

La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

Native American Indian Culture

Special thanks to...

- Gundersen Health System
- La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium (LMHSC)
- LMHSC Cultural Competency Committee

for their assistance in developing this cultural competency module

Disclaimer

Caution on Stereotyping

- The material in this program is generalized and is not intended to perpetuate stereotypes of diverse individuals or groups of people
- Cultural traits may vary based on individual preference and level of acculturation – someone may have physical attributes of a specific heritage, but it does not mean he/she practices the traits of that culture
- Bottom line: Never Assume, Always Ask!
 - ▶ Never assume that every member of any culture holds the same beliefs and ideals
 - ▶ Use this background information to ask culturally sensitive, informed questions

Background

- “AI/AN (American Indian/Alaskan Native) refers to people having origin in any of the original peoples in North & South America, and who maintain tribal affiliation or community attachment.”
(U.S. Census Bureau, February, 2003)
- For this module, the inclusive title of Native American Indian (NAI) will be used
- While generalizations may be possible, each tribe may have diverse beliefs
- Cultural variance between tribes include:
 - Values
 - Customs
 - Traditions

History

- 1634 – Jean Nicolet (French fur trader) arrived in Green Bay. This was one of the first interactions between Wisconsin Indians and Europeans
- European encroachment started in the East, and every tribe was forcefully removed, which pushed the tribes West causing massive migrations and warfare between tribes
- Europeans brought foreign diseases that devastated tribal populations
- War against the Native American Indians resulted in massive deaths of Indian men, women, and children
- 1924 - Recognized as U.S. citizens

Immigration Influences

- Attempted to convert the Indians' lives to Anglo ways, and ended up almost erasing their Native culture
- Currently, many NAI's live on reservations or trust land designated by the federal government, as well as in general society
 - The pieces of land are mere fractions of what was originally Indian territory
 - Sovereign status was created through agreements with the federal government
- NAI's and the U.S. Government continue to disagree about multiple issues including land holding and owed debts

Interaction 1 of 4

- All Native American Indians have the exact same beliefs, regardless of tribal affiliation.
 - True
 - False

**Caution on
Stereotyping**

Interaction 1 of 4 (Answer)

- All Native American Indians have the exact same beliefs, regardless of tribal affiliation.
 - True
 - False

Statistics

- Population of Native American Indians:
 - Before European settlement: 1492 – estimated 112 million and declined to less than 6 million by 1650*
 - As of 2010: about 5.2 million (1.7% of total population)
 - There are over 550 Federally recognized tribes
- Largest Native American Indian populations are in California, Oklahoma, and Arizona
- 1860 – NAI first counted as a separate category in the US census

*<https://uwpress.wisc.edu/books/0289.htm>

Social Structure

- Extended families are very important
- Depending on the tribe, families could include:
 - Actual blood relatives
 - Clan members
 - The community as a whole
- Depending on the tribe, descent, the passing of goods, knowledge or traditions, can be either:
 - Matrilineal (through the mother's family)
 - Patrilineal (through the father's family)

Values

- Loyalty and support of extended family are highly valued
 - Extended family is often involved in decision making
 - Respect for the aged is expected
 - Cooperation, interdependence, and collectiveness
 - Nature, and its preservation, is of utmost important
 - Rituals and traditional ceremonies may be a part of everyday life

Interaction 2 of 4

- Approximately how many Native American Indians live in the U.S. as of 2010?

(select one)

- 2.1 million
- 3.1 million
- 5.2 million

**Caution on
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Interaction 2 of 4 (Answer)

- Approximately how many Native American Indians live in the U.S. as of 2010?

(select one)

- 2.1 million
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Spirituality

- Traditionally NAI spirituality is nature-based
- Beliefs
 - Supreme creator (possibly other spiritual figures)
 - Humans = body+mind+spirit
 - Every part of nature (living and non-living) is sacred and has a spirit
 - Each spirit existed before the actual body was created, and will exist after the body dies
 - Spirits (with, or without a body) are part of everyday life
 - Each tribe has specific beliefs for the afterlife

Communication

- Handshake in greeting is acceptable
- May not have direct eye contact out of respect
- Establish rapport/relationship of trust with patient, when first speaking
- Allow for response, as interruptions may be viewed as disrespectful
- “Thank you” is often implied instead of being stated
- Maintaining composure and not showing emotion may be cultural traits

Spatial Orientation

- Preferred personal space is at least as much used in Western culture (2 ft.)
- Males and females have more formalized behavior with each other
- Physical affection is common with close family members

Interaction 3 of 4

- Native American Indians believe that each human is made up of:

(Select all that apply)

- Body
- Mind
- Spirit

**Caution on
Stereotyping**

Interaction 3 of 4 (Answer)

- Native American Indians believe that each human is made up of:

(Select all that apply)

- Body
- Mind
- Spirit

Sense of Time

- Present oriented
- This may conflict with schedules as defined by Western society
- Present oriented individuals may not see a problem in arriving 10-15 minutes late, since they will accomplish everything

Environmental Control

- External
 - Although individual actions may have minor influence, the supreme being will control every aspect of the human environment
- For example, if faced with a terminal illness, many Native American Indians would not want to prolong life
 - They may want to allow the spirit to move on to the next life

Interaction 4 of 4

- Native American Indians relate to which time orientation

(Select one)

- Past
- Present
- Future

**Caution on
Stereotyping**

Interaction 4 of 4 (Answer)

- Native American Indians relate to which time orientation

(Select one)

- Past
- Present
- Future

Question 1 of 4: Identify the correct choice to complete each of the bulleted statements below:

- This may be seen as disrespectful:
- Europeans moving onto Native American Indian land caused:
- Native American Indians have a(n):
- Clan members or an entire community could be considered:

Choices:

- a. Warfare between tribes
- b. Direct eye contact
- c. External locus of control
- d. Extended family

**Caution on
Stereotyping**

Question 1 of 4: Identify the correct choice to complete each of the bulleted statements below:

(Answers)

- This may be seen as disrespectful: **direct eye contact**.
- Europeans moving onto Native American Indian land caused **warfare between tribes**.
- Native American Indians have an **external locus of control**.
- Clan members or an entire community could be considered **extended family**.

Choices:

- a. Warfare between tribes
- b. Prolonged eye contact
- c. External locus of control
- d. Extended family

Question 2 of 4

- The federal government has made attempts at compensating the Native American Indians; however, the struggle between the two groups is continuous.
 - True
 - False

**Caution on
Stereotyping**

Question 2 of 4 (Answer)

- The federal government has made attempts at compensating the Native American Indians; however, the struggle between the two groups is continuous.
 - True
 - False

Question 3 of 4

- Native American Indians value cooperation, interdependence, and collectiveness, unlike the individualistic Western society.
 - True
 - False

**Caution on
Stereotyping**

Question 3 of 4 (Answer)

- Native American Indians value cooperation, interdependence, and collectiveness, unlike the individualistic Western society.
 - True
 - False

Question 4 of 4

- Native American Indians may practice maintaining composure and not showing emotion.
 - True
 - False

**Caution on
Stereotyping**

Question 4 of 4 (Answer)

- Native American Indians may practice maintaining composure and not showing emotion.
 - True
 - False

La Crosse Medical Health Science Consortium

We hope you had a good experience using this module.
If you have any comments or ideas you would like to
share about this module, or future modules, please
contact the LMHSC Cultural Competency Committee at:

hscinformation@westernnc.edu

Thank you!



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For additional cultural competency resources,
please visit the [website](#).

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