



303 Indigenous Productions

Overview Brief

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Project Description

303 Indigenous Productions is the second cohort of the Colorado Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) implementation of the Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting Grant, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Services (OCSS). The target population for this cohort of the project is urban Native youth, aged 13 to 19, residing in the Denver and Boulder metro areas, who want to strengthen their connection to culture and build relationships with other Native youth. The project began in July 2021 and focuses on engaging youth in a transformational learning process through the creation of original social marketing media content and the positive adoption of new media, aiming to strengthen their sense of cultural connectedness and urban Native identity.

The implementation team partnered with the Denver Indian Family Resource Center (DIFRC) to recruit youth to participate in the project. The implementation team also partnered with Dr. Nancy Lucero to assist with the development of a curriculum that integrates aspects of urban Native identity and culture. The curriculum was adapted from the Trailbuilding curriculum, which was created for the first cohort of the Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting grant. Topics covered in the curriculum include the success sequence, child support, healthy relationships, sexual and reproductive health, Native identity and culture, as well as professional development skills around filmmaking, social media content production, and marketing. The implementation team also created videos that served as key components of the curriculum, featuring members of the target population and capturing their perspectives on topics related to the grant's outcomes. These videos were incorporated into the curriculum to help prompt discussion and foster critical thought among participating youth.



After extensive development and ongoing recruitment, the curriculum was implemented with youth during a 5-day in-person intensive group-level intervention (GLI) workshop series. Over the five days, the youth were exposed to content from each module and participated in cognitive exercises to help develop a concept, storyline, and characters that would be used in their film. On the final day of the GLI, the youth reached a consensus on their film concept, which marked the start of the pre-production process. In the weeks following the GLI, the implementation team and participating youth engaged in several pre-production activities, including wardrobe and production design, location scouting, character development, and scriptwriting. This work culminated in a two-day film production in Denver, Colorado, and post-production (editing) began immediately after filming. The co-creation and development of marketing materials with the youth occurred in conjunction with post-production activities.

The youth and implementation team hosted a premiere in late June to showcase the completed film and associated video materials. Those in the audience at the premiere included participating youth and their families, the implementation team, representatives from local organizations, and community members. The project will culminate in a community-level intervention (CLI) designed to impact the attitudes and behaviors of the target audience, urban Native youth. In addition to organic dissemination, the CLI will utilize a paid social media marketing campaign to distribute the film and other social marketing products. 303 Indigenous Productions is a project that began on July 1, 2021, and will end on June 30, 2026.

Implementation Team

The 303 Indigenous Productions project was managed through a collaboration between the Colorado Division of Child Support Services (DCSS) and the Colorado Sexual Health Initiative (CoSHI), both divisions within the Colorado Department of Human Services (CDHS). Other collaborators were the Denver Indian Family Resource Center (DIFRC), Connected Health Solutions, Inc. (CHS), Spearca Communications, and the Center for Policy Research (CPR). DCSS provided project management, and CoSHI brought their expertise in positive youth development (PYD) frameworks to the planning and management process. DIFRC recruited youth from the target population and helped ensure that the voice of urban Native youth was incorporated into every aspect of the project, including assistance with the development and implementation of the curriculum. CHS and Dr. Nancy Lucero (consultant) co-created the curriculum, building from the existing Trailbuilding curriculum structure, adapting core elements, and integrating essential cultural components. CHS and CoSHI co-implemented the curriculum with support from DIFRC staff. Spearca Communications provided social media marketing, website development, marketing and branding consultation, and the CPR evaluated the project.

The implementation team was composed of:

Jolene Holgate (Diné), **Aurelia Guerue** (Sicangu Lakota & Diné),
and **Terrell Padilla** (Oglala Lakota & Diné), Denver Indian Family Resource Center

Nancy Lucero (Mississippi Band of Choctaw Indians), Indian Child Welfare Workforce
and Service Delivery Consultant

Phil Gover, CDHS Tribal Liaison

Anna Wendt, **Olivia Cornejo**, and **Sabrina Montoya**, DCSS Program Innovation Unit and
Colorado Sexual Health Initiative (CoSHI)

Kenneth Shults, Connected Health Solutions, Inc.

Maggie Spain, Spearca Communications

Destinee Starcher and **Arely Aguirre**, Center for Policy Research

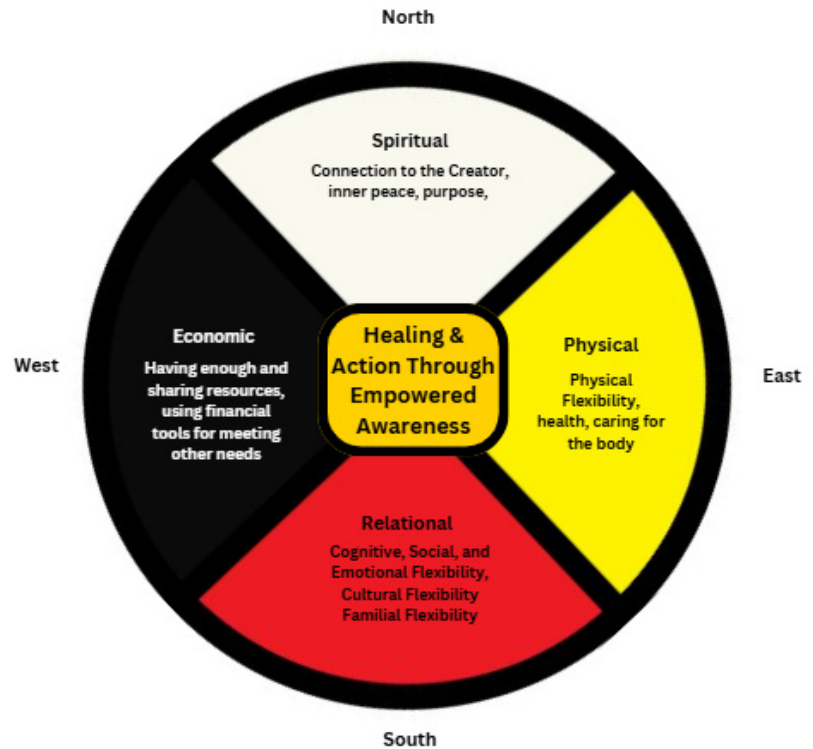
Overview of the Brief

This brief outlines the development of the curriculum, highlighting the incorporation of PYD principles and the adaptations made to meet the needs of the target population. It also includes a description of the social marketing messages, including the film, brand creation, website development, planned film distribution, and paid social media marketing strategy.

The Curriculum

Curriculum Description

The 303 Indigenous Productions project curriculum centered on the concept of economic flexibility. To help youth understand the concept of economic flexibility, the curriculum helps build participants' understanding of the cycle of poverty, which refers to the specific cultural patterns that keep economically disenfranchised families trapped in poverty for generations. The curriculum includes five modules that have been adapted to meet the needs of Native youth in the Denver Metro Area. The curriculum can be adapted to meet the needs of other youth populations or agencies. For example, the medicine wheel is used throughout the curriculum and represents a balance one must have in the spiritual, physical, relational, and economic aspects of their life. The curriculum created for the 303 Indigenous Productions project was adapted from the existing Life. As Told By Youth (formerly referred to as Trailbuilding) curriculum, developed for DCSS's first implementation of the Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting grant.



The 303 Indigenous Productions project curriculum was informed by core components of several curricula, including Respecting the Circle of Life, Parenting and Paternity Awareness (p.a.p.a), Street Smart, and Community Peers Reaching Out and Modeling Intervention Strategies (P.R.O.M.I.S.E.).

- Respecting the Circle of Life is a pregnancy prevention program designed to enhance the sexual and reproductive health knowledge of Native youth. The curriculum integrates Native cultural knowledge and emphasizes individual, family, and community-level responsibility. Components of this curriculum were incorporated to help address the specific needs of the target population for this cohort.
- P.a.p.a. is a school-based curriculum that teaches students about responsible parenting, paternity and paternity establishment, and the realities of having a child during adolescence, with the underlying intent of encouraging youth to adhere to the success sequence in order to increase their economic mobility or flexibility. The success sequence is defined as completing one's education, establishing a career path, and entering a committed relationship before having a child.

- Street Smart is an adolescent cognitive-behavioral skills-building HIV/STI prevention program grounded in social learning theory for youth.¹ The Street Smart approach includes psychoeducational, participatory skills-building activities focused on problem solving, sexual negotiation, affective awareness, emotional regulation and management, and developing helpful coping strategies. The curriculum includes games, demonstrations, tokens of appreciation, visual tools like a “feeling thermometer,” and other activities to actively engage youth with the content.
- Community P.R.O.M.I.S.E. is a community-level intervention model that utilizes role model stories. Peer mentors share stories in the community along with the distribution of harm reduction supplies to people who are living with HIV or may engage with behaviors that place them at risk for HIV. This approach relied on the use of printed materials (zines, pamphlets, etc.) and later was adapted utilizing new-media based strategies.

Positive Youth Development and Youth Engagement Strategies

303 Indigenous Productions is grounded in the principles of Positive Youth Development (PYD). Though frameworks vary, PYD typically involves a strengths-based approach aimed at promoting positive behavior and reducing risky behavior. Research shows that interventions using PYD approaches may lead to improvement in academic achievement and psychological adjustment (e.g., enhanced self-perception and reduced emotional distress).² In 303 Indigenous Productions, the use of PYD frameworks not only engaged youth in skills-building and the decision-making necessary to develop assets and personal agency but also offered robust opportunities for youth to make meaningful contributions within a supportive environment.

Integrating comprehensive PYD practices into the creation of the curriculum and the project overall was a high priority for the implementation team. The framework provided in the PYD Measurement Toolkit helps illustrate how 303 Indigenous Productions applied positive youth development techniques.³ As defined in this toolkit, “PYD engages youth along with their families, communities and/or governments so that youth are empowered to reach their full potential. PYD approaches build skills, assets and competencies; foster healthy relationships; strengthen the environment; and transform systems.”

The PYD framework includes four key domains:

1. **Assets**
2. **Agency**
3. **Opportunities to contribute**
4. **Enabling environment**

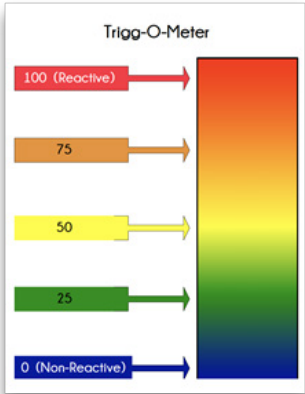
The table on the following page describes each domain and how these domains were incorporated into the group-level and community-level interventions.

¹ McLeod, S. (2011). Albert Bandura's social learning theory. *Simply Psychology*. London, 694, 695.

² Ciocanel, O., Power, K., Eriksen, A., & Gillings, K. (2016). Effectiveness of Positive Youth Development Interventions: A Meta-Analysis of Randomized Controlled Trials. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(3), 483-504. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10964-016-0555-6>

³ Hinson, L., Kapungu, C., Jessee, C., Skinner, M., Bardini, M. & Evans-Whipp, T. (2016). *Measuring Positive Youth Development Toolkit: A Guide for Implementers of Youth Programs*. Washington, DC: YouthPower Learning, Making Cents International.

303 Indigenous Productions Application of Positive Youth Development Strategies³

DOMAIN	DESCRIPTION	GROUP LEVEL INTERVENTION	COMMUNITY LEVEL INTERVENTION
Assets	“Youth have the necessary resources, skills and competencies to achieve desired outcomes”	(1) Teaches and builds skills in new media and effective media-based behavior-change messaging, (2) utilizes the Trigg-o-meter to help youth recognize and quantify emotional responses to internal and external stimuli, and (3) provides opportunities to apply and translate insights and learning through media-message creation	Youth-generated messages resonate with and help viewers identify and regulate emotional self-management
 <p>The diagram, titled 'Trigg-O-Meter', features a vertical bar with a color gradient from blue at the bottom to red at the top. Five horizontal bars with arrows point to the vertical bar at specific levels: 0 (Non-Reactive) in blue at the bottom, 25 in green, 50 in yellow, 75 in orange, and 100 (Reactive) in red at the top.</p>			
Agency	“Youth perceive and have the ability to employ their assets and aspirations to make or influence their own decisions about their lives and set their own goals, as well as to act upon those decisions in order to achieve desired outcomes”	(1) Positions youth as experts in messaging to other youth, (2) shares youth voice through media creation and distribution (3) incorporates youth voice into the curriculum structure through video clips that feature youth addressing each module’s focal point (4) engages youth in the process of creating a film concept, writing a script, designing sets, casting, and acting, and (5) requires and models perseverance in completion of film product	Encourages behavioral self-assessments, future planning, and assessing and recognizing antecedents, behaviors, and consequences (ABC Model) of behaviors to identify causal relationships and predict future outcomes
Opportunities to Contribute	“Youth are engaged as a source of change for their own and for their communities’ positive development”	Youth engaged in multiple tasks associated with creating a film, including (1) concept creation, (2) script writing, (3) set design, (4) acting, (5) casting, and (6) HMU (hair, makeup, wardrobe)	Youth-developed messages and media materials resonate with viewers and help ensure the project achieves desired outcomes
Enabling Environment	“Youth are surrounded by an environment that develops and supports their assets, agency, access to services, and opportunities, and strengthens their ability to avoid risks and to stay safe, secure, and be protected and live without fear of violence or retribution”	(1) Multiple techniques and group designs were employed to suit the culturally-specific Native learning and interpersonal styles to structure the curriculum implementation workshops, (2) opportunities for one-on-one mentoring with facilitators were made available, and (3) evidence-based norm setting practices surrounding the use of positive reinforcement techniques were established at every level of group-level and one-on-one interactions	Youth participants improve interpersonal skills, and practice enhances their promotion of positive social norms, such as self-care values and the pursuit of positive futures in their communities

Youth-produced social marketing enables viewers to identify more effectively with peers featured in media materials who model the successful adoption of (or change in) targeted behaviors. This messaging promotes emotional awareness, linking it to thoughts, behaviors, and outcomes, while increasing the target audience's sense of self-efficacy in relation to the desired behavioral goals. These messages stand in stark contrast to prevention campaigns that young people often regard as judgmental, fear-based, or manipulative to those they target. The 303 Indigenous Productions project curriculum uses the infamous anti-drug campaign, "This Is Your Brain on Drugs," which depicts a man cracking an egg into a hot frying pan, as an example of a well-known, fear-based prevention message that is largely considered ineffective.⁴

Curriculum Adaptations

The curriculum initially developed for the first cohort of the Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting grant was adapted by the implementation team to better align with the needs of the target population, urban Native youth. This adaptation process, led by DIFRC, CHS, and CoSHI, occurred over nine months. During this period, the implementation team regularly met via various video conferencing platforms to review curriculum materials, including module learning objectives, slides, and activities for each module. The team focused on revising the curriculum to be more culturally responsive for urban Native youth to ensure that youth representing the target population would achieve the desired outcomes of the project. These outcomes included increasing awareness of the cycle of poverty, healthy relationships, family planning, child support, and positive parenting and co-parenting practices.

The modifications primarily occurred in the third module of the curriculum. However, some adaptations were made in other modules to make information and related activities more resonant. The section below describes some of these adaptations. For example, Module 1 describes the evolution of media, its history, and its impact on today's society, including the importance of emotion and storytelling. Within this module, the content was modified to include descriptions of how Native storytelling, based on oral traditions, differs from Western narrative structures and to explore how Native culture is typically depicted in mainstream American media. To provide context for this difference in information sharing, the curriculum includes descriptions of colonialism and its long-term impacts on Native family makeup, community structures, economic prospects, coping behaviors, and quality of life.

Module 2 explores how social marketing and behavior change can help individuals understand their audience by understanding themselves. Additional content added to this module includes a discussion of the relationship between capitalism and social oppression, as well as how it can lead to internalized feelings of persecution. It also discusses the impact of capitalism and social oppression on economic mobility, particularly within Native communities. The adaptation also highlights how Native communities can adapt to a capitalist system by reconciling Native values with pro-capitalist American values, and how leveraging their social, cultural, and human capital can aid in the building of generational wealth without compromising Native principles.

⁴ Freudenberg, N., Picard Bradley, S., & Serrano, M. (2009). Public health campaigns to change industry practices that damage health: an analysis of 12 case studies. *Health Education & Behavior*, 36(2), 230-249.

Finally, Module 3, the most adapted module, discusses how commercial marketing reflects and instills in consumers Eurocentric parenting styles and family structures to promote critical thinking when consuming media. Module 3 also explores how generational and historical trauma has impacted and shaped Native economic mobility, responsible parenting, men’s roles and fatherhood, perspectives on child support services, financial flexibility, education, the health of relationships, stereotypes, and stigmas about Native folks. This module was adapted to include a discussion of parenting variations in Native cultures, specifically emphasizing that the Native family structure is more grounded in communal approaches to caring for children and sharing resources, highlighting the relevance of child support as a poverty-interrupting collaboration approach despite its perception as a mechanism of the Euro-American “nuclear family” model.

Social Marketing Messages

The Film

As part of the GLI, the youth wrote, produced, and acted in an approximately 15-minute film titled *Concrete Warriors*.

SAVE THE DATE

For the world premiere of an inspiring and healing short film created and produced by Native youth through our [303 Indigenous Productions](#) project.

❖ **SATURDAY, JUNE 28, 2025** ❖

INFINITY PARK EVENT CENTER
4400 E Kentucky Ave | Glendale, CO 80246

6:00 p.m. Appetizers and red carpet photos
7:30 p.m. Opening performance by youth dancers
8:00 p.m. Film screening + Q & A with youth producers

 Click or scan to RSVP 

Funding provided by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, www.HHS.gov/2025-01-04

Concrete Warriors follows the lives of seven Native teenagers, each struggling with their own unique challenges, who attend the same high school. An invitation to a foreboding party, full of temptations and an opportunity to disconnect from reality through harmful coping strategies that reflect those prevalent in Native communities, reaches each of the teenagers. The teens are also made aware of a Native powwow scheduled the same night as the party, representing connection to community, “new beginnings,” and healing. Both options prompt the youth to consider their choices and their potential outcomes. The main character, Nizhoni, is modeled after a Navajo figure known as “The Spider Woman,” a powerful deity associated with weaving connections (interconnectedness) and maintaining balance. She is credited with teaching the Diné people the art of weaving and is considered a central figure in their cosmology and artistic practices. In the film, Nizhoni’s role mirrors the principles

of the Spider Woman as she takes on the challenge of connecting the conflicted characters to the powwow, its significance, and each other. Through the film’s narration, we hear the poem she writes in an Instagram post, along with the powwow flyer, which convinces the characters to choose the powwow (connection) over the party (disconnection).

303 Indigenous Productions Brand and Website

303 Indigenous Productions created a website and the branded project name to support and enhance the dissemination of the youth-produced media. Youth participants in the GLI and film production participated in a brand-building workshop with the project’s marketing consultant to create the public-facing name for the project. Following the workshop, the youth sketched ideas for a logo and collaborated with Spearca Communications’ graphic designer to develop a design that reflected their vision for the project. The website, embedded with youth-produced media, provides resources to help inform young people about economic mobility (referred to as “flexibility” in this context) and responsible parenting, including connections to child support services and the establishment of paternity (or legal fatherhood).



303 Indigenous Productions
Logo and Website screenshot



Film Distribution and Social Media Campaign

Youth were invited to attend the world premiere of *Concrete Warriors* and related materials during an in-person event on June 28, 2025. The paid social media campaign launched October 15, 2025, and will be promoted for eight weeks. It is anticipated that the social media campaign will reach a large number of youth in the Denver metro counties, resulting in thousands of views of the film and curriculum videos, as well as visits to the 303 Indigenous Productions website.

This brief is the first of three describing 303 Indigenous Productions and the evaluation of the process of implementing the project and assessing its outcomes. The Center for Policy Research developed the content for this and other evaluation briefs. For more information, contact dstarcher@centerforpolicyresearch.org.

303 Indigenous Productions is a project of:



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