

STATEMENT OF NEAL McCALEB
ASSISTANT SECRETARY - INDIAN AFFAIRS
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS, DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BEFORE THE COMMITTEE ON INDIAN AFFAIRS
UNITED STATES SENATE
HEARING ON
NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH

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Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am pleased to be here today to discuss Native American Youth activities and initiatives within the Office of the Assistant Secretary - Indian Affairs and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (Bureau).

The problems encountered by Indian Youth as they grow up on the reservation are the prevalence of alcohol and substance abuse and the consequent social dysfunction created by substance abuse. These problems are, in my opinion, a result of sustained economic deprivation and the hopelessness of having little expectation of having a career or meaningful employment on the reservation. These problems are chronic and seemingly intractable and will require a concerted and sustained effort by the Federal government in its role as Trustee to cause a measurable improvement.

Opportunities for economic development should be promoted and nurtured by all agencies of the Federal government through contracting and economic incentives for businesses in Indian Country in a well coordinated fashion. We are sponsoring an Indian Economic Summit this fall to focus attention on the opportunities and mechanisms for business development on reservations. The objective must be the full participation of Indian communities in the economic prosperity of this country. It is our challenge to help Indian families overcome obstacles related to poverty and isolation.

We have one such successful Bureau initiative carried forward by the Office of Indian Education Programs (OIEP) called the Family and Child Education Program, otherwise referred to as the FACE program. This unique program provides family literacy services to American Indian parents and their children from birth through third grade. The goal is to provide support to parents in their role as their child's first and most influential teacher. Through the FACE program, families receive services in their homes and at school. The FACE program is unique in that it is one of the few Federal programs designed to include the collaborative efforts of Federal, tribal and private organizations to achieve these objectives.

The FACE program began as a pilot initiative in 1991 was implemented in six Bureau funded schools and communities. Over the years the program has expanded to the current 32 programs. Beginning in school year 2003-2004, the program will grow to 39.

The Parents As Teachers organization based in St. Louis, Missouri, and the National Center for Family Literacy based in Louisville, Kentucky provide on-going training and technical assistance to the staff to

implement this program. The training and technical assistance provided to the local based FACE program staff is held at national meetings and on site in the community at a Bureau funded school to ensure a high level of quality implementation. The impact of the FACE program is measured annually with formal evaluations conducted by the Resource and Training Associates (RTA) of Overland Park, Kansas. The executive summaries are available at the BIA/OIEP web site.

Recently, during a recent trip to New Mexico, I saw the FACE program in action. It was evident that there is a family atmosphere. I saw moms, dads, grandparents and youngsters participating as partners in their child's education as well as their own. The school and community look with pride at their FACE program which, although it is a model, is adapted to reflect the culture and community of the local setting. It is impressive to see the program staff who are community members speaking both English and their native language, during the program.

Over the past eleven years, over 5,000 families have participated, representing 15,000 adults and children. It should be noted that the FACE program requires adult participation. For every child in the program, a parent or significant caring adult must also participate. Children are not served without an adult. Seventy-five percent of the FACE program families are learning English as a second language. Sixty-nine percent of the FACE program adults served are mothers, 21 percent are fathers and 10 percent are grandmothers and/or other relatives. Five or six individuals reside in the homes of most of the FACE program families. The number residing in homes range from 2 to 16. Participating families usually are comprised of two or three individuals but the BIA OIEP records show there have been as many 8.

As a direct result of their participation in the program, 1,500 parents have gained job skills resulting in their employment, and 600 have completed their GED or gained their high school diploma. Sixty percent of the FACE program adults improve their reading and math skills. Ninety-one percent of the FACE program parents report reading to their child everyday.

Parents who participate in the FACE program remain involved in their child's education and demonstrate continued participation in the school such as serving on school committees, attending parent teacher conferences and volunteering in the classroom. BIA schools with the FACE program report higher levels of parent involvement than BIA schools without the FACE program. Ninety-one percent of the FACE program parents report that the FACE program schools are welcoming places for parents. This is particularly significant in that so many of the FACE program parents did not have successful experiences in schools and also for many they are returning to the same school in order to participate in the FACE program. As a direct result in their participation in the FACE program they increase their self esteem and become empowered. They gain a voice to express their concerns and to support or impact their child's education. Over the past five years the FACE program has conducted a parent essay contest to encourage parents to write about the impact the FACE program has made for them and their families. There are three winning essays selected and these are posted on the BIA/OIEP web site as personal stories or testimonies about how their lives and families have changed through the support they received through the FACE program. Overall, parents report that the most important thing they have learned from participating in the

FACE program is improved parenting.

Children who participate in both the home based services and school based early childhood program demonstrate higher proficiency in language, literacy, personal, social, mathematical thinking and social studies domains. The age of home based children is from birth through age three. These children and their parents receive the Born to Learn Curriculum, developed by the Parents As Teachers organization, which is based on the latest brain based research from birth to age 3. At age three the brain is 80 percent developed which indicates how important it is to reach children in those earliest years and support parents with knowledge about child development and encourage their participation in age appropriate activities which will enhance learning and future academic achievement.

Children age 4 and 5 are served at a BIA funded school with their parents. The National Center for Family Literacy provides the training and support for early childhood and adult education teachers. The early childhood program is designed to implement a child centered active learning approach and the adult education program is based on the national standards for adult education. Each parent receives a program designed to address their unmet academic needs and improve job related or employment skills. Part of each day these FACE program adults participate in their child's classroom and engage in an activity with them. Part of each day is also set aside to discuss parenting and child development.

A definition of early childhood includes birth through age 8, the FACE program schools provide children in grades K-3 with a child centered active learning approach. The K-3 teachers are trained by certified trainers at national meetings and on site to ensure the quality of the FACE program implementation.

Sharon Darling, Founder and Executive Director of the National Center for Family Literacy has stated that the finest examples of family literacy programs are found implemented in the FACE program.

The FACE program is a quality program that has proven to support parents in one of their most important roles; as teachers of their children. This is an important program that impacts the critical early years of children by improving academic performance which leads our students to complete high school and improve their overall family literacy. I encourage all of you to visit one of our FACE program schools.

It's this type of program that provides opportunities to the whole community by providing each individual with a role in shaping their own destiny. As the opportunity for self-realization of an individual's full potential develops within the cultural influence of the Indian community the social dysfunction of dependency will diminish and Indian youth will experience a new and brighter future.

I will be happy to answer any questions you may have.