Cultural Competency Issues with American Indian Students

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Garrett Lee Smith Campus Suicide Prevention Grantee Meeting

Presented by:
Jacque Gray, Ph.D.

Rural Perspectives
Rural/Frontier Perspectives

- Lack of confidentiality—Everyone knows
  - Mental health (stigma, impact on business)

- Few Resources/Long Distances to Travel
  - 95% ND MHPSA
  - 100 miles one way for services

- Increased Depression and Suicide among Farmers (some studies as high as 50%)

- Economic impact has multiple losses
  - Job, income, lifestyle, home, identity
  - Multi-generational loss (3-4 generations)

**Medicine Wheel**

- Spiritual
- Mental
- Emotional
- Physical
Medicine Wheel Origins

- 4 multi-dimensional, sacred parts
- 4 sacred colors (red, yellow, black, white)
- 4 parts of spiritual & physical world
  - (mental, physical, emotional, spiritual)
- 4 values of the Lakota People
  - (respect, generosity, wisdom, courage)
- 4 directions (East, North, West, South)
- Key Principle: Interconnectedness

Mental

- Gatekeeper training
- Education
- Problem Solving
- Communication Skills
- Stress Management
- Build Strong Minds
Physical

• Engagement: Food as a part of all gatherings
  – Nourishes physical needs
  – Fosters connections with others
• Activities/Services/Interventions
• Soup Fridays
  – Gathers students, faculty, and staff to share informally
  – Develop social networks throughout the university
• Nutrition activities from Wellness Center
• Physical activities from Wellness Center

Emotional

• Organizational
• Culturally based counseling services
• Referral to American Indian counselor or psychologist
• Recognize the impact of stressors from home & school
• Help the student to communicate needs to campus faculty & staff
Spiritual

• Engagement

• Access to Spiritual Leader for Ceremonies
  • Activities/Services/Interventions
  • Sweat lodge, Smudging, Purification
  • Pipe Ceremony, Wiping of Tears

• Talking Circles
  • Include prayers, sharing, ceremony, songs

• Honoring
  • Songs from Drum group
  • Well wishes from those supporting
  • Gift giving

Challenges

• Fighting Sioux Mascot Issue
  – Dissention among AI students/reservations
  – Racism on campus
  – Hostile environment for learning/living
Contact Information:

Jacque Gray, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor
Center for Rural Health
School of Medicine & Health Sciences
University of North Dakota
501 N. Columbia, Stop 9037
Grand Forks, ND 58202-9037

(701) 777-0582
jgray@medicine.nodak.edu