



Lac Courte Oreilles
Child Support Services

Good Life Vision

Your Life | Your Culture | Your Child's Future



OUTCOMES BRIEF

Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting

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Project Description

The Good Life Vision is Lac Courte Oreilles (LCO) Child Support Services' implementation of the Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting Grant, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Services. The Good Life Vision aims to provide Native youth with the opportunity to learn more about culture, history, values, and practices by building a connection to Ojibwe traditions, developing a positive sense of identity, and forming the assets needed to follow the Good Life.



The Good Life Vision brings the LCO Child Support Program together with community partners to preserve, strengthen, and renew Ojibwe values and culture in LCO youth. By providing opportunities to learn about history, values, and practices, the Good Life Vision builds youth's connection to culture, which facilitates learning about and living the Good Life, an important prerequisite to achieving economic mobility and responsible parenting.

Grant Purpose

Sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Services, the Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting Grant is intended to leverage the child support program's expertise on the legal and financial responsibilities of parenting to encourage teens and young adults to follow a path of events associated with favorable socio-economic outcomes known as the success sequence. It calls for parenting to occur following the completion of education, employment and entering a committed relationship.

Good Life Vision Connects Youth to Culture

A strength-based approach based on increasing connection to culture has been shown to have positive impact on Native youth's resiliency, mental health, prevention of substance use, decreased use of violence, academic achievement, and other behaviors integral to living the Good Life. Building cultural connectedness helps mitigate barriers that interfere with economic mobility and responsible parenting. Building connection through understanding and living the Good Life is the Ojibwe "formula" for a healthy and positive life.



Planning Team and Community Partners

The overall planning for the Good Life Vision, a project of LCO Child Support Services, was facilitated by child support staff, led by Director Sue Smith. Grays Peak Strategies offered project-related support, and Dr. Nell O'Donnell Weber developed the project's curriculum. Members of various LCO community partners provided overall guidance to the project and served as cultural and language experts needed in the facilitation of the programs. The Center for Policy Research (CPR) evaluates the Good Life Vision programs.

Overview of the Brief

This outcomes brief, the last of three briefs, provides the results from several LCO programs. The brief begins by discussing the cultural connectedness scale, the primary outcome measured across these programs. Next, the brief describes the results of administering the cultural connectedness scale to Native youth who participated in two Good Life Vision Programs: (1) the culture camp and (2) the middle school program. After that, we describe additional outcomes not previously discussed in other briefs for the high school parenting program. Finally, the conclusion summarizes how the programs have helped youth build cultural connectedness, thus enabling them to achieve economic mobility and become responsible parents.

Cultural Connectedness Scale

Selection and Description of the Cultural Connectedness Scale

The primary outcome of interest for the Good Life Vision Programs is cultural connectedness among program participants. To measure this construct, evaluators selected the validated Cultural Connectedness Scale-S, developed by Angela Snowshoe (2015), a non-status First Nations and Métis scholar. Snowshoe developed the Cultural Connectedness Scale using an “indigenous quantitative methodology in action” approach, which is a perspective that values the viewpoints and traditions of First Nation Peoples (Snowshoe, 2015; Walter & Andersen, 2013). The Cultural Connectedness Scale-S has ten items, which ask about a youth’s identity, participation in traditional activities, and spirituality. As a result, the Cultural Connectedness Scale-S includes three subscales: (1) identity, (2) traditions, and (3) spirituality. Out of the ten items on the scale, four can be found within the identity subscale, three within the traditions subscale, and the remaining three within the spirituality subscale (Snowshoe, 2015). Each subscale is meant to be evaluated individually, along with the overall measure of cultural connectedness.

Cultural connectedness has been linked to several positive outcomes for Native youth:

- The **protective effects of cultural connectedness** have been observed in Native groups across continents, (Gibson et al., 2021; LaFraumoise et al., 2006).
- Gray and Cote (2019) found that cultural connectedness acted as a strong protective factor against generational trauma; it was associated with **positive mental health** among individuals with family histories of residential schooling.
- LaFromboise and colleagues (2006) found enculturation, or identification with Native culture, to be the **highest predictor of resilience** among tribal communities in the upper Midwestern United States.
- A higher level of cultural connectedness was found to be related to **lower levels of violent activity and alcohol abuse** among Native youth in the Midwestern United States and Alaska (Pu et al., 2013; Allen et al., 2006).
- Whitbeck and colleagues (2001) found enculturation to be a factor in fostering **academic success** among Native youth in the Midwestern United States.
- Tribal language use, as well as involvement in ceremonies and powwows, were found to be **protective against delinquent behaviors** in tribal communities in both the Southwestern and Midwestern United States (Mmari et al., 2010).
- A study by Snowshoe (2015) identified positive associations between cultural connectedness and “**self-efficacy, sense of self** (present and future), **school connectedness, and life satisfaction** and, in some cases, predicted mental health above and beyond other established social determinants of health.”

Together these studies provide evidence of the value of the Good Life Vision’s core focus of building LCO youth’s cultural connectedness as an effective strategy to promote positive mental health, reduce substance use and its accompanying risks while increasing the healthy, pro-social behavior needed to follow the Good Life path.

Cultural Connectedness Scale, Data Cleaning, and Coding

The evaluators followed the example used by King and colleagues (2019) to record the responses to each question and ultimately create the scales. Specifically, for the first set of questions, respondents were asked, “do you agree with these sentences?” with response options of yes (coded as 5), no (coded as 1), or I’m not sure (coded as 0). In the second set of questions, respondents were asked, “do you agree or disagree with these sentences?” and given the response options of strongly disagree (coded as 1), disagree (coded as 2), I’m not sure (coded as 3), agree (coded as 4), or strongly agree (coded as 5). For the final question, the respondents were asked to “mark your answer to the question below” and given the response options of I’m not sure (coded as 0), never (coded as 1), once/twice in the past year (coded as 2), every month (coded as 3), every week (coded as 4), and every day (coded as 5). See Table 1 below for the complete list of questions and response options. The responses to each question were coded to ensure that a higher score indicates increased cultural connectedness. Each subscale was coded for a summed total score of identity, tradition, and spirituality. Then, scores from each subscale were summed together for a total overall measure of cultural connectedness.

Good Life Vision Programs

This section focuses on the evaluation of the culture camp and middle school curriculum, which used cultural connectedness (as defined above) as the primary outcome of interest. Additionally, we present other outcomes not previously discussed for the high school parenting program. The section below begins by briefly describing the culture camp, followed by the cultural connectedness survey administration and the survey results for campers, caregivers, and camp counselors. Next, there is a discussion of outcomes for the middle school curriculum. Finally, there is a discussion of additional important outcome data for the high school parenting class.

Good Life Culture Camp

Good Life Vision’s central program is its week-long summer culture camp for youth aged 11-14. The camp is housed at the beautiful Camp Highlands on the shores of Plum Lake in northern Wisconsin. Under the supervision of young adult camp counselors, LCO child support staff, and other partners, campers engage in cultural activities like Ojibwe language lessons, dance, drumming, singing, and traditional crafts such as leather work and creating regalia. To date, the camp has been offered to local youth three times: in the summer of 2022, the summer of 2023, and the summer of 2024. The Good Life implementation team led by LCO child support director Sue Smith hopes to continue offering the summer culture camp to youth after this grant has ended.



Administration of the Cultural Connectedness Survey

The Good Life Vision’s evaluators used a survey to administer the Cultural Connectedness Scale-S to campers, caregivers, and camp counselors at multiple intervals throughout the project. Campers were surveyed up to five different times throughout the project: (1) during the first camp in the summer of 2022, (2) as part of a follow-up survey in December 2022, (3) during the second camp in the summer of 2023, (4) during another follow-up survey in March 2024, and (5) during the third camp in the summer of 2024. Caregivers (parents, grandparents, aunt, uncles or other legal guardians of the campers who did not attend the camp) were surveyed up to four different times: (1) during the first camp in the summer of 2022, (2) as part of a follow-up survey in December 2022, (3) during the second camp in the summer of 2023, (4) and during another follow-up survey in March 2024. Camp counselors were surveyed up to three times: (1) during the first camp in the summer of 2022, (2) during the second camp in the summer of 2023, and (3) as a part of a follow-up survey in March 2024. For the surveys conducted at the three summer camps, LCO staff or the evaluators administered the surveys at the end of camp. The first follow-up survey, conducted in December 2022, was sent to the campers, caregivers, and counselors through the mail, and completed surveys were returned to the evaluators. The second follow-up survey was conducted in March 2024, and the evaluators sent the surveys to all participants via email. Across all iterations, participants received a gift card for completing the survey. Minor adaptations were made to the cultural connectedness scale to reflect local Ojibwe traditions. Table 1, found below, shows how the questions were slightly adapted for each group (campers, caregivers, and camp counselors).

Table 1. Cultural Connectedness Scale Question Comparison Across Campers, Caregivers, and Camp Counselors

CAMPERS	CAREGIVERS	COUNSELORS
<p>Do you agree with these sentences? Mark yes, no, or I'm not sure. <i>[Options: yes, no, I'm not sure]</i></p>		
<p>1. I know my indigenous/spirit name. [Spirituality]</p> <p>2. I feel a connection to things like animals and rocks as natural beings. [Spirituality]</p> <p>3. I use or intend to use tobacco or asemaa for guidance. [Traditions]</p> <p>4. I plan on trying to find out more about my Native culture, such as its history, traditions, and customs. [Identity]</p> <p>5. I have a traditional person, Elder, or Spiritual leader who I talk to. [Traditions]</p>	<p>1. I know my indigenous/spirit name.</p> <p>2. My child (child that attended camp) knows their indigenous/spirit name.</p> <p>3. I have a traditional person, Elder, or Spiritual leader who I talk to.</p> <p>4. My child has a traditional person, Elder or Spiritual leader who they talk to.</p>	<p>1. I know my indigenous/spirit name.</p> <p>2. I feel a connection to things like animals and rocks as natural beings.</p> <p>3. I use or intend to use tobacco or asemaa for guidance.</p> <p>4. I plan on trying to find out more about my Native culture, such as its history, traditions, and customs.</p> <p>5. I have a traditional person, Elder, or Spiritual leader who I talk to.</p>

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CAMPERS	CAREGIVERS	COUNSELORS
<p>Do you agree or disagree with these sentences? Mark how much you agree or disagree. <i>[Options: Strongly Disagree, Disagree, I'm not sure, Agree Strongly, or Agree]</i></p>		
<p>6. I have spent time trying to find out more about being Native, such as history, traditions, and customs. [Identity]</p> <p>7. I have a strong sense of belonging to my Native community or Nation. [Identity]</p> <p>8. I feel a strong attachment towards my Native community or Nation. [Identity]</p> <p>9. The eagle feather has a lot of meaning to me. [Spirituality]</p>	<p>5. I learned a lot about my Native culture when I was growing up.</p> <p>6. I have spent time as an adult trying to find out more about being Native, such as history, traditions, and customs.</p> <p>7. I spend time teaching my child cultural related things like language, dancing, or crafts.</p> <p>8. I have a strong sense of belonging to my Native community or nation.</p> <p>9. I feel a strong attachment towards my Native community or nation.</p> <p>10. The eagle feather has a lot of meaning to me.</p>	<p>6. I have spent time trying to find out more about being Native, such as history, traditions, and customs.</p> <p>7. I have a strong sense of belonging to my Native community or Nation.</p> <p>8. I feel a strong attachment towards my Native community or Nation.</p> <p>9. The eagle feather has a lot of meaning to me.</p>
<p>Mark your answer to the question below: <i>[Options: Never, Once/Twice in the Past year, Every Month, Every Week, Every Day, I'm not sure]</i></p>		
<p>10. How often does someone in your family or someone you are close with use sage, sweetgrass, tobacco/asemma or cedar in any way or form? [Traditions]</p>	<p>11. How often do you use sage, sweetgrass, tobacco/asemma or cedar in any way or form?</p>	<p>10. How often does someone in your family or someone you are close with use sage, sweetgrass, tobacco/asemma or cedar in any way or form?</p>
<p><small>Note: The subscale classification for each question asked to the campers is found between square brackets. An analysis of the subscales was not conducted for the caregivers or counselors due to scale modifications completed for these groups.</small></p>		

Campers

Campers were surveyed up to five different times throughout the project. The vast majority of campers attended camp twice or three times. Once the subscales and overall cultural connectedness scale answers were recorded from each version of the survey, data analysis occurred in several different phases. First, the results from the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 were compared using several paired sample t-tests to the follow-up results in December 2022. Second, the results from camp in the summer of 2023 were compared using several paired sample t-tests to the subsequent follow-up results in March of 2024. Third, the results from the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 were compared using several paired sample t-tests to the results from the camp in the summer of 2024.

Analysis of the camper data across time resulted in several important takeaways about the impact of the culture camp on cultural connectedness for the campers. The results for each iteration of the survey are shown below in Table 2.

To summarize these key takeaways:

- There was no statistically significant change in cultural connectedness (as measured by this scale) for campers between the baseline camp survey conducted in the summer of 2022 and the first follow-up survey conducted in December 2022.
- However, there was a statistically significant increase in the spirituality subscale and the overall cultural connectedness scale in the March follow-up compared to results from the summer 2023 camp.
- Additionally, there was a statistically significant increase in the identity subscale, traditions subscale, and overall cultural connectedness scale between the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 and the third camp in the summer of 2024.

The survey results overall show that the culture camp increased cultural connectedness for campers, especially over time between the first camp in the summer of 2022 and the third camp in the summer of 2024.

Table 2. Camper Cultural Connectedness Survey Results

	Baseline Camp Summer 2022 (n = 28)	Follow-up December 2022 (n = 28)	Camp Summer 2023 (n = 56)	Follow-up March 2024 (n = 23)	Camp Summer 2024 (n = 38)
	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range
<i>Identity Subscale</i>	13.75 (3.76) 8,20	12.21(6.98) 0,19	14.57(3.32) 7,20	15.65 (2.23) 9,19	15.63*(3.18) ₃ 7,20
<i>Traditions Subscale</i>	6.82 (3.92) 0,15	7.71 (4.83) 0,15	8.70 (4.49) 0,15)	10.65 (3.81) 2,14	8.66*(3.99) ₄ 1,15
<i>Spirituality Subscale</i>	8.32 (3.67) 2,15	7.36 (5.00) 0,15	9.16 (3.58) 4,15	11.60*(3.43) ₁ 5,15	9.60 (3.04) 4,15
<i>Overall Cultural Connectedness</i>	28.89 (7.85) 15, 44	27.29 (15.25) 0,45	32.43 (8.72) 15,48	37.91*(7.22) ₂ 23,47	33.89*(7.49) ₅ 20,46

Notes: SD is an abbreviation for Standard Deviation; *p≤0.05
 1. Indicates a statistically significant increase in the spirituality subscale in the March follow-up compared to results from the summer 2023 camp
 2. Indicates a statistically significant increase in the overall cultural connectedness scale in the March follow-up compared to results from the summer 2023 camp
 3. Indicates a statistically significant increase in the identity subscale between the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 and the camp in the summer of 2024
 4. Indicates a statistically significant increase in the traditions subscale between the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 and the camp in the summer of 2024
 5. Indicates a statistically significant increase in the overall cultural connectedness scale between the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 and the camp in the summer of 2024

Caregivers

As stated above, the cultural connectedness scale questions were slightly adapted for each group (campers, caregivers, and camp counselors). Since the original questions were written for youth, several modifications were made to the caregiver version of the scale including adding an additional question. Given these

changes to the scale, only the overall measure of cultural connectedness was calculated for caregivers. After creating the overall cultural connectedness scale for each version of the survey, data analysis occurred in two phases. First, the results from the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 were compared using a paired sample t-test to the follow-up results in December of 2022. Second, the results from camp in the summer of 2023 were compared using a paired sample t-test to the subsequent follow-up results in March of 2024. The results for caregivers are shown below in Table 3.

To summarize the key changes in cultural connectedness over time for caregivers:

- There was a statistically significant decrease in cultural connectedness (as measured by this scale) for caregivers between the baseline camp survey conducted in the summer of 2022 and the first follow-up survey conducted in December of 2022.
- Additionally, there was no statistically significant change in overall cultural connectedness between the surveys completed during the summer 2023 camp and the March 2024 follow-up.

There are several reasons why cultural connectedness for caregivers appears to have decreased between survey administrations at the end of camp and at follow-up. Since the survey did not specify which caregiver should complete it, different caregivers may have completed the surveys administered at camp and at the follow-up timepoints. Thus, the surveys did not necessarily measure cultural connectedness for the same person at the two different time points. Still another reason for the reduction might be the lag in time between the baseline and follow-up administrations of the survey. Finally, it is likely that an increase in cultural connectedness for youth did not translate to an increase in cultural connectedness for their caregivers.

Table 3. Caregiver Cultural Connectedness Survey Results

	Camp Summer 2022 (n=13)	Follow-up December 2022 (n=14)	Camp Summer 2023 (n=17)	Follow-up March 2024 (n=22)
	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range
Overall Cultural Connectedness	47.38 (7.44) 29,55	38.93*(7.38) ₁ 28,49	45.59 (9.00) 21,55	42.90 (8.80) 23,52

Notes: SD is an abbreviation for Standard Deviation; *p≤0.05
 1. Indicates a statistically significant decrease in cultural connectedness between the baseline camp survey conducted in the summer of 2022 and the first follow-up survey conducted in December of 2022

Camp Counselors

As the original survey was created for youth, the questions were adapted (as shown above in Table 1) for the adult camp counselors. Again, given these changes to the scale, only the overall measure of cultural connectedness was calculated for camp counselors. After creating the overall cultural connectedness scale for each version of the survey, data analysis occurred in two phases. First, the results from the baseline camp in the summer of 2022 were compared using a paired sample t-test to the results from the summer 2023 camp. Second, the camp 2023 results were compared using a paired sample t-test to the follow-up survey in March of 2024. The entire results for camp counselors are shown below in Table 4.

The camp counselor survey results showed:

- There was no statistically significant change in cultural connectedness (as measured by this scale) for camp counselors between the baseline camp survey conducted in the summer of 2022 and the summer 2023 camp.
- Additionally, there was no statistically significant change in cultural connectedness for counselors between the survey completed in the summer 2023 camp and the follow-up survey in March of 2024.

The lack of change may indicate that camp counselors already had a high level of cultural connectedness before attending the camp. Thus, the camp did not increase or decrease the connection to culture for this group. As shown in Table 4, camp counselors already reported a high level of cultural connectedness at the baseline camp and the summer 2023 camp. However, future iterations of the culture camp may result in increased cultural connectedness for counselors, given the innovative junior camp counselor program implemented in the latter part of the Summer 2024 camp. As part of the junior camp counselor initiative, a camp attendee who has previously attended the camp is allowed to continue to be involved in the summer camps as a junior mentor for current campers. The junior camp counselor program can help increase cultural connectedness among adult counselors who mentor the junior campers and the junior campers who receive another opportunity to enjoy the summer camp programming.

Table 4. Counselor Cultural Connectedness Survey Results

	Camp Summer 2022 (n=5)	Camp Summer 2023 (n=10)	Follow-up March 2024 (n=5)
	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range	Average (SD) Range
Overall Cultural Connectedness	47.20 (4.15) 40,50	45.2 (6.16) 34,50	43.80 (8.38) 30,50

Notes: SD is an abbreviation for Standard Deviation, no statistically significant differences found

Middle School Program

After partnering with the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School, Good Life Vision implemented a multi-session program on Parenting and the Good Life for middle school students. Six sessions were planned, with an additional one added to refresh the participants’ engagement with previous lessons. The sessions were held over seven weeks during school hours and included discussions, activities, and homework assignments on family, emotions, kindness, respect for elders, and staying healthy. The middle school students were given a survey that included the cultural connectedness scale described above before and after implementing the middle school curriculum to measure changes in cultural connectedness. The LCO staff administered the pre-test at the first session of the program, and the same staff administered the post-test at the end of the last session.

Table 5 below shows the results for the pre-and post-test survey. Although there was a slight increase in both the traditions and the spirituality subscales in the post-test compared to the pre-test, these differences were not statistically significant. Therefore, the middle school program did not increase cultural connectedness (as measured by the current scale) among participants. However, changes to the program implementation process and strict adherence to the curriculum could help increase cultural connectedness in future iterations of the program.

Table 5. 2024 Middle School Curriculum Cultural Connectedness Survey Results

	Pre-Intervention (n=24)			Post-Intervention (n=21)		
	Average	SD	Range	Average	SD	Range
<i>Identity Subscale</i>	13.88	3.71	7,20	12.19	6.09	0,18
<i>Traditions Subscale</i>	7.67	2.90	3,13	8.10	4.95	0,15
<i>Spirituality Subscale</i>	6.88	3.11	2,14	6.90	3.70	2,14
<i>Overall Cultural Connectedness</i>	28.42	6.64	16,41	27.19	13.12	3,46

Notes: SD is an abbreviation for Standard Deviation, no statistically significant differences found

High School Parenting

Good Life Vision strengthened the health class elective, Early Childhood and Parenting, offered by Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School by providing 12 RealCare Baby Infant Simulators for parenting education. Students practiced responding to the baby dolls’ needs and experienced the demanding realities of caring for an infant. Students cared for the baby simulator for a weekend while journaling on their experiences and thoughts about the emotional, social, and financial impacts of caring for a baby. For the evaluation, a focus group was held with students who participated in the program, and an interview was conducted with the teacher of the health class elective.



Focus Group

Six students (freshmen and juniors) participated in the High School Parenting Program. In a focus group, the youth discussed their experiences caring for baby simulators, and the emotional, physical, social, and financial demands it had involved. The girls shared how this experience made them realize that caring for an infant meant they were on duty 24/7. Many girls also spoke about how tired they were after staying up late at night to care for the baby. As said by one participant, *“I’d have to say the waking up in the middle of the night was the hard part... I had major anxiety sleeping because, I didn’t want it to go off while I was sleeping because a few people know that I’m a very heavy sleeper. I will not wake up for nothing.”* The girls also described the physical toll of carrying around an eight-pound baby, with one girl even complaining of a backache at the end of the weekend.

Students also spoke about the impact on their social life. For example, one girl shared that she wanted to go to a sleepover with a friend but could not attend because she needed to care for the baby. Some students held after-school jobs and expressed difficulties balancing the competing demands of work, school, caring for the baby, and having time to relax. Others expressed feelings of intense anxiety when taking the doll out in a public setting. One girl shared what it was like when her doll cried at a local store, saying, *“It wouldn’t stop... just giving me like a lot of anxiety because I felt like everyone just wanted the baby to shut up and I’m like what do I do?”* The students also shared their experience completing a mock nursery assignment for this class. As part of this assignment, they picked a theme for their nursery, created a list of items they would need for the nursery, and found the prices for those items. All of the students were surprised that the cost of the items they selected was much higher than expected.

“

It was a really great learning experience.”

– Student

The evaluators also asked the students about their overall opinion of the class, whether it should be taught again, and what changes should be made moving forward. The students generally held a very positive view of the course when asked about their overall opinion. As said by one student, *“It was a really great learning experience.”* The students also vehemently agreed that the class should be required for all Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School students. However, the students did feel that it would be helpful if they could carry the doll for longer than the weekend.

Interview

To gather additional information on the program, CPR staff conducted an interview with Theresa Poole, the teacher of this health class. At the time of the interview, Theresa had been employed by the LCO school for six years and had taught the course for all six years. Students in previous course iterations also used dolls for this parenting section. However, the old dolls were outdated and missing a lot of critical electrical components that enhanced the reality of the simulation. As a result, when the course was taught, students would sign a paper stating when they fed and changed the baby. To contrast, the new dolls include computerized chips that register the care provided to the doll. Theresa credits these new dolls for the smoother implementation of the program this year.

As part of this interview, we asked Theresa to describe the educational goals of the class. She responded, *“Number one it is teaching them the responsibility that caring for an infant takes time.”* Theresa felt that an important takeaway for students was learning that the responsibilities of caring for a child were greater than they anticipated. As she put it, *“I think they understood that this was bigger than they expected it to be, which is good. Because ultimately, you know, we want them at a place where when you’re going to choose to have a child, you’re responsible.”* She felt that a key takeaway of this class was students gaining a deeper understanding of the duties associated with parenting.

Another important takeaway for Theresa was that the dolls and accompanying assignments helped students become more aware of the financial realities of parenting. She shared that the girls learned about the benefits of having a partner, finishing school, and becoming financially established before becoming a parent. Theresa also spoke very highly of the mock nursery assignment that students completed. She described the process of creating a fun document that students used to identify their nursery themes, necessary items, and the prices of those items. When speaking about students’ reactions to the prices, she shared, *“I think they were kind of surprised by the amount of money that it was going to take to set up a first baby.”* Overall, she felt the experience of carrying the doll for the weekend helped generate some critical conversations with students, especially around the responsibilities and financial duties associated with having a child, which had a meaningful impact on the girls.

Conclusions

The LCO Child Support Services' Good Life Vision programs had a powerful impact by increasing the cultural connectedness of its LCO youth participants. The centerpiece program, the Good Life Culture Camp, engaged over 75 youth in meaningful cultural and recreational activities that built cultural connectedness, created friendships, and exposed campers to new and challenging experiences. The high school parenting class also helped students learn more about the emotional, social, and financial impacts of caring for a baby while also helping these youth build connections to their culture. Based on prior research linking cultural connectedness to a number of positive outcomes (see Allen et al., 2006; Gibson et al., 2021; Gray & Cote, 2019; LaFraomboise et al., 2006; Mmari et al., 2010; Pu et al., 2013; Snowshoe, 2015; Whitbeck et al., 2001). It is hoped that increasing cultural connectedness among LCO youth through these various programs will help them build a sense of personal identity and sense of belonging to their community, provide guidance about making good choices, and ultimately help them become better parents in the future.

In the words of one Ojibwe Language teacher...

“

The payoff is gonna be huge. I cannot wait to see the types of parents that these kids are gonna be. Giving them an understanding and a connection to who they are as Native people is part of that gift. So that their parenting lives are rich and full and loving and supportive and cultural. So it's very intentional. Not every child's gonna grow up to be a parent. But every child will be involved in parenting, whether you're an auntie or a waa'aa or you .. have a role in our tribe as a parent, no matter what happens in your life.”

– **Bonnie Beaudin, Ojibwe Language Teacher**



This evaluation brief is the third of three descriptions of the Good Life Vision programs and approach, process of implementation, and outcomes. The briefs summarize the Good Life Vision evaluation conducted by the Center for Policy Research. Quotes included here were solicited through feedback surveys or were extracted from the *It's a Good Life* film, produced by nDigiDreams. For more information, contact dstarcher@centerforpolicyresearch.org.