

# **American Indian Alaska Native (AI/AN) Youth Mental Health Disparities: historical and future challenges**

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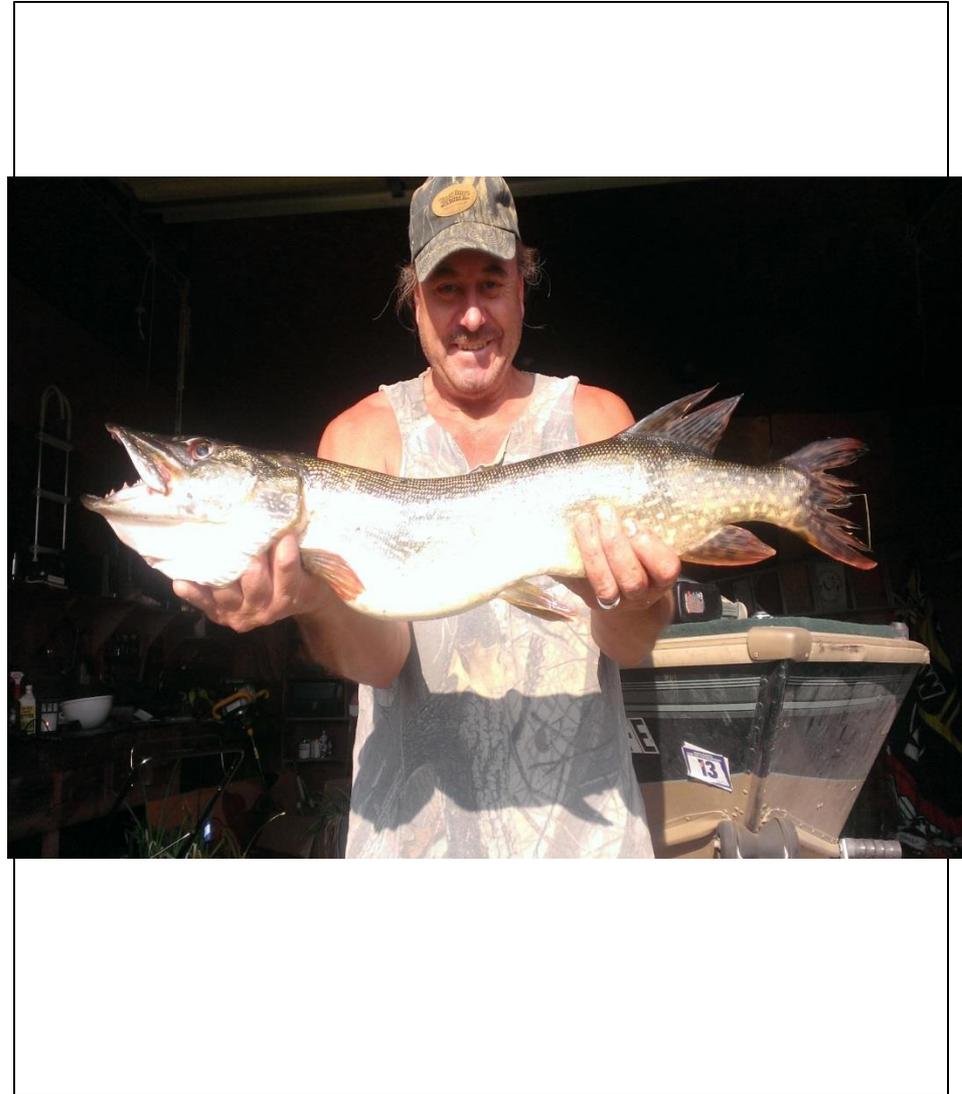
2015 IHS National Combined Council Winter Meeting

January 29, 2015



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# Learning Objectives

- Clearer understanding of history of AI/AN youth Mental Health challenges & disparities
- Recognize common predictors of disparities
- Suggestions for improved diagnostic and treatment modalities with AI/AN youth



# Key factors in mental health disparity development for AI/AN youth

- **Historical Trauma**
- **Cessation of hostilities and the dawn of the treaty/reservation era**
- **Assurance of education**
- **Boarding school era and subsequent consequences**
- **Tribal “enrollment” issues – Who is “Indian” -  
> eligibility for services**



# Key factors in mental health disparity development for AI/AN youth (cont.)

- **Assurance of healthcare**
- **Development of Indian health services**
  - **Western vs Traditional healing conflicts/issues**
  - **Challenges for I.H.S.**
  - **Compacting (638): pros and cons**



# Subsequent personality and identity development problems

- **Cultural identity and competence development challenges**
- **Biculturalism and psychopathology**
  - **The “Orthogonal Theory of Biculturalism”**
    - **Scientific Support**
    - **Potential impact for AI/AN youth**



# Subsequent personality and identity development problems (cont.)

- **Lack of identifiable health-care role models**
  
- **Breakdown of the family and clan systems**



# Western versus traditional Indian healing mindsets and practices

- **Racism and other biases**
- **Behavioral health challenge**
  - **suicide and American Indian youth**
  - **cutting, choking game, substance abuse, obesity**
  - **domestic and other forms of violence and aggression**



# Historical examination of diagnostic and treatment efforts

- **Traditional tribal and cultural approaches**
  - utilization of traditional ceremonies and rituals
  - challenges in identifying competent traditional healers
- **Utilization of majority culture psychological treatment**
  - Psychotherapy and counseling
  - Psychotropic medications
    - Placement/Disposition challenges



# “Best” Practices

- **Best practices -> pulling it all together: integration of traditional and majority culture diagnostic and treatment considerations**
  - **integrating cultural identification into the treatment plan**
  - **culturally appropriate assessment of bicultural competence and its implications for treatment**
  - **primary prevention and psychoeducation**



# Conclusion

**Striving toward best practices and continuity of care: working with families, clans, tribes & I.H.S**



# References

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- McDonald, JD, Morton, R, & Stewart, C. (1993). *Clinical concerns with American Indian patients and clients*. *Innovations in clinical practice*.

