

Public Value

Traditional Native American games may be a good option to reduce obesity rates, chronic disease, and health care costs in some South Dakota communities. Promoting mental, physical, social, and spiritual health, the games offer a way for Native American youth, adults, and elders to find restored cultural identity. Traditional games are a practical physical activity option as they are sustainable, cost-effective, not seasonal in nature, and also have the possibility to provide healing to communities that struggle with racial divides.

The Issue

According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 65% of adults and 32.2% of youth in South Dakota were considered overweight or obese. The Native American population in South Dakota has higher chronic disease prevalence, including higher rates of diabetes and overweight/obesity. Traditional games offer a way to incorporate more physical activity in a form that is culturally responsive to communities' needs.

What We've Done

In partnership with the International Traditional Games Society (ITGS), over 100 adults and youth have been trained and certified to teach others traditional Native American Games. Many of those certified have brought the games back to their communities with positive results. Community Wellness Coalitions in several communities and reservations have purchased doubleball and lacrosse sets that are able to be checked out for use by community members.

SDSU Extension staff have also presented regarding traditional games at three different statewide conferences, sharing information about the benefits of traditional games and providing information on how organizations can get started in training staff, developing programming, and organizing events involving traditional games.

Rapid City Police Department, along with SDSU Extension and Partnership with Native Americans, organized a community-wide traditional games event that was held in May of 2017. Black Hills Lacrosse League played an exhibition game, a traditional Native American meal was served, and community members had the opportunity to play doubleball and also to craft traditional games. Over fifty community members attended this event and plans are



Impact

- A total of 110 youth and adults were trained and crafted their own game sets at one of two Traditional Games Trainings; many being affiliated with Community Wellness Coalitions
- A statewide Traditional Games Coalition has been formed for further connection and collaboration of participants
- SD Game, Fish & Parks in Sioux Falls has incorporated traditional games into their programming and reached 78 adults and 205 youth, becoming a popular program requested by teachers. Programs have included games such as: Dice Game, Story Stones, Counting Sticks, Hoop and Stick, Double Ball, Run & Scream, Make the Stick Jump, etc.
- Indian Health Services at Ft. Thompson has incorporated traditional games into Young Men and Young Women's Leadership Cultural Camps, reaching 130 young women and 200 young men ages 12-24
- Rapid City Police Department has presented traditional games to over 150 elementary school students as part of their youth programming
- A P.E. teacher that was trained presented "Ring the Stick" at a Rapid City elementary school Family Day in which 100 kindergarteners and their parents crafted the game to take home and play
- A father that was trained facilitated a game of "Family Lacrosse" at a Todd County elementary school to students and parents

underway for future traditional games events.

Quotes by Participants

"Culture is prevention. Learning and connecting with our culture can prevent so many problems: health-related, domestic violence, suicide, drug and alcohol abuse... Our program believes in this so strongly that we have rewritten our grants to include the teaching of traditional games." Training participant

"The traditional games gives participants team building, skills, and wonderful history lessons. The program is always well received." Training participant

"These games are not just for Native people. I have taught these games to non-Native kids and it is amazing how you can just see the walls come down..." Training participant

- In Lake Andes, the public library has included traditional games in its youth programming, teaching games such as "Run & Scream".

Traditional Games presentations completed by SDSU Extension staff:

- 2017 Chronic Disease Partners Meeting
- 3rd Annual Good Health & Community Wellness Symposium
- 2017 South Dakota Indian Education Summit
- 2017 South Dakota Indian Education Summit Youth Day: In partnership with ITGS, 52 South Dakota high school students were trained to play traditional team games including double ball, shinney, and traditional lacrosse.

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