"Incorporating Tribal Customs into Healing to Wellness Courts"

PRESENTED BY
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The following is presented with the understanding that not all Judges, participants, and tribal people support the incorporation of custom and tradition in court programs as necessary....
Outline

- History
- Environment & AI/AN Population
- Cultural Awareness & Sensitivity
- Trauma
- Self Awareness
- Team Exercise

AADCP Problem-Solving Courts Conference ~ April 20, 2017
There are over 560 Federally Recognized Tribes in the U.S.

Relocation – Inter-Tribal Relationships – Inter-Racial Relationships – Blood Quantum – Federal Recognition
Tribal Nations

- 1500-1750 Disease
  - Small pox, Bubonic plague, Measles, Yellow fever, Cholera,
- 1800 Decimation
  - Influenza
  - War
  - Assimilation
  - “If the savage resists, civilization, with the ten commandments in one hand and the sword in the other, demand his immediate extermination.” Andrew Jackson The Indian Killer 1867 to Congress
- 1900 Boarding School
  - Punishment for speaking language
  - Hair and Dress code

ASSIMILATION.....TRAUMA
Approximately 1.5% of the US population-4.1 million Americans-identity themselves as having American Indian or Alaska Native heritage.

About two-thirds live in urban, suburban or rural non-reservation areas; about one-third live on reservations. During the last 30 years, more than 1 million AI/AN’s have moved to metropolitan areas off reservation.

More likely to live in poverty; more than twice as many AI/AN’s live in poverty than the total US population (26% vs 12%)
Addiction in Indian Country

- Alcohol/Drugs introduced by traders
- Cigarette Addiction - highest among all other ethnic groups
- Childhood trauma increases smoking risks
- Daily smokers are 5 times more likely to abuse alcohol
- Alcoholism remains high among native people
- Most violent crimes committed in Indian country involve alcohol/drugs on both the part of the offender and the victim
Addiction

- Tends to mask the real source of the problem
- Enhanced Low Self-Esteem
- Loss of sense of belonging or connection to the tribal community or group
  - Possibly stemming from historical trauma
  - Negative boarding school experience
  - Relocation
  - Assimilation
  - Change in identity
Defining Trauma

- Experiencing a serious injury to yourself or witnessing a serious injury to or the death of someone else
- Facing imminent threats of serious injury or death to yourself or others
- Experiencing a violation of personal physical integrity

Resulting in overwhelming feelings of terror, horror, or hopelessness.
Types of Potentially Traumatic Experiences

- Abuse and Neglect
- Accidents
- Interpersonal Violence
- Domestic Violence
- Medical Procedures
- Natural Disasters
- War or Terrorism
Impacts of Trauma

Historical traumas, including forced relocations and cultural assimilation, Numerous broken treaties and other social, economic, and political injustices, continue to affect AI/AN communities in significant ways. AIAN health disparities are inherently tied to the historical and current sociopolitical experiences of these people.
Stress experienced by an individual’s ancestor may overshadow the stress experienced within a lifetime.

These events change which genes are turned on or off by a process called methylation.

Your ancestors’ lousy childhoods or excellent adventures might change your personality, anxiety or resilience by altering the epigenetic expression of genes in your brain.
Responding to Trauma

- Reactive VS Receptive States
  - Know your state/self care
  - Mindfulness/breathing
  - Training
A simple exercise demonstrating an immediate “felt” experience of the difference between reactive and receptive states.

When the nervous system is reactive, it is actually in a fight-flight-freeze survival state.

Brainstem feels a threat “no”, and it takes over.

Not possible to connect with another person when our focus is on self-defense and/or survival.

Our state of mind can turn even neutral comments into fighting words, distorting “what we hear” to fit “what we fear.”
Receptive States

- A different branch of the brainstem activates.
- The muscles of face and vocal cords relax, blood pressure and heart rate normalize.
- We become more open to experiencing the present moment and connecting to others.
- We experience being safe and seen.
- Your responsibility is to know your state. Ask for time or pause if you are in a reactive state.
- Exercise and Strengthen your basic ability to enter a receptive by being aware.
Treatment of Alcohol/Drug Use & Trauma Among Native American’s

- Conflicts were historically addressed through customary and traditional methods
- Community vision guide native people
- Traditional native people focus on community
- Modern ways are individualized
- Mental Health, Wellness and Healing are built in as part of native culture, rituals and traditions.....
- Wellness Court process is not a new method
Cultural competency is one of the critical principals of care.

Not all Tribal customs and traditions are the same.

Not all methods of traditional healing are the same.

Not all native people will be open to cultural orientated activities.

Careful consideration in approaching culture & teaching customs.

Most Tribal Nations have healers & local cultural experts.
Health & Wellness Challenges

- Prevention and intervention efforts must include supporting/enhancing strengths of community resources as well as individual and family clinical interventions.
- Service providers must take great care in the assessment process to consider cultural differences in symptoms and health concepts when making a specific diagnosis or drawing conclusions about the presenting problem or bio-psychological history.
- Every effort should be made to consult with local cultural advisors about symptomology and treatment options.
Self Awareness

- Emotional Intelligence/Enneagram
- Energy follows attention
- Mind Maps
  - Me-Insight to ourselves
  - You-Insight to others-empathy
  - We-Our relationships to each other-community

Feeling connected is in fact a meeting of minds and this felt sense is created by these maps.

We are hard-wired to connect to each other....
Who’s Responsible?

- Courts
- Police
- Treatment Providers
- Elders
- Healers
- Community, “…it takes a village…”
- Self…
Team Exercise
Thank You
The Tribal Law and Policy Institute is a Native American non-profit corporation organized to design and deliver education, research, training, and technical assistance programs which promote the enhancement of justice in Indian country and the health, well-being, and culture of Native peoples.

www.Home.tlpi.org
Tribal Law and Policy Institute Resources

- www.WellnessCourts.org
- Tribal Healing to Wellness Court Publication Series
  - Tribal 10 Key Components
  - Preliminary Overview
  - Program Development
- Webinars
- On- and Off-Site Technical Assistance
- Native American Indians-Surgeon General report. Mental Health disparities American Indian/Alaskan Natives