



THE EXCHANGE

News from FYSB and the Youth Services Field

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TRIBAL PROGRAMS HARNESS CULTURAL STRENGTHS TO IMPROVE CONDITIONS FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH

Headlines from our Nation's Tribal communities can often be discouraging. As in many rural areas in the United States, opportunities for economic advancement on and near Tribal lands are harder to come by than in urban and suburban centers. Resulting poverty and joblessness can fuel a host of other problems, including poor health, substance abuse, and high rates of violence and incarceration.



While some strides have been made in recent years, J.R. Cook, executive director of United National Indian Tribal Youth (UNITY), Inc., says the effects of such social ills on Tribal youth is too often "negative peer pressure and wasted talent." With more than a third of the Native American community currently under the age of 18, that's no idle concern.

That's why UNITY and a number of Tribal and non-Tribal organizations across the Nation are working with the U.S. Administration for Children and Families (ACF), and its Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), in a collaborative effort to build upon the strengths of Native youth and their families.

As a result of their efforts, a number of innovative initiatives are being born throughout Tribal communities addressing the persistent problems that have hampered the positive development of Tribal youth. Some of the most promising are based on several key components:

Tribal problems are best addressed with Tribal solutions.

With 562 Federally recognized Tribes in the United States, each with a different cultural and historical background, trying to create one-size-fits-all solutions, or introducing non-Tribal programs to Tribal audiences, is often not as effective as tailoring programs to meet specific Tribal needs. FYSB's Family Violence Prevention and Services Program, for example, has found that family violence shelters that are run on Tribal lands by Native American staff are better able to respond to the needs of the women and children from the local community (see article on page 10) than shelters in non-Tribal areas.

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Cultural pride and identity should be respected and promoted.

While not all Native Americans feel strong ties to their cultures, many of the most promising Tribal initiatives have allowed youth to explore aspects of their heritage that emphasize strength and pride.

❖ The Nez Perce Tribe in Idaho, for example, developed the Young Horsemen Program in an effort to teach youth, ages 14 to 21, about the art of good horsemanship, horse management practices, and working with horses as a career, while at the same time reviving and passing along a traditional strength of the Nez Perce Nation.



❖ In Washington State, the Port Gamble S'Klallam Tribe started teaching its young people how to dig out and man the ocean-going canoes that participate in a ritual known as the Tribal Journey. During the trip, canoes from more than 20 traditionally seafaring Tribes travel down Washington's Olympic coast, a voyage that revives and reaffirms their canoe cultures.



Young people should be given opportunities for Positive Youth Development in a culturally and spiritually appropriate setting.

Research continues to show that young people who have access to opportunities that allow them to build skills and demonstrate leadership are better able to make the transition to a healthy and productive adulthood. UNITY, for example, has a roster of more than 200 Tribal youth councils across 34 States

**AMERICAN INDIANS AND ALASKA NATIVES (AIAN)
BY THE NUMBERS**

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Total AIAN population in the U.S.: | 4.1 million |
| AIAN as a percentage of U.S. population: | 1.5 |
| Number of Federally recognized Tribes: | 562 |
| Number of recognized Tribes in Alaska alone: | 227 |
| Number of square miles of the U.S. held in trust for Native American Tribes: | 86,000 |
| Area of the state of Minnesota in square miles: | 87,000 |
| Approximate percentage of Native American population living on reservations or land trusts: | 13 |
| Rank of California as State with the most Native Americans: | 1 |
| Rank of Vermont: | 50 |
| Percentage of the Alaskan population that identifies as Native American, the highest percentage in the country: | 19 |
| Percentage of AIAN population under 18 years old: | 34 |
| Percentage of U.S. population under 18 years old: | 26 |
| Percentage of AIAN over 25 with a high school diploma in 1990: | 66 |
| Percentage with a high school diploma in 2000: | 71 |
| Percentage with a bachelor's degree: | 11 |
| Poverty rate in percent among AIAN in 1990: | 27 |
| Poverty rate among AIAN in 2000: | 24.5 |
| Poverty rate in the U.S. as a whole in 2000: | 12.5 |
| AIAN unemployment as a percentage of population: | 12.4 |
| U.S. unemployment rate: | 5.0 |
| AIAN median household income in 1990: | \$21,750 |
| AIAN median household income in 2000: | \$32,116 |
| U.S. median household income in 2000: | \$44,389 |
| Number of Native-owned businesses in the U.S.: | 200,000 |
| Percentage of Native-owned businesses owned by women: | 27 |

Sources: U.S. Census Bureau; Bureau of Indian Affairs

that serve as the local organizers and leaders of two major initiatives:

❖ Celebrate Native Health is the just-launched second stage of a program to encourage healthy lifestyles in Tribal communities. During the first stage, Celebrate Fitness, Tribal youth councils across the country

undertook such projects as building walking paths, organizing health fairs, and convincing Tribe members to relinquish their TV remote controls. Celebrate Native Health will focus on proper nutrition.

❖ Funded by the Administration for Native Americans within ACF,



TOP 30 AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKAN NATIVE TRIBAL GROUPINGS BY POPULATION, 2000*

(The 30 most populous tribal groupings make up 60 percent of American Indian and Alaska Natives in the United States.)

| Rank | Tribe | Population | Principal Location(s) |
|------|-----------------------|------------|--|
| 1 | Cherokee | 729,533 | Oklahoma |
| 2 | Navajo | 298,197 | Arizona |
| 3 | Latin American Indian | 180,940 | |
| 4 | Choctaw | 158,774 | Oklahoma, Mississippi |
| 5 | Sioux | 153,360 | Dakotas |
| 6 | Chippewa | 149,669 | Michigan |
| 7 | Apache | 96,833 | Arizona, New Mexico |
| 8 | Blackfeet | 85,750 | Montana |
| 9 | Iroquois | 80,822 | New York |
| 10 | Pueblo | 74,085 | New Mexico |
| 11 | Creek | 71,310 | Georgia |
| 12 | Lumbee | 57,868 | North Carolina |
| 13 | Eskimo | 54,761 | Alaska |
| 14 | Chickasaw | 38,351 | Oklahoma |
| 15 | Seminole | 27,431 | Florida |
| 16 | Potawatomi | 25,595 | Oklahoma |
| 17 | Yaqui | 22,412 | Arizona |
| 18 | Tlingit | 22,365 | Alaska |
| 19 | Tohono O' Odham | 20,087 | Arizona |
| 20 | Comanche | 19,376 | Oklahoma |
| 21 | Alaskan Athabaskans | 18,838 | Alaska |
| 22 | Cheyenne | 18,204 | Montana, Oklahoma |
| 23 | Aleut | 16,978 | Alaska |
| 24 | Delaware | 16,341 | Oklahoma |
| 25 | Osage | 15,897 | Oklahoma |
| 26 | Puget Sound Salish | 14,631 | Washington |
| 27 | Crow | 13,394 | Montana |
| 28 | Paiute | 13,532 | Nevada, California, Oregon, Idaho, Arizona, Utah |
| 29 | Shoshone | 12,026 | Idaho |
| 30 | Pima | 11,493 | Arizona |

**Respondents were allowed to select more than one Tribal affiliation
Sources: U.S. Census Bureau, Census 2000; Tribal Web sites*

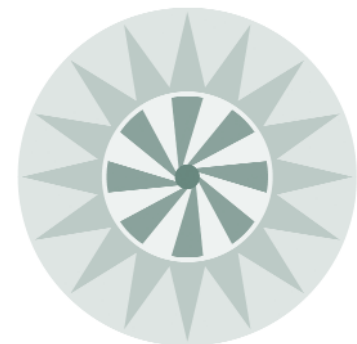
tools to help them undertake development projects. So far, several hundred youth have attended the training sessions in four States. A written training guide is also being developed, a draft of which can be downloaded from www.unityinc.org.

Strong adult role models should be mobilized in each community.

In order to reverse the low expectations that can hamper progress in Tribal communities, successful programs often turn to Tribal and other local leaders to usher in change. Grantees from FYSB's Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program, in particular, rely on local adult role models, including business professionals, police and fire department staff, and Tribal leaders to provide the stability and direction that can often be missing from the lives of these young people (see article on page 6).

With these strategies, Native American groups are working to harness the positive energy of their communities, especially their young people.

"People often say that the youth are the future, or that they are our leaders of tomorrow," Cook says. "We think that youth are leaders now, and we feel that it is very important for Tribes to get them more involved in leadership positions, where they can start working to solve the problems that affect their communities." ■



Preparing Native Youth for Life's Journey is a series of training sessions aimed at providing life skills

and leadership training to UNITY youth so that they can return to their communities with concrete

HOST HOMES FOR NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH: FINDING A FUTURE IN TRADITION

Six months after running away from home, Jon had become an accomplished couch surfer. He knew what friends to call and when he had overstayed his welcome. But moving from apartment to apartment had taken a toll on his education and his health. At 17 and a senior in high school, Jon was ready to find something more safe and stable, something more like home. He wound up on the doorstep of Rose, an old family friend with an extra room. She would love to help him, she said, but she just couldn't afford the extra housing expense.

Feeling like he had nowhere left to turn, Jon went to a nearby youth shelter. Finally, he got some good news. They could help. After meeting with Rose and Jon, the agency agreed, through a formal contract, to pay Jon's room rent directly to Rose. With this living agreement, Jon has links to health care and life-skills training through the agency, has a safe and supportive place to live, and feels independent. Because he and Rose have similar cultural backgrounds, Jon feels at ease in his new home.

The living arrangement described in Jon's hypothetical scenario is called the host home model. If it sounds vaguely familiar, it may be because the model is a variation of kinship care—an informal system that many communities and societies, Native American Tribes for one, have used for years. In kinship care, extended family members take in young people who need shelter and help them in their transition to adulthood. In the host home model, the youth may or may not know his or her host home family, but the goals are the same.

For years, the Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB) has been supporting grantees who use the host home model to help youth in their

runaway and homeless youth programs. FYSB grantees, especially those in rural areas, consider host homes a practical alternative to both short-term shelters (Basic Centers) and longer-term transitional housing (Transitional Living Programs).

"Host homes provide housing and stability," says Kreig Pinkham, director of the Vermont Coalition of Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs, where 10

out of 12 agencies use the host home model. "Here in rural Vermont, we've found the host home model to be effective because it's flexible."

Experts say that its very flexibility, especially in getting services to low-income, resource-poor rural areas, makes the host home model a promising method of bringing shelter and stability to the lives of homeless Native American youth.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE A HOST HOME Host homes benefit ...

➤ the youth-serving agency:

- ◆ The model is a flexible housing alternative for youth-serving agencies that have little money to build or maintain basic shelters.
- ◆ Host homes provide practical residences for agencies in rural areas, where apartment buildings for transitional living programs are scarce.

➤ the host home family:

- ◆ Host homes allow adults to be role models to the youth they house, ensuring that the next generation has the skills to become successful.
- ◆ The agency pays the host family for room rental and partial utilities – a welcome support to families who may already be caring for the youth.

➤ the youth:

- ◆ Youth continue to be part of a home, where they can maintain a sense of belonging and pick up critical life skills.
- ◆ The host home model provides youth with an ongoing connection to the youth agency, which in turn provides linkages to and support from other services, like health care, job training, and mental health counseling.
- ◆ Youth may reap other unforeseen benefits of living with a family. For example, host home families may help youth with transportation to jobs or to school—a fringe benefit that is especially important in rural areas.

➤ Native American youth, in particular:

- ◆ The host home model could prove comfortable for Native American youth because it is based on kinship care, a system used by many Tribes.
- ◆ If host home family members are Native American, they can help Native American youth connect with their culture.
- ◆ The youth-serving agency can provide linkages to a youth's Tribe, reservation, and culture.

If you are considering host homes for Native American youth, below are some tips to make the living arrangement as comfortable, stable, and healthy for them as possible.

Talk with the client.

When Native American youth contact an agency looking for a place to stay, Crystal Nicholson of the National Resource Center on Youth Services (NRCYS) says to “do what you would do when any kid contacts your organization: talk with them, ask them questions, ask them straight-forwardly, ‘what can we do to make this transition useful to you?’”

Then, determine where they fall on the acculturation continuum. In other words, what does the youth determine his or her cultural identity to be? As Nicholson puts it, “some Native American youth are so acculturated to the mainstream that they’re not interested in reconnecting with their Native American culture. It’s important to respect this decision. Just be sure they know that you’re willing to help them reconnect at any time.”

Contact local Native American organizations.

If your organization often helps youth who identify themselves as Native American, it is imperative to have a working relationship with local Native American organizations and tribal alliances. These organizations can make connecting youth with their culture and Tribe a much smoother process than going at it alone.

Forge a relationship with the young person’s Tribe.

Your agency should consider it its duty to facilitate an ongoing conversation with the youth and the Tribe. Yvonne Barrett, director of Ain Dah Yung

youth services, recommends that agencies talk with the youth’s tribal community and its leaders about the host home option.

“Find out if they support the idea of a host home arrangement for this particular youth,” Barrett said. “Listen to their recommendations for how to best house the youth, reconnect them with the Tribe, and ease their way into adulthood.”

Recruit and train host home families.

If at all possible, recruit Native American host homes. “If kids don’t understand the culture of their host, their new living arrangements can be uncomfortable and scary,” explains Linda Garding, a training and technical assistance provider in North Dakota.

If it proves impossible to recruit Native American host homes in your community, hire Native American staff or contract a Native American trainer or “cultural guide” who is still connected with a Tribe to teach agency staff and host home families cultural proficiency skills.

Your agency may have a lot of clients like Jon—youth who need or already have access to a place that feels like home. Maybe your agency has a few clients who need housing, but not enough at one time to justify building a shelter. Perhaps you serve Native American youth who need additional cultural support.

Think outside of the shelter: think about host homes.

For more information on host homes, please refer to the sources below, call your Regional T/TA provider, or contact NCFY.

Native Pathway to Adulthood: Training for Tribal and Non-Tribal Child Welfare Workers. Author: National Resource

WHEN WORKING WITH HOMELESS OR IN-TRANSITION NATIVE AMERICAN YOUTH, REMEMBER:

- ◆ All Native American youth are not the same.
 - Some are highly acculturated to mainstream society; others may not be.
 - Some want to maintain a strong connection with their Tribal culture; others may not.
- ◆ All Tribes are not the same.
 - They have different rituals, languages, and ceremonies. They are different cultures.
 - Native American youth may have different cultural needs. Offer services like health care, counseling, and life skills curricula that incorporate Native American norms and values.
 - Native American people have natural supports. Tribes often have strong spiritual leaders (elders) and a heightened sense of community. Work with these strengths.

Center for Youth Services, University of Oklahoma. 2004. Available at www.nrcys.ou.edu.

The Path Before Me: Questions to Guide American Indian Youth Toward Responsible Living. Author: Kroner, M. 1997. Available from the National Resource Center for Youth Services, University of Oklahoma, www.nrcys.ou.edu.

Tribal Approaches to Transition. Author: Munsell, G. 2004. Available from the National Resource Center for Youth Services, University of Oklahoma, www.nrcys.ou.edu. ■

GETTING STARTED

Would Native youth in your community benefit from a host home program? Some ideas for getting started:

1. Find out who is already working with at-risk, homeless, or transitional youth in your community or in nearby towns.
 - ◆ Search the Helping America's Youth online database (www.helpingamericasyouth.org) for youth programs in your area.
 - ◆ Contact your State or local agency responsible for youth programming, the police department, or child welfare agencies for programs they recommend.
 - ◆ Call the National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth at (301) 608-8098 for the names of FYSB grantee agencies in your area.
2. Contact existing service providers.
 - ◆ It may be easier to fund a fledgling Native host home program by teaming up with an existing service provider in a nearby town or urban area. Together, you can develop proposals that include a satellite office and a few host homes in an outlying, Tribal area.
3. Cast a wide funding net.
 - ◆ The Council on Foundations provides a searchable database of community foundations across the country at www.community-foundationlocator.org.
 - ◆ Community foundations fund a diverse array of programs that address the issues impacting the local communities where they operate.
 - ◆ The Foundation Center offers a searchable database of foundations at <http://fconline.fdncenter.org>. This paid service searches for funding opportunities among thousands of private and corporate foundations.
 - ◆ The National Clearinghouse on Families & Youth can conduct a search to help you target funding for your program. Call (301) 608-8098.

TRIBAL MENTORS PASS WISDOM, SELF-ESTEEM TO CHILDREN OF PRISONERS



Fishing on Medicine Stab Lake in Browning.

Fishing. Trapping. Hunting. Dog racing.

Native young people in the mentoring program at Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Fairbanks area in Alaska are learning that their elders have a lot more to offer than an hour of companionship a couple times a week.

They can teach pride and self-sufficiency with a healthy dose of fun.

"We have 16- and 17-year-old boys signing up to be Little Brothers," said Cindi Nation, rural expansion director at the Big Brothers Big Sisters chapter.

"At that age, we're usually signing them up to be Big Brothers."

And it's not just the boys who are having all the fun. One mentor recently taught her Little Sister how to trap and skin a beaver in order to turn the pelt into a traditional pair of gloves and a hat.

Mentoring can be a powerful youth development tool in Native communities, where so much of the Tribe's history and identity is passed down through the knowledge and skills of the elders. The self-esteem and confidence that can come through a meaningful connection with older Tribe members can help children and young people grow into successful, productive members of the society. That's why the Family and Youth Services Bureau's Mentoring Children of Prisoners (MCP) Program supports Tribal mentoring programs for the children of incarcerated parents.

Research has shown that children who suffer the long-term absence of a parent

or parents are most at risk of experiencing the emotional, behavioral, and educational problems that could jeopardize their future success. Adding to the burden, Native youth also frequently face issues around poverty, illness, and alcohol and substance abuse. And while homelessness is not usually an issue on Tribal lands, overcrowding is.

"When there are an average of about 10 to 15 people living in a small two-bedroom house, it's hard to have quiet time. It's difficult to have time for reflective action at all," said Milt Lee of the Maza Tiopa mentoring program on the Pine Ridge Reservation in Porcupine, South Dakota. "The idea of mentoring, to take these children out for an hour or two with nothing more in mind than building a relationship with an adult, is really powerful."

Indeed, mentoring programs have been proven to improve the futures of young people. Studies show they reduce first-time drug use by almost 50 percent and first-time alcohol use by 33 percent.

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CULTURAL PROFICIENCY

Does your youth-serving agency actively promote cultural proficiency?

Assess your organization's cultural proficiency, and brainstorm ways to enhance it by answering the following questions.

1. Agency's overall goals

Assess: What wording in your mission statement addresses the goal of embracing clients from different cultural backgrounds?

Enhance: How could your organization further address the goals of diversity and inclusion?

2. Staff, board members, and volunteers

Assess: How is your personnel diverse in race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, religion/spirituality, gender, native language, sexuality, and age?

Enhance: In what ways could your staff, board, and volunteers be more reflective of the clients you serve?

3. Policies

Assess: What actions are your staff expected to take if clients or others involved with your agency behave in culturally inappropriate ways (e.g., making racist comments)?

Enhance: How could this policy best be communicated so that clients know exactly what happens if culturally inappropriate behavior occurs?

4. Training

Assess: What cultural proficiency training (one-time and ongoing) do you provide for your staff?

Enhance: What cultural proficiency training could you add in the next year?

5. Environment

What about your facility (the decorations, artwork, space distribution) makes it appear safe and inviting to your clients?

Enhance: What can you do to further ensure that your facility's atmosphere reflects the cultural backgrounds of your clients?

6. Outreach

Assess: How does your agency conduct outreach to youth of different cultural backgrounds?

Enhance: How could you conduct outreach to include a group that is underserved in your community?

7. Activities for clients

Assess: What culturally relevant activities have you provided for your clients recently?

Enhance: What culturally relevant activities can your agency plan for clients in the next year?

WAYS TO MAKE EVERYONE FEEL AT HOME

Overall goals

- ❖ Have your staff and clients create a "diversity statement" separate from your mission statement.
- ❖ Establish a staff and client committee responsible for maintaining focus on cultural proficiency. Rotate participation.

Staff, board members, and volunteers

- ❖ On a regular basis, collect demographic data of your clients so that you can accurately assess how your staff board, members, and volunteers reflect clients' cultures.
- ❖ When interviewing, ask candidates to share their experience in relating with diverse groups.
- ❖ Give youth active roles in the interviewing and hiring processes.

Policies

- ❖ Be sure staff and clients know what you mean by "cultural proficiency" and are able to recognize "culturally inappropriate" statements or behaviors.
- ❖ Make sure clients know how to report culturally inappropriate behavior and assess whether they feel comfortable and safe doing so.

Training

- ❖ Ask other community service providers to train staff on specific cultural issues. For example, invite staff of local Native American alliances to talk with staff about the differences among Native American Tribes.
- ❖ Host brown bag lunches in which staff discuss a book or article on specific cultural diversity topics.

Environment

- ❖ Create a space, such as a bulletin board or mural, where clients and staff can post artwork, literature, or articles that reflect their cultures. Post reminders about not tolerating hateful speech.
- ❖ Incorporate into the daily operations of your agency food, arts, and music of the different cultural groups you serve.
- ❖ Have clients and people in the community help decorate the office space.

Outreach

- ❖ Recruit clients through religious groups, mobile services, and advertising in all areas of your community.
- ❖ Create promotional materials that reflect the cultures in your community.
- ❖ Be sure that promotional items are available in the languages spoken by your potential clients.

Activities for clients

- ❖ Help youth put together skits, dances, and other performances that enhance their cultural identities.
- ❖ Celebrate holidays that reflect all of the cultures that your agency represents.
- ❖ This list is by no means exhaustive. We encourage your agency to develop creative ways to foster cultural proficiency and to share your ideas with others.

Thanks to Western States Youth Services Network's "Creating Culturally Competent and Diverse Agencies" toolkit for tips and starters.

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Mentoring also helps children to improve their relationships with their caregivers and peers. And mentored youth are more confident about their schoolwork and often improve their academic performance.

In Alaska, the outcome is far more fundamental.

“We have a way too high youth suicide rate in the State,” said Taber Rehbaum, executive director of Big Brothers Big Sisters of the Greater Fairbanks Area. “We’re not just helping them feel better about school; we are talking about life and death here.”

The five Tribal MCP programs—the first of their kind—were funded by FYSB in 2004, and while Big Brothers Big Sisters is building on its ongoing activities, some other programs are still experiencing the start-up pains that are common to mentoring efforts.

One of the biggest challenges so far, grantees say, has been navigating the issues around recruitment. For Francis Onstad, director of the Blackfeet Indian Reservation in Browning, Montana, word of mouth has been their primary source for recruiting.

“Kids know other kids who have parents that are incarcerated,” says Onstad, “We also work with the courts and the schools.”

The challenge becomes, Onstad says, convincing them to stay. Cultural sensitivity plays a large role not only in keeping the youth interested, but also maintaining discipline for up to 20 youth.

“The mentors are all elder Natives,” says Onstad. She says the elder Natives don’t have problems disciplining the youth, because their tradition teaches youth to respect their elders. “With the elders they just look at the kids and they behave,” she says.

Teaming the youth immediately with elders as mentors helps them to feel grounded and lets them know there is someone interested in them, says Liz Sherman, director of the youth mentoring program for Blackfeet. Sherman says the elders greet the youth in Blackfeet language and teach them a word each day. The youth learn traditional and Tribal songs and dances and visit historical sites on the reservation.



Elder mentor with youth.

Maza Tiopa staff in South Dakota are having a harder time finding mentors for their program. Some adults are cautious about volunteering because as mentors they are unclear about what would be expected of them.

“We really emphasize that the relationship is the intervention,” Lee said. “These children need to have good relationships with adults who are going to offer mental, emotional, and spiritual support even though you might go 6 months with these children before they’ll let their guards down.”

In Alaska, Nation has found that her sales pitch works best when she explains the program in terms of Native custom. Most of the villages she enters, she says, already have a word for mentoring in their own languages and a tradition of inter-generational support.

“When the parents came to sign up the kids, they would say ‘Oh, I can do this’ and signed themselves up too,” she said.

Recruitment was enough of a challenge in the 16 Boys and Girls Clubs-hosted MCP programs run through a Navajo Nation grant that staff developed and conducted a series of trainings to help the programs find and convince potential mentors and mentees to sign up, according to Spencer Willie, program manager for the Expansion Office with the Office of the President and Vice President of the Navajo Nation. With the help of mentoring experts, they eventually developed an introductory video that the programs can show when they visit potential recruitment sites, such as fire stations or professional associations.

Recruitment may be easier for the Navajo programs, Willie said, since mentors and mentees always meet in the structured environment of the Boys and Girls Clubs, where activities are often planned and help is readily available.

“When the mentees bring up things about their own lives that the mentors don’t feel trained to handle, we can immediately bring in club staff to help with individual issues,” Willie said.

The Boys and Girls Clubs also organize group activities and offsite trips to the movies to give mentors and mentees contact with and support from others in the program.

So far, many of the planned activities between mentors and mentees in the other programs have been around attending community events and dinners, as well as sports and homework. But over time, the new grantees plan to build in excursions that bring the participants closer to their cultures, like the Blackfeet program in Browning has begun to do. Sherman says they are in the planning stages of taking youth to the annual Gathering of Nations Powwow where they can dance with Native tribes from all over the country.

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At Maza Tiopa, one of the pillars of the program will be reconnecting both youth and their mentors with the seven sacred sites of the Lakota, and the rites that accompany them. On the summer solstice, for example, Lakota go to Devil's Tower, a sacred rock formation in Wyoming, for a Sun Dance. But since it's 150 miles from Pine Ridge, most people don't have the resources to get there anymore. Lee says that Maza Tiopa will be organizing trips to take them there.

"Everything that we are doing here is a stepping stone toward building a child into somebody who is developmentally sound and a strong adult," Lee said.

Grantees also hope that mentoring programs will affect how Native American mentors parent their own



Camping on Chewing Black Bones campground near Glacier National Park.

children. Nation said that in one Alaska Native community she serves, a mentor had his Little Brother come over every Saturday morning so they could cook breakfast together.

"His stepson got mad and said it wasn't fair, that he wanted his own time," Nation said. "So now he's got Friday evenings."

Given the success of the more established Alaska Big Brothers Big Sisters program, Native Mentoring Children of Prisoners grantees have much to look forward to.

In one Alaskan village school, half the children now have mentors.

"The thing that excites us about that is that it is enough to make a difference in how the whole community interacts with youth," Rehbaum said, "and especially how they build Positive Youth Development into the community."

For copies of the Navajo Nation's mentoring manual or recruitment video, please contact Spencer Willie at spencer_willie@yahoo.com or at (928) 871-6352.

SEEING IS BELIEVING: MCP ON VIDEO

Washington to Texas, Arizona to Connecticut, Milt Lee has traveled the country with one goal in mind: Getting in to prisons. Why? As part of the Maza Tiopa Mentoring Children of Prisoners Program on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota, Lee shuttles videotaped messages from youth to their incarcerated parents and back in an effort to build a connection that could help brighten all of their futures.

"The more connected people are to their children, the less likely that they are going to go back to prison," Lee said. "And the child really gains a strength that can keep them from following in their parent's footsteps."

While communicating with family is often hard from jail, Native prisoners have an especially difficult time maintaining relationships with their children. Since a number of crimes on the reservation are considered Federal offenses, infractions may land a mother or father in a Federal penitentiary thousands of miles from home. And while phone calls and letters are important, the power of seeing a parent or child on film is undeniable. Just ask the family in one of Lee's recent sessions, which resulted in a promotional video for the program.

The first time they were interviewed, the three adolescent girls were visibly angry and hurt. They were dismissive of

their incarcerated father's role in their lives. "I'm not looking for a dad anymore," one of the girls said. "But if he wants to be my friend, I'll be open to that."

Their father, who has been in and out of prison their whole lives, was clearly shaken by their comments but responded with understanding. "I know I'm going to have to initiate this," he said. "If she wants to be friends, that's more than what I can ask for. That's more than what I deserve."

By the second round of video letters, father and daughters were laughing, sharing stories, and talking about a future together.

As the Maza Tiopa mentoring program grows to serve more young people, Lee hopes to expand the video letters service as well. One of the biggest challenges he has encountered however, is convincing prison administrators to let him in.

"They say they are afraid the inmate is going to say something that is going to hurt the child," Lee said. "Or they are afraid they are going to say things that are codes for drug deliveries and crimes."

Lee has assured prison officials that videos are edited for appropriateness before family members see them.

Then, the healing begins.

A PLACE TO CALL THEIR OWN: DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SHELTERS ON NATIVE AMERICAN LAND

Not too long ago, protecting the women of the Pine Ridge Reservation from domestic violence wasn't such an easy task. With a domestic violence center, but no residential facilities, program staff were often forced to drive nearly a hundred miles to transport women seeking safe housing to the nearest shelter in Rapid City, South Dakota.

And the problems didn't stop there. Take one morning, for example, when the staff shuttled four women to the faraway shelter.

"Three of those four women made their way back to the reservation before the staff did," said Karen Artichoker, director of Sacred Circle, the National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women. "They just didn't want to stay."

According to Artichoker, Native American women and children often felt uncomfortable when they were sent to off-reservation, non-Tribal shelters. They disliked the foreign atmosphere. And the staff and other clients seemed less than welcoming.

Today, though, things have changed. With the support of FYSB's Family Violence Prevention and Services Program, many Native American Tribes are finally able to run their own shelters on their own land, developing programs that, they say, serve their clients better.



"...A place to be safe and think and have tea"

Artichoker explains that many Native women feel that non-Native shelters have evolved into a more professional, medical model, which feels too strict. These shelters "have daily schedules, which bring us back to the days we

were shipped to boarding schools," she says, referring to an era when Native children were removed from their families and sent far away to school.

Native women and their children at the Pine Ridge shelter who have escaped from family violence do not need regimented schedules but "a place to be safe and think and have tea," Artichoker said. "Women can relax here."



"Going to a shelter outside the reservation can be a real culture shock."

Native women also feel uncomfortable in non-Native shelters when they perceive racism from other clients or non-Native shelter staff. "Native women often feel that all non-Native people group them as 'Indians' and don't see the cultural differences between the Cherokees, the Choctaws, and the Chickasaws," says Pauline Musgrove, director of the Oklahoma Native American Domestic Violence Coalition. Native American women sometimes feel stereotyped, sensing that other clients and staff assume that they are alcoholic or uneducated, Musgrove said.

Native women also may not feel that their culture is understood by non-Native shelter staff. For example, Musgrove says that although many Native Americans live in Oklahoma, others in the State "don't understand the ways and traditions of Native American people." Native peoples have different parenting styles, different communication styles, different cuisine, and different family systems from mainstream European American culture, she says.

For women who "have never stepped out of their community," Artichoker

says, "going to a shelter outside the reservation can be a real culture shock." Native women are much more likely to go to a shelter on their reservation where they recognize the food, the environment, and the people, she says.

One of the major cultural barriers that Native women find at non-Native shelters is a lack of knowledge or access to Native American spirituality and rituals. A domestic violence shelter run by Native Americans can offer connections to traditional spirituality.

One of the main goals of the Oklahoma Native American Domestic Violence Coalition is to "restore our cultural and traditional values to those who feel that need," Musgrove says.

"These women have come here to heal," she says. "For them, the healing process often involves reinstalling those cultural ways and traditions and spirituality to them."



When Native American women run their own shelters, it gives them a "sense of power over their own space...."

The shelter on the Pine Ridge Reservation connects women and their children to traditional spirituality by providing contact with a medicine man, for example. And in some cases, the shelter provides child care for women while they participate in longer Native American ceremonies, such as powwows, which can last up to a week.

With their emphasis on communal healing and traditional practices, Tribal shelters instill a sense of empowerment among its clients and Tribes. Artichoker compares the Native-run model to the traditional women's shelter model—that is, that domestic

violence shelters work best if they are run by women, for women so that clients gain a sense of protection, safety, and empowerment. In the same way, she says, when Native American women have sovereignty over their shelters, it gives them a “sense of power over their own space and a feeling of being as competent as white people.”

With Native shelters up and running, programs are now starting to build their wish lists for the future. Musgrove would like to see more shelters offer long-term help. “Some women need and want more than just 30 days,” she says. “They’ve lived with a controlling domestic perpetrator for years and years, and now they need to learn to live lives of their own.” She hopes to see shelters teaching them basic living and social skills, like how to write checks and go grocery shopping—“things they’ve never done by themselves before.”

“We’d like to see domestic violence services help more than their immediate need in crisis,” she said. “We’d like to see our services as a place where people and families can heal.”

For more information on FYSB-supported domestic violence resources, go to:

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

<http://www.nrcdv.org>
800-537-2238

Sacred Circle, National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women

<http://www.sacred-circle.com>
877-733-7623

Indian Health Service
Violence Against Native Women
Clinical Tools

<http://www.ihs.gov/MedicalPrograms/MCH/W/DV00.cfm>

HOW FYSB'S FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION AND SERVICES PROGRAM WORKS FOR TRIBES

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Program funds State agencies, Territories, and Indian Tribes to provide shelter to victims of family violence and their dependents and for related services, such as emergency transportation and child care. Grantees use FYSB resources to expand current service programs and to open new centers in rural and underserved areas, on Indian reservations, and in Alaska Native villages. Technical assistance on the prevention of family violence toward Native women is provided through Sacred Circle, a resource center that is part of the Domestic Violence Resource Center Network.

Funding

Ten percent of Family Violence Program appropriations are set aside for grants to Indian Tribes, Tribal organizations, and nonprofit organizations approved by the Indian Tribe. Grantees can either operate family violence shelters on reservations or develop projects designed to prevent family violence and provide immediate shelter and related assistance for victims of family violence and their dependents. Grants are awarded to all federally recognized Tribes that apply and meet the criteria. Grant amounts are determined on a formula basis. Tribes and tribal entities that meet application requirements are granted minimum base amounts determined by population. After the distribution of base amounts, the remaining funds are allocated in proportional amounts based on the ratio of the Tribe's population to the total population of all Tribes that have applied. Tribes are also encouraged to apply as consortia.

SERVING NATIVE WOMEN AND CHILDREN EXPOSED TO DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

- ❖ Researching the unique history of Native Americans in the United States for an understanding of the underlying issues around domestic violence in Tribal communities. For an excellent introduction, download *Introductory Manual to Domestic Violence in Indian Country* (2003) by Mending the Sacred Hoop Technical Assistance Project at <http://www.msh-ta.org/Resources/Introductory%20Manual.htm>.
- ❖ Learning about the cross-jurisdictional issues between Tribal and non-Tribal law enforcement and courts, which can leave some Native battered women vulnerable.
- ❖ Bringing in Tribal representatives to train your staff on how to be more culturally sensitive. Given the often close-knit nature of Tribal communities, keep in mind that confidentiality is of utmost importance.
- ❖ Hiring a culturally representative and bilingual staff and allowing them to provide guidance on facilities, outreach, policies, and procedures.
- ❖ Making traditional healers available for Tribal women, who may feel uncomfortable with Western services and counseling.
- ❖ Creating a supportive community of Native women. By fleeing their homes, Native women often lose a highly developed support system of extended family, which can leave them feeling adrift.

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what's Inside



HOW TRIBAL PROGRAMS HARNESS CULTURAL STRENGTHS TO IMPROVE LIVES

Find out about:

- **Host Homes for Native Americans**
- **How Culturally Competent Programs Retain their Youth**
- **Domestic Violence Shelters on Native American Land**

THE EXCHANGE

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