Cultural Resilience:
An Indigenous Framework applied to the
Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country

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Objectives

By the end of this presentation you will be able to:

• Develop an understanding of how historical trauma influences the health status of tribal communities

• Develop an understanding of how Indigenous resilience can be used as a framework for addressing chronic diseases in tribal communities
Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country program

- Five year grant from the Center of Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)
- Aims to prevent heart disease, diabetes, stroke, and associated risk factors in tribal communities by supporting efforts to implement *community-chosen* and *culturally adapted* policies, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes
- These PSE efforts will target one or more *seven prevention areas*
Seven Prevention Focus Areas

- Reduce the usage of commercial tobacco and decrease exposure to secondhand tobacco smoke;
- Increase access to and consumption of healthy food and beverages including fruits, vegetables, and water;
- Increase promotion of alternatives to less healthy foods and beverages that are in high sodium, sugars and solid fats;
- Increase support for breastfeeding;
- Increase opportunities for physical activity;
- Increase health literacy;
- Strengthen team-based care and community linkages to promote healthy communities
• What is the Peoplehood matrix?
  – Four components that are interwoven and dependent on each other
  – Each component inform cultural protocols and practices, i.e. know the world around us and define reality.
• We are in balance when all working with each other
Process of Colonization

- Colonization is a process creating a relationship
  - Creates the Colonizer and Colonized
    - You can’t have one without the other
  - Our peoplehood is diminished, left unbalanced
  - Creates a negative environment
- In order for colonization to take place
  - One people engages another people
    - This engagement can range from non-violent to violent
      - War
      - Education
- Colonization of knowledge
  - Creating knowledges
    - What is a American Indian in western institutions?
      - Deficient
    - Where does the idea of deficient come from?
      - Academic Institutions
        - Anthropology
        - Science
- Decolonization (Healing) requires both the colonizer and colonized to break the relationship
Process of Colonization

Denial and Withdraw
- Deny any merit & withdraw from cultural practices
- Our way of life, our Indigenous Knowledge, how we know and do things

Destruction, Eradication
- Physically destroy & destroy physical representations
- Ceremonial grounds, tradition gardens, homes, communities, kinship ties,

Denigration, Belittlement, Insult
- Internal Colonial institutions denigrate
- Western education, Schools, Colleges, Anthropology, Science

Surface Accommodation
- What remains is given surface accommodation
- Oral histories, ceremonies, spirituality

Transformation, Exploitation
- What refuses to die is transformed
- Pharmaceuticals, New Agers, Ceremonial practices
Historical Trauma
Defining Historical Trauma

• What is Historical Trauma?
  – Is the **cumulative** emotional and psychological wounding, over the **lifespan** and across **generations**, emanating from massive **group** trauma experiences
  – Grounds current trauma responses in the **collective** traumatic past
  – Focuses on **groups** and not a single event

• Results from:
  – Indigenous peoples subjected to colonialism
  – Genocide
  – War Trauma
  – Internment camps
  – Residential schools
  – Boarding schools
  – Forced adoption programs
  – Bioterrorism (Smallpox)
  – Loss of traditional life-ways
  – Loss of culture
  – Loss of food subsistence
  – Forced Removal from territories
Defining Historical Trauma

• What is Historical Trauma Response?
  – Is a constellation of features perceived as related, or as a reaction, to the Historical Trauma
  – Historical unresolved grief, rapid succession of massive traumatic losses, Native grief became unresolved and impaired
  – Focuses on the collective and on the current and past events

• Examples of response:
  – Higher levels of depression on a community level
  – Various forms of anxiety within community
  – Suicidal thoughts
  – High rates of substance abuse
  – Chronic disease rates are high
  – Adoption of victim identity
  – Hopelessness in community
  – High rates of internal violence and external violence
Cultural Resilience
Process of Decolonization

- Decolonization is a process recreating the relationship
  - Recreates the Colonizer and Colonized to people
    - You can’t have one without the other
  - Our peoplehood is nourished, balance is being restored
  - Creates a positive environment
  - Emphasizes the legitimacy of Indigenous knowledge

- Decolonization (Healing) requires both the colonizer and colonized to break the relationship
Process of Decolonization

Rediscovery and Recovery
- Rediscovery history and recover culture
- Understand why cultural knowledge was taken and the different ways it has been diminished

Mourning
- Lament what has been lost
- Mourn what was lost, ie. language, cultural/ceremonial sites, ceremonies, land, oral history, creation stories, knowledge

Dreaming
- Explore the whole panorama of what could be
- What would it feel like to speak the language fluently, sing songs, tell oral history...

Commitment
- Commit to a single direction in which to move society
- Learn cultural protocols, activities, kinship responsibilities

Action
- Proactive step based on consensus of community
- Practice cultural protocols, adhere to cultural ethics
Healing Historical Trauma

• Resilience
  – The **ability to overcome** stress and **regaining health and well being** after experiencing adversity
  – Outcome of coping skills, social support that promote positive adaptations to extreme circumstances of adversity

• **Survivance**: Native people’s individual and collective abilities to persist despite the enormous adversity imposed by colonialism
  – Moves **beyond victimhood, powerlessness** to being empowered and having agency
Healing Historical Trauma

- Community Resilience
  - Emphasizes how people overcome adversity by drawing from the social and cultural networks and practices of the community
  - Moves beyond the individual to emphasizing the systemic and structural issues that may be causes of or solutions to personal and community suffering
  - Ongoing maintenance of balance for self and community

- Emphasizes:
  - Importance of historical context
  - Extended family roles and relationships
  - Oral traditions
  - The connection to land and the environment
  - Traditional healing practices
  - Spirituality
  - Political activism
Indigenous Framework Approach
Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country

Community Based Action Plan

Conventional Framework
GHWIC
- CHA
- PSE Assessment

Outcomes
- Community gardens
- Clinical linkages
- Healthy food availability

Indigenous Framework Approach
Hozho
- CHA – Health defined by Hozho
- PSE Assessment – Cultural and inherent sovereignty

Outcomes
- Traditional gardening
- Linkages via kinship
- Traditional food availability

Spectrum of activities depends on:
- Conventional Framework
- Indigenous Framework Approach
Good Health and Wellness in Indian Country

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Indigenous Framework Approach
- Hozho
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Outcomes
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Defining culturally adapted and community based depends on:
- Community Health Assessment
- PSE Assessment
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Indigenous Framework Approach

**Accountable:**
Sovereignty, human rights, health, welfare, & cultural integrity

**Responsible to community:**
Collaborative community-based; partnerships based; rooted in a balanced, harmonious, and reciprocal relationship

**Respectful:**
Sovereignty, disparate worldviews, literatures, knowledge, political structures, and languages

**Prioritizes Relationships:**
Protection and strengthening of Indian sovereignty, self-determination, self-sufficiency, and human rights
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Works Cited


Question and Answer
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