

# Heather Sauyaq Jean Gordon

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Heather Sauyaq Jean Gordon is a research scientist in the youth development program at Child Trends. Heather was born and raised in Homer, AK on the beautiful Kachemak Bay. She is Iñupiaq and an enrolled tribal member of the Nome Eskimo Community, a federally recognized Tribe. Dr. Gordon has a B.A. in race and ethnic studies (University of Redlands, CA), an M.S. in sociology (University of Wisconsin-Madison), and a PhD in Indigenous studies (University of Alaska Fairbanks). For her dissertation, Self-determination, Sustainability, and Wellbeing in the Alaska Native Community of Ninilchik, Dr. Gordon conducted ethnographic futures research interviews in partnership with the Ninilchik Village Tribe to explore how individual, community, and Tribal self-determining actions lead to community sustainability and wellbeing. She not only wrote a dissertation but produced a 20-year roadmap for the community, outlining the results of the research for community development. She did her master's work on Building Relationships in the Arctic, which articulates the importance of mutually beneficial participatory research involving co-production, respect of sovereignty and self-determination, privileging Indigenous knowledge, and engaging in free prior and informed consent.

Dr. Gordon comes to Child Trends from the Division of Program Evaluation and Planning at the Administration for Native Americans, a part of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). There she conducted project evaluations, published papers and reports, gave presentations, served on executive order committees on equity issues, designed data collection and measurement instruments, reviewed grant applications, worked with the Native Youth Initiative for Leadership, Empowerment, and Development grantees, worked on missing and murdered Indigenous Peoples initiatives, and explored how culture is a protective factor in Indigenous communities. She also served as a subject matter expert on working with Indigenous people. In that capacity, she advised the Administration for Children and Families (ACF) on their work around missing and murdered Native Americans, the Office of Planning, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE) on methodologies appropriate to working with Indigenous people and other vulnerable and minority populations, the Interagency Arctic Research Policy Committee (IARPC) on drafting the Arctic Research Plan (ARP) 2022-2026, and the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy on documents and work around Indigenous knowledge.

Dr. Gordon's research interests include continued work with Indigenous youth, families, and Elders around colonization and historical trauma, culture as a protective factor, futures research, and Indigenous self-determination. Her research interests also include sustainability, health and wellbeing, missing and murdered Indigenous people, social inequality and stratification, criminology and restorative justice, Indigenous healthcare, and Indigenous migration. She seeks to continue participatory work that brings voices often not heard to the forefront by working with Tribes and Indigenous organizations to produce mutually beneficial research that not only benefits the Indigenous community but informs policy and granting organizations.

