



**NEBRASKA CENTER FOR RESEARCH ON
CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS**

Participatory Action Research to Prevent Sexual and Related Forms of Violence Among Indigenous Youth

Katie M. Edwards and Leon Leader Charge



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CHILDREN, YOUTH, FAMILIES & SCHOOLS**

Wocekiye

(Sending a Voice For
the Future)

Land Acknowledgement

The University of Nebraska is a public, land-grant institution with campuses and programs across the State that reside on the past, present, and future homelands of the Pawnee, Ponca, Oto-Missouria, Omaha, Dakota, Lakota, Arapaho, Cheyenne, and Kaw Peoples, as well as the relocated Ho Chunk (Winnebago), Iowa, and Sac and Fox Peoples.



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Introductions and Context/Background

Who are we?

Leon Leader Charge



Katie M. Edwards

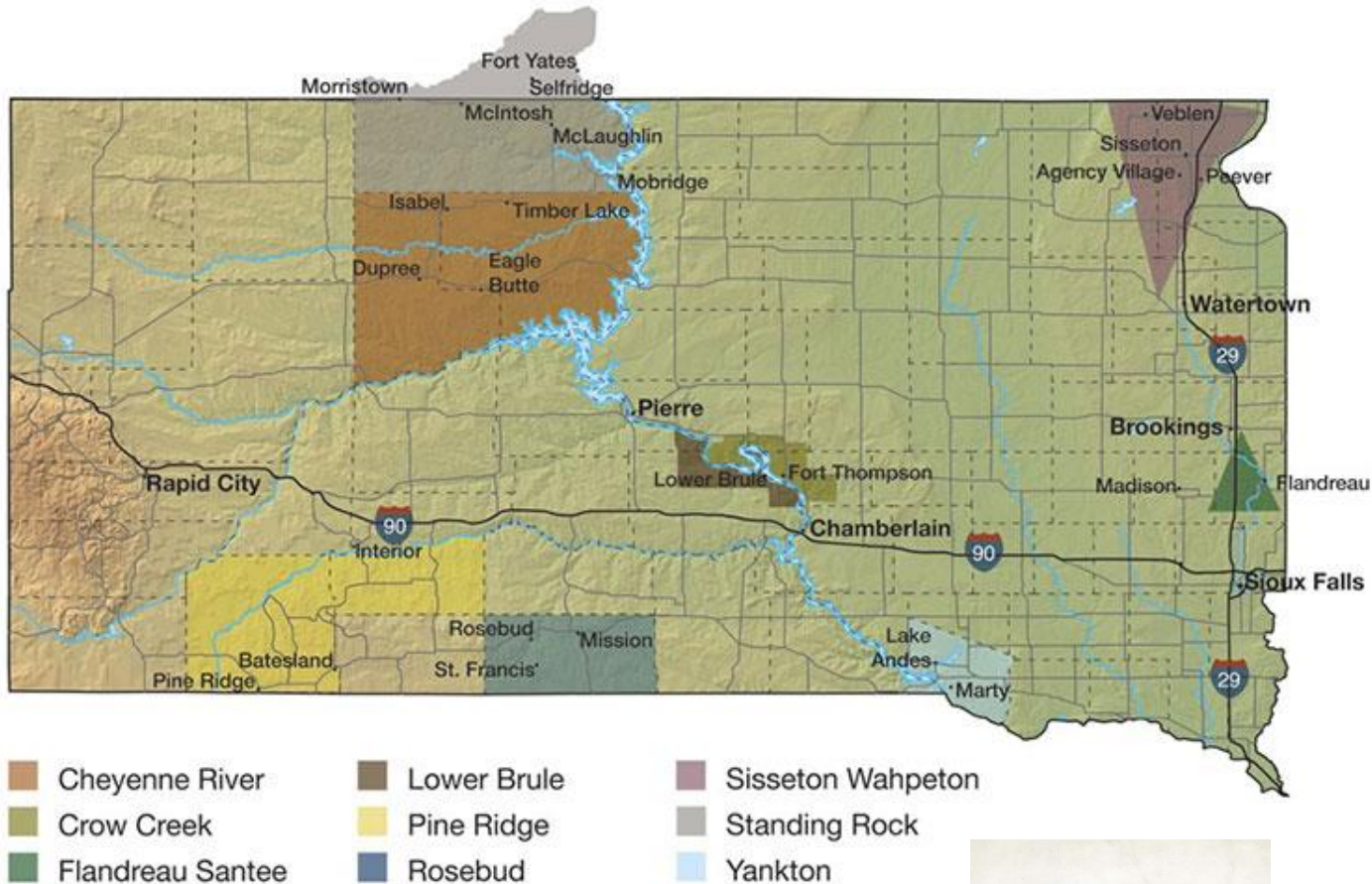


Positionality: We are a group of academic and non-academic individuals, who collectively embody a range of minoritized identities, roles, and personal areas of expertise including multi-disciplinary researchers, practitioners, advocates, students, and community members from elders to youth, ranging in age from adolescence to late adulthood. Our team is comprised of people who belong to racial/ethnic minoritized groups; white, non-Latine individuals; queer including trans and non-binary individuals and heterosexual cisgender individuals; individuals born in countries outside of the U.S. and who learned English as a second language; and people with disabilities. Collectively, we are committed to efforts for prevention of and healing from violence and trauma through community based participatory action research. Further, we believe that violence, adversities, and related public health and safety issues must be understood within a sociopolitical and historical lens, and that team members' power and privilege must be acknowledged and dismantled through reflexivity, decolonized approaches to research and practice, and a commitment to anti-oppression work.

History of the Sacred H'e Sapa

- We all come from the T'ate Ihuta (source of wind) – Wind Cave, in the Sacred H'e Sapa (Black Hills)
- We were given spiritual laws to govern ourselves (Wo'ope Sakowin – Seven Sacred Laws)
- We were given a Sacred Canunpa (pipe) to communicate with Creator
- Our spiritual laws, language, ceremonies and customs are the foundation for ensuring healthy development of children which leads to healthy elders
- ***We were shown by the Pte Oyate (buffalo nation) where/how to make sacred offerings in the H'e Sapa (Black Hills) when the sun passes through particular constellations***

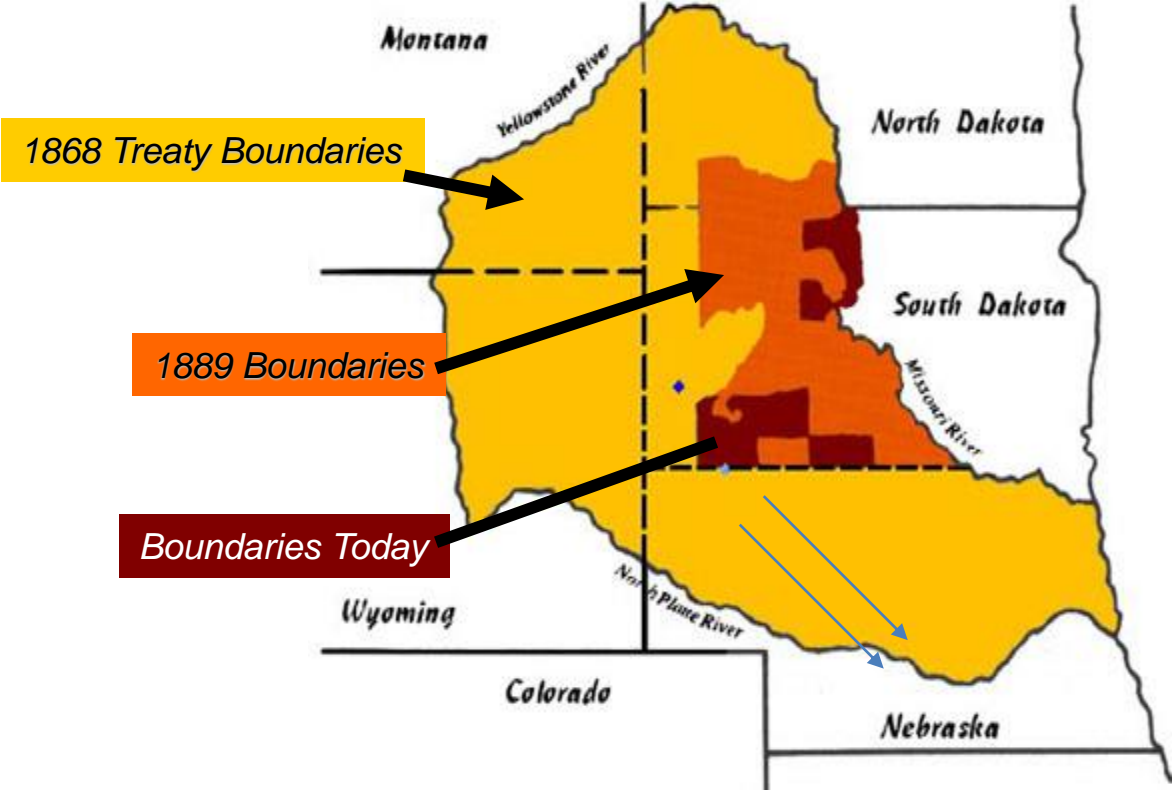
Tribal Nations in Present Day SD



Lakota
Nakota
Dakota



Makoce Ungnuniipi (Loss of Land)



Goals of Our Work in SD and Beyond

- Adapt/develop, implement, evaluate, and sustain interpersonal violence prevention and response efforts that are culturally grounded, and strengths focused.
 - Community-based participatory action research, Indigenous-led (Elders), Start in a good way (ceremonies, blessings)
- Dismantle larger systems of oppression that are root causes of interpersonal violence and other health disparities among Indigenous relatives

Types of Interpersonal Violence

- Sexual assault
- Sexual harassment
- Sex trafficking
- Teen dating violence
- Stalking
- Bullying
- Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)

Rates of Past-Six Months Victimization among Lakota Middle and High School Girls

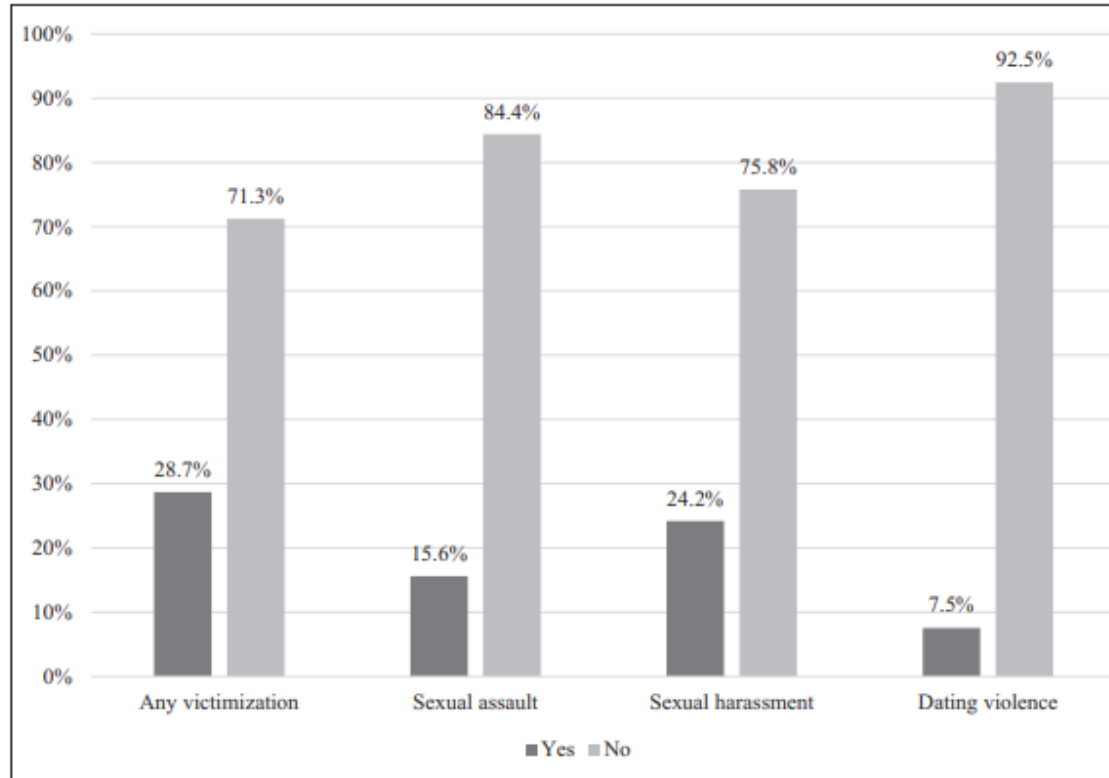


Figure 1. Rates of past 6 months sexual assault, sexual harassment, and dating violence victimization.

Rates of Past-Six Months Victimization among Lakota Middle and High School Students

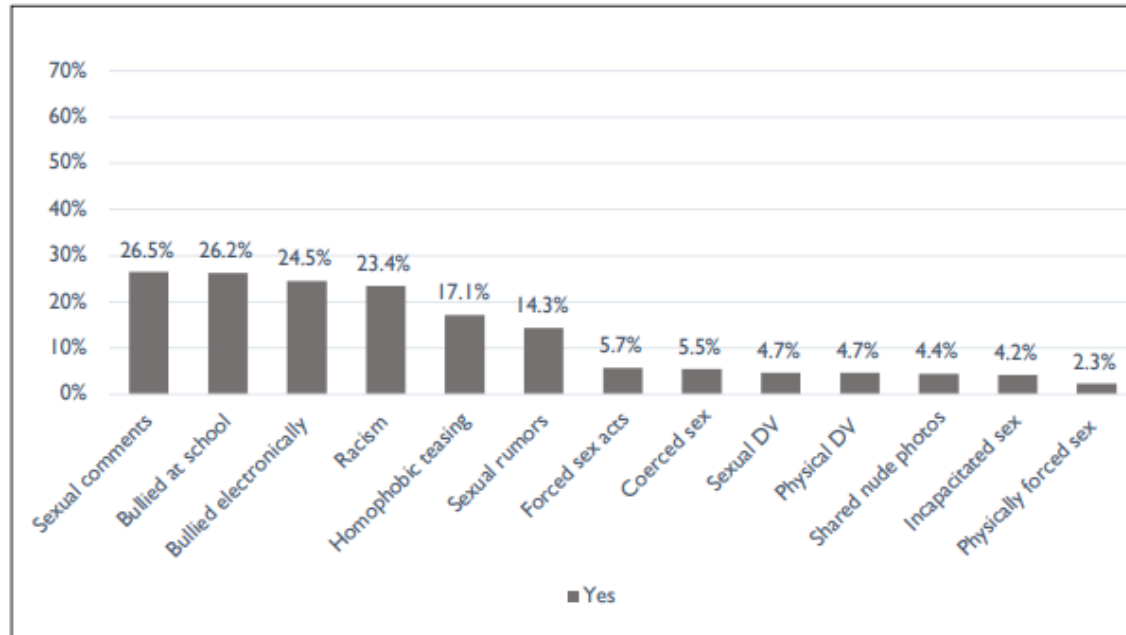


Figure 1. Past 6-month rates of interpersonal violence victimization ($N = 400$).

Note. DV = dating violence.

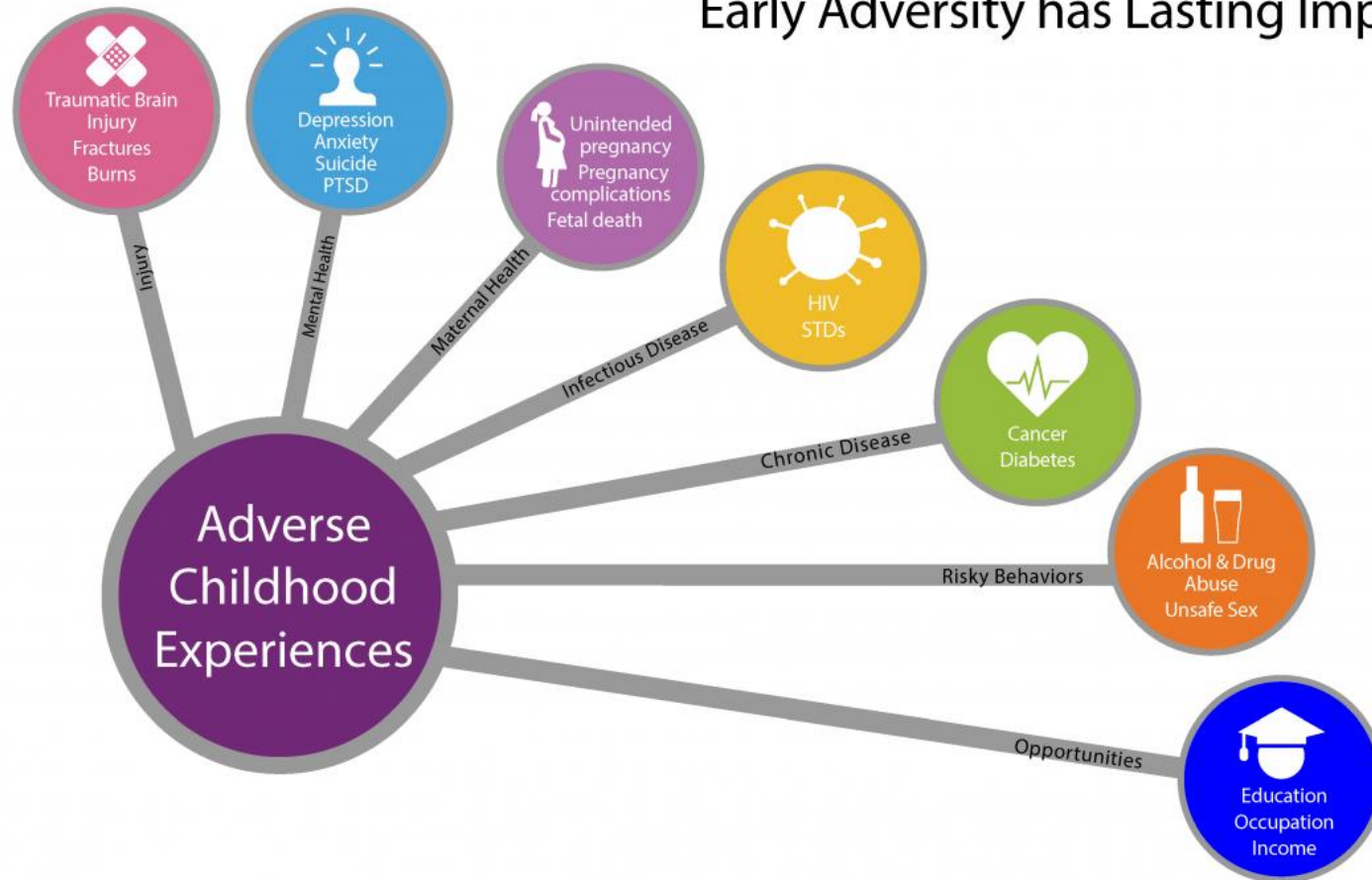
Rates of Past-Six Months Victimization among Lakota LGBTQ2S+ Youth (13 to 17)

- Bullying
 - 52%
- Teen dating violence
 - 51%

ACEs among Lakota Relatives

- On average, caregivers reported experiencing 11.39 ACEs (Range = 0 – 29) as a child.
- Caregivers reported that during the past six months, on average, their child (ages 10 to 14) experienced 4.53 ACEs (Range = 0 – 15).
- Lakota LGBTQ2S+ youth (ages 13 to 18) reported experiencing 12.7 ACEs (Range = 0 – 29) as a child.

Early Adversity has Lasting Impacts



<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/aces/index.html>

Outcomes among Lakota Youth

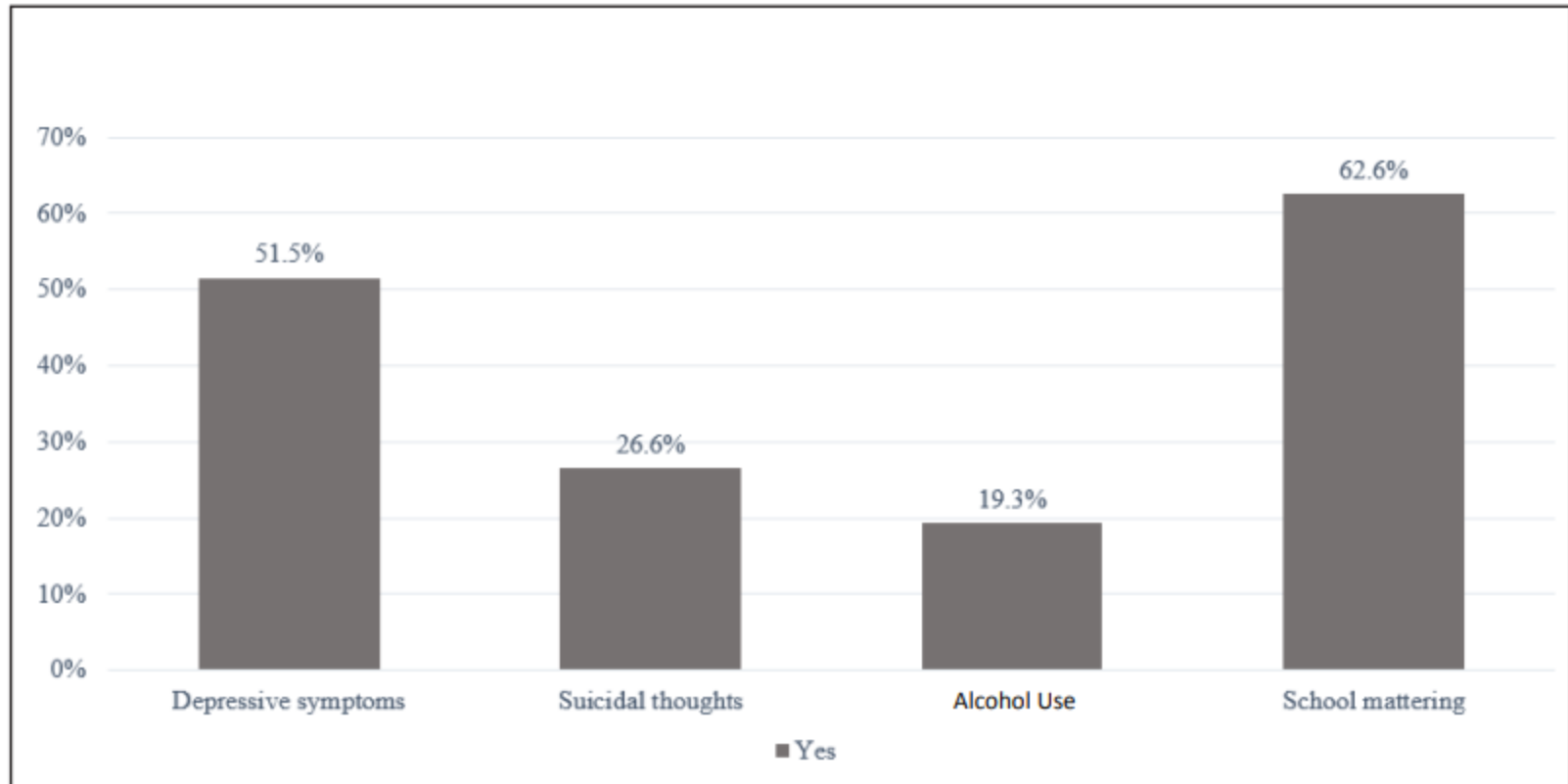
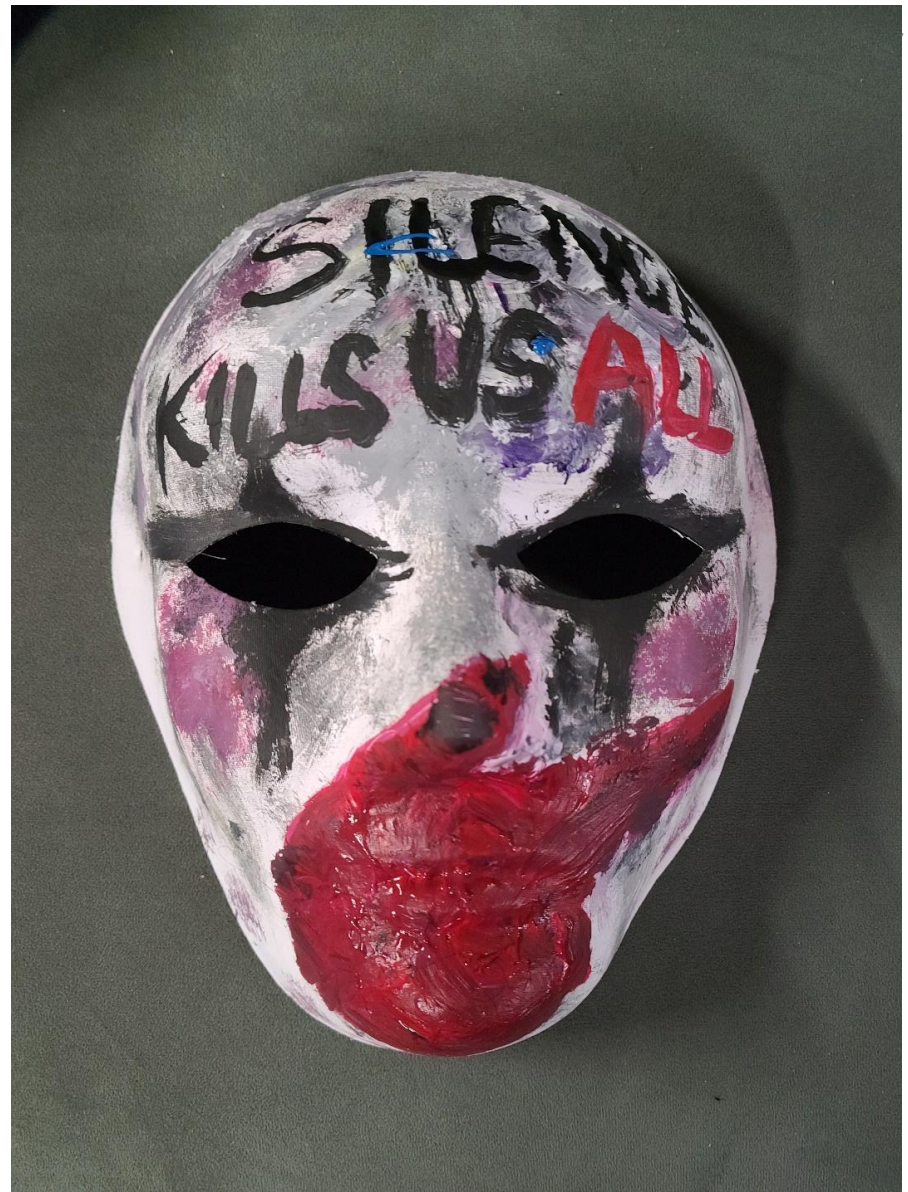
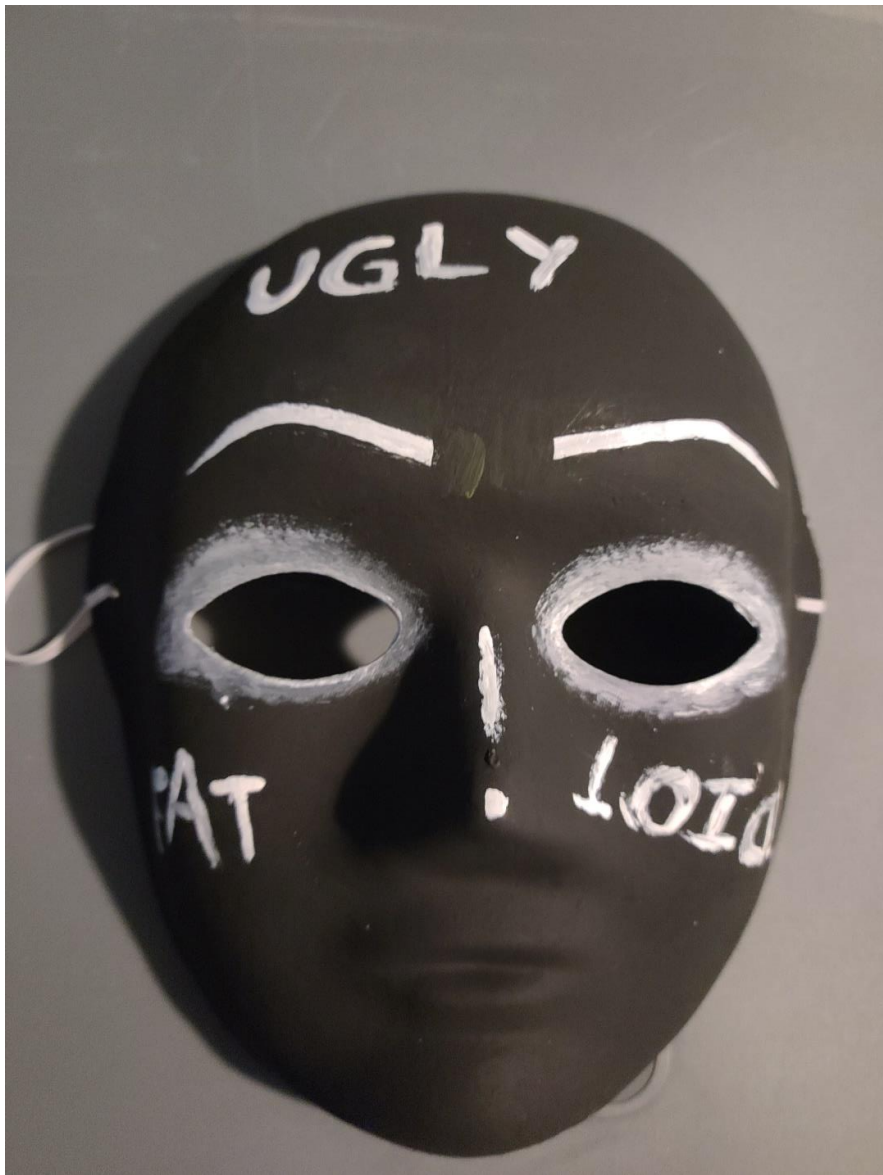


Figure 2. Past 6-month rates of adjustment indicators ($N = 400$).



“If you see something bad, somebody who's supposed to protect you doing something bad you're supposed to say something. You should feel safe no matter where you are. If a person says they're supposed to protect you, that's what they're supposed to be doing. If you keep silent about the people who say they protect us and aren't doing that, you're just as bad as them”

HISTORICAL CONTEXT – *IMPACT ON CURRENT SOCIETAL IMBALANCES*

- Colonization and Genocide
- Doctrine of Discovery
- Manifest Destiny
- Land loss
- Boarding Schools separated children from parents/family by force
- Federal Policies designed to assimilate
- Outlawing spiritual ceremonies
- Broken Treaties (still the supreme law of the land)



Historical Context

- Loss of culture, history, language → health consequences
- Sexual violence in Indigenous societies was extremely rare before colonization
- Resilience
 - Connection to culture/cultural identity

Cultural Identity

- Lower rates of interpersonal violence among Lakota youth
- Buffers against intergenerational transmission of ACEs





“I learned I don't have to sacrifice my culture to be comfortable with my gender and sexuality”



“I feel all the emotions. I just want to change the world when I'm outside.”



“Before you are born, your family prepares for you. They take a lot of time making your moccasins and getting everyone ready for your arrival. They do this because they love you and want to support you. As you grow, your initial pair of moccasins won’t fit. Your family keeps making you new ones that fit you. It’s the same thing with boundaries. Your family gives you boundaries like structure and rules of kinship so you can grow and be safe.”



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Overview of Prevention Projects

Project Overview

- Strengths-focused, culturally grounded prevention approaches
- Research studies:
 - Community-based participatory action research
 - Research approvals
 - University IRB
 - IHS IRB or Tribal IRB/Council approval
 - Approval/blessings from Elders
 - Tribes own data; Indigenous co-authors

THE 12 LAKOTA VIRTUES

- 1 Unsiiciyapi (*Humility*)
- 2 Wowacintanka (*Perseverance*)
- 3 Wawoohola (*Respect*)
- 4 Wayuonihan (*Honor*)
- 5 Cantognake (*Love*)
- 6 Icicupi (*Sacrifice*)
- 7 Wowicake (*Truth*)
- 8 Waunsilapi (*Compassion*)
- 9 Woohitike (*Bravery*)
- 10 Cantewasake (*Fortitude*)
- 11 Canteyuke (*Generosity*)
- 12 Woksape (*Wisdom*)



YOUTH VIP

Voices in Prevention



YOUR CITY | YOUR VOICE

<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/35303249/>
<https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fv10000413>
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1002/ajcp.12645>

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Youth Voices in Prevention

- In 2017, a multi-stakeholder collaborative in SD created Youth Voices in Prevention (YVIP)
- The goal of Youth VIP is to end sexual and related forms of violence and promote positive youth development in Rapid City, SD through adult-to-youth mentoring
- Events
 - Overnight camps
 - After school events/activities
 - Social media presence



YOUTH VIP

Youth learn the following skills:

- 1 Bystander intervention skills (how to help in situations of sexual violence, sexual harassment, dating violence, bullying and racism)
- 2 Social-emotional learning skills (how to manage one's emotions and interact with others in healthy, respectful ways)
- 3 Social norms (how to spread the message that sexual violence in Rapid City is unacceptable and that everyone has a role to play in ending sexual violence)
- 4 Diffusion skills (how to share skills you have learned with others)
- 5 Appreciation of Lakota culture (all Youth VIP activities include the integration of Lakota culture, values, traditions and language)

88% of youth in RC think that everyone has a role to play.

What is YOUR role in ending sexual assault?



www.youthvip.org

Did you know 74% of RCAS youth (grades 7-10) think its important to talk about how to stop sexual assault?



We are taking a stance in our community against sexual violence.

#positivebystander #rcyouthvip #dontwatchtakeaction
Find more info @ YouthVIP.org

"My opinion is important because I can make a difference in Rapid City."

Preventing sexual harassment and dating violence is everyone's responsibility.

70.8% of RCAS (grades 7-10) youth think its important for adults to talk about healthy relationships
#rcyouthvip #dontwatchtakeaction #fearisfiction

Evaluation Methods

- Surveys of middle and high school students
 - 5 time point over 3 academic years
 - ~20% were Native youth
- Interviews with students

MAKING A DIFFERENCE

We found the Youth VIP project led to positive change in Rapid City. Surveys were completed by 2,647 middle and high school students in Rapid City Area Schools before and after participating in Youth VIP activities. Nine students involved in Youth VIP also participated in one-on-one interviews to provide additional feedback.



2,647 STUDENTS

from middle and high school completed surveys



132 EVENTS

were held between May 2018 - April 2020

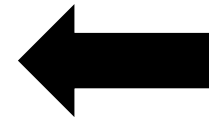


8.1% OF STUDENTS

participated in 1 or more community event

Survey Results

- **Youth who participated in Youth VIP, compared to youth who did not:**
 - More acknowledgment of sexual violence as an issue
 - More positive bystander behavior
 - Less perpetration of some forms of violence
 - Higher likelihood of reporting victimization



More robust positive outcomes for sexual minority students compared to heterosexual students AND Native students compared to non-Native students

- **Friends of friends who participated in Youth VIP:**
 - More awareness of Youth VIP

IN THEIR OWN WORDS

According to open-ended questions on surveys and interviews, the program was highly acceptable to youth. They reported gaining both violence prevention skills (e.g., bystander intervention) and more general skills (e.g., leadership, communication) through Youth VIP involvement.

“ [Youth VIP] opens my eyes to see what’s actually wrong in the community and what we need to do. Usually, I wouldn’t do anything. I don’t know what to say, but this [training] makes me want to do something. All the skills you’ve learned you want to put it to test.”

“ I’ve learned ... not to be afraid to share what you’re thinking because it could be good, it could have potential.”

“ I felt a little more proud of myself ... [because] instead of saying I want to change, [I’m] trying to be the change.”

“ It gives me motivation to talk about it ... because some people could be like me; they could be shy ... but they’ve probably been through it and ... need another person who’s exactly like them to talk about it.”

“ I just never really knew what to do [before] ... now it’s kind of like, guys, I’m not going to stand for this, and I will start speaking up against other people.”

“ In my everyday life, [I’ve] been more informative, and I’ve been more open to the topic with my friends.”



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IMpower for Lakota Youth



IMpower Programming Overview

- Elementary school boys and girls
 - 12 hours
 - OK v. NOT OK touch
 - Recognize risk
 - Say “no”, run away, scream, etc.
 - Get help
- Middle and high school girls
 - 12 hours
 - Identification of risk
 - Responding to risk
 - Verbal skills
 - Physical skills
 - Empowerment
- Middle and high school boys
 - 12 hours
 - Sexual consent
 - Bystander intervention
 - Healthy masculinity
 - Healing from trauma



RST NMNW: Outcomes for 4th and 5th Grade Students



Knowledge about child sexual abuse



Efficacy to resist an attack



Liked the program and felt that the program helped them stay safe



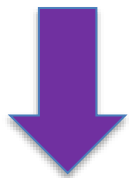
Outcomes for Middle and High School Girls



Knowledge about effective sexual assault defense strategies



Increase confidence to stop/avoid a sexual assault



Reductions in sexual assault and sexual harassment

“I learned that I am worth defending”



Rapid City Family Project



RCFP

Project Purpose

- ❖ Develop and evaluate a strengths-based, culturally-grounded adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) prevention program
 - ❖ Multi-stakeholder collaboration
 - ❖ Three-year project funded by the CDC
- ❖ Community-led
- ❖ Focus is on youth ages 10 to 14 and their caregiver(s)
 - ❖ Native and/or living in poverty

Strengthening Families Program

- ❖ 50% reduction in child maltreatment
- ❖ Increased likelihood of family reunification following child welfare intervention
- ❖ Adapted and evaluated in dozens of countries
- ❖ Adapted for Indigenous communities
 - ❖ Bii-Zin-Da-De-Dah (Whitbeck et al.)
 - ❖ Thiwáhe Gluwáš'akapi

Program Adaptation

- Data from focus groups and photovoice as well as in-depth input from Native Advisory Board, Lakota Elders, and open pilot trial with children and their caregivers



Tiwahe Wicagwicayapi: Program Overview

- **Key outcomes:** connection to culture; family cohesion and bonding; communication skills; healthy coping skills; caregiver monitoring skills; refusal skills (children); connection to external resources/social support
- **Format:** family dinner followed by caregiver and child break-out sessions; end as a family; opening and closing prayer; homework; resources
 - Facilitated by diverse staff, primarily Lakota (Elder present at all sessions)
- **Tone:** fun and engaging



Tiwahe Wicagwicayapi: Session Overview

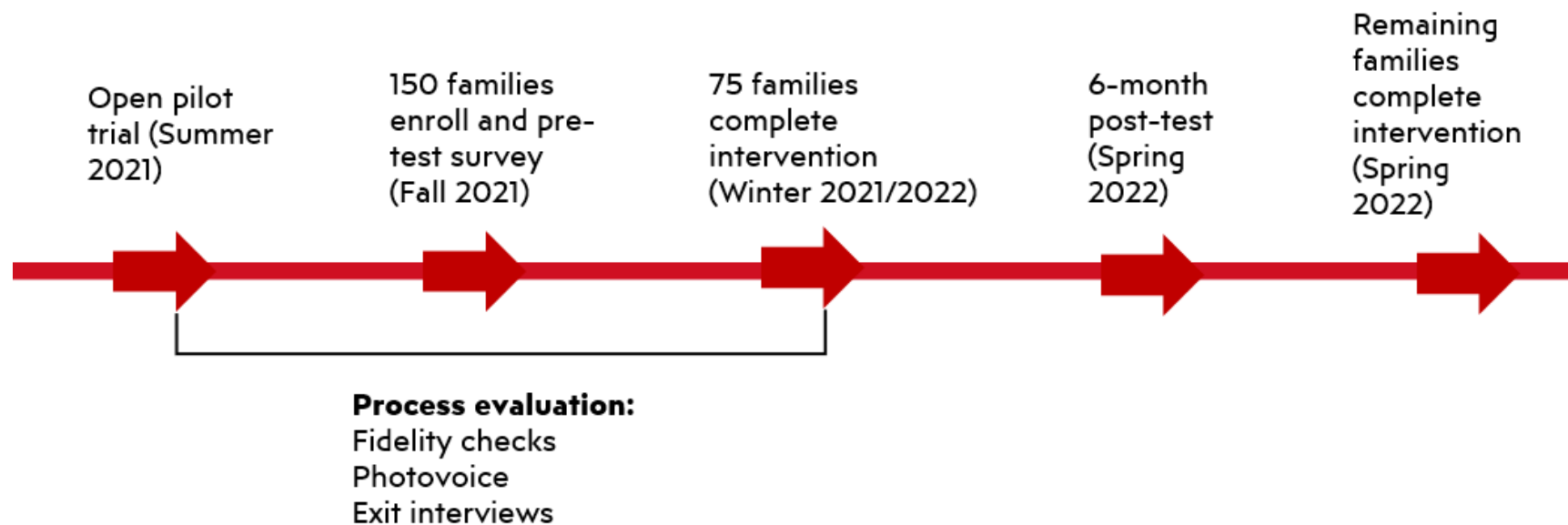
- Session 1: Canteognake (Love)
- Session 2: Wopila (Gratitude)
- Session 3: Wowike (Harmony)
- Session 4: Waohola (Respect): Part I
- Session 5: Waohola (Respect): Part II
- Session 6: Woohitike (Bravery)
- Session 7: Wayunonihan (Honor)

“[Lakota virtues] have much to offer anyone who is curious about life. They are our gift to the world.”

-Joseph Marshall III



Evaluation Plan



Program Outcomes

- Reductions in:
 - IPV
 - ACEs
 - Harsh parenting
 - Depression
- Increases in:
 - Parent-child communication
 - Caregiver emotion regulation
 - Caregiver cultural identity





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Summary and Next Steps

Summary

- High rates of sexual and related forms of violence impacting Indigenous youth with myriad short- and long-term deleterious consequences
- Prevention is possible
 - Indigenous/Community-led
 - Culturally grounded
 - Strengths focused
 - Ecologically based
 - Comprehensive
 - Sustainable
- Sustainability and expansion
 - Collaborate with us!



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Q&A

Wopila Tanka!

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