

**NATIVE COMMUNITIES HOME
VISITING MEETING 2026**



Rooted in Traditions
Nurturing our Families
Nourishing our Future

ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES

Centering Native Knowledge in Home Visiting through Community-Led Data Storytelling

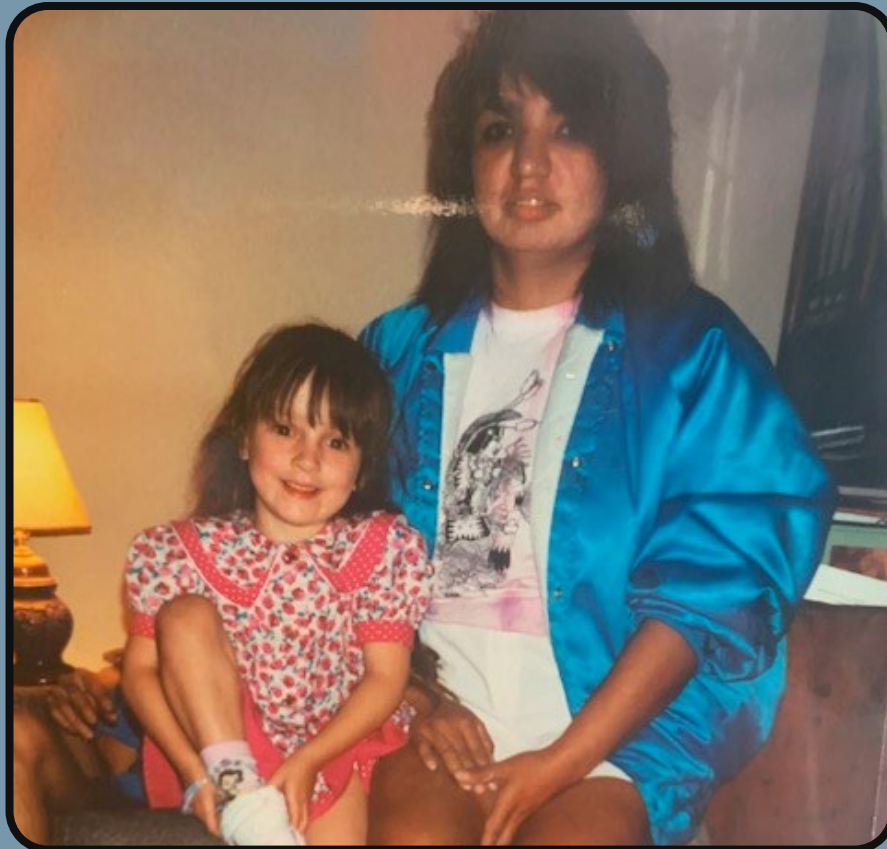
Tess Abrahamson-Richards, Ph.D., MPH
Sp'q'n'i? (Spokane), Colville, Coeur d'Alene

The road to being here today...

...And coming full circle
in life, career, and home
visiting work.

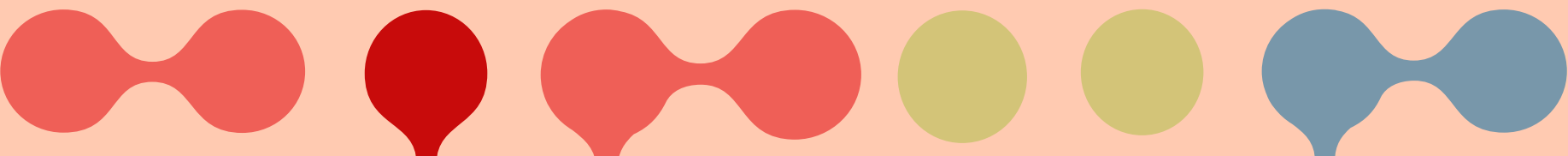


Family, lineage, strength, and all
that we inherit generationally that
brings us to our work:



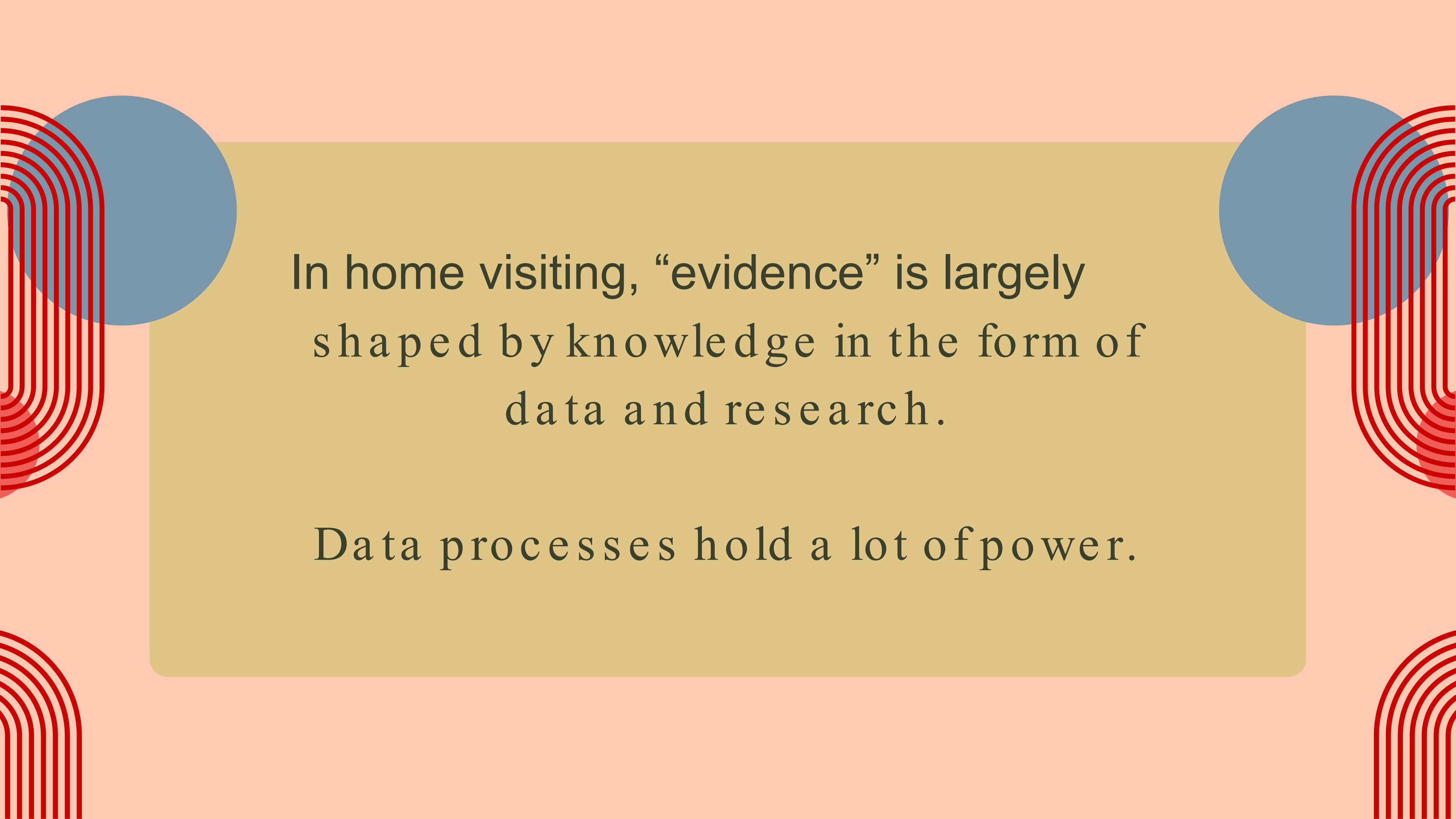
I've worn many different hats in Early Childhood...

- Teaching Kindergarten
- Leading peer parent groups
- Home Visiting as a:
 - Home Visitor
 - Parent
 - Researcher/Evaluator



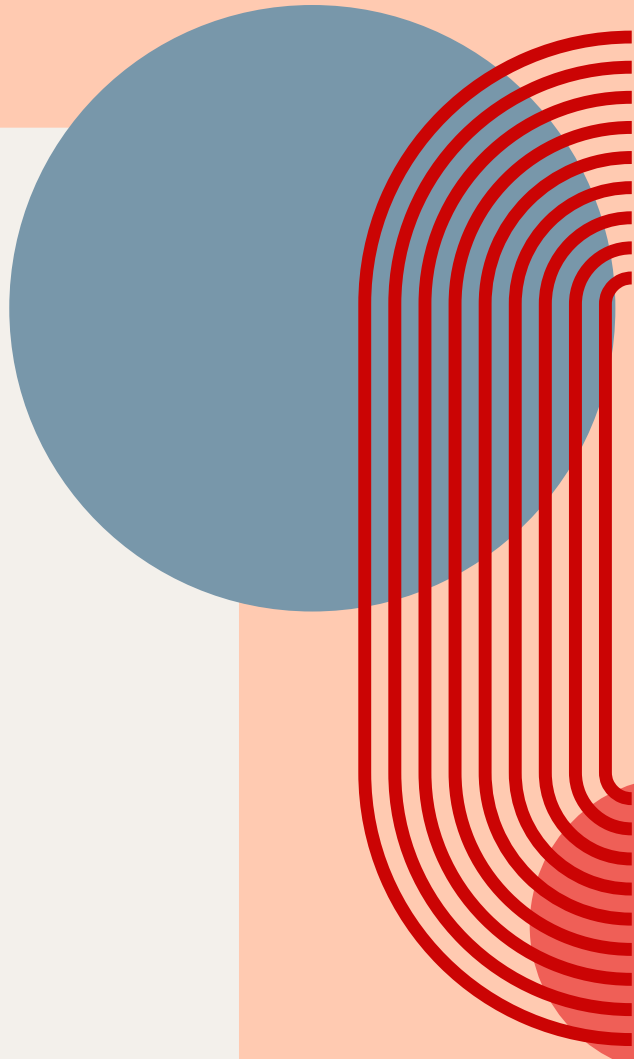
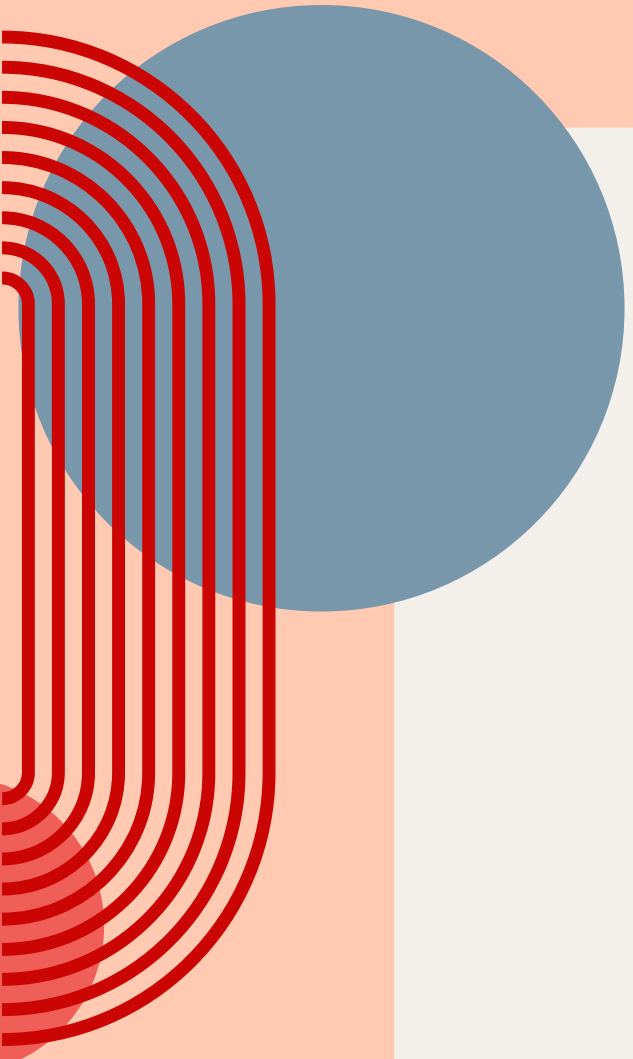
Why Research?





In home visiting, “evidence” is largely
shaped by knowledge in the form of
data and research.

Data processes hold a lot of power.

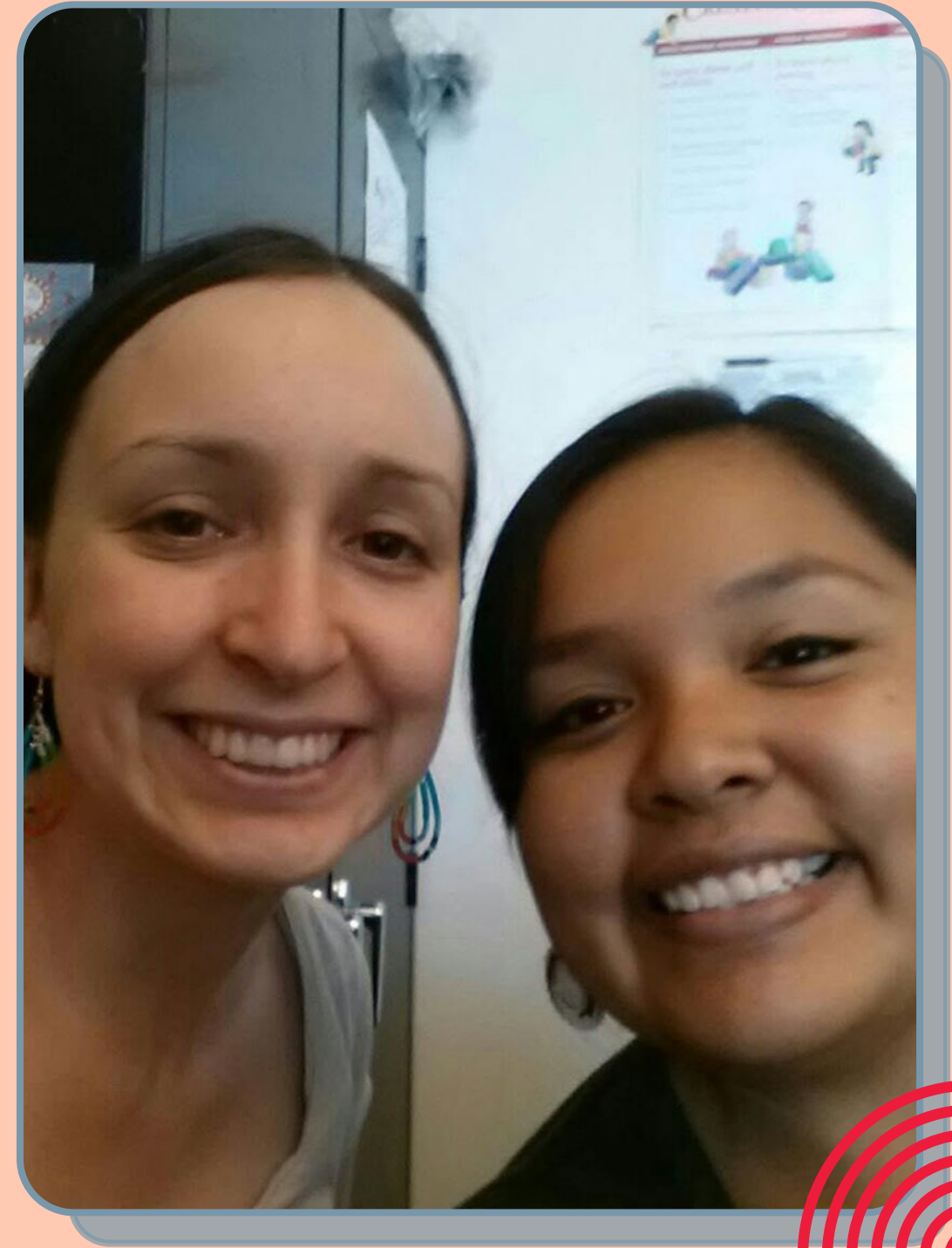


“There is a direct connection between the ideology underlying the U.S. boarding school system and today’s evidence-based practice structure.”

-**Seratha Largie** , *Centering Tribal Sovereignty in Early Childhood Care Systems*

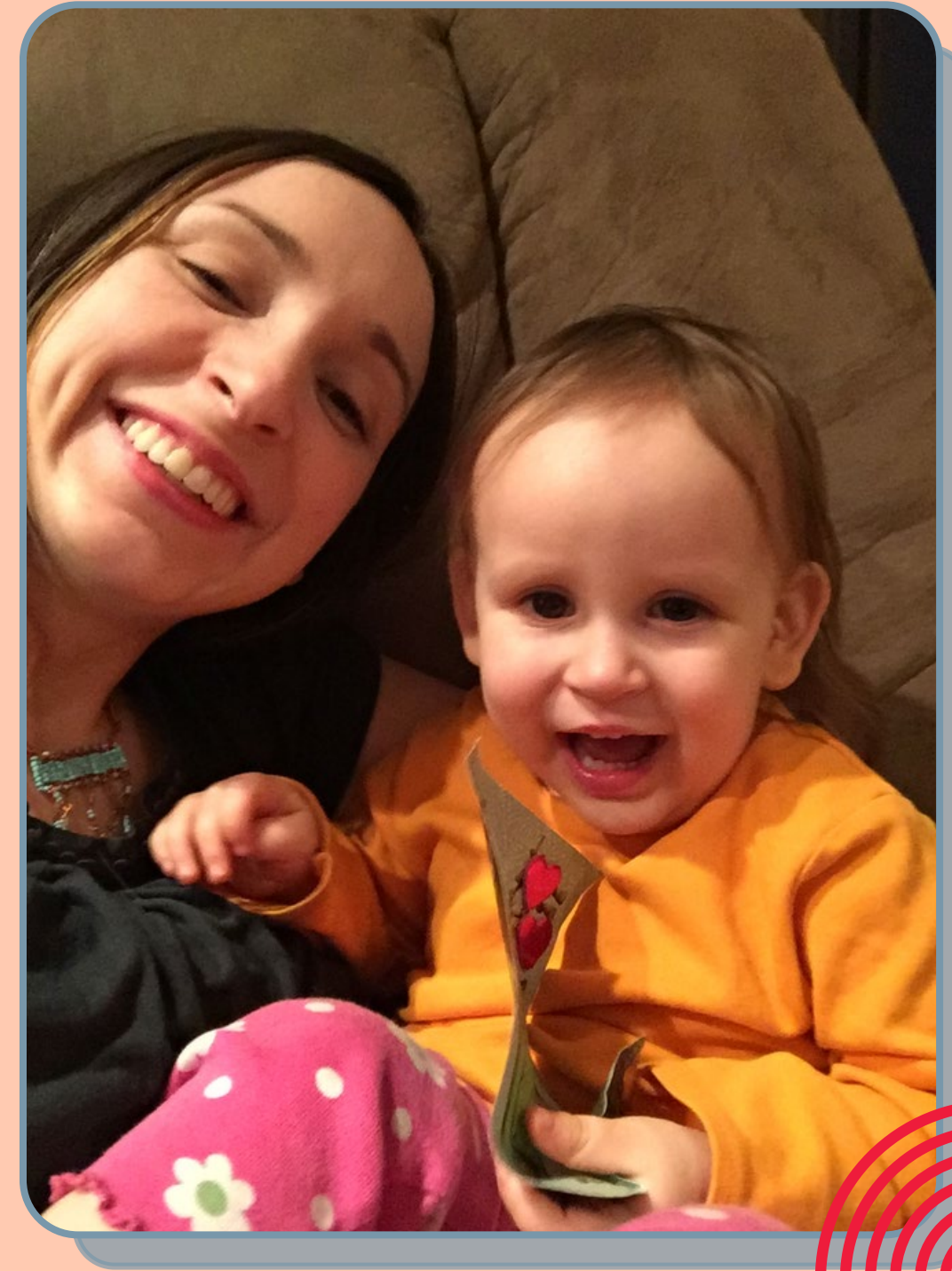
As a Home Visitor, I found that recording data felt

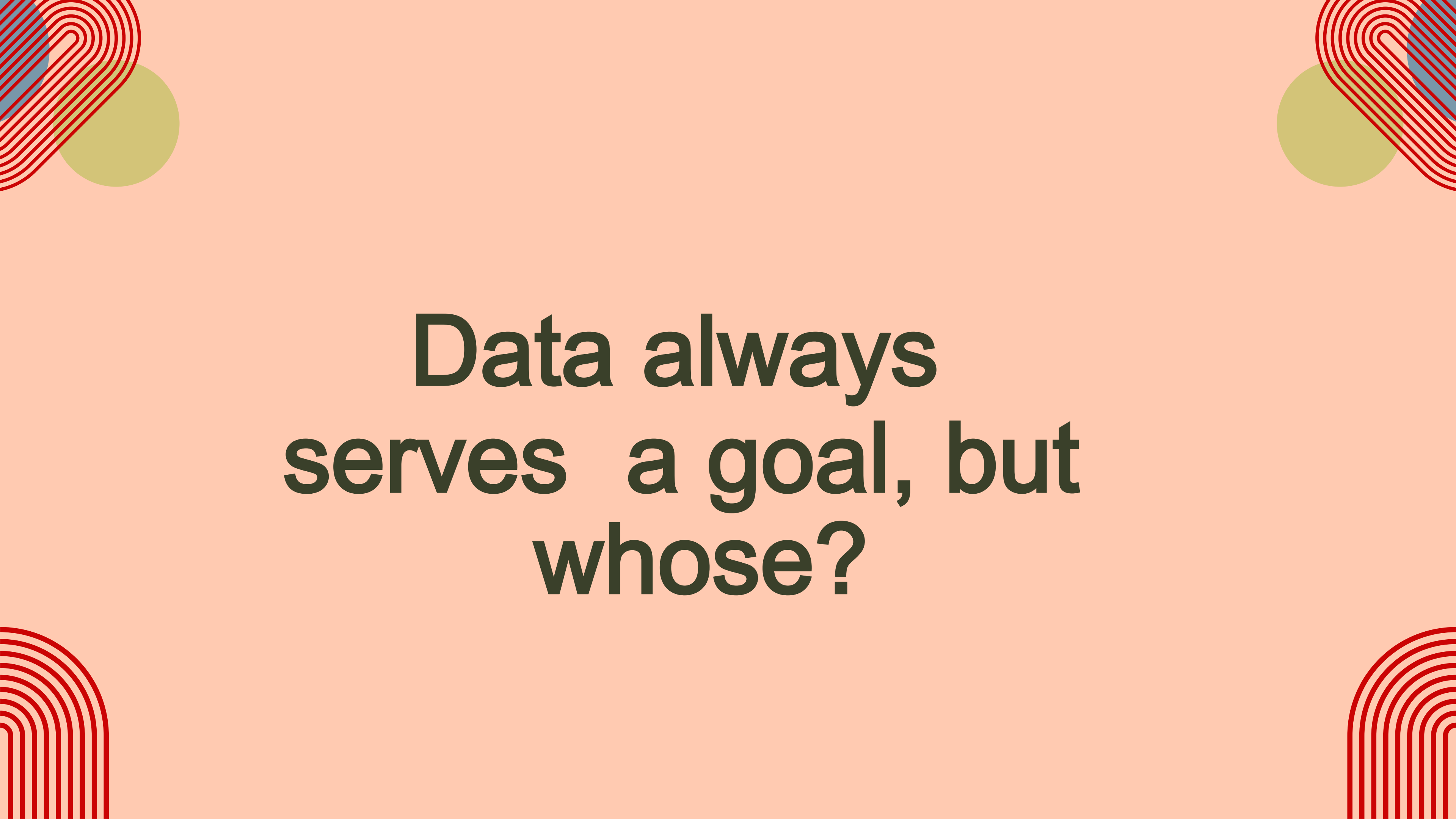
- Boring
- Lacking in meaning
- Like it took away from the real work



As a parent in a Native home visiting program, data asks felt

- Unclear in their purpose
- Repetitive of data other people asked me for (doctor, daycare, etc.)
- Like a favor to the program



The image features a light orange background with four decorative corner elements. Each element consists of a solid light green circle partially covered by a series of concentric, slightly offset red lines that form a stylized, rounded corner shape. These elements are located in the top-left, top-right, bottom-left, and bottom-right corners.

**Data always
serves a goal, but
whose?**

Deciding how goals are set may be:

Outside Led

- Compliance
- Partnership

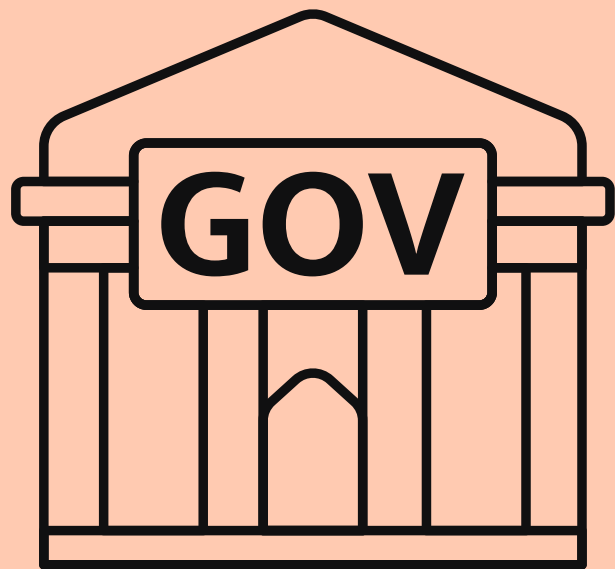
And/
Or

Program & Community Led

- Knowledge, data, and narrative sovereignty
- Early childhood systems sovereignty

• Co-Creation

Who is learning from data that is collected?



**Where data
comes from, where
data goes, and who
decides...**



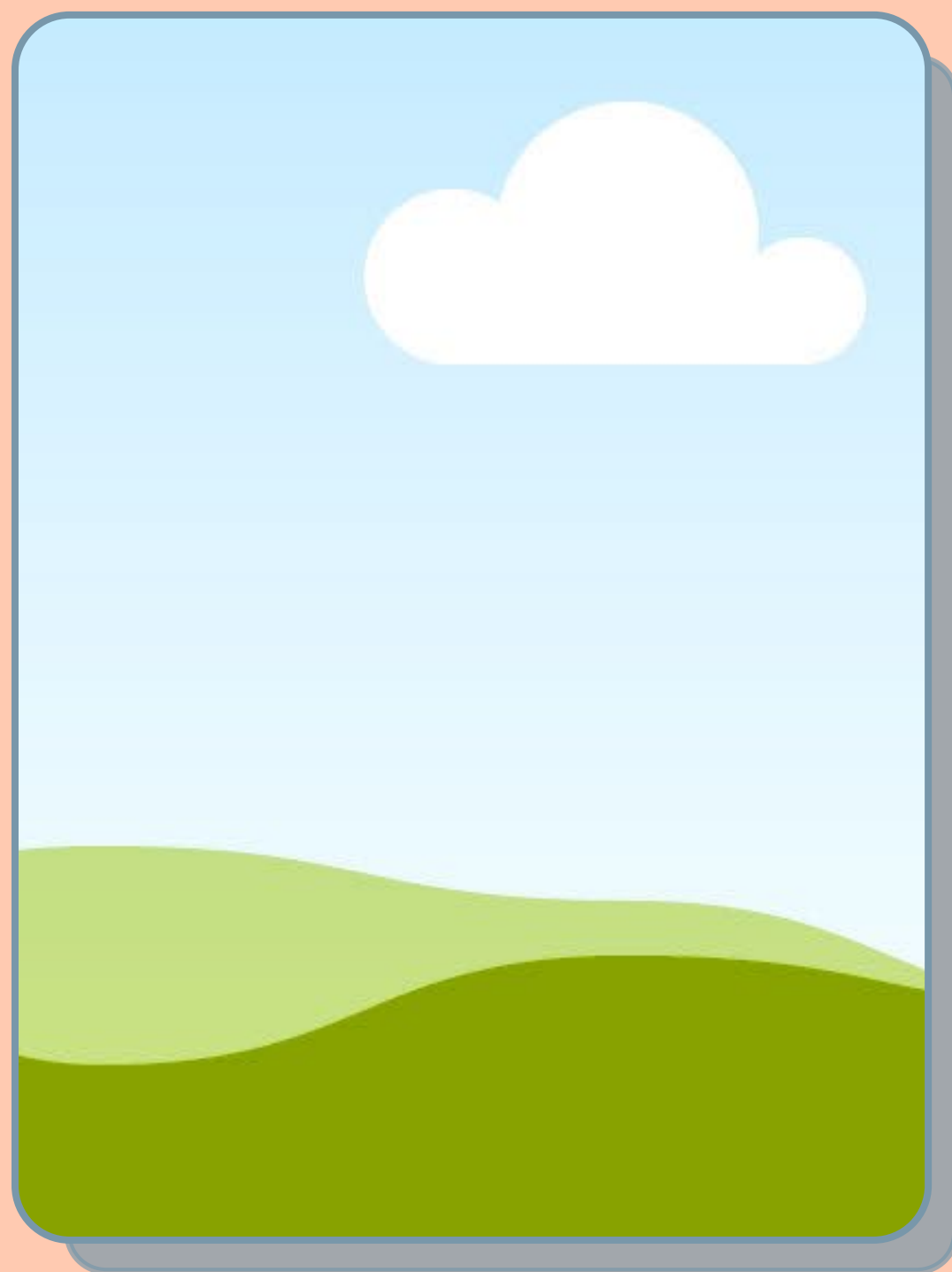


**Data are powerful; in
ways that can be
beautiful and in ways
that can cause harm
to families, staff, and
communities.**



Data and research
practices reflect
ways of knowing.





Before I knew
any of this,
something drew
me to the world
of Indigenous
data.

But what kept me here?

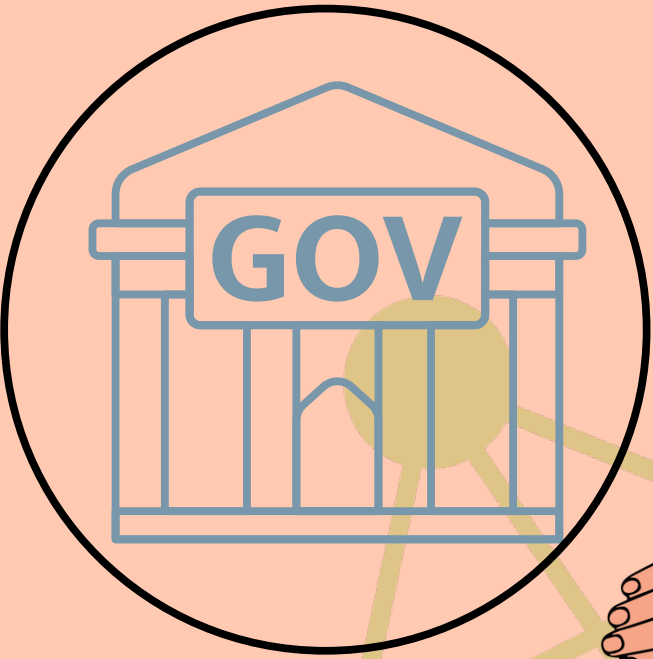


Indigenous Data & Research Practice



Indigenous methodologies are radically place based; rooted in context; often oriented towards practicality; holistic and relational rather than reducing and separating parts of the whole.





Outside Led

Program & Community Led

What does it look like when systems engage with grantees and communities?

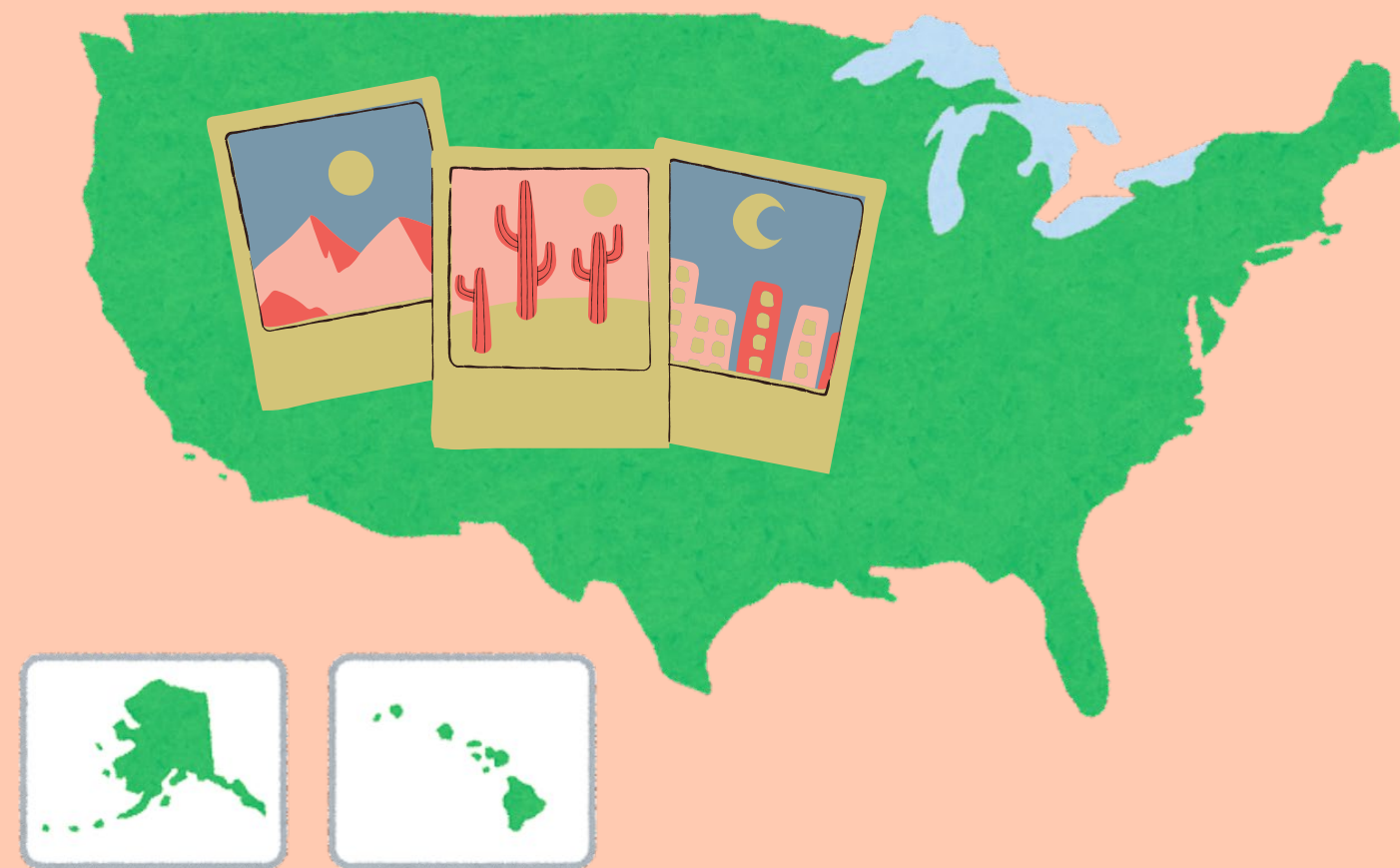
Partnership

- Dialogue, input, and consultation
- Transparent decision -making
- Responsiveness and consideration of community/program priorities
- Consistent communication

Co-Creation

- Shared leadership and governance
- Shared decision -making at every phase of a project
- Negotiation until agreement
- Shared responsibility for project tasks

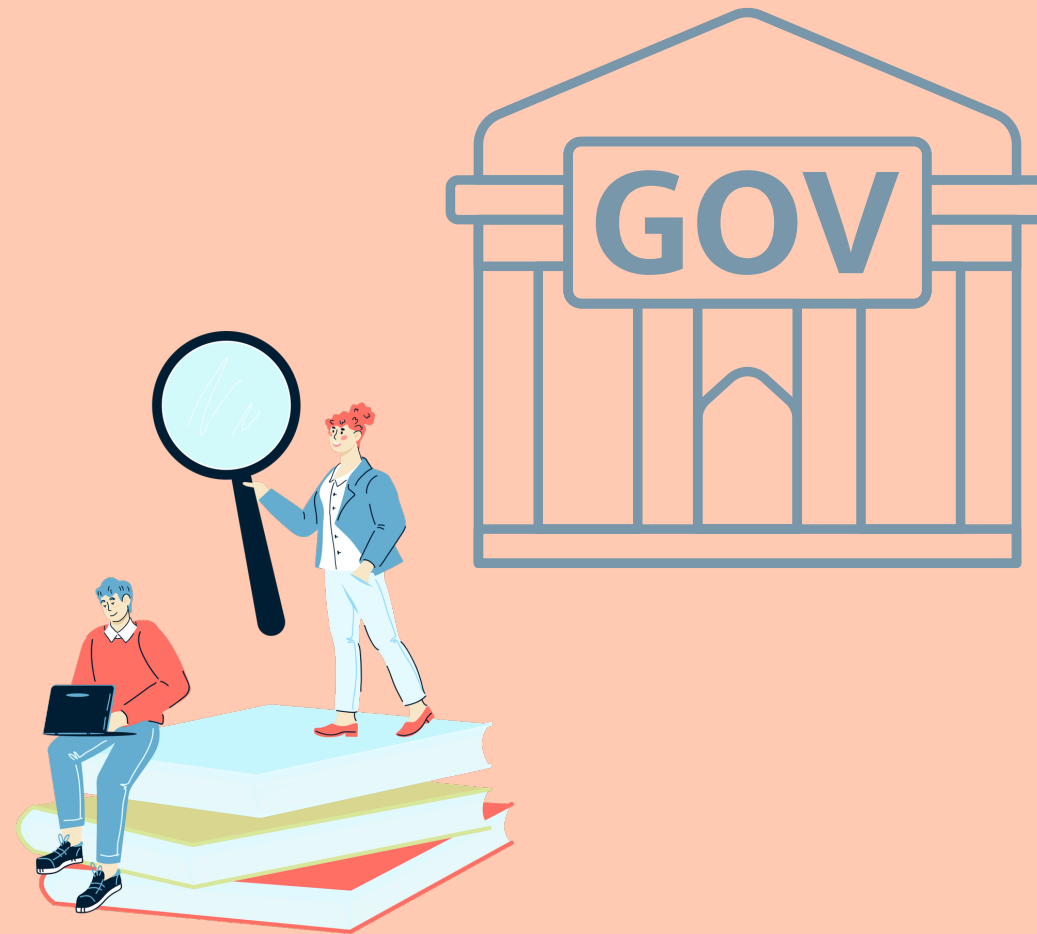
Often, this involves the complexities of co-creation across many Tribal and Indigenous Nations and communities.



Home Visiting Data Initiatives

- Federally -led
- State -led
- Model -led

All have a place



Home Visiting Data Initiatives

- Federally -led
- State -led
- Model -led

All have a place

But there is huge
potential within...

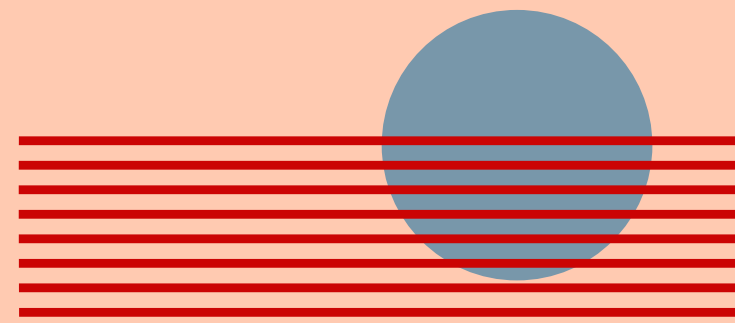
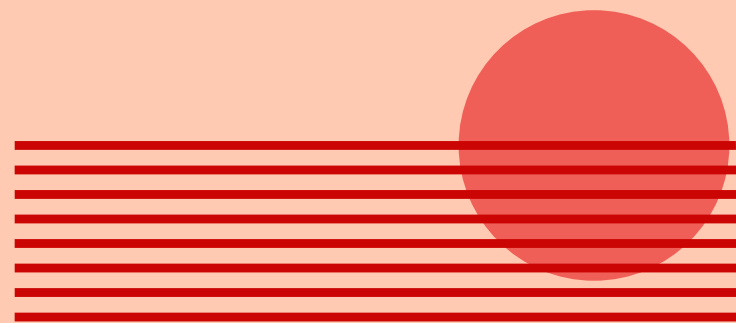
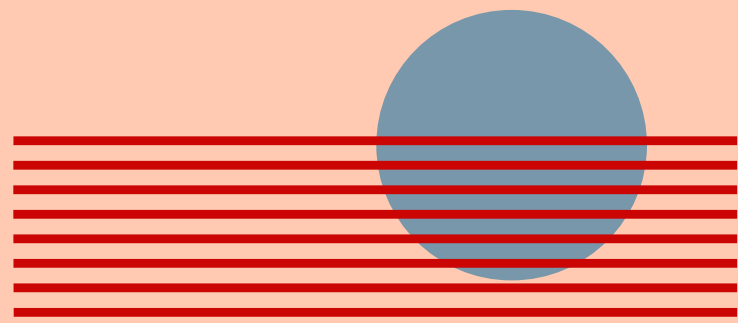
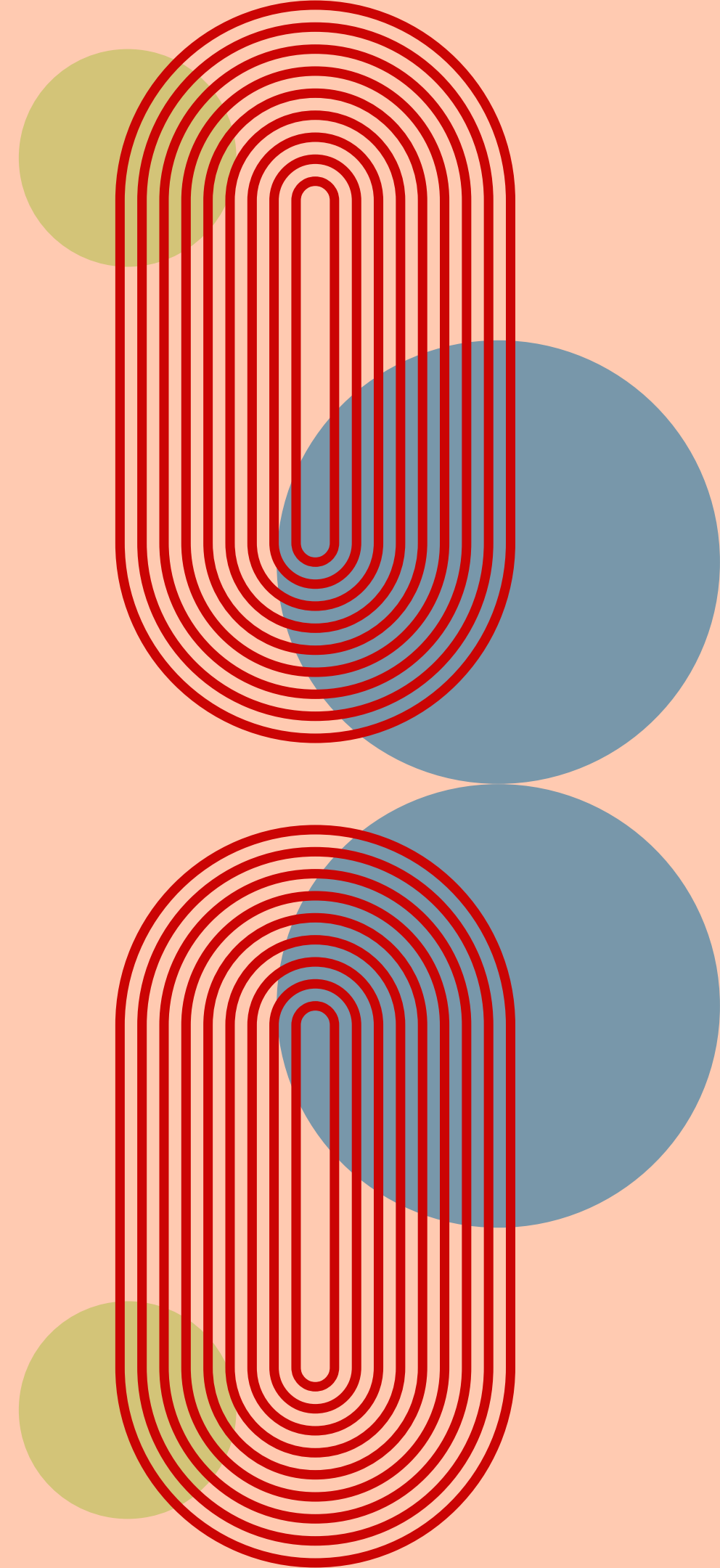


Program,
family, and
community -led
data work

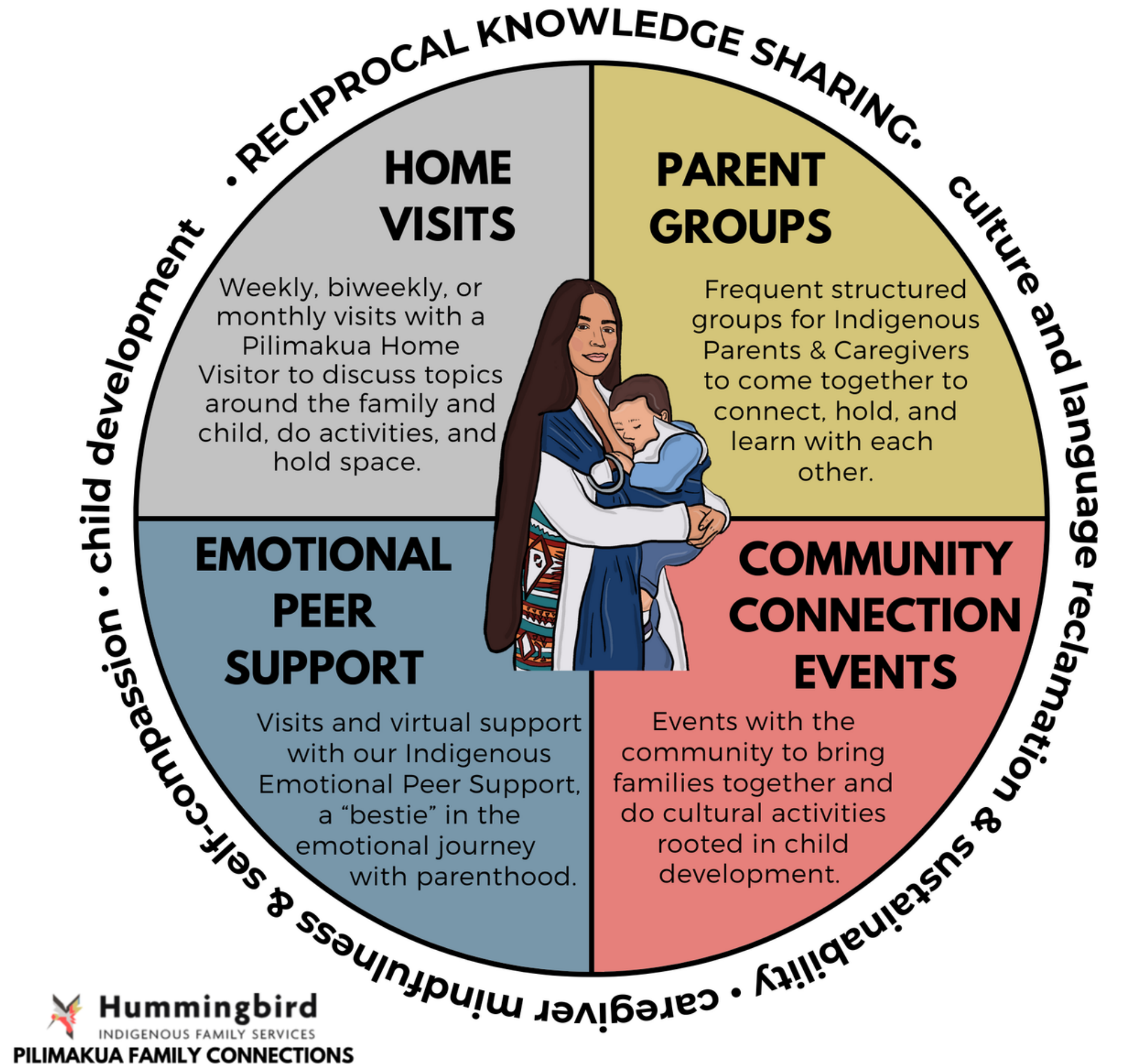


Hummingbird

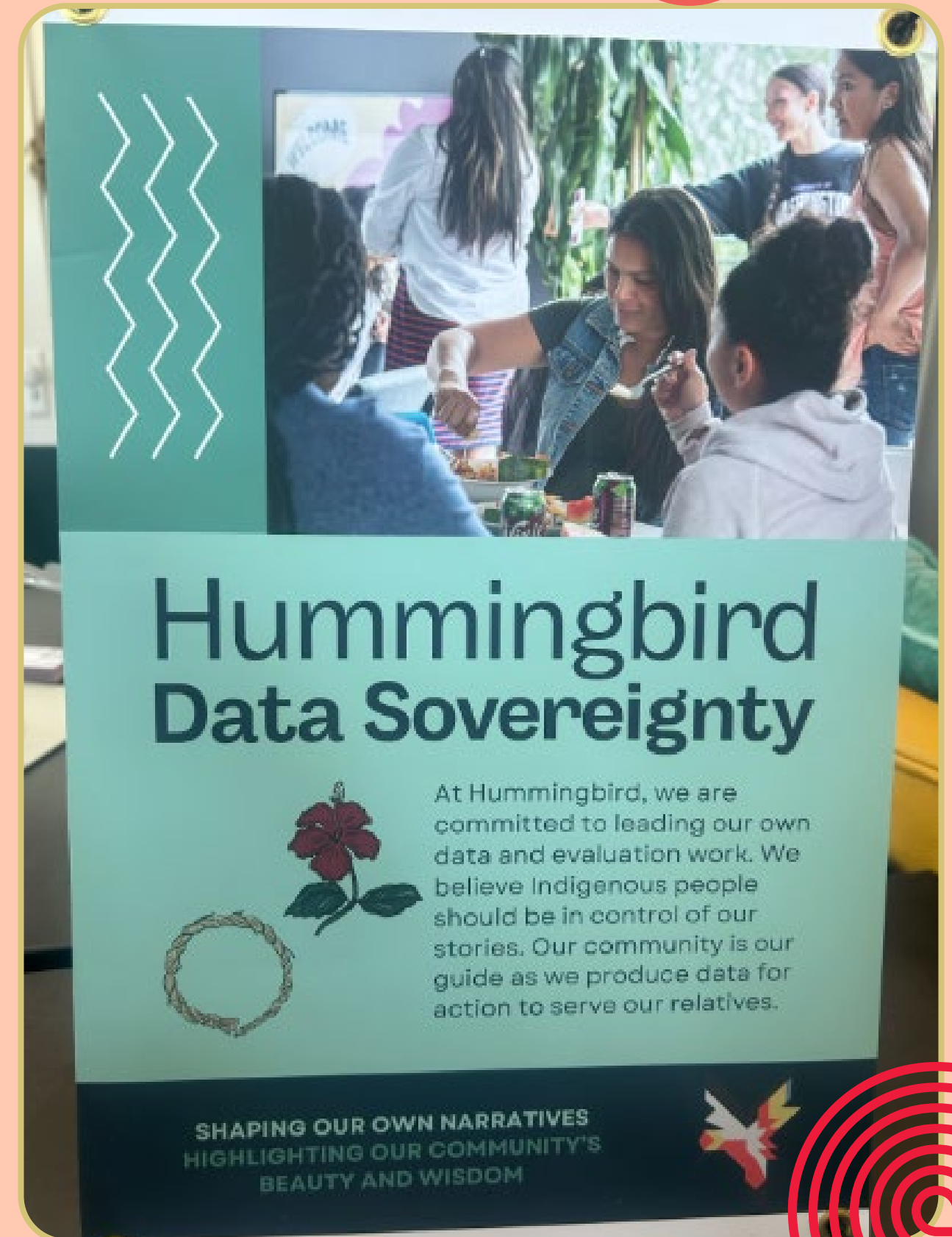
Pilimakua Family Connections
&
Data Sovereignty



Pilimakua



Data Sovereignty

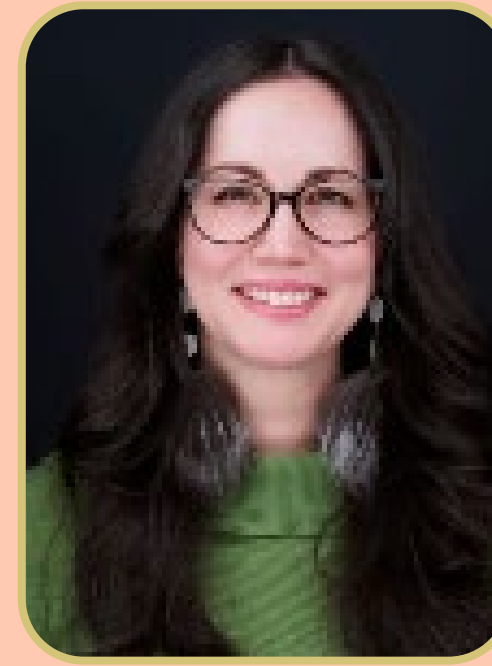


Data Sovereignty Team

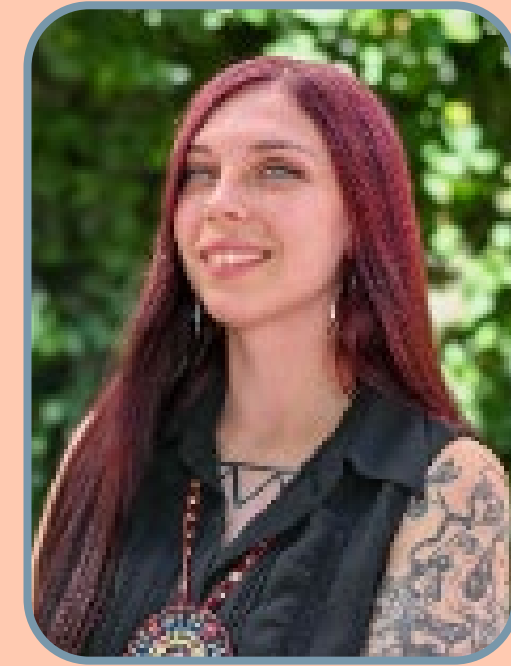
Instead of another “hat”,
embedding data and
research as its own role
under the same vision and
mission as direct services.



Tess
Spokane



Daysha
Yup'ik



Olivia
Choctaw



Koa
Sāmoan



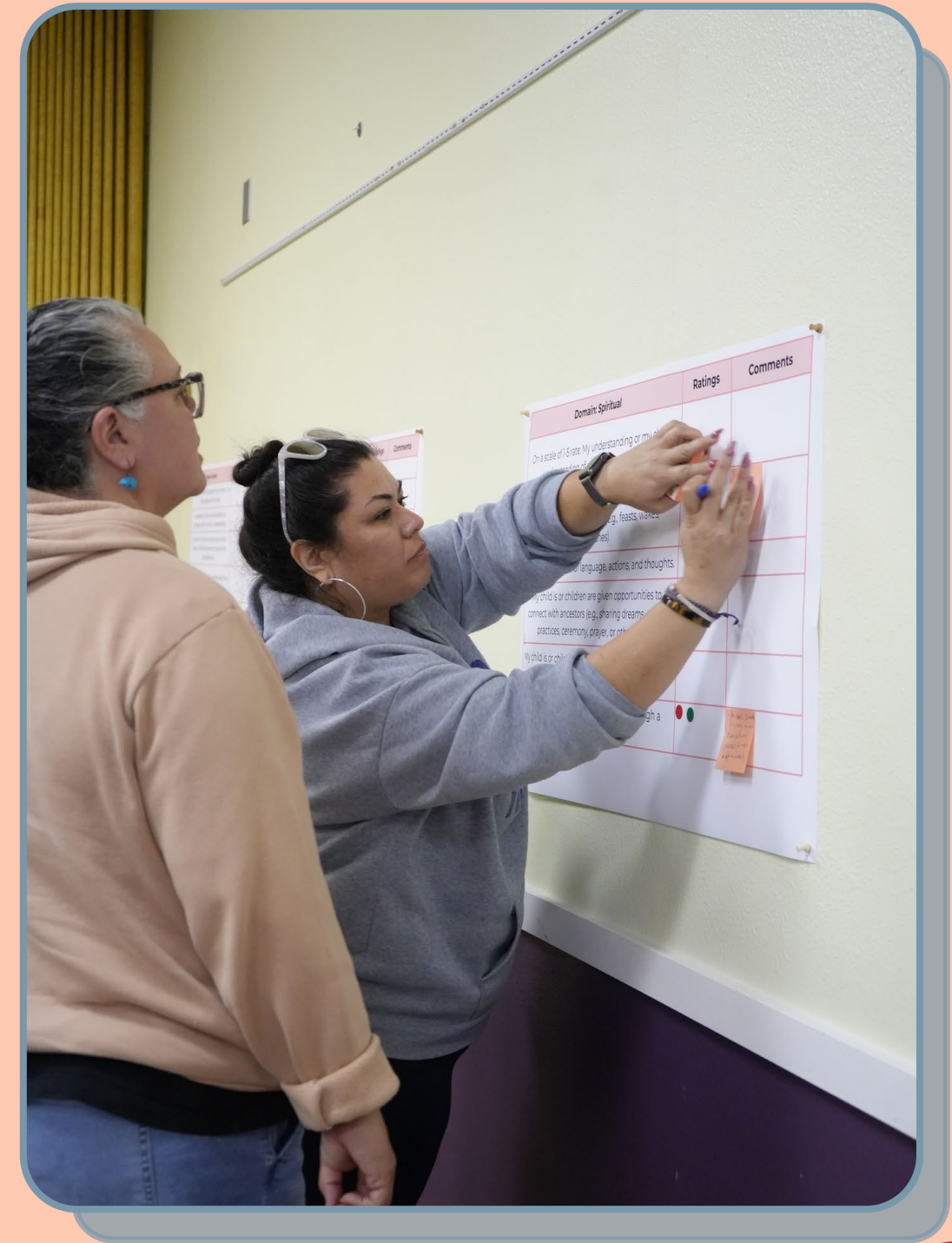
Mikyla
Navajo & Palauan

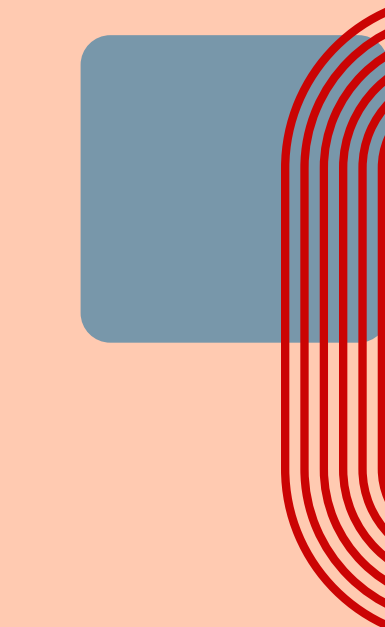
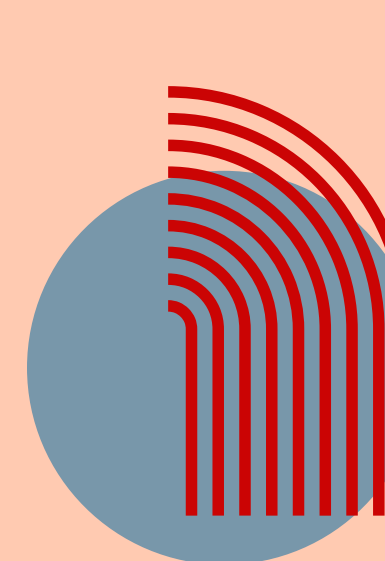


Seratha
Diné/Navajo

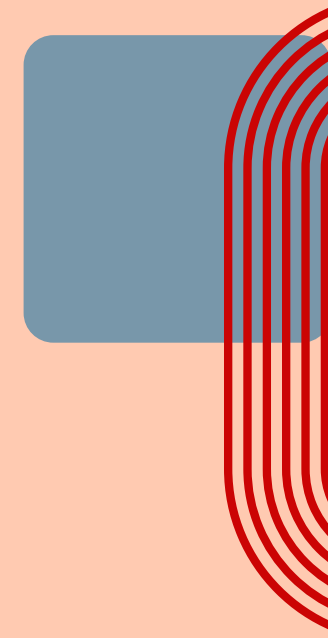
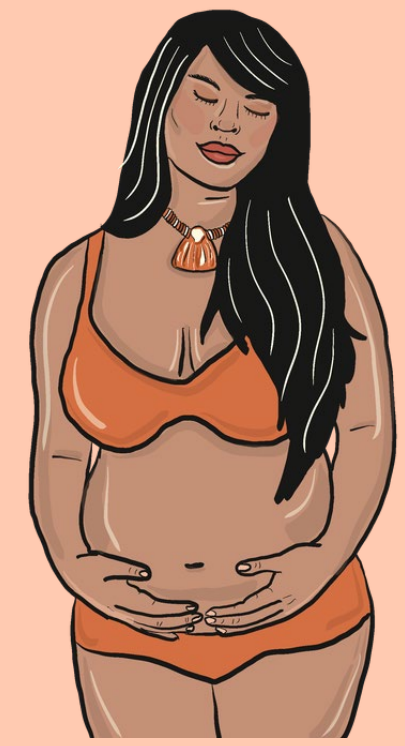
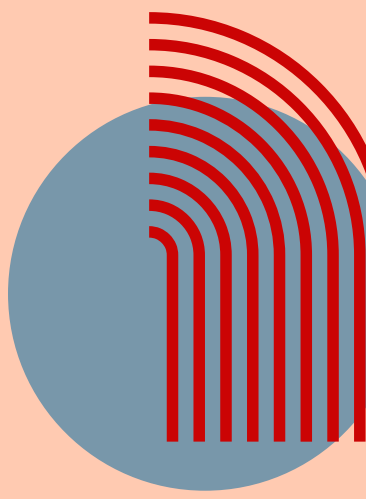
Pilimaku a Data and Research

- Reasons we collect data:
 - Programmatic data
 - Funder requests
 - Research-Practice Partnership
 - Measure development
 - Evidence building
- If we don't want home visitors and families to carry the feelings I once held about data, what are we trying to cultivate instead?





**What if data and
the way they're
collected were fully
community driven?**

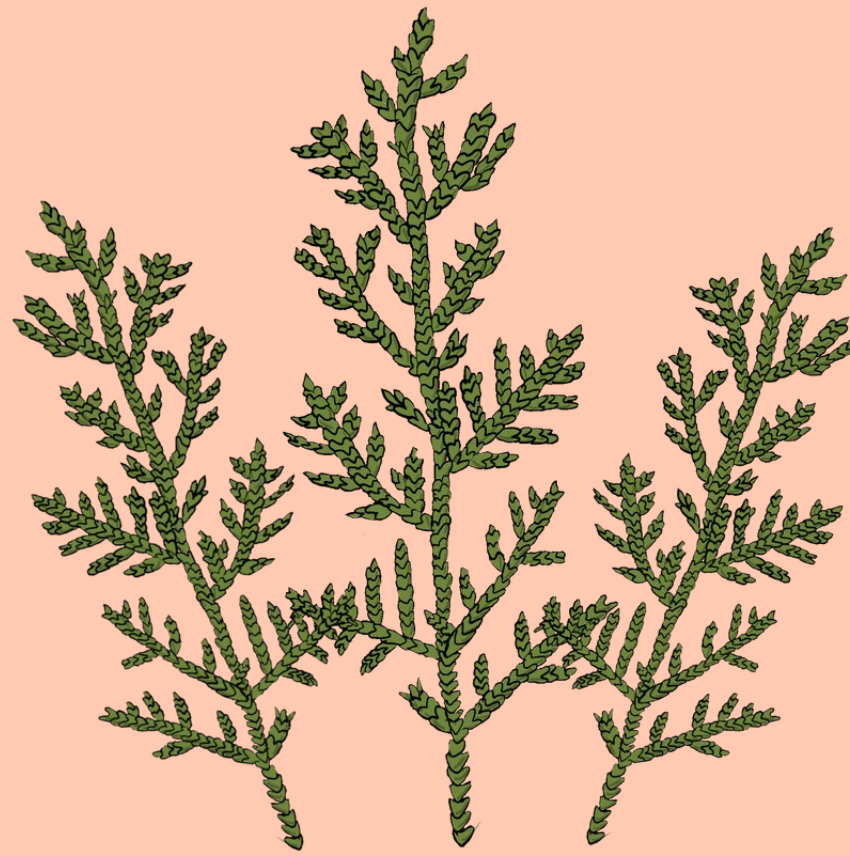


Connecting birth and
parenting sovereignty
to stories that are told
about these experiences
through data.

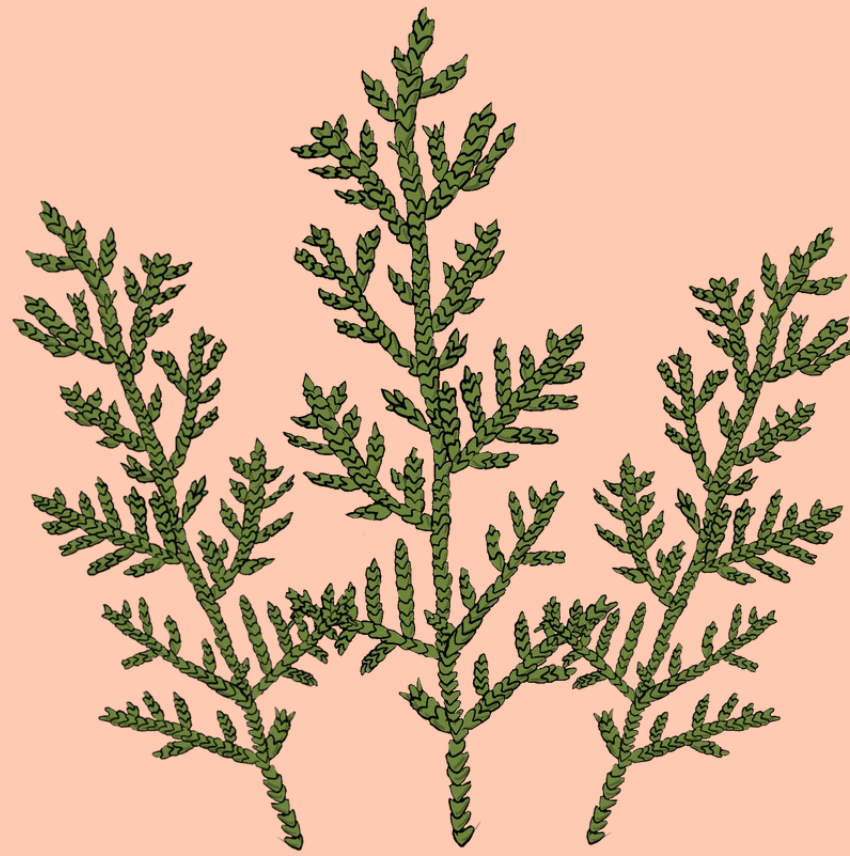


What stories do we
want to tell?

Recognizing measurement as intervention.



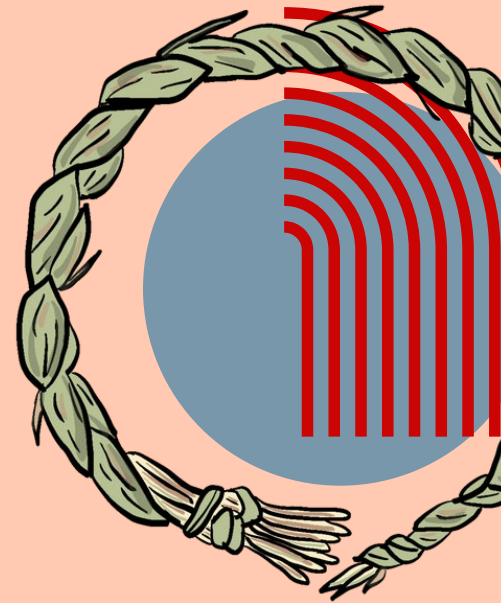
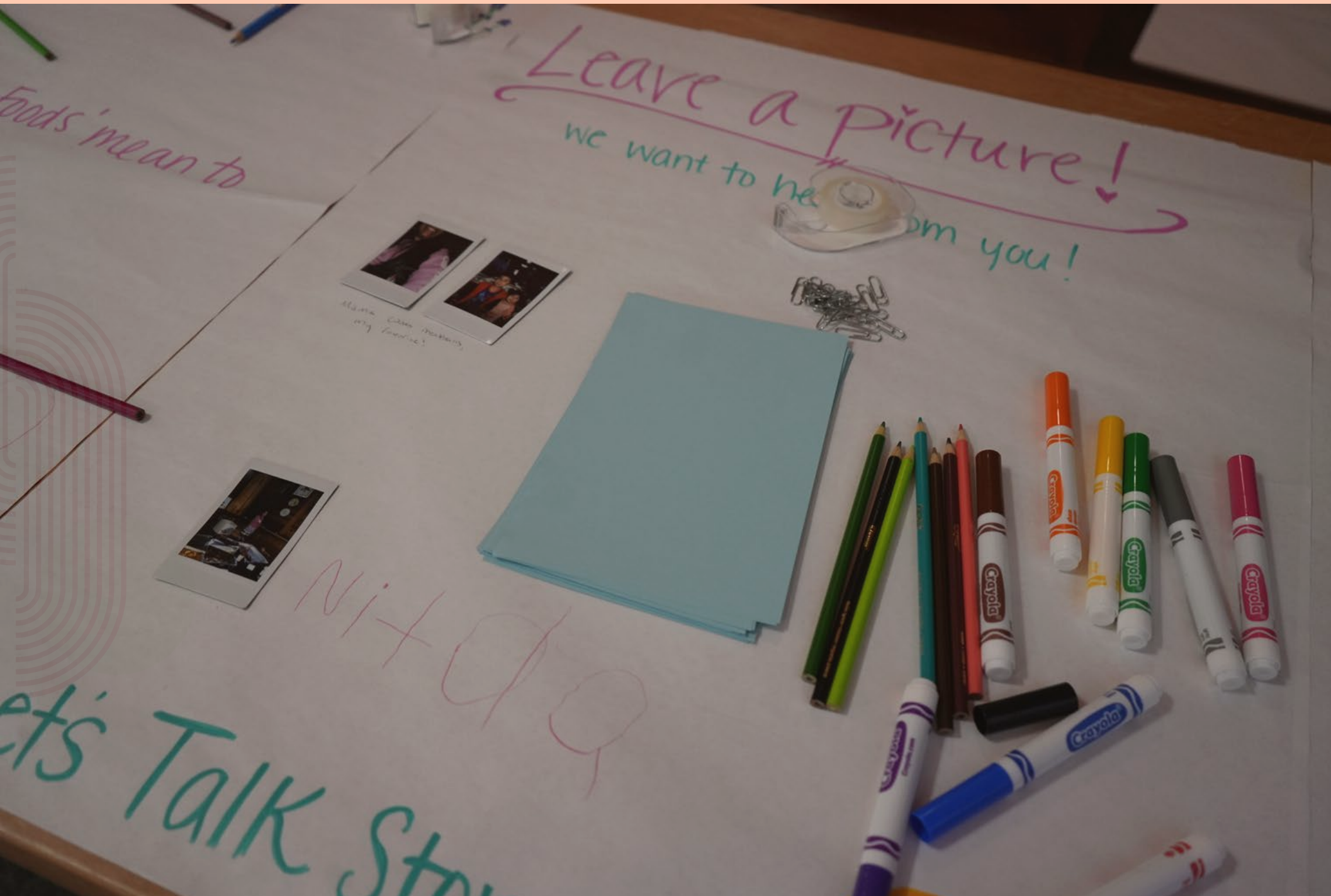
Indigenizing measurement.

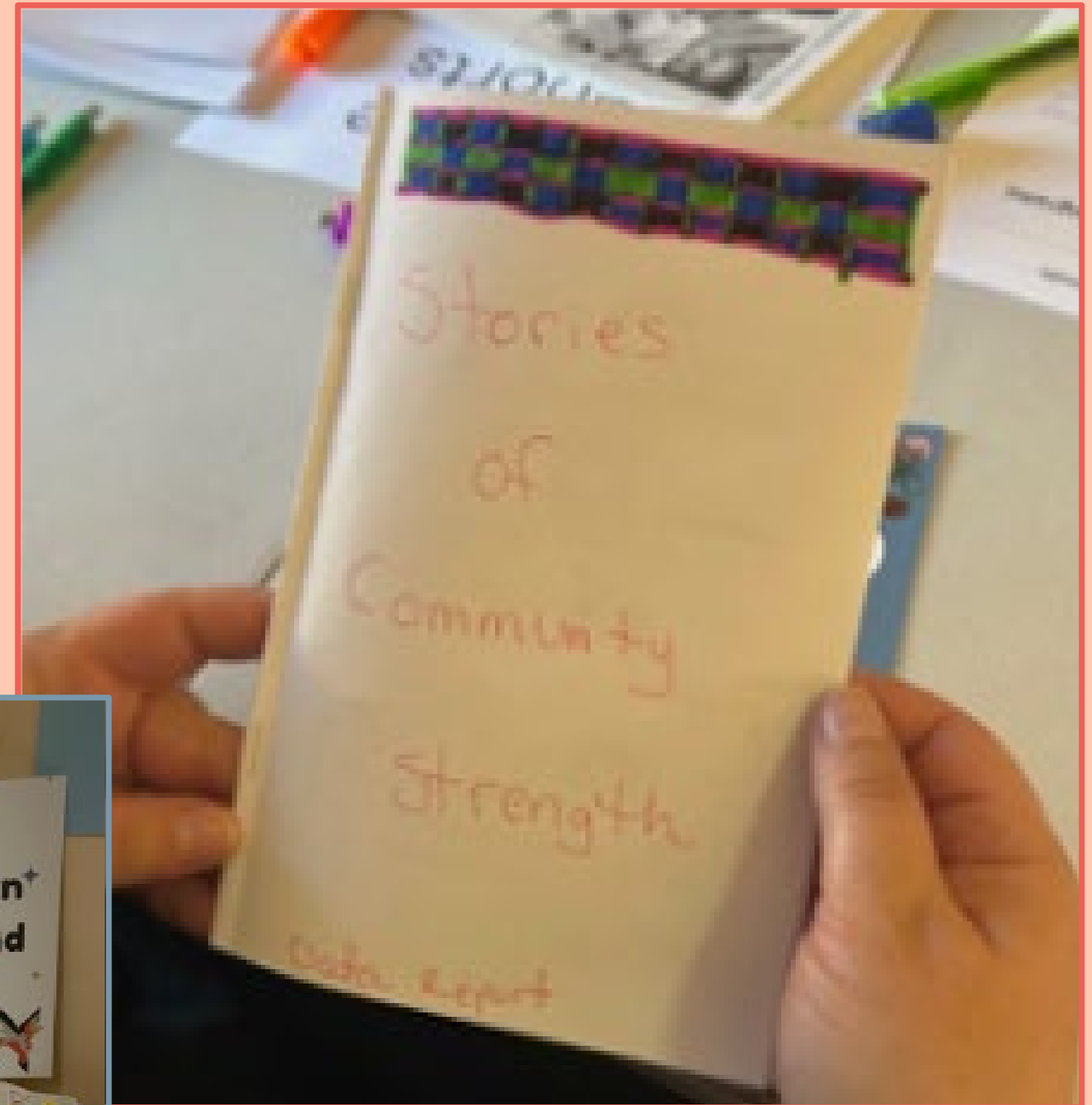


Our Strategies

Leading our own research and data projects is one piece, but we also:

- Negotiate data reporting requirements
- Collect meaningful program data
- Identify innovative measurement opportunities
- Strategically build our capacity to generate our own evidence across the organization

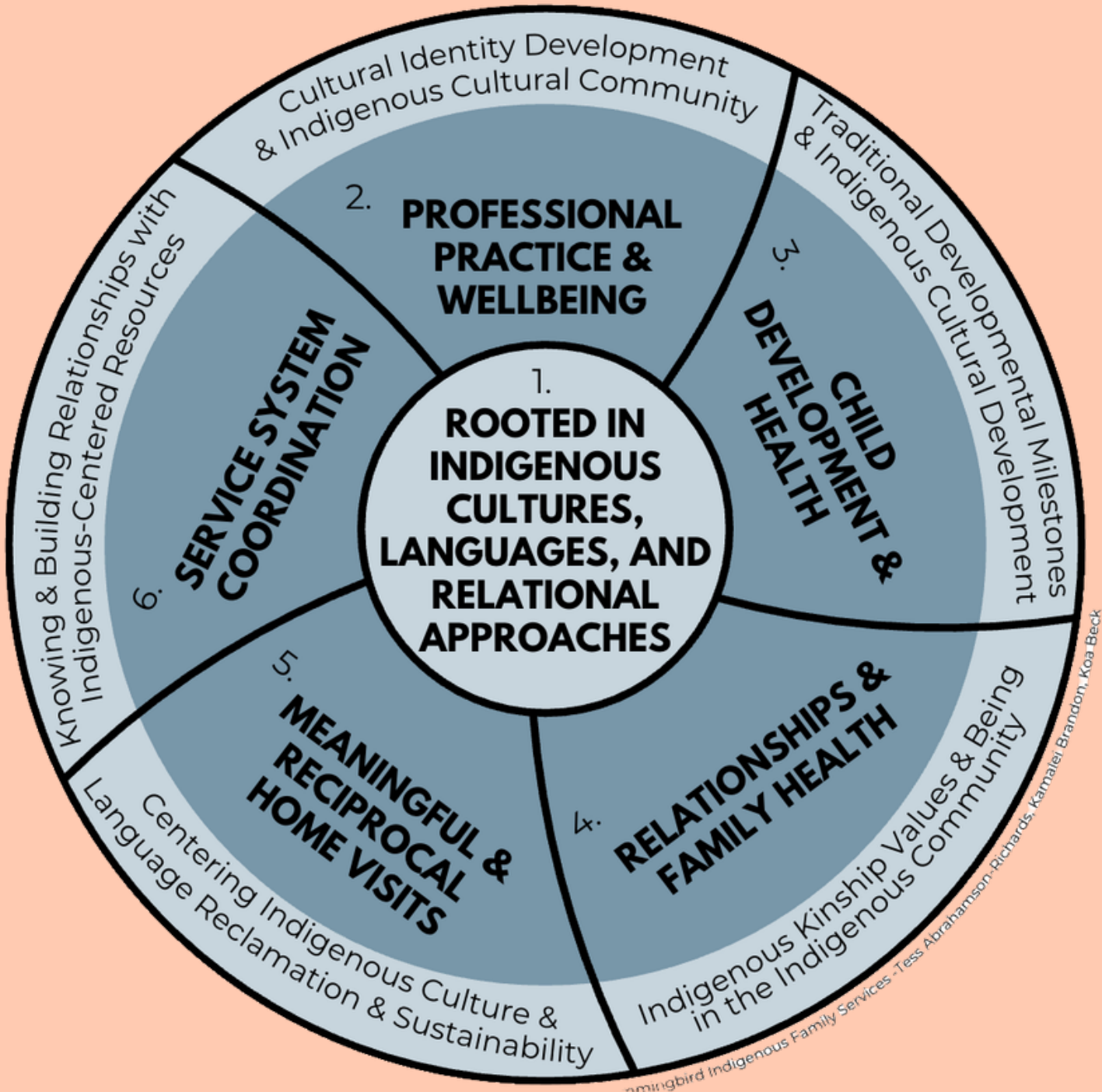




Data sovereignty in practice

Co-Publishing with Pilimaku and Data Sovereignty

Framework of Indigenous Home Visitor Professional Practice



Critical and underrecognized home visitor competencies: Indigenous knowledge, culture, and self-determination in early childhood service delivery

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ARTICLE INFO

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Home visiting
Self-determination

ABSTRACT

Purpose: Home visiting programs target maternal and infant mental health, family wellbeing, and child development. Culture is an essential ingredient in advancing these goals in Indigenous home visiting contexts. This study examines how Indigenous knowledge systems can inform home visitor professional competencies that nurture positive maternal and child mental health outcomes and community self-determination.

Methods: We reviewed existing home visitor competency frameworks and Indigenous practice approaches and conducted a novel “grounded re-review” process with Indigenous home visitors that aimed to elevate Indigenous practice-based expertise. Through facilitated interviews and hands-on activities, Indigenous practitioners critically examined dominant frameworks and co-analyzed existing literature to identify areas of alignment, tension, and omission.

Results: Ten common home visitor competencies were identified, reflecting standardized approaches to promoting maternal and child wellbeing and mental health. These frameworks largely fail to account for Indigenous epistemologies and values. Indigenous literature and grounded re-review highlight misalignments for applying these competencies to Indigenous settings and embedding self-determined cultural best practices. These include the assumption of nuclear family structures, an emphasis on individual rather than collective wellbeing, and a failure to recognize the important role of cultural knowledge. In response, we propose an *Indigenous Home Visitor Competencies Framework* that positions Indigenous cultures and languages at the center of five other interconnected domains.

Conclusions: This framework represents a fundamental shift from cultural adaptation to Indigenous sovereignty in early childhood practice. By centering Indigenous knowledge systems as complete epistemologies rather than add-on considerations, this supports both maternal and infant mental health and community self-determination.

1. Introduction

The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples defines Indigenous self-determination as the right to “freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development” and “the right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs” (United Nations, 2007). These rights to self-determination are underexplored in the research literature on evidence-based practice implementation despite

widespread awareness among Indigenous people of the many barriers the Western-based evidence paradigm has presented for our communities. This gap is particularly evident in early childhood intervention spaces, such as home visiting. Starting at the level of home visitor training and professional standards, universalized approaches to establishing metrics for home visitor competencies frequently overlook community- and culturally-specific knowledge systems that Indigenous practitioners leverage when working within their own communities. This paper contributes to understandings of the ways in which

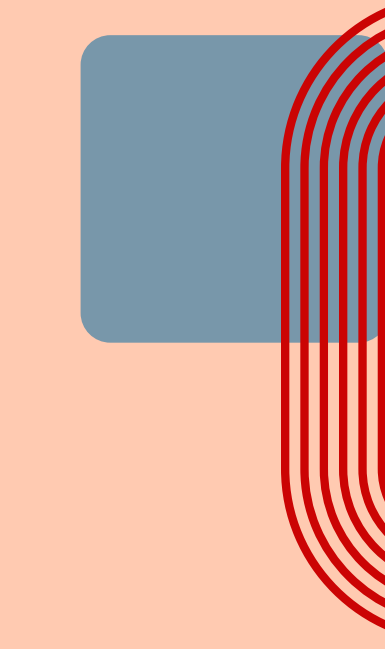
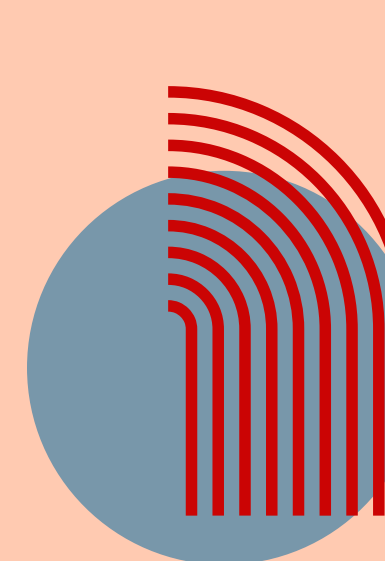
This article is part of a special issue entitled: Indigenous self published in SSM - Mental Health.
* Corresponding author. 3712 S. Ferdinand St., Seattle, WA, 98118, USA.
E-mail address: tess@hummingbird-ifs.org (T. Abrahamson-Richards).

“ Cultural connection is vital to supporting Indigenous maternal and infant mental health. ”

“ By positioning Indigenous practitioners as co -analysts of existing literature rather than subjects of study – and in the tradition of an Indigenous politic of refusal ([Simpson, 2016](#)) – we refuse traditional hierarchies that privilege academic knowledge over practice -based expertise. We also refuse the erasure of Indigenous science and epistemologies from early childhood intervention research by drawing on intergenerational knowledge transmission that takes place beyond peer - reviewed literature. ”

Finding, Adapting, & Developing New Tools

- Child development
- Intergenerational cultural connectedness
- Perinatal mental health
- Economic resources & well-being
- Indigenous parenting joy



Asking ourselves: What
could an Indigenous
place -based approach
to model development
and sustainability look
like, not just for us, but
at the systems level?

Early Childhood Systems Sovereignty

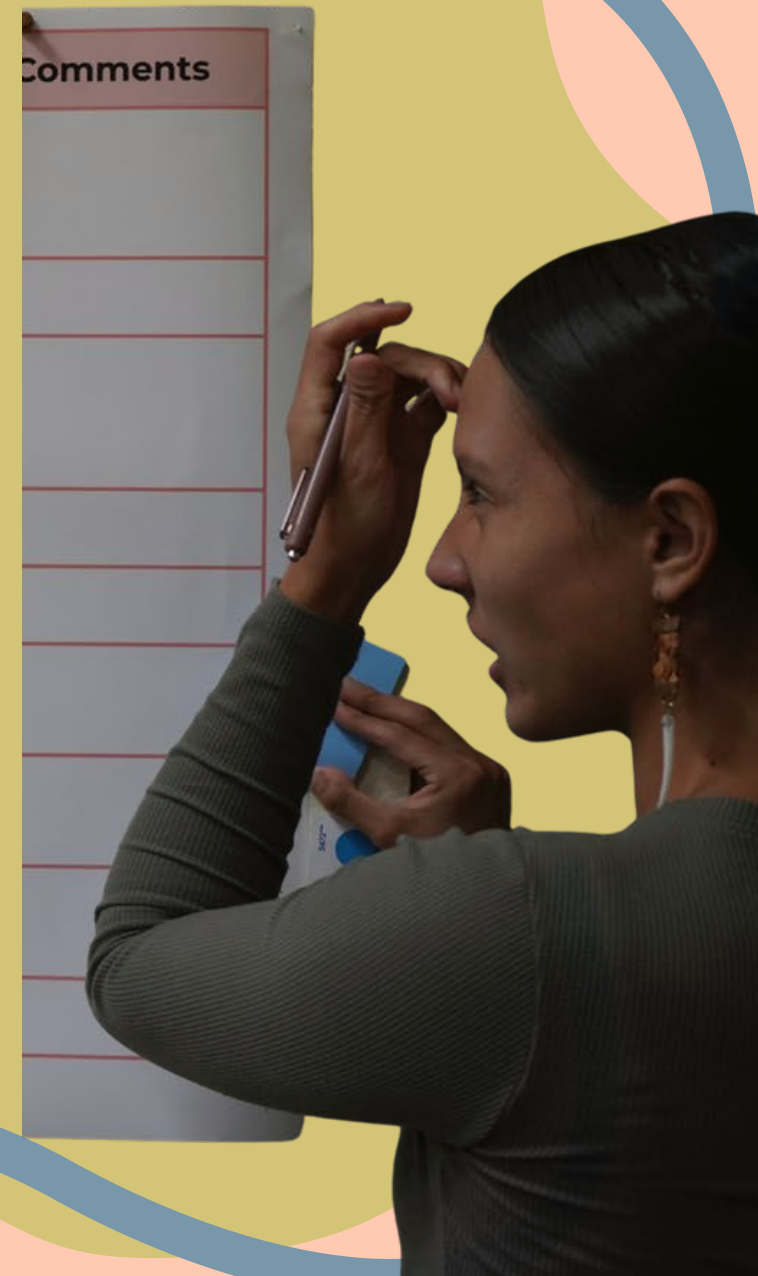


Data Sovereignty is
one tool in our toolbox

Where are we aligned
with those outside our
communities?

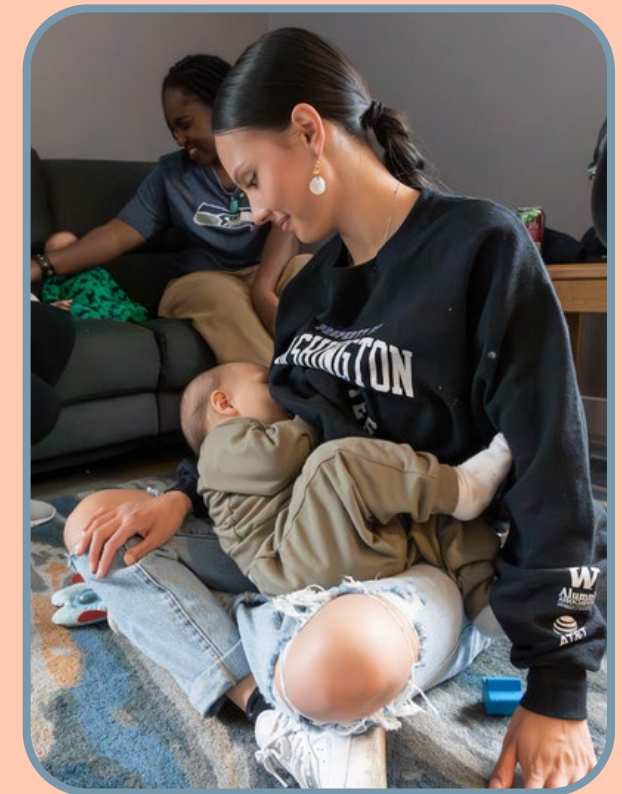
Dreams for the Future

We don't have it
all figured out,
and that's not
the goal.

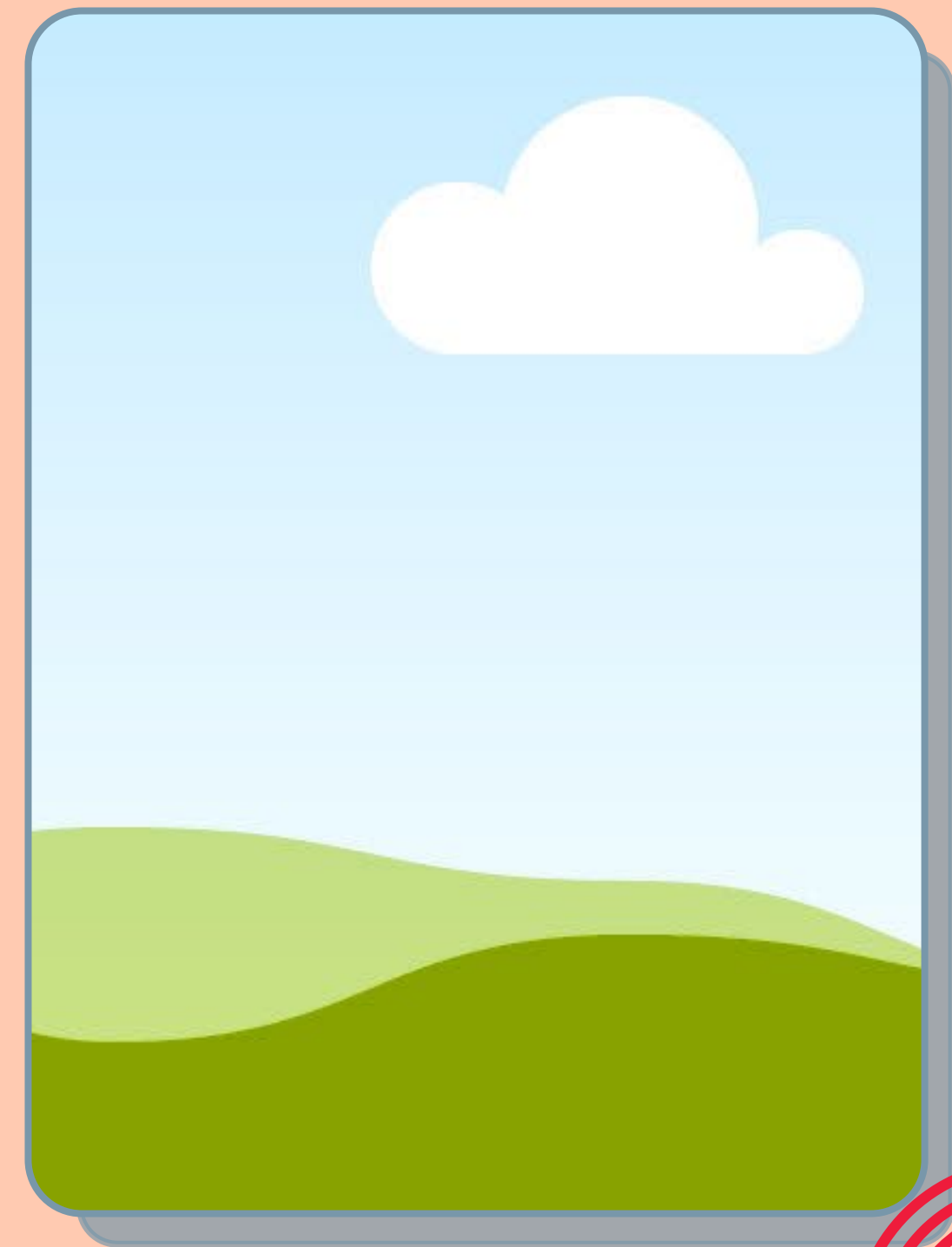


Dreams for the Future

We can only do
our best to
contribute
something for the
next generation,
like others did for
us.



Further
Dialogue
here at
NHVM



The background features a light peach color with abstract geometric patterns. On the left side, there are several sets of concentric red lines forming semi-circular and rectangular shapes, some of which overlap with solid-colored circles in shades of blue, green, and red. Similar patterns are visible in the top right and bottom right corners.

LemImtš

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