



Testimony By:

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Delivered To: U.S. Senate Committee on Indian Affairs

July 15, 2015

Good Afternoon, Kwey (hello). My name is Carla Knapp and I am a tribal member of the Penobscot Indian Nation, and the proud mother of two beautiful children – a 25-year-old son who is currently serving in the U.S. Air Force, and a 5-year-old daughter.

I have 15 years of experience working with tribal youth through the Boys & Girls Clubs of America. I began my career by establishing a Boys & Girls Club to serve my home tribe, eventually becoming the Chief Professional Officer. Over time I worked to expand Club services to a wider area, partnering with five federally-recognized tribes to reach many more Native youth in need.

In June of 2013 I joined the national staff of Boys & Girls Clubs of America, becoming a Director of Organizational Development for Native Clubs. Last year I became the National Director of Native Services, overseeing our entire network of Clubs serving youth in Indian Country.

I am extremely honored and humbled to serve in this role, and to be here today on behalf of Native youth across the nation.

In recognition of the extraordinary and unique challenges facing Native communities, including the enormous barriers that stand in the way of success for Native youth, Boys & Girls Clubs of America chartered its first Club in Indian Country in 1992.

Today, 23 years later, Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country is a true success story – we are the nation's largest Native youth-serving agency, with 179 Native Clubs serving some 82,000 youth in 24 states, representing some 90 different American Indian, Alaska Native and Hawaiian communities.

The Boys & Girls Club legacy in America goes back 155 years, and has always been driven by several fundamental principles. We believe every child in America deserves:

- A safe place to go after school

- A place that is available when they need it the most
- A place that is fun
- A place that is clean and well-maintained, and gives them a sense of belonging and pride
- A place that is affordable regardless of their financial circumstances
- A place where their friends are, and where they can make new friends
- A place with trained, professional staff
- A place that offers life-changing programs
- A place that provides hope and opportunity.

And because we strive to offer these amenities at every Club, we also believe:

- **Every** child **deserves** a Boys & Girls Club.

Over the past 23 years, the Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country have proven to be a game-changer for Native youth, by helping them overcome the many societal issues and personal obstacles they face in their communities and home environments.

Many national studies have consistently shown that Native Americans suffer disproportionately, compared with other groups in the United States, from diseases and death connected to alcoholism, drugs and substance abuse.

Furthermore, the persistent issues of unemployment, poverty, physical and sexual abuse and a host of other risk factors existing in Indian Country, have created a climate where suicide, alcoholism and drug abuse amongst tribal youth is continually perpetuated.

There are many statistics that paint a grim and alarming portrait of the well-being of Native youth in America today. Because time is limited, I will offer just two:

- 1 In 2012, 36 percent of American Indian/Alaska Native children lived in poverty, compared with 13 percent of white children and 22 percent of all children. In the same year, 64 percent of Native children lived in low-income families, compared with 32 percent of white children and 45 percent of all children.¹

¹ Institute of Education Sciences, http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator_cce.asp and National Center for Children in Poverty, <http://www.nccp.org/publications/images/0-18-2014fig6.png>

- 2 Among Native youth ages 15 to 24, suicide is the second leading cause of death. Native teens experience the highest rates of suicide of any population in the country.²

These two facts alone provide a sober assessment of the circumstances that face our Native young people growing up in America today. In our written testimony, which all of you have received, we include many more statistics, all of which speak dramatically to the need for more resources and commitment to addressing the needs of Native youth in America.

Our Clubs offer an antidote to these challenges, by attracting and guiding young people with core programs in five areas:

- **Education and Career Development**, which teaches basic educational disciplines and technology, and supplements the role of the school;
- **Character and Leadership Development**, which emphasizes interpersonal relationship-building, self-image and contribution to the community;
- **Health and Life Skills**, which encourages goal-setting and self-sufficiency;
- **The Arts**, which nurture creativity, cultural awareness and appreciation for the arts in all forms; and
- **Sports and Recreation**, which develop physical and social skills, enhance stress management and appreciation for the environment.

These programs are available to youth in grades K through and 12 and are administered by caring adults who greet the children with smiles and encouragement every day.

While much empirical and anecdotal evidence exists pertaining to the impact of the Boys & Girls Club experience, we strive to constantly measure, evaluate and improve the experiences and outcomes achieved by Club members.

One of the key indicators we have used over time has been a series of surveys, originated by well-known researchers **Lou Harris & Associates**, gauging the ultimate impact of the Club experience. In the last survey, implemented in 2007, **57 percent of former members said the Club “saved my life.”** Upon further probing, many said they meant this literally.

So we know from this testimony, and from many objective studies conducted over the last decade, that how kids spend their out-of-school time exerts a huge influence on staying in school, avoiding encounters with the law, and going on to successful futures as contributing citizens and leaders. We believe, given the circumstances in which they live, that this truth applies even more tenderly to young people on Indian Lands.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Minority Health, <http://www.minorityhealth.hhs.gov/omh/browse.aspx?vl=4&lvlID=39>

During the past five years, in our efforts to increase accountability and pursue continuous improvement, Boys & Girls Clubs of America has made a major commitment to the measurement and evaluation of program effectiveness and impact. BGCA established the **National Youth Outcomes Initiative**, which collects comprehensive data on the experiences and outcomes of Boys & Girls Club members in a consistent manner, using a common set of research-informed indicators and measures.

Following are a few examples of what we have found related to the impact of the Club experience on Native youth.

1. Reducing Youth Delinquency

Research over time clearly indicates that youth who become involved with delinquency and illegal activities have a high rate of dropping out of high school, and concurrently, diminish their future prospects, in terms of not continuing their education, achieving a promising career path, or earning a decent living.

Our findings: Among teen-aged Native Club members who participated in BGCA's National Outcomes Survey in spring 2015, **91 percent reported never being arrested** in the past year.

Another Proven Results:

Evaluations have shown that public housing communities with Boys & Girls Clubs that implemented SMART Moves experienced 13% fewer juvenile crimes, 22% less drug activity, and 25% less crack cocaine presence than similar sites without Boys & Girls Clubs.³ Another study of parent involvement in SMART Moves found that regular parent involvement in SMART Moves activities increased youths' ability to refuse alcohol and marijuana beyond that of programs without a parental component

2. Societal Costs Associated with Negative Youth Outcomes

- In the U.S., state correctional facilities spend an average of **\$408 per day** – and an average of **\$149,000 per year** – to incarcerate one juvenile.⁴
 - Every 10 youth Boys & Girls Clubs divert from incarceration, could save as much as **\$1.5 Million**.

³ Pope, C.E. et al (1995). Evaluation of Boys and Girls Clubs in Public Housing. U.S Department of Justice. National Institute of Justice. Washington D.C.

⁴ Petteruti, A., Schindler, M. and Ziedenberg, J. (2014). *Calculating the Full Price Tag for Youth Incarceration* (Washington, D.C." Justice Policy Institute), <http://www.justicepolicy.org/research/8477>.

- Over a lifetime, the medical costs associated with childhood obesity total about **\$19,000 more per child** than those for a child of normal weight.⁵
 - Every 100 youth Boys & Girls Clubs help develop habits that enable them to maintain a healthy weight, could save as much as **\$1.9 million** in lifetime medical costs.
 - According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 31 percent of Native Youth are obese, a rate 177 percent higher than that of the general population. Whereas only 30 percent of all U.S. youth get physical exercise every day, Boys & Girls Clubs' outcome data reports **60 percent** of Native Club youth exercise 5 or more days per week.

Another Proven Result:

Over the past 10 years, T.R.A.I.L., a diabetes prevention program has been implemented in Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country to provide youth with the skills necessary to lead healthy lives while also sharing knowledge with their surrounding community. The impact of the T.R.A.I.L. program in Indian Country is astounding: In total, T.R.A.I.L. participants have logged 4.2 million physical activity minutes from 2003-2014. T.R.A.I.L. participants' daily physical activity level increased by nearly 87% in a 28 week period in the 2013-2014 program year.

3. Economic Impact Estimates Associated with Positive Youth Outcomes

- The average lifetime economic benefit to our nation for every young person who graduates from high school is \$209,100.⁶
 - For every 100 struggling students Boys & Girls Clubs help to graduate, our economy benefits by **\$21 million** in lifetime gains in productivity.
 - Approximately 41% percent of incarcerated individuals lack a high school education⁷, and the high school graduation rate for Native American/Alaskan Native youth overall is 70%⁸. In contrast, 95% of Native Boys & Girls Club teens expect to graduate from high school, according to BGCA outcome data.

⁵ Finkelstein, E.A., Graham, W.C.K. and Molhotra, R. (2014). "Lifetime Direct Medical Costs of Childhood Obesity," *Pediatrics*, Vol. 133, No. 5, 854-862, <http://pediatrics.aapublications.org/content/133/5/854.short>.

⁶ Levin, H.M. et al. (2007). *The Costs and Benefits of an Excellent Education for All of America's Children* (New York: Center for Benefit-Cost Studies of Education, Teacher's College, Columbia University).

⁷ U.S. Department of Justice (2003). Bureau of Justice Statistic Report.

⁸ National Center for Educational Statistics (2015), https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/tables/ACGR_2010-11_to_2012-13.asp.

4. Economic Impact Estimates Associated with Out-of-School-Time Programs

- It costs Boys & Girls Clubs as little as **\$15 per day** – or \$790 per year – to produce a positive impact on a child.⁹

Taking these and many other impact indicators into account, we believe that Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country is one of the best bargains in America.

In most tribal communities, Native children and youth comprise the largest proportion of the population, yet some 40% of students in Bureau of Indian Education schools on tribal lands fail graduate on time.¹⁰ Boys & Girls Clubs will continue to play a critical role in breaking a perpetual cycle of extreme poverty, low academic performance, and significant health problems. We envision Native youth on their path to great futures — succeeding in school, becoming community leaders, assuming roles as contributing members of the workforce, and engaging in regular physical activity and good nutrition.

Boys & Girls Clubs in Indian Country have an unprecedented opportunity to help more Native youth to lead sustainable change, while embracing their culture and traditions. We believe generations of children to come will benefit from investments in programs and services, such as Boys & Girls Clubs, that help them grow into responsible adults — and that America stands to gain from the increased productivity and contributions of these future citizens and leaders.

As mentioned earlier, Boys & Girls Clubs grew from one solitary Native Club in 1992, to 179 Clubs serving some 82,000 Native youth today. How can we replicate this success, and reach many more youth in need, in the immediate years ahead? Boys & Girls Clubs of America stands ready to partner with those, from all sectors, who share our passion for making a difference, and who wish to join us in harnessing the power and potential of our Native youth, for the betterment of our great nation.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman (*Sen. John Barrasso*), and members of the Committee. That concludes my testimony.

⁹ Boys & Girls Clubs of America cost-per-child estimate based on annual report data submitted by Club organizations on average daily attendance and Club operating expenses.

¹⁰ Bureau of Indian Education (2013), <http://www.bie.edu/cs/groups/xbie/documents/text/idc1-021962.pdf>.