

Native American Youth in Transition: The Path from Adolescence to Adulthood in Two Native American Communities

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March 2005



NICWA
National Indian Child Welfare Association

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) would like to thank the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for its generous support in making this research publication possible. In addition, we would like to gratefully acknowledge the contributions of members of our project steering committee from the Skokomish and Akwesasne communities: Patty Ware (Skokomish), Lila Vigil (Skokomish), Tom Peterson (Skokomish), Danielle Cagey (Skokomish), Michelle Rourke (Akwesasne), Agnes Jacobs (Akwesasne), and Cierra Jacobs (Akwesasne). We would like to extend our appreciation to everyone in the Skokomish and Akwesasne communities for their participation and enthusiasm and for welcoming us into their communities. We hope this project will provide valuable information to service providers, community members, and policymakers about the strengths of youth and young adults aged 16-24 and the challenges they face as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. We hope that this report will help to tell their stories and to improve the lives of Native American youth.

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Fox, K., Becker-Green, J., Gault, J., & Simmons, D. (2005). *Native American youth in transition: The path from adolescence to adulthood in two Native American communities*. Portland, OR: National Indian Child Welfare Association.



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ABSTRACT

Current research and statistics have provided insight into the status of Native American youth and adults separately, but little has been done to document the journey from adolescence to adulthood for this population. Native American youth aged 16-24 in reservation-based communities may access a variety of services, such as health care, mental health, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, and employment training, but little is known about the experience of these youth as they move between child and adult service delivery systems. Research regarding this population often focuses on problem behaviors without thoroughly examining the family and community strengths and supports that help these youth become successful adults. Gaps in information regarding the needs of this population have also created barriers for practitioners and policymakers interested in improving services.

Using a combination of secondary data analysis and a participatory research approach, this study examined the experiences of a population of Native American youth aged 16-24 who have been involved in at least one of the service systems identified above and/or are out of work and out of school in two tribal communities. The tribal communities participating in this project were the Skokomish Tribal Nation and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. In addition to documenting their experiences in making the transition from adolescence to adulthood, the project reviewed existing literature; analyzed existing federal databases and U.S. Census data; and analyzed existing federal, state, and local policies that impact this population. It is hoped that the findings from this study can be used to progressively expand the public policy dialog about funding for and development of services and supports to adequately meet the needs of Native American youth who are 16 to 24 years of age.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

Approximately 15% of all youth in the United States between the ages of 18 and 25 are neither in school nor employed. At a time when the demands of adulthood are rapidly becoming the focus of their lives, young adults between the ages of 16 and 24 have received scant attention or assistance from service providers. This study looks at some of the most vulnerable of these youth, those who are members of Native American communities, and recommends ways to begin to meet their needs.

Literature Review

A review of the literature reveals that Native American youth are worse off than youth of other racial or ethnic groups in several areas. These areas include environmental factors such as widespread poverty, poor health, overcrowded housing, and high rates of alcoholism in Native American communities, as well as characteristics of the youth themselves, such as high teen birth rates, low educational achievement, and high rates of foster care. The literature also suggests approaches that work with Native American youth. These include a return to traditions, treatment for alcohol and drug use, and addressing economic needs.

Research Questions

The research questions asked in this study were as follows:

1. What does existing literature tell us about Native American youth aged 16-24?
2. What types of services or supports are available for Native American youth aged 16-24?
3. What are the barriers that Native American youth face in accessing available services and supports?
4. What types of strengths exist within tribal communities that help Native American youth develop into successful adults?
5. What are the impacts of key federal, state, and tribal policies on the design and delivery of services and support to Native American youth aged 16-24?

Methods

Methods included a review of literature; secondary analysis of large, relevant federal databases available to researchers; a review of U.S. Census data; and focus groups and key-informant interviews during site visits to the two participating communities. A policy analysis was completed using information from both secondary sources and the site visits.

Analysis of the databases was completed by downloading and analyzing data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Each database downloaded from the World Wide Web was split into two population groups, Native American and non-Native. Chi-square and t-test were used to identify differences between them. U.S. Census data tables were created from the U.S. Census



website. Site visits included focus groups and key informant interviews with community members recruited by tribal members who were on the project steering committee. Participants included youth, parents, elders, elected and traditional community leaders, and program staff. The instrument used during the site visits was developed using the relational worldview model, which, when applied to a community, looks for balance among four quadrants: environment, infrastructure, resources, and mission. This project used a participatory research model in which members of the study sites played a central role in the design and collection of data from the site and were responsible for reviewing and approving all materials related to the study. Lastly, federal, state, and tribal policies were reviewed to ascertain their effects on this group of Native American youth aged 16-24, and on-site interviews with tribal leaders included questions about the impact of these policies.

Results

Federal Databases

Data from three large federal databases maintained by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) were analyzed. Comparisons of Native Americans and other subjects reflected information reported in the literature and suggested both additional issues and possible indications of progress in meeting the needs of Native American youth. Information that supported the findings of the literature were that Native American youth frequently live in homes that are more violent, more crowded, and poorer than those of other youth. The Native American youth have more problems related to alcohol use and are less likely to have completed high school or college than other youth. A positive trend regarding lower rates of alcohol abuse among Native American subjects was featured in reports from the NIAAA and supported by data in the SAMHSA cohort, which showed more negative attitudes toward alcohol use in Native American communities than in other communities.

2000 U.S. Census Data

Reports based on 2000 U.S. Census data were available on the World Wide Web and included data from the Skokomish and Mohawk reservations as well as the total Native American population.¹ U.S. Census data from the Mohawk reservation included only about 22% of the estimated total population due to the co-location of the reservation in the United States and in Canada and the reluctance of many traditional people to participate in federal census taking. U.S. Census data supported findings from other sources that Native American persons are, on average, poorer, younger, less likely to have completed high school or college, and more likely to live in crowded households than the rest of the population. Also according to U.S. Census data, they are more likely to live in homes with grandparents present and more likely to live in single-parent households with either a male or a female as the parent figure.

¹ Only those people who reported **only** Native American race/ethnicity were included in the analysis.



Site Visits

Data from the site visits reflected findings from other data sources analyzed in this study and provided some suggestions for change. Findings in the environmental quadrant were that communities are aware of and understand the various issues among youth aged 16-24, but they are unsure of how to best address their complex needs. Elders were clear that the salvation of youth is tied to the salvation of their way of life. They stated that a return to the old ways, before they themselves were taken to boarding schools, sent away to the cities, and taught that their hair length, language, and ceremonies were wrong, was what was needed for youth who had gone astray. Many blamed the influence of mainstream society for the ills of the younger generation, and suggested a return to the old traditions, language, religion, and ceremonies as a way to save the youth.

There were differences at the two sites in the infrastructure quadrant in terms of services available to youth and families, with more programs and opportunities in place at the Mohawk site but services for youth aged 16-24 still either not sufficient or lacking altogether at both sites. Program data collected at both sites were limited. At the Mohawk site, lack of access to data from half the population, those who live on the Canadian side of the reserve, made data difficult to obtain. Funding for human services was not sufficient at either site. Although there are opportunities for college education at both sites, the attitudes of many of the youth, combined with community apathy, lack of information, and mixed messages from adults about education, worked to decrease the number of young people who attend college. One of the youth at the Skokomish site stated, "My uncle told me, he said, 'Don't settle for your GED, it doesn't give you [anything], go for your high school diploma.'"

At both sites, elements of the resource quadrant were mixed. The self-governing status of both nations provided some flexibility in how funding from the federal government was spent. There were many community leaders identified at both sites, although these were not necessarily the elected leaders. Youth and family involvement in programs was not strong at either site. In the mission quadrant, both communities are in the process of reclaiming as much as they can of the old ways, which are understood to be responsible for wellness in the minds of many community members.

Site participants mentioned the importance of spirituality in all four quadrants of the relational worldview model. At both sites, an ideal community envisioned by youth, elders, parents, staff, and leaders included traditional elements such as canoe building, songs, dances, and traditional crafts. Parents, youth, staff, and some elders also wanted to include more opportunities for youth to learn, including both their native languages and college courses, in an ideal community. As one elder stated, "[Youth aged 16-24] gotta know who they really are, gotta know there's places that help them, know not to be afraid to go and talk to elders." Youth themselves expressed an interest in learning traditions, although sometimes for mixed reasons. As stated by a Mohawk youth, "I wanted to learn the language 'cuz it would be cool to talk with my friends and no one else would really understand." Balance among the four areas was found at both sites, and ways to improve were identified.



Policy

A review of federal, state, local, and tribal policies highlighted the immense effects of historical federal legislation on tribal groups that extend into the present time. State and local policies continue to have an effect as well. With more acceptance of and emphasis on tribal sovereignty, tribal policies are becoming increasingly important as vehicles of change.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The lessons learned from this study were that youth aged 16-24 in Indian Country have many difficult issues to face, but they are anxious to become responsible adults and role models in their communities. However, they are confused as to how to proceed. The adults in their lives do not now reach out to them to any great degree but have many ideas about how to do so. The recommendations of this report, based on the information reviewed and the suggestions of community members at each site, are as follows:

Recommendation 1: Increase youth involvement in spirituality and traditional activities. This recommendation was suggested by the literature review and was echoed repeatedly at the study sites. Spirituality was understood to be crucial to wellness in these communities as they try to reclaim lost or forgotten traditions. The elders who bore the brunt of assimilationist policies that reached a peak in the early 20th century were clear that the youth should return to the beliefs and activities that sustained their ancestors. A return to tradition included suggestions that youth learn the language, take part in spiritual activities, and learn ceremonies, stories, traditions, and crafts that nourished and maintained the Mohawk and Skokomish communities through centuries of contact with mainstream ways.

Recommendation 2: Bring the community together; increase communication and contact of youth with parents, elders, and other community members. In order to provide a locus for the reinvigoration of ancient traditions, both study sites found that the people in the community needed to become more cohesive. In the case of the Mohawk site, this was seen partially as a governmental issue, as reservation land encompasses parts of two countries, two Canadian provinces, and one American state. Further, the reservation government is administered by both traditional and elected leaders on both sides of the United States/Canada border. Since the creation of one cohesive government structure from such disparate elements is unlikely, community members suggested more community gatherings and other chances for youth, adults, and elders to associate and interact as a means of increasing the transfer of knowledge, providing consistent role models, and reducing fears and misunderstanding among groups.

Recommendation 3: Increase employment opportunities. More and better paying jobs that will help them support their young families, save for future goals such as higher education, and take on adult roles in the community are needed for Native American youth. At the site visits, most community members said these jobs should be on the reservation so that the young people can stay to work with



the rest of the community in addressing the many issues present at these sites. There were also suggestions that the economic and spiritual realms could be combined to produce a means of income for youth through apprenticeships in such time-honored activities as carving traditional masks at the Skokomish site.

Recommendation 4: Give youth a real and important role in the community. The subject of youth having a real role in the community did not come up until people at the two sites were asked what the role of youth should be. Youth mentioned that their views were not seen as important and that the adults in the community did not see their possible value as contributing members. Youth disagreed with this view and said they are ready to take on adult roles. When asked, parents, elders, and tribal leaders mentioned that youth have limited roles now in current projects, such as the youth council and community garden at Skokomish Tribal Nation and mentoring younger children at the Boys and Girls Club at St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. Independently, the adults and youth both said that these current examples need to be expanded, both to assist the communities and also to enable these youth to see themselves as taking an active, adult role. As they increase their visibility and take on adult roles, youth who are between teen and adult years play a transitional role as keepers of the knowledge and traditions they learn to be passed on to their own children and grandchildren in the future. In Mohawk society, this is known as keeping in mind the well-being of “the seventh generation.”

Recommendation 5: Research and evaluation in tribal communities should be participatory. The most important finding of this study was the catalytic effect that it had on the two communities. Both, when they learned of the positive needs and desires of youth aged 16-24, wanted to do something to address them. The research process itself provided an opportunity to begin to address these needs by coming up with possible solutions to the issues identified. Therefore, it is recommended that whenever research is undertaken in a tribal community, a participatory model be used. As shown in this study, a participatory model not only allows extensive and complete data collection but also may provide an impetus for change in the community.

Recommendation 6: Establish direct funding for tribal governments under key federal entitlement programs. While the number of federal programs that tribal governments have direct access to have increased slightly over the last 25 years, there are still significant gaps in funding access. As mentioned in the Policy Analysis section of this report, tribal governments do not have direct access to three of the largest human service entitlement programs under the Social Security Act – Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance, Title XX Social Services Block Grant, and Medicaid. Without direct access to these core funding sources, tribal governments will continue to struggle to offer the diverse services that this population requires.



INTRODUCTION

The transition of youth into adulthood is a time of dissociation from childhood and acceptance of adult roles. For many youth, connection to the labor force and significant relationships is difficult. There are currently an estimated 3.8 million youth in the United States between the ages of 18 and 24 (approximately 15% of all young adults) who are neither employed nor in school or college (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004). These youth are vulnerable to violence and poverty. According to Wald and Martinez (2003):

At an age when most young adults are benefiting from full time work and close interpersonal relationships, these youth will not have connected to the labor force; most will lack social support systems. About sixty percent will be men; of these, over half will be in prison, while the remaining young men will be mired in protracted spells of long-term unemployment. By age 25, nearly all of the young women will have started families; however, most of the young mothers will face the daunting challenge of raising their children alone with little income, or with the help of their own impoverished families. (p. 2)

Native American youth have historically been among the most troubled and impoverished of youth in the United States. According to the U.S. Department of Justice (1999), Native Americans experience per capita rates of violence that are more than twice those of the total U.S. population, and about a third of all Native American victims of violence are between the ages of 18 and 24. A recent study by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development concluded that due to both gaming revenues and increased self-governance, Native Americans experienced substantial growth in income from the 1990 to the 2000 U.S. Census (Taylor & Kalt, 2005). However, income in Indian Country is still substantially behind income in the rest of the country. Taylor and Kalt (2005) reported the following:

Real per capita income of Indians living in Indian Country (in the 2000 Census) was less than half the U.S. level...Indian unemployment was more than twice the U.S. rate; Indian family poverty was three times the U.S. rate...and the proportion of Indian adults who were college graduates was half the proportion of Indian adults as a whole. (p. xii)

Both the need for and the lack of services and programs for Native American youth and adults have been well documented (Barlow & Walkup, 1998; Nelson, McCoy, Stetter, & Vanderwagen, 1992). Most authors agree that the programs needed in Indian Country should be culturally sound, which means they should be different from mainstream services (Blount, Thyer, & Frye, 1992; Cross, 1986; Cross, Earle, Echo-Hawk Solie, & Manness, 2000). Over the past few decades, federal, nonprofit, and some state agencies have worked to provide these culturally sensitive and appropriate services. More



commonly, as tribes become self-governing, they provide services directly for members of their own communities.

Native American youth of late adolescent and early adult age are normally not targeted directly by social service initiatives, which generally focus instead on children or young teens, who are perhaps regarded as most vulnerable to the many difficulties that plague Indian Nations, and on adults who are suffering from chronic problems of alcohol abuse, mental illness, unemployment, and poverty.

To assist in addressing this disparity, the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) was awarded an 18-month grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to increase the amount of information available to tribal governments, public officials, and private funding agencies regarding Native American youth who are between the ages of 16 and 24 and who are in need of services in the areas of health care, mental health care, child welfare, education, juvenile justice, and employment training. Information on this population was collected from the literature and from large national databases, including the year 2000 U.S. Census, and was refined by extensive visits and interactions with two tribal sites, the Skokomish Tribal Nation of Washington and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe of New York.

Tribal Sites

In keeping with NICWA protocols for conducting research with Native American communities, this project used a participatory research approach to conduct case studies in the two selected tribal communities. There are 563 federally recognized Native American tribes and nations in the United States. The two tribal sites included in the study, the Skokomish Tribal Nation and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, were chosen in an attempt to broadly represent American Indian tribes and nations across the country.

Skokomish Tribal Nation

The Skokomish Tribal Nation is located in Shelton, Washington. There are approximately 825 enrolled members of the Skokomish and, according to the tribe, there are 1,828 residents at the Skokomish Indian Reservation (Skokomish Indian Nation, 2002). This number compares to the 2000 U.S. Census figure of 704 Skokomish residents of the reservation. The Skokomish Indian Reservation boundaries encompass a total of almost 5,000 acres or approximately 7.5 square miles.

The Point No Point Treaty of 1855 established the Skokomish Indian Reservation in Mason County, Washington, astride the Skokomish River Basin. This area constitutes a small fraction of Skokomish ancestral lands, which included the eastern slopes of Olympic Mountain, Hood Canal drainages, and the Skokomish River Basin. The tribe adopted a constitution and elective government structure as required by the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934 and completed self-governance negotiations in 1995. A seven-member elected tribal council governs the Skokomish Tribal Nation. Tribal council members serve staggered terms.

The Skokomish Tribal Nation was included in this study as representative in size and rural location of the more than one third of American Indian tribes and nations (approximately 150) with



populations under 1,000. The Skokomish are also representative of these tribes and nations because of the small size of their remaining land base and their forced relocation from a much larger land base. Their reservation status and self-governing status are also representative of many Native American tribes and nations in the United States; in this they differ from the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe as the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, along with many other tribes, still maintains both an elected tribal council and a traditional, largely unrecognized council outside of the Mohawk community government.

St. Regis Mohawk Tribe

The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe is one of six members of the Iroquois Confederacy. The other five members are the Seneca, Cayuga, Onondaga, Oneida, and Tuscarora Nations. The Mohawk Reservation straddles the border of the United States and Canada along the St. Lawrence River. It spans parts of two counties in New York State (St. Lawrence and Franklin) and two provinces of Canada (Ontario and Quebec). In the United States, the reservation includes approximately 14,000 acres and in Canada approximately 7,500 acres. Tribal councils have been created on both sides of the reservation, with three chiefs, three sub-chiefs, and a tribal clerk of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe on the American side and one elected chief and 12 district chiefs in the Mohawk Nation Council of Akwesasne located on the Canadian side. There is an additional ruling body, the Mohawk Nation Council of Chiefs, which is the traditional government of the Mohawks under the Iroquois Confederacy and governs through traditional chiefs and clan mothers. The 2000 U.S. Census reported there were 2,699 Mohawks living on the American side of the reservation. However, according to people interviewed at the Mohawk site visit, the total number of enrolled Mohawks is close to 12,000 in both the United States and Canada.

The inclusion of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe was based on three key factors. First, it is a reservation-based tribal community with an over 200-year history with the federal government and with both a traditional and an elected government. Second, it is a tribe that is split by an international border where data issues and political boundaries intersect with negative consequences. While few tribes are split internationally, several are split among states, and these issues are well illustrated in the Mohawk example. Third, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has a long history of providing services, of strong advocacy in working with the state, and of maintaining the strengths of its traditions and language.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Background

The complexity of the history of Native American social services provision has contributed to confusion among policymakers and bureaucracies about who is responsible for what in Indian Country. This complexity has also contributed to the under funding of tribes and tribal programs and to a historical lack of autonomy necessary to operate social welfare programs in Indian Country.

Due to history and law, tribes have related primarily to federal, rather than state, government agencies. Historically, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) was the central oversight agency for tribes and the primary source of social services. Established as part of the U.S. War Department in 1824, the BIA



used army personnel to provide health care to tribal members (Attneave, 1984). Oversight of the BIA was transferred from the War Department to the Department of the Interior, where it now resides, in 1849. The central office of the BIA is in Washington, DC, and there are twelve regional offices located throughout the country. About 80 area offices serve one or more reservations.

The Indian Health Service (IHS), which was established as a federal agency in 1955, has been the primary provider of health and mental health services for tribal members, although mental health care specifically for Native Americans was not provided until 1965² when IHS established an Office of Mental Health on the Navajo reservation (Nelson, et al., 1992). Native American health care is currently provided directly through the IHS, by facilities operated by tribes in keeping with the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 and its amendments or through urban Indian programs.

The tangle of laws, jurisdiction, and responsibility for programs and services began to receive attention and, to some extent, rectification beginning with the Civil Rights era of the 1960s. Gradually, jurisdiction over Native American social service programs has been returned to the tribes. The history and current status of service provision have had broad effects on services in Indian Country for tribal members of all ages, including the population of interest, tribal youth aged 16-24.

Characteristics of Native American Youth

Native American youth aged 16-24 are poised on the brink of more and improved tribal economic and social prospects. These have come with increased income opportunities and greater emphasis on tribal sovereignty over the past few decades. Tribal youth aged 16-24 are caught between the old views and the legacy of past efforts to educate and assimilate Native Americans and new opportunities provided by gaming and other revenues, as well as a new federal policy of encouraging tribes to meet their own needs. As stated by the Harvard Project on American Indian Economic Development (2003), "While the burgeoning youth population strains standard non-Indian approaches to gang violence, teen drug use, and youth crime, tribes are tapping deep cultural connections to find solutions" (pp. 3-4).

Statistics available from the 2000 U.S. Census and reported in the literature identify some of the issues affecting Native American youth. These problems are greatest in the areas of education and crime. According to Goodluck and Willetto (2001), 17% of Native American youth aged 16-19 are not enrolled in school and do not have a high school diploma, compared to 9% of all Americans aged 16-19, and 18% of all Native American youth aged 16-19 are not enrolled in school and not working, compared to 10% of all Americans aged 16-19. Educational attainment figures for Native Americans show a higher percentage of Native Americans aged 24-26 who have completed some high school or less and a lower percentage who have obtained college degrees, when compared to all other racial groups (Wald &

² Federal involvement in mental health services for the mainstream population dates back to the mid-1800s when a hospital for those with mental illness was opened in Washington, DC.



Martinez, 2003). Excessive violence among Native Americans between the ages of 18 and 24 was reported in the Bureau of Justice Statistics publication titled *American Indian Crime* (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). The Bureau reported the following:

On a given day, 1 in 25 American Indians age 18 or older is under the jurisdiction of the criminal justice system. Nearly a third of all American Indian victims of violence are between ages 18 and 24. This group of American Indians experienced the highest per capita rate of violence of any racial group considered by age – about 1 violent crime for every 4 persons of this age. (p. v)

Overall, the mean crime rate for Native Americans (124 per 1,000 population) is about two and one half times the national rate. The most common crime committed is simple assault, with a rate of 70 assaults per 1,000 people, compared to 30 or less for any other race. In 1997, Native Americans were held in local jails at a rate of 1,083 per 100,000 adults, the highest rate of any racial group in the United States (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999).

Many young Native American youth participate in gangs. Predictors of gang involvement among Native American youth include living in a single parent household, family history of dysfunction, large numbers of life transitions and losses, and perceived discrimination (Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Chen-Xiaojin, 2002). Many Native American gangs have origins in informal drinking groups of young men who come from families that are marginally functional (Henderson, Kunitz, & Levy, 1999). In Indian Country, the problems of substance abuse, poverty, physical abuse, and violence are all linked. Following are discussions of issues affecting young Native American men and women in the areas of economic factors, transitional living, education, mental health, and substance abuse.

Economic Factors

According to the U.S. Department of Commerce (1992), the percentage of Native Americans living below the poverty line (30.9%) is twice the average of the general U.S. population (13.1%). As stated above, these results were replicated by Taylor and Kalt in 2005. Tribal communities have used different means to address poverty. Strategies to address poverty range from federal programs, such as the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program, to relatively new and, in some cases, extremely successful ventures such as tribal development and ownership of gambling casinos.

Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)

A recent survey of 350 current or former welfare recipients on three large reservations in Arizona determined that, unlike their counterparts in the rest of America, Native American families on reservations are having some difficulty participating in the back-to-work initiative largely because there is little work and few support services such as transportation and childcare (Pandey, Brown, Zahn, Hicks, & Welch, 2001). In recognition of this fact, Native Americans living on a reservation with a 50% or higher unemployment rate are exempt from the five-year TANF benefit limitation (although they are still subject to work requirements and sanctions for not meeting the work requirements) (Brzuzy, Stromwell, Sharp,



Wilson, & Segall, 2000). In Arizona, in the late 1990's, 10 of the 21 tribal communities had rates of unemployment ranging from 45% to 90% (U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs [BIA], 1997). Current and former welfare recipients on the three Arizona reservations surveyed by Pandey and colleagues (2001) were found to have the following:

- Lower levels of education than the general welfare population: 70% had less than a high school degree.
- Few employment opportunities: only 15% had found employment over a two-year period. Those employed averaged \$6.80 hourly or \$591.00 monthly and were still below the poverty line. Although TANF rolls have dropped on some reservations, only a little over half of the 101 families surveyed who had gotten off TANF had improved their economic situation. Another 23% were cut off under TANF timelines with no alternatives and 19% had dropped out due to various reasons "including moving in with a partner or family, getting married, moving to another reservation, wanting to avoid the work requirement or 'could not stand the hassles' and thus dropped out of the system" (p. 8).
- Lack of basic support services: only 25% of respondents owned an automobile, and many of these were not reliable; 86% had children under the age of 13 with an average of 2.5 children under that age; 89% relied on themselves for childcare, and less than 7% sent their children to formal programs such as preschool, childcare centers, or Head Start (Pandey, et al., 2001).

Native American families living in urban situations face similar difficulties with none of the special provisions designed for Indian reservations. In some cases, these families have moved back to reservations with the 50% unemployment exemption, putting further stress on an already fragile system of financial support. These families are most likely young, with young children (Stromwall, Brzuzy, Sharp, & Anderson, 1997).

According to some authors, the poor employment scenario in reservation communities also has the effect of moving young people who can work away from their homes and into urban areas where there are jobs. This may affect tribal cultural preservation and community development and lead to more assimilation of tribal members into mainstream society. One of the more onerous effects of moving away from tribal communities is the assimilation of children, who will be placed in mainstream day care facilities and schools away from their tribal culture while their parents work (Pickering, 2000). Pickering recommends more support of economic development at the tribal level as a way to meet the needs of Indian Nations such as Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, where the unemployment rate exceeds 70%.

Gaming

Among Native American communities, gaming has been seen, by some, as a way out of poverty. The Indian Gaming Regulatory Act (IGRA) (25 U.S.C.A. §§ 2701-2721, 18 U.S.C.A. § 1166) specifies purposes for which gaming revenues may be used and may include per capita payments to tribal members (Canby, 1998). The purposes include funding tribal government operations, providing for



the general welfare of tribal members, promoting tribal economic development, or donating to charitable causes. The “casinos on reservations pay living wages, provide full benefit packages, and hire their own tribal members first” (Brzuzy et al., 2000, p. 198).

According to Gerdes, Napoli, Pattea, and Segal (1998), “As of December 31, 1996, 184 tribes operated 281 gaming facilities, representing 55% of all continental U.S. tribes” (p. 23). The Indian gaming industry has provided 140,000 jobs related to gaming on reservations, and the funds from gaming have given many tribes the resources for considerable political clout (Gerdes et al., 1998). It is important to note, however, that even with gaming revenues, “Indians on both gaming and non-gaming reservations have a long way to go to with respect to addressing the accumulation of long-enduring socioeconomic deficits in Indian Country” (Taylor & Kalt, 2005).

Also, gaming is controversial in Indian Country. Although termed “the new buffalo,” a possible source of the restoration of Native American communities, there are many concerns. In interviews of members of a reservation community, Peacock, Day, and Peacock (1999a) found that although respondents recognized economic benefits of gaming, there were negative effects as well. These included the replacement of alcohol with gambling as an addiction, with consequent neglect of family responsibilities; lack of participation in more culturally appropriate community social activities; and lack of child care due to the involvement of potential caregivers in casino gambling. The long-range negative effects of gambling were thought to include changes in traditional values, such as sharing of mutual possessions; a rise in individual materialism; and more focus on the self.

These same authors, in a separate study, surveyed 185 adolescents aged 14-19 regarding their gambling habits and found that 81% had gambled at some time in their lives, and 75% had gambled within the past 12 months. They reported a statistically significant relationship between gambling and drinking, marijuana use, and low self-esteem for Native American youth. Native American youth were also significantly more likely than White youth to report that “people look up to you when you win at gambling” (p. 15), suggesting that Native American youth are more at-risk for developing problem gambling behaviors (Peacock, Day, & Peacock, 1999b).

Napoli (2002) concludes that although tribes with casinos need to be aware of the “acceleration of addictions gambling can cause,” gambling has the potential to make tribes strong and independent from the federal government (p. 32). To illustrate this point, she quotes Iron Moccasin (2000): “Like Sitting Bull said, if you see something good in the white man’s path, pick it up. And if it’s no good, throw it away” (Napoli, 2002, p. 33).

Homelessness

Another economic factor that affects Native American youth is homelessness. Native Americans, as a whole, are over-represented among the homeless (Zerger, 2004). According to Zerger, there are historic reasons for this, beginning with dispossession of land, family, and cultural ties over several centuries. As young people move away from reservations, frequently to urban areas where they still cannot find work, lack of education and lack of employment opportunities also lead to homelessness.



Currently 61% of the Native American population live in urban areas. Zerger states that the housing shortage on reservations is acute, with people on waiting lists for an average of 41 months for low-income housing units; and this is even though the housing options on reservations are overcrowded and dismal. Off-reservation, Zerger quotes two studies that have found discrimination against Native Americans in rates of loan requests for home ownership and in notification of availability of rental units.

Transitional Living

According to Hogan and Siu (1988), Native American and other minority children are “over-represented in substitute services, and a greater discrepancy exists between recommended and delivered services for minority children than for non-minority children” (p. 493). Native Americans are clearly over-represented in the foster care system (Earle & Cross, 2001), but as they age out of foster care, they are less likely than other youth to take advantage of the recommended transitional living services available as a stepping stone between the dependence of foster care and the independence of adult living (Crofoot-Graham, Cellarius, Clothier, Moore, & Hawkins, 2001). As one of the directors of an Indian Child Welfare program stated:

Once they have aged out of foster care (or left the system) and are under 19 years of age, so many fall through the cracks because after youth have aged out or left care, they cannot access financial/housing services. Young mothers cannot access housing because they cannot sign leases. Have to go under parent’s authority. (Crofoot-Graham et al., 2001, p. 53)

Young men and women of all races living in substitute care have difficulty transitioning to independence. This may be due to lack of strong family and other support systems and stable community ties, as well as to poor mental and physical health, undereducation, and unemployment (Collins, 2001). A study of older adolescents released from out-of-home care in Missouri in 1993 found that “many youths were leaving via unplanned discharges, were living with relatives at the time of release, and were leaving without jobs or without having completed their high school education” (McMillen & Tucker, p. 353). These authors noted that their findings reflected those of earlier studies but that they differed in that there was a large proportion of youth (44%) with psychiatric symptoms in the Missouri study, and these youth experienced a higher number of out-of-home placements (average of 7 out-of-home placements per youth). In their controlled study of an independent living program (ILP) in North Carolina that provides a transition from foster care to independence, Lindsey and Ahmed (1999) found that ILP participants did better than non-participants in educational achievement, employment, and ability to access and manage independent living arrangements.

According to Crofoot-Graham et al. (2001), American Indians are underrepresented in ILPs. In a survey of child and adolescent welfare programs in Indian Country, these researchers found that less than half of these agencies provided or accessed ILP services for young men and women aging out of foster care. The services most respondents said they would like to add were training in life skills and



social skills, mentoring, and subsidized transitional housing. The strength of the existing programs in Indian Country, according to Crofoot-Graham and colleagues, is cultural competence. They suggest that mainstream programs would be better able to assist Native American youth if program staff learned more about the cultures of these young people and were able to modify their ILPs appropriately.

A study of Native American youth completed by NICWA in 2002 (Clifford & Mills) found that Native American youth reported special issues regarding transition from childhood to adulthood. Clifford and Mills conducted 15 telephone interviews with staff of the reservation-based programs of the Casey Family Programs (CFP) Great Plains Regional Office and facilitated and recorded interviews with a group of 24 members of the CFP Native Youth In Transition Workgroup to discuss and brainstorm issues and to make recommendations for Native American youth in transition. Recommendations of the report included practice, program development, and research recommendations. They include more services in general and more culturally appropriate services, staff, and training; use of culturally appropriate tools; inclusion of alternative and traditional healers in treatment efforts; and education for youth about the skills they need to live in both the Native American and mainstream worlds. While this study delineated several ways to improve services to youth in transition, it also identified underlying values and behaviors of Native American communities that must be recognized if programs are to be culturally relevant. Clifford and Mills (2000) state the following:

Participants indicated that community—which for AI/AN [American Indians/Alaska Natives] often comprises the nuclear family, extended family, and other community members—is a common and integral thread highly valued within Native cultures. Native children are taught to be part of their intercultural communities in an interdependent manner. In contrast, mainstream culture, with its predominant emphasis on individual independence, can at times be incongruent with values held in Native communities. (p. 4)

Education

Native American education has historically been one of the most controversial and difficult areas since colonization. In the early association between the United States and Indian Nations, education was generally regarded as a way to “civilize” Indian people, beginning with the children. Horrific stories are told of children being rounded up, taken from their parents and homes, and sent to boarding schools, most never to be seen at home again (Coolidge, 1977). Boarding schools and all federal schools for Native American children required that “no vestige of Native language, clothing, hairstyle, art, religion or personal expression was allowed to students” (Lomawaima & McCarthy, 2002, p. 286). Gradual change in federal education policies has recently supported the operation of tribal schools, where, in some schools, traditional tribal languages are taught and spoken, and cultural traditions are welcomed. However, as in many areas in Indian Country, funding for tribal schools is inadequate and unpredictable. Language revitalization is seen as being contrary to the still-cherished but not openly stated goal of assimilation of Indian children. As stated by Lomawaima & McCarthy, “Standardization, while



masquerading as an equalizing force, in fact stratifies, segregates, and undercuts equality of opportunity. We have only to consider the history of American Indian education to see how this is so” (p. 299).

Several authors have reported that culturally based indigenous educational initiatives have been successful in increasing the number of Native American youth who complete high school and college. The Hoop of Learning program, located in a large southwestern urban area, is a middle school-to-high school-to-college program that exemplifies these successful programs. The program

... offers a protected, culture-rich learning environment designed by and for Native people within the mainstream public high school system. In keeping with traditional education in many Indigenous cultures, a central focus of the program is nurturing the student’s Indigenous worldview and spiritual understanding as the basis for development, and as a protection from negative influences and self-destructive paths. (Waller, Okamoto, Hankerson, Hibbeler, Hibbeler, McIntyre, & McAllen-Walker, 2002, p. 105)

Over a three-year period, rates of retention, transfer rates, and dropout rates for Hoop of Learning students were all more positive than for non-Hoop of Learning students. For the year 2002, rates of retention were 93% (Hoop) and 67% (non-Hoop); rates of transfer were 5% (Hoop) and 28% (non-Hoop); and dropout rates were 2% (Hoop) and 5% (non-Hoop). Graduation rates from high school were 100% for all three years for Hoop of Learning students, compared to 60% (1998), 48% (1999), and 61% (2000) for students not in the program. Ninety percent of the Hoop of Learning students went to college, the majority of these continuing within the Hoop of Learning partnership between the local high school and Arizona State University, Washington University, and Phoenix College. The authors conclude that much of the program’s success is due to “an oasis of comfort and familiarity within dominant culture educational settings, and perhaps for the first time, giving them an opportunity to pursue their dreams without having to decide how much of their ethnic identity they will have to give up in order to succeed in the American mainstream” (Waller et al., 2002, p. 113).

A similar message was presented by Ambler (2002) in a paper on tribal colleges. The author found that although the college population reviewed included predominantly poor, female, first-time college students, an emphasis on knowing each Native American student as a person rather than as a statistic led to their success in college.

Mental Health and Substance Abuse

Instances of alcohol and drug abuse among young people today are especially high for Native American youth. The use of alcohol is frequently associated with crime. According to statistics from the U.S. Department of Justice (1999), “The 1997 arrest rate among American Indians for alcohol-related offenses (driving under the influence, liquor law violations, and public drunkenness) was more than double that found among all races. Drug arrest rates for American Indians were lower than average” (p. vii). Other national statistics regarding alcohol and drug use (King & Thayer, 1997) are as follows:



- 75% of all Native American youth deaths are related to alcohol.
- 5 of 10 major causes of death among Native Americans are directly attributable to alcohol (automobile crashes, cirrhosis, alcohol dependency, suicide, and homicide).
- Lifetime prevalence rates for alcohol use among Native American adolescents have been shown to average 80% or higher.
- Native American youth begin using an array of substances at an earlier age and are likely to try marijuana and to do so at an earlier age than their White counterparts.
- Inhalant use is twice as high for young Native Americans as the national average. Toluene-based solvents are among the first drugs used by Native American youth and their use often precedes first-time alcohol use. It must be noted here, however, that a more recent study (Beauvais, Wayman, Jumper-Thurman, Plested, & Helm, 2002) has reported a “strong pattern of decreases in inhalant use among American Indian adolescents over the last decade” (p. 171).
- Substance abuse reaches epidemic proportions in Native American boarding schools.

Problems of mental illness are frequently related to drug and alcohol abuse. Native American communities suffer one of the highest rates of situationally caused mental health problems in the United States. According to Yellow Horse Brave Heart (1999), the trauma suffered by generations of Native American people is still felt today in the community and individual consciousness of Native Americans. Problems associated with poverty, crime, and unemployment are exacerbated by issues of unresolved grief related to a community consciousness of loss.

According to Duclos and colleagues (1997), “several empirical studies suggest that Indian adolescents may have more serious mental health problems than adolescents in the general population” (p. 866), and there have been higher rates reported among Indian youth in the following: suicide, depression, conduct disorder, trauma-related symptomatology, and alcohol and substance abuse. Duclos found that 49% of a sample of 150 American Indian youth in a correctional facility had at least one psychiatric disorder, 13% had two disorders, and 9% had three or more disorders. The authors compared these rates to those of other ethnic groups and concluded that these American Indian incarcerated youth had “higher rates of disorder than either Indian youths or adolescents in general” (p. 871). The highest incidence was of alcohol abuse/dependence (34%), followed by any substance abuse/dependence (38%), conduct disorder (16.7%), and major depression (10%).

What Works in Indian Country

Mainstream programs such as education, employment, and transitional living programs, mental health programs, or programs to address drug or alcohol addiction are frequently unable to meet the needs of young American Indian men and women. However, Native American people and programs report limited success. Native American authors and authors who work with Native Americans have



highlighted specific programs and approaches that can address the needs of this group based on their research. These suggestions and programs have certain themes in common.

- Treatment needs to be based on traditional tribal values and spirituality (Crofoot-Graham et al., 2001; Gilgun, 2002; Skye, 2002; Weaver, 2002; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Chen-Xiajin, 2002).
- Underlying interpersonal problems such as self-esteem and anxiety must be taken into account (Taylor, 2000; Zvolensky, McNeil, Porter, & Stewart, 2001).
- Educational approaches must be based on the culture and learning styles of Native American youth (Ambler, 2002; Lomawaima & McCarty, 2002; Waller et al., 2002).
- Assessment tools to determine level of dysfunction must be culturally appropriate (Graham, 2002).
- Peer support is part of the problem and part of the cure (Beauvais et al., 2002; Morris, Morgan, & Easton, 2001).
- Treatment must be provided for drug and alcohol abuse (Guilmet, Whited, Dorpat, & Pijanowski, 1998).
- Economic needs must also be addressed (Woods, Blaine, & Franciso, 2002).

Successful, positive intervention in the lives of young Native American men and women must address the issues facing all young people today as they try to cope with an increasingly complicated world. In addition, those wishing to help young Native Americans must understand the conflicts and difficulties found in Native American communities. Many of these are related to the historical domination by mainstream society and the consequent marginalization of Indian sovereign nations. This domination has had adverse effects on Indian people of all ages (Poupart, 2002). The answer to these problems as reported in the literature is related to cultural appropriateness as an approach, a milieu, and a solution to various problems of young Native American men and women.

METHODOLOGY

Based on the literature review and the goals of the research, the following set of research questions were designed to be answered by this study:

1. What does existing literature tell us about Native American youth aged 16-24?
2. What types of services or supports are available for Native American youth aged 16-24?
3. What are the barriers that Native American youth face in accessing available services and supports?
4. What types of strengths exist within tribal communities that help Native American youth develop into successful adults?
5. What are the impacts of key federal, state, and tribal policies on the design and delivery of services and support to Native American youth aged 16-24?



Methods included the analysis of large, relevant secondary databases available to researchers, analysis of data gathered during extensive site visits to the two participating communities, and policy analysis using information from both secondary sources and the site visits. The relational worldview model was used as a framework for the site visits. This culturally competent model was used to develop a community assessment tool that served as the basis for the focus group and individual interviews. This model, applied to an organization, examines the balance among four quadrants: environment, infrastructure, resources, and mission.

NICWA uses a participatory research approach when conducting research with tribal communities. In this participatory research project, the tribal sites themselves set the agenda, customized the survey instruments, and conducted the surveys on site. They also had a major role in the review of the final report, with veto power over the use of any material from their sites. Using the participatory research model, a project steering committee from the two tribal communities was established to oversee and guide the conduct of research in each community. The committee ensured that each step of the research process was conducted in a culturally appropriate manner (e.g., design, interview, focus group questions, sample selection, final report, etc.). Committee membership included one professional representative, one or more youth between the ages of 16 and 24, and one parent from each site. Prior to recruiting committee members, the research team established steering committee selection criteria and expectations of steering committee members and research staff. The steering committee met face-to-face two times over the course of the project, and members arranged and conducted interviews and focus groups on site.

Secondary Data Analysis

Large data sets that included Native American youth between the ages of 16 and 24 were located and downloaded from the World Wide Web into a NICWA file and were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Analysis consisted of creating a variable for Native American race/ethnicity within each data set, mining the data for characteristics of that sample, and comparing the Native American sample to other samples using cross-tabulation and chi-square for nominal data and comparison of means and t-test for interval or ratio level data. Statistical results are not included in the analysis because of the difficulty of verifying results from the secondary data sources. However, all results that yielded statistical significance using chi-square and t-test are included in this report, and all results that did not yield significance are excluded. Tables available on the U.S. Census website were used to create comparison tables for Mohawk, Skokomish, all Native American U.S. Census respondents, and the total U.S. population.

Site Visits

Participants

The study used a convenience sample of Native American youth between the ages of 16 and 24, parents or other family members, elders, service providers, community leaders, and elected officials



at the Skokomish Tribal Nation of Washington and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe of New York. These disparate sites provided study participants from both large and small communities, while also providing participants from two tribes with different populations, perspectives, and experiences.

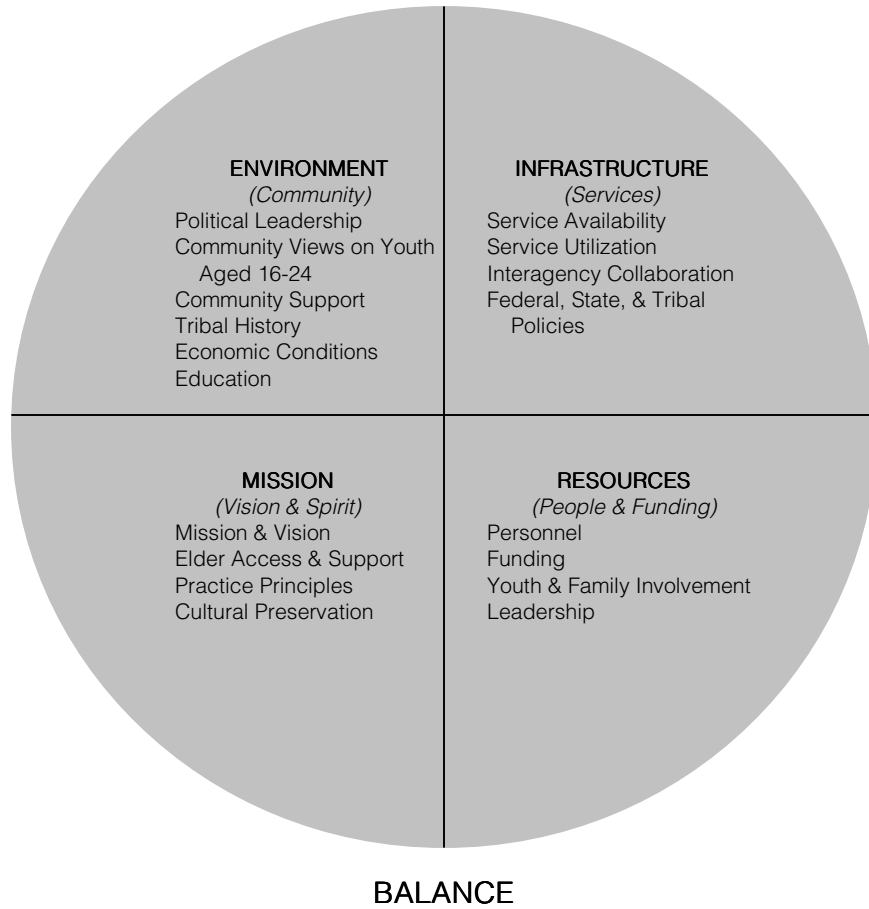
Instrumentation

The research team worked collaboratively with the steering committee to design and finalize the interview and focus group protocols and instrumentation at each site. The final instruments used the relational worldview model to design questions for the interviews and focus groups. The relational worldview model (Cross, 1995) provides an approach to assessment at both the individual and agency level that is strengths-based and holistic. A culturally based theoretical model that is designed for use with indigenous people, communities, and agencies, the relational worldview model is grounded in American Indian identity and diversity. This model allows participants in a personal or a systemic relational worldview model evaluation to gain both an understanding of the amount of balance among elements of the whole and also an understanding of their own cultural identity. It looks carefully at four realms of human existence, the context, mental, physical, and spiritual realms, and ascertains the relative balance among these four areas. For groups, agencies, or communities, the four realms are environment (context); infrastructure (mental); resources (physical); and mission (spiritual realm). Figure 1 depicts the relational worldview model applied to the case study of the two tribal communities and includes the sub-categories examined under each quadrant of the model.

Draft interviews based on the relational worldview model were developed by NICWA research staff, reviewed and piloted by the steering committee members, and revised to meet the unique needs of each site. A copy of the final instrument can be found in Appendix A.



Figure 1. Relational Worldview Model Applied to the Case Study Evaluation of Two Tribal Communities



Procedures

An estimated 75 Native American youth between ages 16 and 24 (approximately 35 at each site) were contacted and asked to participate in this research project. In addition, subjects interviewed or included in focus groups were personnel from key service providers, community leaders (elders, spiritual leaders, and community advocates), elected officials, and parents or other family members. At the Skokomish Tribal Nation, focus group interviews were held with youth, service providers, parents/family members, and elders. Individual interviews were conducted with tribal council members and spiritual leaders. At the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, focus group interviews were conducted with youth, parents/family members, elders, and key service providers. Individual interviews were conducted with traditional tribal council leaders and elected tribal council members. NICWA applied for an Institutional Review Board review and the project received an exemption from full review.



The process of conducting the site visits involved the following:

1. Contacting the site representative to schedule a one-week site visit for members of the NICWA research team to travel to the tribal community, record the focus groups, and conduct the individual interviews. The site representatives were responsible for arranging the focus groups and individual interviews.
2. Meeting with members of the steering committee upon arrival at each site to review the interview schedule and to discuss the focus group and individual interview protocols.
3. Prior to beginning each focus group, site representatives provided participants with an informed consent form and reviewed it with them orally. Once the consent forms were signed, the site representatives conducted the focus groups. Prior to beginning each interview, interviewees were asked to read and sign an informed consent form.
4. Conducting the focus groups and individual interviews. Site representatives, who were members of the research team, conducted the youth, parent/family member, and elder focus groups while members of the NICWA research team were responsible for hand recording the focus groups. At the request of the Mohawk and Skokomish site representatives, NICWA staff conducted focus groups and individual interviews with tribal council members.

Data Analysis

Available data from the sites were compared and analyzed across each of the service areas and areas where larger themes exist. Interview and focus group data were analyzed for common themes that address the research questions. The interviewers and other members of the steering committee took written notes, which were then transcribed and combined into one document of notes from each site. These notes were then combined into a report on the areas of environment, infrastructure, resources, and mission for each site, with an overall assessment of the state of balance for the entire community in regard to services for youth aged 16-24. All data belong to the tribe where they were collected, and each tribe was given the option, at any time, to request that their data not be included in the final report. This data analysis provided the basis for making recommendations regarding policy, practice, and future research for this population.

Policy Analysis

The research team carefully reviewed the literature and worked closely with the site representatives to identify a limited number of key federal, state, and tribal/local policies to be collected and analyzed for their impact on this group and population. Results from the literature and from focus groups and interviews were used to guide the policy analysis.



RESULTS

Analysis of Secondary Databases

Three large studies were completed between 2001-2003 that included data of relevance to the question of how best to provide services to Native American youth between the ages of 16 and 24.

These studies were as follows:

- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) recently released the results of the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2003). The survey is conducted every two years with scientifically selected samples of high school students in the United States. It monitors behaviors that lead to risk for adolescents such as drug/alcohol use, sexual behaviors, and dietary and physical risks. In 2003, 15,214 questionnaires were completed by students in grades 9-12. Included in the sample were 158 American Indian students.
- The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) conducted the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC) based on diagnostic criteria for alcohol abuse and alcohol dependence contained in the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders-Fourth Edition* (DSM-IV) (Grant, Stinson, Chou, Dufour, & Pickering, 2004). Face-to-face interviews were conducted with 43,093 non-institutionalized United States civilians aged 18 or older 2001-2002. The NESARC assessed the prevalence of alcohol disorders during the year prior to the survey, and rates were compared across the ten-year period. Included in the sample were 1,304 American Indian individuals. This survey was a repeat of a survey completed in 1991-1992.
- The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), formerly known as the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), was completed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) (SAMHSA, 2004). The survey is designed to produce incidence rates and prevalence estimates of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use and to report the consequences and patterns of use and abuse in the general U.S. civilian population aged 12 and older. Questions include age at first use, as well as lifetime, annual, and past-month usage for the following drugs: alcohol, marijuana, cocaine (including crack), hallucinogens, heroin, inhalants, tobacco, pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, and sedatives. The survey covers substance abuse treatment history and perceived need for treatment and includes questions from the *DSM-IV*, which allow diagnostic criteria to be applied. Respondents are also asked about personal and family income sources and amounts, health care access and coverage, illegal activities and arrest records, problems resulting from the use of drugs, perceptions of risks, and needle-sharing. Demographic data include gender, race, age, ethnicity, educational level, job status, income level, veteran status, household composition, and population density. Included in the sample of 54,079 were 593 American Indians.



Although the Native American sample was small in each of these national studies, the nature of the sampling (random samples carefully designed to capture the population) and the proportion of Native American participants (about the same as the percentage of Native American people in the general population) give the results some credibility. Following are results of each of these studies comparing responses of the Native American subjects to those of subjects of other race or ethnicity.

Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)

The 2003 YRBSS was analyzed to determine the characteristics of the Native American sample and to compare these results to youth of other than Native American Indian race/ethnicity. Data for the study were obtained from the following states depicted in Figure 2.

Figure 2. States Reporting Data to the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS)

Northeast	Midwest	South	West
Connecticut	Illinois	Alabama	Alaska
Maine	Indiana	Arkansas	Arizona
Massachusetts	Iowa	Delaware	California
New Hampshire	Kansas	District of Columbia	Colorado
New Jersey	Michigan	Florida	Hawaii
New York	Minnesota	Georgia	Idaho
Pennsylvania	Missouri	Kentucky	Montana
Rhode Island	Nebraska	Louisiana	Nevada
Vermont	North Dakota	Maryland	New Mexico
	Ohio	Mississippi	Oregon
	South Dakota	North Carolina	Utah
	Wisconsin	Oklahoma	Washington
		South Carolina	Wyoming
		Tennessee	
		Texas	
		Virginia	
		West Virginia	



Table 1: Characteristics of Native American Sample in the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) Survey (n= 158)

CHARACTERISTIC		FREQUENCY	PERCENT
Metropolitan status	Urban	66	42%
	Suburban	66	42%
	Rural	26	16%
Age	12 or younger	4	3%
	13 years old	0	0
	14 years old	17	11%
	15 years old	46	29%
	16 years old	35	22%
	17 years old	36	23%
	18 years old or older	20	13%
Gender	Female	78	49%
	Male	80	51%
Grade in school	9 th grade	48	31%
	10 th grade	43	28%
	11 th grade	29	19%
	12 th grade	36	23%
Geographic region	Northeast	52	33%
	Midwest	24	15%
	South	59	37%
	West	23	15%

Native Americans who participated in the survey differed dramatically from youth of other race/ethnicity in age and geographical region. Native Americans were younger than youth of other race/ethnicity with 43% of Native American youth aged 15 or under, while only 32% of other youth were 15 or under. Native American youth in the survey were more likely to be from the Northeast (33% compared to 15%) than youth of other race/ethnicity. This may be explained by the presence of New York City, which includes a large number of Native American people in the Northeast sample.

Table 2 compares Native American youth to other youth in areas related to dangerous behavior and drug and alcohol use and abuse.



Table 2: Comparison of Native American Youth to Youth of Other Race/Ethnicity in the 2003 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) Survey

QUESTION	NATIVE AMERICAN (n=158)		OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=14,200)	
How often do you wear a seat belt when riding in a car driven by someone else?				
Never	23	15%	985	7%
Rarely	17	11%	1,486	11%
Sometimes	21	13%	2,375	17%
Most of the time	38	24%	3,806	27%
During the past 30 days, how many times did you drive a car or other vehicle when you had been drinking alcohol?				
0 times	130	86%	12,162	87%
1 time	3	2%	714	5%
2 or 3 times	5	3%	592	4%
4 or 5 times	3	2%	151	1%
6 or more times	10	7%	315	2%
During the past 30 days, how many times did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club?				
0 days	105	72%	11,382	84%
1 day	6	4%	481	4%
2 or 3 days	10	7%	550	4%
4 or 5 days	8	6%	187	1%
6 or more days	16	11%	999	7%
During the past 30 days, how many times did you carry a gun?				
0 days	135	89%	13,033	94%
1 day	8	5%	236	2%
2 or 3 days	1	1%	211	2%
4 or 5 days	2	1%	55	<1%
6 or more days	6	4%	272	2%
During the past 30 days, how many times did you carry a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?				
0 days	136	87%	13,267	94%
1 day	7	5%	228	2%
2 or 3 days	7	5%	171	1%
4 or 5 days	1	1%	54	<1%
6 or more days	6	4%	342	2%



Table 2: Continued

QUESTION	NATIVE AMERICAN (n=158)		OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=14,200)	
During the past 30 days, how many times did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on your way to or from school?				
0 days	139	88%	13,340	94%
1 day	10	6%	398	3%
2 or 3 days	1	1%	223	2%
4 or 5 days	1	1%	64	1%
6 or more days	7	4%	147	1%
During the past 12 months, how many times has someone threatened or injured you with a weapon such as a gun, knife, or club on school property?				
0 times	128	81%	13,033	92%
1 time	13	8%	511	4%
2 or 3 times	8	5%	275	2%
4 or 5 times	1	1%	110	1%
6 or 7 times	1	1%	58	<1%
8 or 9 times	2	1%	28	<1%
10 or 11 times	0	0	12	<1%
12 or more times	5	3%	158	1%
During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight?				
0 times	81	55%	9,045	66%
1 time	21	14%	2,072	15%
2 or 3 times	22	15%	1,542	11%
4 or 5 times	7	5%	438	3%
6 or 7 times	1	1%	159	1%
8 or 9 times	3	2%	98	1%
10 or 11 times	2	1%	48	<1%
12 or more times	10	7%	278	2%
During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight in which you were injured and had to be treated by a doctor or nurse?				
0 times	137	88%	13,524	96%
1 time	12	8%	394	3%
2 or 3 times	7	5%	87	1%
4 or 5 times	0	0	12	<1%
6 or more times	0	0	57	<1%



Table 2: Continued

QUESTION	NATIVE AMERICAN (n=158)		OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=14,200)	
During the past 12 months, how many times were you in a physical fight on school property?				
0 times	116	79%	11,957	87%
1 time	17	12%	1,168	9%
2 or 3 times	9	6%	401	3%
4 or 5 times	2	1%	75	1%
6 or 7 times	0	0	25	<1%
8 or 9 times	0	0	12	<1%
10 or 11 times	0	0	8	<1%
12 or more times	3	2%	79	1%
During the past 12 months, did your boyfriend or girlfriend ever hit, slap, or physically hurt you on purpose?				
Yes	22	15% ³	1,317	9%
No	129	85%	12,649	91%
Have you ever physically been forced to have sexual intercourse when you did not want to?				
Yes	25	17% ⁴	1,144	9%
No	124	83%	12,120	91%
During the past 12 months, how many times did you actually attempt suicide?				
0 times	110	83%	11,252	92%
1 time	13	10%	515	4%
2 or 3 times	5	4%	324	3%
4 or 5 times	2	2%	63	1%
6 or more times	2	2%	111	1%
How old were you when you smoked a whole cigarette for the first time?				
I have never smoked a whole cigarette	64	44%	7,393	54%
8 years old or younger	15	10%	444	3%
9 or 10 years old	19	13%	653	5%
11 or 12 years old	13	10%	1,380	10%
13 or 14 years old	19	13%	2,114	16%
15 or 16 years old	11	8%	1,294	10%
17 years old or older	5	3%	349	3%

³ 14% of Native American females and 16% of males responded “yes” compared to 9% of females and 10% of males of other races.

⁴ 19% of females and 15% of males responded “yes” compared to 11% of females and 6% of males of other races.



Table 2: Continued

QUESTION	NATIVE AMERICAN (n=158)		OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=14,200)	
During your life, how many times have you used hallucinogenic drugs such as LSD, acid, PCP, angel dust, mescaline, or mushrooms?				
0 times	108	82%	11,226	91%
1 or 2 times	9	7%	542	4%
3 to 9 times	6	5%	259	2%
10 to 19 times	5	4%	94	1%
20 to 39 times	2	2%	48	<1%
40 or more times	2	2%	111	1%
During your life, how many times have you used methamphetamines (also called speed, crystal, crank, or ice)?				
0 times	138	87%	13,183	94%
1 or 2 times	5	3%	360	3%
3 to 9 times	6	4%	198	1%
10 to 19 times	4	3%	103	1%
20 to 39 times	3	2%	83	1%
40 or more times	2	1%	164	1%
During your life, how many times have you used ecstasy (also called MDMA)?				
0 times	132	85%	12,594	91%
1 or 2 times	15	10%	780	6%
3 to 9 times	2	1%	245	2%
10 to 19 times	2	1%	113	1%
20 to 39 times	4	3%	58	<1%
40 or more times	1	1%	114	1%

These data present a portrait of Native American youth as living and interacting in a more violent environment compared to other young adults. Native American youth aged 12-18 were less likely than other youth to wear a seat belt in a car and more likely to drive a car while drinking alcohol, carry a weapon, carry a weapon on school property, stay away from school because it was unsafe, be threatened with a weapon, be in a physical fight, be injured in a physical fight, be in a physical fight on school property, be hit or slapped by a boyfriend or girlfriend, be physically forced to have sexual intercourse, and attempt suicide. Native American youth also reported smoking cigarettes at younger ages than the other subjects.

Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions

NIAAA conducted the NESARC with a representative sample of approximately 43,000 non-institutionalized United States civilians aged 18 or older in 1991-1992 and again in 2001-2002. According to Grant et al. (2004), the prevalence of 12-month *DSM-IV* alcohol abuse and dependence



changed during those 10 years, with an increase in overall alcohol abuse and a decrease in alcoholism. However, among Native Americans, there were decreases in both alcoholism and alcohol abuse. From 1991-1992 to 2001-2002, rates of alcoholism dropped from 4.35% to 3.83% among Whites, from 3.84% to 3.57% for Blacks, from 9.01% to 6.35% for Native Americans, and from 5.78% to 3.95% among Latinos. It rose among Asians from 2.26% to 2.41%. The rate of alcohol abuse rose in every racial group except Native Americans. Among Whites, the rate of alcohol abuse rose from 3.33% to 5.1%, among Blacks from 1.46% to 3.29%, among Asians from 1.08% to 2.13%, and among Latinos from 2.52% to 3.97%. Among Native Americans, the rate of alcohol abuse decreased from 8.14% to 5.75%.

Using the National Institutes of Health research site on the World Wide Web and the database from the 2001-2002 study, NICWA did further analyses of the data to attempt to determine other differences between Native American (n=1,304) and other (n=41,789) study participants. The racial/ethnic breakdown was determined by whether or not a specific category was checked; and more than one could be checked. The number of persons checking Native American was 1,304; checking Asian was 1,334; checking Black was 8,600; checking Hawaiian or Pacific Islander was 363; and checking White was 32,789. Table 3 describes demographic differences between Native American respondents and other respondents.



Table 3: Demographic Differences between Native American Respondents and Respondents of Other Race/Ethnicity in the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC)

CHARACTERISTIC	NATIVE AMERICAN (n= 1,304)	OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=41,789)
Number of children under 18 in the house (mean)	.93	.71
Number of unrelated persons in the house (mean)	.18	.11
Total number of persons in the house (mean)	2.84	2.49
Age of respondent (mean)	43.18	46.5
Total family income last 12 months (mean)	\$39,528.	\$45,878.
Type of building living in (percent)		
Mobile home	9%	6%
Single family	63%	67%
Apartment	28%	27%
Other (boat, RV, etc.)	<1%	0
Were you or a member of your family a victim of crime in the last 12 months?		
Yes	10%	6%
No	90%	94%
Region of the United States		
Northeast	13%	19%
Midwest	17%	21%
South	32%	38%
West	39%	22%

The above results were all statistically significant at the .001 level.⁵ They show that Native Americans are more likely to be from the West, more likely to have been a victim of a crime, more likely to live in a mobile home, and less likely to live in a single-family home than respondents of other races. Additionally, Native Americans surveyed had more children, unrelated persons, and total persons in the house; were younger; and had a smaller household income than persons of other race or ethnicity.

Table 4 reflects the findings of the study by Grant et al. (2004) that Native Americans have higher rates of alcohol abuse than other groups and also mirrors the findings of the U.S. Department of Justice that Native Americans experience higher rates of arrest, including arrests for driving under the influence (DUI), related to alcohol use (U.S. Department of Justice, 1999). Of interest is the additional information provided by this analysis regarding patterns of use and attitudes among Native American respondents.

⁵ Statistical significance, however, is difficult to support when conducting analyses of secondary data.



Table 4: Differences in Behavior and Attitudes Related to Alcohol Use Between Native American Respondents and Respondents of Other Race/Ethnicity in the National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions (NESARC)

CHARACTERISTIC	NATIVE AMERICAN (%) (n=1,304)	OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (%) (n=41,789)
Frequency of beer drinking (percent)		
Once a week or more	17%	12%
2-3 times a month to 1-2 times a year	24%	21%
Never	56%	67%
Where drinking occurs (percent)		
Own home	52%	52%
Home of friend or relative	26%	20%
Public place	22%	28%
Drank wine in last 6 months (percent)		
Yes	45%	54%
No	55%	46%
How often drank 5 or more alcoholic drinks in last 12 months		
Once a week or more	16%	11%
2-3 times/mo. to 1-2 times /year	22%	18%
Never	62%	71%
Main type of alcohol during days of heaviest drinking		
Coolers	9%	7%
Beer	54%	51%
Wine	9%	16%
Liquor	28%	26%
More than once wanted to cut down on drinking		
Yes	37%	26%
No	63%	74%
More than once tried unsuccessfully to stop or cut down on drinking		
Yes	9%	5%
No	91%	95%
Ever have period when drinking interfered with taking care of the family?		
Yes	7%	3%
No	93%	97%
More than once drive a vehicle while drinking?		
Yes	28%	22%
No	72%	78%
More than once ride in a vehicle while driver was drinking?		
Yes	39%	30%
No	61%	70%



Table 4: Continued

CHARACTERISTIC	NATIVE AMERICAN (%) (n= 1,304)	OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (%) (n=41,789)
Ever get arrested or have legal problems because of drinking?		
Yes	13.5%	7%
No	86.5%	93%
Ever went to ER for drinking		
Yes	38.5%	25%
No	61.5%	75%
Current smoker?		
Yes, current	32%	26%
Ex-smoker	16%	19%
Lifetime non-smoker	52%	56%
Ever used any of the following substances		
Opiates	7%	4%
Amphetamines	7%	4%
Cannabis	26%	19%
Cocaine	9%	6%
Hallucinogens	8%	5%
Inhalants	3%	1.5%

According to this analysis, Native Americans are more likely than others to drink beer and less likely to drink wine compared to others and are more likely to drink in the homes of friends rather than a public place. They are more likely to drink once a week or more and less likely to have never taken a drink. Native Americans are more likely than others to want to cut back on drinking and more likely to have tried unsuccessfully to do so. This reflects the finding that rates of alcohol abuse among Native Americans decreased from 1991-1992 to 2001-2002.

In addition to vehicular, legal, and arrest problems related to alcohol, the Native American sample also reported more likelihood of going to the emergency room of a hospital due to drinking. Native Americans were more likely to be current smokers and more likely to have tried various substances in their lifetime than persons of other race or ethnicity. This study did not report results by age group, so the habits, preferences, and activities of youth aged 16-24 could not be analyzed specifically. However, these data present a picture of the state of health and living circumstances in Indian Country as a whole, which helps to define the environment for many of these youth.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) covers substance abuse treatment history and perceived need for treatment, personal and family income sources and amounts, health care



access and coverage, illegal activities and arrest record, problems resulting from the use of drugs, perceptions of risks, and needle-sharing.

It is broken down by age group, with categories of 12-17 years of age, 18-25 years of age, 26-34 years of age, and aged 35 and above. There were 593 Native American subjects out of the total of 54,079. The following table compares the Native American subjects to persons of other race/ethnicity.

As shown in Table 5, Native American adults made up 1% of the population surveyed, about their proportion of the total U.S. population. They differed from the rest of the population in marital status (fewer Native Americans reported being married, and more divorced or separated); in overall health (fewer reporting good or excellent health, and more reporting fair); and in education (over half of Native American respondents did not complete high school, compared to 44% of the rest of those surveyed).



Table 5: Demographic Comparison of Native American Subjects to Persons of Other Race/Ethnicity in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

VARIABLE	NUMBER	PERCENT
Race		
Non-Hispanic White	37,353	69%
Non-Hispanic Black	6,627	12%
Non-Hispanic Native American	593	1%
Non-Hispanic Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	263	.5%
Non-Hispanic Asian	1,501	3%
Non-Hispanic More Than One Race	953	2%
Hispanic	6,789	13%
	Native American (n=593)	Other Race/Ethnicity (n=53,486)
Age category, Native American compared to all others		
12-17 years old	33%	33%
18-25 years old	34%	33%
26-34 years old	9%	10%
35 or older	25%	24%
Gender, Native American compared to all others		
Male	47%	48%
Female	53%	52%
Marital status, Native American compared to all others		
Married	20%	27%
Widowed	1%	2%
Divorced or separated	10%	6%
Never been married	50%	48%
Aged less than 18 (NA)	19%	17%
Overall health, Native American compared to all others		
Excellent	21%	30%
Very Good	33%	40%
Good	34%	24%
Fair	9%	5%
Poor	2%	1%
Education, Native American compared to all others		
Fifth grade or less	4.4%	2.8%
Sixth grade	5.2%	6%
Seventh grade	6.4%	6%
Eighth grade	8.1%	6.8%
Ninth grade	6.9%	6.9%
Tenth grade	9.4%	7.4%
Eleventh grade	10.5%	8.1%
Less than High School degree	51%	44%
Twelfth grade (High School degree)	27.2%	22.9%
College Freshman	6.2%	7.2%
College Sophomore or Junior	10.5%	11.9%
College Senior or graduate school	5.2%	13.9%



Table 6: Use of Tobacco, Illegal Substances, by Age Groups 12-17 and 18-25 Years: Native American Compared to Other Race/Ethnicity in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH)

QUESTION	NATIVE AMERICAN (n=593)	OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=53,486)
Ever smoked a cigarette? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	51%	34%
Age 18-25	83%	72%
Age 26 or older	83%	75%
Ever used marijuana/hashish? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	39%	21%
Age 18-25	68%	55%
Age 26 or older	59%	47%
Ever used cocaine (crack)? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	NS	NS
Age 18-25	11%	4%
Age 26 or older	NS	NS
Ever used LSD (acid)? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	5%	3%
Age 18-25	21%	17%(p<.05)
Age 26 or older	17%	13%
Ever used PCP (angel dust)? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	3%	1%
Age 18-25	5%	3%
Age 26 or older	6%	4%
Ever used peyote? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	7%	<1%
Age 18-25	9%	2%
Age 26 or older	14%	3%
Ever used mushrooms? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	6%	2%
Age 18-25	17%	14%
Age 26 or older	12%	10%
Ever inhaled gasoline or lighter fluid? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	NS	NS
Age 18-25	10%	3%
Age 26 or older	9%	2%
Ever inhaled glue, shoe polish, or toluene? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	6%	5%
Age 18-25	5%	3%
Age 26 or older	5%	2%
Ever inhaled spray paints? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	NS	NS
Age 18-25	4%	1%
Age 26 or older	3%	<1%



Table 6: Continued

QUESTION	NATIVE AMERICAN (n=593)	OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=53,486)
Ever inhaled other aerosol sprays? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	NS	NS
Age 18-25	5%	2%
Age 26 or older	NS	NS
Use alcohol last month? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	NS	NS
Age 18-25	54%	62%
Age 26 or older	46%	56%
Use marijuana last month? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	17%	8%
Age 18-25	NS	NS
Age 26 or older	NS	NS
Use any illicit drug last month? (Yes)		
Age 12-17	21%	12%
Age 18-25	27%	20%(n<.05)
Age 26 or older	NS	NS

Table 6 shows differences that were statistically significant between Native Americans and other respondents in their use of alcohol or illegal substances. In every category of drug use, Native American respondents reported higher use except in alcohol use within the last month, in which a lower percentage of Native American youth aged 18-25 and adults over 26 reported using alcohol within the last month compared to persons of other race/ethnicity.

Of note are the high percentages of youth aged 12-17 who reported that they have smoked cigarettes, used marijuana/hashish, hallucinogenic mushrooms, and peyote. Native American youth aged 18-25 were also more likely than others to have tried unusual substances such as gasoline or lighter fluid, glue, shoe polish, toluene, spray paints, or other aerosol sprays, although these percentages were small.



Table 7: Attitudes of Native American Respondents Compared to Those of Other Race/Ethnicity Respondents in the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) Regarding the Use of Alcohol/Drugs, by Age Group

QUESTION	NATIVE AMERICAN (n=593)	OTHER RACE/ETHNICITY (n=53,486)
How would neighbors feel about adults drinking daily? 18-25 year olds - Disapprove	43%	36%
How do you feel about adults smoking 1+ packs cigarettes per day? 18-25 year olds - Neither approve or disapprove	43%	35%
How would parents feel about your smoking 1+ packs cigarettes per day? 12-17 year olds - Neither approve or disapprove	12%	4%
How you feel about friends using marijuana monthly 12-17 year olds – Neither approve or disapprove	26%	19%
How did you get the last marijuana used? (12-17 year olds)		
Bought it	45%	33%
Traded for something else	8%	2%
Got for free, shared someone else's	47%	64%
Grew yourself	0	1%
Wanted/trying to cut down/stop drinking last 12 mos.		
18-25 year olds	48%	32%
Over 26 year olds	46%	25%
Did cut down or stop drinking at least once past 12 mos.		
12-17 year olds	72%	46%
Over 26 year olds	40%	25%
How difficult to get the following		
Probably impossible, age 12-17		
LSD	50%	34%
Cocaine	50%	32%
Crack	53%	32%
Heroin	59%	39%
Probably impossible, age 18-25		
LSD	38%	21%
Cocaine	31%	18%
Crack	36%	23%
Heroin	55%	30%

Table 7 shows the percentage of Native Americans and other respondents who differed significantly on questions related to attitudes toward cigarettes, alcohol, and marijuana. As shown in this table, Native American respondents were more negative than other respondents toward alcohol use than toward the use of cigarettes or marijuana. They were also much more likely to want/try to stop drinking,



with 72% of Native Americans aged 12-17 and 40% of those over 26 either stopping or trying to stop drinking in the past 12 months.

Over half of students aged 12-17 reported they found it “probably impossible” to get LSD, cocaine, crack, and heroin. This group of youth also was more likely than others of the same age to buy marijuana or trade something for it and less likely to get it for free. A higher percentage of Native American respondents than other respondents aged 18-25 also reported it was probably impossible to get LSD, cocaine, crack, and heroin, but the percentages were lower than in the younger Native American group. Persons over 26 did not differ significantly in the two groups.

A recent analysis of Native Americans in this data set appeared in *Risk and Protective Factors for Substance Abuse Among American Indians or Alaska Native Youths* (SAMHSA, 2004). This report focused on risk and protective factors among Native American youth compared to all other youth and used different variables than those selected by NICWA staff. Conclusions of the report were that Native American youth were more likely to perceive moderate to no risk of substance abuse, that a larger percentage of American Indian youth did not perceive strong parental disapproval of substance abuse, and that Native American youth were more likely to believe that all or most of the students in their school get drunk at least once a week. These results demonstrate that looking at different variables in a database can lead to different conclusions. By focusing on Native American behavior and attitudes toward alcohol abuse, NICWA staff concluded that Native American adolescents were more negative toward alcohol use and that neighbors (community members) would be more likely to disapprove of alcohol use in general than would be found among other ethnic groups. The SAMHSA study found that Native American youth and parents alike were less likely to disapprove of substance abuse in general. The NICWA findings regarding a more negative attitude toward alcohol use support the findings of the NIAAA recently reported by Grant et al. (2004), that rates of alcohol use and abuse are decreasing among Native Americans.

Comparison of Mohawk, Skokomish and National 2000 U.S. Census Data

As shown in Table 8, Native Americans made up approximately 1% of United States population in the 2000 U.S. Census. An additional 1,671,312 persons stated that they were Native American and one or more other races, for a total of 4,119,301. U.S. Census data from 2000 were compared for Mohawks, Skokomish, total Native American respondents, and the total United States population.



Table 8: Number and Percent of Persons in Each Racial Group from the 2002 U.S. Census Summary File 3⁶

Total Population	United States	Percent
White alone	211,353,725	75
Black or African American alone	34,361,740	12
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	2,447,989	1
Asian alone	10,171,820	4
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	378,782	0
Some other race alone	15,436,924	5
Two or more races	7,270,926	3
TOTAL	281,421,906	100%

Table 9 compares the Mohawk and Skokomish populations to the total Native American only population and to the total United States population, using both U.S. Census data and data from the study sites. As shown in this table, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe includes approximately 12,000 members in the United States and Canada, while the Skokomish population is less than 1,000. The Skokomish land base is also smaller than the Mohawk. Approximately 22% (2,699) of the Mohawks appear in the 2000 U.S. Census. This figure represents people were living on United States side of the St. Regis Mohawk reservation in 2000. Given these limitations of the U.S. Census data, when comparing these two populations to the total Native American and United States populations, the following observations are made:

- Median age of Mohawk, Skokomish, and total Native American populations is lower than that of the United States population; this is reflected in the higher percentage of children under age 18 and the lower percentage of people over 65 among the Native American populations.
- Mohawk, Skokomish, and Native American U.S. Census data indicate the following differences relative to the U.S. population as a whole:
 - A higher percentage of households with one or more non-relatives
 - A higher percentage of persons who had not completed high school
 - A lower percentage of persons with Bachelor’s or Master’s degrees
 - A lower median household income
 - A higher percentage of persons whose sources of income were supplemental social security, public assistance, or “other income”
 - A higher percentage of persons with income below the poverty level
 - Fewer one-person households and more households with five or six persons

⁶ United States Census Summary File 3, <http://factfinder.census.gov>



Table 9: Comparison of Mohawk and Skokomish Populations to United States and Native American Population from the 2000 U.S. Census Summary File 4⁷

CHARACTERISTIC	MOHAWK	SKOKOMISH	TOTAL U.S. NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATION	TOTAL U.S. POPULATION
Geographic size ⁸	14,000 acres in U.S.;	7,500 acres in Canada		
Population ⁹	12,000	825		
Population on reservation (source: U.S. Census)	2,699	704		
Median age	30	32	29	35
% Population aged 16-24	14%	15%	17%	13%
Age				
Under 18	34%	32%	34%	26%
65 and over	8%	10%	6%	12%
% of households with one or more non-relatives	14%	22%	16%	10%
Knowledge of Native language				
% aged 5-17 who know language	1%	1%	13%	
% aged 18-64 who know language	10%	2%	16%	NA
% over 65 who know language	24%	6%	24%	
Where people work - over 16				
State of residence	99%	99%	96%	96%
County of residence	75%	85%	78%	73%
Education of persons over 25				
Less than HS degree	33%	29%	29%	20%
HS degree	31%	32%	29%	29%
Some college	19%	21%	24%	21%
Associate's	10%	6%	7%	6%
Bachelor's	3%	7%	8%	16%
Master's	4%	6%	3%	8%
Working females (over age 16) with children				
Working with children under age 6	67%	38%	59%	63%
Working with children aged 6-17	86%	84%	69%	75%
Working with no children	47%	36%	52%	52%
Median household income in 1999	\$32,664	\$25,156	\$30,599	\$41,994
Percent of persons with income below poverty level 1999	22%	28%	26%	12%

⁷ US Census Summary File 4, <http://factfinder.census.gov>

⁸ From Mohawk and Skokomish sites

⁹ *ibid.*



Table 9. Continued

CHARACTERISTIC	MOHAWK	SKOKOMISH	TOTAL U.S. NATIVE AMERICAN POPULATION	TOTAL U.S. POPULATION
Sources of income (one person may appear in more than one category)				
Wages and salary	78%	70%	81%	78%
Self employment	10%	5%	10%	12%
Social Security	21%	28%	18%	26%
Supplemental Social Security	9%	6%	8%	4%
Public assistance	7%	15%	10%	3%
Retirement income	17%	15%	11%	17%
Other income	19%	15%	18%	13%
Household size				
1-person	23%	14%	20%	26%
2-person	23%	28%	26%	33%
3-person	18%	26%	18%	17%
4-person	18%	18%	16%	14%
5-person	11%	10%	10%	7%
6-person	4%	2%	5%	2%
7 or more person	3%	2%	5%	2%

The available U.S. Census data show that the Mohawk and Skokomish subsets match the Native American population more closely than the U.S. population in several areas, including age, number of non-relatives and total persons in a household, percentage of male and female heads of household, fewer high school graduates and fewer persons with higher degrees, lower household income, and higher percentages of persons who receive Supplemental Social Security and public assistance income.

Some differences among the Mohawk, Skokomish, and total Native American populations are worth noting, keeping in mind possible bias in the U.S. Census data from the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. The Skokomish and total Native American populations are more likely than the U.S. population to have responsibility for their grandchildren; yet the Mohawk grandparents who completed the U.S. Census live with their grandchildren a longer time than was reported by Skokomish grandparents. This may reflect a presence of more three-generation households among the Mohawk.

The Mohawks who completed the U.S. Census were more likely than the Skokomish to know their native language, but both sites reported fewer people overall who know their language than the total Native American population. This is one area in which U.S. Census data collected from the more traditional Native people could change results dramatically, as the people least likely to complete the survey are those most likely to speak a language other than English.

Almost all of both the Skokomish and Mohawk people who completed U.S. Census data stayed within their state to work, but Skokomish stayed within their county as well. This reflects both the lack of jobs off the reservation for the Skokomish and the mobility off the reservation for Mohawk men, especially



steel workers, many of whom travel to New York City and other large urban areas in the state to work. A finding that 9% of Mohawks travel to work by motorcycle is interesting; during a site visit to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, research staff from NICWA noticed and were told about the many all-terrain vehicles (ATVs), which could be included in the “motorcycle” designation in U.S. Census data, on the reservation.

According to U.S. Census data, more Mohawks are enrolled in college, and more Mohawks receive associate degrees, than the Skokomish, all Native Americans, or all persons in the United States. The Skokomish have many fewer people enrolled in college than the Mohawks, all Native Americans, or the total population. The Mohawk reservation is located adjacent to several New York State colleges.

U.S. Census data indicate that the Skokomish also differ in the percentage of women who stay home with children under age six. About a third (38%) of Skokomish women with children under age six work, compared to two thirds of the Mohawks, half of all Native Americans, and two thirds of the total United States population. However, percentages are still lower for Skokomish women who have no children, indicating that these results may be due to lack of job opportunities rather than to the presence of children under age six in the home. The Skokomish also reported a higher percentage of people living on public assistance.

These similarities and differences between the sample populations of Mohawk and Skokomish people, the total Native American population, and the total U.S. population indicate that, in general, the two sample populations appear to be representative of the total Native American population, although they differ from each other in important ways.

Site Visits

Focus groups and key informant interviews were held with youth, parents, elders, program staff, and tribal council members at the Skokomish and Mohawk tribal communities during the summer of 2004. Questions were grouped in quadrants identified in the relational worldview model: environment (context); infrastructure (mental); resources (physical); and mission (spiritual realm). A summary of the focus group and individual interview findings is presented below by site (i.e., Skokomish Tribal Nation and St. Regis Mohawk Tribe). The information is summarized using the four quadrants of the relational worldview model as a framework (i.e., environment, infrastructure, resources, and mission). The final part of this analysis includes a discussion of similarities and differences between the two sites and a discussion of balance among the four quadrants.

Skokomish Tribal Community Environment

In the relational worldview environment quadrant, questions were designed to provide a picture of the community social context for youth aged 16-24. Questions were in the categories of political leadership (internal and external); community views (internal and external); community support (internal and external); tribal history; community views of the economic environment; and community views of the educational environment. Within these categories, “internal” referred to the environment on the



reservation, and “external” referred to the environment in the surrounding mainstream communities and institutions.

Political Leadership

The connection of tribal community leadership to youth is a tenuous one and may occur through indirect channels such as family contacts. The political leadership funds some programs for youth but does not focus on this age group specifically. There are many other priorities the leadership spends its time on. The youth felt that the political leaders probably see them in a negative light, although they were not sure of this. There was general agreement that the political leadership on the reservation needs to address issues facing this group.

Externally, tribal members felt there was no positive assistance for youth, and there may be much negativity and generalization of bad attitudes toward all Skokomish youth. Yet there appears to be much the outside political leadership can do to support youth, such as advocating for the inclusion of education classes about traditional Native ways and being involved in the community itself through visits or attendance at tribal council meetings.

Community Views

Focus group and interview findings suggest that the community is concerned about its children’s upbringing. However, there was a range of positive and negative attitudes toward Skokomish youth aged 16-24. Youth are seen as vulnerable to many influences, and community members often associated youth with experimenting with or using drugs and alcohol. Adults felt that many youth were not proud to be Indian and give up too easily. Tribal council members interviewed felt that youth have great potential but need guidance, direction, and accountability. “We ignore them by accident,” one leader commented. The youth argued that they have a poor relationship with tribal police, which has created a negative image of youth in the entire community. This negative view is based on perceived harassment and stereotyping by tribal police who don’t care and who don’t know enough about the Skokomish community. Some comments were, “They harass us and make us look hard core. They think we’re drug addicts, they think we’re bad.” Despite this strained relationship, youth expressed a desire to have better relationships with tribal police.

Some youth in the community who are perceived as being successful and involved were raised in traditional Skokomish households, and there was a perceived relationship of tradition to success and wellness. Elders who lived through the boarding school era, the termination policies, and other efforts to assimilate Indian children expressed a desire to expose youth to the culture they had been denied. This included the stories, ceremonies, language, and spiritual practices of their ancestors but also, as one elder put it, “culture is more than crafts, it is having a role in the community, whether basket-maker or caregiver, or spiritual or political leader.” The youth themselves were awakening to this realm of knowledge and possibility. As one Skokomish elder put it, “We are waiting for the right people to wake up.”



The attitudes toward Skokomish youth of individuals living outside the Skokomish community are perceived as very negative. According to one participant, these attitudes and stereotypes include “lazy, destructive, get pregnant, go on welfare, get a lot of money from the government or from casino, or are bad parents.” The majority of people interviewed felt that there is a lot of external racism and that external communities held an opinion that there isn't anybody worth saving on the reservation. According to staff, some of the factors contributing to the negative views toward Skokomish youth included misperceptions about the treatment of American Indians in regard to money, rights, and support given unfairly to tribal members.

Community Support

Some of the strengths identified by the focus group and interview participants were: energetic, positive people who believe changes can be made and are working to make a difference; the youth council; and the rich tribal culture and tradition. Parents participating in the focus group identified spirituality, religion, and the parents themselves as community strengths. Youth interviewed mentioned the GED program, Chum Run, the canoe journey, and the community garden as strengths. Elders interviewed identified additional strengths including the people who work for the tribe, a sense of camaraderie within the community, the education center (and computers), and the values learned during the canoe journey. In terms of barriers to community support and acceptance of youth, the elders pointed out the busyness of life, apathy, lack of interest, historical trauma, and the loss of traditions and culture as barriers to community support. One elder said, “When people had connection to their spirit they were able to overcome just about anything. Without connection to their spirit, people are depressed and have despair and they use drugs and alcohol to cope with depression, which only creates more barriers.”

Strengths in the outside community that could help youth were related to sources of funding and more services, activities, and programs for the Skokomish community. Tribal members did not see the need for youth to go outside the community to obtain assistance but wanted the assistance to be brought in. Teaching Pacific Northwest tribal history in the outside community, especially in the high school, was mentioned as an important way to educate and involve members of the external community in understanding and assisting youth.

Tribal History

The tribe's first recorded direct contact with European culture came in 1792 and resulted in a devastating smallpox epidemic that took the lives of many. There were nine Twana bands, the largest being known as the Skokomish or “big river people.” The Twana subsisted on hunting, fishing, and gathering activities; practicing a nomadic lifestyle during warmer weather; and resettling at permanent sites during the winter. Twana descendants live on the Skokomish Reservation, and all have become known as the Skokomish Tribe.



Elders interviewed talked a great deal about being sent away to boarding schools where they suffered humiliation, loneliness, and fear. Elders also discussed the time after World War II when partying and drinking alcohol was accompanied by blaming the previous generation for their problems. The historical events that have occurred, accompanied by modern technology, have created a feeling of displacement among tribal members. There is less socializing, a decline in religion and spirituality, and a sense of lost kinship. There was a perception that youth are angry because they must deal with the problems of inferiority, racism, oppression, and survival of the generations before them.

There are many important traditional Skokomish values and rituals that help youth cope. The revival of the canoe journey last year marked the community's first canoe journey in a century. Along with members of the Squaxin, Nisqually, Puyallup, and Muckleshoot tribes, Skokomish members make 50-foot canoes and spend three weeks paddling from the Skokomish Tribal Nation to a different distant destination each year in a celebration of culture and tradition. Traditional rituals that signify a transition for youth to adulthood include taking on more responsibilities in the home and with their family (e.g., taking care of brothers and sisters), naming ceremonies, learning to fish and hunt, and choosing or accepting spirituality as important milestones. As youth age, they may also begin to dig clams or geoduck and may participate in the canoe journey. Youth interviewed expressed a desire to learn about their cultural traditions and rituals. Elders interviewed felt that learning how to be in balance was an important part of entering adulthood. As one elder stated,

The process or rituals your family gives you are important. When I was younger, my dad took us to the river and into the woods to gather natural foods, to show us what you can eat. He taught us to make friends with the forest as we walk in, to talk to what we can and cannot see, to only take what we need, and to acknowledge that something there owns it. Making friends with the natural world is important. . . . Even though we are modern we hold on to these traditions and values. They are more precious to me than my wallet. Learning how to balance yourself is a ritual.

Economic Environment

There are very few job opportunities for Skokomish youth aged 16-24. The few opportunities that are available include geo-ducking, clam-digging, and fishing, or working at the community garden, the summer recreation program, the tribal casino, the tribal store, or the fishery. Fishing and shellfish activities depend on healthy natural resources in the area, knowledge and skills, and a market to sell to. A certain percentage of each person's earnings must also go back to the tribe.

Educational Environment

Views of and support for education at Skokomish Tribal Nation vary. Some adults who have had a bad experience themselves do not value education for youth, and many of the youth consider the



nearby off-reservation high school a waste of time. The community provides opportunities to get a GED, so some youth do not see the need to complete high school. There are other youth who want to complete high school and college. Opportunities to obtain college credit are available on the reservation or through distance learning and some community colleges. As one youth stated, " It depends on the youth. Some think that it is very important and will plan for college. It is all about your attitude. Others don't care as much."

Opportunities for traditional education in the Skokomish community are passed on through relatives and several traditional members in the community. There are believed to be only two or three people remaining who know the traditional language. Youth know who these individuals are and are interested in having more classes on Native history, basket making, carving, and the Twana language.

Infrastructure

Questions asked in the infrastructure quadrant of the relational worldview model were designed to gauge the mind or mental aspects of reservation life for youth aged 16-24. These questions included issues like the availability of human services supports such as child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, and employment training programs; service utilization; and interagency cooperation.

Availability of Services

Focus group participants described a variety of human service programs offered through Skokomish Tribal Social Services, IHS, and the South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency (SPIPA). Briefly, SPIPA, formed in 1976, is a tribally chartered, intergovernmental agency serving five Southwestern Washington tribes. These tribes are Chehalis, Nisqually, Shoalwater Bay, Skokomish, and Squaxin Island. SPIPA provides planning, technical assistance, and direct services to each tribe's administration as well as to Native Americans residing within SPIPA's service area.

Services provided at the tribal level include child protective services, foster care, domestic violence services, and limited substance abuse services. A new family mental health center, Tuwaduq Family Services, opened in November 2004, following the site visit completed for this study. Tuwaduq identified the age group 16-24 as an underserved group and has tailored groups and community outreach programs to meet their needs. The program also offers language classes and traditional basket-weaving groups, and elders have been hired to teach traditional crafts to youngsters (personal communication from Creighton Runnette, February 2, 2005). Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) had been provided by the state, but the Skokomish were beginning to provide services on the reservation in the summer of 2004. While there is a police department, there is no probation office or correctional facility on site, and a justice visits the Skokomish Tribal Nation periodically. Lack of housing on the reservation was seen as a problem for youth who are just starting to form their own families.

Service Utilization

Some data are collected from these services, but there is no central data collection site or source. Problems with services identified by focus groups included lack of funding, high turnover, and



lack of time to accomplish all that needs to be done. Staff also felt some of the youth of this age group had an “entitlement mentality,” meaning that they felt the tribe should take care of them.

Interagency Collaboration

Although there is collaboration among services on site, more collaboration is needed with community off-site services.

Federal, State, and Tribal Policies

Federal. The only federal policy mentioned by staff was No Child Left Behind. Staff interviewed felt that this piece of legislation was more about de-funding rather than funding programs as it makes guidelines for receiving education funding more stringent.

State. The only state policy briefly mentioned by staff during the site visit was the Becca Bill (RCW 28A.225.010), enacted in July 1995. Under the Becca Bill, if a child does not attend school, the school must take steps, including adjusting or changing the child’s school program, referring the child to the truancy board, or requiring alternative program’s or services be provided. After the seventh unexcused absence during a month, the school district is required to file a petition for civil action within the juvenile court. Although this does not directly affect youth aged 16-24, it may have affected them in the past; at least one student interviewed mentioned ending up in a juvenile correction facility partly because of his high school experience. However, this legislation was described by program staff as generally “underutilized and not enforced.”

Tribal. The Skokomish Tribal Nation has a tribal youth code, and currently, language pertaining to education and truancy is being developed. Even though there is a tribal youth code, youth are also subject to other tribal codes. Staff felt that policies have been written with the best of intentions, and they mirror other codes and statutes. Staff described some policies as “unenforceable” and said that “you can leave a paper trail, but that is about it; however, you may be able to use the paper trail to help get services for youth.”

Two areas where policies have provided barriers to improving services to youth between the ages of 16 and 24 were described. First, staff felt that it is sometimes difficult to put policies into practice because once you do, people rebel against the formal written policy. Second, staff felt that a major problem exists with policy regarding juvenile offenders because even if a policy is written, it cannot be enforced as there is no way to incarcerate them either locally or at the county level, where it is difficult to place youth in county juvenile detention.



Resources

Resources are the “physical” part of the community that youth turn to for assistance in reaching adulthood. Resources include program staff, funding, youth and family involvement in services, and leadership.

Program Staff

Staff positions in human services generally require a college degree, being alcohol- and drug-free, and having the skills needed to work with children, parents, and youth. It is difficult to find and hire qualified staff, especially among tribal members not only because of the educational qualifications required but also because of what staff characterized as a lack of understanding of structure (e.g., getting to work on time and professionalism) among young people hired on site. These skills must be learned.

Funding

Funding is received from the federal government, state government, and grants. The tribal council oversees the budget and, since the tribe is self-governing, is able to move funding among categories as needed. Current levels of funding do not meet the needs of the Skokomish Tribal Nation, especially for training in traditional work and apprenticeship.

Youth and Family Involvement

There is not much involvement of families or youth in providing or supporting services. One exception is the youth council, whose members meet monthly and provide limited input to the tribal council. Youth reported they help their families and also help out with the community garden, summer recreation program, and with family functions and tournaments. They suggested a return to community sports such as basketball and baseball, which used to be played regularly on the reservation.

Leadership

Community leaders include formal leaders such as the tribal council and informal members such as traditional elders. One elder stated, “The tribal council attempts to lead – they are formal leaders. There are also informal leaders. Historically, the chief may be the person with the least worldly goods, as a true leader will give to those who are in need and would put others before self. Today, leadership is a business. What our leaders say is what we have to accept. With informal leaders they are willing to accept leadership and you can find them in religion, grassroots efforts, canoeing, drumming, and dancing.” When youth were asked about leadership, some replied that their leader is “the biggest guy.” They also mentioned a traditional Skokomish leader but said “no one has really shown the way.” Youth felt that families stay to themselves, but families have role models such as grandparents, parents, aunts, and uncles. All felt that more leadership was needed for youth aged 16-24. Good leaders, according to youth, need to know that youth have their own ideas and must listen to them.



Mission

The relational worldview model mission's quadrant is the spiritual aspect of community and includes the vision and mission of community members, spirituality, elder access and support, practice principles of the human service agencies, and cultural preservation. The spiritual realm is at the heart of community functioning, and much time was spent by focus groups in describing the ideal community for youth aged 16-24; the spiritual health of the community today, which includes access to elders, the keepers of tradition; and dreams and hopes for the future.

Vision and Mission

Some interview participants described an ideal community for youth transitioning to adulthood as a return to traditions. For example, an interviewee stated the following:

Go back in time rather than forward – traditions heal. I gather plants, berries, herbs, roots – rather see them do that as a community, as a whole. There is only a certain time when the berries are ripe and the cedar is ready to peel. When I was 16-24 I had a rough life, got there through pain, despair – but I had an elder, one person who had faith in me, an old elder from Urbane who taught me that “only our drums will help us heal.” I got involved in canoe journeys, hung out with elders and my grandmother, and they taught me the old ways of honoring – when you see a person struggling, honor them, show them you have faith in them.

Staff described Native studies, cultural classes, and rigorous academics taught by local Native American teachers. Parents mentioned that the Skokomish are from nine different bands from all up and down the canal and many feel they still belong “up there in the hills and all the territory.” They said that the Skokomish need to develop more land to live on and that they need a rediscovery process. They described a visioning process that was common 20 years ago in which the youth would go up into the hills and suggested an outdoor camp for today's youth where kids are rotated two weeks at a time and are taught culture and nature. This would be using a preventive approach to the problems of youth rather than community service after the fact.

The ideal community envisioned by staff would give youth the responsibility to design a youth center gym, skate park, and moto-cross park. There would be a Native high school and a youth center/community center that would provide after-school activities and structure. People interviewed said that the development of a youth center would provide an opportunity for all families and groups to work together toward a common goal, which would heal some long-standing differences among them. Youth's ideal community included music, a bike park, basketball and tennis courts, swimming pool, handball court, something for every sport, and an auto shop because “cars just fall apart and sit there.” Drugs and alcohol would be banned on the reservation, and there would be no public smoking. Kids



would learn skills and get an education, and families would be healthy. There would be information provided to young people about what is available spiritually. In this new community, elders stated that youth would be visiting around a lot, and working with people with drug and alcohol problems to see if they can talk to or pray with them. In order to get from the current state of the community to the ideal, participants suggested a gradual return to traditions such as the canoe journey, designed for youth, and a spiritual gathering in the winters.

Youth wanted to take the lead on developing an ideal community. They said that they would participate and lead and would help organize younger kids. Youth said they can run things, teach, help build, design, maintain, clean, and do fund raisers. Anything they can do, they will do. “The money is out there – if enough people really want it, youth will pull it together and get it done. The community,” said one youth, “needs to do something instead of just telling us we’re bad.”

Spirituality

When asked about the importance of spirituality for youth, the adults (parents, staff, elders) stated that although spirituality (the smokehouse, sweat lodge, passing down family songs, or whatever you want to follow, with participation up to the person) is very important, youth may not realize it, and there is not a lot of expression from youth about their spirituality. As one staff member stated, it is very critical for a youth to know that if he/she leaves the reservation, spirituality can sustain him/her in a wider world. Parents said that there is not much meaning for youth in spirituality, and they forget about it. They also said that youth may have heard about bad experiences people have had with church, yet people have to feel grounded in some way. Nature is another option for them, as it has spiritual values.

Most youth on the reservation agreed with the adults that they do not take spirituality seriously, although it depends on the youth. Some youth said that they do have spirituality in their lives, like “when I’m alone,” but they generally do not attend organized spiritual events. One youth said, “I go in the Smoke House, go for walks, and I can learn paddle songs.” Types of spirituality mentioned by youth included Christianity, Mother Nature, none, and “I believe in many gods, Shaker religion, animism, and Smoke House.” One youth described his/her struggle with spirituality: “On some level, it is important, but on the other levels, I do not care. I don’t have a religion, but I have a lot of different beliefs in me, and I am trying to find out what fits me.”

Elder Access and Support

In the Skokomish community, elders are treated with respect. Being an elder means, according to parents, that when you reach a certain age, you are respected and are able to speak to children and grandchildren with truth. A tribal council member agreed saying, “I know in my heart what it means to be an elder. An elder has the role of a teacher.” Elders saw themselves as those whom people reach out to for advice when they are having a hard time with drugs and alcohol or with marriage struggles. Elders wear a “spiritual hat . . . all of the time” and “are a resource if we are not afraid to be.” One elder felt that this was a big responsibility and stated,



I am afraid . . . what do I have to pass on in terms of family history and family stories? I am always teaching and telling. As an elder I have to be dependable. It means having a good sense of humor and being able to laugh. I always have to be willing to listen. I sometimes pick up youth who are walking on the road and talk with them while they are in my car. I am in a teaching role and they depend on me.

Practice Principles

The practice principles of the tribal council and the agencies that serve youth all have mission statements, but people were not sure that staff or others either knew or followed the mission statements. Values are modeled for youth by the people they come into contact with throughout the community. The size of the community is good and bad; all adults are role models, but sometimes what they model (e.g., substance abuse) is not setting a good example for youth.

Cultural Preservation

“Cultural activities,” said an elder, “provide a sense of identity, a sense of who you are, and where you came from.” According to some interviewees, rituals and ceremonies are the best thing for overcoming historical trauma, and naming ceremonies (a rite of passage) are good as a lot of responsibilities come with naming. There are also salmon ceremonies. Some interviewees thought that the Skokomish needed to develop more ceremonies to help heal the historical trauma within the community. Youth suggested more community gatherings and events like the senior picnic, since families that fight get along at community gatherings.

A tribal council member said that a traditional leader is trying to instill traditions in everyone’s hearts and minds, and a lot of things are coming full circle. At one point in time, the Skokomish were told not to follow traditions, but now they are “trying to grasp on to whatever we can.” Elders are willing to teach youth how to hunt, how to fish, and how to be self-sufficient in the world, and to teach others spirituality. Elders said the Skokomish need to get back to the grassroots of traditional beliefs by learning to respect and to take care of Mother Earth: “If we care for her, she will provide for us.” According to the elders interviewed, if you can honor yourself, you can take care of others. For example, one elder stated,

Life struggles are pieces of our life that get us to where we are at. Without these struggles, we could not become who we were meant to be. They are there to assist us, not hinder us. It is all about attitudes. Everything we experience is a lesson, and these lessons can be positive or negative. Even if an event is negative, there is usually a positive lesson.



St. Regis Mohawk Tribe Environment

In the area of “environment,” questions asked at the Mohawk site, just as with the Skokomish site, were about the area of social context for youth aged 16-24. Questions included issues of political leadership (internal and external); community views (internal and external); community support (internal and external); tribal history; community views of the economic environment; and community views of the educational environment. Within these categories, “internal” referred to the environment on the reservation and “external” referred to the environment in the surrounding mainstream community and institutions.

Political Leadership

Political leadership at Akwesasne is divided between traditional government based on the clan system and government by an elected tribal council. It is further divided because it covers both an American and a Canadian side of the reservation. The elected tribal council members said they do fund some programs for youth, although there are so many other issues to deal with that the youth are not at the top of their priority list. When they do address this age group, it is to focus attention and funds on gaps in service and not directly on the youth. Political leadership that relates to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe outside the reservation, according to focus groups, was limited. Staff said, “We aren’t anyone’s problems or we are a criminal problem.”

Community Views

Smuggling across the United States/Canada border affects the community view of youth both inside and outside of Akwesasne. Some youth who participate in smuggling can make good money and therefore do not feel they need to go to college or get a regular job. According to one youth, “It is too easy to not finish high school, do whatever you want, to do drugs and alcohol.” The adults have mixed feelings about this, as smuggling has a long tradition and does not consist only of smuggling illegal substances. The community is protective toward youth, but many adults also had negative feelings toward their use of drugs and alcohol and all-terrain vehicles, which lead to frequent accidents. Staff felt that there are many ways of being and views of the world and that youth have different opinions and views. Elders also felt that young people have to learn how to survive on their own, as their ancestors did, by learning to live off the land. As one youth stated, “Our grandparents survived residential school. That says something about our resilience.”

The external community has a negative attitude toward the youth at Akwesasne, and resistance and stereotypes are found in the schools, courts, work, environment, and media. In athletics, youth are well regarded. Youth themselves said that the farther away they go from the reservation, the more positive the attitudes are. When asked what factors shape the negative views of youth, a parent responded, “These are views that have been placed on us for years, that are carried down through the generations. They exist because we are Indian.”



Community Support

Community strengths that are in place to support youth include the Mohawk language, a strong culture, political autonomy, community ingenuity, willingness to come together in times of need, and strong family networks. These strengths were echoed by the remarks of one elder, "Our people are strong. We come from strength. Our culture is still strong." The youth mentioned the Boys and Girls Club and other programs for youth as strengths. Issues to be addressed included youth apathy, lack of financial support, family rivalry, border issues, drugs, and parental denial. According to elders, the Mohawk reservation is overcrowded, over-paved, fractionalized, and increasingly materialistic. The drug problem leads to violence, the police are not able to fight drugs and smuggling, and a lot of people have guns in their cars. Elders said that, despite the community strengths, there are too many bad influences coming into the community, and people are constantly fighting with one another.

Outside of Akwesasne, strengths that may help youth are jobs, schools, colleges, and sports programs. However, there are barriers such as racism, boundary lines, and a lack of awareness of what is available. There is a lack of attention to this age group in general.

Tribal History

The Mohawk Nation is one of six nations of the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee¹⁰) Confederacy formed by neighboring and closely related North American Native Nations: the Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora. Akwesasne is a small remnant of the original hunting grounds of the Mohawk people, who were based further south in central New York State. A Catholic mission was established at the site in 1789 and named after St. Jean Francis Regis, and the American side of the reservation is referred to as "St. Regis." Significant events in recent tribal history include removal of many community members, now grandparents, to boarding schools as children; employment as ironworkers for Mohawk men; and the recent addition of a gaming facility on the reservation.

Traditions that are still observed by the Mohawk include oral history, storytelling, dances, seasonal celebrations, and ceremonies such as the naming ceremony, vision quest, clan mother teachings, and other followings of the Longhouse. Mainstream values of youth include music, MTV, peer pressure, drugs, alcohol, material goods, and ATVs.

Economic Environment

Jobs available to Mohawk youth include government jobs, pumping gas, or working at a cigarette factory, restaurant, or casino. Jobs require a high school degree. Illegal smuggling is a big issue, as it pays well. According to elders, many Mohawks have been losing skills since the New York Power Authority built a dam, which led to loss of hunting, fishing, and medicine plant picking. The industries along the St. Lawrence River have polluted the water, and the Mohawks can no longer eat the fish safely.

¹⁰ Translated as "People of the Longhouse"



Educational Environment

There are mixed views regarding education from both adults and students. Adult members of the community who do not favor education had bad experiences themselves. Youth views on education also vary, and many times the educational system does not work well for Native kids who tend to learn differently. There are four different high schools available to youth on the reservation, two on the American side and two on the Canadian side. There are a variety of opportunities for college education off reservation. Barriers to secondary and college education are lack of motivation, lack of discipline, negative attitudes, and a lack of support. Also included are lack of resources and transportation, peer pressure, smuggling, and family pressure. Tribal council members interviewed expressed the opinion that labeling often occurs in school and that school cannot always meet special needs.

Opportunities for traditional education include the Freedom School, a cooperative school on the reservation run by volunteers and family members. The Ronatahonni Traveling College, the Longhouse, elders, and family members are also sources of traditional knowledge.

Infrastructure

As with the site visits to the Skokomish community, questions asked in the area of “infrastructure” were designed to gauge the mind or mental aspects of reservation life at St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. These questions included questions on the availability of human services and support such as child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, and employment training programs; service utilization; and interagency cooperation.

Service Availability

A wide range of social services are available to Mohawk children and families through the Akwesasne Youth Group Home, Child Care, Department of Social Services, Family Support, Indian Child Welfare, Individualized Residential Alternatives Programs, Intensive Preventive Program, Medicaid Service Coordination, STOP Domestic Violence Program, and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation. Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is available through the county, but its use is very limited due to low eligibility and the stigma attached to welfare. A restorative justice program in the community allows youth to make amends for harm done and to bring healing to victim and perpetrator alike. There are many educational opportunities, as discussed above, and limited employment and employment training options. Youth and parents felt that services in general were underutilized, but that there were few programs that specifically target youth over age 18.

Programs or facilities that are still needed are a domestic violence shelter, local inpatient and residential mental health care, and expanded substance abuse services. Probation is the only adult correctional program at Akwesasne. It is anticipated that by next year, the community will have its own court system.



Service Utilization

The state supplies data systems and analysis to the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe in the area of child welfare. Data are also collected to meet the requirements of funding sources. Within Akwesasne, each human service agency collects data separately and submits reports to the director. According to staff, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe is just starting a tribal TANF program and has a system in place to collect and report TANF-related data. Data collected from the Canadian side of the reservation are not included in American reports, yet clients may receive services from both sides of the border. There is a feeling that numbers are not as important as culture and history in making a case for more and better services to the tribe. Rather than presenting the numbers that funding sources request, the tribe would like to teach funding agencies how to understand the non-number-based Mohawk worldview. In this scenario, an argument based on cultural realities would provide evidence of need without hard data.

Interagency Collaboration

Agencies on the American side collaborate to provide services, while those on the Canadian side collaborate as well within their service area. While there is duplication or overlap of services across the border, there have been attempts to meet with Canadian systems of care and agencies in order to provide services in a coordinated manner. Taking a holistic approach to service delivery in a coordinated fashion has allowed the tribe to incorporate a cultural component throughout all of the services delivered.

State and Tribal Policies

State. New York State is amending previous child protective services (CPS) law to allow tribes to operate their own services with state funding. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe will be the first Native American tribe in the state to operate its own CPS program because it has developed a tribal-state agreement and already provides an array of child welfare services. Further, with the passage of Section 448 of Article 19-C under New York State law, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has been able to voice its concerns for children with emotional and behavioral disorders who require services from multiple providers, who are receiving limited services, who are currently on a waiting list for services, or who are not receiving needed services because of cross-border jurisdictional issues.

Tribal. To receive any tribal services, an individual has to be an enrolled member of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. Membership is determined on a case-by-case basis and requires ¼ blood quantum and matrilineal clan identification.

In terms of tribal policies specifically aimed at youth, there is a tribal curfew for youth under the age of 18, and the elected tribal council is currently looking into an ATV policy that would mirror the traditional council's ATV policy. Further, according to tribal council members interviewed, a donation policy is currently being developed to support youth activities. In exchange for a business donation to a youth organization or agency, youth must participate in community service activities. According to tribal council members, when large agencies work together, cooperation and collaboration are imperative.



Resources

Resources are the “physical” part of the community. As in the Skokomish community, resources at the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe include program staff, funding, youth and family involvement in services, and leadership.

Program Staff

Staff who provide human services for the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe generally have college degrees, and many of them have master’s degrees. State positions are flexible in terms of requirements, except for training requirements, and in some instances, staff need to be trained by the state rather than by persons from the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. The primary issue that affects staff is the co-location of the Mohawk Nation in the United States and Canada and within Canada in two separate provinces, Quebec and Ottawa. This leads to the need to work closely with Canadian counterparts in both provinces, as families, children, and youth live and travel freely among the different jurisdictions.

Funding

Funding comes from federal, state, and tribal sources. As a self-governing tribe, the Mohawks operate services formerly operated directly by the IHS and the BIA. The tribal council oversees funding of programs, but gives tribal programs wide latitude in how to run services. Gaps in funding occur, and the tribal council works to cover them as best as possible.

Youth and Family Involvement

There was a mixed response on whether or not tribal youth and their families are involved in tribal services. Both parents and staff felt that youth were not too involved in planning and that things were generally done for them. The more traditional approach, such as that which the group home incorporates, is more likely to involve people in planning. The Youth Summit 2006 (an Indigenous youth summit) is planned for Akwesasne. It is anticipated that approximately 50,000 youth will be in attendance at the Youth Summit. Families are sometimes involved in services, and there are Longhouse singers and AA groups led by parents. The only activity youth mentioned that they were involved in was picking up garbage around the community on Earth Day.

Leadership

According to one elder, “leadership comes from within a person.” Leaders mentioned included educators, church leaders, elders, library teachers who teach basket-making, chiefs, schoolteachers who influence kids, and Indian professionals (there are three medical doctors and three lawyers). Elders said that the traditional council is very involved and that when you have a problem, you can go to your clan. Clan mothers, chiefs, faith keepers, and people who are knowledgeable about the traditions are the leaders in the community, they said. Parents felt that the tribal council could better lead by securing more funding for more places like the Boys and Girls Club or by securing funding for a high school on



the reservation. According to tribal council members, the parents need to be more involved in Boys and Girls clubs to show their leadership skills in order to train kids to be leaders. There used to be a youth leadership council, and it should be started again.

Challenges to developing leadership among the youth were apathy, educating people about the needs of youth aged 16-24, need for a consistent message, the rural nature of the community, and confusion regarding whether or not the elected or traditional council members are the real leaders. Role models mentioned by youth included “someone who goes to college and actually finishes,” people in the community who went to the Olympics, people who excel in sports, and clan mothers and elders since “they went through a lot, they know our language and how everything once was.” Off-reservation role models included nationally recognized figures who are Native American, such as Senator Ben Nighthorse-Campbell, business people, athletes, teachers, and famous artists.

Mission

The mission quadrant is the spiritual aspect of community. Included in this area are the vision and mission of community members, spirituality, elder access and support, practice principles of the human service agencies, and cultural preservation.

Vision and Mission

The ideal community envisioned at the Mohawk site would primarily be a unified community with no multiple jurisdictions - one single nation territory with one central government body with representatives from traditional council and tribal council and Canadian and American constituents. According to one parent, “Some programs and customs put borders on us.” A unified, sovereign community sets a positive image for youth. If community leaders have more of a say as to what is set in place, “kids will truly have role models.” Ideas for an ideal community included traditional elements such as widespread use of the Mohawk language, more schools to teach the Mohawk language and traditions, and more singing societies and traditional speakers. There would also be well paying jobs that would remove the temptation to get involved in smuggling. Human services would be integrated in one place and would include housing to meet the needs of youth as well as needs for respite and domestic violence programs and other services such as wraparound services for new parents. The ideal community would have a youth center with a movie theatre, bowling alley, pool tables, dance areas, recreation facilities, and room for socials. There would be opportunities for college education on the reservation.

People spoke about the need for the old family ways to come back and wanted families, along with tribal leaders and businesses and program staff, to have a role in creating the ideal community. Adults need to be more involved with the youth so that they will understand the cultural values. So far, adults and elders have not been able to find a way to lead them and “to take their hands and walk with them.”



To get from the current situation to the ideal, trust is needed. Both (traditional and elected) councils need to be mobilized: “We just need to plan and do it.” According to elders, youth could play a more vital role in the community by learning traditions. There are some youth aged 16-24 at Akwesasne who have learned traditional ways and who are seen as successful role models for other youth. These include girls who participate in the Daughters of Tradition, a program supported by outside funding that teaches traditional ceremonies, dress, and behavior to teen girls.

Spirituality

Everyone agreed that spirituality is very important, and youth at the Mohawk reservation are being taught to increase traditional ways through methods such as language immersion. Spirituality swings back and forth, and a lot of people are finding it through the Longhouse. Everyone agreed that spirituality is very important for youth preparing for adulthood in order to have a healthy lifestyle. One elder asked a poignant question, “If you don’t have a spirit, who are you?” Youth have to be balanced. Spirituality is the beginning of everything. One staff person stated that the loss of spirituality is “destroying our people. The connection to earth is important. A lot of people get caught up in the act and are just going through the motions – it is not coming from the heart.” Some youth agreed that spirituality is very important “because we are the next generation, and if we don’t learn about the Mohawk culture, it will be gone.” Spirituality is also considered important at the agency level, and some agencies include talking circles and sweat lodges as part of their services.

Elder Access and Support

Most elders did not see themselves in a leadership role with youth, although they said they were available for members of their own families if needed. Tribal councils on both the American and Canadian sides of the reservation seek the opinions of elders, and they are valued in the traditional council, where elders play a leadership role. Barriers to youth/elder contact were due to comfort levels between both groups and due to the need for many youth to leave the reservation in order to make a living. It was suggested that this be addressed by providing more opportunities for interaction such as canoe building or even taking a walk together. The Longhouse also provides opportunities for roles and interaction of both youth and elders.

Cultural Preservation

Cultural pieces that are important to supporting youth aged 16-24 include language, medicine, and “all of it because it all fits together (e.g., Great Law, creation story, and songs). This all comes from within.” One elder stated, “Anything that you do culturally will help to produce men and women of the good mind.” Swimming in the river, even though it is polluted, “brings a certain joy. It is just as important as dancing in the Longhouse.” The Longhouse, socials, ceremonies, songs, healing societies, rites of passage, basket making, and language were mentioned by staff, tribal council, parents, and youth. Also



mentioned was the importance of maintaining balance in life, medicine wheel, and the way that incorporating these teachings in your life helps to maintain control.

When asked what youth do to have fun, some of the things mentioned were watching movies, playing video games, drinking, playing sports such as lacrosse and hockey, riding bikes, skating, swimming, smoking, riding around, riding 4-wheelers, or participating in cultural activities. An elder said that youth “go to socials. If there are no socials, they ride ATVs, play sports, and taunt local police.” More cultural programs are needed that educate youth about stories, ceremonies, and language and teach them dances and songs. All agreed that more contact and communication were needed across generations.

When youth were asked what they see themselves doing in five years they mentioned the following: work, college, and learning more Mohawk language and other traditions. They hope for a clean river for fishing and swimming. One youth’s hope was “to be able to say that I have made a difference somewhere to somebody.”

Summary – Site Visits

The importance of the four elements of the relational worldview model is not inherent in the elements themselves but is based on whether or not they are in balance. Following is an analysis of the similarities and differences between the two sites in the relative strength and health of the four elements of the relational worldview model.

Environment

Differences in Environment. There are important differences between the two tribal communities participating in this study. First, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe is much larger than the Skokomish Tribal Nation and is more diverse, separated, and divided. There are numerous governments, confusion over leadership roles, and very strong traditional and mainstream cultures that often clash. Second, Mohawk youth have less of an idea about what their role is in the community than Skokomish youth. They are more unsure, doubtful, and apathetic about where they fit in the future of their community.

Similarities in Environment. Despite drastic geographical and historical differences between there are many similarities the environments of the Skokomish and the St. Regis Mohawk people. At both sites, elected tribal council members are interested and eager to learn and help their youth but are constantly dealing with multiple demands and immediately significant issues to which they must respond. There is still an “us vs. them” mentality with regard to the outside community. Tribal members and youth feel separated from the outside community, and relationships are often strained. The barriers to securing support for youth are numerous and are similar in both communities. Both communities expressed the desire for more proactive and preventative services, which suggests a great deal of motivation and energy to help their community. Throughout the interviews and focus groups, both



communities also expressed a strong desire to have a youth center where older youth would be able to gather in a safe place.

Infrastructure

Differences in Infrastructure. The major difference in infrastructure between the St. Regis Mohawk and Skokomish communities is the community size. Skokomish is a very small community with limited resources, and St. Regis Mohawk is much larger with many more resources. Each community has different ways of accessing services. For example, at Skokomish, many services are accessed through the South Puget Intertribal Planning Association (SPIPA), and youth often get sent to another community due to a lack of local services. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has many more options than Skokomish, and, as one respondent said, “services are often underutilized.” The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe’s child welfare infrastructure is extensive in relation to Skokomish, where there are only two Indian child welfare (ICW) workers. However, services for youth aged 16-24 are still limited at the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe.

The availability of mental health services differs between the communities. Skokomish youth have difficulty finding mental health services¹¹ in the surrounding areas, while at the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, there are several outpatient mental health services supported by the tribe, the county, and the state. There is also a major difference in community justice and juvenile justice services for youth. Skokomish expressed a strong need for more services, starting with a probation officer, in the area of juvenile justice because of a strained relationship between youth and police. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has an effective restorative justice project but still finds relationships with the police problematic.

Similarities in Infrastructure. Despite differences in the size of the communities and availability of services, there are also many infrastructure needs these communities share. Both have very limited welfare-related services, and both are just starting their own TANF programs. They have similar education environments, although the number of colleges in the Akwesasne area is much higher than around Skokomish Tribal Nation. However, there are opportunities for distance learning and nearby education, and the issue seems to be educating youth about resources and helping them access available opportunities rather than a lack of opportunities. Both sites have a desire and a need for independent living facilities, a local family court, and adult corrections. Both sites also have difficulty accessing inpatient mental health services. Finally, both sites have had difficulty with service utilization data but for different reasons. Skokomish has fewer data sources and data collection opportunities than the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. One reason for this is that the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe receives some assistance from the state in data collection; however, due to the co-location of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe in two countries, complete data are lacking.

¹¹ However, following the site visits in August 2004, a new mental health service program was created with services targeted to this age group.



Resources

Differences in Resources. Program staff issues differed slightly between the sites. The primary issue that affects the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe program staff's ability to provide effective services is the co-location of the Mohawk Nation in both the United States and Canada. Although there are funding needs at both sites, the specific areas of need differ. Skokomish funding needs appeared greater than those of the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe. Skokomish focus group and interview participants highlighted needs in the areas of training in traditional work and apprenticeship, while the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe focus group and interview participants mentioned funding for Medicaid reimbursement for developmental disabilities, an area that can perhaps only be addressed after the crucial needs for housing, employment, and other services have been met. Youth involvement is also very different at the two sites. The majority of Skokomish youth are involved in or are aware of the strong and visible youth council present in the community. At Akwesasne, youth are not generally involved in the planning of things and generally don't feel their ideas or opinions are important.

Similarities in Resources. Educational requirements of program staff are similar in that most involve college degrees and, increasingly, master's degrees. Both communities are self-governing tribes, but the funding available does not meet either community's needs. In both communities, there is some family involvement with services but only on the reservation or within their tribal community. Leadership takes many forms in both these tribal communities, and there is no lack of leaders. These leaders include traditional leaders and healers, elders, educators, family members, and other youth. At both sites, participants felt that adults needed to take a bigger role in encouraging youth leadership as they transition to adulthood.

Mission

Differences in Mission. Differences between the two sites regarding mission and values were due primarily to differences in Mohawk and Skokomish cultures and traditions. Skokomish culture involves such things as preserving the Twana language, clam-digging, basket-weaving, and the canoe journey, while Mohawk culture involves preserving the Mohawk language, the Great Law, the Longhouse, ceremonies, and healing societies. More of the Mohawk people knew the Mohawk language, and there were more opportunities for youth to learn it than at Skokomish, where only a few people still know Twana. Another difference was that the Skokomish elders had more motivation for involvement with youth than did the St. Regis Mohawk elders.

Similarities in Mission. There are many similarities between Skokomish and Akwesasne in the mission quadrant. Both communities expressed the desire for an ideal community to be unified, with a return to the traditional ways and language. There would be a youth center, more job opportunities, and a tribal college in each community's ideal vision. Both communities mentioned the importance of



spirituality to their people and the role of spirituality for youth in transition. Elders are important in both communities. Elders felt they could be doing more to help youth as they transition to adulthood.

Balance

Balance among the four quadrants of the relational worldview is good at both sites. At both sites the area of spirituality, or mission, is very strong and provides a foundation for the environment, infrastructure, and resources. Spiritual issues were brought up throughout the interviews and focus groups in all four areas of discussion. Changes to the systems that would lead to perfect balance are also the recommendations made by youth, elders, parents, and staff at both sites and the recommendations of this report.

Policy Analysis

Funding and Program Access

Policy regarding services provided by sovereign Indian nations is a complex issue. Policies that affect Native American youth aged 16-24 may be federal, state, or tribal in nature. Due to the far reach of the United States government, the most compelling of these are the federal policies that affect human services, education, and work. The effects of these policies on tribal communities are further complicated by issues of state jurisdiction, tribal status, and federal funding. State policies are usually tied to federal-state funding for human services and are primarily available to tribal communities only if a state-tribal agreement is in place. In addition, tribal policies can either restrict or expand services available to youth within the parameters of state and federal policy. In this study, the major findings were examined for policy implications that could help describe impacts on the ability of this population to access supportive services and community support in their journey to adulthood. The findings point to policies at the tribal, state, and federal levels that have some impact on services and community supports for Native American youth in these two tribal communities. Some of the policies that are implicated have long histories with tribal communities and others are more recent, within the last 10 years. There are also findings that do not readily support relationships to formal policy but may have some relationship to informal policies that have developed over time in the form of practices that have become commonplace.

Much of the data collected, both at the national and tribal levels, illustrate the disproportionate rate of social problems that exist for youth and young adults between the ages of 16-24. These include higher than average rates of poverty, health problems, alcohol and substance abuse, crowded housing, teen births, low educational achievement, and foster care placement. These rates have changed little over the last 25 years and can be explained in part by the inability of tribes to offer adequate supportive and treatment services. Critical federal programs that offer funding to develop and operate programming designed to address these needs are often unavailable to tribal governments. Under the Social Security Act, where many of these federal programs are authorized, Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance, Independent Living, Social Services Block Grant, and Medicaid do not contain



authority for tribes to receive funding. Titles IV-E and IV-B are two major funding streams for child welfare that are provided to the states from the federal government. The Title IV-B, Subpart I, Child Welfare Services program provides funding for prevention and case management. Title IV-B, Subpart II creates Promoting Safe and Stable Families program funds and services to families to avoid the need for out-of-home placement or to promote reunification of families. The Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance programs are open-ended entitlements that provide federal matching funds for states to provide out-of-home placements and adoptions for children with special needs (Child Welfare League of America [CWLA], 2005). In the case of the Social Services Block Grant, tribal populations are counted in determining the state's allocation, but the services supported by these funds often do not reach tribal members on the tribal lands.

State Agreements

Sometimes tribes can negotiate agreements or contracts with states to pass through federal funds that they are not eligible to receive, but for most tribes this is not possible, or the arrangements the state is willing to concede to do not provide the full range of authority or funding that the state enjoys. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe has been able to develop a Title IV-E agreement with the state of New York that provides funding for IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance funding, but the Skokomish Tribal Nation does not have a Title IV-E agreement. The Skokomish Tribal Nation does receive a small grant from the state for general child welfare services, but this comes from state general fund revenue, not federal sources, and is subject to the state appropriation process.

The Foster Care Independence Program under Title IV-E provides important resources for states that are addressing the needs of youth aged 14-21 who are moving towards emancipation. Under this program, tribes are not eligible to receive direct funding, but the states are required to consult with tribes on the development and provision of services to their youth and provide services to Native American youth on the same basis as other youth in the state. This statutory language opens the door for tribes to have a greater voice in how these state services will work for their eligible youth, but it does not mandate that states share funding or offer services in a certain area. Similar requirements can be found in some other federal authorizing statutes (Title IV-B and TANF). Neither the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe nor the Skokomish Tribal Nation receives any pass-through of these funds from their states. The tribes have made some effort to access state independence services, but neither state has services that are tailored to tribal youth participation. One issue that comes up in discussion about this program is the difference between how states conceptualize independent living and how tribal communities view the journey to adulthood for their youth. Tribal concepts of this journey fit more closely with the concept of interdependence, in which the relationships and responsibilities are seen through a relational worldview that emphasizes the role within family and community as interdependent. Independent living models employed by most states are focused on helping a youth become independent and self-reliant with little focus on their role within a family or community. These profound cultural differences may underscore some of the reasons why Native Americans underutilize this program nationally.



Tribal members who do access state services that are supported by these federal funds are often forced to travel long distances in areas where public transportation is unlikely to be available and encounter services that are based upon mainstream values and approaches that run counter to tribal culture, values, traditions, and belief systems. In these situations, it is very likely that tribal members will not find the services helpful and may even feel the services are a hindrance to remedying the issues they sought services for. An additional factor in service utilization with state agencies is the issue of trust. Historically, state agencies have not always been respectful of tribal culture and Native American people. Practices included excluding tribal people from receiving state services, setting more stringent eligibility conditions for Native Americans than for others, and using personal information to coerce Native American clients in inappropriate ways. These practices became informal policies in many state agencies, causing Native American people to distrust state services and avoid them whenever possible. As tribal agencies take over more of these services, that history of distrust can create a barrier to tribal members utilizing services and to effective relationships between tribal service providers and community members. At the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, many tribal members are still suspicious of the tribal service providers' need for personal information and how that might be used.

Direct Access to Federal Funding

In programs where tribes are allowed to receive direct funding for services, such as BIA Social Services or Title IV-B Subparts 1 and 2, limits in funding may be one of the most significant barriers to helping this population achieve success in overcoming issues that plague them. Title IV-B is one of the main federal programs that states rely on to fund their child welfare services. This includes prevention and investigation of child abuse and neglect, as well as supportive services to help families address problems in family functioning and prevent the removal of their children into foster care. The Skokomish Tribal Nation is only eligible for a \$2,127 grant from Title IV-B Subpart 1 and is not eligible for any funding from Title IV-B Subpart 2 because its tribe does not have the minimum number of children needed to receive funding under the statutory formula. It should be noted that the grant from Title IV-B Subpart 1 is so small that it would not even cover the resources needed to develop an application and meet reporting requirements. The St. Regis Mohawk Tribe is eligible for direct funding from both of the Title IV-B programs, but the amounts are very small. Under Title IV-B Subpart 1, the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe is eligible for \$8,333, and, under Title IV-B Subpart 2, it is eligible for \$11,313. While both tribes receive additional funding from the BIA and the state to perform child welfare services, it is still much less than what is needed to provide adequate services and is discretionary in nature, which leaves the possibility that funding will be reduced or eliminated altogether in the future.

In some cases, the ability of tribes to provide a federally funded program is based upon their ability to attract support from state funding or services. Direct access to TANF became available to tribes in 1996, but because of the way the funding formula for tribes was written, many tribes could only run the program if they were able to secure state funding too. The funding formula for states under TANF provided an allocation based upon their historic use of federal matching funds from the Aid to Families



with Dependent Children (AFDC) funds. Since tribes were not eligible to run the AFDC program, they relied upon the state to help them establish tribal member utilization of the state program and what that constituted in federal expenditures under the program. Since only the federal match was available to tribes under the TANF authorizing statute, tribes had to come up with a way to provide the non-federal match in order to make operating the program feasible. Since the vast majority of tribes have very limited or no tribal general revenues to contribute towards a non-federal match, this meant getting a commitment from the state to provide the non-federal match portion. Thus, although both the Skokomish Tribal Nation and St. Regis Mohawk Tribe are considering submitting an application to operate the TANF program, they consider the match issue critical to their success.

Other Critical Policy Areas

There are some areas discussed during the site visits in which tribal policy can assist youth aged 16-24 in meeting their needs. It is crucial that, in assisting not only youth but also all tribal members, the tribal council has flexibility in making funding decisions. Also important are the collection and analysis of data to track the needs of this and other populations; access to higher education for this age group; and, most importantly, an understanding at the tribal level of the federal and state policy decisions that may affect the tribes and an opportunity to have some input in those decisions.

Flexibility

Besides funding availability, having flexibility to design programs and effectively integrate them with other programs is important to offering services that reflect community values and achieve the best possible outcomes. Both the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe and Skokomish Tribal Nation are designated as self-governance tribes by the BIA and receive their BIA funding through a mechanism that allows them to prioritize the targeting of funds across a broad range of program areas, including BIA Social Services programs. The tribe develops its budget priorities within the program areas that the BIA funds and then negotiates with the BIA for the amount of funds that will be available. Once the tribes receive their funding from the BIA, they have broad discretion in how they design their programs and the transfer of funds across program areas. This helps tribes not only with coordination across BIA programs but also with other federal, state, and tribal programs. However, the amount of funding is limited and discretionary.

Data Collection

Data collection and integration into planning is a critical step in raising awareness of issues that support or hinder youth progress. At the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, data are difficult both to track and to analyze because of inadequate data systems and because of differences in service providers and funding sources in the Canadian and American areas of the reservation. Tribal data capacity overall in the United States is very limited as tribes have not been funded to develop data collection and reporting systems as states have. This creates a very significant problem for tribes as they struggle not only to



plan within their own programs but also to effectively express their population's needs to funding sources and policymakers. Some of the problem results from tribes' not being included in key federal programs that finance data collection efforts. Other problems result from state agencies either not collecting data on tribal youth or, if they do collect data on tribal youth, not separating out data for Native American youth. Establishing tribal capacity to collect data, especially with a population that has such diverse needs and is involved in both youth and adult systems, can be viewed as the key to developing better policies and prioritization of resources.

Need for Inclusion

Within the Skokomish and St. Regis Mohawk tribal communities, the findings indicate that the communities were generally aware of the issues that their young people faced and that they wanted to help but were often unsure of what to do or how to do it. Participants in the study, elders, leaders, parents, and youth envisioned a community where additional opportunities to build cultural identification and social supports would be available. This included standard recreational opportunities and cultural activities, such as Native language development. However, the findings also indicate that youth and family involvement in tribal programs was not strong at either site. Overall, the findings indicated that at both sites, some of the most important conditions for success for these youth included support from their communities and families, involvement in decision-making processes that impact them, and access to their culture. Youth involvement is tied to empowerment and feelings of success. Where the tribes have invested in policies that promote the prioritization of resources and process for decision-making that reflect youth involvement, youth generally expressed more feelings of success. The Skokomish Tribal Nation has a tribal youth council that meets with the elected leadership of the tribe periodically and participates in planning and decision-making regarding issues that affect them. Leadership development has been a key component of the youth council activities. Establishing these kinds of opportunities where youth can have a voice and participate in policymaking decisions can assist the tribe in staying aware of the issues that impact youth and how these can best be addressed.

Need for Greater Emphasis on Education

Educational attainment is a key area of concern identified by many of the participants in the study. While support for securing a high school diploma and going on to college were available from both tribes, these opportunities sometimes competed with mixed messages about educational attainment. Issues such as the idea that youth who go to college don't come back to the community and that nearby mainstream schools are hostile places for tribal youth were juxtaposed with tribal leaders' and other adults' messages to pursue college and training for the benefit of self and tribe. A tribal council member at Skokomish suggested that the tribe develop an informal program where tribal youth who go on to college could receive special consideration for tribal employment after they graduated, but guarantees for employment are difficult to ensure when changes in tribal government occur. Providing clear, formal policies that articulate the value of education and inducements for completing an education



may be an important avenue to improving educational attainment for both tribes. However, this would need to work in coordination with an effort to clarify tribal values regarding education that are not policy-driven and to address community attitudes that may be barriers.

Need for Coordination and Communication

Despite the significant impact that both current and historical policies have had in shaping the environment and opportunities that tribes and their youth have, the findings indicated that while the effects of many of these policies were well understood, the connection between the policies and effects was not well understood. In general, the participants were much more aware of their local tribal and state policies than they were of federal policies. In many cases, the federal policies are the basis for the development of state and tribal policy, especially in regard to program requirements. This disconnect raised questions for the researchers about how this might impact tribal government's efforts to address the systemic issues that arise from inadequate or poorly crafted public policies that originate at the federal level. Increasing awareness within the community and by key government officials regarding federal policies and their impacts could be beneficial in helping empower this population and creating more momentum and tools for advocacy efforts.

Summary

A review of the impact of federal, state, and tribal policy on the Skokomish and Mohawk sites illustrates the major effects that federal and state policies have on tribal communities. The results of federal and state policy put tribes at a disadvantage in obtaining the resources needed to operate human service programs. Overall, tribes have few sources of federal and local funding to support services for young adults. This is borne out at the St. Regis Mohawk and Skokomish sites. Scarcity of resources, combined with tribal economies that severely limit or have no ability to raise general tribal revenues through taxes or fees, creates an environment where tribal programs have high vulnerability to losing core funding support. This makes it very difficult to plan for tribal programs to expand services, even when additional funding is available, without taking significant risks that could jeopardize basic services later.

Yet, the connection between policy decisions at the federal or state levels and the problems observed at the community level did not appear to be well understood. This situation increases the probability that tribal governments and members will continue to attempt to address issues of funding and service provision in isolation, while new or revised policies at the state or federal levels may severely impact whatever tribal decisions are made. Clearly, more inclusion of tribal input in decisions that affect them is needed, and more communication from the state and federal levels to tribal communities is called for.

Other areas were identified where tribal policy can assist tribal government in addressing the issues affecting 16-24 year olds. These were in the areas of program flexibility, increased and more accurate data collection, inclusion of youth in decision-making, and increased motivation of youth for



attaining higher education. These are areas that can be improved at the tribal level but which still need the support of policies at other governmental levels as well.

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

The needs of youth aged 16-24 have received attention recently, as parents, providers, and policymakers have begun to realize that this group of people, who are our future leaders, have been largely left out of human service provision. The percentage of these youth who are not successfully negotiating the transition to adulthood, specifically those who are neither employed or in school, is high. As stated earlier, they make up 15% of all youth between the ages of 18 and 24 in the United States (Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2004). The Annie E. Casey Foundation also states, "A significant number of these 3.8 million kids have neither the skills, supports, experience, education, nor confidence to successfully transition to adulthood. Disproportionately large shares of these youth come from minority homes and low-income families" (p. 6). The Annie E. Casey Foundation categorizes these almost four million youth as "disconnected youth." This report describes in detail some of the most disadvantaged of these young people, those who are members of Native American communities. The literature, federal databases, and U.S. Census data have been supplemented with extensive interviews at two reservation-based sites in order to ascertain not only what is occurring in the lives of these young people but also how to help them negotiate the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Literature

According to the literature, Native American teens and young adults have higher teen birth rates than the general population and are less likely to have a high school diploma, to be enrolled in school, or to be working. Native American youth are also more likely than youth of other races to experience violence. They live in tribal communities where the rates of poverty and unemployment exceed those of the rest of the United States. Native American youth are overrepresented in the foster care system but underrepresented in transitional housing. They use alcohol and drugs at an earlier age than other youth, are more likely than other youth to try inhalants, and have higher rates than other youth of suicide, depression, conduct disorder, trauma-related symptomatology, and alcohol and substance abuse.

The literature also presents approaches and tools that work with Native American youth. The following principles of service delivery are valued: treatment based on traditional values; addressing underlying issues of self-esteem and anxiety; approaches based on Native American culture and learning styles; culturally appropriate assessment tools; treatment for alcohol and drug abuse; and addressing economic along with other needs.

Federal Databases

Three large, recently compiled federal databases were analyzed to compare data regarding Native American youth to data on all other youth in the databases. The sources of data were the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the U.S. National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and



Alcoholism (NIAAA), and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). Demographic data collected by the surveyors was reviewed to look for obvious factors of bias in each database, and these possible bias factors are included in the discussion. Only results that were found to be statistically significant at the .05 level or better were included in this report. However, statistical significance using data from a secondary source is suspect. Therefore, these data were only used to provide possible indications about the status of youth aged 16-24 in Indian Country rather than to draw conclusions.

The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System

Comparisons between Native American and other youth aged 9-12 in the CDC database showed that the Native American youth surveyed were more likely to live in a violent environment than other youth, and that this lack of safety and presence of violence carried over to the school environment. This database may have some bias due to differences between Native American and other youth surveyed: Native American youth were younger than other students surveyed and significantly more likely to be from the Northeast, which included New York City in the sample. There are significant numbers of American Indians living in New York City. Native American youth who live there may differ in important ways from Native American youth in other parts of the country.

The National Epidemiologic Survey on Alcohol and Related Conditions

Although this survey was based on interviews with persons over age 18, many of the questions dealt with elements of life in Indian Country that may affect youth aged 16-24 in general. The survey was completed twice, in 1991-1992 and again in 2001-2002, thus providing important indicators of change over time. A paper referencing this database highlighted difference among racial/ethnic groups. Grant et al. (2004) pointed out that during the 10-year period, alcohol abuse increased in every racial group except American Indians, where it declined. The new, lower, rate (5.75%, a change from a rate of 8.14% in 1991-1992) is still higher than that of any other racial/ethnic group; the next highest is Whites, with a reported rate of 5.1% (an increase from 1991-1992).

An analysis of data from the 2001-2002 database was completed comparing Native Americans to all other respondents. In this database, Native American respondents were more likely than others to be from the West, which makes sense given geographic demographics of Native American populations. They were also younger, lived in more crowded conditions, were more likely to have been a victim of a crime, and had a lower income than other respondents. Additional analysis of this database indicated that Native American respondents aged 18 and over have higher rates of alcohol-related arrest and emergency room admission than other respondents. Drinking behavior differs from others in that beer is preferred to wine and drinking is more likely to occur in the homes of friends; Native American respondents are more likely to drink at least once a week and less likely to have never taken a drink; and Native American respondents are more likely to want to cut back on drinking (as reflected in the findings



by Grant et al., 2004) and to have tried to do so. Native American respondents were also more likely to smoke and to have tried other substances.

The National Survey on Drug Use and Health

This survey is broken down by age group, and includes two groups that report responses among age groups of interest in this report: young people aged 12-17 and 18-25. There are no obvious indications of discrepancy between Native American subjects and other subjects in this database, although it is still problematic to draw conclusions from analyses of secondary data sources. This analysis, like the analyses of the other two large databases, is intended as an indication of what may be occurring in Indian Country.

Demographic variables reflected known Native American characteristics such as low high school and college completion rates and poor health of Native American respondents. In addition, the Native American respondents were less likely than other subjects to be married. Data regarding substance abuse showed Native American subjects were more likely to use alcohol/drugs except within the month previous to the survey, in which they reported less use than others. These data also show that Native American youth start to use substances at an earlier age and are more likely than others to use unusual substances to get high. Attitudes toward alcohol/drug use among Native American respondents differed from those of others as well, with Native American respondents more likely to report disapproval of alcohol use, neutrality toward smoking and marijuana use, and more attempts to cut down on drinking. Although the Native American respondents reported more overall use of substances, they also reported more difficulty in obtaining substances than others.

A 2004 SAMHSA report on Native American respondents supplemented these findings. By combining alcohol and drug use under “substance abuse,” the SAMHSA report provides an alternative view from that found in the NICWA analysis. The negative attitudes toward alcohol use reported here reflect those of the NIAAA study.

Federal Databases Summary

The three comprehensive surveys of the population residing in the United States described in this report each include a sample of Native Americans that is approximately proportionate to the number found in the total population. NICWA performed additional analysis of these data using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) and found several notable differences between the Native American subjects and others. Although the statistical significance of these data is not dependable given the nature of secondary data analysis, the trends are of interest. These trends show that Native American youth live and go to school in a more violent environment than other youth, that they live in households with more people and fewer resources, and that they have more extensive exposure to drugs and alcohol than other youth in general. However, an interesting aside is that these reports found a more negative view of alcohol use among American Indian community members, which has resulted in a decrease in the use and abuse of alcohol over the past 10 years.



2000 U.S. Census Data

Data in the 2000 U.S. Census show that Native Americans made up approximately 1% of the total U.S. population, with an additional ½% reporting they were both Native American and some other race. An analysis comparing the 1% who identified as only Native American to all other respondents was completed by NICWA to provide some additional context for the analysis of youth aged 16-24. Data from Skokomish Tribal Nation and St. Regis Mohawk Tribe that was included in the 2000 U.S. Census was also analyzed, although these figures are known to be incomplete, especially in the case of the Mohawks. For the Skokomish people, the 2000 U.S. Census included 85% of the known residents, while for the Mohawks it included only about 22% of the known reservation residents. The Mohawk situation is complicated by the co-location of the reservation in the United States and Canada, as well as by the allegiance of many of the residents at Akwesasne to the traditional Mohawk way, which does not include U.S. citizenship, participation in federal surveys, or voting. This information was provided by persons interviewed during the site visits, including a member of the youth cohort who said she was told by her parents specifically not to vote in the U.S. presidential election. U.S. Census data are also, like the large federal surveys, provided here only as an indication of those things affecting youth aged 16-24 that may be occurring in Indian Country.

The three Native American U.S. Census sources did show some notable differences from the total U.S. population. The differences included the facts that Native American people were younger, poorer, less likely to have completed high school or college, more likely to live in single-parent households, and more likely to live in crowded households than the total U.S. population.

Both the Skokomish and total Native American households reported more grandparents caring for grandchildren than the U.S. population as a whole. Skokomish and Mohawks were less likely than the total Native American respondents to know their traditional language and to work within their state of origin. The Mohawks differed from all other groups in the higher percentage who are attending college and who have received an associate's degree and in the higher percentage who used a motorcycle to go to work. Skokomish reported fewer people going to college, a lower percentage of people who were self-employed, a lower percentage of women with children under age 6 who were working, and a higher percentage of people living on public assistance and Social Security than the Mohawks, Native Americans as a whole, or the total U.S. population.

Although the percentage of the Native American population captured in the 2000 U.S. Census data is relatively small, the importance of this group is due to its unusual status. American Indian/Alaska Native tribes, villages, and corporations differ from other minority population groups because they are considered sovereign nations not generally subject to state law. Although tribal members are still considered to be U.S. citizens, they are also citizens of their tribes. Most are enrolled and carry identification cards. Many tribes, including the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, issue passports that allow their members to travel abroad. Because of tribal custom and attitudes, it is possible that U.S. Census data may not fairly capture characteristics and behaviors that describe the more traditional, non-assimilated



members of the tribe. These are the persons least likely to take part in the U.S. Census. Although common conceptions in Indian Country are that U.S. Census data for Native Americans are incomplete, the sample found in the U.S. Census database may fairly represent the Native American population. This sample supported negative reports in the literature and in other databases related to the living conditions and status of Native Americans living in the United States.

Differences between the Skokomish and Mohawk populations found in the 2000 U.S. Census may indicate some true variation between the two sites. The smaller Skokomish Tribal Nation appears to be more isolated than the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, with fewer job and higher-education opportunities, more poverty, and more intergenerational homes and responsibilities than the Mohawks. The smaller Skokomish Tribal Nation is also more in danger of losing its Native language, as less than 5% of persons under the age of 65 know the language. These differences, based on the 2000 U.S. Census, provide a background for the information collected on site during visits to the two tribal communities in the summer of 2004.

Site Visits

At the Skokomish Tribal Nation and St. Regis Mohawk Tribe, tribal youth, parents/family members, elders, service providers, and tribal council members were interviewed in either a focus group or individual interview format using an instrument developed by NICWA with input from the project steering committee.

The relational worldview model was used as a framework for developing the focus group and interview questions. Within this model, questions were developed in four different quadrants: environment, infrastructure, resources, and mission. In the area of environment, participants indicated the environment for youth both inside and outside the community is generally not supportive. The reservation communities are aware of issues with the youth, and want to help, while the outside community is generally negative towards Skokomish or Mohawk young adults. At the Mohawk site, there is confusion related to both different governments on the American side and other complexities related to the Canadian/American split in the reservation. Spiritual and cultural elements at the two sites are there to support youth but are not now strong enough to help all.

In the area of infrastructure, the different size of the two communities leads to some differences. At Akwesasne, there are many services available to the general population of families and children but fewer for youth aged 16-24, while at Skokomish there are fewer overall resources. At both sites, there is a need for more local services, especially in the areas of juvenile and adult corrections. Data collection at both sites is limited. Although Mohawk human service agencies collect more data, its use is limited because of the existence of an entirely separate human services structure across the border and the inability of community members to freely access both systems. This means that any data collected on either side is incomplete.

Funding resources are inadequate at both sites, but there are committed staff at both who do their best with the resources available to them. Positions in human services increasingly require that



applicants have advanced degrees, and this is more difficult at the smaller and more isolated Skokomish reserve. Both sites, however, have access to college classes either on site or at nearby colleges. The mixed attitude of youth toward attending classes is due partly to the negative experiences with mainstream education of their parents or elders in earlier times. Youth and families are only marginally involved in assisting the community, yet everyone felt there was a need for them to become more involved. At Skokomish, some youth serve on their youth council, but at Akwesasne, the youth generally felt their input was not important or heeded.

Aspects of the mission quadrant were referenced throughout the interviews, and differences between the two sites in the area of mission were minimal. Community members looked back in time to the period before the Europeans arrived with nostalgia but were also able to describe community strengths related to traditions that have survived over the past few hundred years. Again and again, helping youth aged 16-24 was tied to a return to traditions, which would provide a spiritual anchor for youth who are adrift and which may also be a source of jobs and meaningful use of the skills of these young men and women.

Policy

An analysis of policy must include federal, state, and local policies. Federal, state, and local policies have had dramatic effects on these two communities, but both communities are currently recovering from these negative courses of action. Staff on site did not address the effects of specific federal policies, but the literature includes discussions of the effects of major legislation on tribes in general, and some authors have written about the effects of federal legislation on New York and Washington states specifically. As an overview, policies of the last few decades have begun to reverse many of the previous policies that led to loss of land and inability of tribes to self-govern. The effects of changes in policy on youth aged 16-24 are most immediately felt in the areas of local or tribal policy, as these can have a direct impact on their world.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Research Questions

Research questions asked at the beginning of this study were:

1. What does existing literature tell us about Native American youth aged 16-24?
2. What types of services or supports are available for Native American youth aged 16-24?
3. What are the barriers that Native American youth face in accessing available services and supports?
4. What types of strengths exist within tribal communities that help Native American youth develop into successful adults?
5. What are the impacts of key federal, state, and tribal policies on the design and delivery of services and support to Native American youth aged 16-24?



Responses to the research questions were as follows:

1. The literature portrays Native American youth in a negative light, with more problems than other youth, but also suggests ways to address these issues. These ways include a return to Indian traditions as well as treatment of alcohol and drug use and addressing the economic needs of youth.
2. For Native American youth living on reservations, the greatest support is the people in their communities. This survey did not investigate sources of support for urban Native American youth, and this would be a rich topic for a future analysis.
3. Barriers that youth face in accessing services are primarily a lack of services specifically designed for this age group. Additional barriers are youth apathy, partly related to drug and alcohol use, and lack of guidance given to this age group by adults in the community.
4. Community strengths available to help youth are both the willingness of adults to help them and the availability of traditional ways and values that provide a storehouse of materials youth can use to provide meaning in their lives.
5. The impact of federal policies on this age group is indirect, as these policies have been responsible over the years for creating the current tribal environment. State policies also have an indirect effect as, for example, in both communities they have affected the ability of youth (as well as other members of the community) to fish and hunt. Tribal policies have a more immediate effect, as they impact the ability of youth to go about the community at night and to use certain vehicles, and they may have an effect on such things as the availability of alcohol and drugs.

Conclusions

Information from the literature, the federal databases, the U.S. Census, and site visits to two Native American communities was amazingly consistent in both creating a snapshot of issues affecting Native youth aged 16-24 and also suggesting ways to address these issues. The overall picture is not good. Negative findings in the literature and databases included heavy use of alcohol and drugs, violence, school problems, difficulties with law enforcement, lack of jobs, poverty, and overcrowding. One encouraging finding from national databases was the apparent recent attempt within Native American communities to address alcohol abuse. This was found in a reduced alcohol abuse rate nationally among Native Americans and in negative community attitudes toward alcohol use reported by youth surveyed nationally. U.S. Census data from the two study sites, although limited, supported the findings from other sources and showed similarities between the study sites and all Native Americans included in the 2000 U.S. Census. These similarities give credibility to the use of these two specific sites in a study of national trends.



Recommendations

While the data and literature reviewed outlined issues for youth aged 16-24, community responses to the strengths-based relational worldview model survey instrument provided most of the answers needed. At each of the participating sites, elders, tribal leaders, program staff, parents, and youth had strong recommendations as to how to address the problems they described. These were directly related to findings from the literature, the federal databases, and the U.S. Census data.

Recommendation 1: Increase youth involvement in spirituality and traditional activities. This recommendation was suggested by the literature review and was echoed repeatedly at the study sites. Spirituality was understood to be crucial to wellness in these communities as they try to reclaim lost or forgotten traditions. The elders who bore the brunt of assimilationist policies that reached a peak in the early 20th century firmly believed that youth should return to the beliefs and activities that sustained their ancestors. A return to tradition included suggestions that youth learn the language, take part in spiritual activities, and learn ceremonies, stories, traditions, and crafts that nourished and maintained the Mohawk and Skokomish communities through centuries of contact with mainstream ways.

Recommendation 2: Bring the community together, and increase communication and contact of youth with parents, elders, and other community members. In order to provide a locus for the reinvigoration of ancient traditions, both study sites found that the people in the community needed to become more cohesive. In the case of the Mohawk site, this was seen partially as a governmental issue as reservation land encompasses parts of two countries, two Canadian provinces, and one American state. Further, reservation government is administered by both traditional and elected leaders on both sides of the United States/Canadian border. Since the creation of one cohesive government structure from such disparate elements is unlikely, community members suggested more community gatherings and other chances for youth, adults, and elders to associate and interact as a means of increasing the transfer of knowledge, providing consistent role models, and reducing fears and misunderstanding among groups.

Recommendation 3: Increase employment opportunities. More and better paying jobs are needed for Native American youth that will help them support their young families, save for future goals such as higher education, and take on adult roles in the community. At the site visits, most community members said these jobs should be on the reservation so that the young people can stay to work with the rest of the community in addressing the many issues present at these sites. There were also suggestions that the economic and spiritual realms could be combined to produce a means of income for youth through apprenticeships in such time-honored activities as carving traditional masks at the Skokomish site.



Recommendation 4: Give youth a real and important role in the community. Ideas for creating an ideal community included a major role for youth in envisioning and working on such a project. Youth mentioned that their views were not seen as important and that the adults in the community did not see their possible value as contributing members. Youth need to have a role not only in new initiatives but also in current projects such as the tribal council at Skokomish Nation and in mentoring of younger children at the Boys and Girls Club at Akwesasne. These current examples need to be expanded, both to assist the communities and to enable these youth to see themselves as taking an active, adult role. As they increase their visibility and take on adult roles, youth who are between teen and adult years play a transitional role as keepers of the knowledge and traditions they learn, which are to be passed on to their own children and grandchildren in the future. In Mohawk society, this is known as keeping in mind the well-being of “the seventh generation.”

Recommendation 5: Research and evaluation in tribal communities should be participatory. An additional lesson from this study was the value of participatory research in tribal communities. Members of the steering committee from each site chose to interview a wide and diverse sample of community members; indeed, at the smaller Skokomish site there were probably very few residents of the Skokomish Nation who were not interviewed. Interviews were accompanied by food and were generally informally led by the Skokomish or Mohawk members of the research team. The participatory nature of the research led to community-wide awareness of issues facing the youth and, by the time of the last interviews, participants in both communities were calling for changes that would assist youth aged 16-24 in transitioning to adulthood. Both communities are now poised to help this group. This leads to another important recommendation. As shown in this study, whenever research is undertaken in a tribal community, a participatory model not only allows extensive and complete data collection but also may provide an impetus for change in the community, as has occurred here.

Recommendation 6: Establish direct funding for tribal governments under key federal entitlement programs. The policy analysis yielded a last important recommendation. While the number of federal programs that tribal governments have direct access to have increased slightly over the last 25 years, there are still significant gaps in funding access. As was mentioned in the policy analysis section of this report, tribal governments do not have direct access to three of the largest human service entitlement programs under the Social Security Act: Title IV-E Foster Care and Adoption Assistance, Title XX Social Services Block Grant, and Medicaid. Without direct access to these core funding sources, tribal governments will continue to struggle to offer the diverse services that this population requires.

These recommendations can now be taken forward for these communities in pursuit of seed funding to bring about change. As discussed by an elder at the Skokomish Nation, funding needs to provide an impetus for change, but the change must come from within the hearts and minds of community members. Both the Skokomish Tribal Nation and the St. Regis Mohawk Tribe have embarked on this journey.



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APPENDIX A
Interview Guide



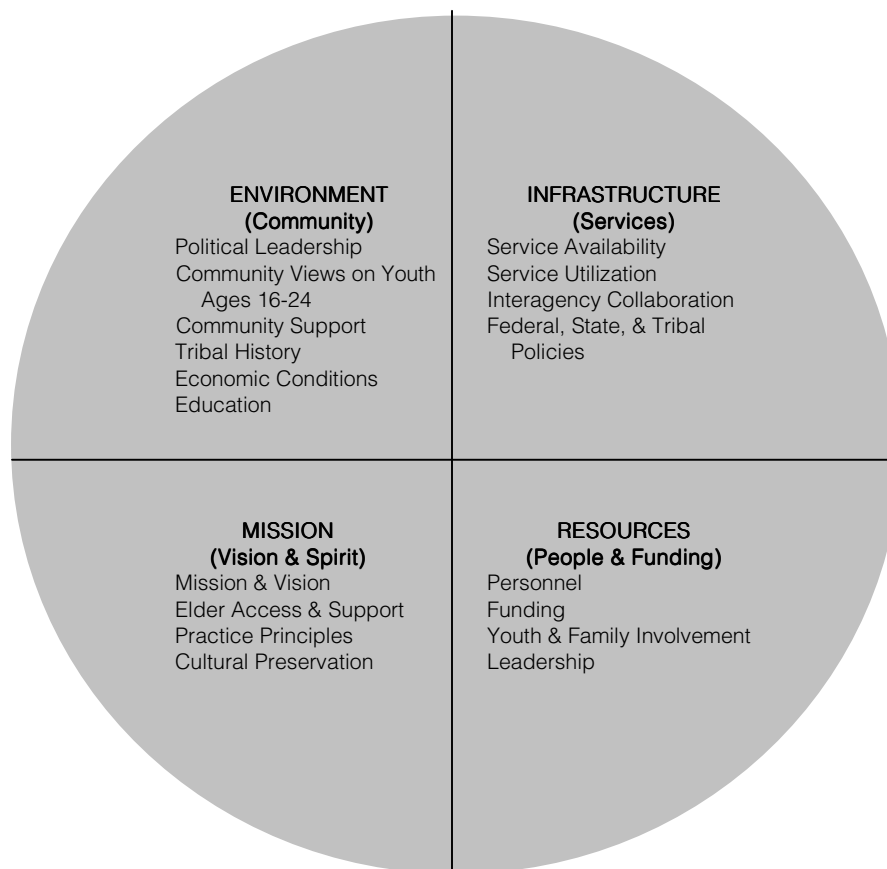
Native American Youth in Transition: The Path from Adolescence to Adulthood in Two Native American Communities

Tool for Examining Organizational and Community Capacity

The purpose of the site visit is to examine organizational community capacity to serve youth as they transition from adolescence to adulthood. The interview questions were developed using the relational worldview model for organizations. There are no right or wrong answers. It is merely a series of “prompt” questions that can help you think about the services and supports available to youth aged 16–24 in your community. This interview was designed to answer the following questions:

1. What types of services and supports are available for Native American youth aged 16–24?
2. What are the barriers that Native American youth face in accessing available services and supports?
3. What types of strengths exist within Native American communities that help Native American youth develop into successful adults?
4. What are the impacts of key federal, state, and tribal laws on the design and delivery of services and supports to Native American youth aged 16–24?

The elements of the interview include the following:



Environment

1. Political Leadership: Internal

What is the awareness of the tribal political leadership about the issues facing youth in transition from adolescence to adulthood?

What kind of involvement does the tribal political leadership have in addressing issues facing youth in transition (e.g., tribal council resolutions, resources allocated to youth programs, youth council, participation in youth-led projects, advocacy efforts outside the tribal community, 5-year plan that addresses youth-related issues, etc.)?

What is still needed from tribal political leadership to help support youth in transition from adolescence to adulthood?

Political Leadership: External

What is the awareness of the political leadership outside the tribal community about the issues facing youth in transition from adolescence to adulthood?

What kind of involvement does the political leadership have in addressing issues facing youth in transition (e.g., resolutions, resources allocated to youth programs, youth council, participation in youth-led projects, advocacy efforts, 5-year plan that addresses youth-related issues, etc.)?

What is still needed from political leadership to help support youth in transition from adolescence to adulthood?

2. Community Views on Youth aged 16-24: Internal

What are the attitudes toward youth/young adults aged 16-24 in your community?

Where might there be resistance and/or negative views towards the youth population?

What are the factors that shape these views?

Community Views on Youth aged 16-24: External

What are the attitudes toward youth/young adults aged 16-24 in your community?

Where might there be resistance and/or negative views towards the youth population?



What are the factors that shape these views?

3. Community Support: Internal

What are the strengths of the community that may help to provide services and supports to youth in transition?

What are the barriers to securing community support for youth aged 16-24 in the community?

What is needed in the community to provide better services and better outcomes for youth aged 16-24?

Community Support: External

What are the strengths of the community that may help to provide services and supports to youth in transition?

What are the barriers to securing community support for youth aged 16-24 in the community?

What is needed in the community to provide better services and better outcomes for youth aged 16-24?

4. Tribal History

What are the significant events that have shaped your tribal history?

How did these events shape support for youth as they transition to adulthood (e.g., attitudes about youth, roles for youth, opportunities for support, challenges)?

What are the traditional values in your community that pertain to youth aged 16-24?

What are the mainstream values that pertain to youth aged 16-24?

What is the interface between traditional and mainstream values?

What are the traditional rituals that signify transition from youth to adulthood?

What are the mainstream rituals that signify transition from youth to adulthood?

What is the interface between traditional and mainstream rituals?



5. Economic

What types of jobs are available for youth aged 16-24 in your community (e.g., seasonal work, full-time, part-time, benefits provided, location of jobs)?

How qualified or prepared are youth to take advantage of these employment opportunities?

6. Education

How do adults in your community view education?

How do youth aged 16-24 in your community view education?

Are there opportunities for secondary education (e.g., vocational training, community college, college, etc.)?

What are the barriers to receiving education for youth in transition?

Infrastructure

1. Service Availability

Human Services

What types of mental health services and supports are available for youth aged 16-24 in your community? (Description of services and eligibility requirements)

Follow-up: Are these services and supports provided by the tribe or state/county?

What types of child welfare services and supports are available for youth aged 16-24 in your community? (Description of services and eligibility requirements)

Follow-up: Are these services and supports provided by the tribe or state/county?

What types of substance abuse services and supports are available for youth aged 16-24 in your community? (Description of services and eligibility requirements)

Follow-up: Are these services and supports provided by the tribe or state/county?

Welfare-Related Services

Does the tribe operate a TANF program? If not, where do people go for TANF? Are TANF services hard to get?



What other public assistance services are available in your community (e.g., food stamps)?

What is the process like for getting welfare-related services?

Community Justice

What types of juvenile justice services and supports are available for youth aged 16-24 in your community? (Description of services)

Follow-up: Are these services and supports provided by the tribe or state/county?

What type of adult corrections services and supports are available for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

Follow-up: Are these services and supports provided by the tribe or state/county?

Education

What types of educational options are available for youth aged 16-24 (e.g., high school, GED, vocational school, community college, college, etc.)?

Employment Training

What types of employment readiness programs or opportunities exist for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

Follow-up: Are these services and supports provided by the tribe or state/county?

Other Services and Supports

What other types of services and supports (e.g., housing, parenting classes, etc.) are available to youth aged 16-24 in your community?

2. **Service Utilization (Ask for data where available)**

Human Services

What types of mental health data are collected for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?
Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?



How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

What types of child welfare data are collected for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?
Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?

How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

What types of substance abuse data are collected for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?
Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?

How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

Welfare

What types of data are collected related to the TANF program for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?
Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?

How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

What types of data are collected related to other types of welfare programs for youth aged 16-24 in your community?



How are the data collected used to inform decision about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

Community Justice

What types of juvenile justice data are collected for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?
Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?

How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

What type of adult corrections data are collected for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?
Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?

How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

Education

What types of educational data are collected for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?
Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?

How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

Employment Training

What types of employment data are collected for youth aged 16-24 in your community?

- Prompts: Who collects the data?



Are the data shared with other agencies?
Do you share data with your tribal council?

How are the data collected used to inform decisions about program improvements, service design and delivery, target populations, funding, etc.?

3. **Interagency Collaboration**

How do agencies serving youth between the ages of 16 and 24 interact with one another?
What are some examples of successful collaboration?

How do youth transition between child and adult services? What are some of the challenges of agencies working together?

4. **Federal, State, and Tribal Policies (when possible, obtain hard copies of state and tribal policies)**

Federal

What are the key federal policies that affect youth aged 16-24 (e.g., child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice, TANF, education, etc.)?

What are some examples of how these policies have supported services to youth aged 16-24?

What are some examples of situations where policies have provided barriers to improving services to youth aged 16-24?

State

What are the key state policies that affect youth aged 16-24 (e.g., (child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice, TANF, education, etc.)?)

What are some examples of how these policies have supported services to youth aged 16-24?

What are some examples of situations where policies have provided barriers to improving services to youth aged 16-24?



Tribal

What are the key tribal policies that affect youth aged 16-24 (e.g., child welfare, mental health, substance abuse, juvenile justice, TANF, education, etc.)?

What are some examples of how these policies have supported services to youth aged 16-24?

What are some examples of situations where policies have provided barriers to improving services to youth aged 16-24?

Other

How do you help youth successfully transition?

How do you resolve conflicts between federal, state, and tribal policies?

Resources

1. Program Staff

What are the key staff skills and knowledge needed to address the needs of this youth population?

How available are workers with these skills?

What are barriers to securing more of the needed skills and knowledge in the worker pool?

What types of training do program staff receive to help them address the needs of this youth population?

What type of training is needed?

What supports are in place to help program staff collaborate with other programs serving this youth population?

What are some other issues that affect program staff's ability to provide effective services (e.g., paperwork vs. service, attracting qualified staff, workload, etc.)?

2. Funding

What are the federal, state, tribal and private funding sources that support services for this population?



Do state and county governments share funding with your tribe? What is required to receive funding from state and county governments?

Where are the gaps in service funding occurring?

Are the funding sources available adequate for the services needed (percentage of need being met)? If not, how much more is estimated to be needed (percentage or dollar figures)? What services are not being funded?

Do the funding sources allow for flexibility in how services are provided? Provide examples of when they are and when they are not.

Can individual funding sources be combined and/or leveraged to support needed services for this population? Provide examples of when they can and when they can't.

Is the administration of these funding sources (i.e., program reporting, requirements) in proportion to the amount of funding being provided? Provide examples of both.

Do the funding sources support data collection and sharing of data with other agencies?

3. Youth and Family Involvement

How are youth and family members involved in your tribe's services (e.g., planning, service provision, evaluation)?

How are youth and family members involved in non-tribal programs that serve your youth?

What are the challenges of involving youth and family members in tribal and non-tribal services?

How has youth and family involvement in your program changed your services and community?

4. Leadership

What role do you see leadership playing in helping support youth and their families? Who are the leaders (e.g., tribal council, elders, program administrators, community advocates, youth, parents, etc.)?



Are leaders in your community well informed of the challenges this population faces? If not, what do they need to know to better support this population?

Identify some areas where more leadership is needed to better support this population.

What are the challenges of helping develop leadership that can facilitate change for this population?

What factors are present (inside and outside the community) to help support leadership for this population?

Mission

1. Vision and Mission

If the tribe could design an ideal community that would support youth transitioning to adulthood, what would it look like? Who would be involved (e.g., people, agencies, etc.)? What would their role be? What should the role of families and youth be? What services would be provided?

What does the community look like now? Who is involved (e.g., people, agencies, etc.)? What are their roles? What is the role of families and youth? What services are provided?

What is needed to get from the current situation to the ideal?

What are the community's values regarding youth aged 16-24? (How does the community interact with youth in this age group? What are the appropriate roles for youth and young adults of this age in the community?)

How important is the role of spirituality for youth preparing for adulthood?

2. Elder Access and Support

What does it mean to be an elder in your community?

How are elders included in decision-making or social situations in the tribe?

What is the role of elders in helping a youth prepare for adulthood?

What are the barriers to youth/elder access (i.e., youth accessing elders or elders accessing youth)?



What are the ways (either positive or negative) in which elders have contact with youth aged 16-24?

Please describe a time when an elder or a group of elders intervened to help one or more youth aged 16-24 with a social, emotional, work, juvenile justice, or physical problem.

3. Practice Principles

Please describe the core beliefs of agencies that serve youth.

How are these core beliefs reflected in the services delivered by your agency?

Are there any regular activities (community, tribal, or associated with one or more human service agencies) that youth of this age take part in that would help them follow a healthy lifestyle?

4. Cultural Preservation

What are the cultural pieces that are most important to supporting youth aged 16-24 in your community?

How does tribal culture support youth preparing for adulthood?

Is there anything that prevents youth and families from accessing their culture?

What do members of this age group generally do to have fun?

What other cultural activities could this group be involved in to help them take on a more adult role (e.g., storytelling at the day care center, competitive dancing, beadwork for sale, etc.)?

