

# **Evaluation of Asdzáán Be'eena' Teen Pregnancy and Substance Use Prevention Program:** *Harnessing cultural strengths and intergenerational programming to improve health outcomes among Navajo girls and their female caregivers*

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**CENTER FOR  
INDIGENOUS HEALTH**

# Disclosure Statement

- In the past 24 months, **Jaime Begay** has no relevant financial relationships with the manufacturer(s) of commercial services discussed in this CME activity
- In the past 24 months, **Brittany Begay** has no relevant financial relationships with the manufacturer(s) of commercial services discussed in this CME activity
- We **do not** intend to discuss an unapproved/investigative use of a commercial product/device in our presentation.

# Johns Hopkins Center for Indigenous Health at the Bloomberg School of Public Health

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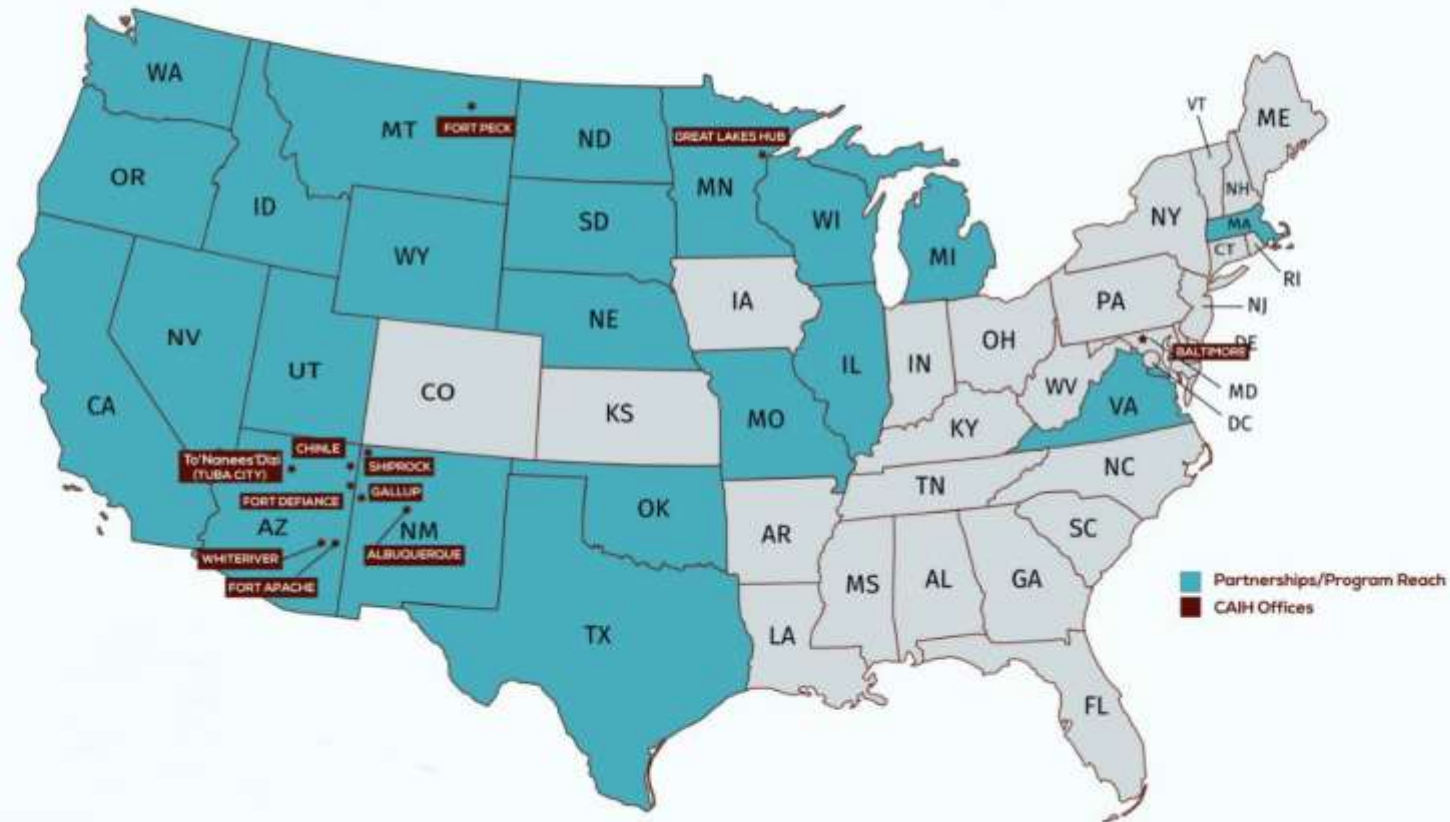
**Founded in 1991** by Dr. Mathu Santosham, based on 10 years of work with Southwest tribes

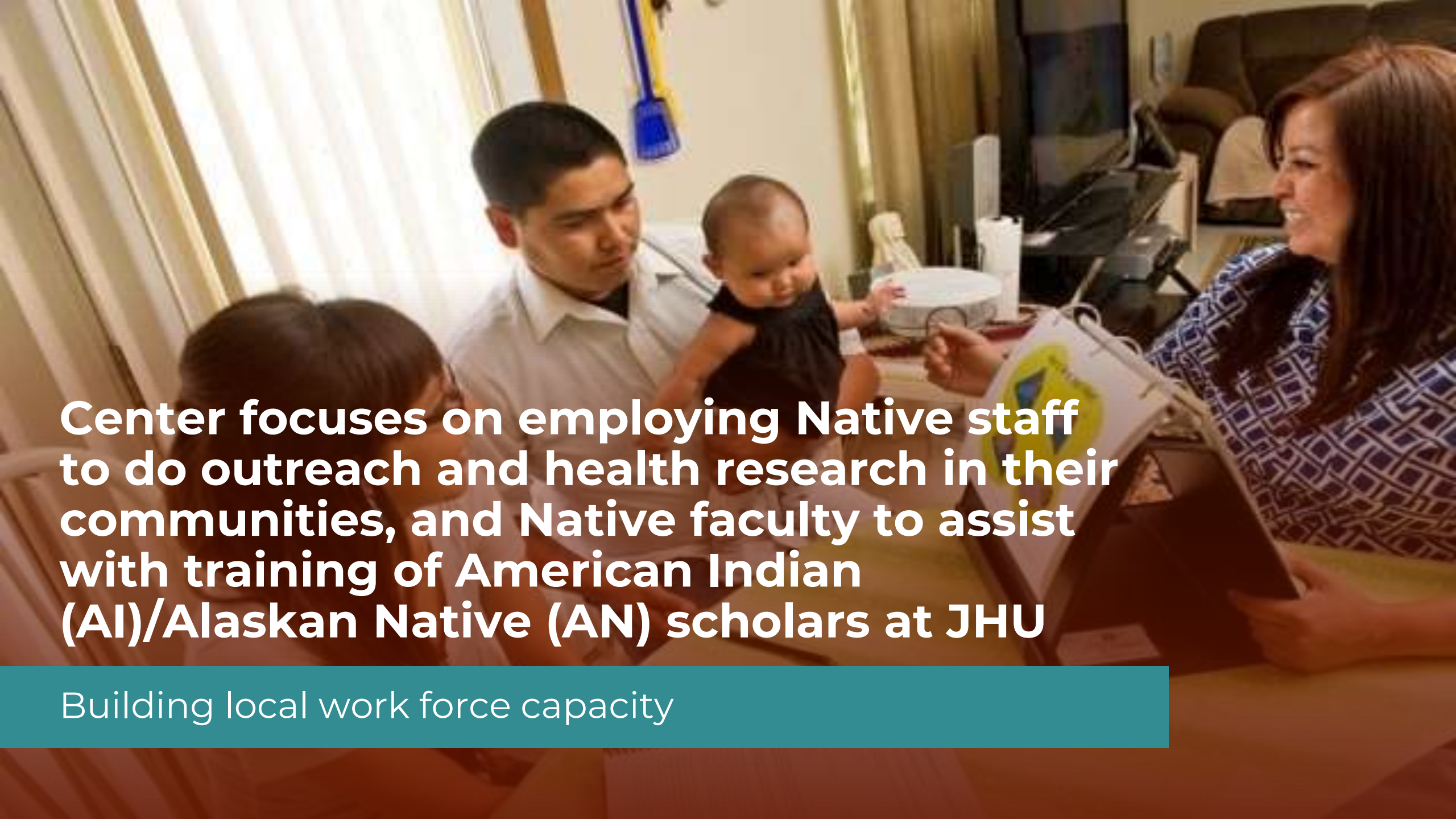
**Mission:** To work in partnership with communities to advance Indigenous wellbeing and health leadership to the highest level.

**Vision:** Thriving Indigenous communities worldwide.



Our Center's programs are currently reaching **150 tribal communities in 23 states** and our health communication resources are used by tribes across the country.

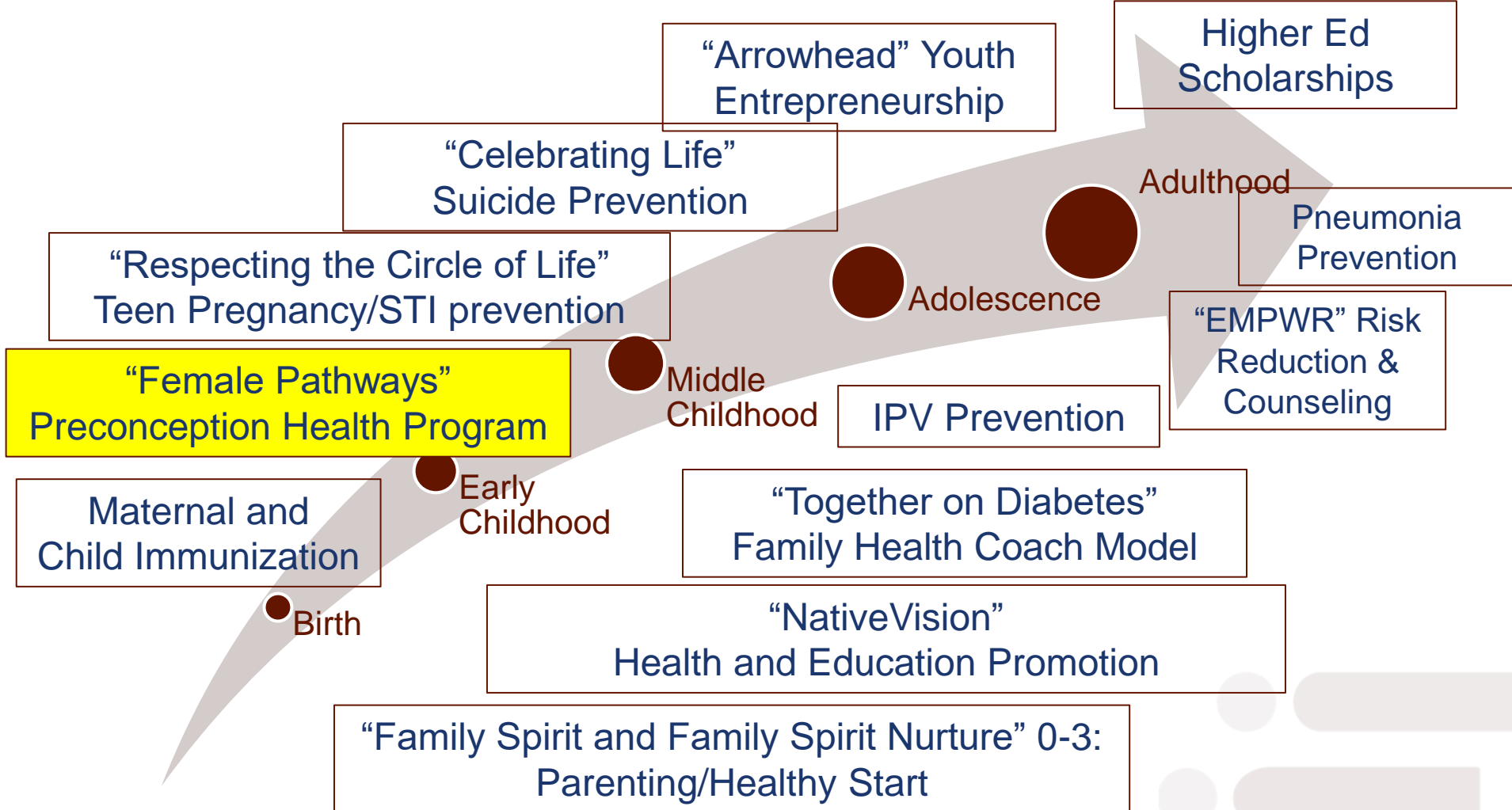


A photograph showing a healthcare professional in a white coat holding a baby. A woman with long dark hair is smiling and looking at the baby. Another person is partially visible in the foreground, looking towards the baby. The setting appears to be a clinical or office environment with a window in the background.

**Center focuses on employing Native staff to do outreach and health research in their communities, and Native faculty to assist with training of American Indian (AI)/Alaskan Native (AN) scholars at JHU**

Building local work force capacity

# Changing the Future: *Working Across the Lifespan*



# What is the Asdzaan Be'eena' (Female Pathways) Program?

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A program for Native girls ages 10-14 and their female caregiver(s) that is grounded in the strengths of Navajo culture and community.

*We seek to intervene in the early teen years and provide adolescents with the tools to have a healthy transition through puberty and into adulthood*

**ASDZÁÁN BE'EENA'**  
*Female Pathways*



# Meet the Asdzáán Be'eena' Team



Barbara Harvey  
Health Coach



Roshelle Wagner  
Evaluator



Brittany Begay  
Evaluator



Janell Nez  
Evaluator



Marissa Begay  
Site Coordinator



Kristen Mitchell  
Site Coordinator



Jaime Begay  
Program Coordinator



Jennifer Richards  
Principal Investigator



Alicia Tsosie  
Site Coordinator



# Why Mothers or Female Caregivers and their daughters?

- Navajo is a matrilineal society
  - Women play a strong role in Navajo society
  - The program will reinforce the strength of Navajo women
- The Kinaalda Ceremony
  - Sacred coming of age ceremony
  - Emphasizes the strengths of the Navajo culture and Navajo women
  - The program will reinforce some of the concepts that are emphasized during the Kinaalda
- Role of parents/adults in children's lives
  - Parents and adult caregivers are essential to positive development of children
  - The program will help to build a strong relationship between girls and their mothers/female caregivers



# How Asdzaan Be'eena' started?

- 2018-2020 Pilot study in TC and Chinle
- AB improved parent-child relationship quality and communication
- Girls: increased cultural knowledge and connection, self-efficacy, support, and sexual health knowledge
- Also, decreased depression, anxiety, and attention problems
- Caregivers: improved social support and parenting self-efficacy



# Program Development

## Initial Formative Work

Engagement of Community Advisory Board  
Qualitative data collection with local communities  
Development of themes/iterative analysis



## Review of Findings & Development of Curriculum

Review of findings with community stakeholders  
Development of curriculum topics and ideas  
Meeting with cultural experts  
Draft curriculum modules

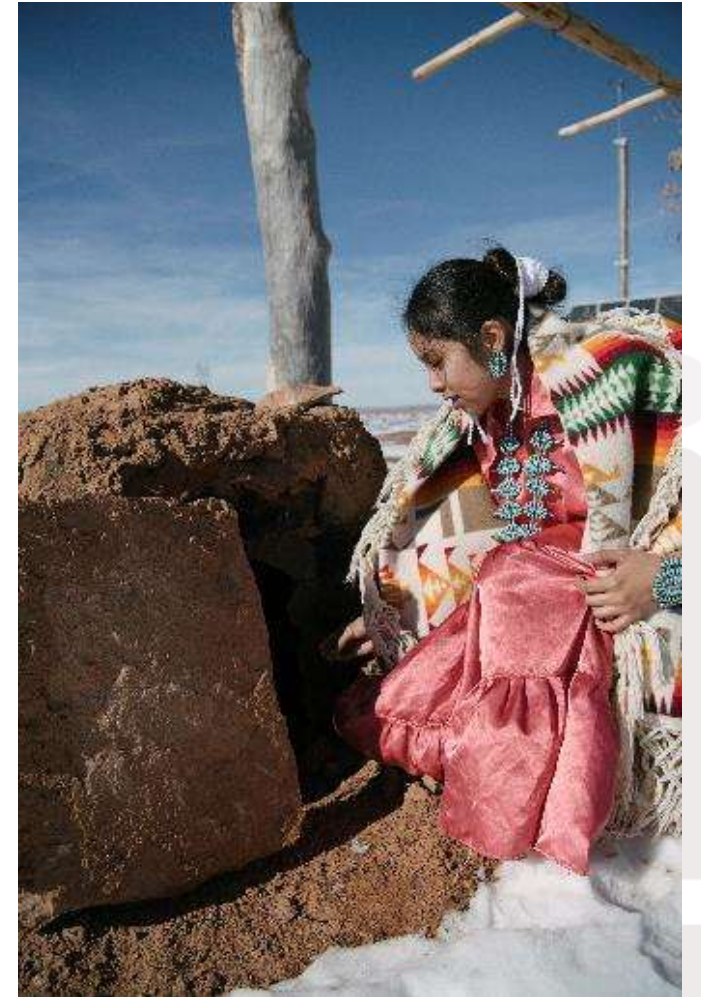


## Finalizing Curriculum

Review of curriculum by project team  
Review of curriculum by cultural experts

# Engaging a Community Advisory Board in two Navajo communities

- Determined how the program should be delivered to girls ages 8-11 and female caregivers
- Created a plan for qualitative research (recruitment, logistics, etc)
- Reviewed and finalized guides for focus groups and in-depth interviews
- Guided interpretation of findings from formative research
- Advised on curriculum topics and themes



# Formative Research With Two Navajo Communities

- 11 Focus Groups and 17 In-Depth Interviews

Focus groups and interviews with girls ages 8-24; mothers; grandmothers; grandfathers; fathers; and traditional practitioners/cultural experts

- 200 Surveys

Surveys with adult women to assess reproductive health knowledge and practices related to a girls' transition to womanhood

# Engaging Cultural Experts



## Guided curriculum development


- Used cultural teachings to inform the curriculum concepts and activities
- Organized curriculum to be consistent with the Navajo Creation Story
- Determined order and format of curriculum
- Discussed specific activities in each lesson and determined what was and was not appropriate/how activities should be done
- Wrote sections of the curriculum

# Findings from Surveys

- 54% said their mother is their role model
- 85% of participants said Navajo culture is a strength
- Women first spoke to female caregiver about sexual health at these ages:
  - < 9 years old: 30%
  - 10-14 years old 44%
  - >14 years old: 13%
- 57% felt comfortable talking to their mom about puberty when they were younger
- 49% had a right of passage ceremony
- 71% wished they learned more about reproductive health during or before puberty



# Themes from Focus Groups and Interviews

- Cleanliness is emphasized during puberty
  - Mothers have little reproductive health knowledge
  - Gender roles are important
  - Respect for self and others is valued and reflected through how one dresses
  - Knowing clans is important
  - A variety of relatives raise young girls
  - Historical events are examples of resiliency
  - Language is a source of pride
  - Education is highly valued
  - All milestones in a woman's life are important and should be discussed when a child is young
- 



# Asdzáán Be'eena' Curriculum Topics

## Black World

- Lesson 1 (dyad): The Clan System and Family
- Lesson 2 (dyad): Role Models, Respect and Boundaries

## Blue World

- Lesson 3 (group): Mother Daughter Communication
- Lesson 4 (dyad): Support Networks and Family

## Yellow World

- Lesson 5 (group): Navajo Women's Strength Through History
- Lesson 6 (dyad): Positive Thinking and Problem Solving
- Lesson 7 (group): Communication and Dealing with Bullying

## White World

- Lesson 8 (dyad): Community, Family and Cultural Values
- Lesson 9 (group): Reproductive Health
- Lesson 10 (dyad): Self-Esteem and Goal Setting

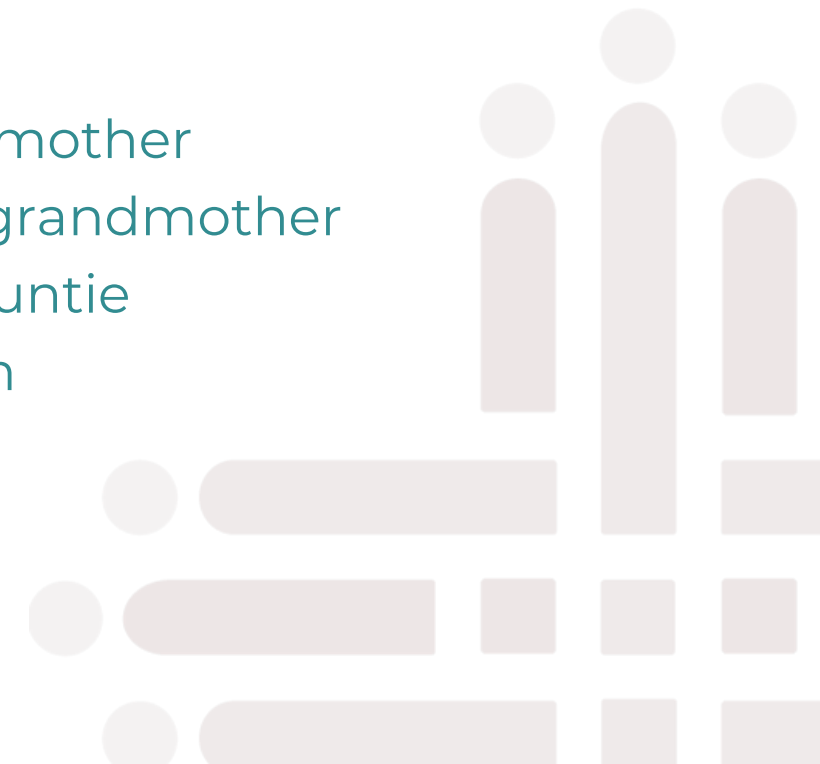
## Glittering World

- Lesson 11 (group): Holistic Living





# Pilot Trial: Participant Characteristics

- N=47 enrolled; N=36 completed 3 month post assessment
  - Caregivers
    - Mean age: 40.2
    - Relationship to child
      - 77.5% of caregivers were the enrolled child's mother
      - 17.5% of caregivers were the enrolled child's grandmother
      - 2.5% of caregivers were the enrolled child's auntie
    - 95% live with the child who is enrolled with them
    - 67.5% were employed at baseline
    - 80% had some college or a college degree
  - Child
    - Mean age: 9.5 years (age range was 8-11)
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# Pilot Trial: Child Pre/Post Outcomes

## Culture

- Increase in Cultural Knowledge (.61 vs .71; **p=.018**)
- Increase in % of girls who want to have a Kinaalda Ceremony (67% vs. 89%; p=.09)
- Slight increase in their perception that family teaches/ participates in Navajo culture (1.21 vs. 1.27; p=.50)

## Mother-Daughter Relationship

- Increase in number of activities participated in with caregiver in past week (**p=.031**)
- Improved communication with caregiver (**p=.023**)

## Sexual Health

- Improved sexual knowledge (**p=.001**)
- More youth report intending to wait to have sex until married, although not statistically significant (p=.18)



# Pilot Trial: Caregiver Pre/Post Outcomes

## Culture- all domains increased, none significantly

- Cultural connectedness (p=.20)
- Family engagement in Navajo culture (p=.12)
- Slight increase Cultural Knowledge (p=.37)

## Mother-Daughter Relationship

- Increased reported communication with enrolled child (**p=<.001**)
- Slight decrease in Monitoring (potential ceiling effect) (p=.47)

## Parenting Self-Agency

- Slight increase (p=.88)

## Sexual Health

- Slight increase in knowledge (p=.57)

# Pilot Study findings

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- Asdzaan Be'eena' improved parent-child relationship quality and communication
- Girls: increased cultural knowledge and connection, self-efficacy, support, and sexual health knowledge
- Also, decreased depression, anxiety, and attention problems
- Caregivers: improved social support and parenting self-efficacy



# Study Overview

## **Study Design:**

Randomized Control Trial to assess impact of the program compared to a control on parent-youth communication, girls' intention to abstain from sex, and girls' behaviors (internalizing and externalizing).

## AB Intervention:

- 11 weekly sessions with dyads over 3 months
- 5 taught in groups and 6 taught individually

## Control:

- 4 incentives mailed to DYADs over 3 months
- Target goal: 200 dyads

# Program Goals

## Primary Outcomes

- Youth-Caregiver Relationship (communication, warmth/responsiveness and monitoring)
- Youth sexual initiation
- Youth internalizing and externalizing behaviors (risk factors for later substance use and sexual risk taking)

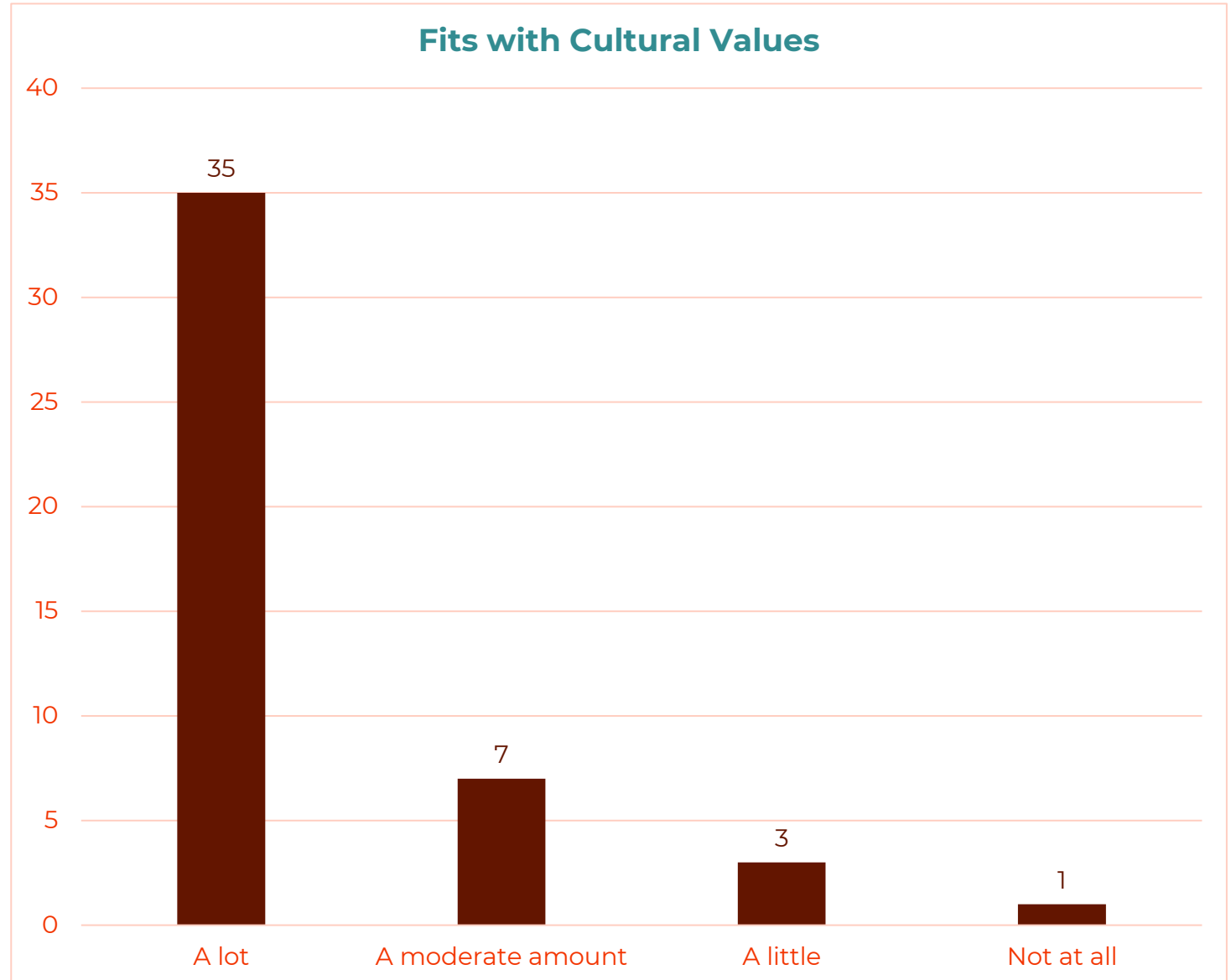
## Secondary Outcomes

- **Girls**
  - Cultural connectedness
  - Self-efficacy, optimism, self-regulation, resilience and self-esteem
  - Healthy relationship skills
  - Sexual and substance use initiation
- **Caregiver**
  - Family environment scale
  - Parenting Self-Efficacy/Agency
  - Parent attitudes and expectations for substance use
  - Caregiver substance use

# Caregiver Program Feedback Form n = 46

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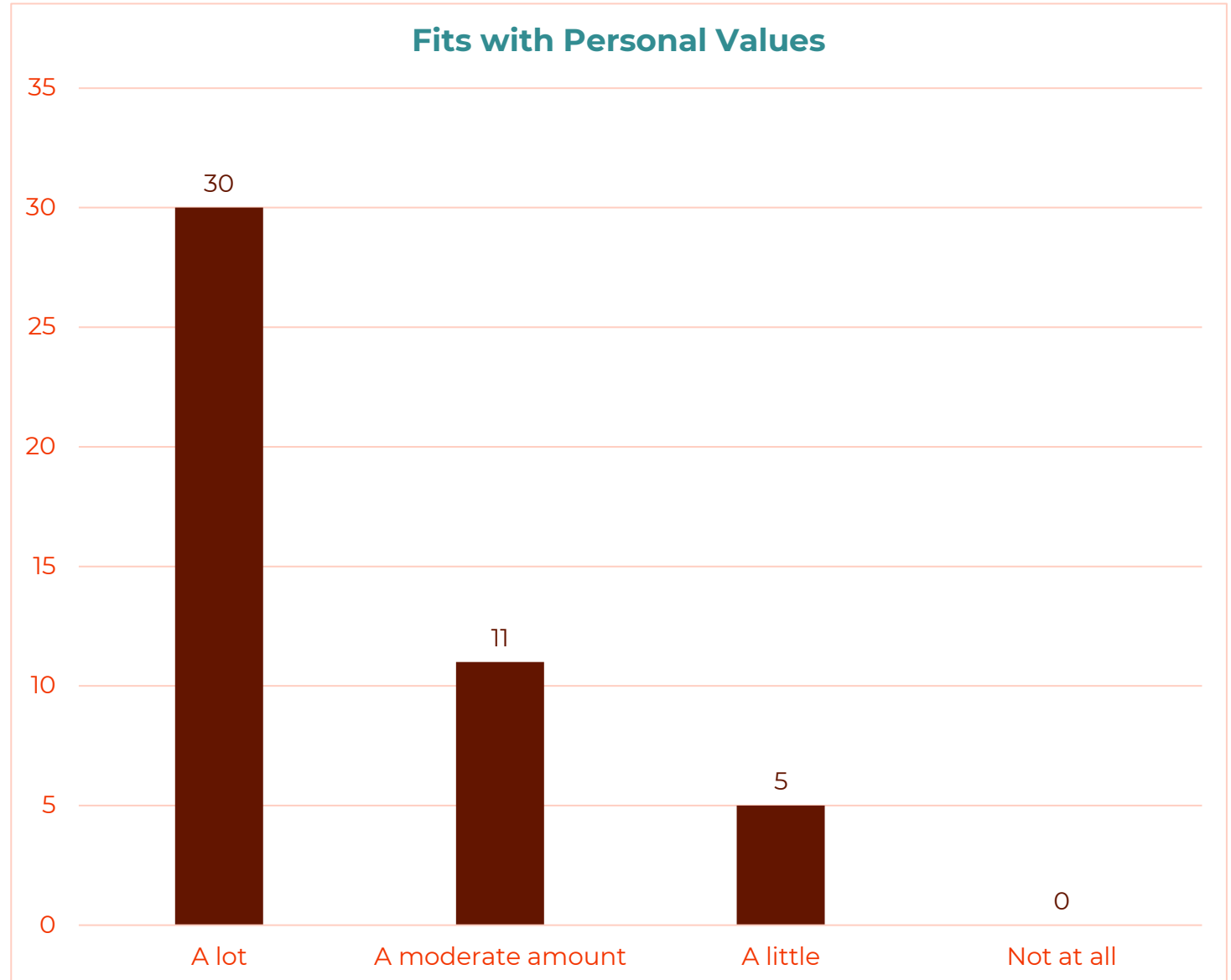
- Does the program fit with your cultural values?





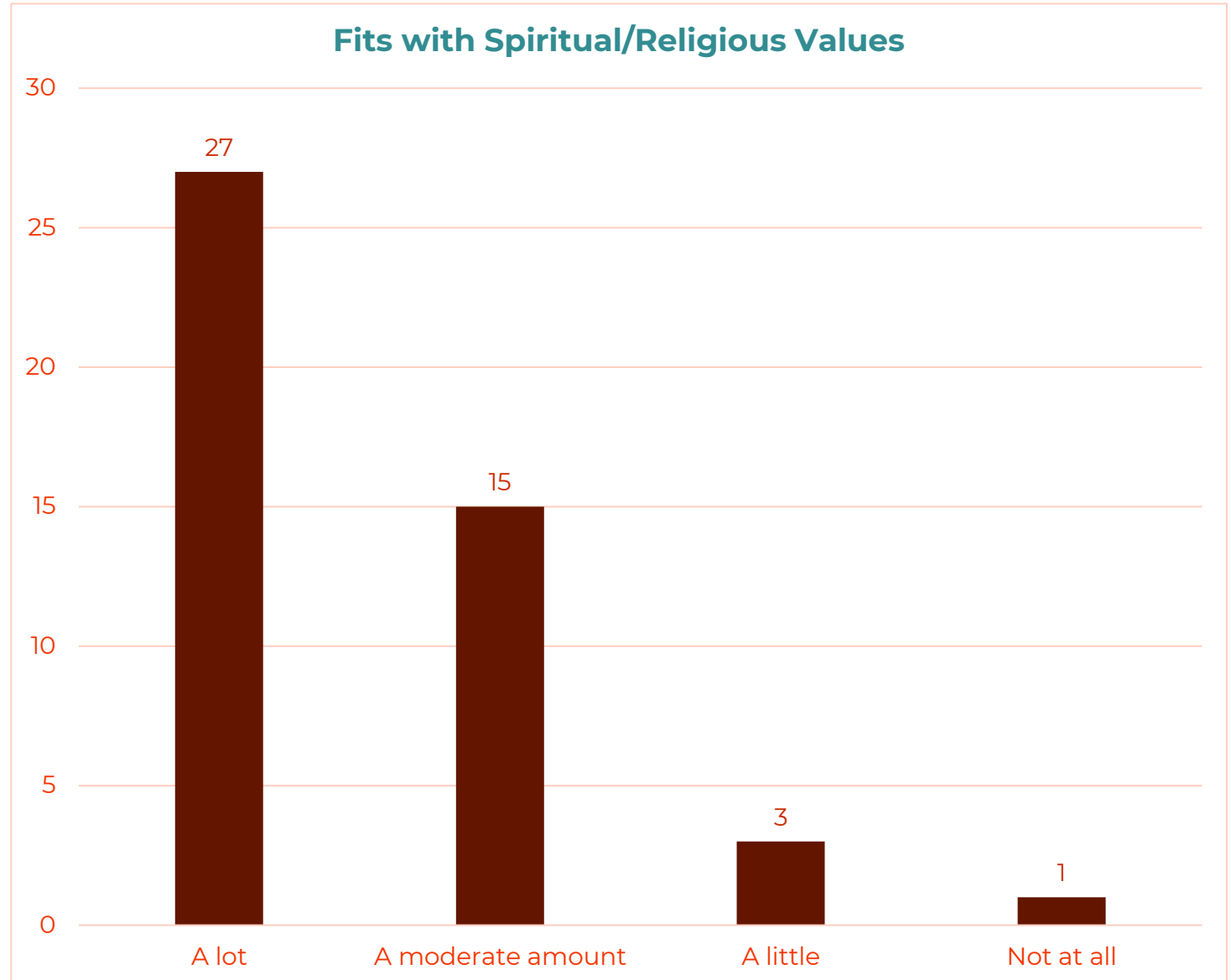
# Caregiver Program Feedback Form n = 46

Does the program fit  
with your personal  
values?



# Caregiver Program Feedback Form n = 46

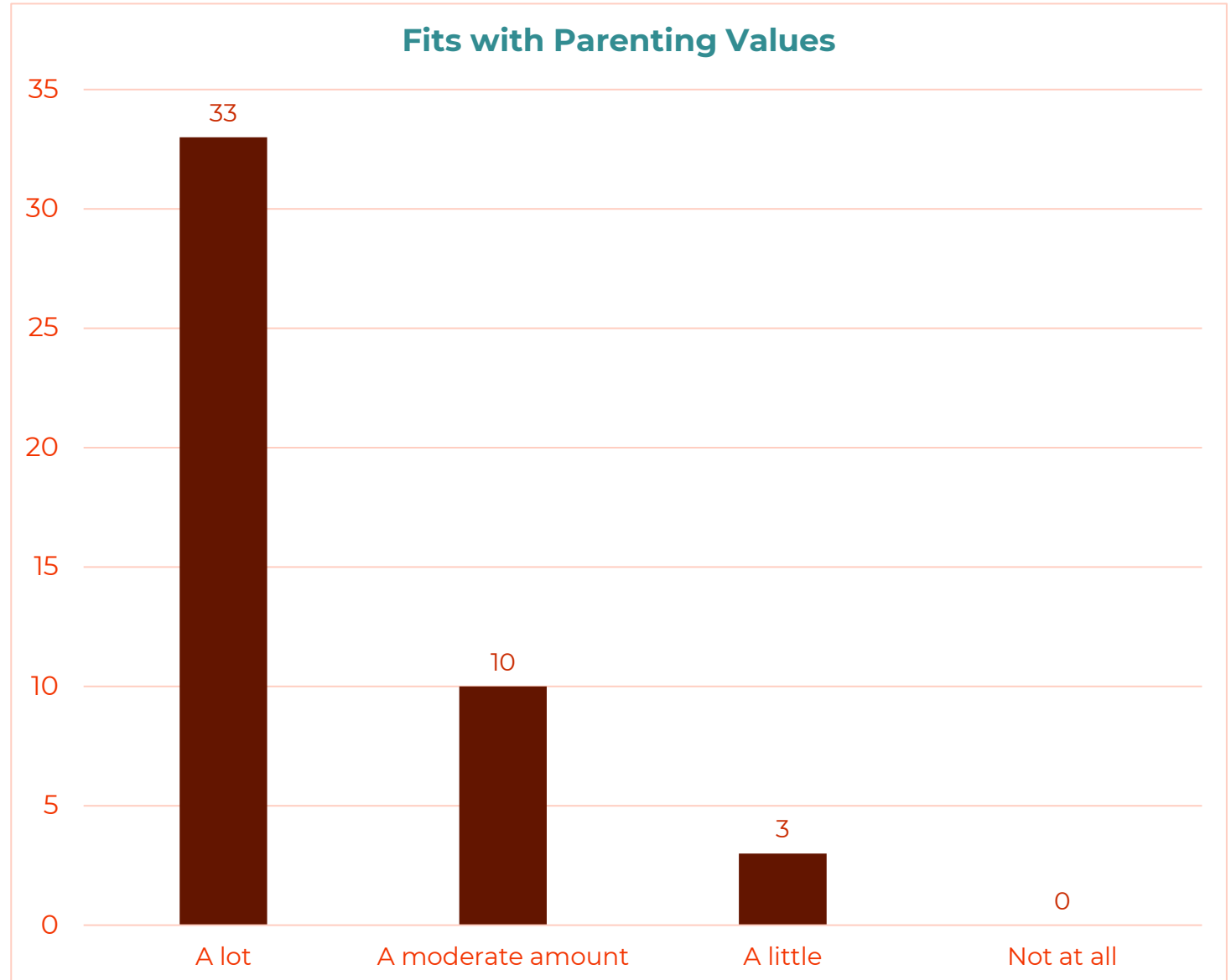
- Does the program fit with your spiritual/religious values?



# Caregiver Program Feedback Form n = 46

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- Does the program fit with your parenting values?



# Recruitment

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Radio and Print Ads: KTNN, KNAU, Navajo Times

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Community Flyers

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Tabling at community events

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Word of Mouth

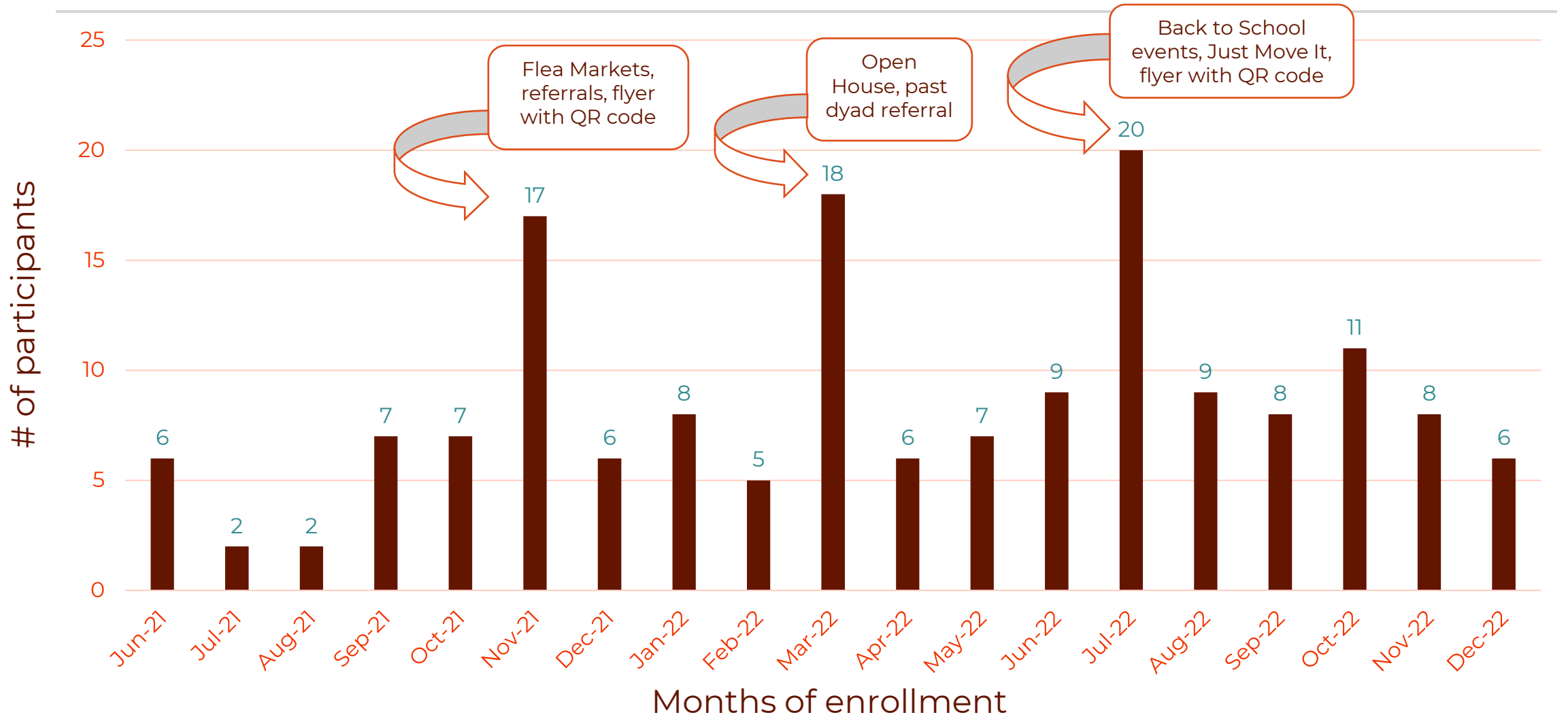
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\$10 Referral Incentive for past participants

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Agency referrals (TCRHCC, WIC, TANF); referral sheets

# Asdzáán Be'eena' Enrollment



# Program Implementation

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## Successes

- Community support
- Social Capital

## Challenges

- Covid Pandemic
- Staff turnover
- Difficulty of RCT





**How do we improve  
implementation of  
programs similar to  
Asdzáán Be'eena'**




**Next  
steps**





# Acknowledgements

- Participating Families
  - Navajo Tribal Members
  - Navajo Nation Institutional Review Board
  - Center for Indigenous Health staff & faculty
  - Administration for Children & Families grant
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# Thank you!

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