Who is an Indian? Historical Trauma

American Indian Alaska Native Historical Trauma and Contemporary Healthcare Issues
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Workshop Objectives: By the end of the session, the participant will be able to:
1. Identify at least 4 examples of historical trauma specific to American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIANs).
2. Relate how historical trauma affects AIANs’ trust and use of western medicine

Uniqueness of AIAN History
All or almost all cultures throughout history experience some form of:
- Violence
- Domination
- Slavery
- Annihilation
These cultures all have something “unique” about their experiences and survival

Today’s session is to explain what some of those “unique” events are within the Natives’ story

Introduction
What is “an Indian” and how do we differ from other medically under-served communities?
American Indian = AI
Alaska Native = AN

What are the differences in the American Indians history?
Since the formation of the union, the U.S. has recognized Tribal governments as sovereign nations
The federal government has enacted numerous statutes and regulations that establish and define
- Who is an Indian
- Their relationship to the federal government

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Who is an Indian? Historical Trauma

Indians are not just . . .

... a minority

... a special interest group

... a political party


Tribal Sovereignty

Tribes are governments that have authority with regard to their members

Tribes existed prior to the U.S.

For examples:

voting for tribal leadership is totally under the control of the tribal Nation

Any murder or suspicious death occurring on Indian land, it is the FBI who becomes involved as part of the historical trust agreements between Sovereign Nations and US Congress


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Government-to-Government Relationship

Tribes are treated as governments by the federal government.

Approval Protocols unique to each tribal Nation


Government-to-Government Relationship and Tribal “Consultation”

Tribal “consultation”= means federal agency must meet with all 564+ federally recognized tribal Nations …

Cannot meet with selected Nations or groups and meet the legal definition of “consultation”


Federal Definition of AIAN (FYI only)

The term “Indian” as used in secs. 461-466, 470-473, and 475, 476-479 of this title shall include all persons of Indian descent who are members of any recognized Indian Tribe now under Federal jurisdiction and all persons who are descendents of such members who were, on June 1, 1934, residing within the present boundaries of any Indian reservation, and shall further include all other persons of one-half or more Indian blood…Eskimos and other aboriginal peoples of Alaska shall be considered Indians. Indian Reorganization Act, June 18, 1934, c. 576, & 19, 48 Stat. 988.


How does the Federal Government Identify AIANs?

Tribes establish criteria for membership

1/4 tribal blood is the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) Standard

A descendant of a tribal member

Or a person recognized by the tribal members as a member.

Alaska Native: The term collectively refers to Eskimos, Aleuts, and American Indians who are indigenous to Alaska.

Self-Identified Data Sources

- “American Indian” This includes enrolled members of Federal and/or State recognized tribes as well as people who are identify themselves as “American Indian”. Includes surveys such as:
  - U.S. Census
  - Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance Survey (BRFSS) and Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS)
  - National Health Interview Survey

What are the differences in the American Indians history?

- Since the formation of the union, the U.S. has recognized Tribal governments as sovereign nations
- The federal government has enacted numerous statutes and regulations that establish and define who an Indian is and their relationship to the federal government

Brief overview of AIAN Historical Events as Basis of Distrust of Government and its Programs

Indians are not just...

- a minority
- a special interest group
- a political party

Manifest Destiny Adopted as Federal Policy

“.... It is the right of our manifest destiny to over spread and to possess the whole of the continent which Providence has given us for the development of the great experiment of liberty and federative development of self government entrusted to us. It is right such as that of the tree to the space of air and the earth suitable for the full expansion of its principle and destiny of growth.”
Federal Indian Policy

- 1608-1830 Treaty Making
- 1830-1850 Removal Policy
- 1850-1871 Establishment of Reservations
- 1871-1928 Assimilation and Allotment Era
- Indian Reorganization Act of 1934
- 1943 – 1968 Termination
- 1968 – Present – Self Determination

Removal Policy: Eastern Tribes

How many tribal Nations were included in the “Trail of Tears”?

Removal Policy: Nez Perce

Indian Lands within the U.S.: 1492 to …?

Indians Forced Inland

Indian Lands within the U.S.: 1492 to …?

1790

Indian Lands within the U.S.: 1492 to …?

1860

Indian Lands within the U.S.: 1492 to …?

1890
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Indian Lands: 1492 to Present

First They Took Our Land
…Then They Took Our Children

Tom Torlino (Navajo) as he appeared upon arrival to the Carlisle Indian School, October 21, 1882.

Three years later

Indian Boarding School System

- Existed between 1870 - PRESENT
- Movement attributed to Manifest Destiny philosophy
- **Mission**: to educate Indian children and assimilate them into the European language and culture.

Apache Children at Carlisle Indian School

Characteristics of the Boarding School Experience

- Forced separation of children from communities
- Physical, sexual, emotional abuse by caretakers
- Exposure to infectious diseases, resulting in illness and death

Characteristics of the Boarding School Experience (cont.)

- Extreme diet changes.
- Children who didn’t go home, took on the characteristics of their caretakers.
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**Key Points in Indian History**

- 1802 - War Department
- 1824 - Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)
- 1849 - BIA moved under Department of Interior
- 1887 - The General Allotment or Dawes Act
- 1924 - Indian Citizenship Act of 1924 (41 Stat. 408)
- 1934 - Indian Reorganization Act
- 1940’s – 1980’s Indians fought for the right to vote
- 1953 - Termination Act
- 1968 – Self-Determination (PL 93 -638)

**Many Contemporary (since 1960s) Events**

- 1968 American Indian Movement and Alcatraz Island – reclaiming deserted federal lands as per federal law
- 1970’s sterilization of American Indian women without informed consent
- Many other events (NY / Canada Mohawk siege; Rosebud; Wounded Knee (recent event, not the original event)

**Culture-wide Multiple Traumas**

- Racism/Poverty
- Post Traumatic Stress Disorders
- Neglect/Abuse of Children “Inadequate Mirroring”
- Boarding Schools
- Depression
- Children never parented so never learned to parent
- Unresolved Grief
- Coping: Unhealthy Behaviors

Long histories of subjugation, historical trauma, unresolved grief and the challenges of changing cultures, poor economics, and lack of opportunities are negative and destructive

**How May Historical Trauma Affect AIANs Use Of The Healthcare System?**

- Example: distrust = avoid Western medicine
- What are specific examples related to cancer?
- Cancer clinical trials (especially treatment trials)
- Cancer genetic studies

**AI/AN Public Health: Challenges**

- Few AI/AN public health professionals
- Limited familiarity with AI/AN policies
- Complexities/logistics – over 500 tribes

Modified slide with permission from Dean Seneca, MPH, CDC

**AI/AN Public Health: Challenges**

- Public health legislation/legal foundations
- Lack of public health infrastructure
- Funding issues

Thank you, Dean Seneca, MPH, ATSDR, CDC, for sharing the slide
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Examples Public Health Funding Issues

- Lack of AI/AN-specific funds
- Data errors under-count AIAN health problems
- Limitations/problems of categorical funds
- Funds received by CDC/ATSDR often designated for state health departments

Examples Public Health Funding Issues

- Tribal ineligibility for certain funds
- Current funding policies/procedures often put states and tribes in competition for same funds
- Funding agencies do not understand historical context of phrasing AIAN organizations include within grant applications

Thank you, Dean Seneca, MPH, CDC, for sharing the slide

What Does “Cancer Health Disparity” Mean?

- Differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of cancer and related adverse health conditions that exist among specific population groups in the U.S.*

What Does “Cancer Health Disparity” Mean?

- Gender
- Age
- Ethnicity
- Education
- Income
- Social class
- Disability
- Geographic location
- Sexual orientation


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