

American Indian/Alaska Native Youth Engagement Strategies for Suicide Prevention

3/11/2020

The following resource was developed based on a request for examples of youth engagement activities for suicide prevention specific to American Indian/Alaska Native communities. It is divided into several lists: culturally adapted youth engagement activities, and culturally adapted manuals and guidelines for suicide prevention, postvention, and response.

Culturally Adapted Youth Engagement Activities and Suicide Prevention Programs

Title	Developer/Author	Description
<p><i>American Indian Life Skills Development</i> - http://uwpress.wisc.edu/books/0129.htm, https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/american-indian-life-skills-developmentzuni-life-skills-development</p>	<p>Teresa D. LaFromboise</p>	<p>American Indian Life Skills Development is a school-based life skills curriculum designed to reduce suicide risk and improve protective factors among American Indian Adolescents 13 to 17 years old. Teachers deliver lessons in collaboration with community resource leaders and representatives of local social service agencies.</p> <p>Anitra Warrior with Morningstar Counseling in Lincoln, NE, indicated that her team is in the process of administering this program with the Omaha Tribe.</p>
<p><i>Family Intervention for Suicide Prevention (FISP)</i> - http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/family-intervention-suicide-prevention-fisp</p>	<p>Joan Rosenbaum Asarnow, Ph.D.</p>	<p>"The Family Intervention for Suicide Prevention (FISP) is a cognitive behavioral family intervention for youth ages 10-18 who are presenting to an emergency department (ED) with suicidal ideation or after a suicide attempt. The main goal of the FISP is to use the ED visit as an opportunity to decrease the short-term risk of repeated suicidal ideation and behavior by building the coping skills of youth and their families, enhancing motivation for follow-up mental health treatment, and improving linkage to outpatient follow-up treatment services after discharge from the ED or hospital."</p>
<p><i>Healing of the Canoe project</i> - https://healingofthecanoe.org/ https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/curricula/healing-of-the-canoe/</p>	<p>Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board's THRIVE project</p>	<p>The primary focus of this project is substance use prevention, but two modules address suicide prevention - <i>Staying Safe: Suicide Prevention</i>, and <i>How Can We Help: Suicide Intervention</i>. Healing of the Canoe team can tailor/adapt and provide training, technical assistance, and implementation support to meet the needs of different tribal communities. The THRIVE project is a Garret Lee Smith Tribal Youth Suicide Prevention and Early Intervention Grant.</p>
<p><i>Hope Squad</i> - https://hopesquad.com/suicide-2/,</p>	<p>HOPE4UTAH</p>	<p>The Hope Squad program is a school-based peer support team that partners with local mental health agencies. Peers select students who are trustworthy and caring individuals to join the Hope Squad. Squad members are trained to watch for at-risk</p>

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<p><i>Adaptation for Native communities -</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x_ZnYJr5aNc&feature=youtu.be</p>		<p>students, provide friendship, identify suicide-warning signs, and seek help from adults.</p> <p>From Susan Gay, Southern Plains Tribal Health Board: For the past three years, Southern Plains Tribal Health Board (SPTHB) has sponsored the Hope Squad program as part of grant that focuses on male mental health and wellbeing. Hope Squad is a peer-to-peer, school-based suicide prevention program. As a tribal-serving organization, SPTHB works with several federally recognized tribes in Oklahoma, Kansas, and Texas. We started Hope Squad in a town with a large American Indian population in Southwest Oklahoma that experienced a suicide contagion among American Indian youth beginning in 2015.</p>
<p><i>Journey to Wellness -</i> http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/journey-wellness</p>	<p>Battle River Treaty 6 Health Centre Inc.</p>	<p>“Journey to Wellness (J2W) is an eight-week wellness program for American Indian youth 12-18 years of age. Participants receive a sequenced set of eight one-hour sessions that are framed positively toward healthy living styles while at the same time exploring risk factors, suicide prevention, and other suicide-related issues. The sessions are activity-oriented and designed to engage youth. Sessions topics include: relationship building, problem solving, self-esteem building, facts and myths of suicide, networking, life planning, emergency planning, and finally, a celebratory event to close out the sessions. J2W is delivered along gender and age group divisions to promote comfort and safety.”</p>
<p><i>Model Adolescent Suicide Prevention Program (MASPP) -</i> http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/model-adolescent-suicide-prevention-program-maspp</p>	<p>North Central Community-Based Services</p>	<p>“MASPP is a public health-oriented suicide prevention and intervention program originally developed for a small American Indian tribe in rural New Mexico to target high rates of suicide among its adolescents and young adults. The goals of the program are to reduce the incidence of adolescent suicides and suicide attempts through community education about suicide and related behavioral issues, such as child abuse and neglect, family violence, trauma, and alcohol and substance abuse. As a community-wide initiative, the MASPP incorporates universal, selective, and indicated interventions and emphasizes community involvement, ownership, and culturally framed public health approaches appropriate for an American Indian population.”</p>
<p><i>Native H.O.P.E. -</i> www.nativeprideus.org</p>	<p>Dr. Clayton Small, Dr. Maha Small</p>	<p>“Native H.O.P.E. is a peer-counseling (youth helping youth) curriculum that focuses on suicide prevention and the related risk factors such as substance abuse, violence, trauma, and depression. This curriculum is a four-day retreat that includes a one-day training of trainers. This is a strengths-based approach that incorporates culture, spirituality, and humor, as well as awareness and education about the warning signs of suicide. The participants develop a strategic action plan of ongoing “booster” prevention activities. This curriculum has been endorsed by Indian Health Services, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and the</p>

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		Department of Justice as an effective culture-based suicide prevention program. This is also an effective approach to use with adults.”
<i>One Mind Youth Movement</i> - https://www.omym.org/	Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe	“The One Mind Youth Movement or OMYM is a group of youth leaders organizing out of the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe in South Dakota. It is a common belief among our people that the children literally are the future. They are the sacred seeds of our ancestors, inherently instilled with the values passed down through generations. We have to water them and they will blossom into the sacred flowers of life they are.”
<i>Peer Helping – described in Aboriginal Youth: A Manual of Promising Suicide Prevention Strategies</i> - https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/aboriginal-youth-manual-promising-suicide-prevention-strategies	Jennifer White and Nadine Jodoin, Centre for Suicide Prevention, Canadian Mental Health Association	“Peer helping programs select and train a number of children and adolescents to become “helpers” for other youth within their own peer groups.” The manual includes a description of the practice, evidence base for it, general guidelines, training needed to implement the practice, how to evaluate its effects, example programs, and references.”
<i>Project Venture</i> - https://projectventure.org/	National Indian Youth Leadership Project	“Project Venture is a Positive Youth Development approach, with a unique culturally-based group development process and does not focus on deficits, but on the positive behaviors and healthy lifestyles that we want young people to choose. Project Venture is a year long sequence of challenges and growth opportunities, implemented in-school, out of school, weekends, multi-day trips and summer camps. NIYLP has a curriculum, with lesson plans and learning outcomes identified.”
<i>Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach to Building Life Skills</i> - http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/reconnecting-youth-peer-group-approach-building-life-skills	Reconnecting Youth Inc.	“Reconnecting Youth: A Peer Group Approach to Building Life Skills (RY) is a school-based prevention program for students ages 14-19 years that teaches skills to build resiliency against risk factors and control early signs of substance abuse and emotional distress. RY targets youth who demonstrate poor school achievement and high potential for school dropout. Eligible students must have either (1) fewer than the average number of credits earned for all students in their grade level at their school, high absenteeism, and a significant drop in grades during the prior semester or (2) a record of dropping out of school. Potential participants are identified using a school's computer records or are referred by school personnel if they show signs of any of the above risk factors. Eligible students may show signs of multiple problem behaviors, such as substance abuse, aggression, depression, or suicidal ideation.”
<i>Sources of Strength</i> - https://sourcesofstrength.org/	Sources of Strength	“Sources of Strength is a strength-based comprehensive wellness program that focuses on suicide prevention but impacts other issues such as substance abuse and violence. The program is based on a relational connections model that uses teams of peer leaders mentored by adult advisors to change peer social norms about help seeking and encourages students to individually assess and develop strengths in their life. Sources of Strength is most often implemented as a school-based program in middle school, high school, or college. However Sources of Strength is also often used

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		in community, faith-based, and cultural settings. It promotes and focuses on connectivity, school bonding, peer-adult partnerships, and help seeking behaviors.”
<i>Uniting Our Nations - Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth</i> - https://youthrelationships.org/uniting-our-nations	The Fourth R, Centre for School Mental Health, Western University in London, Canada	The Uniting Our Nations Peer Mentoring Program for Indigenous Youth connects secondary school students to meet weekly with the primary goal of developing a positive relationship in a culturally safe and relevant environment. The program includes activities with peer mentors and mentees only, small groups, or as part of the larger group. Students engage in a range of activities together, sometimes with a cultural focus, and other times with general activities enjoyed by youth in this age group.”
<i>WeMatter Campaign</i> - https://wemattercampaign.org/	Kelvin and Tunchai Redvers, and sponsored by other partners including the Canadian government.	“We Matter is an Indigenous youth-led and nationally registered organization dedicated to Indigenous youth support, hope and life promotion. Our work started with the We Matter Campaign – a national multi-media campaign in which Indigenous role models, youth, and community members from across Canada submit short video, written and artistic messages sharing their own experiences of overcoming hardships, and communicating with Indigenous youth that no matter how hopeless life can feel, there is always a way forward.” https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mcTJoTyc2yM
<i>WeRNative</i> - https://www.wernative.org/	<i>We R Native is housed at the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board.</i>	“We are a comprehensive health resource for Native youth, by Native youth, providing content and stories about the topics that matter most to them. We strive to promote holistic health and positive growth in our local communities and nation at large. “
<i>Youth Leadership</i> - described in <i>Aboriginal Youth: A Manual of Promising Suicide Prevention Strategies</i> - - https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/aboriginal-youth-manual-promising-suicide-prevention-strategies	Jennifer White and Nadine Jodoin, Centre for Suicide Prevention, Canadian Mental Health Association	“The strategy of youth leadership involves recruiting and training a number of young people to become youth leaders within their own communities. The approach aims to empower young people to become active participants in decisions that affect them as well as effectively address the problems faced by their peers in their respective communities.” The manual includes a description of the practice, evidence base for it, general guidelines, training needed to implement the practice, how to evaluate its effects, example programs, and references.”

Culturally Adapted Manuals and Guidelines for Suicide Prevention, Postvention, and Response

Title	Developer/ Author	Description
<p><i>AI/AN Zero Suicide Guide</i> - http://zerosuicide.edc.org/toolkit/indian-country</p>	Zero Suicide	Zero Suicide framework adapted for AI/AN.
<p><i>Ensuring the Seventh Generation: A Youth Suicide Prevention Toolkit For Tribal Child Welfare Programs</i> - https://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/ensuring-seventh-generation-youth-suicide-prevention-toolkit-tribal-child-welfare</p>	The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA)	This toolkit is intended for tribal child welfare workers and care providers. It discusses: child and youth suicide risk factors; specific risk factors associated with children served in child welfare; warning signs for caseworkers and care providers to be alert to; suicide prevention and intervention strategies that can be applied in child welfare agencies; and mobilization of support networks around particular children.
<p><i>Indian Country Child Trauma Center</i> - http://www.icctc.org/</p>	University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center in the Center on Child Abuse and Neglect	The Indian Country Child Trauma Center (ICCTC) was established to develop trauma-related treatment protocols, outreach materials, and service delivery guidelines specifically designed for AI/AN children and their families, originally funded by SAMHSA. <i>Honoring Children, Mending the Circle</i> curriculum, which is the cultural enhancement of Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavioral Therapy. <i>Honoring Children, Honoring the Future</i> - American Indian Life Skills Development Curriculum, a suicide prevention curriculum for middle and high school students. Recognized in 2005 as a SAMHSA program of excellence. ICCTC has assisted the author to modify the curriculum for middle schools students and Boys and Girls Clubs in Indian Country.
<p><i>Mental Health Evidence-Based Practices for American Indian and Alaska Native Schools and Communities</i> - https://mhffcnetwork.org/centers/national-american-indian-and-alaska-native-mhffc/product/mental-health-evidence-based</p>	National American Indian and Alaska Native MHTTC	This environmental scan is a repository of evidence-based mental health programs and practices found to be effective with American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) school-aged children and youth who experience adverse childhood experiences, including violence and trauma, that contribute to mental health problems. It was created in an effort to provide a repository that could be used by communities who serve Native school-age children, as well as to avoid the duplication of efforts. Most of these resources address suicide prevention.
<p><i>Mental Health in our Native American Communities</i> Volume 1 Issue 3 Spring 2020 - https://mhffcnetwork.org/centers/national-american-indian-and-alaska-native-</p>	National American Indian and Alaska Native MHTTC	<i>Volume 1, Issue 3</i> of this newsletter, <i>Mental Health in our Native American Communities</i> for Spring 2020, is entitled, "Suicide, Trauma, and Finding a Way to Heal." The newsletter includes several lists of manual and resources designed for or adapted to Native communities.

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mhttp://product/mental-health-our-native-0		
<i>Preventing and Responding to Suicide Clusters in American Indian and Alaska Native Communities</i> - https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma16-4969.pdf	SAMHSA	Background information based on research, media, and surveillance data regarding suicide rates in the affected communities; clusters and contagion; risk and protective factors in tribal communities; and contextual information about the regions where the cluster events occurred. Findings related to the impact of clusters on individuals and communities, community response and recovery, suicide prevention strategies, and existing and needed community resources; and a discussion of the findings as they relate to preventing and responding to suicide clusters in AI/AN communities.
<i>SPRC's AI/AN Settings webpages</i> – http://www.sprc.org/settings/ain	SPRC	Webpages with listings of AI/AN resources
<i>Suicide and Self-Injury Surveillance Systems for Native Communities</i> - http://caih.jhu.edu/programs/surveillance-systems/	White Mountain Apache Tribe, Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health	The White Mountain Apache Tribe passed a tribal law mandating that any suicidal incident occurring on tribal lands be recorded into a tribal suicide surveillance system. Johns Hopkins Center for American Indian Health worked with the tribe to develop data collection forms, design a computerized data gathering system, and employ and train the Apache Suicide Prevention Team (ASPT). The ASPT is responsible for tracking and maintaining the award-winning surveillance system for the tribe. Once a form is collected, a member of the ASPT visits the individual's home/school/other known location to conduct a brief interview to determine if the event occurred as it was reported and collect details of the event from the individual.
<i>Suicide Clusters within American Indian and Alaska Native Communities: A Review of the Literature and Recommendations</i> - https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma17-5050.pdf	SAMHSA	The purpose of this report is to examine what is known about suicide clusters within American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) populations and to use that information to develop recommendations for stakeholders working to prevent and contain suicide clusters within AI/AN communities.
<i>To Live to See the Great Day that Dawns - Preventing Suicide by American Indian and Alaska Native Youth and Young Adults</i> - https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/sma10-4480.pdf	SAMHSA	"Guide that lays the groundwork for comprehensive prevention planning, with prevention broadly defined."
<i>Transforming Tribal Communities: Indigenous Perspectives on Suicide</i>	SPRC	"Culturally relevant suicide prevention strategies that are endorsed by community members can lead to long-lasting change. The following six-to-eight-minute webinar clips, adapted from SPRC's Tribal Community of Learning Series, feature expert

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<p><i>Prevention -</i> http://www.sprc.org/resources-programs/transforming-tribal-communities-indigenous-perspectives-suicide-prevention</p>		<p>advice on addressing the root causes of mental health issues and suicide in American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities by drawing on community strengths.”</p>
<p>[not specific to AI/AN Communities] <i>Recommendations for a Community Plan for the Prevention and Containment of Suicide Clusters -</i> https://wonder.cdc.gov/wonder/PrevGuid/p0000214/p0000214.asp</p>	<p>CDC</p>	<p>“The recommendations contained in this report were developed to assist community leaders in public health, mental health, education, and other fields to develop a community response plan for suicide clusters or for situations that might develop into suicide clusters.”</p>
<p>[not specific to AI/AN Communities] <i>Responding to Grief, Trauma, and Distress After a Suicide: U.S. National Guidelines -</i> http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/migrate/library/RespondingAfterSuicideNationalGuidelines.pdf</p>	<p>Action Alliance for Suicide Prevention</p>	<p>“The guidelines provide a unified, far-reaching blueprint for the development of suicide postvention at all levels of U.S. society. The overarching goal is to reduce the deleterious effects of exposure to suicide and facilitate the process of healing from a suicide loss. The guidelines call for an integrated and compassionate community response to deaths by suicide in every kind of community in the country.”</p>
<p>[not specific to AI/AN Communities] <i>Suicide Attempts Among Latina Adolescents: The State of Knowledge -</i> https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Anh3iTPY_jg</p>	<p>National Hispanic and Latino MHTTC</p>	<p>Webinar presented By Dr. Luis Zayas on February 6, 2020.</p>

Other Considerations

- It would be important to include specific postvention and cluster response resources; during an active crisis with recent losses, it’s not necessarily the time for more general prevention activities, and kids need to be supported in grieving and helped to process any suicidal thoughts of their own.
- Many Omaha tribal members share the Native American Church belief. The Native American Church (NAC) is a very private group, only accessed by tribal members, but the local NAC has or will have special prayer meetings. This is not a resource that mainstream

organizations can access, but is background information on a resource that Omaha tribal members have likely accessed already.
<https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&p=native+american+church+and+omaha#id=1&vid=f51081346a517284e4cc1b3bb78fe4e4&action=click>

- SAMHSA funds a tribal System of Care in the state of Nebraska. Called the Santee Sioux Society of Care, and based in Lincoln (Nebraska), the Society of Care serves all the tribes in Nebraska. See: <https://www.societyofcare.org/> Greg Donovan is the project director gdonovan@societyofcare.org.
- Although engaging youth in suicide prevention is important, it seems vital to begin with efforts to facilitate healthy grieving. These young people have recently experienced the traumatic loss of their friends and relatives, and the life threatening health event of others who have survived their attempts. Sometimes when we rush in with prevention programs, the implied message received by the survivors we are training becomes “if YOU would have done things differently, they would still be alive” and further complicates the grieving process. Fostering healing and strengthening community connectedness could be a strong start to preventing youth suicide in this community. Then bringing them evidence-based trainings and practices will be extremely empowering.
- Community Strategies - Team up outside professionals with gatekeepers in the community (those that the youth know and are comfortable with, i.e. put a behavioral health aid in the basketball coach’s office). Reach out to youth on their territory, don’t expect them to come to you for help (Youth groups, church events, sports events, cultural events). Listen to what the youth are saying and pay attention to how they are responding to offers of help. Support youth in creating a youth led organization (i.e. Students against destructive decisions) and let them come up with activities that promote well-being. An example for a club activity is cover up bathroom mirrors at the school on Fridays to promote seeing inside beauty.

Contributors

Amy Painter, Ángel D. S. Casillas Carmona, Anitra Warrior, Ponca, Anne Helene Skinstad, Bryan Hartzler, Chris Mason, Christina Borbely, David Terry, Dennis Donovan, Elly Stout, Felicia Benson, Heather Gotham, Heliana Ramirez, Holly Echo-Hawk, Pawnee, James Glenn, Johnna James, Chickasaw, Laura Gold, LaVonne Fox, Leora Wolf-Prusan, Maureen Nichols, Marie Cox, Megan Dotson, Megan Hawkes, Michelle Monk, Natasha Peterson, Raymond Daw, Navajo Nation, Diné, Ryan Sanchez, Sarah Nielsen, Sean Bear 1st, Meskwaki, Shelby Rowe, Chickasaw Nation, Stefanie Winfield, Steve Adelsheim, Suganya Sockalingham, Susan Gay, Thomasine Heitkamp, Valerie Gold.

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