Cultural Perspective:
Working with Native American Elders in Michigan
Biography

- Member of the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe
- Mother is full blood of Nottawaseppii, Ojibwe, Ottawa
- Father is Caucasian of Germen lineage
- Work experience with Substance Abuse, Adolescence, Mental Health and Aging
- Currently Administrator for Assisted Living Facility for the Saginaw Chippewa Tribe, Adjunct Professor and Substance Abuse Counselor
Learning Objectives

- Brief overview of demographics and data on Native American Tribes of Michigan
- Current issues facing Native American elder and caregivers
- Learn culturally appropriate approaches in care for Michigan Native American populations
- Understand the importance of family and socialization for Native American elders
- Identify resources specific to Native American Elders
Michigan Tribal Map

12 Federally recognized Tribes in Michigan

Map obtained by Intertribal Council of Michigan

http://www.itcmi.org/information/tribal-map
The most populous Michigan Counties are in the Upper Peninsula, near Traverse City, Petoskey, Mt Pleasant, Grand Rapids, and Lansing.

Percent of Population 8.0 or greater in most of the areas listed above.

Saginaw Chippewa Tribe of Michigan
- District I 336 elders
- District II 14 elders
- District III in Michigan 480
Tribal Constitutions

- Membership are decided by each Tribe's Constitution
- Can vary based on
  - Blood Quantum
  - Lineage
- IMPORTANT – this is a topic not easily discussed with most Native American's

- Why?
Current Issues

- Membership
- Housing
- Victimization
- Poverty
- Health Care
- Mobility
- Isolation

Many of the issues facing Native American are similar to the general population
Membership

- Members
  - Have access to certain tribal resources and Indian Health Services providers
  - Some deal with discrimination within their own tribe
    - Subtle and not often discussed

- Non-members
  - Less access to resources afforded Tribal members
  - Also deal with discrimination as non-members
    - More overt forms found and easier to self-identify
Housing

- Tribal Housing is Limited
- Urban areas have less affordable housing
- Senior Housing is less available – Traverse City, Sault Ste. Marie and Saginaw Chippewa Tribe
- Assisted Living – Saginaw Chippewa Tribe
- Skilled Care – None
- Housing often shared with family members or other extended family members
Abuse
- Subtle – financial, childcare, housing, use of assets, medication theft
- Rare – physical abuse but it does occur
- Emotional – verbal, withhold grandchild visitation

Culture value of respect for elders – wise, knowledgeable, and cherished
- Maybe less than general population due to value but statistics are flawed
- Abuse can be under reported
Victimization

- Elder Protection Codes
  - Reservation are Nations within the U.S.
  - State Laws may not apply within reservation boundaries
  - Most Tribes do not have Elder Protection Codes in place
  - If they are in place they only apply within the reservation boundaries
  - No elder wants to see family, and friends prosecuted

- Several Codes I have read promote prevention and education long before prosecution
Many of the issues are similar to general population

Difference

- Pride and Independence – prevent some from discussing situation while others are okay with seeking assistance
- Poverty is still prevalent – stable income may not be present
- Casinos do not always mean income for membership
Health Care

- I.H.S. serves health care needs of Native Americans
- 43% live outside I.H.S. care boundaries (1)
- “No one needs to fuss over me”
- “Providers should know what’s wrong with me”
- Elder’s comfort with health care providers
  - Can be mistrusting
  - Communication barriers
  - Traditional medicines
Mobility and Isolation

- Again similar with Native American populations
- Rural areas make travel more problematic

- Native people are use to multigenerational families – this is changing
  - Loneliness can occur
Cultural Approaches

- Areas of Interest
  - Where do we start
  - Values
  - Language
  - Religion
  - Family

- How would you want to be approached?
Cultural Approaches

- Getting Started

- Respectful
  - Not with many papers to fill out
  - Seating considerations
  - Slow to warm
  - Eye contact
  - Interest in their case

- Interest in their history and culture but caution against being the “expert”
Culture Approaches

- Values

- 7 Grandfather Teachings
  - Nbwaakaawin  Wisdom
  - Zaagidwin   Love
  - Mnaadenidimowin  Respect
  - Aakwade’ewin  Bravery
  - Gwekwaadiziwin  Honesty
  - Dbaadendiziwin  Humility
  - Dewewin     Truth
Cultural Approaches

- Language
  - Ojibwe speak Anishinaabee Mowin
  - Bodawatomii speak similar but different
  - Ottawa again speak similar but Odawa

- It's hard for me
  - Each culture, family and “group” has language variations
  - Dialect is different in areas
  - The way we put words together are interchangeable
Cultural Approaches

- Religion
- Many different religious practices and faiths
- Tradition
- Christianity
- Inter-unity
Cultural Approaches

- Family is very important
- Grandchildren and Children are very adored
- Can be source of stress but keep remarks positive
- Getting them to voice how they want the relationship to be?
- Many share extensive families – related in many different ways
Resources

- **Website resources**
  - [http://cas.umkc.edu/casww/natamers.htm](http://cas.umkc.edu/casww/natamers.htm)
  - [http://www.olderindians.org/aginglinks.cfm](http://www.olderindians.org/aginglinks.cfm)
  - [http://www.itcmi.org/](http://www.itcmi.org/)
  - [http://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/aian2010_wall_map/aian_wall_map.html](http://www.census.gov/geo/www/maps/aian2010_wall_map/aian_wall_map.html)
  - [http://www.michiganindianelders.org/](http://www.michiganindianelders.org/)
  - [http://www.ihs.gov/](http://www.ihs.gov/)
  - [http://www.nicoa.org/](http://www.nicoa.org/)


How identity and cultural plays a part in what we do?

Find how care is culturally sensitive and different from dominate society?

Talk about what we do and how we do it.