Community Wellness Teams

Cyndi Nation, Director
Community Health Outreach Programs
Tanana Chiefs Conference
We service 42 villages, spanned across 235,000 square miles within the interior.
Alaska Size Comparison

Alaska is 586,412 square miles, which is two times the size of Texas. Texas is not much larger than the area we service.
Travel

Travel in almost all of the communities within the Tanana Chiefs Conference region is done by small aircraft, only a handful of our communities are accessible by road.

During the summer months community members can travel by boat.

During the winter, community members can travel by snowmobile.
Communities From the Air

Population Range in the villages we serve:
60 people to 500 people
Background:

- Wellness teams went from being an idea to a reality.
- Began with Huslia as the pilot project in 2010, where the community identified it as a Wellness Team.
- Huslia forged a path of what the Wellness Team could be and how they create wellness in their community.
- Filmmakers volunteered to create a video on the project that follows Huslia and their efforts.
- From the Huslia Project, we have branched to other communities and gained support from other programs.
Wellness Team Objective

- TCC’s Objective of a Wellness Team
  - Empower the community by providing a local voice to the individuals of the community
  - The community decides what is most important to them and how to solve their problems

- Who do you need to support you?
  - Tribal Council
  - Community Members: Elders, Adults, Youth anyone and everyone from that community
Meeting Spaces

Huslia Tribal Hall

Tetlin Tribal Hall

Allakaket Tribal Office
The Initial Visit

- What is your ideal community?
  - More homes, new clinic
  - new youth/adult rec centers

- What are the weaknesses of your community?
  - Too much drugs and alcohol
  - Not enough activities

- What are the strengths of your community?
  - Respect each other, strong youth leaders

Responses:

- Ideal community:
  - More homes, new clinic
  - new youth/adult rec centers

- Weaknesses:
  - Too much drugs and alcohol
  - Not enough activities

- Strengths:
  - Respect each other, strong youth leaders
Second Visit

- Huslia Wellness Team
  Video is displayed

- Discuss what the community would like their Wellness Team to look like

- Questions posed to the community:
  - What is the role of the Wellness Team
  - When do we meet and how often?
  - Who does what?
Third Visit

- Security Cabinet Delivery
- Crisis Response Team Discussion
- Introduce the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) Coordinator from Behavioral Health

Eligibility is based on:
- Children and young adults aged 10-24 years of age
- High risk for suicide, ideation, depression, and past attempts
Fourth and Fifth Visit

- We begin to ask suicide specific questions, starting slowly with:
  - What hurts when there is a suicide?
  - What hurts when there is a suicide?

- Some Responses:
  - What helps:
    - Be with family, visitors, Elder inspiration
    - Traditional foods, Prayer, listening
  - What hurts:
    - Drugs and alcohol
    - Associating shame with it, talking bad
    - Nobody coming around

- Check security cabinets for proper usage
Youth Programs

We focus on messages of Hope, Help, and Strength

- **Sources of Strength**
  - Designed to break the mold of silence and secret keeping among youth when it comes to suicidal behavior and thought
  - Youth are more likely to listen to the messages from their peers

- **American Indian Life Skills Curriculum**
  - American Indian Life Skills Curriculum was introduced to provide self-esteem and life skills.
Sources of Strength Training
Working with Young Peers

Older students stand up and talk with younger students about bullying and their strengths. Interactive games are played prior to identifying younger peer strengths.

Sources of Strength will create change by youth teaching youth on all prevention topics, creating a revolving wheel that will continue with all grades as they grow up into adults.
Yellow Ribbon Campaign

- Founded in Memory of Mike Emme, a young man who committed suicide. His family put words of hope, help and strength on yellow cards.
- Teens share the message.
- TCC Community Health Outreach Program adapted the Yellow Ribbon Campaign for their region.

**Front**

"Choose to Live!"

This yellow ribbon carries a message that there is someone who cares and will help. If you are in need and don’t know how to ask for help, take this card to a counselor, teacher, clergy, health care provider, parent or friend and say: "I NEED TO USE MY YELLOW RIBBON"

**Back**

SAVE A LIFE!

If you have received this card, it is a cry for help:

- Take it seriously. Listen.
- Ask: “Are you having thoughts of suicide?”
- Do not leave the individual alone.
- No secrets. Respond and seek help.
- It is OK to ASK for HELP.
- ALASKA CARELINE Statewide Toll-free at 1-877-266-4357

Choose To Live!

Suicide Prevention

My Name is ____________ and I Pledge to Live.

Paper Chain Pledge to Live
In addition to digital story telling, students receive photo voice to create messages of hope, help, and strength to share with the community.
Communities and the Yellow Ribbon
Sustainability

- Community Wellness Teams are driven and directed by the community, where all decisions are made based on what they want.
  - Meetings will continue because there is a sense of ownership of the program.
- Security cabinets are owned by the tribe (not TCC) for a period of two years at which point ownership passes on to the individual and/or moves on to another family who currently meet the criteria.