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Document Title: Taku Eyachantognaka Owihankeya
Wanica, Community Brief 2

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Document Number: 309603

Date Received: October 2024

Award Number: 15PNIJ-21-GG-02808-RESS

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Research Overview: The purpose of this project was for Native American community members to work with researchers to determine what type of research they would like to see happen in Native communities on issues related to Native youth violence and resiliency. This research was conducted with Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains, and researchers at the University of South Dakota and the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. Through a series of workshops with Native Americans in the Great Plains, we identified areas of interest related to Native youth violence and resiliency.

Locations & Participants: Three workshops were held between October 2022-April 2023. There were two in-person workshops. The first was in Rapid City, South Dakota and the second workshop was held in Bismarck, North Dakota. A third workshop was held online. All participants needed to identify as Native American, be at least 18 years old, speak English, and be concerned about Native youth violence and resiliency. Across the workshops, a total of 55 Native people participated in these discussions.

Research Questions: We asked the participants who volunteered to participate in the workshops a series of questions on violence and resiliency among Native youth. Participants discussed with each other a variety of topics pertaining to violence and resiliency.

Initial Findings



We have two main areas of findings:

- What violence looks like in their community
- How resiliency can be encouraged among the community

See other pages for detailed descriptions of findings

Next Steps

The research team is working to identify another research project based on the input from community members that participated in the workshops. We are developing a more extensive report for Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains (NWS). We are also currently talking with potential Native partners and looking to identify a way to address Native youth violence and promote resiliency in a culturally informed and responsive way based on the information shared from this research.

Interested in Connecting?

If you are interested in learning more about this research or any upcoming research, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us through the information provided below.

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Violence in Their Community

“It is very difficult to sit in tribal court and have children taken out of home and the people supporting them. There are no resources for the people that are trying to get their kids back. Our systems are very oppressive and the simple fact that we allow this to continue is violence.”

“Most of what I see in the community is how the parents treat the kids. Then the kids go to the schools and treat other kids that way. I see the parents treating the kids, kids treat other kids that way and it becomes a big mess...like bullying, name calling, and cyber bullying.”



Questions on Violence

- When you hear the term violence, what does that mean to you?
- If violence is a reduction in well-being, what does that look like in your communities?
- What are the causes and effects of this violence?
- How does this affect youth?

“I think of cultural trauma, historical trauma, divide and dissention, loss of culture. Violence has to come from somewhere. It is a learned behavior. If we don’t know our culture, how do we tell our stories? How do we teach our kids not to be violent?”

“One thing we are running into is the loss of our elders, people who keep our traditions. Lost to substance abuse. These are the ones that you would turn to if you needed to know about traditions.”

“I have noticed in our communities that obituaries are more frequent or young. I wonder, what are they dying from? Is it suicide? A lot are from overdoses. We are seeing that in our communities. We are losing our younger people earlier.”

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Examples of Resiliency Identified by Participants

“To be resilient is to be Indigenous.”

“Being able to speak to people you don’t know and it’s going to bring up something for someone in this room. I bring my light and when someone else comes in and shines their light and I’m like that makes sense. Then someone else shines their light and then I get to see the full picture. This is resiliency and I see that betters my family.”

“Learn from mistake and learn from our peers of how to deal with our trauma and all the things we deal with in our life.”

“Our culture is key. Our identity. Our LANGUAGE. If we do not know who we are, how will we know where we are going?”

“The kids asked to be safe and we taught them about safe touch, not okay touch, their body parts, and how to say their body parts in Lakota. We taught them not to be ashamed of their body parts and you know, parents didn’t realize and I don’t think they pay attention.”

Areas for Strengthening Resiliency

“The youth showed us that they could lead. Let’s get them involved and keep them involved. They are the future.”

“Not only for school but for our justice system, I think they need to include more of us in the conversation when it comes to decision making and implementing programs. I think a lot of us are missing from those conversations. That’s the first step. Every time I find myself at a community event, I feel like not enough of us are showing up or not enough of us are invited. Where are we? We are here to help each other but not very many of us are coming to the table to talk about things.”

“I think each of us in here has a personal stake in here to help our child/ and youth. How do we instill resiliency in them when [we] are still experiencing trauma?”

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