Suicide Prevention
Don't Hurt yourself
TALK TO SOMEONE
Suicide Prevention in American Indian/Alaska Native Communities: Lessons Learned from Indian Country

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Trauma in AI/AN Communities

Cultural
- “What broke our world apart”
  (Gathering of Native Americans)

Historical
- long-term and cumulative exposure to traumatic events

(Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 2003; Beals et al., 2002; Morsette, 1994; Morsette et al., 2006)
Trauma in AI/AN Communities

Intergenerational
• Unresolved trauma that is internalized and passed on from generation to generation
  • Trauma is normalized. “It’s just the way things are here on the rez.” (Elder from Northern Plains Tribal Community)

Present
• Trauma experienced today
  • Higher rates of death due to disease
  • Aggravated assault twice that of the country as a whole
  • Violent death accounts for 75% of AI/AN youth in late adolescence and early adulthood
  • Highest rates of meth use
  • PTSD

(IHS, 1999; D.S. Bigfoot, 2007; Stahl & Chong, 2002; Cohen et al., 2004; Cohen et al., 2006; Morsette et al., 2006; NCAI, March 2009)
Consequences of Trauma: AI/AN Community Risk Factors

Loss of lands, culture, language, subsistence or traditional way of life

Continued pressure to assimilate

Feelings of being torn between two different worlds

Intergenerational post-traumatic stress disorder
Consequences of Trauma: AI/AN Community Risk Factors

SES levels: Ongoing and pervasive poverty, high unemployment, lack of academic achievement, and economic opportunity

Lack of the “opportunity to be industrious”  
(Northern Plains Tribal Leader)

Dependence on TANF and other subsidies

Low community self-esteem  
(Chandler & Lalonde, 2003)

Low community expectations for success
Consequences of Trauma:
AI/AN Community Risk Factors

Community-level hopelessness, learned helplessness

Alcoholism/drug use

Community violence

Community shame

Highest rates of youth suicide in the country
Don't kill yourself
Because if you have kids your kids will miss you
**AI/AN Family Risk Factors**

Family disruption
High rates of unemployment
Low academic achievement
Poverty
Lack of economic opportunity
Family stressful life events and trauma
Substance Abuse
Spousal and Child Abuse
Stigma around seeking mental health treatment
Lack of information about youth violence, bullying, and warning signs for suicide
SueAnn

Don't hang your self you will not come back.
AI/AN Youth: Individual Risk Factors

Gender

Age

History of mental health problems
depression, hopelessness, poor coping skills

Friends or family members who have attempted or completed suicide

Alcohol use/abuse

No father at home

(IHS, 1998-99; CDC WISQARS; Mason et al., 1989; Grossman et al., 1991; Howard-Pitney et al., 1992; Gartrell, et al., 1993)
Suicide rates by ethnicity and age group -- United States, 2000-2005

Source: CDC vital statistics
Suicide Rates Among Persons Ages 10-24 Years, by Race/Ethnicity and Sex, United States, 2002-2006

CDC
Suicide rates by region for persons aged 0-19 years – U.S., 1989-1998

(U.S. average rate 3.03)

Percentile

- 95-100
- 75-94
- 50-74
- 0-49

States with the highest rates:
- Alaska 23.77
- Montana 21.71
- South Dakota 19.07

States with the lowest rates:
- Nevada 0.92
- Arizona 1.14
- California 3.48

Notable rates:
- Portland 7.70
- Billings 8.08
- Aberdeen 19.07
- Bemidji 8.94
- Tucson 18.25

Other notable locations:
- Albuquerque 7.25
- Nashville 2.54
- Oklahoma City 3.11
- Phoenix 7.71
- California 3.48
AI/AN Youth: Individual Risk Factors

Stressful Life events:
- Acute personal trauma
- Chronic personal trauma
- Community Trauma
- Bullying and other forms of violence
- Physical illness
- Multiple home placements

PTSD

Unresolved Grief

Frequent contact with criminal justice system

Family and community instability

Parental unemployment

(Bigfoot, 1988; Manson et al., 1989; Howard-Pitney et al., 1992; Middlebrook, et al., 2001)
AI/AN Youth: Individual Risk Factors

Boarding Schools
Cultural conflict and pressure to acculturate
Disruption of cultural values
Identity conflict
Lack of recreational opportunity
Lack of educational opportunity
Poverty

(Berlin, 1985; Hochkirchen & Jilek, 1985; Lipschitz, 1995)
Ask for help.

Don't keep a secret.

Get a counselor.

Tell someone.

Respect - X - Take care.
Protective Factors

Factors associated with resiliency:
  Higher levels of self-esteem
  Sense of Self Efficacy
  Cultural values
  Community support
  Family Support

Strong maternal figures

Spirituality

Strong sense of identity

(Goodluck, 2002; Tester and McNicoli, 2003; Goodluck & Willetto, 2004; LaFromboise et al, 2006)
Protective Factors

Family SES level
Alcohol and drug free families
Healthy families
Intact communities
Positive Attitude toward school
School Athletics and other recreational activities
Academic achievement/success
Good communications skills
Recognition for achievement
Enculturation

(Howard-Pitney et al., 1992; Zimmerman et al., 1998; Goodluck, 2002; Chandler and Lalonde, 2003; Goodluck & Willeto, 2004; LaFromboise et al., 2006)
American Indian and Alaska Native Prevention Programs

Institute of Medicine Guidelines

1) Well-defined risk and protective factors
2) Targeted population group
3) The intervention itself
4) The research design used to test the program
5) Evidence concerning the implementation
6) And evidence concerning the outcomes
Zuni Life Skills Development Curriculum
American Indian Life Skills Development Curriculum

School-based
Risk Factors
  Suicide potential
  Psychological distress
  Stressful life events
  Alcohol and drug use
Protective Factors
  Coping, self-efficacy, problem solving
  Communication skills
  Information on suicide
  Goal setting
  Cultural & Spiritual development

(LaFromboise & Howard-Pitney, 1994, 1995)
Western Athabaskan Natural Helpers Program

School & Community-based
Use of “Natural Helpers”

Risk Factors
  Alcohol and drug abuse
  Child abuse, violence between intimate partners
  Traumatic death or injury
  Suicide

Protective Factors
  Self-esteem
  Team-building
  Community Education
  Screening

(Serna, May, Sitaker 1998)
Wind River Behavioral Health Program

School & Community-based

Risk Factors
- Depression
- Suicide of friends & family members
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Community violence
- Child abuse & neglect
- Crime
- High unemployment, lack of job skills

Protective Factors
- Cultural & Spiritual practices
- Improving community relations

(Tower, 1989)
Blue Bay Healing Center

Community-based, Residential Treatment Facility, Out-Patient training

Risk Factors
  Depression
  Alcohol and drug abuse
  Unresolved grief
  Family history of suicide
  Physical health problems

Protective Factors
  Spiritual and Cultural Connections
  Moral development

(Fleming, 1994)
Acoma Canoncito-Laguna Adolescent Health Program

School & Community-Based
Risk Factors
  Suicide
  Depression, despair
  lack of social & economic opportunities, persistent poverty
  Some tribal norms
  Pressure to acculturate

Protective Factors
  Self-esteem
  Physical Health
  Cultural Connectedness

(Davis, Hunt, & Kitzes, 1989)
Tohono O’odham Psychology Service

Traveling clinic

Risk Factors
  Depression
  Alcoholism
  Suicide
  Economic privation
  Broken homes
  Emotional problems

Protective Factors
  None Reported

(Kahn & Delk, 1973, 1975, 1988)
At-Risk Incarcerated Youth, Community-based

Risk Factors
- socioeconomic and interpersonal factors
- self-destructive behaviors
- alcohol & inhalant use,
- cultural identity confusion
- child-rearing practices
- gender

Protective Factors
- None Reported

(Dizmang, et al., 1974; Shore et al., 1972; Levy & Shore, 1977)
Rainbow Lodge Alcohol Recovery Home

School & Community-based
Risk Factors
  Alcohol abuse
  Loss of history
  Loss of ethnic identity
  Family breakdown
Protective Factors
  None Reported

(Fox et al., 1984)
PRIDE

Urban School & Community-based
Risk Factors
  Alcohol and drug abuse
  Lack of community identification
  Coping skills
  Poor nutrition & health
Protective Factors
  Decision-making
  Self-esteem
  Personal identity

(Dorpat, 1994)
Do Suicide

Your teaching bad things
Summary and Recommendations for Prevention Program Development
Data Development

Risk Factors for Youth Suicide

Evaluation of Interventions to Prevent Youth Suicide

Suicide Prevention Services

Public Information & Education

Broader Approaches
Encourage research focused on AI/AN youth resilience

Fund community participatory research

“nothing about us without us”

Bring tribes to the table from the beginning

Bring tribal youth to the table

Improve & fund suicide prevention initiatives

Fund school-based prevention

Community-based prevention

Involve youth in program development

Create partnership with tribes for improving their own culturally-based interventions
Improve collaboration between county and state mental health systems

Public/Private Partnerships

Indian Health Services

mental and physical health services in every community

Increase the number of qualified native mental health professionals

DHHS

AI/AN youth mental health initiatives

Capacity development initiatives
Reservation Infrastructure Development Initiatives

- recreation
- economic
- education
- roads
- transportation
- housing
Strength, Power, and Love for Life

Don't Do Drugs - they will make you want to die. Stay away from them!

Let's be the Generation that raises awareness of Teen Suicide.
Suicide is not native way.

Be strong. Be proud.

Live another day!