

WORKING IN INDIAN COUNTRY



Bonnie Bruerd, DrPH

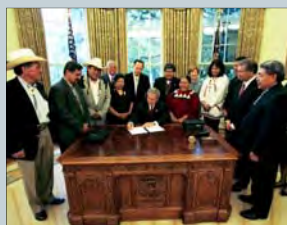
Tribal Sovereignty

- The inherent authority of indigenous tribes to govern themselves within the borders of the U.S.
- This legal and political relationship was established in 1787, based on Article I, Section 8 of the Constitution, and has been given form and substance by numerous treaties, laws, Supreme Court decisions, and Executive Orders.



A Little History

- The provision of health services to members of federally-recognized tribes grew out of the special government-to-government relationship between the federal government and Indian tribes.



Indian Health Service (IHS)

- Officially established in 1955
- Agency under the Department of Health and Human Services
- Serves 2.2 million AI/AN people who live on or near reservations and are members of 573 federally recognized tribes. There are 645 IHS/Tribal facilities (322 dental programs) More than 80% of the total facilities are tribally run

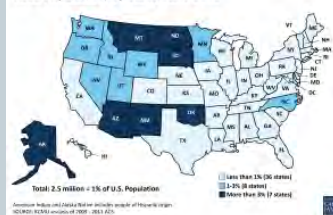


www.ihs.gov



Where do most AI/AN people live?

American Indians and Alaska Natives as a Share of the Total Population, by State, 2009-2011



<http://kff.org/report-section/health-coverage-and-care-for-american-indians-and-alaska-natives-issue-brief/>

Health Disparities

- Leading causes of death are heart disease and cancer
- More than twice the rate of diabetes of US all populations
- Three times chronic liver disease
- Death from unintentional injuries and motor vehicle crashes almost double



Disparities Specific to Children

- Infant Mortality
- SIDs
- Injuries and death from accidents
- Youth Suicide
- Overweight



The Indian Healthcare System

- **Indian Health Service (IHS) direct health care services**
IHS services are administered through a system of 12 Area offices and 168 IHS and tribally managed service units.
- **Tribally-operated health care services**
Today, over half of the IHS appropriation is administered by Tribes through self-determination contracts or self-governance compacts.
- **Urban Indian health care services**
There are 33 urban programs.



Healthcare Providers

- Healthcare providers who work in direct IHS and tribal programs can be employed as officers in the USPHS (uniformed), civil servants, tribal employees, or under contract with the tribes.



The Cross-Cultural Dance



The Culture Card

<http://store.samhsa.gov/product/American-Indian-and-Alaska-Native-Culture-Card/SMA08-4354>



The Culture Card: Some Highlights

- Handhugs instead of handshakes
- Humor (laugh at yourself)
- Respect for elders and veterans
- Strong kinship and extended family systems
- Shared sense of collective community responsibility vs. individual competition



The Cross Cultural Dance...

- Retention and reclamation of traditional language/culture
- Following" instead of directing children. Letting children learn through experience and observation
- Value of Storytelling
- Relationships are everything! Trust is built slowly

To Learn More: Ask Open-Ended Questions

- Tell me about your family's involvement in your tribal culture and traditions.
- Tell me about any cultural or health beliefs or past experiences that will help us work with your family.
- Can you describe the role you play in your child's health (or "your own health")?

Resources



- www.ihs.gov
- Dental Support Centers, located in 8 of 12 IHS Areas
- You can google individual tribes and most have great websites talking about their culture, listing their health programs and usually the name/number for the Health Director and often the full healthcare staff.

Local Community Involvement



- Ask for a copy of the Organizational Chart for the tribe you serve. Meet some leaders.
- Read any tribal newsletters and listen to local radio stations.
- Attend cultural events.
- Try some local foods and maybe even learn how to join in on some circle dances☺

**"People don't
care what you
know until they
know that you
care."**

