THE YUROK TRIBE

SUMMARY FINDINGS

Understanding Truancy among Yurok Tribal Students

Authors: Alissa Leigh, Nicole Chappelle, Dawn Arledge, Katherine Schoenfield

Abstract: In 2014 the Yurok Tribal Court received funding to focus on addressing the low attendance rates and high truancy rates among Yurok students in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties. The Yurok Tribal Court staff worked with the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) to develop a collaborative project to gather and analyze key informant interviews with students, parents, and community members to better understand why Yurok Tribal students are missing school.

The California Endowment

CCRP California Center for Rural Policy

HUMBOLDT STATE UNIVERSITY

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Understanding Truancy among Yurok Tribal Students

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Executive Summary

In 2014, the Yurok Tribe received funding from the California Endowment to address the low attendance rates and high truancy rates among Yurok students in Humboldt and Del Norte Counties, specifically targeting elementary school students (K-5th) who are chronically absent (10 or more absences in one school year) and/or who are considered truant by California law (3 or more unexcused absences). While Yurok students are experiencing higher truancy rates than other populations, chronic absenteeism and truancy are widespread concerns throughout the country. Very little research has focused on issues surrounding truancy and chronic absenteeism in Native American populations.

In the spring of 2015 through the fall of 2016, the Yurok Tribal Court (YTC) conducted a series of key informant interviews with 26 Yurok tribal members including: students identified as being truant, their parents/guardians, family members and community members at large. This report summarizes the findings from the key informant interviews. Throughout this project the YTC worked collaboratively with the California Center for Rural Policy (CCRP) at Humboldt State University to develop, implement and analyze the findings from this project.

To date much work has been accomplished through the leadership of the YTC to address low attendance rates and high truancy rates among Yurok students. Some of these accomplishments are:

- The development of a Memorandum of Agreement for data sharing between the Del Norte Unified School District and the YTC.
- Strengthened partnerships and collaborations with the following: Del Norte County district attorney's office, probation, child welfare and mental health department, and with a range of community stakeholders.
- Tracking Yurok students' attendance data.
- The development of the Yurok Educational Code.
- Recommendation that all Yurok students be sent to YTC before appearing at the county School Attendance Review Board (SARB).

This report provides insight regarding the reasons for truancy among Yurok students from the perspective of tribal members and families experiencing truancy. Findings from this project align with the California Attorney General's Office commissioned study focused on truancy. They found that when an elementary school student was missing school it was often due to family struggles.[3] In addition, they found physical health issues, mental health issues and parental value of early education all factored into absenteeism.[3]

Key Findings

The following were major themes that emerged from the interviews with key informants:
- Interviewees indicate a lack of clarity regarding whose role and responsibility it is to address truancy.
  - Interviewees expressed confusion surrounding truancy policies.
  - Interviewees expressed a lack of clarity around the appropriate roles for the tribe and school to address high truancy rates among Yurok students.
- Transportation is identified as a barrier impacting truancy and attendance, as well as a resource to address it.

- Students who are truant are facing barriers in both their home and school environment.
  - Family struggles and a lack of stability in the home environment are causing students to miss school.
    - Health challenges for both students and family members, family conflict, and having "a lot going on" are some of the reasons for truancy.
  - The school environment and experiences with bullying are causing students to miss school.
    - Bullying by peers and teachers is one of the top issues impacting students feeling safe at school.
    - Interviewees indicated a need for alternative learning styles and environments for students in order to improve attendance.
- Students having low interest in school was cited as a reason for truancy.
- Interviewees identified peers/friends, family and themselves as sources of resilience. Friends and family members were cited as having a positive influence on students' attendance.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the following: current research around truancy prevention, results from the key informant interviews, and discussions with the Yurok Tribal Court.

- Explore additional best practices around courtroom intervention strategies that reduce or eliminate barriers for getting children to school.
  - Provide each student experiencing truancy with an advocate and/or mentor.
  - Intervene at earliest point.
- Design and implement a communication strategy to educate families on the importance of school attendance, school and tribal roles in addressing truancy, current efforts and policy achievements around truancy prevention, and legal consequences of truancy for families.
- Evaluate school and tribal policies regarding truancy that may be contradictory in addressing truancy. For example, some policies include suspending students who are truant, which causes them to miss more school.
- Continue to develop and ensure students experiencing truancy are identified and referred to tribal court where attendance is tracked and monitored both prior to and following implementation of interventions.
- Consider both the home and school environments when determining consequences and identifying appropriate interventions for students and their families.
- Consider creating a consistent monthly schedule for truancy court cases so that families and schools know what to expect. Ensure that court appearances are routine and timely to support early intervention and ongoing monitoring of students identified as truant.
- Explore additional funding opportunities to implement the above recommendations that the current system does not have the capacity to carry out.

The design of this study allowed for a unique opportunity to examine and to understand why Yurok Tribal students are truant and/or chronically absent. In addition to the recommendations, additional research with Yurok tribal members and other key stakeholders can enrich the collective understanding of this issue. For example, a deeper investigation into the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) among Tribal students experiencing truancy may help to inform additional intervention strategies.

Introduction

The purpose of this project was to explore issues surrounding school attendance in a rural elementary school in which the majority of students are Yurok tribal members. A recent report found that over 50% of the K – 2nd grade students at this school were chronically absent.[2]

School attendance is affected by both truancy and chronic absenteeism. Factors associated with truancy and chronic absenteeism are examined in this report.

Truancy

Truancy is defined by the California Constitution as unexcused absences from school. The California legislature defined truancy as missing more than 30 minutes of instruction without an excuse three times during the school year.[3] Truancy is not endemic, over 30% of all California public school students were truant in the 2010-2011 school year.[3] Truancy rates have been shown to be close to 50% in some California school districts.[2] Truancy is not inconsequential as it occurs in every school, representing a considerable portion of students.

Chronic Absenteeism

Chronic absenteeism, a recently identified issue in academic performance, consists of a pattern of excessive number of missed days of school. Chronic absenteeism has been defined as missing 10% of the school year. Many states do not require schools to report on chronic absenteeism rates. Because most schools do not monitor or report chronic absenteeism, national trends are not known. Much of what is known about chronic absenteeism comes from those states that do require school districts to report chronic absenteeism. Chronic absenteeism rates, like truancy, has shown to be endemic.[4] Many school districts among the Oregon counties report chronic absenteeism rates greater than 25%.[4] In Nebraska, the rates of chronic absenteeism reported by schools ranged from 5% to 50%.[4] Chronic absenteeism, like truancy, is a prevalent issue that involves a significant portion of the student population.

Outcomes for Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism

Evaluating rates of truancy and chronic absenteeism are important as both are associated with poor academic performance and delinquent behavior.[5] Truancy is associated with lower academic grades and lower scores on standardized achievement tests and lower high school graduation rates.[5-6]

Risk Factors for Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism

In order to prevent truancy and chronic absenteeism, and their attendant outcomes, it is important to identify factors that may contribute to the risk of students being truant or chronically absent. However, little is known about the correlates or causes of truancy or chronic absenteeism. Recent efforts in evaluation of education effectiveness has identified issues that are associated with truancy rates or chronic absenteeism. Variables that are associated with truancy include delinquent peer association, poverty, and being African-American.[6-8]

The Attorney General's Office commissioned a study to evaluate issues surrounding truancy. Four general themes from the data analysis emerged. They found that when an elementary school student was missing school it was often due to family struggles.[3] In addition, they found physical health issues, mental health issues and parental value of early education all factored into absenteeism.[3]

Truancy and Chronic Absenteeism in Native American Students

To date very little research has focused on issues surrounding truancy and chronic absenteeism in a Native American population. Data from Del Norte County schools revealed that chronic absenteeism is greater in Native American students when compared to that of Caucasian students.[2]

Methods

Interviewing of Key Informants

A total of 26 persons in the Yurok tribal community participated in one-on-one in person interviews with Anthony Trombetti, Family Education Advocate and project lead. Predominantly parents, guardians and or family members of a student identified as being truant were interviewed, followed by students who are currently truant in school and lastly individuals in the community. Qualitative methods prescribe that persons interviewed are purposively sampled, not randomly sampled as with quantitative methods, in order to obtain a range of perspectives.

Table 1. Types of Interviewees

| Interviewees	Totals
Students	11
Parents/Guardians/Family Member	13
Community Members	2

Students interviewed ranged in age from 10-17 years of age and were predominantly from single-parent families that live in Del Norte County. The majority of interviewees live in Klamath, with only several interviewees living in Humboldt County. Predominantly interviewees indicated that they currently rent an apartment or home, while a few indicated that they were currently homeless. Within this group some parents also shared that they were currently unemployed.

Focus of Inquiry

Open ended questions were developed by using the Social-Ecological Model (SEM). This model is a theory based approach used to understand the complex interrelations among various personal and environmental factors. It is also through this framework that one can see the bi-directional influence both away from and towards the individual, within the larger ecological framework.

This model, as seen in Figure 1 is made up of the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. The microsystem is the layer that is closest to the individual, representing the individual's immediate surroundings, for example, family and friends. The mesosystem consists of the interactions between different systems in which the individual lives, for example, their neighborhood and/or their school. The exosystem is the larger social system in which an individual does not directly function in. This could be an individual's place of work, or community resources. Lastly is the macrosystem, and it is composed of the cultural values, laws and customs.

Figure 1. Social Ecological Model
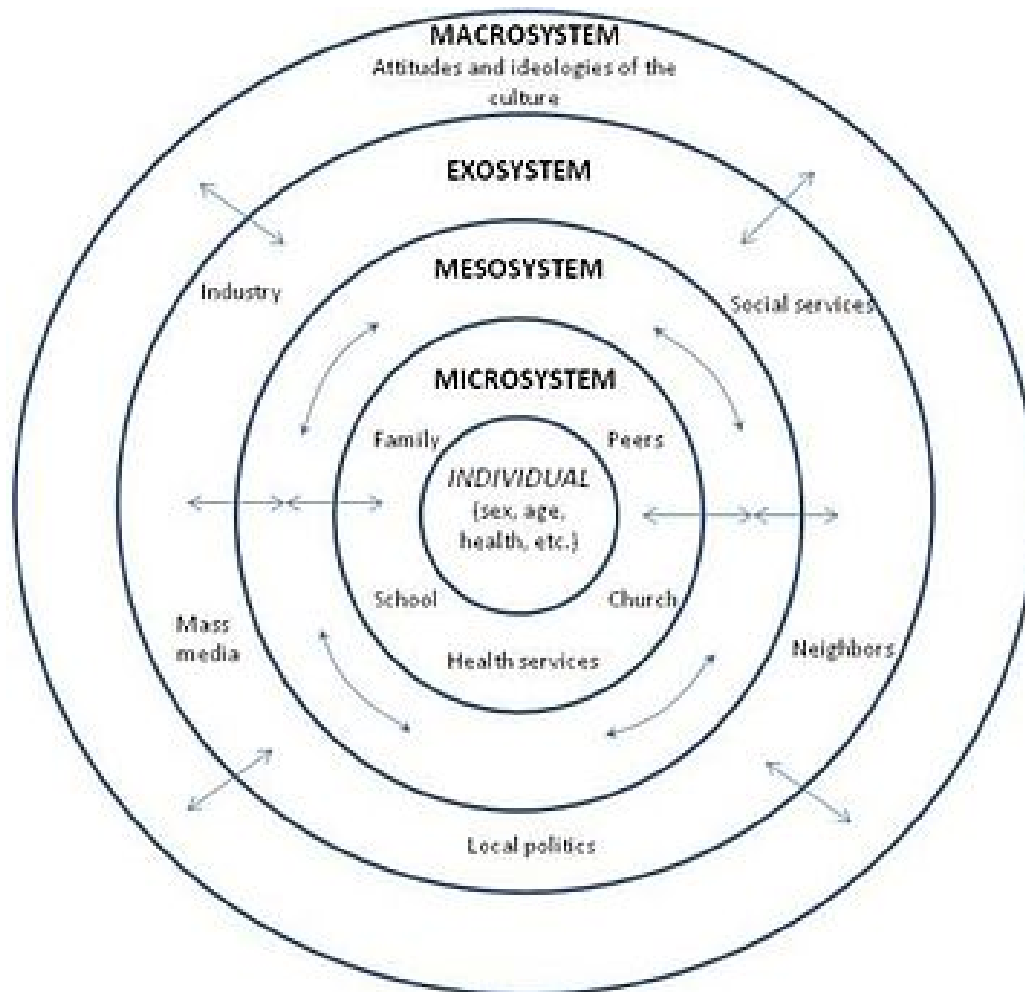
In order to better understand why Yurok Tribal students are missing school, questions were developed to understand each of these social ecological levels to provide a better understanding and context to why students are missing school.

The five levels in the Social Ecological Model that we focused on were; Tribal (macrosystem), school (exosystem/mesosystem), family (microsystem/mesosystem), peers (microsystem/mesosystem), and student (individual). In each of these categories the following areas were inquired about:

- Current support provided in getting student to school
- Factors that may cause a student to miss school
- Changes that could be made

Questions for the semi-structured interviews are listed in Appendix A. Figure 2 summarizes the reasons students are missing school utilizing the Social Ecological Model.

Figure 2. Social Ecological Model: Reasons Why Students are Missing School
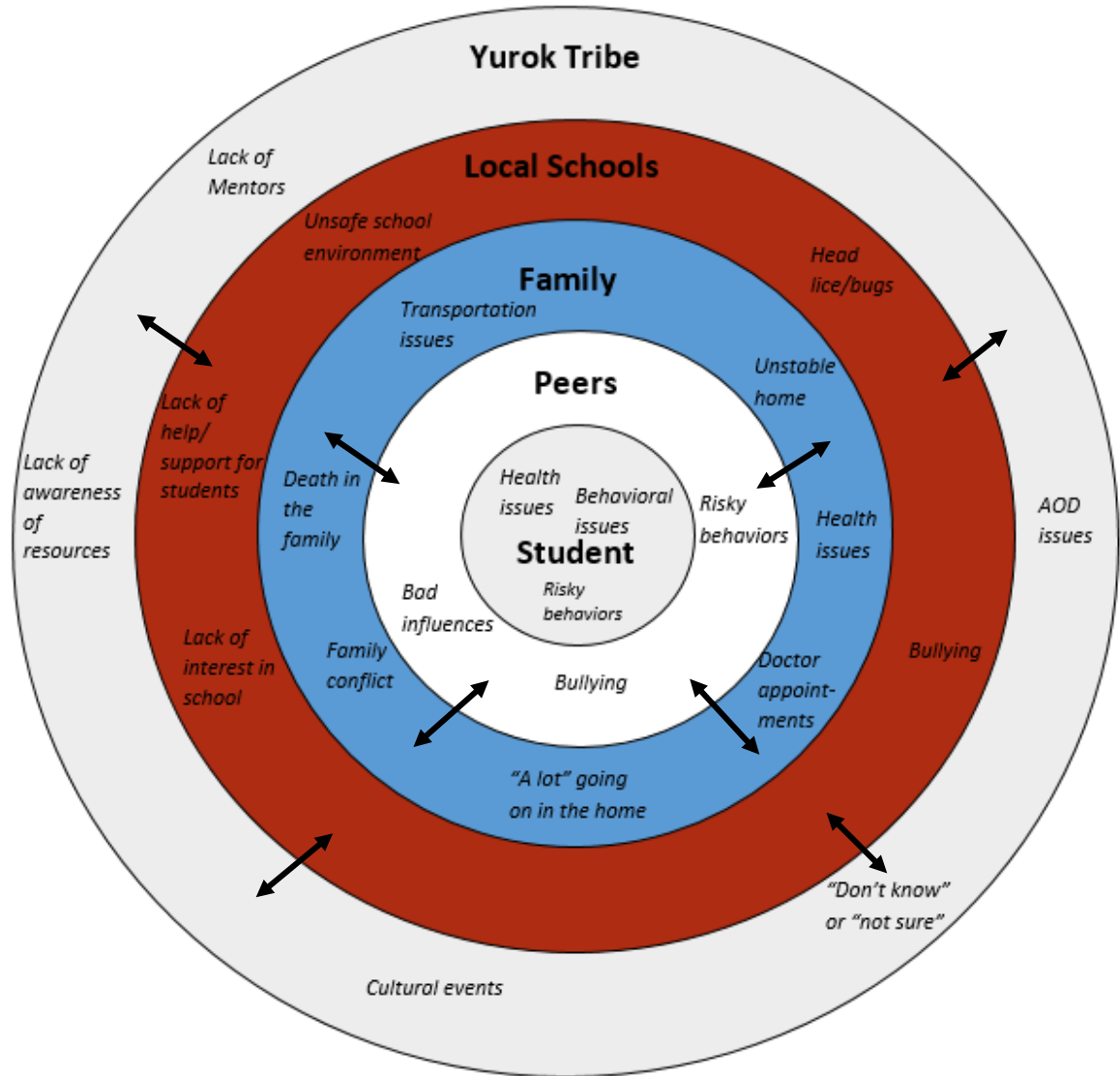
Data Entry and Analysis

Interview Data Entry

All interviews conducted by Anthony Trombetti, the Family Education Advocate, were audio-recorded in order to capture word-for-word responses from the interviewees. Once a key informant interview was conducted the audio-recording was sent to CCRP for transcription and analysis. Once audio-recordings were received, each interview was transcribed and formatted in a Microsoft word document.

With each interview CCRP provided Anthony Trombetti, the Family Education Advocate with feedback and guidance. This allowed for a continuous mode for quality improvement and ways in which data collection and analysis could be improved.

Qualitative Data Analysis of Key Informant Interviews

The qualitative analysis of data from each key-informant interview was based on a modified method of constant comparison used in naturalistic inquiry. Naturalistic inquiry is a form of qualitative research where social issues are looked at in their natural settings, through the use of multiple methodological procedures, however, in this study primary data collection was through the use of in-depth key-informant interviews

Transcribed interviews were analyzed for repetitious patterns of ideas generated from participant responses to the questions that were asked (see Appendix A). Repetitious patterns were analyzed by unitizing and categorizing data using the modified method of constant comparison. All data were coded and retrieved via computer-assisted qualitative data analysis using ATLAS.ti.

To identify the major themes and sub-themes arising from participant responses a code list was developed. A total of 112 codes were defined. Codes were constantly refined and grouped together, as new themes emerged throughout the analysis of all 26 interviews.

Results

Results are portrayed in tables with the listing of the codes or themes arising from the key-informant interviews, rank ordered by the number of persons out of the total group of interviewees (26). Results are also presented within the five question groups: Tribe, School, Family, Peers, and Students. In addition, results are further grouped by age of interviewees. Parents, guardians, family members, and community members were grouped in the "adult" (n=15) category, while students were grouped in the "youth" (n=11) category.

Throughout the interviews, among all five question groups (Tribe, school, family, peers/friends and student) respondents (both adults and youth) stated that there was "nothing" that the Tribe, school, family, peers/friends or the student was doing that was causing them to miss school. Interviewees did not identify the Tribe as being responsible for student attendance. In addition, when questions were asked about what is currently going on and changes that could be made within the five question groups, individuals' consistently stated "nothing" or that they were not sure. This could be due to truancy being a new topic of concern within the community and a lack of awareness regarding it and the available resources.

Bullying was a theme that emerged within two of the five question groups (school and peer). Respondents indicated that bullying (including being put down and conflict at school) was causing students to miss school. Figure 3 lists the top three reasons among the five question groups, for why students are missing school.

Figure 3. What is going on that is causing students to miss school?

Five Question Groups	Identified Causes of Why Students are Missing School
What is going on with the **TRIBE** that may cause you (the student) or your student to miss school?	1. "Nothing" stated by respondents (n=13)
	2. Miscellaneous reasons (listed below) (n=5)
	3. Ceremonies/dances/cultural activities (n=3)
What is going on with the **SCHOOL** that may cause you (the student) or your student to miss school?	1. Bullying (peers and teachers) (n=7)
	2. "Nothing" stated by respondents (n=5)
	3. [Student]not interested in school and/or disengaged (n=4) Unsafe school environment (n=4)
What is going on within your **FAMILY** that may cause you (the student) or your student to miss school?	1. Family conflict and lack of family connection (n=10)
	2. A lot going on in the home (n=8)
	3. [Parents] not aware of what is going on at home or at school (n=4)
What is going on with **PEERS/FRIENDS** that may cause you (the student) or your student to miss school?	1. Bullying (among peers) (n=9)
	2. Risky behaviors; alcohol and other drug (AOD) abuse, out at all times of the night (n=6)
	3. "Nothing" stated by respondents (n=5)
What is going on with the **YOU/YOUR STUDENT** that may cause you (the student) or your student to miss school?	1. Miscellaneous reasons (listed below) (n=9)
	2. Rather be doing other stuff/skip school/uninterested (n=6) Health issues (n=6)
	3. Behavioral issues (n=4) Mental health issues (n=4) Risky behaviors (n=4)

Tribal Question Themes

All interviewees were asked three main questions in regards to the Tribe:

1. What is the **Tribe** currently doing that helps you get to school?
2. What is the **Tribe** doing that may cause you to miss school?
3. What are some changes that could be made by the **Tribe** to help you/your student get to school?

When interviewees were asked, "What is your **Tribe** currently doing that helps you (or your child) get to school?" The top two themes that emerged in regards to what the tribe is currently doing were:

1. Nothing/not aware of what the Tribe is currently doing
2. Don't know/not sure

Overall, the majority of the interviewees, both adults and youth, were unable to identify what the Tribe is currently doing that helps them (the student) or their child get to school. Some respondents who indicated nothing expressed this because they felt that it wasn't the Tribe's responsibility. However, some interviewees did mention: TANF, providing a Truancy Officer, and the Yurok Court Truancy Program were what the Tribe was currently doing to help them (the student) or their child get to school. In addition, there was no difference in how adults and youth answered this question, as seen in Table 2.

> "[the student] goes to school there and the tribe helped with that actually, but in terms of when he was home, and going to school, I'm not aware of any tribal effort." –Adult Interviewee

Other miscellaneous things that were mentioned by interviewees that the Tribe was doing included, providing transportation, housing and general support to students and their families.

Table 2. What is the Tribe currently doing that helps you get to school?

Tribe Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Yurok Court Truancy Program	2	0	2
Don't know/not sure	6	3	3
Miscellaneous	5	1	4
Nothing/Not aware	9	4	5
TANF	2	0	2
Truancy Officer	2	1	1
Unable to code	2	1	1

When interviewees were asked "What is the **Tribe** doing that may cause you to miss school?" the top themes that emerged from interviewees responses were:

1. Nothing
2. Ceremonies/Dances/Other Cultural Activities
3. Lack of access to tutors
3. Don't know/not sure

As shown in Table 3, youth and adults were in agreement in regards to there being nothing that the Tribe is doing that may cause them or their student to miss school. In addition, some indicated that the reason for their student missing school was due to being a teenager, or not having the inspiration to want to go.

Some interviewees also brought up that at times participating in cultural activities like ceremonies and dances caused them (the student) and/or their child to miss school. Interviewees also talked about the lack of access to tutors offered by the Tribe as a reason for students missing school. Lastly, some respondents weren't sure or didn't know what the Tribe could be doing that may cause them (the student) or their child to miss school.

Other miscellaneous reasons for what the Tribe is doing that may cause the student or child to miss school were: not properly advertising Tribal resources, lack of mentors, AOD issues on the reservation, and fishing season.

Table 3. What is the Tribe doing that may cause you to miss school?

Tribe Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Ceremonies/dances/cultural activities	3	1	2
Don't know/not sure	2	0	2
Lack of access to tutors	2	0	2
Miscellaneous	5	1	4
Nothing	13	7	6

"Nothing I guess to blame on the tribe. Just being a teenager, with no inspiration to want to do nothing. Or not to be in school anyway."

-Adult Interviewee

"Nothing that I know of. I mean I take care of my own kid." –Adult Interviewee

When interviewees were asked, "What are some changes that could be made by the Tribe?" The following is a list of the top three themes that emerged from what respondents expressed:

1. Provide transportation
2. Not sure/Don't know
2. Nothing
2. Provide more opportunities for youth within the community
3. Provide more support to parents, families and children
3. Provide incentives/motivations/inspiration to students

In regards to some changes that could be made by the Tribe, there were slightly different themes that emerged between adults and youth, as seen in Table 4. For example, among adults the primary theme that emerged was the Tribe providing transportation. Providing transportation included; bus passes, transportation primarily for children in Klamath, and more transportation provided during the mornings and afternoons. In addition, another theme that emerged for adults was the need for the Tribe to provide more incentives, motivation as well as to inspire youth to want to attend school.

Another change identified primarily by adults was that the Tribe could provide more opportunities for youth including: access to healthy activities, Big Brother and Big Sister, reward programs, and monthly field trips. Lastly, adults talked about the need for the Tribe to provide more support to parents, families and children. Support was identified as teams of individuals working together for a family/child, support to single parents, and sub-offices of the Tribe in areas where there are higher numbers of Yurok students. It was also mentioned the need for more support and/or help be provided to students that are falling behind in school, while others specifically mentioned the need for tutoring services be provided by the Tribe.

For youth, one theme that emerged was that they were not sure or did not know of any changes that the Tribe could make that would improve their attendance. In addition, some students indicated that there was nothing that the Tribe could change. This primarily may be due to interviewees, both adults and youth, indicating that their attendance or their child's attendance is not the Tribe's responsibility.

Other miscellaneous types of changes that were mentioned that the Tribe could make were: providing financial support, offer homeschooling option for students, and using a multiagency approach when trying to address the needs of children.

Table 4. What are some changes that could be made by the Tribal community to help you (your student or a student) get to school?

Tribe Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Miscellaneous	5	4	1
More general support to parents/families/children	3	0	3
Not sure/don't know	4	3	1
Nothing	4	2	2
Provide help to students falling behind	2	0	2
Provide incentive/motivation/inspiration	3	0	3
Provide opportunities for youth	4	1	3
Provide transportation; bus passes	6	2	4
Provide tutoring	2	0	2

School Question Themes

All interviewees were asked three main questions in regards to their school or their child's school:

1. What is the **school** currently doing that helps you/or your child get to school?
2. What is the **school** doing that may cause you/or your child to miss school?
3. What are some changes that could be made by the **school** to help you/your student get to school?

> *"People don't want to go to school because they don't want to get jumped or into a fight. What could the school do?"*
>
> *-Student Interviewee*

When interviewees were asked, "What is your **school** currently doing that helps you (or your child) get to school?", the top two themes that emerged in regards to what the school is currently doing were:

1. Provide transportation
2. Nothing

Overall, the majority of students, both adults and youth identified that the school helps them by providing transportation for them (the student) or their child. Aside from providing transportation, interviewees were unable to identify what the school is doing to help them (the student) or their child to get to school.

Other miscellaneous things that were mentioned by the interviewees that the school was doing included: teachers and volunteers providing support to students, providing breakfast, and providing incentives for attendance.

Table 5. What is the school currently doing that helps you get to school?

School Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth(n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Don't know/not sure	3	1	2
Miscellaneous	4	2	2
Nothing	5	3	2
Provide an alarm clock to student	2	1	1
Provide necessary support/structure based on needs	3	2	1
Provide transportation	7	2	5
Providing encouragement and support and motivating	3	1	2

When interviewees were asked, "What is the school doing that may cause you to miss school?" the top themes that emerged from interviewees responses were:

1. Bullying (peers and teachers); being put down or disrespected by teachers
2. Nothing
3. Not interested in school/disengaged
4. Unsafe school environment

> *"My teachers put me down a lot. I don't like when they put me down, so you know I just, I don't want to go to school..."*
>
> *-Student Interviewee*

The majority of adult interviewees identified bullying in the school by peers and teachers as the top reason for their child/children missing school. Adult and youth interviewees are in agreement when citing an unsafe school environment as a reason that they (the student) or their child/children are missing school.

Other miscellaneous reasons for what the school is doing that may cause their child to miss school were: lack of cultural sensitivity.

Table 6. What is going on in the school that may cause you (your student or a student) to miss school?

School Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Bullying (Peers and teachers); put down disrespected by teachers	7	2	5
Head lice/ Head bugs	3	2	1
Lack of help/support to students	3	2	1
Miscellaneous	2	0	2
Not interested in school/Disengaged	4	0	4
Not the right type of learning environment/communication	3	0	3
Nothing	5	4	1
Unsafe School Environment	4	2	2

When interviewees were asked, "What are some changes that could be made by the school?" The following is a list of the top three themes that emerged:

1. Alternative learning styles and environments
2. Miscellaneous (nothing, respect student privacy, some students felt "picked on")
3. Parents and school communicate and work effectively together

Overall, the majority of interviewees, both adults and youth, identified alternative learning styles and environments as changes that could be made by the school. Following this was miscellaneous, which included: nothing, respecting student privacy, and not "picking on" certain students as changes that could be made by the school. Lastly, adults and students identified that the parents and the school could improve communication and work effectively together as changes that could be made by the school.

Table 7. What are some changes that could be made by the school to help you (your student or a student) get to school?

School Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth(n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Don't know/ Not sure	3	0	3
Need for consequences	2	0	2
Increase types of activities: Group activities, presentations, sports, music	2	1	1
Miscellaneous	6	2	4
Parents and school communicate/work effectively together	5	2	3
Alternative Learning Styles & Environments	10	4	6
Provide incentives	2	1	1
Provide more support to students who need help with school work	3	1	2
Provide opportunities for parents to get involved	1	1	0

"I think [my students] learning has to be something interesting. You can't just throw a packet at him, and tell him "Figure it out", because I tried, and I can't do it either."

-Adult Interviewee

"If they're going to talk to me (teachers) then talk to me personally, not in front of the whole school or in front of my whole class. If I knew one of their secrets and they didn't want me to tell everybody, then I would respect that. They didn't respect my privacy."

-Student Interviewee

Family Question Themes

All interviewees were asked three main questions in regards to their family:

1. What is the **family** currently doing that helps you get to school?
2. What is the **family** currently doing that may cause you to miss school?
3. What are some changes that could be made by the **family** to help you/your student get to school?

When interviewees were asked, "What is your **family** currently doing that helps your child get to school?", the top three themes that emerged were:

1. Provide transportation
2. Provide basic needs
3. Provide overall support and encouragement

Overall, the majority of the interviewees, both adults and youth, identified that their family helps the children get to school by providing transportation. Additionally, both adults and youth identified that their family provides overall support and encouragement to help them get to school. The majority of adults identified that they provide their child/children with basic needs to help them get to school.

Other miscellaneous things that were mentioned by adult interviewees included: talking to their child/children about the value of education, and having consequences for missing school.

Table 8. What is your family currently doing that helps you get to school?

Family Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Connecting child to necessary resources/fun activities	2	0	2
Extended family support	5	0	5
Help with school work/homework	4	2	2
Miscellaneous	2	0	2
Provide basic needs	10	1	9
Provide overall support/encouragement	10	5	5
Provide Transportation	12	6	6
Transportation: Have to ask/seems inconsistent	3	2	1

When interviewees were asked, "What is the **family** doing that may cause you to miss school?" the top themes that emerged from interviewee responses were:

1. Family conflict/lack of family connection
2. A lot going on in the home
3. Not aware of what is going on at home and at school

As displayed in table 9, the majority of interviewees identified family conflict and lack of family connection as reasons for missing school. Both youth and adults were in agreement in regards to "a lot going on" in the home as a reason for missing school. "A lot going on" included: busy work schedules, providing support to other children in their extended family, unemployed parents seeking work, family in rehabilitation, issues with AOD (alcohol and other drugs), incarcerated family members, divorced parents and children going in between homes, new adopted sibling, and a new baby in the home getting

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raised by grandparents. Lastly, adults were not always aware of what is going on at home or school, meaning adults were not always aware that their child wasn't at school, were not aware that their child was absent, and a lack of supervision at home also contributed to students missing school.

Other miscellaneous reasons for what the family is doing that may cause the student or child to miss school include: lack of support, fishing, and nothing.

Table 9. What is going on in your family that may cause you to miss school?

Family Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Doctor Appointments	4	0	4
A lot going on	8	4	4
Attending ceremonies	1	0	1
Death in the family	3	1	2
Family conflict/Lack of family connection	10	3	7
Financial reasons	4	3	1
Lack of dependable transportation	4	2	2
Miscellaneous	3	2	1
Not aware of what's going on: at home and school	5	2	3
Not waking up in the morning	3	2	1
Parents work/activities	2	1	1
Sickness/health issues	4	1	3
Unstable environment/home	4	2	2

When interviewees were asked, "What are some changes that could be made by the **family**?" the following is a list of the top themes that emerged from what respondents expressed:

1. Provide a more stable environment/being persistent
2. Preparing for school; going to bed earlier, waking up earlier
3. Miscellaneous

"I ask for help, but don't always get it, [name of individual] is working at [location] all week long, so I'm responsible for caring for the house, and getting the wood, and changing the propane and dealing with the generator, and if the car breaks down it's on me until the weekend to figure out how I'm going to figure that out. Just being responsible for all this stuff that maybe people who don't live off the grid don't have to deal with. Like propane tanks, you know, how am I going to figure out how to take the big propane tank and all the kids to town at the same time and fill it and get it back so by the time that they get home they have hot water again?"

-Adult Interviewee

"We don't have a steady home, I don't know, that, and him [the student] and his brother and sister are a big age difference, so we just clash, all three of us just clash. And me and him clash of course. But I think it's mostly because we don't have a steady home."

-Adult Interviewee

As displayed in Table 10 below, there was not a consensus about what changes the family could make that would help the student the most. The top three categories were: providing a more stable environment and persistence, preparing for school (going to bed earlier, waking up earlier) and miscellaneous reasons. Miscellaneous changes that could be made by the family include: decreasing the number of family crises, improve transportation, increase encouragement and/or motivation for the child, and have more support from extended family members.

Table 10. What are some changes that could be made by your family to help you (your student or a student) get to school?

Family Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Don't know/not sure	3	3	0
Improve communication with each other	3	1	2
Miscellaneous	4	1	3
Nothing	3	2	1
Prep for school; go to bed earlier, wake up earlier	4	1	3
Provide a more stable environment/being persistent	4	1	3
Relocate to be closer to school	2	1	1
Trying my best to do it all	2	0	0

"I think that one of the things—and I think we are working towards this, it's just that there is a lot of movement at our house or has been because we have a lot of nieces and nephews that are in and out of the house and I try to put on the brakes on that, so that its more mellow at our house in the morning, and in the afternoon, so that it's not crazy for them, I think that affects them [the students]."

-Adult Interviewee

All interviewees were asked three main questions in regards to Peers/Friends

1. What are the **peers/friends** currently doing that helps you get to school?
2. What are the **peers/friends** doing that may cause you to miss school?
3. What are some changes that could be made by the **peer/friends** to help you/your student get to school?

When interviewees were asked, "What are the **peers** currently doing that helps you (or your child) get to school?" the top three themes that emerged in regards to what the peers are currently doing were:

1. Positive encouragement and support
2. Having interaction with them
3. Nothing

Overall, the majority of interviewees, both adults and youth, identified peers as helping them get to school by providing positive encouragement and support. Interviewees also identified that having interaction with the students helped them get to school.

Table 11. What are your peers/friends currently doing that helps you get to school?

Peer Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth(n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Having interaction with them	7	2	5
Miscellaneous	0	0	0
Not sure/don't know	2	1	1
Nothing	5	4	1
Positive encouragement and support	10	4	6
Positive Role models	3	1	2

When interviewees were asked, "What are the peers doing that may cause you to miss school?" the top three themes that emerged from interviewees responses were:

1. Bullying, rude to one another/conflict/exclusion
2. Risky behaviors: AOD, selling drugs, not coming home all night
3. Nothing

Overall, the majority of interviewees, both adult and youth, identified bullying as the top reason that their peers may cause them to miss school. This was followed by risky behaviors (AOD, selling drugs, and not coming home at night),

"Um, most of my friends, or my best friends they would tell me "Hey, you need to get your education, you're not going to make it anywhere without your education", and I'll have serious talks with them about school. Sometimes I need to be there for them, and I'll encourage them too. They tell me and help me with my homework, and yeah, encourage me to wake up in the morning like just because they'll say something like, "Oh, there's a girl that you like that showed up at school today, so you should come to school today", and I'll just be like, "Alright, I'm up" (chuckles) and then show up at school."

-Student Interviewee

identified by both youth and adults. Lastly, the youth identified that their peers did nothing to impact their likelihood to miss school.

"She [the student] likes her friends, so she make sure she goes."

-Adult Interviewee

Other miscellaneous things that were mentioned by interviewees that the peers were doing that may cause the student to miss school included: Not having friends, or the parents of children don't want them playing with the student, and the death of a friend.

Table 12. What is going on with your peers/friends that may cause you to miss school?

Peer Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Bad influences	4	2	2
Bullying, rude to one another/conflict/exclusion	9	4	5
Friends got kicked out of school/no longer go	2	1	1
Friends having problems that student wants to help out with	2	1	1
In trouble with the law/probation/jail/felonies/breaking the law	2	1	1
Miscellaneous	2	0	2
Nothing	5	4	1
Risky Behaviors: AOD, selling drugs. not coming home all night	6	3	3

When interviewees were asked, "What are some changes that could be made by the peers?" the following is a list of the top themes that emerged from respondents:

1. Better role models to one another; get involved in positive activities
2. Be more supportive and encouraging to one another, inclusive
3. Nothing, not wanting friends to change

As shown in table 13, the top theme that emerged from interviewees for what their peers could change to help them be in school was for the peers to be better role models to one another and get involved in positive activities. Following this was for the peers to be more supportive, encouraging, and inclusive to one another. Lastly, a few interviewees did not identify any changes that could be made by their peers, and they did not want their friends to change.

Table 13. What are some changes that could be made by your peers/friends to help you get to school?

Peer Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Be more supportive and encouraging to one another, inclusive	4	2	2
Better role models to one another; get involved in positive activities	9	3	6
Nothing/not wanting friends to change	3	2	1

"Well they [peers] can just be more supportive of each other and not do the name-calling. Just, you know, being more proactive instead of negative."

-Adult Interviewee

"We've [student and peers] tried to make changes, we used to hang out every weekend and every other night to go to drink and party in town, and we've just been growing up I guess."
-Student Interviewee

"Some kids would bug her [the student], she thought they were friends and all of a sudden they are not friends, because of somebody else's issues or whatever. So, I think the bullies is the biggest thing that bothers me a lot."

-Adult Interviewee

Student/Individual Question Themes

All interviewees were asked three main questions in regards to the student:

1. What is the **student** currently doing that helps him/her get to school? OR What are you currently doing that helps you get to school?
2. What is the **student** doing that may cause him/her to miss school? OR What are you currently doing that may cause you to miss school?
3. What are some changes that could be made by the **student** to help them get to school? What are some changes that you could make to help you get to school?

When interviewees were asked, "What is the **student** currently doing that helps the student get to school?" the themes that emerged were:

1. Getting themselves up and ready for school
2. Miscellaneous (desire for friendship, values education, likes to learn, not sure.)
3. Involved in positive activities
3. Making an effort and wants to go

The majority of respondents identified that the students help themselves get to school by getting themselves up and ready for school in the morning. Miscellaneous things that helped the student get to school included: desire for friendship, valuing education, likes to learn, and not sure.

Table 14. What are you/or your student currently doing that helps you/your student get to school?

Student Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Awareness of consequences of not going	2	2	0
Getting themselves up and ready for school	9	3	6
Involved in positive activities	3	0	3
Making an effort/wants to go	3	1	2
Miscellaneous	4	3	1

"They get up. Well usually we don't have to get them up, they get up. They get themselves ready. Yeah, they're pretty good about that."

-Adult Interviewee

"Well when I wake them up, they get themselves dressed, they brush their own teeth. Um, if need-be they will come and fix their own bowls of cereal because they're old enough. They're old enough to get themselves ready, so they know to get themselves ready because they will ask me, when it's about 7 o' clock or so, "Is it time yet? How much time do we have left?" They will ask when their bedtime is. So they've got that structure."

-Adult Interviewee

"He's home and goes to bed on time, and prepares for the next day, that's when he's the best and most likely to go to school."

-Adult Interviewee

When interviewees were asked, "What is the student doing that may cause the student to miss school?" the top 3 themes that emerged were:

1. Miscellaneous (not connected to the tribe, scared of getting hurt due to fights, more responsibility in the home, change in school, cheerleading, and parents leaving town for work or to go shopping).
2. Rather be doing other stuff/skip school/leave/doesn't care for it/uninterested/doesn't value, doesn't go
3. Sickness/health issues/medical issues

Overall, the majority of interviewees, both youth and adults, identified miscellaneous things that may cause the student to miss school, including: Not being connected to the Tribe, scared of getting hurt due to fights, more responsibility in the home, change in school, cheerleading, and parents leaving town for work or to go shopping. This was followed by interviewees identifying that they (or their child) may be missing school because they would rather be doing other things (uninterested, doesn't value school, doesn't care for it, skipping class). Lastly, both youth and adults identified that sickness, health and medical issues contributes to the student missing school.

Table 15. What is causing you/your student to miss school?

Student Response Themes	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Behavioral issues, anger issues, trouble at school	4	2	2
Emotional issues	2	0	2
Mental Health Issues/Learning Disabilities	4	2	2
Miscellaneous	9	5	4
Not having clean clothes/clothes in general	3	2	1
Rather be doing other stuff/skip school/leave/doesn't care for it/uninterested/don't value/doesn't go	6	2	4
Risky behaviors; AOD, partying, ran away from home, not coming home at night, trouble with law	4	2	2
Sickness/health issues/Medical issues	6	3	3
Student thinks they are in charge	1	0	1

> *Interviewer: "Is your fear that you're going to hurt somebody or that you're going to get hurt?"*
> *Respondent: "No, that I am going to get hurt."*
>
> *-Student Interviewee*

When interviewees were asked, "What are some changes that could be made by the student?" the top 3 themes emerged in regards to what changes could be made by the student:

1. Be more responsible for self; not getting into trouble
2. Miscellaneous (more structured environment, finding positive influences, cultural activities, homeschooling, creating goals, friends, girlfriend)
3. Change attitude to be more positive

The majority of interviewees, both youth and adults, identified that the top change that could be made by the student are to be more responsible for themselves, and not get into trouble. Miscellaneous types of changes included: more structured environment, finding positive influences, cultural activities, homeschooling, creating goals, friends, girlfriend or boyfriend). Lastly, interviewees identified that the student could change their attitude to be more positive.

Table 16. What are some changes that you/your student could make to help you/your student get to school?

Student: changes that could be made?	All (n=26)	Youth (n=11)	Adults (n=15)
Be more responsible for self; not getting into trouble	10	4	6
Change attitude to be more positive	4	1	3
Don't know/not sure	1	1	0
Miscellaneous	5	2	3

"Right now I know what's working for me [student], so I'm just going to keep doing that to get my high school diploma, and I just have to stay on the right track. I need to watch the scenes that I'm at and the people that I'm with. I just have to be more careful and more aware of my surroundings when I'm in situation that I probably shouldn't be in."

-Student Interviewee

"I think that once [the student] has a structured environment, I think that is when he does the best. So, when he acknowledges that. When he's trying to go to sleep at a reasonable hour, and he's cooperating with that, I think that's what works for him best."

-Adult Interviewee

"Well, okay, so when I would leave [school], it was just because I knew my teacher was just going to sit there and talk me to death, and I was just like nah. I could be somewhere else, or I could be talking to somebody about something that actually interests me, and when I went there—for example my econ class, like I went in there, and I really just felt like all these kids were like so much more ahead of me, because I started about a month after school started because I had some credits to make up at [school] and so I felt like "Wow, do all these kids already got all that on me?" So I was like, "What's the point of even trying?" And then yeah, but I kind of didn't go to that class a lot but I did turn in my work so I had a decent grade."

-Student Interviewee

Conclusion

To date limited research has focused on the issues surrounding truancy and chronic absenteeism in Native American populations. Through the analysis of the 26 key informant interviews, there is a better understanding of why Yurok Tribal students are missing school. This project identified key factors that are contributing to the risk of students being truant or chronically absent through the stories, voices and perspectives of the Yurok people.

The use of the social-ecological model as a framework for interview questions allowed for better understanding of the complex interrelations among various personal and environmental factors impacting truant and chronically absent students and their families. Each set of questions focused on the Tribe, school, family, peers/friends and the student. This approach uncovered positive work that is currently being done, barriers and challenges impacting students in being able to attend school, and proposed changes to address this issue.

Recommendations reflect the need for proposed solutions to consider the complex interrelations and factors causing truancy in Yurok Country, and the need for more funding to continue to research and implement key strategies to address truancy and chronic absenteeism.

Recommendations

These recommendations are based on the following: current research around truancy prevention, results from the key informant interviews, and discussions with the Yurok Tribal Court.

Explore additional best practices around courtroom intervention strategies that reduce or eliminate barriers for getting children to school.

More research is needed in order to identify best practices around courtroom intervention strategies for Yurok Tribal students. Current literature has identified mentoring/advocates as a strategy used to improve student attendance. The Juvenile Court Department of the King County Superior Court in Seattle, Washington recommends that their youth be entitled to have an advocate that is either a social service worker, lawyer or a guardian during the court process.[11]

Current literature also identifies the importance of intervening quickly in order to reduce truancy. This early identification will require consistent monitoring of attendance data. It is imperative that the attendance data is then shared with the Tribe, allowing both Tribe and school to work collaboratively to address the issue. Research has shown the need for truancy intervention strategies to be multifaceted. Truancy intervention strategies should take into account the following dynamics: the whole student needs to be considered, intervention must be done early and be continuous, the importance of family involvement, collaboration and cooperation of multiple organizations, and accountability. [12]

Design and implement a communication strategy to educate families on the importance of school attendance, school and tribal roles in addressing truancy, current efforts and policy achievements around truancy prevention, and legal consequences of truancy for families.

Interviewees were not aware of the Tribe's role, what the Tribe was currently doing or changes that the Tribe could make to address truancy. Further community conversations focused on truancy prevention at multiple levels may help the Tribe to design and implement a communication strategy that 1) increases awareness of the importance of school attendance, and 2) increases awareness of the resources that are currently available to support families and students. Community conversations can also enrich the Tribe's understanding of their role and responsibility as well as the roles and responsibilities of the schools, families, friends, and the students themselves to reduce and prevent truancy.

These conversations can be used to encourage the shift of responsibility of addressing truancy away from the student to a shared responsibility of the Tribal community, the school system, and the families who are experiencing truancy. Conversations can be facilitated by Tribal leadership or other key stakeholders such as the YTC or parent leaders.

Evaluate school and tribal policies regarding truancy that may be contradictory in addressing truancy.

An evaluation of the current school and tribal policies may help the Yurok Tribe to fully understand the consequences as well as the resources established by schools and the tribe to address truancy and chronic absenteeism. This evaluation would allow for all parties to fully understand and determine whether the consequences in place are contradictory in addressing truancy. For example, some policies include suspending students who are truant, which causes them to miss more school. Research has shown that this type of harsh punishment results in continued absenteeism and/or drop out.[14]

A study of this kind would allow the tribe and school to explore the full range of responses that are in place to prevent truancy and whether or not they are most effective in addressing truancy specifically among Yurok Tribal students.

Continue to develop and ensure students experiencing truancy are identified and referred to tribal court where attendance is tracked and monitored both prior to and following implementation of interventions.

Research has shown that it is in the best interest of the student for any attendance issues to be resolved prior to it being sent to any traditional court or school attendance review board. Early intervention from the Tribe to 1) identify reasons for truancy and 2) link students who are truant to appropriate resources may ensure a more culturally appropriate response to truancy. For the Lac du Flambeau Juvenile Justice Program in Wisconsin, the truancy citation is handed over to the Truancy Tribal Court. In their courtroom, truancy is clearly defined which allows the judge to take immediate action in determining an intervention strategy. Students are given the option to participate in the Truancy Reduction Program. If they participate and attendance is improved then fines assessed are waved. [13]

Consider both the home and school environments when determining consequences and identifying appropriate interventions for students and their families

Based off the current study, the complex interplay and impact of a student's home and school environments must be taken into consideration when addressing truancy among Yurok students. Current literature regarding best practices also recommends an approach that includes all aspects of a child's life.[14] This approach has been identified as one that is more "holistic" in that it identifies how an intervention must be a shared responsibility among the student, family, community, and school.

Programs like the Lac du Flambeau Tribal Youth Program have designed teams that include a broad group of key stakeholders like; school social worker, Indian Education mentor, truancy officer and juvenile justice staff. This team works together to help the student by reviewing attendance data and creating a plan for how they will address this issue with the student and family. [13]

Similar to the Lac du Flambeau Tribal Youth Program, the Juvenile Court Department of the King County Superior Court in Seattle, Washington has created Advocacy Teams that are a multi-system approach to involve youth and their family in reducing truancy. These Teams have shown to be effective in reducing legal involvement and helping to improve how the school and family are functioning. These teams consist of individuals outside of the court system, whose goal is to determine strategies that build upon the students, families and communities strengths. [11] Most importantly these teams are family-centered, meaning that the family determines their needs and priorities. [11]

Consider creating a consistent monthly schedule for truancy court cases so that families and schools know what to expect.

Ensure that court appearances are routine and timely to support early intervention and ongoing monitoring of students identified as being truant. For example, if both the families and the schools know that truant Yurok students have regular, consistent days and/or times when they are seen by the court then all parties know what to expect and can plan ahead. By creating a consistent monthly schedule, it may be easier for both school representatives and parents to be present at the court cases. This allows for continuous check-in and communication with the student and the family and the school. Consistent and regular court scheduling may help to build rapport and trust between the court, the family, and the school system.

In addition to establishing a consistent schedule for working with Yurok students who are experiencing truancy, standard court dates may allow the tribe to better track the progress being made by the student and family, and determine if a different intervention strategy is needed.

Explore additional funding opportunities to implement the above recommendations that the current system does not have the capacity to carry out.

The design of this study allowed for a unique opportunity to examine and to understand why Yurok Tribal students are truant and/or chronically absent. Additional research is needed in order to capture more views and voices of the Yurok people and their understanding of this issue.

With the completion of the 26 key informant interviews, great insight and perspective was provided, however, youth noticeably said less during the key informant interviews. This could be partially due to some parents being included in the key informant interviews. However, it also could be due to truancy

and absenteeism being new topics of concern in the community. Gathering additional data from youth—either through additional key informant interviews or focus groups, would help to further understand their perspective on attendance and truancy.

In addition, the Yurok Tribe may want to explore a deeper investigation into the impact of adverse childhood experiences (ACES) on Tribal students experiencing truancy, including the link between historical trauma at both the community and individual levels. Many respondents mentioned traumatic events related to one's family or self that they were currently or had been experiencing.

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Appendix A: Interview Questions

Topic Area	Question #'s and Sub-topic
Tribal Community	1. What is your Tribal Community currently doing that helps you (your student or a student) get to school?
	2. What is going on in your Tribal community that may cause you (your student or a student) to miss school?
	3. What are some changes that could be made by the Tribal community to help you (your student or a student) get to school?
School	4. What is the school currently doing that helps you (your student or a student) get to school?
	5. What is going on in the school that may cause you (your student or a student) to miss school?
	6. What are some changes that could be made by the school to help you (your student or a student) get to school?
Family	7. What is your family currently doing that helps you (your student or a student) get to school?
	8. What is going on in your family that may cause you (your student or a student) to miss school?
	9. What are some changes that could be made by the family to help you (your student or a student) get to school?
Peers	10. What are your/your students peers/friends currently doing that helps you (your student or a student) get to school?
	11. What is going on with your/your student's peers/friends that may cause you (your student or a student) to miss school?
	12. What are some changes that could be made by your/your student's peers/friends to help you (your student or a student) get to school?
Student	13. What are you/your student currently doing that helps you (your student or a student) get to school?
	14. What is going on with you/your student that may cause you (your student or a student) to miss school?
	15. What are some changes that your/your student could make to help you (your student or a student) get to school?