

HISTORY OF THE NAVAJO WELLNESS MODEL

Introduction:

In the fall of 2004, two Chinle Service Unit Health Promotion/Disease Prevention (HPDP) program staff traveled to the field to conduct a prevention presentation. A Navajo Elder approached the staff and said “that Navajo teachings should be use to teach about health and wellness, since we grew up with it and we know it.” We just don’t teach it to our people anymore.” In response to the Navajo elder’s feedback, the Navajo HPDP program decided to use Navajo teachings on health and wellness to develop the Navajo Wellness Model Curriculum.

Project Description:



The Navajo Wellness Model utilizes a social ecological approach of public health using teachings from Navajo philosophy. The Model talks about following the journey of the sun --- from sun up to sun down there are teachings Navajo people are supposed to follow, like running toward the sun in the morning, self-

care, and taking care of the household and pets. The Model is design to increase awareness, knowledge, and understanding among health care and public health providers of the core Navajo teachings about personal and family health, healthy communities, and a healthy environment. Since the inception of the model, we have trained over 200 health care and public providers across the Navajo Nation.

This year a team of Traditional Healers, HPDP staff, and community members assembled to edit the Navajo Wellness Model. The team has been working diligently together to get the Model ready to use this upcoming winter. We would like to acknowledge the team of editors; Charlotte Hadley, Cassandra Allen, Annette Gonnig, Roland Begay, Woodie Tsosie, Darlene Begay, Ernest H. Begay, Neva Kayaani, Regina BlueEyes, Rich Begay, Chelsea Kettering, Carol Leonard, and Shawnell Damon.

In January 2020, the Navajo Area HPDP program hosted the Navajo Wellness Model training with Johnson Dennison and Richard Begay conducting the training both in the Navajo/English language with 113 participants. We received an overwhelming positive feedback from the participants. Even the Honorable Amber Crotty stopped in to recognize the participants and importance of the Navajo Wellness Model.

Quotes from the participants

“Mr. Johnson Dennison is humble, amazing and so descriptive in all of his teachings. He raised the bar for me and I am going to enrolled in a class to learn to write and read the Navajo language. I so appreciated that his wife was there, supporting him in all of his work.”

“Mr. Richard Begay is an eloquent speaker, expelling positive energy, and motivating us with the translation from Navajo to English.”

“The resources of traditional people and medicine people in that meeting room. The wealth of knowledge.”

“The Navajo Area IHS team who supported this training from the welcome, revision in the curriculum, snacks, and logistics.

“This was my first opportunity in attending the almost week long training, and walked away feeling refreshed, reinvigorated, and very much inspired.

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Summary

We are thankful for the feedback from the elder who reminded us to use our own traditional teaching to empower our people to support personal, family, and healthy communities.

