



Native American Sports Medicine

A presentation by
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Introduction

NAME: JOHN SUNCHILD

INDIAN NAME/TRIBAL AFFILIATION: PI-SI-M NAH-PEW WHICH TRANSLATES TO SUN MAN, ENROLLED MEMBER OF THE CHIPPEWA CREE TRIBE ON THE ROCKY BOY RESERVATION, MONTANA. FOUNDED IN 1916.

EDUCATION: ROCKY BOY HIGH SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF MONTANA UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE IN EXERCISE SCIENCE AND GRADUATE DEGREE IN ATHLETIC TRAINING.

JOB HISTORY: ATHLETIC TRAINER FOR PROVIDENCE ST. JOSEPHS IN POLSON, MT. CURRENT POSITION, ATHLETIC TRAINER FOR ROCKY BOY HEALTH CENTER IN ROCKY BOY, MONTANA.

Clinical considerations in rural healthcare on reservations

Each and every tribal entity is unique in their beliefs, traditions, ceremonies and language.

It is essential for healthcare providers to recognize this to deliver high quality healthcare.

How do we effectively provide culturally specific healthcare to Native Americans on reservations?

Tribal History and The Federal Government

Native American Tribes each have unique tribal histories filled with rich cultural traditions but all share a marred relationship with The United States government.

Federal government systematically forced assimilation upon the Native American Tribes to physically and culturally eradicate their unique belief systems and way of life.

The inequalities led to severe distrust to the Federal Government and long lasting effects on reservations today.

Ways that they tried to assimilate Native cultures were through broken treaties, land loss, deprivation of human, political and cultural rights, residential schools and sickness/disease.

Challenges Native Americans Face Today

Native Americans are experiencing vast problems culturally, socially, politically and in delivery of quality healthcare.

Native American reservations have high rates of cancer, diabetes, heart disease, mental health problems, substance abuse issues and other health disparities.

There are present day initiatives on the reservation to address these inequities which have made progress but major work still needs to be done to alleviate the problems associated with historical trauma.

Honor and Recognize Individualized Needs of Tribal Entities

- Healthcare providers on reservations need to immerse themselves into the community to learn the specific needs of the tribal members.
- This includes base knowledge of cultural practices, belief systems, language and participation in local events.
- Healthcare providers willing to open their mind, body and spirit will gain respect, acceptance, support and most importantly trust within the community.




Implementation of Culturally Specific Care

- Promotion and trust of ancestral knowledge through songs, prayer, traditions, language and traditional wisdom along side coordinated plans of evidence based healthcare.
- Supporting unique ideas of models and health healing interventions. Such as herbal remedies, traditional plant medicines and different forms of alternative medicine.
- Modifying requirements to fit relevant tribal paradigms and allowing room for flexibility with time constricted decision making processes.




Implementation of Culturally Specific Care (continued)

Being an active listener and open to the patients concerns especially in relation to family and cultural practices.



Advocating for your patients specific needs can have a positive impact on their well being and gaining their buy in and trust.



Creative collaborations and supporting other tribal entities and organizations within the tribal umbrella can also increase likelihood of trust and high quality healthcare on reservations.

Examples of Implementation of Culturally Specific Healthcare





Personal Experience

- Education at a University system, breaking down social, political, and cultural barriers.
- Living in 2 separate worlds and walking in between them.
- Keeping grounded in education and cultural practices.
- Altruistic attitude and approaching life, education and career with respect and humility.
- Successes and adversity through the scope of western education, traditional education and moving forward in a system that was never meant for Native Americans.



Conclusion

- Being a Native American healthcare professional practicing sports medicine, athletic training is all together is distinctive experience.
- Connection to other Native Americans is an easier transition in comparison to non native peoples.
- The perspective in which I walk in life professionally and culturally is all one in the same, to help others.
- I am proud to be Chippewa Cree and I am proud to be an athletic trainer, father, husband, brother, son, friend and colleague to many. I owe it all to my family and culture, I hope I can continue this work for many years to come.
- For my wife Shauntae and sons, Rickson and Bear!