Traditional Knowledge: Neurodiversity in Practice

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(Yurok, Karuk & Tolowa)
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Aiy-yu-Kwee’

Shoshoni Gensaw-Hostler is the Noh-sue-no-wow’ (We grow up) Program Manager for the Yurok Tribe. She is an Associate Marriage and Family Therapist who has worked in various capacities for tribal communities for over 20 years. She received her BA in Psychology with Minor in Native American Studies from Humboldt State in 2006. She received her MA in Psychology in 2020 from Humboldt State. Her areas of study and interest include eating disturbances amongst ethnically diverse women, suicidality and program development. She is also a mother of four beautiful children and a devoted regalia maker.
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Disclaimer

The views expressed in this presentation are those of the speaker and do not necessarily represent the views, policies, and positions of the Indian Health Service (IHS), or the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS).
Personal Disclosure

• I am a cisgender female of Yurok, Karuk and Tolowa decent.
• I have a family history of SUD and mental illness.
• I have sought out and received mental health services
• I have both knowingly and unknowingly contributed to bias.
Learning Objectives

At the end of this presentation, participants will be able to:

- Identify cultural differences in identification, acceptance, and treatment of autism spectrum disorder

- Evaluate how culturally centered community-based approaches may improve early intervention efforts for families

- Provide families with resources to support their children with autism
Acknowledgement

This presentation is a sharing of traditional viewpoints from Northern California dance leaders and elders. Native communities are unique and can differ in traditions and beliefs. Please use what is useful or thought provoking and bring forth these conversations into your own community.
Values, Knowledge, & Giftedness

Traditional Neurodiversity

• Social Roles

• Spiritual connection

• Proprioception & vestibular rich lifestyle

• Difference in perception creates safety from danger and mistreatment
Development

• “In their own time” allows for developmental difference. 2/3 of chronological age.
  — Ex: 8/12 what does 8 yr. individual need to be able to interact with 12 yr. individual?

• Instead of holding back to place with developmentally similar in age which can cause low self-esteem and notable distress.

Cahill, M. (2019) ADHD in Teens and Young Adults. Pesi Publishing and Media
Cultural Safe Space

• Identifying personal gifts and pairing youth with adult mentors to cultivate those gifts

• Teaching responsibility to environment
  – Ecotherapy exploration w/ built in safety
  – Helps to apply knowledge to social situations
  – Is relevant for all. Promotes neurodiversity
Craftsman
Safe Space Applied

- Loaning equipment closet
- Land Responsible Ecotherapy
- Training community to become support workers
- Sensory integration education for community members
Trauma Informed Care

How to Support Someone Who Has Experienced Trauma

- **Predicatability**: Everyone loves surprises! Not. Trauma survivors often prefer predictability because that feels safer.
- **Attribution**: Don't refer to the person's 'upbringing, problem, issues, behavior.' Call it for what it is - trauma.
- **Reciprocity**: Give what you also need to receive: listening, empathy, and empowerment.
- **Support**: Be kind, loving, patient... but empathetically set limits - you have needs too!
- **Choice**: It can be a big trigger when a survivor is denied choice and control. Confer, collaborate, and cooperate.
- **Perspective**: Be aware when 'past is intruding into present.' Don't take responsibility for what is not yours... gently.
- **Recalibration**: Rid 'over-reacting', 'over-sensitive', or 'over'-anything from your vocabulary.
- **Space**: Allow time for the survivor to calm down and take perspective. Trauma survivors often have difficulty regulating emotions and take longer to calm down.
Enriched Space

- **Visual** - drawing, catching objects, grass spotting activities
- **Auditory** - traditional instruments, traditional language
- **Tactile** - feather sorting, bark stripping, acorn preparation
- **Olfactory** - traditional herbal medicines, essential oils
- **Gustatory** - traditional food workshops for kids
- **Proprioception** - rocking/vibrating chairs
- **Vestibular** - sensory swings, yoga and core engagement
Community

Communities Responsibility Safety have conversations about neurodiversity in ceremony Decolonize our spaces Advocate environmental impact of colonized pollution Spirituality DREAMS ARE IMPORTANT Break down negative blame about mother’s inclusion benefits all Connection Generations of time and space Patience Compassion recognize trauma and heal
Traditional Language

Some traditional language teachers have seen autistic students excel and be top students in language class.
Special Thanks

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Natalie Carpenter
Rose Sylvia
Melodie George-Moore
Jacqueline Winters

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