SUICIDE PREVENTION IN TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

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OBJECTIVES

• Recognize the role of historical trauma and substance abuse as suicide risk factors.

• Learn how "Culture as Prevention" is utilized as a protective factor within current programs offered by the Phoenix Indian Center.

• Identify best practices when facilitating suicide prevention programs to American Indian youth/families and service providers.
The Phoenix Indian Center is the oldest, continuing American Indian Center in the United States, operating since 1947.

The City of Phoenix, upon the urging of community members, provided a small office building for the Phoenix Indian Center to begin providing assistance to urban American Indian people.

The Center gladly collaborates with other Indian and non-Indian agencies to improve the lifestyle of urban American Indians – we honor these relationships.

The Center serves well over 7,000 individuals annually through direct services; related outreach touches the lives of more than 20,000 each year.
Our mission is to create a sustainable coalition that addresses alcohol, other drug use and suicide by urban Indian youth through foundation of cultures.

Our vision is to increase awareness, prevent the use and reduce the incidence of alcohol, other drug use and suicide by urban Indian youth.

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HISTORICAL TRAUMA
ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCES (ACEs)

Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) are stressful or traumatic events, including abuse and neglect. They may also include household dysfunction such as witnessing domestic violence or growing up with family members who have substance use disorders. ACEs are strongly related to the development and prevalence of a wide range of health problems throughout a person’s lifespan, including those associated with substance misuse. – SAMHSA definition

By including historical trauma with our American Indian population, we can see the challenges we face in prevention.
Brief history of colonization and the major events for tribes specifically in Arizona

• Long Walk – Navajos
• Apache Wars
• Cutting off natural resources (Gila River)

This left a lasting impact as boundaries were set, resources taken away, and traditional ways of living were being replaced.

Segued into the Reservation Period and Boarding schools, etc.
According to the 2010 U.S. Census Bureau, the highest number of tribes (alone) represented in Maricopa County are:

1) Navajo – 21,960
2) Pima – 10,299
3) Yaqui – 5,736
4) Apache – 2,845
5) Tohono O’odham – 2,453
2016 ARIZONA YOUTH SURVEY

- 49,240 students in 8th, 10th and 12th grade in Arizona participated
- 5,006 of those identify as American Indian
  - North - 921
  - North Central - 624
  - Central - 2601
  - Southern – 860

Tribe specific information is not available. Only zip code and regional information was used to develop this presentation.

According to an article published in 2014 by the National Institute on Drug Abuse, “Prevalence rates for AI [American Indian] students* were significantly higher than national rates for nearly all substances, especially for 8th graders.

Rates of marijuana use were very high, with lifetime use higher than 50% for all grade groups. Other findings of interest included higher binge drinking rates and OxyContin® use for AI students”

* On or near reservations
NATIONAL & LOCAL DATA

In Arizona suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for ages 10-34.

According to the 2015 Heath Status Profile of American Indians in Arizona, Death by suicide was highest among males and the between the ages of 15-24.

American Indians have the second highest rate of suicide in Maricopa County at 17.9 per 100,000. Nationally AI youth are 2 times more likely to commit suicide than white youth and 3 times more likely than other minorities.
THOUGHTS OF SUICIDE

In 2015 the Navajo Nation lost nine people to suicide during a period between spring and fall. “One was a counselor...All the rest were 14 to 28 years old” (Horoshko 2016)

Some feelings that are often heard are resounded by White Mountain Apache individuals who had:

“I felt sad and like nobody needed me around. Why was I even put on earth, is there really a reason? I felt like I was lost, like I wasn’t needed anymore, that I didn’t even exist.” (Tingey et al. 2014)

“Our relationship [with mother] is a boat and it’s got holes in it and we’re both trying to haul out the water. The only time we talk is when I’m going to tell her where I am going and who I am going with and that’s it.” (Tingey et al. 2014)
CULTURE IS PREVENTION

Prevention Programs
What we utilize when it comes to our programs:

- Culture as a protective factor
- Barriers in openly discussing suicide (i.e., taboos)
- What type of model is best to prevent suicide (public health, ecological, etc)
- Culturally based programs - and its limitations
- Cultural activities implemented in these types of programs
- Cites Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) as a “promising program”
By incorporating culture into evidence-based practices, we are ensuring our urban American Indian community is informed of local resources, support and overall well-being.
LIVING IN 2 WORLDS

• Project Infinity – drug and alcohol prevention program using American Indian cultural aspects

• Expanded to include the keepin’ it REAL prevention curriculum (kiREAL), a SAMHSA national model program developed at Arizona State University and specifically designed for the diverse populations of the Southwest

• PIC partnered with the Southwest Interdisciplinary Research Center (SIRC) at Arizona State University in a research effort designed to create an adaptation of the model program curriculum that would be specific to Native cultures

• Uses a Community-Based Participatory Research (CBPR) model
Incorporating cultural values and norms which help build the resiliency of students

Cultural Heritage Project at the end of each lesson: “to encourage students to learn more about their ancestry, cultures, traditions, and values.”
PARENTING IN 2 WORLDS

• A companion to L2W

• Gives parents an opportunity to share their own experiences in relation to their children

• Uses an ecological risk and resiliency approach
  • Culture is Prevention
  • Identifying protective factors from their tribe, background, heritage

• Communication competence
  • Putting the knowledge and skills into practice, especially with drugs and alcohol

• Storytelling
  • A way to pass down valuable knowledge; traditionally we learned this way from elders
LESSONS

L2W

• Options & Choices
• Living in 2 Worlds
• Beliefs, Values & Norm
• Avoid
• Risky Business
• Communicating Choices
• Refuse Respectfully
• Storytelling
• Explain
• HLP NTWRKZ (My help networks)
• Leave
• My Place in BOTH Worlds

P2W

• Introduction
• Building Parenting Communities
• Identifying Family Traditions, Norms, & Values
• Knowing Your Child’s World
• Communicating with Your Child
• Receiving and Giving Support
• Guiding Your Child’s Behavior Effectively
• Talking to Teens about Risky Behaviors
• Putting it All Together, Celebration
SUICIDE PREVENTION & INTERVENTION
**safeTALK**  
Suicide Alertness for Everyone  
- Half day workshop  
- For anyone 15 years old and over  
- Objectives:  
  - Recognize persons with thoughts of suicide  
  - Ask directly if they are having thoughts of suicide  
  - Learn and apply the TALK steps:  
    - Tell, Ask, Listen and Keep safe  
    - Connect them with community resources for further help

**ASIST**  
Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training  
- Two day interactive workshop  
- Suicide first aid  
- Prepares caregivers to provide intervention using the Pathway for Assisting Life (PAL) model  
- Understand how beliefs and attitudes can affect suicide interventions  
- Learn to develop a safe plan with the person with thoughts of suicide

LivingWorks
HOW IS CULTURE INCORPORATED?

safeTALK
- First Nations (Canada) version
- Three video vignettes using First Nation people and situations
- Bringing up challenges within American Indian communities as reasons why suicide thoughts and invitations get Missed, Dismissed, or Avoided
- Taboos about death, behavioral health, asking for help
- Using alternative phrases for suicide, such as “killing yourself” or “ending your life”

ASIST
- More room for group discussion
- Confidentiality: more likelihood to share experiences
“HONOR LIFE”

- A series of information cards and posters created by the Urban Indian Coalition of Arizona
  - 4 areas: Suicide Prevention, drug & alcohol prevention, Rx360, and marijuana
- Aimed at American Indian youth
- Outreach materials
THANK YOU!

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