School-Based Substance Use Programming for Native American Youth

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What knowledge, assumptions or biases might you have when working with Native Americans?
Indian Country

• 7 Mil. Identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)

• 570 Federally Recognized Tribal Nations

• Majority AI reside off Reservations
California Indian Country

- 2020 Census- 630,000 AIs
- 74% Increase over 10 years
- 1.4 Million Mixed, 94.9% increase
- 110 Federally Recognized Tribes
- Pan-Indian Movement, Diverse
- Strong Cultural Revitalization
Native American Cultural Identity

• In the nationwide Indigenous Futures Survey (2020), over 90% of 1,086 Indigenous youth participants strongly agreed or agreed that being Native American is an important part of their identity compared to only 27% of participants strongly agreeing or agreeing that being an American is an important part of their identity.
Understanding Native Americans

• Native American
• American Indian/Alaskan Native
• Yurok, Tolowa, Hupa-Nationhood
• Indigenous
• Indigenous Intersectionality
Indigenous Intersectionality

- Overlapping social identities intersect to create a comprehensive whole that is different from each individual identity.
- Important to consider systems of oppression, discrimination, and colonialism.
- Indigenous knowledge systems are interconnected and interdependent.
Native American Behavioral Health Programming
Integrating counseling interventions w/ Native Traditions

**Strategies:**

1. Increase access to traditional treatment models for AIs
2. Use Psychotherapeutic Techniques aligned w/ Native Traditions
3. To ensure cultural competence and connection w/ Native wisdom, integrate traditional healing methods w/ these forms for psychotherapy

LaFromboise, Trimble, & Mohatt, 1990
[POST]COLONIAL PREDICAMENT

On one hand, **urgent community needs**...

- Multi-Stressed Communities
- Documented disparities in mental health status, **Historical Trauma, Colonial Disorders**

On the other hand, **incongruent clinical services**

- “Brainwash me forever so I can be like a Whiteman”

Current Documented Disparities

American Indian adolescents experienced the highest overdose rate in 2021

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Table. Characteristics of Adolescent Overdose Deaths, 2010, 2019, 2020, and 2021

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2019</th>
<th>2020</th>
<th>2021</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deaths, No.</td>
<td>Rate</td>
<td>Deaths, No.</td>
<td>Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total among overall population</td>
<td>38 329</td>
<td>12.41</td>
<td>70 630</td>
<td>21.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total among adolescents</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>492</td>
<td>2.36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Substance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Benzodiazepines</td>
<td>83</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>0.34</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cocaine</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>0.18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Illicit fentanyl and synthetics</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>253</td>
<td>1.21</td>
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<tr>
<td>Methamphetamine</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>0.18</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>0.38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prescription opioids</td>
<td>159</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Race and ethnicity¹</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>American Indian or Alaska Native, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4.86</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>6.88</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black or African American, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>1.49</td>
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<tr>
<td>Latinx</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>1.38</td>
<td>136</td>
<td>2.68</td>
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<tr>
<td>White, non-Hispanic</td>
<td>412</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>281</td>
<td>2.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

¹ Race and ethnicity were assessed in this study, as categorized in the underlying records, because recent data have suggested that racial and ethnic inequalities in overdose are increasing among the general population and may also be a concern among the adolescent population assessed herein. Trends among Asian individuals were not included because of differences between the representation of this group in the preliminary and final databases used.

² 2021 refers to January to June 2021, and rates and counts have been annualized.
What can we do in the schools?
Problematizing the Systems, Not our People

Western Mainstream society operates from a “normative” viewpoint- what is considered Normal.

Social Norms, Social Factors, Individualizing Care
Best Practices

In multiple qualitative studies, Native youth have articulated the importance of:

- Being flexible and supportive
  - Hearing from parents (even when it may seem like youth don’t want to!) about their views on drug use, protective behaviors, limits, etc.
  - Receiving support from parents and other trusted adults to learn about cultural practices, increase community connectedness
  - Deep listening to youth perspectives and limiting reactivity to youth statements
  - Using Personal Experience, HUMBLE
Social Media - Native Perspective
Case Study:
Lessons Learned

- Youth Mental & Wellness
- Staff 4 to 27
- 25 to over 300 youth
- Expanded Services to most rural areas
- Advocacy, “Rethinking Mental Health & Youth Wellness”
Impacting Social Norms

- **Wellbeing of the Person** - understanding why we are doing the work, working on oneself, showing up in a good way, Inspired

- **Teamwork** - Interdependent Selves, Partnership Building, “No Crabs in Bucket Mentality.” *Giving away power*. Healthy Conflict Resolution (impacted by trauma)

- **The Wisdom is Us**, Community, the federal & state gov’t will not lead us to decolonization, community thriving

- **Removing Barriers to Treatment** - “removing barriers to kindness, care.”
Impacting Social Norms: Specific Mindsets

- **Responsible without blaming.** Unconditional Care, Solidarity.
- **Enculturation** - knowing one’s history, stories, cultural teachings
- **Mattering** - Valuing lived Experience, focusing on Purpose, Meaning, Identity. MATTERING- FEELING VALUED, ADDING VALUE

**Strongest Determinants of Wellness:** quality of relationships, health of land/environment, Transforming the Whole- Recovery as “we” rather than “Me”
Individualizing Care

Temperament
Cultural Knowledge
Socio/economic factors
Family Support
“Showing Up”

Constantly Adapting
Signature Two Feathers Program

ACORN Youth Wellness  Reconnect to “Culture”

Flower Dance

Stick Game
ACORN Research Questions
N = 47

- Your Culture Gives You Strength
- How would you describe a Healthy Native Person
- What is the biggest problem youth face in our community
- Reasons for Learning Your Native Culture?
- Earth, Local Plants, Animals, Sacred Sites, Language?
Qualitative/Stories from Native Youth

• “Without culture, there’s no way of thinking you are somebody, it affects identity, gives you a purpose to believe in yourself, your family and where you come from.” -14 y.o. female

• **What do you think youth need in order to help address issues of mental health in their lives?** Learning about Native languages, learning more on the land of different tribal communities.– 15 y.o. male

• “Without culture there’s no way of thinking you are somebody; it affects identity, and gives you a purpose to believe in yourself, your family and where you come from. It gives you direction, a way of life.” 16 y.o. female
How do we promote Native American thriving in the 21st Century?

K’winya’nya:n-ma’awhiniw “the human way” - demonstrated through values such as honor, respect, humility, discipline, generosity, and “having a good heart.” “Proud of who you are.”

Hupa Giftedness- “someone who cares and loves the people.”

From Rights to Responsibilities
Specific Approach: Relationship Ruler

- Mentorship/Mental Health
- Relational Active Efforts
- Teachers/Mental Health
- Coaches/Mental Health
- Employment/Mental Health
- Culture/Mental Health
- Rehabilitative Systems/Mental Health

Quality of Relationships
Reimagining School Sports

• Shifting Norms

• Connecting for Impact
Changemakers

• If everyone is a changemaker, there’s no way a problem can outrun a solution

• Don’t be content to just give a fish or teach one how to fish. We will not rest until we have revolutionized the fishing industry

-Bill Drayton
• We’re reclaiming our roles and our purpose in this world. And I think for a lot of Natives, that role was cut. That’s why we’re here today. We are trying to find a way that we fit into [and improve] this world with respect to ourselves and our relatives.

~ Stephen Cheney (Lakota, Kul Wicasa Oyate)