



EARLY CHILDHOOD
SUMMIT 2015
LEARN. SHARE. GROW.



TRIBAL GATHERING

Nurturing our Future: Culturally Responsive Services for Young American Indian Children



Hilary N. Weaver, DSW
hweaver@buffalo.edu

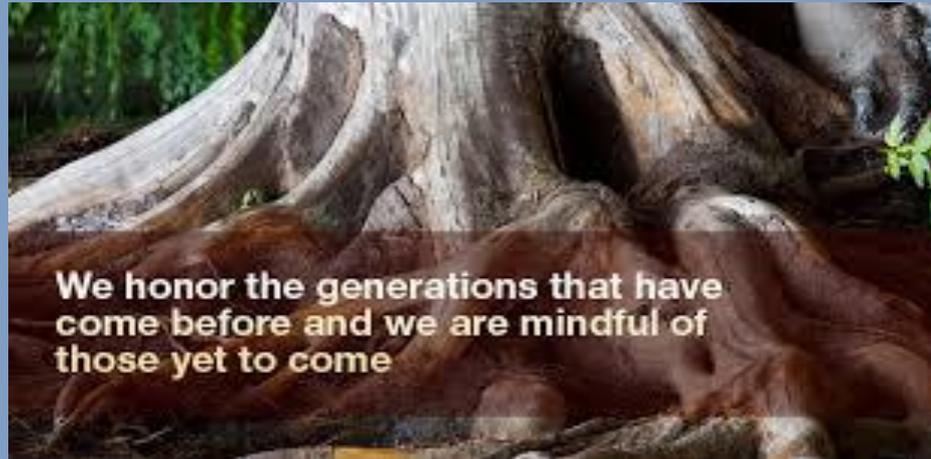
Overview

- Honoring the work of Lanna Flood; A mother, grandmother, & professional
- The importance of incorporating culture, language and community in early childhood initiatives



Overview

- Children are the seeds for our future
- As they mature they become culture carriers and our future leaders
- Seven Generations



Overview

- Crossing boundaries
- We come to this as professionals, community members, & human beings
- Format



Activity:

Reflecting on our own cultural competence

Cultural competency is not a state we achieve;
There is always room for growth, possibility of
missteps/insensitivity

Many ways to define cultural competence but lets
think of it as *iyeska*, crossing the bridge/being the
bridge



Activity



Think about the following:

- What are the main components of cultural competence identified consistently in the literature?
- What strengths do I bring to striving for culturally competent work?
- When have I fallen short or made mistakes?
- How can I receive guidance and support?

Reflections on Cultural Competence

- How I come to this work
- Defining cultural competence: it's all relative (must be context specific)
- The spaces in between (the Transactional Model and reflections on power)



Study: Cultural Competence with Native Americans



- Building on work with Maori in Aotearoa
- Gathered information from Indigenous helping professionals
- Knowledge, skills, values/attitudes associated with cultural competence

Cultural Competence Study

- Demographics of respondents
 - 132 total
 - 47% social workers, 30% nurses, 23% psychologists
 - 68% female
 - 52 nations; (many identified as multi-tribal)
 - 23% Lakota/Dakota, 15% Anishinaabe, 13% Cherokee, 13% Haudenosaunee, 9% Navajo/Dine

Knowledge Themes

- Diversity
- History
- Culture
- Contemporary Realities



Must Understand Diversity

- This theme undergirds all others
- “Too often, professionals either ignore differences or simply treat everyone the same or else apply formulaic treatments by ethnic group (e.g., all Indians are left brained)”
(nurse)



Must Know the History

- The “effects of oppression, colonialism, racism. Know the history of the US extermination and assimilation policies. Know the history of government relations and the creation of dependency. Have knowledge of the amount of loss on all levels that Indian people have experienced” (social worker)

Must Know the History

- “We *all* have ‘psychic’ pain learned from experience and at our parents’ knees [but] some show nothing. Anger, alcohol abuse, depression. I think we have a right to be depressed” (nurse)



Know About Our Cultures

- Communication patterns:
- “We express ourselves in a more quiet manner. It is hard to be aggressive when you have been raised to be passive all your life” (nurse)
- “It takes time for most Native people to trust or befriend non-Natives. Most are private and not very talkative” (nurse)

Know About Our Cultures



- Community & extended family networks, respect for elders, matriarchal structures
- Nurses emphasized specific health beliefs and healing practices
- “The value system the Creator has given Native people, the meaning of personal responsibility and how it plays [an] important part in everything the Creator has given the people. The importance of the People” (nurse)

Know About Our Cultures



- Beliefs, worldviews, values
- “Perspective is not only entirely different from, but often in conflict with [the] European American perspective; e.g., emphasis on balance, responsibility to self and others, traditionally less fearful and avoidant of death and grieving issues, less comfortable with resources, relationships, etc. being disposable” (psychologist)

Know About Our Cultures



- Relevant traditional teachings
- Recognize that families may or may not have received or follow these

Know About Contemporary Realities

- Urban communities
- Tribal politics
- ICWA
- Sovereignty



Skills for Cultural Competence

- General skills
- Containment skills



General Skills

- Communication
- Problem solving
- Strengths perspective
- Empathy
- May need language skills



General Skills

- “Native Americans in my area have trust issues. [It is] important to go slow. Get to know [the] person and share yourself. We always want to know about you and your family; it’s a Native thing” (nurse)



General Skills

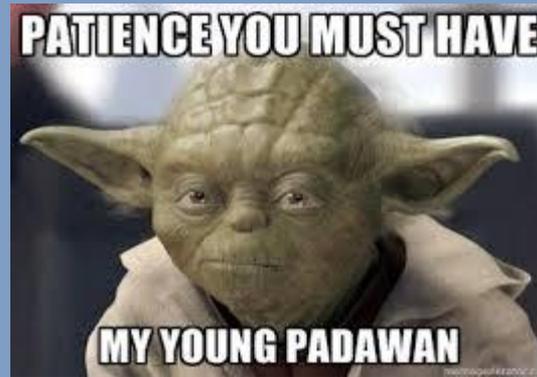
- Nurses emphasized skills for a non-Western cultural context, “be willing to work *within* the cultural context of the tribal culture(s) and not *force* Western views on the person” (nurse)
- “ask appropriate questions about *this* person; traditions vary between tribes and *family* groups” (nurse)

Containment Skills

- Patience
- Tolerance for silence
- Listening
- Making space for culture and traditional ways



Containment Skills



- “Patience, tolerance, to actively listen, to avoid ‘jumping’ in to say what is on one’s mind. To be humorous and to accept being the target of humor” (social worker)
- Patience is required because “generations of oppression... takes time to change” (social worker, ellipses in original)

Containment Skills

- “Avoid dashing to the heart of the complaint. Maybe even having [a] meal with a client and/or family... might be considered unethical in virtually all other settings” (psychologist)



Values and Attitudes Associated with Cultural Competence

- Helper wellness & self awareness (highlighted by social workers)
- Caring & compassion (emphasized by nurses)
- Humility & willingness to learn
- Be respectful, open-minded & non-judgmental
- Social justice (highlighted by social workers)

Helper Wellness & Self Awareness



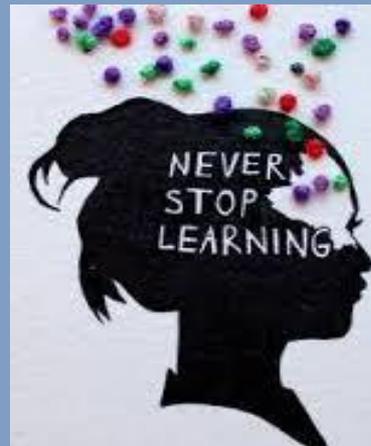
Caring & Compassion

- “A smile with honesty will do wonders”
(nurse)



Humility & Willingness to Learn

- “An attitude of ‘I will continually be educated by others *including* my clients’ is utmost. If one is based in academic arrogance, then they are useless to Native Americans” (social worker)



Respectful, Open-minded, Non-judgmental

- “I think it’s more important for a service provider to be more accepting, appreciative, and respectful of others’ values; appreciate the differences, not define people by them, not judge people or cultures, but learn from, respect, appreciate, and help” (social worker)



Respectful, Open-minded, Non-judgmental

- “Set aside prejudices regarding race, religion, socioeconomic class etc. [One must have an] ability to grasp [a] different worldview [and an] ability to appreciate different value systems even when it clashes with one’s own” (social worker)



Respectful, Open-Minded, Non-judgmental

- “Ability to accept people as they are. Not make your worldview your client’s worldview” (nurse)
- “Respect for traditional lifestyles and beliefs. These are too often dismissed as cute, misguided, or insincere” (nurse)



Social Justice

- Recognize the power and control aspects found in many human service relationships and not replicate these within the context of helping.



Social Justice

- Decolonization & acknowledgement of oppression & unique status of Native Americans.
- Decolonization involves recognizing, then shedding, the mindset associated with colonial processes by which one culture subjugates another and defines it as inferior.

Social Justice

- Dedication to tribal sovereignty & self determination
- Helping professionals must “recognize [their] own class bias and colonial presence” (social worker)



Social Justice



- “Special rights of American Indians [are] not based on race but on laws and special legislation. Services provided to American Indians [should] not [be] viewed as [a] handout or moral obligation—but as payment for lands and rights give up by American Indians” (social worker)

Early Childhood is Crucial

- Many social and health disparities have early roots
- Issues are often noticeable in the early history
Native people with significant problems



Nurturing Resilience

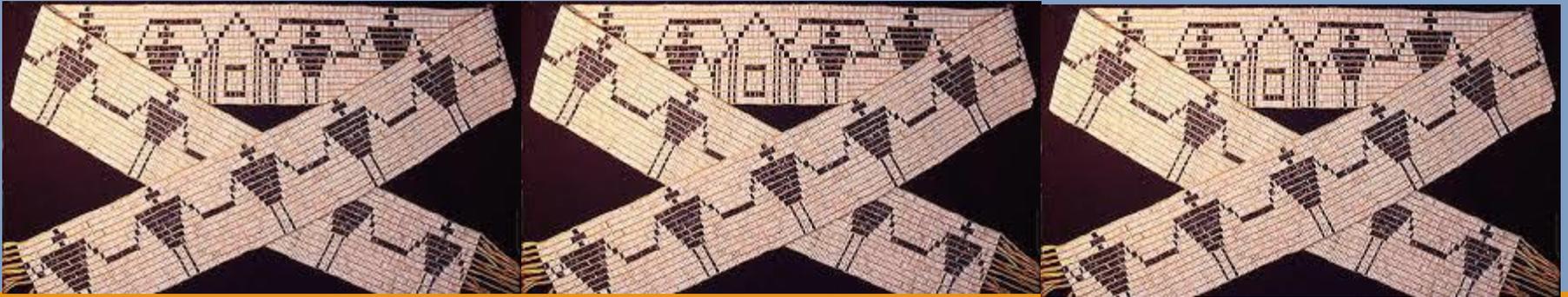
- Resilience and creative approaches to negotiating challenges must be nurtured in order to provide a strong foundation for both individuals and communities.



- The power of culture; original instructions
- The power of language
- Preventing/mending holes in our souls
- Addressing internalized colonization and how we hurt each other

We Must be Attentive

- The impact of Adverse Childhood Events (ACE)
- Intergenerational cycles
- Care for caregivers to support children
- Nurture children's environment to nurture them (community wellness)
- We are all connected and interdependent



We Must be Attentive

- Nurturance and self care
- Our own wellness is important



Successes

- Northeastern child abuse investigations with Clan Mothers
- Gathering of Good Minds initiatives
- The importance of allies

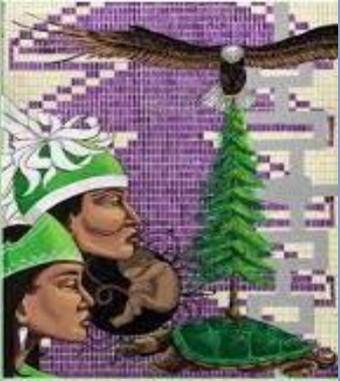


Challenges



- Reservation/urban schisms
- Must fully recognize & be willing to work in context (even when, especially when, this is messy and overwhelming)
 - This means dealing with many variables including intergenerational problems, violence, substance abuse, racism

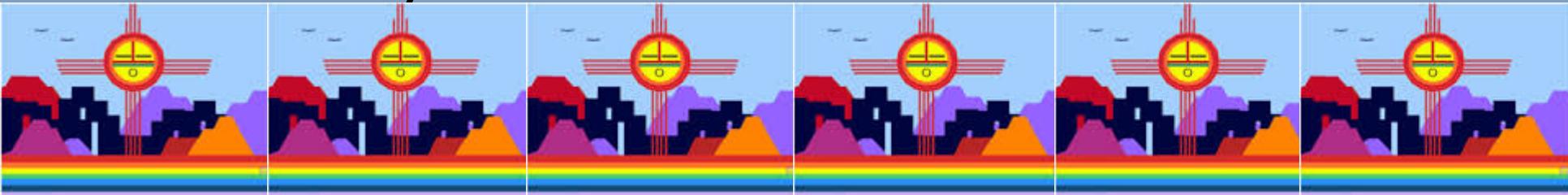
Case Example



- The Healthy Living in Two Worlds program (summer program for urban Native youth ages 9-12 focusing on tobacco, diet & activity)
 - What went right?
 - What went wrong?

Serving American Indian Children and Families

- Some general principles but answers are community specific; must make space for community voices; be attentive to issues of power
- Identify obstructions. With my grant restrictions on food came from my own university not the funder.



Being Proactive for Healthy Youth and Communities

- Fostering cultural competence
- Reducing oppression and discrimination
- Promoting wellbeing



Sharing Perspectives



What have you learned?

How can you apply it in your communities?

Revisiting earlier reflections:

- What strengths do you bring to striving for culturally competent work?
- How can you learn from your mistakes?
- How can you seek guidance and support?

Concluding Thoughts & Questions





EARLY CHILDHOOD
SUMMIT 2015
LEARN. SHARE. GROW.



TRIBAL GATHERING