children's Program*, substandard housing may include:

Housing which lacks one of the fundamental utilities such as **water, electricity, or heat;**

is infested with **vermin or mold;**

lacks a basic functional part such as a working **kitchen** or a working **toilet;**

or may present **<u>unreasonable dangers</u>** to adults, children, or persons with disabilities.

Each city, county, Tribe, or State may have its own housing codes that further define the kind of housing that may be deemed substandard.
[AB 2533 - SUBSTANDARD HOUSING CHECKLIST](#) *(City of La Canada Flintridge, CA)*

Identification Strategies

CDE Housing Questionnaire

Students and families self-refer (including posts on social media!)

Referrals from other community based programs

Moccasin telegraph~Referrals from other school staff! Families will start to refer each other!

Opportunity: *Reach out and partner with programs specifically serving Native American youth and families*

Identification Strategies

- Review your chronic attendance data~ reach out to students with morning tardies!

- Identify students who have withdrawn from school the previous year but didn't re-enroll~ reach out to them!

- Identify students with unknown drop codes~ reach out to them!

- Ask your registrar to notify you when students transfer in~ if housing is dire in your community, odds are they are doubled-up!~ follow up!

Opportunity: *Reach out and partner with neighboring districts and schools to keep track of students transferring between each*

Identification Strategies

Host	Invite	Provide	Build
Host a giveaway of school supplies, children's books~ share MV brochure and HQ forms	Invite Grandparents who are raising their grandchildren to stop by for a cup of coffee, gift them with coloring books and crayons for their grandchildren	Provide Resources~ Generosity is a strong cultural value!	Opportunity: Build relationships with families through consistent support and they will refer their friends!

Partnering with Agencies

Full Sail Ahead: Supporting Students Navigating Smooth & Stormy Waters

Strategies for Intervention

Full Sail Ahead: Supporting Students Navigating Smooth & Stormy Waters

Rural Native American Students

Substandard housing is "normal"

Living overcrowded is "normal"

Generational homelessness

Lack of resources (ie. laundry mat, shelters, youth friendly spaces, transportation, mental health services)

Trafficking risks are extremely high

Lateral oppression (crabs in a bucket)

Bordertown misunderstanding

Everyone thinks they know what's going on!

- Complicates identifying UHY

Rural Strategies

Grandmas and Grandpas! And aunties and uncles!

- Caretaking without regard for custody

Build strong community networks

- Consider hiring a Systems Navigator (especially to case manage your UHY)
- Educate community about eligibility for McKinney-Vento service; include examples (ie. boarded up windows)
- Partner with Family Services
- Partner with other Native-specific non-profits if available

Urban Native American Students

May struggle to adjust to life in a metropolis (When relocating)

May face unemployment/low-end jobs

May face discrimination

Possible homesickness

loss of traditional cultural support

May feel disconnected from their tribe, culture and identity

May feel invisible

Lateral oppression (especially when returning to the reservation)

Urban Strategies

Connect youth with cultural supports
- Powwows- for some, but not all
- Invite cultural elders to share with youth (ie. meaning of ribbon skirts, make skirts/dresses/cultural items together)
- Gather community resources specific to cultural supports
- Connect youth with school-based cultural supports (if available!)

Network with Urban Health Centers
- If there's an IHS nearby, or other Indian Health center/program, make a few friends there!

Provide Resources: "generosity"
- Establish resource "center" for students to access:
- A safe place to study, with internet
- Hygiene items
- Clothing closets & Food pantry
- Host culturally relevant activities

Resources:

California Data:

 [DataQuest - Accessing Educational Data (CA Dept of Education)](#)

 [Google Document with American Indian/Alaska Native McKinney Vento Data](#)

 [California School Dashboard (CA Dept of Education)](#)

Schoolhouse Connection:

 [Child and Youth Homelessness Data Profiles | Tableau Public](#)

 [Identifying Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)

 [Strategies to Support Native Students Experiencing Homelessness in Indian Country](#)

 [Awarding and Accepting Partial Credits for Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)

 [SHC Scholarship Program](#)

 [One-page summary of access to early learning for children experiencing homelessness, birth to five | SchoolHouse Connection](#)

Bureau of Indian Education Schools in California:

 [Noli Indian School](#)

 [Sherman Indian High School](#)

California Department of Education

 [American Indian Education Centers - Resources (CA Dept of Education)](#)

 [American Indian - Specialized Programs (CA Dept of Education)](#)