TACUNA
Traditions and Connections for Urban Native Americans

fall 2022 press release

FEASIBILITY AND ACCEPTABILITY OF INCORPORATING SOCIAL NETWORK VISUALIZATIONS INTO A CULTURALLY CENTERED MOTIVATIONAL NETWORK INTERVENTION TO PREVENT SUBSTANCE USE AMONG URBAN NATIVE AMERICAN EMERGING ADULTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY

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SUMMARY

We talked to American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) emerging adults (aged 18-25), parents, Elders, and health providers in urban communities about developing a program to help AI/AN emerging adults avoid or reduce harmful substance use, as there are few culturally tailored programs that address alcohol, cannabis, and opioid use for this age group. We created a program—Traditions and Connections for Urban Native Americans, or TACUNA—to meet this need.

We asked focus group participants for feedback on our workshop materials, which focused on helping AI/AN

HIGHLIGHTS

> Just lightbulb in my head, just filling out the survey... seeing wow, I do know people that harbor that duality of being in the traditional spiritual practices and being a user at the same time. And it's just that pull is constant, as well.
>
> *- Emerging adult*

emerging adults learn how the people in their lives may influence them to use or not use substances and to engage in traditional Native practices. Helping them understand who is in their social groups, who may influence them to use substances, and who can help them avoid substances are important steps to encourage healthy choices. Building connections with other AI/AN people who engage in traditional practices also may be an important way to protect against substance use.

TACUNA uses a technique called "social network visualization." Participants answer questions about their relationships and then view and discuss a computer-generated picture that shows them their social relationships (or "network," which can include both online and offline interactions). The picture shows them who is in their network and how those people are connected to each other. TACUNA workshops provide a supportive, non-judgmental, and safe space for participants to talk openly about their social networks, including who might influence them to use substances, who might help them avoid use, and who would support them in engaging in traditional practices. Participants enjoyed the workshop content and style, gave ideas for improvement, had a clear understanding of their

HIGHLIGHTS

> I think this would really help with young adults just because sometimes they're displaced out of their homes or they're growing into adults. And they're leaving their homes and their social networks are changing... you'll show them how they're moving and how they can in the future move.
>
> *- Parent*

social networks when viewing their pictures, felt comfortable sharing in a group setting; and discussed how they understood their networks better after the workshops.

Social network visualizations are a promising tool for increasing awareness of social challenges and sources of strength for urban AI/AN emerging adults. These visualizations may help those in the AI/AN community gain a better understanding of how their social relationships can influence both their substance use and engagement in traditional practices.

Read the full article at www. tacunaproject.com/ pub-media. For more information about the TACUNA project, scan the QR code.

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