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TRADITIONS AND CONNECTIONS FOR URBAN NATIVE AMERICANS (TACUNA): UTILIZING COMMUNITY-BASED INPUT IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN OPIOID PREVENTION INTERVENTION FOR URBAN AMERICAN INDIAN/ ALASKA NATIVE EMERGING ADULTS



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SUMMARY

The opioid epidemic is severely impacting American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) communities. This study examines the development and testing of a new opioid prevention program for urban AI/AN emerging adults (ages 18-25) called TACUNA (Traditions and Connections for Urban Native Americans).

We invited AI/AN parents, emerging adults, and health providers in urban communities to give us feedback on the TACUNA program content to make sure the workshops were interesting and practical, and also addressed issues and concerns that face urban AI/AN emerging adults. Workshop participants discussed: 1) historical trauma/cultural identity, 2) AI/AN traditional practices, 3) social networks, and 4) substance use. Based on focus group feedback, we created three 2-hour virtual workshops where participants engage in traditional practices (cultural identity and storytelling, Native cooking, and sage/spirituality) and also learn

about the effects that opioids (painkillers like OxyContin, Vicodin, and fentanyl) can have on the mind, body, and spirit. We then pilot-tested the workshops with AI/AN emerging adults, who expressed that the focus on historical trauma and cultural identity was helpful in thinking about their own cultural and identity journey. Many also said that participating in traditional practices helped them connect with their AI/AN community. Participants also emphasized that social connections are critical to maintaining health and well-being.

Finally, they reported that people that use substances to deal with emotions and stress is a growing concern and that it is important to discuss healthy ways to cope.

The pilot test showed that TACUNA workshops could help foster the development of cultural pride, cultural connectedness, and social support in areas outside of reservations and tribal lands (including urban areas) for AI/AN emerging adults.

Read the full article at tacunaproject.org/pressreleases. For more information about the TACUNA project, scan the QR code.

HIGHLIGHTS

“The social networks was a really good idea, and that diagrams, like helped visualize how your social network affects you.”

HIGHLIGHTS

“I actually loved it [the food segment], because, yeah, I’m Native, but I don’t really practice traditionally. This is actually the reason why I joined this discussion, so I could learn more about myself in that way.”



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