

Balancing Two Worlds

Cultural Differences on a Spectrum and Working with Native Families

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EPICS



Community Parent Resource Center serving
the 23 Federally Recognized Tribes of New
Mexico

IDEA Information and Resources

1. Early Intervention
2. Special Education

Promotion of Family Leadership



Native American Conference on Special Education



September in Albuquerque, NM

2 Days of Topical Breakout Sessions

- Autism
- Blindness
- Juvenile Justice Pipeline
- & More

Special Education Law and
Advocacy Post-Conference

www.epicsnm.org/conference



Presentation Overview

Presenter will:

1. Provide brief overview of Native American historical topics
2. Highlight differences in cultural to consider when working with Native families



Definition: Federally Recognized Tribe



An American Indian or Alaska Native tribe that is documented as having a **government-to-government relationship** with the United States, with the responsibilities, powers, limitations, and obligations attached to the status. Federally recognized tribes are also recognized as possessing certain rights of self-government and are entitled to receive certain benefits, services, and protections because of their special relationship with the United States.



Services for Tribes



- Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - “Best interest of Native Americans”
 - Bureau of Indian Education
 - Social Services
 - Technical Assistance to Federally Recognized Tribes in the development of tribal governments, economy, and programs
- Eligibility to apply for grants from the U.S. government
 - IDEA 611: Child Find funds to assist SEAs
- Indian Health Service (IHS)
 - Network of reservation-based hospitals and clinics



Blood Quantum



- A system that the federal government placed onto tribes to limit citizenship.
 - Navajo: 25% Navajo blood
 - Turtle Mountain Chippewa: 25% Indian Blood
 - Cherokee: Lineage
- Logic: Native Americans would breed themselves out and free the government of their duties to uphold treaty obligations
- Tribes determine what their threshold is.



Termination Era:

The time (mid-1940s to mid-1960s) in which the United States sought to end the recognition of sovereignty of tribes and to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream American life, ending services granted to Native Americans through trusteeship.

At first, focused termination on tribes who were willing and able to part from the United States' under 4 factors:

- Degree of Acculturation
- Economic Condition
- Willingness of the tribe
- Willingness and ability of State to assume responsibilities



Termination Era - Continued:



“On June 9, 1953, the first shot of the great twentieth century Indian war was fired when Representative William Henry Harrison introduced House Concurrent Resolution 108 in the 83rd Congress. HCR declared the intention of Congress to terminate federal supervision at the ‘earliest time possible.’ They waited only until the following February before launching the attack. And supervision, as it turned out, meant only services.

[...] Gone were the four factors which Zimmerman had used in 1947 to classify tribal readiness for termination.”

- Vine Deloria, Jr.,
Custer Died For Your Sins



Historical Trauma in Action



- Removal of children to Boarding Schools
- Inability to speak to older generation
- Shift from inclusive and connected communities to disconnected communities
- Racism and stereotyping
- Lack of trust in non-native peoples and native people involved in government
- 90% reduction of Native American population



Community-Centered Views



- Strong connection to other Native people.
 - I can walk up to another Native person in an airport and have a personal conversation right away because of shared history.
- “Everyone knows everyone.”
- Tip: Develop strong personal connections

Sandra:

<https://youtu.be/4TxAO2V2mfA?t=187>



Cultural Differences on a Spectrum



- Native communities are complex systems in many ways with different beliefs and values mixed in with Western values
- Tip: Try not to make generalizations
- More than one spectrum
- Some differences lead to intra-tribalism



Blood Quantum



- Some tribes have stricter blood quantum thresholds, others do not.
 - One Alaskan tribe: “If you live like one of us, you are one of us.”
- Both sides have arguments in survival
 - **Lineage:** Build tribes numbers and capacity to survive and perpetuate the tribe
 - **Harsher requirement:** Preserve the existing community



Disability



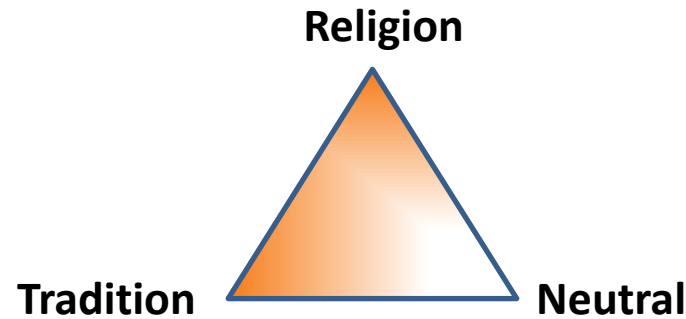
Sacred

Taboo

- In some communities, disability is viewed as a gift and a variance in nature.
- In some communities, disability means someone in the family did something wrong and upset a higher power.



Religion / Traditionalism



- Religion has a deep history among Native people
 - There are missions and churches scattered among Indian Country.
- Not all traditions will be followed, but some might.
- Each family has different beliefs and values



View of Formal Education



- Some Native people are promote higher education as a chance to gain a better position in society
- The opposite arguments are numerous:
 - “Our family has done well without formal education.”
 - “The system doesn’t work in our favor anyway.”
 - “College is for white people.”

High School Graduation Rate:

Nation: 82%

Native Americans: 70%

College Graduation Rate:

Nation: 28%

Native Americans: 13%

*NCES



Self-Identity



- Some Native people are very proud to be Native American, others are not.
 - Common in other non-white races.
- Loss of services due to non-enrollment
 - You must be enrolled in a Federally Recognized Tribe to receive services from the federal government and from that tribe.
- Census
 - If you are Native American and you don't identify as Native American on the Census, your tribe doesn't get to count you for funding purposes.



Identity Crisis

Native people spend their early years struggling with where they fall on each of these spectra, with feedback and criticism from family, friends and the community.

Can lead to bullying, depression, and unacceptance of one's self.

- “Where do I fit in this world?”
- “I don't look like any of my friends.”
- “My friends think I'm stereotypically Native American.”

Native youth have the highest rate of suicide among all ethnic groups in the US and is the second-leading cause of death for Native youth aged 15-24.*



Every Family Has a Different Culture



Accept that no family is identical to another.

Accept that we all want our self-identification to be valued.

Just because a family is Native American doesn't mean they have common Native American beliefs

Conversely, just because a person doesn't look Native American doesn't mean they don't identify as Native American.





Collaboration is key!