



Using Anishinaabe Culture to Support Recovery Principles

Presented by:
Kevin Gasco
Matthew Lesky
Miigwaans Smith



Today's Presentation

Overview:

- Origin of Waabshkii-Miigwaan Drug Court Program.
- How culture was initially integrated into WMDCP.
- How the use of culture and cultural practice has evolved within the program over time.
- How the change in the approach to incorporating culture into the program has improved outcomes for clients.
- How we evaluate the effectiveness of cultural intervention



The Origin of the WMDCP



The Origin of the WMDCP

The White Feather story:

- Redemption and healing-to-wellness
- Valuing our community members
- Healing the community





[WAABSHKI-MIIGWAN PHASE 1 WORKBOOK]

Thank you for joining us in the Waabshki-Miigwan Drug Court Program! Phase One is the Learning Level. It will focus on detoxification and beginning treatment. You will be introduced to the basic underlying principles of your program and meet those in the community that will assist you in your treatment. Totally commit yourself to your Waabshki-Miigwan curriculum and you will be successful. This drug court program is not easy but it is simple and achievable. Can you complete this life challenge? We think you can. Welcome.

Brief Overview of the Original WMDCP Program

- 44 weeks in length
- Heavy emphasis on AA
- Wellbriety/White Bison as the basis of client programming
- Sanction oriented, including using jail as sanction for use
- Cultural programming was primarily image based; posters and manuals with “tribal” imagery, and presenting them with a feather upon completion of the program, and occasionally a sweat lodge
- Clients (male/female) received a ribbon shirt upon graduating the program



First Enhancement

- Programming still based on Wellbriety
- Phase fires are introduced, clients receive flint/steel strikers
- Cultural Resource Advisor was still highly restricted in their activity → there was an expectation that they would be in the office
- Very little participation in cultural activities except at the powwow



Second Enhancement

- Added female cultural resource advisor to the team
- Cultural resource advisors facilitated the participation of clients in some cultural activities outside of court
- CRAs worked with clients on the seven grandfather teachings
- Clients begin receiving feast bundles
- Female clients begin receiving water bundles
- Woven approach to justice, clients and team sit together in a circle for hearings



Second Enhancement (cont.)

- Water ceremonies begin being held at client fires
- Re-commitment to recovery phase based on seven grandfather teachings introduced
- Clients were given Anishinaabe-authored books, i.e. The Mishoomis Book, Gazhewaybak, The Indians of Hungry Hollow, The History of the Ottawa and Chippewa Indians of Michigan
- Talking Circles before court hearings for the clients were introduced
- Phase Advancement ceremonies introduced



Where are we now?





Third Enhancement

- Welcome Fire prior to client's entry hearing
- Clients learning their protocol introduction in Anishinaabemowin
- Clients receive language binder
- Medicines are present in court room
- Judge, team and clients use protocol introduction in court hearings
- Feast bundles, fire bundles and water bundles provided earlier in the program
- Participation in community activity counts as peer recovery meeting





Cultural Engagement and Client Outcomes





When Clients Arrive

They Arrive as Cultural Orphans

- Not raised with cultural practices
- Unfamiliar with traditional activities
- Don't have an Anishinaabe noozwin (spirit name)
- Don't know what their doodem (clan) is
- Have minimal knowledge of medicines and how they are used



The Negative Impact of Low Cultural Literacy

- Incomplete sense of identity
- Low connection to the community
- Loss of a protective factor
- Continued erosion of community stability → fewer people engaging in the activity means its less likely that knowledge will be transferred





Mnobmaadziwin: Restoring Connection and Improving Outcomes

- Focus on creating connections within the community
- Encourage clients to learn Anishinaabemowin, bungii eta
- Teach clients about medicines and their use
- Teach clients how to begin fulfilling traditional roles, fire keeping, water ceremony
- Engage in activities “on the land”
- Value cultural engagement → participation in community activity counts as a peer recovery meeting



Mnobmaadziwin: Restoring Connection and Improving Outcomes

- Community members get to see clients in a different light
- Clients see people gathering together engaged in sober activities
- As we have increased the level of cultural engagement, graduation rates have gone up; beginning with the second enhancement
- Clients report that the cultural elements of the program are the most impactful to them



Service Planning and Measuring Change: Native Wellness Assessment

- At the end of 2023 our program begin utilizing the Native Wellness Assessment in collaboration with the Thunderbird Partnership Foundation
- The NWA measures clients' cultural knowledge and engagement across multiple dimensions
- The NWA assists the CRAs in program planning for individual clients and allows us to assess the impact of cultural interventions on client progress
- Clients are reassessed at each new phase of the program
- Data from the assessments is aggregated into a report by NWA for no cost







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Miigwetch for Coming Today!

We appreciate your attention and interest.
We are happy to answer any questions you may have!

