

Narrative Medicine

Exploring Patient Experiences of Diabetes
Through Zines and Storytelling



Paul Ryland, MSW Candidate

**Who am I?
Where do I come from?
Where am I going?
Why am I here?**

Murray Sinclair (Ojibwe)

Agenda

Orienting to the Project

Storytelling & Narrative Medicine

Zines

Storytelling & Diabetes

Future of the program

Connection to your communities

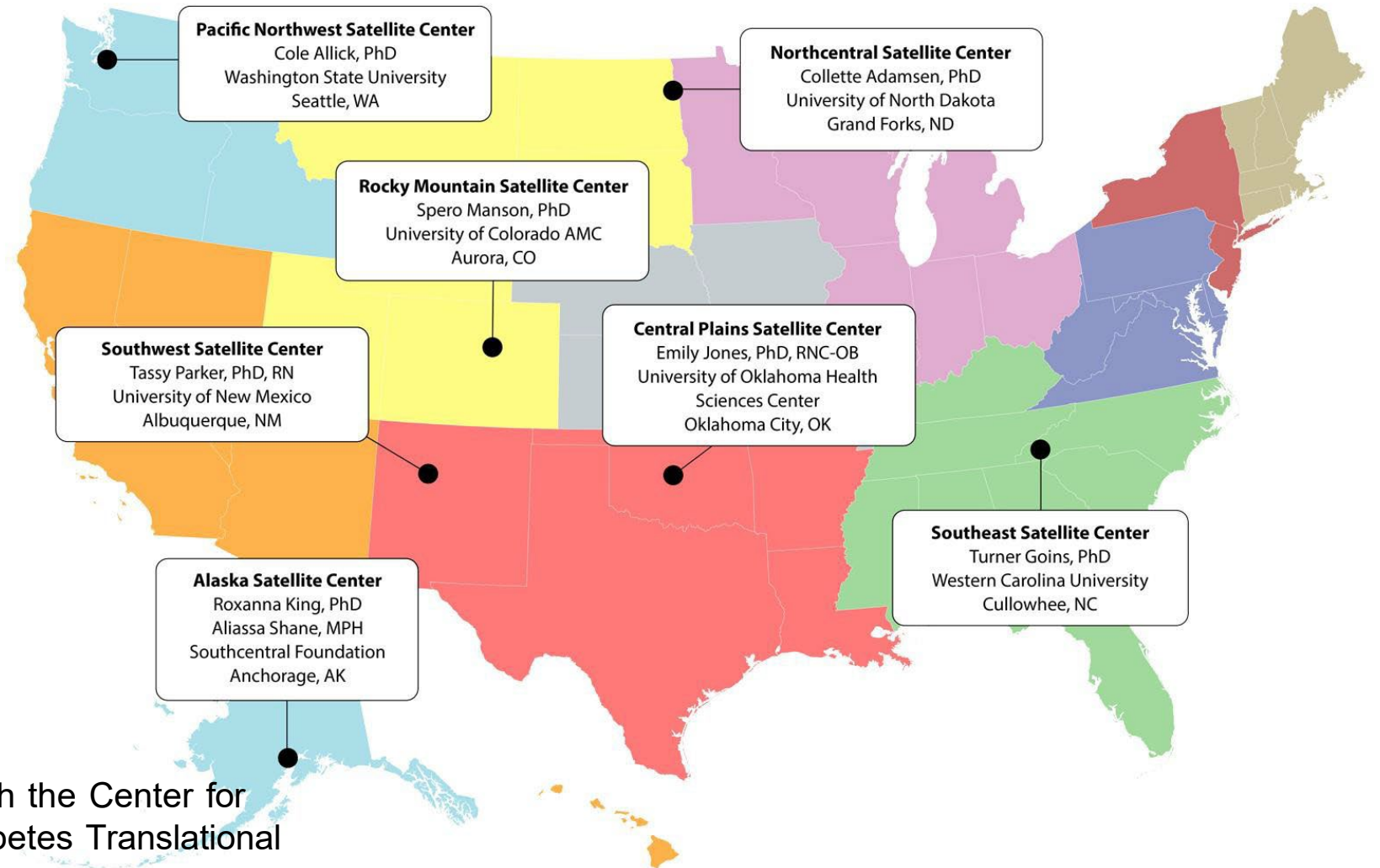
Q & A

**What are the ways
(ritual, ceremony,
customs) you open
groups in your
work or practice?**

*Drop your answers
in the chat!*

CENTER FOR AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE DIABETES TRANSLATION RESEARCH (CAIANDTR)

"Although much prior work has focused on knowledge exchange in health provider systems, we argue that effective knowledge exchange must engage communities as well as the scientific disciplines..."



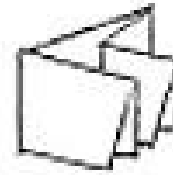
Funded by NIH (P30 DK092923) through the Center for American Indian and Alaska Native Diabetes Translational Research at the CO School of Public Health



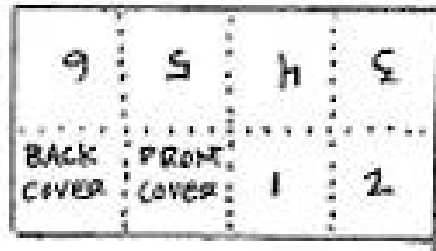
fold



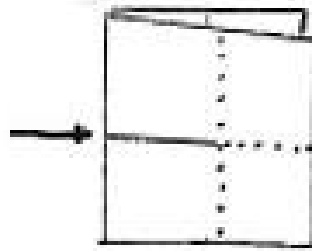
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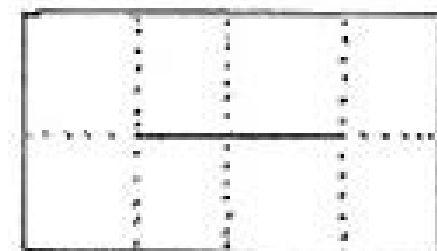
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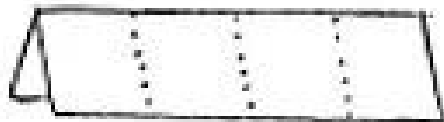
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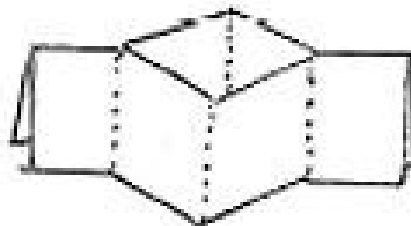
cut at the arrow...



...so there's a slit in the middle



fold



pop it out



fold

Step 1: Draw a spiral



~~Step 1: Draw a spiral~~

Step 2: Open to the first two pages of your zine. Write or draw a story about **MY EARLIEST MEMORY OF EXERCISE**



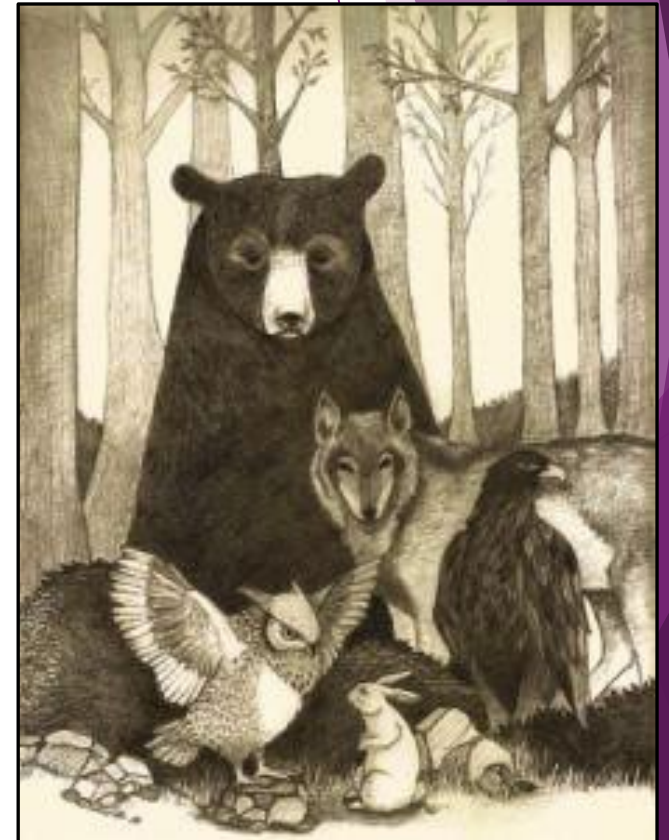
Storytelling Tradition in Native America

- ▶ Rich tradition of storytelling
- ▶ Primary means of preserving culture, teaching lessons, and transmitting knowledge across generations
- ▶ Encompass myths, legends, folktales, and historical accounts, serving an important role in shaping cultural identity and understanding



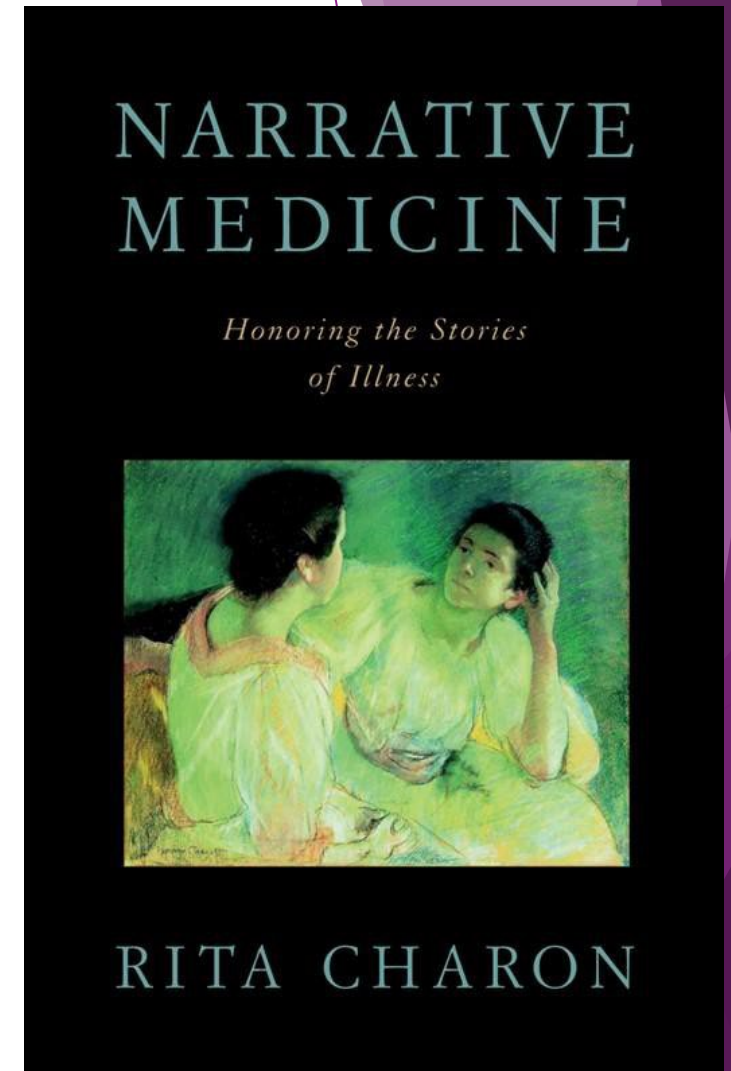
Storytelling Tradition in Native America

- ▶ Storytellers are highly respected community members who are usually Elders
- ▶ Keepers of knowledge and cultural memory, entrusted with the responsibility of preserving and sharing the stories that define their communities



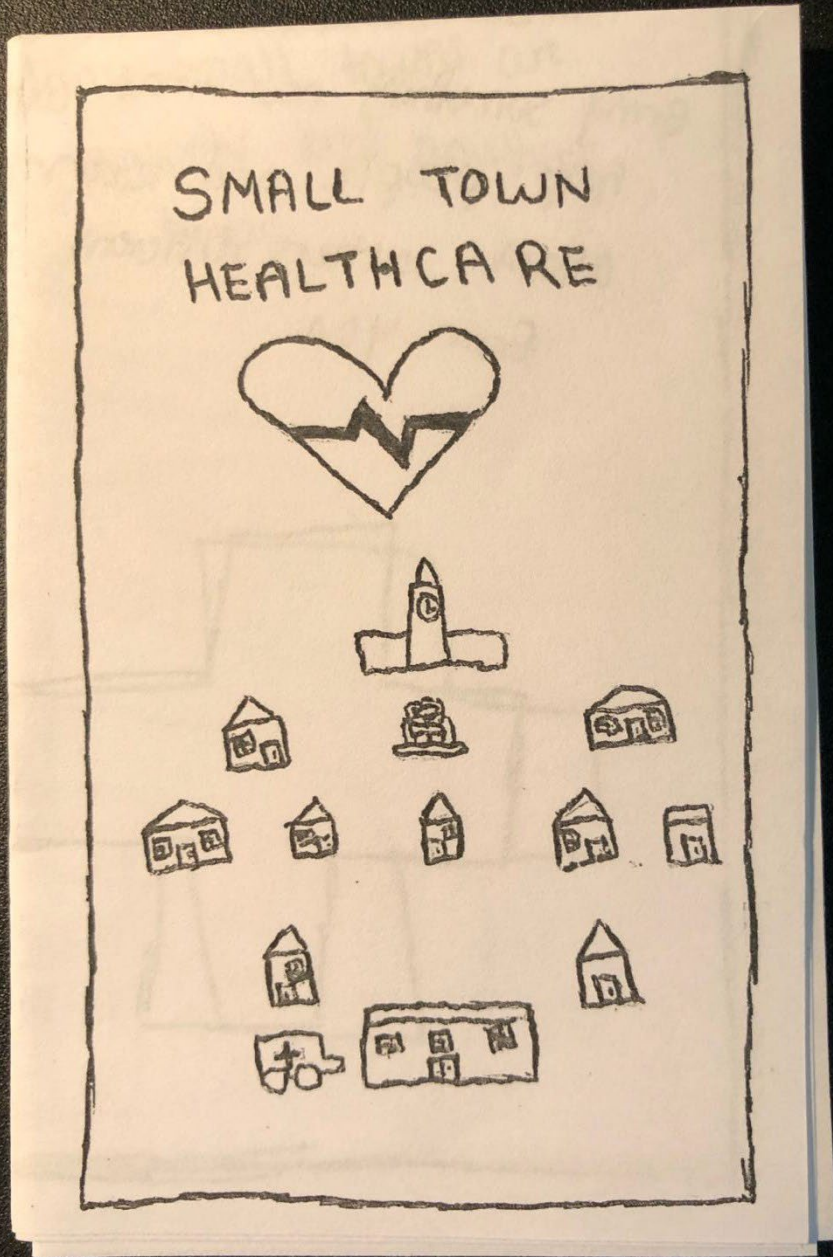
Narrative Medicine

- ▶ Helps patients and health professionals to tell and listen to the complex and unique stories of illness
- ▶ Emphasizes that patients are more than their symptoms, but individuals with unique stories of illness and suffering
- ▶ Highlights the importance of understanding the patient's illness narrative with the goal to improve health care



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4 Generations



Our journey with Diabetes



Wait, What's a Zine?

A small, self-published independent work of text and images, often photocopied and distributed locally or to a niche audience

- Rooted in DIY, feminist, and punk culture
- Often centers marginalized voices and topics
- Creates agency



**Where have you
used, or seen
storytelling used,
in your practice?**

*Drop your answers
in the chat!*

Open to the third and fourth pages of your zine. Write or draw a story about
**THINGS PEOPLE GET
WRONG ABOUT DIABETES**



Indigenous ways of knowing as a model for health education

- Centering cultural values and community voice means knowledge transfer happens between community members – not to community members
- Narrative-based approaches are relational and iterative
- Indigenous research approaches prioritize knowledge dissemination methods that benefit the community

Why does storytelling belong in Native health education?

- Storytelling, literature, and art help address historic, multigenerational grief and trauma linked to diabetes
- Diabetes effects on Native individuals are not easily explained by the symptomology of the individual alone.
- Need for reflective, learner-as-educator models of health education

STORYTELLING & DIABETES

Summer 2024

Summer 2025





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STORYTELLING & DIABETES

An intergenerational
storytelling program for the
Eastern Band of Cherokee
Indians

Purpose: Intergenerational storytelling program where participants share experiences of living with diabetes and create handmade zines for community dissemination

Goals: Foster reflection, connection, knowledge, and agency while supporting culturally grounded health education

Approach: Participant empowerment program. Narrative-, art-, group-, and intergenerational-based.

Storytelling & Diabetes

Format: Five semi-structured 2-hour sessions including story circles, art/storytelling activities, zine education, feedback discussions, and studio time

Implementation: Supported by a facilitator guide and slide deck, and designed as a scalable program model

2025 Pilot: 15 EBCI participants (8 adults with diabetes + intergenerational partners) produced 8 unique zines



WZPPoDy

NEW
Storytelling
Activity!

STORYTELLING & DIABETES

Eligible to
receive up to
\$250!

WHO: Current and former “What Can I Eat” participants, paired with a family member or friend from a different generation (younger or older).

WHAT: An intergenerational storytelling activity about diabetes. Participants will learn to create “zines,” or small handmade books, with the help of an art educator and Indigenous storytelling group

WHEN: Thursdays 3:30–5:30, August 28 – September 25 (5 sessions total)

WHERE: Cherokee Indian Hospital

For more information or to express interest,
email or call/text Turner Goins:

rtgoins@wcu.edu
(828) 400 - 4281

- Program size capped at the first 7 people to respond
- No prior experience needed
- Refreshments provided

Recruitment

- Conducted in partnership with Cherokee Indian Hospital Nutrition Department and the Cherokee Senior Center
- Participants enrolled as intergenerational dyads
- 7 intergenerational teams enrolled; 93% retention
- Participants’ ages 19–82 years, demonstrating relevance across the life course
- Compensation: up to \$275 total for full attendance, zine completion, surveys, and listening session

STORYTELLING AND DIABETES

FACILITATOR GUIDE



PROGRAM SCHEDULE

SESSION 1

▶ *Introduction to zines*

SESSION 2

▶ *Story circle workshop*

SESSION 3

▶ *What makes a “good” zine?*

SESSION 4

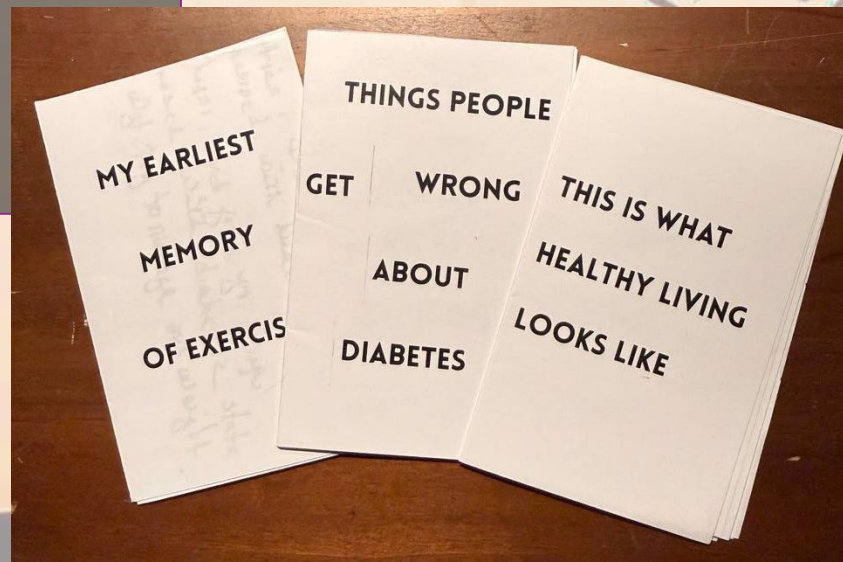
▶ *Let’s make a zine!*

SESSION 5

▶ *Zine swap and celebration*

Session 1: *Introduction to Zines*

- ▶ Greeting & Introduction to Project
- ▶ Icebreaker & Participant Intros
- ▶ Group Agreements
- ▶ Cherokee Oral Storytelling Traditions
- ▶ What is a Zine?
- ▶ Diabetes Listening Session
- ▶ Creative Exercise: Mini Zines
- ▶ Summary & Announcements



Session 2: *Story Circle Workshop*

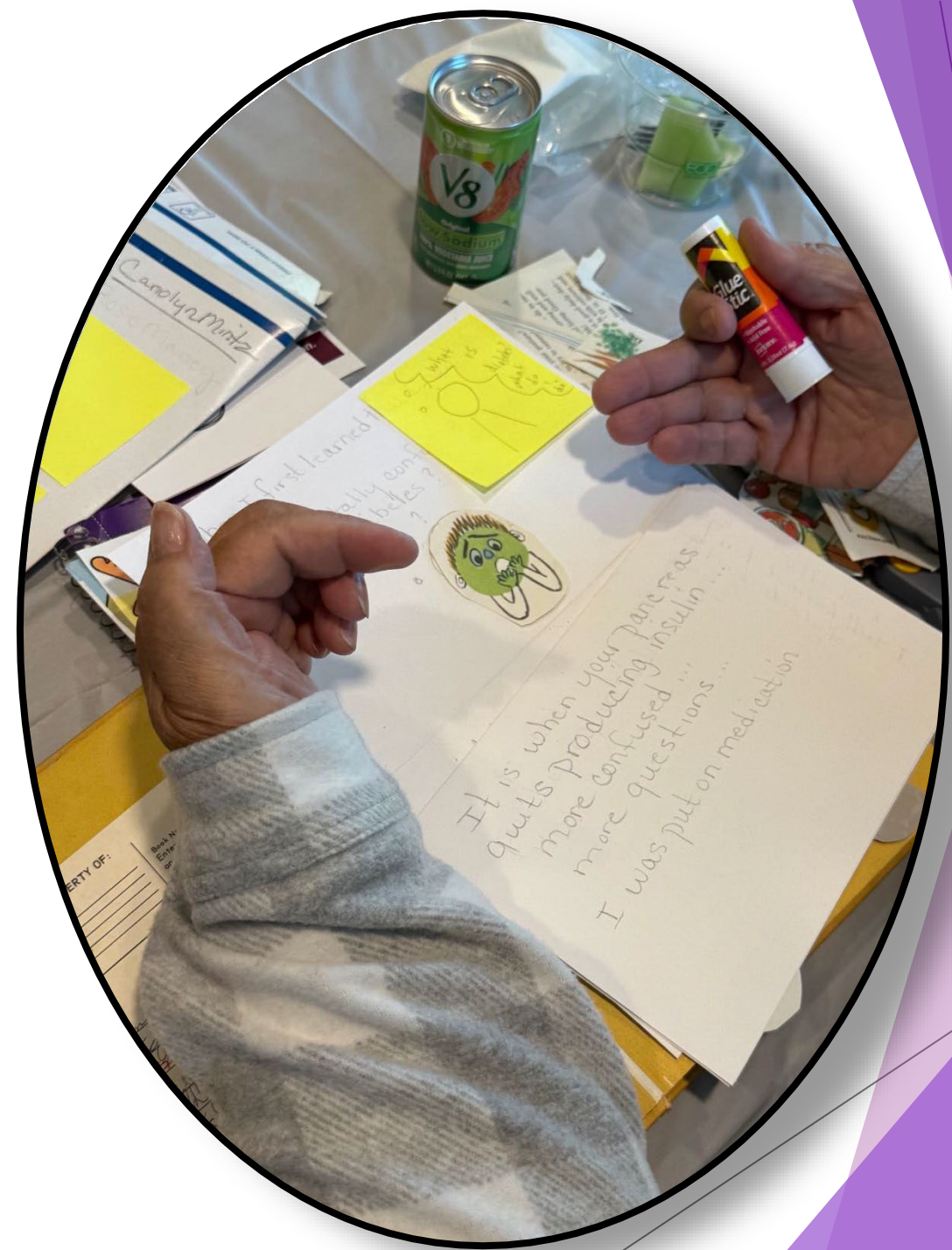
- ▶ Greeting & Check-In
- ▶ Story Circle Workshop w/ nDigiDreams
- ▶ Summary & Announcements



Story Circles

- ▶ Allows a more complex narrative to unfold
- ▶ Reveals differences and commonalities between personal experiences
- ▶ Emphasis on reflective listening and supportive exploration of key parts to an individuals' narrative





Session 3: *What Makes a “Good” Zine*

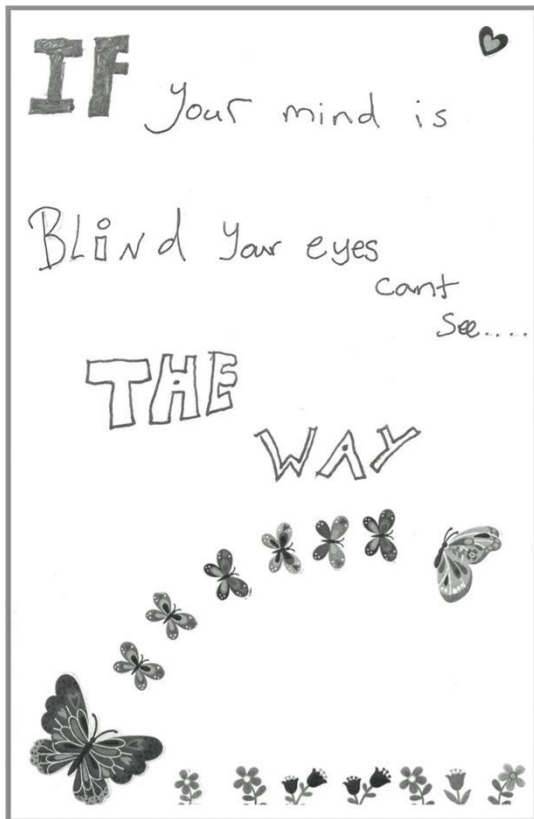
- ▶ Greeting & Check-In
- ▶ What Makes a Good Zine?
- ▶ Zine Dummies
- ▶ Telling Your Story Aloud
- ▶ Covers
- ▶ Summary & Announcements



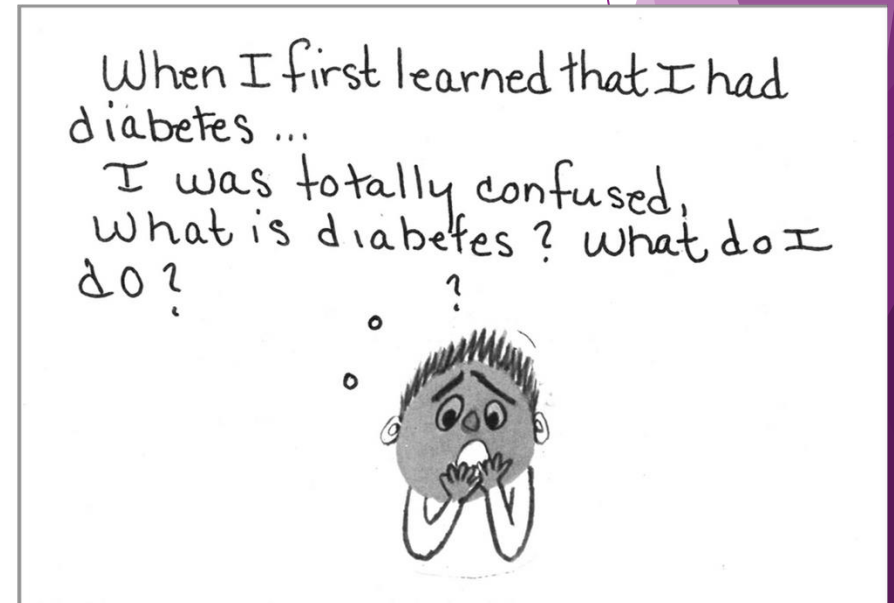
Session 4: *Let's Make a Zine!*

- ▶ Greeting & Check-In
- ▶ Creative Exercise: Drawing Jam
- ▶ Open Studio
- ▶ Summary & Announcements

Session 5: Zine Swap & Celebration

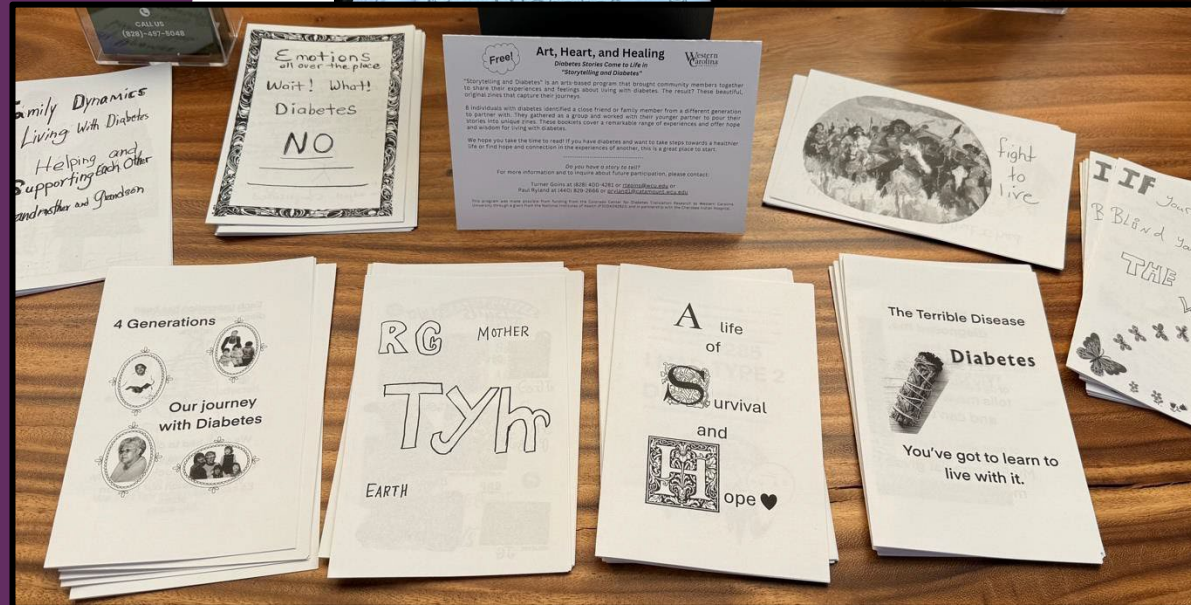
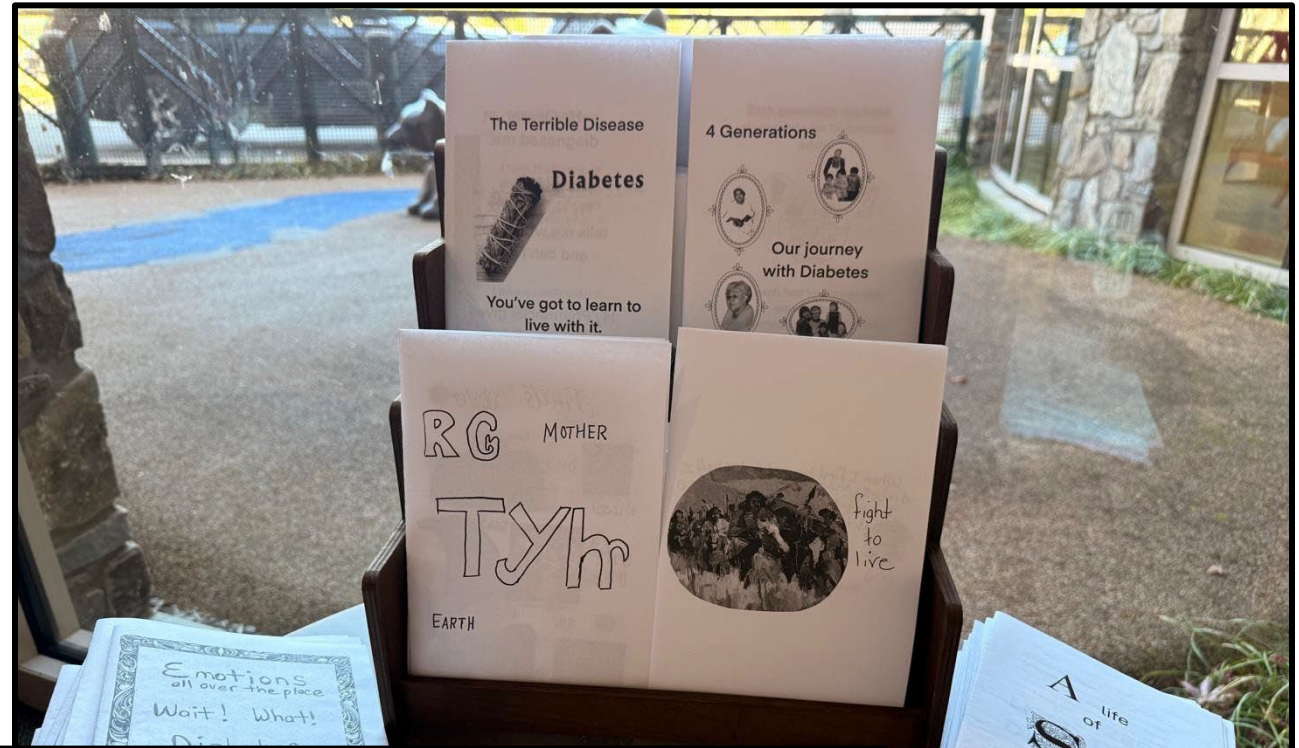


- ▶ Greeting & Check-In
- ▶ Zine Folding
- ▶ Zine Swap & Celebration
- ▶ Program Feedback Listening Session
- ▶ Final Thoughts & Goodbyes

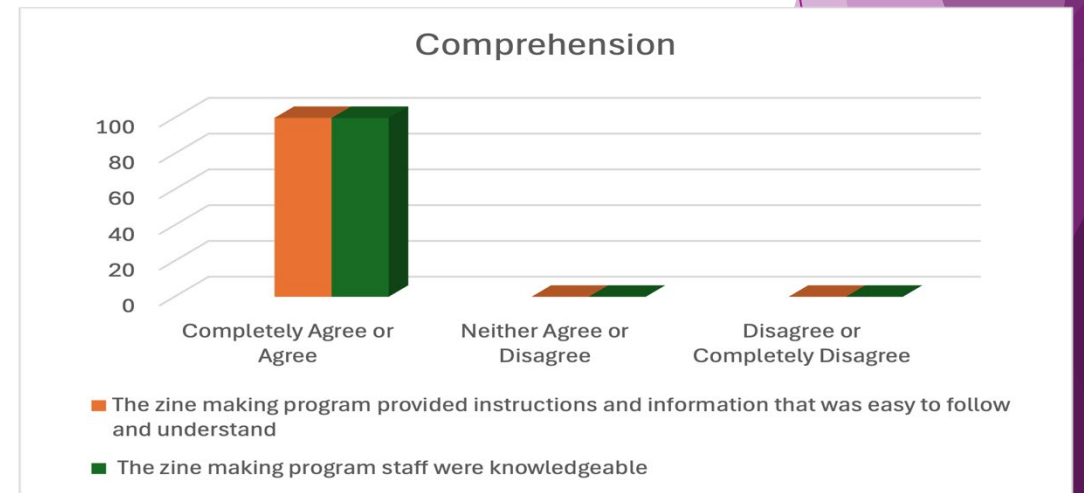
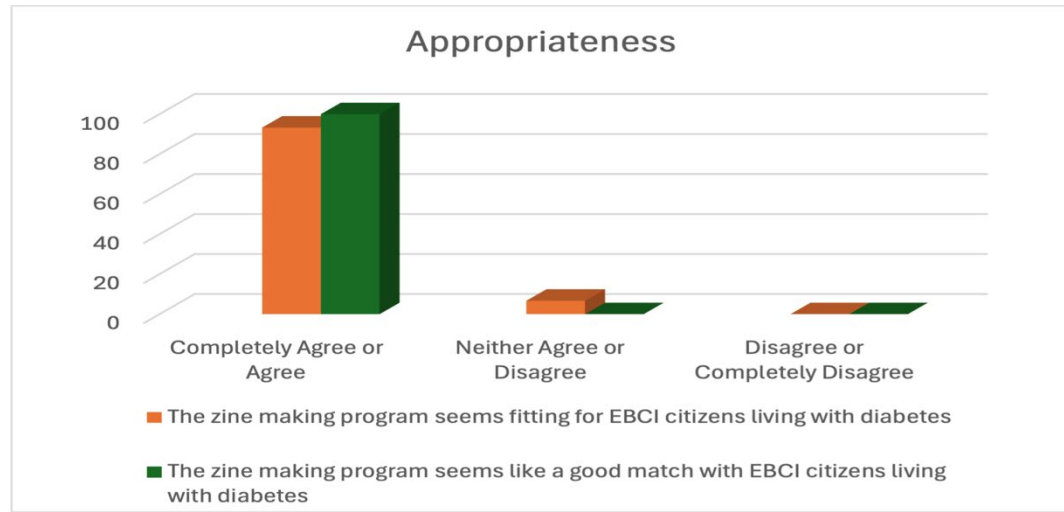


Dissemination

- Zines distributed locally:
 - Cherokee Indian Hospital
 - Cherokee Dialysis Center
 - Cherokee Choices
 - Coffee shops
 - Libraries
- Preparing digital collection for online platform in collaboration with other satellite centers



Acceptability and Feasibility

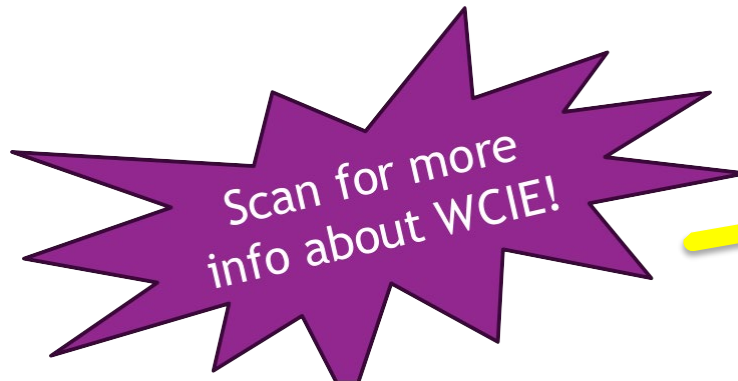


Feedback

- High satisfaction: 100% rated the program “good” or “excellent” (86% “excellent”); all agreed it was appropriate for EBCI citizens with diabetes
- Storytelling emerged as the program’s greatest strength, fostering connection, reflection, and a shift in how participants viewed diabetes from a “death sentence” to a manageable disease
 - *”These zines could save a life.”*
- Recommendations: Clearer upfront instructions and more time for storytelling and creative work

Future Programming

- Center storytelling and listening
- Shift from outside facilitators to peer facilitators, drawing on peer support specialist models
- May be a program of interest for SDPI sites or Tribal communities running WCIE groups



What Can I Eat?
Healthy Choices for American Indians and Alaska Natives with Type 2 Diabetes

The collage features several images: a man and a woman walking outdoors; a plate of food with green vegetables and orange carrots; two women in a kitchen setting; a man writing on a whiteboard; and another plate of food with a variety of ingredients. A QR code is located in the bottom right corner of the collage, with the text "What Can I Eat? | Linktree linktr.ee" below it.

Open to the fifth and sixth pages of your zine. Write or draw a story about

**THIS IS WHAT HEALTHY
LIVING LOOKS LIKE**



When you go home tonight, what is one thing you're going to tell your friends or family about what you learned today?

Drop your answers in the chat!

Acknowledgements

- ▶ Many thanks to Dr. Turner Goins, Nilofer Couture, Jess Speer, and Nancy Pheasant
- ▶ A special thanks to the participants of our pilot program and the beautiful stories they courageously shared
- ▶ And thanks to you! for listening, participating, and sharing

Contact information

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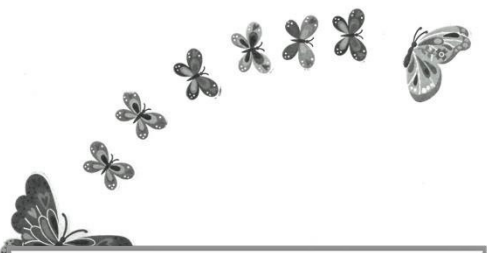
Dr. Turner Goins

rtgoins@wcu.edu



IF Your mind is
Blind your eyes
cant see...

THE WAY



Family Dynamics
Living With Diabetes
Helping and
Supporting Each Other
Grandmother and Grandson

The Terrible Disease
Diabetes



You've got to learn to
live with it.



fight
to
live

4 Generations



Our journey
with Diabetes

Emotions
all over the place

Wait! What!

Diabetes

NO

RC MOTHER

Tyhr

EARTH

A life
of

Survival

and

Hope ♥