

NEEDS ASSESSMENT OF CULTURALLY RELEVANT AND SENSITIVE
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE SERVICES FOR NATIVE AMERICAN WOMEN IN A
RURAL NORTHERN CALIFORNIA COUNTY

By

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Abstract

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In this rural Northern Californian County, there are four federally recognized tribes, as well as additional non-federally recognized tribes. This county is home to a single encompassing agency that assists those in need of domestic violence services. Indigenous people seeking services have little choice, therefore it is paramount that providers incorporate concepts such as historical trauma and assist those in need with culturally relevant and sensitive services.

A needs assessment was conducted, which was comprised of two distinct parts. The first, was a case study to collect and analyze data from a focus group assembled of Native American women, who have had experiences with domestic violence services within this county. The intent of the focus group was to discern the users' perspective of services, or why they may not have had sought out services in relation with the users' cultural identity. Secondly, a survey of local professionals experienced with the Native American community, was conducted seeking individuals' perspectives. This pertained to culturally sensitive treatments for Native American women.

Based on the findings of the research, it was expressed by participants that additional services are needed in the areas of advocacy, outreach education, counseling, and inclusions of the Native American community and healing practices representative of their culture. A written report, with recommendations derived from information from focus group and surveys, was shared with local domestic violence services, Native American agencies, and tribes.

It is imperative for professionals to hear the voices of the population they intend to serve to create the most effective positive changes. With suggestions, outlined in this written report, the services of these agencies could further benefit the Native American community with regards to domestic violence services.

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Introduction

Domestic violence is widespread within Native American communities due to historical trauma. This is caused through European colonization which displaced Native American people from their lands and families. This led to the degeneration of their culture, beliefs, and values. Colonization caused a shift in gender roles. Previous to colonization, relationships between men and women were balanced and equal (Hart & Lowther, 2008).

Presently, Native American women experience domestic violence “more than twice as often as any other ethnic group.”(Hart & Lowther, 2008, p. 188). They experience domestic violence differently, and at higher rates than American women and are at a higher risk of experiencing domestic violence than other populations in the United States (Hart & Lowther, 2008).

With the prevalence of domestic violence in Native American communities, it is important for those who respond to domestic violence situations, to have a better understanding of historical trauma. Training is necessary in order to respond appropriately to these situations in a culturally relevant and sensitive manner. With this understanding, we can begin healing the effects of historical trauma within the Native American community (Native American Communities Justice Project, 2010).

This county is rich with Native American culture and history. There are currently four federally recognized tribes as well as additional non-federally recognized tribes who reside in this county. To protect the identities of the participants of this study, the

pseudonym of Golden Feather County will be used to identify the county discussed.

Golden Feather County is a rural part of Northern California which only provides one agency that offers domestic violence services. This offers little options for Native American women so it is paramount that providers incorporate concepts such as historical trauma and assist those in need with culturally relevant and sensitive services.

Many Native American women in Golden Feather County have experienced situations in which domestic violence services were inadequate in reflecting cultural understanding and needs. This study aims to obtain an understanding of culturally relevant and sensitive domestic violence services for Native American women in Golden Feather County.

Through survey questions, directed to professionals who work with the Native American community, and focus group discussions with Native American women, their input will inform current providers what is needed to improve services. The responses will be outlined in a written report to aid current domestic violence agencies and possibly encourage tribal agencies to implement Native American led domestic violence services.

Review of Literature

Understanding Historical Trauma

The occurrence of domestic violence is disproportionately higher for Indigenous people and is experienced by Native American women at higher rates than any other ethnic group (Hart & Lowther, 2008). Colonialism and the persistence of subjugation and oppression is the root cause for this. Due to the prevalence of domestic violence in Native American communities, it is important to have an understanding of colonization and the continuing effects it has caused Indigenous people through historical trauma (Jones, 2008).

Through contact with European settlers, Native American people experienced the loss of their people through disease and murder by colonizers. Along with high rates of death of their people, Native Americans were also forcibly removed from their ancestral lands (Jones, 2008). This is also a great source of grief and loss, as these ancestral lands are sacred to them, as well as all living things native to these lands. This forced removal to reservations continued as European settlers and the government found monetary value in their lands. As they were moved by militant force, many more Native American people were killed or died from disease and starvation. These reservations provided bleak living conditions that proved to be an economic disadvantage (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Additionally, the government continuously broke treaties, which is still happening in this

present day with Native American tribes, leaving a deep sense of distrust of outsiders (Jones, 2008).

The boarding school era had a devastating impact on Native American people and plays a large part in historical trauma. Native American children were forced from their families and experienced physical, sexual, and emotional abuse at the boarding schools. The intention of the boarding schools was to rid Native American children of their own culture, and cultural values, in order to assimilate to the dominant culture. They were physical abused for speaking their native language and for participating in any of their traditional cultural related activities. They experienced emotional abuse by being shamed for being Native American and there are numerous reports of sexual abuse. This abuse, as well as being removed from their cultural connections and identity, left them emotionally and spiritually broken (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Many children died from homesickness and disease, never to return home from the boarding schools. The children who survived, to return back to their families, had lost the sense of understanding traditional parenting roles. They subsequently learned abusive behaviors by being raised in the boarding school system. Domestic violence was a result of this learned behavior (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Disenfranchised grief is another piece of historical trauma. It is defined as “grief that persons experience when a loss cannot be openly acknowledged or publicly mourned” (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 66). Anger, guilt, shame, feelings of sadness, and helplessness are common features of disenfranchised grief. Our dominant culture has done little to legitimize the genocide of Native American people. No apologies have been

made to Indigenous people. Treaties continue to be broken and land sacred to Native American people continue to be taken away and desecrated (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

The legacy of Western society of denying cultural grieving practices results in grief that remains unresolved. Native American people are dying at high rates due to suicide, alcohol and substance abuse, poor health, and living conditions, adding to their already existing trauma. This in turn increases the occurrence of domestic violence in Native American communities. The multiple layers of present loss, in addition to past trauma, exacerbate psychological numbing, anguish, and destructive coping skills that relates to historical trauma and disenfranchised grief (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Barriers and Gaps in Services

Several factors emerge when looking at why services have not been effective thus far for the Native American community. There are many barriers for accessing these services. It is important to be aware of these discrepancies, moving forward, to promote the healing needed for this community.

Studies have shown that Native and tribal communities have expressed that the non-Native American specific services are lacking cultural sensitivity, were not culturally appropriate, and did not meet the needs of the Native American community (Native American Communities Justice Project, 2010). Historically, there is already an existing mistrust of social services and government run programs. When these services prove to be lacking, the understanding of cultural needs of this community increases the lack of trust, further preventing Native Americans to seek these services (Jones, 2008). Other

noted barriers are not having access to services in their area due to geographical remoteness, unavailability of transportation, and poverty (Goodkind, et al., 2010). Systems of care, such as behavioral health for the Native American community, are vastly underfunded which affects the quality of care and accessibility of services.

According to Goodkind, et al., (2010), “The U.S. government spends less per capita on health care for Native Americans than it does on Medicaid recipients, prisoners, veterans, or military personnel. In addition, funding for behavioral health care through Indian Health Service is less than \$30 per year spent per person served by the system.” (p. 387).

Existing programs and services are heavily influenced by the white, middle class, dominant culture. Evaluation strategies and research have also been influenced by mainstream American values. Funding for research usually focuses on evidence-based practices (Goodkind, et al., 2010). The main concern with this research is the “lack of inclusion of Native American participants...and the exclusion of traditional healing practices among these studies” (Goodkind, et al., 2010, p. 388). Native American traditional practices, rituals, and ceremonies have been prohibited by federal policies, disregarded, and their credibility has been scrutinized by mainstream culture which has caused a loss, for many, of traditional practices within Native American communities (Goodkind, et al., 2010).

Best Practices

Research has shown that Indigenous people are more spiritually grounded with an overall positive physical and mental well-being when they have access to traditional cultural practices, “participation in traditional activities is fundamental to traditional healing... tribes have utilized traditional healing ceremonies which have a natural therapeutic and cathartic effect” (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 74). Due to lack of availability of these activities, it is important for non-Native services and agencies to be trained to be culturally competent, relevant, and sensitive (Goodkind, et al., 2010).

In 1977, the first shelter program was developed on an Indian reservation. It was opened by the White Buffalo Calf Women’s Society of the Rosebud Reservation. Since then, other shelters have been developed specifically for Native American communities. These programs provide culturally specific services such as naming ceremonies, talking circles, as well as various traditional practices. Currently there are tribal programs that have incorporated elders sharing story telling skills with the youth regarding tribal history. This in turn strengthens the sense of historical awareness to the younger generation. The Minnesota Indian Women’s Resource Center produced a handbook for advocates, for sexual assault victims, encouraging the development of culturally specific materials regarding ceremonies and languages (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Suggestions for the healing of historical trauma and unresolved grief is through traditional interventions as well as individual, group, and family therapy. Additionally, it would be beneficial to facilitate communal grief ceremonies,

“not only for current deaths, but for historical traumas: the loss of land, the loss of the right in the past to raise our children in culturally normative ways at home, and mourning for the human remains of ancestors and sacred objects being repatriated” (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 74).

Furthermore, research expresses a need for Native American advocates and clinicians, within the social work and mental health field, who have a personal understanding of the needs of the Native American community (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

To acquire a true sense of cultural competence, understanding, and sensitivity, non-Native social workers, mental health clinicians, and other service providers should have an understanding of historical knowledge pertaining to the Native American community. Service providers should have an understanding of the genocide of Native American people and how it relates to historical trauma, disenfranchised grief, and mistrust of the government, and social services. They must have an understanding of tribal sovereignty, organizations, and politics, as well as understanding the structure of reservations, and contemporary roles of the Native American community (Weaver, 1999).

Social workers, being dedicated to promoting social justice, should especially be aware of federal laws and policies that affect the Native American community. They should also take an active part in decolonization which “involves recognizing, then shedding, the mindset associated with colonial processes by which one culture subjugates another and defines it as inferior. Social workers should be dedicated to the concept of

tribal sovereignty and carry through with a commitment to individual and tribal self-determination” (Weaver, 1999, p. 2).

It is important to have cultural knowledge such as values, belief systems, and worldviews of the Native American community. Diversity exists within different tribes and nations, so it is important to not assume that all tribes have the same customs, beliefs, tribal system, and language. Although there is much diversity among Native American tribes, some similarities exist such as the importance of family and tradition, as well as showing respect for elders. Unlike the mainstream society’s sense of identity being based on a sense of individuality, Indigenous peoples’ sense of identity is grounded in a sense of community (Weaver, 1999).

It is important for service providers to be mindful of their own biases, personal beliefs, values, and stereotypes as to not let this disrupt provision of help. In order to do this, it is important be self-aware, remain humble, keep an open mind, and have a willingness to learn when working with the Native American community (Weaver, 1999). This needs assessment will evaluate and discern what improvements may be needed in Golden Feather County in relation to culturally sensitive service delivery.

Methods

MSW Student Positionality

As an intern at an Indian health facility in Golden Feather County, I sought out a domestic violence counselor as my community partner for this project. She has extensive knowledge and experience working with the Native American community. Through my studies at Humboldt State University, I studied a framework of researching marginalized and oppressed communities called Participatory Action Research (PAR). PAR aims to empower communities by including the perspectives of the targeted population to determine how the community views the cultural appropriateness of the research. This includes their input, given their personal and cultural knowledge of the issues being researched, in order to ensure the accountability of those that are conducting the research (Davis & Reid, 1999). Suggestions for incorporating the knowledge of the targeted population include inviting community members, as well as professionals in a similar field of study, to participate in focus groups, community forums, workshops, and similar activities (Minkler, 2000).

This study aims to assess the need for cultural emphasis to be implemented into domestic violence services for Native American women that are offered in Golden Feather County. With the understanding of PAR, and with the support of my community partner, I developed a research plan that included a focus group and survey. The purpose of the focus group is for Native American women to share their wisdom and experiences

with domestic violence services in Golden Feather County. Additionally, the focus group aimed to evaluate the services currently in place. The survey questioned professionals that, work with the Native American community, about their thoughts on services and suggestions for improvements.

Focus Group Methods

The focus group consisted of Native American women over the age of eighteen years who reside in Golden Feather County. I recruited women for the focus group with a flyer. The flyer emphasized to the participants that their wisdom would be essential in assessing the needs of the local Native American. The flyer assured participants that they could leave at any time if they felt uncomfortable. The flyers were handed out at the Indian health facility through my community partner who had a trusting relationship with members of this community through local tribes and Native American service organizations. Participants were asked to confirm their attendance directly to me. A three-hour window was reserved in the conference room located at the Indian health clinic that this community is familiar with.

Through the flyer recruitment, seven Native American women participated in the focus group (n=7) for two hours. All participants were given the opportunity to leave at any time, but chose to remain for the whole session. The informed consent assured participants that no direct quotes would be used in order to protect their identity. The purpose of the focus group was to assess the needs of the local Native American community regarding culturally competent domestic violence services in Golden Feather

County. The participants were asked to share their experiences based on the questions presented to them during the focus group session. Women shared intimate stories during the focus groups and in order to protect their anonymity their quotes are presented in paraphrase.

Upon arrival, participants were given a free-to-low-cost counseling services list and an explanation of the informed consent form was offered prior to their signatures. Participants were asked that material discussed be kept confidential, that no direct quotes would be used, and that the focus group would be audio-recorded so that I could be present and engaged. Refreshments and raffle prizes were distributed prior to the presentation of these four focus group questions. These question were designed to be non-suggestive and open-ended.

1. Have you ever sought out services for domestic violence issues? Why, or Why not? If yes, what type of services have you received?
2. If you have sought domestic violence services, how would you describe your experience with the services? Do you feel your needs were met?
3. If you could, would there be any changes that you would make to services available? Did you notice any barriers to accessing services?
4. Do you have any thoughts or suggestions to what you would like to see in the community regarding domestic violence services? If yes, please explain.

As the facilitator, I sat at the table with the seven participants to provide a casual comfortable setting. After asking the first question, I let the conversation flow and

allowed for moments of silence/pauses for participants to reflect and respond. As a result, the remaining questions were answered without the participants, knowledge. Even though the last three questions were answered, I reviewed them to see if there were any responses that they wished to expand upon. The focus group continued for two hours with all participants present. The opportunity to step outside to smudge with sage along with additional casual conversation took place. I personally professed my appreciation to all participants for sharing their time and wisdom with me.

Survey Methods

The purpose of the survey was to question professionals, which work with the Native American community, about their thoughts on services and suggestions for improvements. The survey questions were arranged on a Likert scale of very satisfied, somewhat satisfied, neutral, not very satisfied, and not at all satisfied. An additional space for comments and suggestions was provided. The questions related to shelter, counseling, court accompaniments, legal assistance, assistance with paperwork, court system, out-reach education for domestic violence services for Native American women in Golden Feather County. It asked what improvements they would like to see; what barriers there may be; and how to address these barriers.

Of the twenty-two professionals recruited, by e-mail, seven responses were received (n=7). These individuals come from various service fields that provide services for the Native American community. These services include financial assistance, behavioral health, outreach, victim assistance.

A copy of the survey questions directed to professionals is shown below:

1. Are you satisfied with current available domestic violence services available to Native American women in Golden Feather County? Please respond to each service listed below:

Shelter (circle one)

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Comments_____

Counseling (circle one)

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Comments_____

Court Accompaniments (circle one)

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Comments_____

Legal Assistance (circle one)

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Comments_____

Assistance with Paperwork (circle one)

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Comments_____

Court System (circle one)

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Comments_____

Outreach Education (circle one)

Very Satisfied	Somewhat Satisfied	Neutral	Not Very Satisfied	Not at all Satisfied
5	4	3	2	1

Comments_____

Other Service:

Name_____

2. If not satisfied, what improvements would you like to see for domestic violence services in the community?

3. Do you see any barriers to your suggested improvements? Please name them:

4. Do you have ideas as to how to overcome those barriers?

My community partner provided a list of names and e-mail addresses. I transmitted twenty-two e-mails to professionals that included the survey questionnaire and informed consent form. I explained that their names and responses would remain confidential. The e-mail recruitment subject line read "Survey Questions: Your input is needed and

appreciated.” In the e-mail, I introduced myself and explained the purpose of the survey which was to potentially improve services for our Native American community. Their responses would assist me in developing a needs assessment of cultural relevance and sensitive domestic violence services for Native American women in Golden Feather County. I identified my community partner, a known professional in their field, as a mentor in this process. I felt adding this information was pertinent to provide credibility and a connection to this research. I asked that they complete the survey and informed consent form attached to the e-mail and print a copy for their records. They would then contact me once it was completed and signed. I would pick it up from them at their convenience.

Results

This needs assessment is comprised of two distinct parts. The first is a case study in which data, consisting of oral responses, were collected and analyzed from a focus group of Native American women in Golden Feather County. The second part is a survey of local professionals experienced with working with the Native American community. The data are analyzed and summarized below by category. This data will be used to synthesize a series of culturally relevant recommendations, to potentially improve domestic violence services for Native American women in Golden Feather County, which will be formalized in a report.

Focus Group Responses

When asked about whether participants had sought out domestic violence services, they expressed that they were not represented by service provider staff based on their culture and skin color. Another reoccurring theme was a distrust of social services and law enforcement. The following are paraphrased responses that emerged from the group discussion.

One of the participants shared that she was raped as a child. She felt being of the wrong skin color, and coming from the wrong neighborhood, law enforcement did nothing to help her. She felt she didn't matter, as a Native American woman, because this was a reoccurring pattern shown by law enforcement in her community. When domestic violence services became available, she didn't seek out help because of the lack of trust.

She did not trust the cops and wouldn't call them for help. She expressed obtaining a restraining order would not matter if there was no one to stop them. It was of her opinion that domestic violence issues are dealt within the family instead of involving law enforcement. Two other participants expressed a similar sentiment with respect to mistrust of law enforcement, social services, and mentioned that domestic violence is dealt within the family. Three other participants agreed that trust is a big issue in the Native community and it takes a long time for trust to be built. In addition, participants experienced law enforcement referring people to the main domestic violence services center and are not aware of programs that are more culturally beneficial.

One participant reflected that twenty years ago, she went to another Indian health clinic in Golden Feather County. She received the help that she needed and was connected with other programs. These programs guided her culturally and connected her with culturally relevant practices.

The overall feeling of the participants was that the main domestic violence services center is lacking cultural sensitivity and it is reflected through services and staff. Participants expressed that in the Native American community, family values are important and the main domestic violence services center doesn't understand this culture. Participants stated that the staff urge you to leave your partner right away, making it more difficult when you have children.

Multiple participants shared that it is important to meet people where they are at in their lives and listen to their needs. Participants experienced providers telling them what actions needed to take place in order to receive their services. Participants felt a

need to be asked what they would like to see happen; what will help; and not be told how or what way it needs to be done. One participant felt that they did not realize how difficult it is to leave the only family you have known. Additionally, they felt shamed for going back to our partners. One participant contributed that when a woman is ready to leave their partner, they are told they don't have space at the shelter and to check in a week later. It takes a lot of courage to leave, and that may have been the only open opportunity.

Participants expressed a preference to going to an Indian health facility due to the focus of Native American cultural needs in regards to behavioral health. Two women mentioned that they are glad that this Indian health facility is planning to open behavioral health services separate, from their medical and dental areas, for confidentiality reasons. They felt that when seeking behavioral health services, other people in the community that are receiving medical and dental services would know where they were going. Participants stated that they would be more willing to seek behavioral health services once the new facility is opened.

Participants have experienced continuous negative views and stereotypes of Native American people. One participant shared that non-Native American people assume they are financially well off because of casino money, and that the government should cut social service programs for Native American people. Another frustration is that it is not understood that the programs that exist are because of broken treaties. Participants perceive that within social services, there are continued attitudes that believe

what happened to Native Americans was hundreds of years ago, and that Native Americans need to get past the issue that their sacred lands were stolen from them.

When asked for thoughts or suggestions, to what participants would like to see improve in domestic violence services, their responses were specific to the need for culturally relevant domestic violence services. Historical trauma training is important for domestic violence service providers. Trauma that has occurred, historically within the Native American community, has contributed hugely to domestic violence within the Native American community. This trauma is carried throughout the generations through DNA and exacerbated through witnessing violence in this community.

Other recommendations for culturally relevant domestic violence services, based on focus group responses, include:

- Culturally appropriate programs that speaks to the native community
- More tribal leadership involved with implementation of domestic violence programs and services
- Cultural healing for victims and perpetrators
- Have a Native American led domestic violence program for all youth
- Native American women sharing their stories that will promote healing while encouraging other Native American women
- Access to culturally relevant services for those who live in rural areas
- Prevention, intervention, and education is needed simultaneously or the problem is not effectively being addressed

Survey Responses

The tables shown below represent the responses of the professionals' level of satisfaction regarding each service listed in the questionnaire.

Table 1: Court Related Services in Golden Feather County

Satisfaction Level	Court Accompaniments	Legal Assistance	Court System
Very Satisfied	0	0	0
Somewhat Satisfied	2	1	0
Neutral	1	4	3
Not Very Satisfied	1	0	1
Not At All Satisfied	2	2	1
No Rating Selected	1	0	2

Additional Comments Regarding Court Related Services

As shown in Table 1: Court Related Services, the professional responses were varied by the participants. However, the responses reflected that participants were not satisfied or were only somewhat satisfied. A majority of the responses for legal assistance, and the court system, were stated as neutral. There were absent ratings in the categories of court accompaniments and the court system.

Court Accompaniments provide support and advocacy for victims who need to go to court for various reasons relating to domestic violence issues. One participant stated this service is not available in this area, while another was unaware this service was available. Two participants replied that a trained staff member be designated to assist with these services.

Legal assistance is needed for the process of filling out restraining orders and various other legal forms. It is also needed to provide legal advice and support. Survey participants expressed that these services are not available, or easily accessible, and are not culturally relevant. More domestic violence lawyers are needed that accept pro bono/low fees for legal victim assistance services.

Participants felt that the court system historically, has created an environment of distrust for the Native American community that prevents them from seeking services and that this system is lacking follow up protection. Another participant added that it depends on how much money you have and felt that all women and men should have equal access to services, including classes for both partners.

Table 2: Other Services in Golden Feather County

Satisfaction Level	Shelter	Counseling	Paperwork Assistance	Outreach Education
Very Satisfied	0	0	0	0
Somewhat Satisfied	1	3	2	0
Neutral	1	1	1	1
Not Very Satisfied	3	2	2	4
Not At All Satisfied	2	1	0	1
No Rating Selected	0	0	2	1

Additional Comments Regarding Other Services

In Table 2: Other Services, participants were not very satisfied in most categories shown above. The highest level of satisfaction was related to counseling and paperwork assistance services. However, two professionals did not provide a rating in the paperwork assistance category.

A majority of participants said that the shelter, managed by the main local domestic violence services center, is lacking cultural sensitivity towards Native American women. Native American women do not feel safe there because they are discriminated against and are not culturally acknowledged. Staff and non-Native American residents of the shelter present a negative attitude towards Native American women that have stayed there.

Participants expressed that those who provide counseling services are lacking cultural humility, and more Native American advocates are needed. Counseling is sparse in the more rural areas where many Native American individuals reside. To improve counseling services, more funding is needed.

When individuals, who are going through a traumatic experience, completing any paperwork can be a daunting experience. When applying for services, filling out paperwork is a necessary process. With respect to this service, three participants were not aware of the availability of this service. Another thought paperwork assistance was available at the local shelter but felt staff was lacking the proper training to effectively respond to the Native American community.

Participants expressed that more community outreach is needed to build trusting relationships between the providers and the community. Unfortunately, very little outreach education is available in regards to domestic violence and how it is linked to historical trauma within the Native American community.

One participant mentioned the organization she worked for tried to connect with the main domestic violence services center to develop a curriculum for healthy relationships for the youth. This center insisted they must include the negative aspects of the cycle of domestic violence before speaking about building healthy relationships. This participant felt that this approach would be traumatizing to the youth and chose to work with another organization that they were able to develop a program that was also culturally appropriate.

Suggested Improvements for Domestic Violence Services in the Community

Survey participants expressed a need for additional funding and grants to address domestic violence issues with respect to this Native American community. These funds would provide for behavioral health and domestic violence advocates that are needed to properly reflect the diverse composition of the community. Programs are needed to educate the Native American community on the various issues relating to domestic violence. All participants expressed the importance that education should be presented by other Native Americans. It was important to two participants that there is a need for providers to come from a place of cultural humility in order to not project their preconceived ideas on what they think this community may or may not need.

One of the participants suggested involvement in the Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) every six months. GONA is a four-day journey focused on increasing the strengths of Native youth and community, healing the past, and building the future.

Barriers to Suggested Improvements

Several barriers include the lack of Native American leadership with services in the community, educational opportunities for providers, cultural humility, time and resources, financial assistance for victims, and flexibility to provide services from an alternative perspective. Two participants specifically stressed that current providers at the

main domestic violence center are resistant to trying to provide services that would be more effective to the Native American population.

Additionally, it was expressed that the Native American community is reluctant to admit an existing domestic violence issue. They felt that most victims did not feel safe to come forward and seek services.

Overcoming Barriers

Participants felt that tribal agencies and government need to create a domestic violence program specifically for the Native American community that would provide advocates, attorneys, housing, food, and toiletries for victims and their family.

Participants also felt strongly about the need for outreach education, which could be presented through pamphlets, brochures, and contact information located at Native American agencies. It was also mentioned that confidentiality be made a priority to ensure the safety of individuals seeking services.

Additionally, education and/or vocational training is essential for victims so they can become more self-reliant. Education and training needs to be offered to providers on cultural competency to encourage cultural humility for all ethnicities.

Discussion

After examining the results of the focus group, and survey for professionals, three main issues emerged relating to the needs for culturally relevant domestic violence services for Native American women in Golden Feather County. The participants collectively explained a need for cultural sensitivity in services, Native American led services, and outreach education.

Culturally Sensitive Service Delivery

Research has shown that, because of fear and/or lack of trust in law enforcement and service providers, people of Native American communities often do not seek help. It is indicated that the lack of cultural sensitivity is the leading cause of mistrust. It is reflected in the responses of both the focus and survey responses that current services are lacking cultural sensitivity which barrier for seeking services. It is important that to improve services, all responders to domestic violence need to be trained in culturally appropriate procedures (Jones, 2008).

The Native American community's worldview differs from the dominant culture in relation to concepts of time, family roles, social connections, and their place in the natural world. Professionals should engage in a way that respects and reflects an understanding of these differences in everyday practice. Without respecting these differences in worldview perspectives, service providers could risk hindering the

potential for creating of trusting relationship that would foster the development of effective services for the Native American community (Jones, 2008).

Another factor that is a barrier to a trusting relationship, regarding interactions with the Native American community, is historical trauma (Jones, 2008). Historical trauma stems from past abuse that is intergenerational. These abuses are repeated through racism, discrimination, fear of losing their children, being alienated from family, and historically services not acting in their behalf (Wahab & Olson, 2004).

Implementing cultural competence education and training for providers may help foster an organizational environment that shows cultural sensitivity which would encourage more people to seek help and continue services. Best practices suggest that service providers should work in collaboration with each other to establish a consistent trusting relationship with the Native American community (Johnson & Cameron, 2001).

By providing education and training for service providers regarding historical trauma, and other specific cultural issues could foster cultural competency and sensitivity. Another solution may be to establish and continue trusting relationships by collaborations between service providers and the Native American community, as well as providing mediation to facilitate communication and a better understanding (Native American Communities Justice Project, 2010).

Native American Led Services

In another study, Native American participants felt that services that were led by non-Native people were culturally inappropriate which is consistent with the participants'

responses in this study. It is also noted that participants that had Native led services were more satisfied with services rendered (Native American Communities Justice Project, 2010). One participant from the focus group expressed satisfaction when she was offered services that included cultural practices. Other participants of the focus group expressed that they preferred services that were Native American led. The need for Native American led services was also desired by survey participants.

It has been shown that the Native American community would benefit from Native American led domestic violence services including a safe house or shelter. Particularly, Native American service providers will be more likely to understand the Native American women's needs and concerns (Johnson & Cameron, 2001).

Native Americans have the wisdom and understanding to facilitate appropriate cultural healing practices. It is important to note that a non-Native person should not attempt to imitate cultural practices but should rather refer a Native American person seeking these specific services to tribal agencies or Native American led services. Suggested culturally relevant practices include talking circles, women's groups, and ceremonies (Native American Communities Justice Project, 2010).

Outreach Education

In this study, participants from the focus group and survey, mentioned the need for outreach education within the Native American community, and that domestic violence is not often discussed. Additional research explains that it is common for the Native American community to hide or not discuss domestic violence. This is due to the

stigma associated with domestic violence, a strong sense of loyalty to family, and a reluctance to seek outside help. With the prevalence of domestic violence, as a result of historical trauma, it is important to find ways of bringing awareness and education about domestic violence within the Native American community (Native American Communities Justice Project, 2010).

Conclusion

Many suggestions have been offered from this study as well as through other resources. Most of these suggestions involve openly discussing domestic violence in this community, such as community dinners with the focus of elders addressing this issue and at tribal council meetings. Pamphlets and brochures, displayed openly at tribal and Native American agencies, would bring awareness while possibly encouraging discussion regarding domestic violence. Furthermore, education and programs for youth surrounding domestic violence could be a needed preventative measure for ending the cycle of abuse (Native American Communities Justice Project, 2010)

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