NEWS | POSTED NOVEMBER 19, 2025

Member Spotlight: Michelle Sarche

AUTHOR

Michelle Sarche

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Bio:

Michelle Sarche, PhD, is a professor and project lead at the Buffett Early Childhood Institute at the University of Nebraska. She is a citizen of the Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Ojibwe tribe. Michelle has been a member of the urban Native communities of Denver, where she has lived for the last 27 years, and of Chicago, where she lived prior. Michelle is trained as a clinical psychologist and has partnered with Native communities in research on children's development throughout her time as a faculty member with the Centers for American Indian and Alaska Native Health at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus (1997-2024) and now at the University of Nebraska (2024-present). Dr. Sarche's work has focused on children's development in the earliest years, the role of Head Start, Home Visiting, and Child Care in supporting children, families, and communities, and cultural adaptation of interventions, including those focused on alcohol exposed

pregnancy prevention. Dr. Sarche co-directs the Native Children's Research Exchange network and Scholars program, through which she has served as a mentor to numerous early career Indigenous and allied scholars and convened the NCRE Conference since 2008.

Have you recently or do you currently serve on any SRCD Committees, Councils, or task forces?

SRCD Policy Advisory Council

Who inspired you and why (and/or who inspired you to go into your chosen field of study)?

I was very close to my grandmother, and it is through her that my Tribal citizenship flows. She meant the world to me, and it is because of her that I have dedicated my career to working in, with and for Tribal communities.

What advice would you give to a student beginning their Ph.D. studies in developmental science or related?

Don't be swayed by what others may see as impossible. If you know it in your heart, follow it fiercely.

What publication or book would you say is a must read in the field (and why)?

This summer, I finally read *Braiding Sweetgrass* by Robin Wall Kimmerer. Dr. Kimmerer is a botanist and member of the Citizen Potawatomi Nation. I love how Dr. Kimmerer invites us to consider braiding wisdom traditions – those of Indigenous people who understand our deep connections and reciprocity with the natural world – and those of Western science – to deepen our understanding of the world around us and our relationship and responsibilities within that world of human, animal, and plant life. This book really changed my perspective on what our non-human relatives can teach us about reciprocity and its importance for our shared well-being.

Why did you join the Indigenous Caucus and how does it facilitate connection among members all year long?

I joined the Indigenous caucus because my life's work has been in, with, and for Native American communities. Indigenous wisdom teaches us about the importance of relationships and over time, I have

come to appreciate that wisdom more and more. The Indigenous caucus includes members who are not only colleagues, but who have become family. Research is a very rewarding path to follow, but it can also be a challenging path to follow. Whether we are meeting in-person during the biennial or gathering in other spaces and places throughout the year, I'm grateful for my Indigenous caucus family for uplifting and inspiring me along this path.