

# Reflections From our In-Person Meeting at the Catawba Indian Nation

November 30 to December 1, 2023

**National Home Visiting Network**

**MARCH 2024**

Members of the National Home Visiting Network Advisory Committee came together in late 2023 for an in-person meeting at the Catawba Indian Nation in Rock Hill, SC. Since the formation of the Network in 2017, we have been convening monthly by Zoom and at least once in-person each year so that we can strengthen our connections and engage in critical conversations that benefit from our multiple perspectives, all in service of our guiding star – “the benefits of home visiting are accessible to all families.”

With the help of Network Advisory Committee member Nicole Loveless (a member of the Pueblo of San Felipe), and federal advisors to the Advisory Committee Carrie Peake and Moushumi Beltangady of the Administration for Children and Families (the federal office that oversees the Tribal Home Visiting program), we identified the Catawba Indian Nation because it would allow us to continue our commitment to learning about the history and current conditions of Native American communities. We invited Anton Treuer (author of *Everything You Wanted to Know about Indians but Were Afraid to Ask*) to conduct a training for the Network, and Carrie provided additional insights specific to Catawba, a new Tribal Home Visiting grant recipient. For most, this was Network Advisors’ first time on tribal lands and to be in community with Native American people in such an intimate way.

Hilary Harris, the Catawba Nation’s Nŭti Yəpə (Morning Sun) Tribal Home Visiting program director, and her team designed a visit that allowed the Network to be immersed in the culture and tradition of the Catawba – the people of the river. From a smudging ceremony to start our work off in a good way, to prayers, songs, storytelling, and drumming, and meals prepared by members of the community, we were fully present with the Catawba. We gathered in the Longhouse where the tribal government meets, visited the river, and learned about the clay vein and water sports, saw children playing in the Early Head Start and Head Start programs, visited the Catawba Cultural Center, and toured the new space for the home visiting program. We learned to count and sing in their Native language. It felt like a warm hug.

We learned about the dark times too. They shared their encounters with the early colonists who took their land (and how land-grabs continue to this day), how the boarding school movement attempted to destroy their identity and language, and what it meant to lose (and regain) their federal recognition. We felt their passion and witnessed their commitment to all that sovereignty means for their culture, people, and land.

With their determination to care for one another and the next seven generations and their gratitude for the natural world around them, the Catawba people left an indelible mark on our consciousness. They are a living example of what we envision authentic community to be. As one participant said, “This meeting had heart to it. Hilary and her team opened their arms and hearts to us and made it easier to listen, learn, and reflect.” Our time together surpassed everyone’s expectations, and for that, we will be forever grateful.

### **About the National Home Visiting Network**

The National Home Visiting Network was formed in 2018 to inspire the growth of a well-connected field that catalyzes and magnifies the collective reach and effectiveness of home visiting. Guided by four core principals, our goal is to see that the benefits of home visiting are accessible to all families. As such, we:

- Catalyze connections across the home visiting field.
- Elevate the voices and perspectives of home visiting professionals and consumers.
- Create a space for challenging conversations that cannot be solved by any one group alone and instead require a networked approach.

The National Home Visiting Network is led by an Advisory Committee with representatives from research, policy, and practice, and includes home visiting consumers. The Heising-Simons Foundation supports the effort.