Identifying Success in Native American Youth: Building Practice-Based Evidence from the Ground Up

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Presentation Overview

- Share information about the organizations involved in the project
- Share information about practice-based evidence
- Share information about the relational worldview model
- Share information about what we learned about youth success
- Share information about next steps in the project
- Gain participants’ perspectives and consult with participants about next steps in the project.
Project Overview

- Five-year collaborative effort between the Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA), National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA), and the Research and Training Center on Family Support and Children’s Mental Health (RTC)

- Purpose – to explore strategies for documenting the effectiveness of NAYA’s services
  - 2005-2006 definition of youth success
National Indian Child Welfare Association

Mission

NICWA is dedicated to the well-being of all American Indian children and families.
What is NICWA?

- An Indian-operated, private non-profit, membership organization located in Portland, OR since 1983
- An advocate for the proper implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act
- The nation’s leading American Indian resource for child welfare:
  - Information and Training
  - Community Development
  - Public Policy Analysis
  - Research and Evaluation
Mission

The RTC is dedicated to promoting the well-being and full community participation of children, youth and families affected by mental health difficulties. Research is designed to increase knowledge of supports, services and policies that:

- Build on family strengths;
- Are community based, family driven, and youth guided;
- Promote cultural competence; and
- Are based on evidence of effectiveness.
Native American Youth & Family Center

Our Mission

...to enhance the diverse strengths of our youth and families in partnership with the community through cultural identity and education.
Cultural Arts and Sports Program
Educational Programs

Middle School Program
Tutoring Center
High School Program
High School Summer Institute
Spring, Summer, & Winter Camps
Youth and Family Services

Foster Care Program
Pathways
Independent Living Program
Healing Circle
Housing & Employment Programs
Generations Project
Gang Prevention Program
NAYA Holistic Service Delivery Model

- NAYA Family Center provides services that are intended to restore balance and promote harmony in the lives of Native children and families.

- NAYA Family Center uses a holistic approach to meeting the needs of children and families.

- By providing holistic services, NAYA Family Center hopes to make a positive difference in multiple areas of an individual’s life.
Worldview

. . . A culture’s worldview is the lens through which they learn how to nurture, protect, and dream for future generations

- Iris Heavy Runner, 2002
Relational Worldview Model

Context
Mind
Spirit
Body

BALANCE
Relational Worldview Model

Context:
- Social History
- Economics
- Work/School
- Family/Peers
- Community
- Culture
- Protecting Factors
- Negative Forces
- Gifts & Intuition
- Grace
- Dreams, Symbols, & Stories
- Spiritual Practices or Teachings

Mind:
- Knowledge/Judgment
- Thinking Process
- Self Esteem
- Memories
- Experiences
- Emotions
- Chemistry
- Genetics
- Nutrition
- Health Status
- Sleep/Rest State
- Substance Use/Abuse

Spirit:

Body:
NAYA Family Center’s Challenge

- We need a way to show that NAYA Family Center services helping Native children and families
- Urgency because of state funding requirements for evidence-based practices
Oregon’s Senate Bill 267

- Requires crime prevention and some mental health programs to be evidence-based
- Evidence-based programs are based on research principles and are cost effective
- Services that agencies provide directly or fund through other agencies
- Funding of evidence-based programs
Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

- **Definition**
  Knowledge obtained from research about the impact of services.

- **Advantages**
  - EBP is one way of increasing the likelihood that services will be effective;
  - EBP should be cost effective – services that are provided are known to be those that work
Evidence-Based Practice (EBP)

Concerns

- EBP often do not reflect the complicated lives and needs of many children and families;
- The determination of “evidence” is narrow and focuses on linear cause-effect relationships;
- Most EBPs exclude newly developed interventions, traditional healing practices, and therapies developed by specific cultural groups;
- EBPs often neglect the cultural and contextual influences on children and families;
- There is often a lack of attention to family choice.
Practice-Based Evidence (PBE)

- **Definition**
  PBE is information gathered from service providers, families, and youth about programs that reflect our values and get good results.

- **Advantages**
  - Information about desired goals and outcomes come directly from the people receiving services;
  - Cultural factors can be explicitly included in outcomes and interventions;
  - Effectiveness can then be measured according to these outcomes.
Practice-Based Evidence (PBE)

- **Concerns**

  Establishing evidence of effectiveness is challenging because it must be accepted as legitimate by
  - the cultural community that is involved,
  - the scientific community, and
  - funding sources
Conducting Research In Indian Country

“Native people in the United States are among the most researched people in the world. Outsiders have studied everything – our religions, our hunting practices, our sexual lives, and our health and education. Very little of that research has benefited us” (Crazy Bull, 1997, p.1)
Project Goals

To develop ways to evaluate culturally specific services that fit our community.

To develop participatory practice-based evidence research strategies that could be applied in other settings.
Defining Youth Success

Focus groups with nine diverse stakeholder groups to learn about the outcomes that people value

- middle school youth
- high school youth
- Pathways youth
- family members
- elders
- community partners
- NAYA program managers, staff, and board members
What We Did

- Individual recruitment of youth, families, elders, and community partners
- Human subjects approval and consent process
- Food, transportation, and meeting space
- Facilitator and note taker
- Child care
- Participant review of notes
What We Asked

- What does success look like for Native American youth?
- What is necessary to help support youth in achieving success in their lives?
- What are the conditions that hinder a youth’s progress toward success?
- How do NAYA Family Center services contribute to a youth’s success?
- Are there other things that NAYA could be doing that would be helpful?
- Is there anything else you would like to add that we have not talked about?
Relational Worldview Model
Analytic Framework

Context
Mind
Spirit
Body

BALANCE
What We Learned About Youth Success

- Connecting with Resources
- Healthy Relationships
  - Service
  - Safety
- Balance
  - Connections to Native Ancestry
  - Spiritual Understanding & Practices
  - Knowledge/Skills in Traditional Cultural Practices
- Context
- Mind
  - Coping Capacities-Emotional Health
  - Focus & Determination
- Personal Capacities
  - Personal Qualities
  - Education
  - Employment
  - Cultural Knowledge
  - Identity
- Body
  - Finances
- Healthy Lifestyle
  - Fitness
  - Health Care
  - Housing
Example of Youth Success - Context

Healthy Relationships
Not being involved in a gang
Involved in positive groups
Do not succumb to peer pressure
Showing care for others
Finding constructive, non-violent ways to solve problems
Able to listen to other people’s opinions
Conflict resolution skills
Making parents proud of their children
Know lots of people
Example of Youth Success - Mind

Personal Capacities
Honoring boundaries
Healthy self-expression
Willingness to change & acceptance of what can’t change
Celebrating their own success
Finding constructive, non-violent ways to solve problems
Being able to de-escalate
Example of Youth Success - Body

Healthy Lifestyle
Recognize wisdom to care for self & use knowledge (e.g., healthcare, sexuality)
Use positive methods of stress relief
Drug/alcohol/tobacco free lifestyle
Healthy lifestyle – physical well-being & prevention
Being okay with your body & looking good
Not putting things into one’s body that would make a person unhealthy – this comes from teachings when children are youth – if a youth comes from a home without these teachings somebody should teach them
Example of Youth Success - Spirit

Balance

7 ways of walking, health, family, generations, silence, joy, generosity, honoring the four directions, & compassion.

Balance of individuality & cultural obligations

Walking in both worlds

Balancing traditional culture & general society

Having a focus and/or vision - finding a connection with who you are

Understanding of spirituality for physical well-being
Appreciation to Project Participants

We wish to thank our project collaborators:

- Terry Cross, NICWA
- Nichole Maher, NAYA Family Center
- Pauline Jivanjee, RTC
- Elders, family members, youth, NAYA staff and program managers, board members, and community partners who participated in focus groups and follow-up meetings
- Members of our advisory group
Questions for Discussion

- Are there any surprises in the findings that were presented?
- Is there anything missing from the findings?
- Is there anything else that you would like to know about this project?
- In what ways do these findings relate to your experiences in thinking about outcomes for youth services?
- Do you have any advice for us as we move into the next stage of our research process to measure outcomes?
Next Steps

- Combine outcomes with responses to other focus group questions
  - Necessary supports for youth success
  - Barriers to success
  - Programming needs for youth

- Convene a national project advisory committee
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