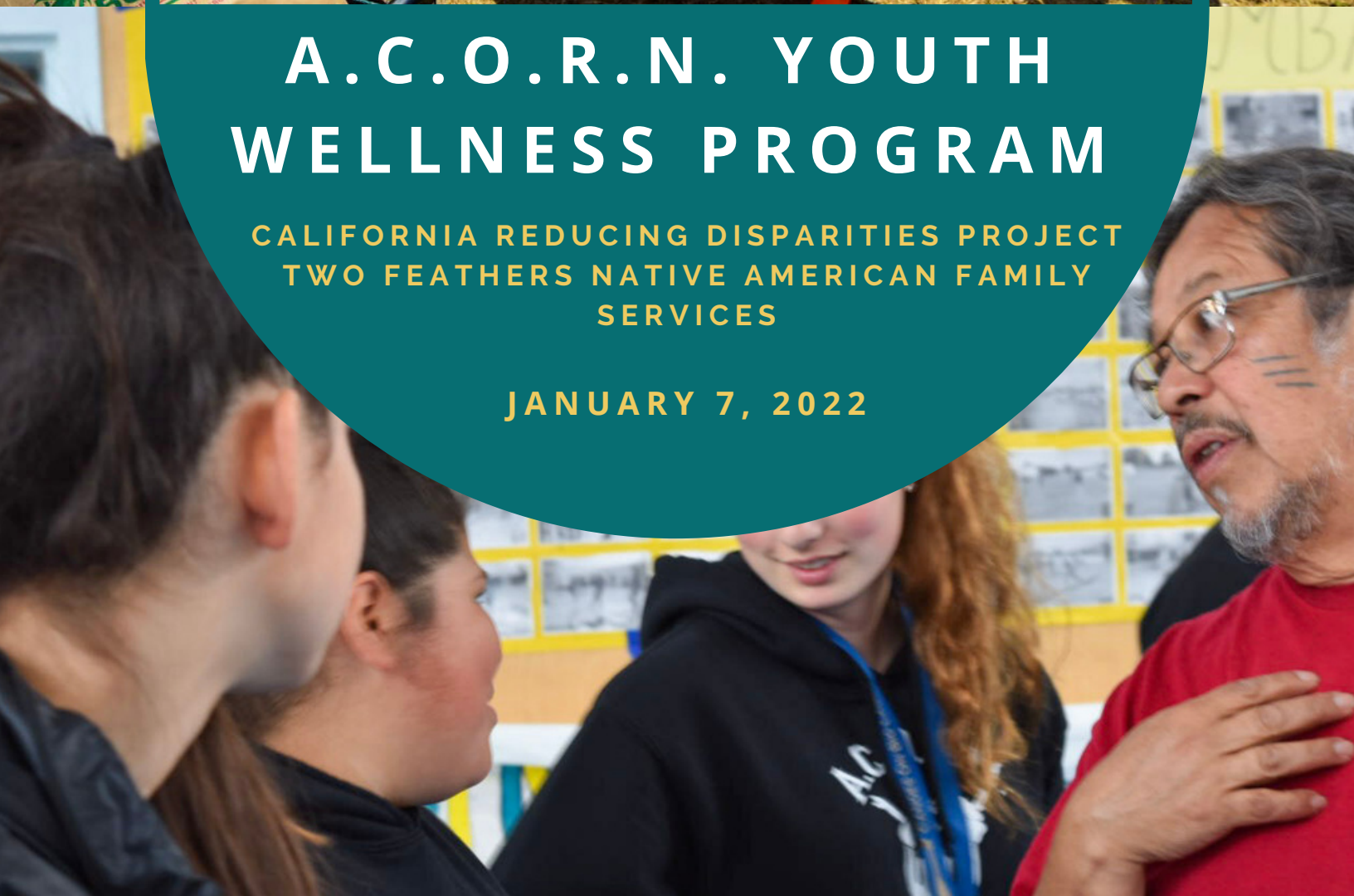
A.C.O.R.N. YOUTH WELLNESS PROGRAM

CALIFORNIA REDUCING DISPARITIES PROJECT
TWO FEATHERS NATIVE AMERICAN FAMILY SERVICES

JANUARY 7, 2022



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Final Report Submission: January 7. 2022

The California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP) was founded in 2009 with the goal of achieving mental health equity for five priority populations in California – African American, Latino, Native American, Asian and Pacific Islander, and LGBTQ+. The first phase of the CRDP focused on developing population specific knowledge about mental health challenges and community-defined solutions. Five population reports were published, which covered the challenges and obstacles each community faced in accessing mental health care and what community programs they developed to meet their community needs. The second phase of the CRDP is intended to develop the capacity of community-based organizations to promote effective mental health strategies and to develop evidence of the success of culturally and linguistically responsive programs and approaches. These approaches are known as 'community defined evidence practices' (CDEPs). Aligned with the five priority populations identified in Phase I (African-American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Latino/x, LGBTQ+ and Native American), 7 grantee organizations known as 'implementation pilot projects' (IPPs) are contracted with a local evaluator and part of a priority population hub assigned to a 'technical assistance provider' organization (TAP). The CRDP is funded by the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63) that was passed in November 2004. This act imposes a one percent income tax on personal income in excess of $1 million. – Office of Health Equity, California Department of Public Health

Priority Population: Native American
Local Evaluation Time Period: October 2017 - October 2021
IRB: 2017-114-Humboldt County (Office of Statewide Health Planning & Development)

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The Two Feathers Native American Family Services: Stick Game & Flower Dance Project is an early intervention and prevention program that aims to reduce mental health disparities for Native Americans by reconnecting Native American youth to traditional cultural practices to positively impact hope for the future, mitigate historical loss and grief, improve mental health and increase health and wellness by improving family relationships, building community, and strengthening intertribal connections and partnerships.[1]

This project was designed to address the provision of culturally-based practices that integrate mentoring, support for the community, early intervention and engagement, and traditional healing practices as recommended in the CRDP Native American Population Report. [2] This study focused on cultural connections to tribal groups primarily from the Northwest California region including the Yurok, Hupa, Karuk, Tolowa, and Wiyot.

Native Americans are one of the most vulnerable populations for mental health disparities in the United States. More than 1 in 3 Native youth live in poverty which is nearly double the national average. [3] Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native youth (age 10-34) or 2.5 times the national rate. [4] Violence accounts for 75% of deaths for Native youth (age 12-20). [5]

The current reliance on “evidence-based” practices for building treatment and prevention practices does not account for measures relevant to many Native communities. Indigenous healing, health, wellness and strategies for maintaining and addressing mental health existed well before contact with European peoples and cultures. Indigenous peoples developed sophisticated, complex, robust, and varied systems of healing built with Indigenous knowledge systems, with grounded, land-based, knowledge regarding illness, medicine, well-being, treatments and medicines. [6]

Both the Stick Game and Flower Dance are community-defined evidence practices (CDEPs) and innovative mental health approaches. In certain regions of Northwest California the Stick Game is primarily practiced by American Indian boys, as direct participants, and the multigenerational community of both men and women that come to watch and mentor youth participants.

There are some tribal groups within this region where girls participate in the Stick Game (primarily in Tolowa country or the far Northwest coastal region of what is currently called California). The Flower Dance is a coming-of-age ceremony that celebrates the onset of menstruation. As a public celebration of the young person transitioning into a new phase of life, the entire community is invited to participate. The ceremony is a key part of local tribal cultures and is tied to the creation stories of the First People (Immortals). It was outlawed by the US government for over 100 years and rejuvenated by community elders 20 years ago. This community-based ceremony calls people together to participate and support a young person during the 1-2 years of preparation and multi-day (2-10) ceremony. It focuses on an individual young person who has started menstruating (generally age 11-16), but is a CDEP that impacts all who attend and participate.

Locally, Native American people experience profound co-occurring mental health crises due to historical grief and loss, manifesting as suicide, substance abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse. A distressing indicator of this suffering is demonstrated by a recent suicide cluster of Yurok peoples in 2017. Fourteen (14) suicides occurred over a 15-month period amongst Yurok tribal members and descendants, driving the rate to 14 times the national average. This event affected not just the families of the suicide victims but also their entire youth cohort within the local school district (Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District) and the surrounding communities. Several community members and teachers reflected that they have seen ongoing issues with student and community youth stemming from this incident including suicidal ideation; a sense of hopelessness; substance abuse; anger and violence.

Unfortunately, mainstream treatment models frequently do not adequately incorporate Native American values. To this end, American Indians working in mental health often argue that the “culture” of mental health and substance use programming must become more closely aligned to the “culture” of the American Indian communities. The Two Feathers Native American Family Services: Stick Game & Flower Dance California Reducing Disparities project is an innovative preventative approach that impacts mental health by providing a point of reconnection. This project’s overall approach is grounded in community-based/tribal participatory research and employs mixed-methods. The most important aspect of the methodologies is that the program was only developed after close, interpersonal work with local elders, cultural practitioners and experts in Indigenous based methodologies.

The first year of the project was spent working closely with a Community Advisory Committee, Cultural Consultants, and staff, to theorize and develop an epistemological foundation based in cultural knowledge to guide our program development, implementation and evaluation. The staff leading the project are local Tribal members as are the Cultural Consultants and Community Advisory Committee, many of whom are Elders and Medicine People. Project staff are all intimately familiar with local customs, languages, tribal variations and able to engage and develop community partnerships and stakeholder investment essential to project success.

Project Director Dr. Virgil Moorehead, Jr., (Yurok, Tolowa, Big Lagoon Rancheria member) has a Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical Psychology from the Wright Institute and is both a Stick Game participant and past facilitator. Project Evaluator, Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa, Karuk, Yurok, enrolled Hoopa Valley Tribe), has a PhD in Native American Studies with a Research Emphasis in Feminist Theory from the University of California, Davis. She is a member of local tribal communities, and a Professor at Humboldt State University. She actively participates in the Flower Dance and has published an award winning book on the revitalization of women's coming-of-age ceremonies in Native California with the University of Washington Press.

The Community Advisory Committee was made up of 13 members all from local tribal groups. Committee members were tribal leaders, Medicine People, cultural practitioners, language speakers, and community activists and leaders. We spent several months utilizing talking circle methodologies to engage community leaders in discussions and foreground what "best practices'' in cultural intervention look like for our local tribal communities. As part of the project, our CDEP worked with the Community Advisory Committee to:

- build culturally based definitions of mental health, wellness, community-self-worth and community belonging.
- build and implement a culturally based intervention program
- advise on best practices for evaluation of culturally based interventions. The Community Advisory Board approved the selected mixed-methods survey tools from peer-reviewed survey tools and assisted with the revision of the survey questions.

As a result of work with the Advisory Committee, Cultural Consultants and staff designed the ACORN Wellness Program. The ACORN wellness program includes five domains of health/wellness as defined by and tied to the local Native communities:

A
APPRECIATION OF OUR WHOLE SELVES

C
CONNECTING COMMUNITY, LANGUAGE & CULTURE

O
OPPORTUNITY & ACCESS

R
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS

N
NURTURING NATURE & SPIRIT

These five domains of health and wellness were used to design the “Make It Stronger;” a co-ed program focusing on health, fitness and cultural connection as well as cultural programming for Flower Dance and Stick Game related activities.

"**Make It Stronger**" consists of 5 sessions that provide opportunities to engage with the theme of the day or one of the aspects of the ACORN program (A-C-O-R-N) which not only focus on health, wellness and fitness but also includes language, cultural sharing, food sovereignty and cultural knowledge.

The purpose of the Make it Stronger program is to provide Native American youth a holistic approach to wellness. The program incorporates both physical and psycho/social interventions including values and traditions based on local Stick Game and Flower Dance teachings. Physical development activities promote a healthy mind, body, and spirit as it relates to individual wellness as well as wellness to family, culture, community and world renewal.

The Cultural Programming Interventions were designed as a year-long program to help prepare participants for being a part of a stick game or Flower Dance. The Stick Game program included training/mentorship in regards to Stick game protocol, a Stick Game “camp” where participants learned about stick game training and also how to participate in a Stick Game tournament. The Flower Dance program is designed to help participants prepare to sing and dance in a Flower Dance. Programming included regalia making, song making, discussion sessions and learning about plants and medicines.

As part of our cultural programming we invited community and spiritual leaders to help guide our workshop activities. At each of the cultural programs we also had parents, family and community members attend. This intergenerational event allowed families to participate together in learning more about cultural items and practices. We also invited youth to lead discussions and tell their own stories of cultural participation in the Flower Dance and Stick Games.

Participants in this project were self-identified Native American/American Indian youth. The study focused on recruiting Native youth (ages 7-17) who would register to be part of Registered Participant Group #1 (pre- and post-surveys) or participate in Non-registered Group #2 (no pre- or post- surveys). We were able to recruit 45 registered participants. 42 of these participants completed the pre-survey while 43 completed the post-survey. A total of 37 participants (ages 7-19) fully completed the pre and post surveys which resulted in our final sample size of N=37.

Research Questions:

Key Question: Do Native American community members, family members, and youth who participate in the Stick Game and Flower Dance reflect greater overall mental and physical wellness?

Further qualitative research questions:

1. How does participation in Flower Dance and Stick Game promote stronger relationships between youth and adults?
2. How will greater exposure to cultural activities improve mental health and wellness?
3. How will Native American youth reflect greater resilience and ability to buffer adverse childhood experiences?

Evaluation Design:

Community Advisory Members worked with the local evaluator through a talking circle discussion to create the project "Evaluation Foundations."

ACORN Wellness Program Evaluation Foundations:

1. Our communities have strengths and resources for positive change. Problems are generally why we try to build these programs/projects but focusing on problems will not solve them. We must focus on strengths, competencies, and beliefs because it is these assets that will make the difference.
2. We get the best outcomes when we include participants' views and interpretations of their own experiences.
3. Start with engagement and establishing relationships. Find ways to strengthen relationships through evaluation and research.
4. Move from problems to "wants." Assessing and setting goals based on hopes and wants will increase intrinsic motivation. Focus on possibility, keeping an eye on a better future.
5. Don't just be culturally competent or culturally sensitive – be "culturally responsive."

For quantitative data collection we utilized pre- and post-surveys to measure cultural connectedness; child resilience; and hope. Each of these survey instruments were peer-reviewed, previously tested instruments. Community Advisory Committee members reviewed each of the surveys in order to help shape culturally relevant wording for our local area especially in regards to cultural questions.

Our qualitative questions were primarily designed and revised by the Community Advisory Committee. They were given throughout the pre/post surveys after the quantitative surveys. Post-test qualitative survey questions were repeated from the pre-survey but there were also added follow-up questions specifically asking youth to declare their wants and ideas for future programming; youth feedback to ongoing program planning; and their reflection on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental health and well-being.

Quantitative Data Findings:

Quantitative data included in this report focuses on the Cultural Connectedness Scale; the Child/Youth Resilience Measure and the Hearth Hope Index. Data was collected via pre- and post-surveys of 37 youth (N=37). It is important to note that pre-survey data was collected between 4/1/2019 - 4/30/2019 and post-survey data was collected 9/1/2021-10/15/2021. There was approximately 1-year where youth participants were not participating in the ACORN program as it was on pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of note, is how post-survey data responses were gathered both post a 1-year moratorium on public gatherings as well as a re-entry into both in-person school and in-person events. Analysis of these data points cannot be divorced from the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key Themes/Findings

- Cultural connectedness results demonstrate an overall increase in cultural awareness and reliance on cultural practices as well as building connections with cultural leaders.
- Child/Youth Resilience measure data is demonstrative of an overall increase in resiliency behaviors and factors among youth participants. Alongside the Cultural Connectedness data there is a continued increase in feeling good about cultural practices and engaging in culturally based activities. There is also a demonstrated increase in youth adaptive behaviors for resilience where youth feel more able to access cultural practices to build their own resilience in challenging situations.
- Youth participants reflect an overall decrease in “hope for the future” in their post-surveys which alongside the COVID-19 pandemic may be more reflective of youth perceptions of the state of COVID as well as the effects of the pause in programming and the year of isolation. This data can be important in informing future programming for Native youth where cultural connections are built through stories of resilience that are a part of cultural practices and youth can be provided demonstrative opportunities to engage with how ancestral connections build resiliency and hope even through the darkest times. Even with a decrease in “hope for the future” youth reflected an increase in their sense of connection as they may see connections with their peers, mentors, and community who are all living through the ongoing experience of the pandemic.

Qualitative Data Findings:
Through our qualitative data collection we were also able to engage youth in their own reflections on the importance of culture to their overall mental and physical wellness. The data from these surveys and questions informed our findings:

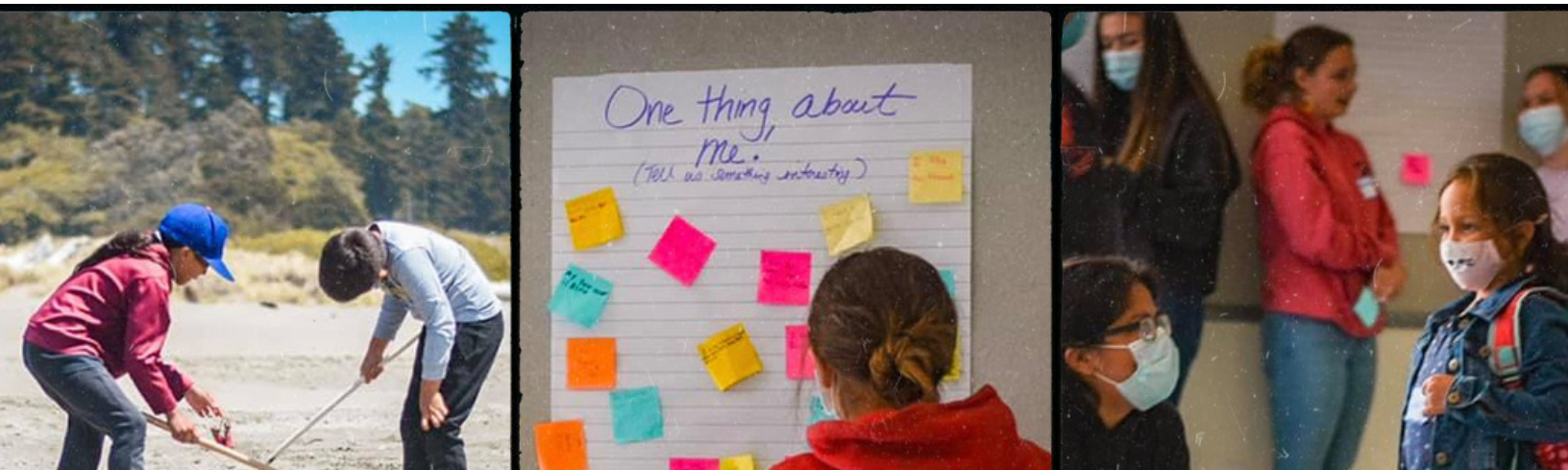
Finding 1: Youth perceive a connection between mental and physical wellness and as a result of the ACORN Wellness Program have expanded their ideas about personal health to include mental health; community connection; and building relationships.

Finding 2: The effects of ongoing health crises in local communities (drug overdoses; alcoholism; violence etc.) informs youth understandings of the importance of connection to culture and the potential for healing and building strength against mental and social health issues increases.

Finding 3: Youth demonstrate a high level of resiliency before and after programming. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has not diminished their levels of resiliency. That youth have reflected an increase in their resiliency scores in their Post-Tests indicates how cultural and prosocial activities can build resilience in youth populations.

One of our youth wrote quite clearly in their own qualitative response:

> "My mental health got better being involved in this program."



Conclusion & Discussion:

Overall, it is clear from the quantitative and qualitative data that our youth participants reflected a greater overall mental and physical wellness as a result of the programming. The focus of our program was on interconnecting mental health with physical health to help our youth approach wellness from a holistic perspective. Staff experiences with our youth throughout this program have solidified how building these connections across generations and tribal communities are important prosocial factors for continued healing and mental health interventions. One staff member shared a particularly touching story about two of our youth participants to demonstrate noticeable significant changes that were being made as a result of participation in the program.

> There were two brothers and the day before I'd met with them and one of our therapists. They were like "I don't know if they could be good with these amounts of kids." A couple of years ago they saw their father stabbed to death in the car. I met with them the day before to talk with them about the program and what would happen. They showed up and they did great. One had gotten suspended eight times for fighting and had behavioral problems. I asked him "are you having fun?" and he said "yeah, I'm having fun" I didn't see any behavioral issues and people didn't think they could do it but they did. They took away a good feeling from that day - that they mattered. They connected with other Indian kids.

It is clear that the CDEP's goal of doing business differently to address mental health in tribal nations and communities was not only and admirable one but also a necessary step to address best practices for mental health and wellness for Native American peoples. Tribal communities and community leaders have insight and experiences to help address ongoing issues but are not actively engaged with by policymakers. Native communities are often dismissed by practitioners and professionals as well. When it comes to finding solutions Native communities continue to design and enact solutions based on their own tribal and cultural practices in spite of the challenges to their expertise and the lack of funding or support for this work.

NATIVE AMERICANS ARE ONE OF THE MOST VULNERABLE POPULATIONS FOR MENTAL HEALTH DISPARITIES IN THE UNITED STATES. [7]

More than 1 in 3 Native youth live in poverty which is nearly double the national average. [8] Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native youth (age 10-34) or 2.5 times the national rate. [9] Violence accounts for 75% of deaths for Native youth (age 12-20). [10]

Recent reports from the Centers for Disease Control note that American Indian/Alaskan Native people are dying of COVID-19 at more than twice the rate in comparison to “White, Non-Hispanic persons.” AI/AN peoples dying of COVID-19 are on average younger though COVID is also killing elders at an “alarming rate.” [11] The CDC notes that Native Americans have 1.6 times the case rate; 3.3 times the hospitalizations and 2.2 times the death rate in comparison to White, Non-Hispanic populations and the highest of any other race/ethnicity. [12] According to the CDC, in 2020 COVID-19 mortality rate disparity was “largest among those aged 20-29 years. Among persons aged 20–29 years, 30–39 years, and 40–49 years, the COVID-19 mortality rates among AI/AN were 10.5, 11.6, and 8.2 times, respectively, those among White persons.” [13]

These high rates of mortality are concerning and also highlight ongoing issues with health care, poverty, and mental health that face Native communities. The National Institutes of Health recently noted that nearly 1 out of 500 children in the United States has experienced COVID-19-associated orphanhood or the death of a caregiver. They further note:

> “...significant racial, ethnic, and geographic disparities in COVID-19 associated deaths of caregivers exist: children of racial and ethnic minorities accounted for 65 percent of those who lost a primary caregiver due to the pandemic. The greatest disparities were among non-Hispanic American Indian or Alaska Native children and Black children."

According to the study 1 of every 168 American Indian/Alaska Native children lost a primary caregiver due to COVID-19. [14] This trauma of intergenerational loss has been referred to as a “cultural crisis” where Native youth are faced with the ongoing loss of elders who carry cultural and spiritual knowledges that have been maintained despite ongoing colonization. [15]

As it becomes clearer that COVID-19 disproportionately affects Native communities it is also clear that lasting effects of the pandemic on Native communities will likely disproportionately exacerbate mental health issues building upon the historical trauma and ongoing issues that already exist in these communities. In December 2020 Time Magazine declared: “Health Officials Fear COVID-19 Pandemic-Related Suicide Spike Among Indigenous Youth.” [16] The article highlights how youth suicide rates have increased in the U.S. over the past decade nearly tripling for children ages 10-14. The article notes: “Mental health experts fear the pandemic could make things worse...”

One example is the Pine Ridge Reservation which declared a state of emergency in August 2020 with concerns that "measures imposed to prevent the virus's spread has added to the strain on a population already struggling with poverty, addiction, high crime, and the trauma of generations of being the target of racism." Ogalala Sioux President Julian Bear Runner elaborated:

> "These necessary measures and the threat of the virus and the threat of the virus are taking a toll on the mental health needs of our population, requiring a response that we are inadequately prepared for due to lack of resources."

High school dropout rates for Native youth are double the national average. [17] Tribal youth are overrepresented in foster care (8.4%) and recent studies have demonstrated that the foster care system has been shown to lead to an increase in child sex trafficking. Native American adolescents have been shown to experience worse major depressive episodes (MDE) than among other ethnicities. The National Congress of American Indians (NCAI) found that "An estimated 22 percent of AI/AN children experience Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), which equals or exceeds the rate of PTSD among Afghanistan, Iraq, and Persian Gulf veterans." [18]

The current reliance on "evidence-based" practices for building treatment and prevention practices does not account for measures relevant to many Native communities. Indigenous healing, health, wellness and strategies for maintaining and addressing mental health existed well before contact with European peoples and cultures. Indigenous peoples developed sophisticated, complex, robust, and varied systems of healing built with Indigenous knowledge systems, with grounded, land-based, knowledge regarding illness, medicine, well-being, treatments and medicines. [19] Although there are significant variations on healing practices between and within tribes Indigenous approaches to health often include interconnected approaches that foreground how mental, physical, spiritual, and community health are relational and cannot happen in isolation. Dr. Lewis Mehl-Madrona, Associate Professor of Family Medicine at the University of New England, writes that "Conventional medicine remains largely locked in the idea that we should be able to identify one cause of every disease" while Indigenous approaches to medicine look for a "multiple, interlocking causality approach" which allows "new paths to emerge through internal local interactions of interlacing networks." Mehl-Madrona highlights that while "conventional medicine discourages us from seeing each other as connected" and sees "the community [as] irrelevant to the disease of the individual," Indigenous methodologies "recognize the importance of the community" and therefore are focused on systemic approaches to health care and what builds mental health. [20]

Colonialism is a structure that continues to affect Native communities and degrade Native American people and cultures. The history of genocide in the State of California is still silenced in history curriculum and there is very little discussion as to how the attempted genocide of California Indian peoples continues to affect generations of people as they navigate the lasting impacts of the violence, dispossession, removal and attempted assimilation of Native peoples.

Sherburne Cook (1976) estimates that the deaths of California Indians between 1770 and 1900 amounted to over 90 percent of the original population. He traces this depopulation to what he calls “Three Waves of Destruction”: The Spanish Mission System; the Ranching and Trading of the Mexican-American war period; and the Gold Rush. [21] While the Spanish Missions affected much of Southern and Central California, the influx of settlers to the Northern California region happened with the Gold Rush in 1849. During this period of time California passed laws that legalized the enslavement of California Indians, laws that gave white citizens rights to own Indian children and laws that subsidized a California Volunteer Militia to carry out the massacre of Indian villages and murder of Indian peoples. [22] In Humboldt County, a review of these slave records reveals that most persons taken into slavery were children ages 7-12 and most of those were girls.

Subsequent to these underhanded machinations by the federal, state and local governments, California Indians (much like Indians throughout the United States) were forced to accept the building of forts on their reservations. These forts were meant to keep a paternal eye on Native peoples, supposedly to protect them from settlers but also to keep Native people from rebelling against policies and laws that were continuing to encroach on their rights and sovereignty. Agents assigned to various forts could decide if Indians left the reservation, the amount of rations they received, and even the type of work that could be performed. Fort Gaston was built on the Hoopa Valley Indian Reservation in 1859 and housed the various military personnel assigned to monitor the Hupa Indians who were suspected of aiding neighboring tribes in attacks on settlers. [23]

Fort Humboldt was built in 1853 in Wiyot Territory (Eureka, CA) overlooking Humboldt Bay. The Wiyot called Fort Humboldt “Jouwuchguri” which means “lying down with your knees drawn up” likely referring to the cramped cattle corrals where Native people were imprisoned in the fort.

Native youth have always been particularly targeted and vulnerable to settler colonial policies of removal and assimilation. Following the Gold Rush, federal and state policy focused on assimilation of Native children and families through education programs like boarding schools and policies and laws like allotment which converted communally held Native lands into private property. The Dawes Allotment Act of 1887 called for reservation lands to be allotted, or divided among individuals for farming or livestock. This was an effort not only to assimilate, but to move Indian people out of their cultural and traditional ways of life. As part of this policy, Indian people were once again classified as “savage” and child-like, much as they had been throughout U.S. political history. In California, while allotment was meant to break apart communities and “assimilate” tribal peoples, in many cases this did not happen and some tribes planned to use the allotment policy to gain access and control of their lands. Once the allotment policy was over, tribes were left to deal with the lasting impacts of the policy, both financially, culturally, familial, and also jurisdictional. This continues to affect Indian Country today and has created a number of issues around law enforcement and accountability and criminal justice.

Boarding schools were designed to “Kill the Indian, save the man.” Native children were forcibly removed from their homes and placed in distant schools separating them from their language and culture. Boarding schools forbid Native children from speaking their language, and practicing their culture and spirituality, and forced them to cut their hair and change their names. The lasting traumatic effects of the boarding schools continue to make headlines throughout the nation. A recent cover story published by the North Coast Journal highlights the work of SuAnn Reddick and Eva Guggemos who published a website documenting the deaths at Chemawa Indian School between 1880-1945, which included Native youth from Northern California. [24] In 1891 Congress declared that school attendance for Indian children was mandatory. Two years later it authorized the Bureau of Indian Affairs to “withhold rations, clothing and other annuities” from parents who were not sending their children to school. By 1900 Congress had created a network of Indian schools composed of 147 reservation day schools, 81 reservation boarding schools and 25 off reservation boarding schools.” [25] The Hoopa Valley K-8 Boarding School was established in 1893 in what had once been the barracks of Fort Gaston and would remain in operation until 1933. Local tribal youth also attended distant 9-12 boarding schools such as Chemewa in Salem, Oregon and Sherman Institute in Riverside, CA.

The lasting effects of the Boarding school era on Native youth have been explored by several Native researchers to demonstrate how Native people are navigating the lasting effects of the attempted assimilation of generations of children to this day. [26] Recent investigations reveal evidence of mass graves of Indian children buried at boarding school sites across the Nation. In June 2021 Secretary of the Interior Deb Haaland launched the “Federal Indian Boarding School Initiative” to “prepare a report detailing available historical records, with an emphasis on cemeteries or potential burial sites, relating to the federal boarding school program.” [28] Haaland’s statement reads in part:

> “The Interior Department will address the inter-generational impact of Indian boarding schools to shed light on the unspoken traumas of the past, no matter how hard it will be. I know that this process will be long and difficult. I know that this process will be painful. It won’t undo the heartbreak and loss we feel. But only by acknowledging the past can we work toward a future that we’re all proud to embrace.”

Melodie George-Moore, who is a Hupa Medicine Woman and also a high school teacher at Hoopa Valley High School "remembers stories about elders who hid their children from the forced school system to avoid the atrocities so many children experienced during the boarding school era." [29] Moore stated in a recent article:

> "We're unpacking the trauma of our ancestors — the survivors. And we are survivors. This true history hasn't been talked about in textbooks. Part of colonization is erasure of true history. There are a lot of people who never get to deal with that trauma and those emotions. There's a cycle of grief and a way we process grief. Our bodies remember the trauma. We are tired of carrying around that burden. We need to unpack the trauma, speak the truth about our history, witness that history become acknowledged, and pray in order to truly heal."

Historical trauma, as defined by Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Health Sciences Maria Yellowhorse Braveheart, is "collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide." [30] The California Reducing Disparities Project (CRDP) Strategic Plan to Reduce Disparities and the Native American Population Report, recommend that for Native American people there is a need to recover from federal policies that disallowed cultural practices and forced assimilation, separation of families and genocide in its place. The legacy of this history is experienced today as literal disconnection – from self, family, community, spirituality – that manifests as adverse childhood experiences.

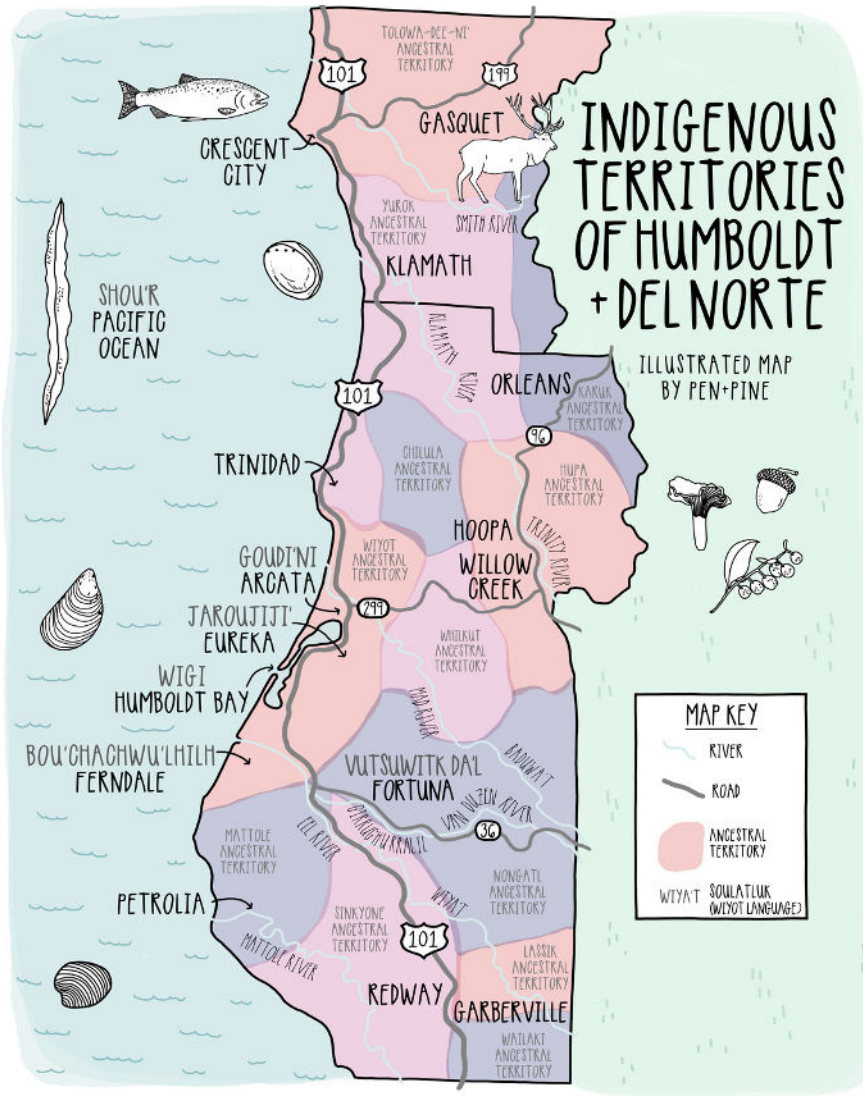
Ongoing critical discussions about trauma and the embodiment of trauma as epigenetic markers which are inherited across generations have also necessarily led to reexaminations of historical trauma that focus not just on perceived deficits of inherited trauma and grief but also on inherited traits of resistance, survival and resilience. [31] And as Dr. Kayla Begay states in an interview with Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy (2014):

> ""I think our texts are our ceremonies and that's a very important text for me, if you want to call it that. That experience I can always go back to and reinterpret different things, maybe not reinterpret, but new things that come up in my life I can think back to that time and think about something I was taught or something I experienced."

How we engage these ceremonial and cultural texts into critical thinking and critical interventions is at the heart of Indigenous methodologies that are informed by Indigenous knowledges and can be best understood as embodied decolonial praxis. Indigenous research methodologies and culturally informed intervention programs reimagine who research is for, what research should look like, and how research should be enacted in and for communities. This is not only to build informed programs for mental health interventions, but because Indigenous people have always valued long-term, mixed-methods data collection that honors Indigenous interconnectivity, where cultural practice is not separated from health, law, or environment and where we see how situating mental health not just as a practice of coping, but also as a practice of engaging in cultural reconnection. Indigenous peoples have navigated a millennia of change through adaptation while maintaining this interconnectedness.

About Humboldt County & Northwest California Indian Tribes

Humboldt County is 300 miles north of San Francisco in rural Northern California. 80% of Humboldt County is forestland, protected redwoods, and recreation areas. Native lands include approximately 95,000 acres and there are twelve federally recognized tribes spanning both Humboldt and neighboring Del Norte county including two of the largest land holding tribes in California the Yurok and Hoopa Valley Tribes. The region is predominantly white with a growing Latino population, a Hmong population, and a significant Native American population. While Native people are 1.7% of the total population in California, they are 7% of the population in Humboldt County. Del Norte County, located just north of Humboldt County, is approximately 12% Native American. There are regions of Humboldt County where the population has a concentrated Native population (like the Hoopa Valley which is approximately 86% Native American) or the Klamath, CA region (home to the Yurok Tribe and Resighini Rancheria and approximately 31% Native American.) [33]



Local tribal nations are located primarily in the rural regions of our county, with the Yurok Tribe being about 1 hour away from the nearest county seat (Eureka, CA). However, there are some tribes located in the city centers of the counties and many of our tribes have built working partnerships with the most populous cities, like Eureka, which is located in the aboriginal territory of the Wiyot Tribe.

In Humboldt County, tribal reservation areas rank the highest on the Intercity Hardship Index, which documents socioeconomic factors contributing to health disparities such as alcohol and drug overdose and suicide. [34] A disproportionate number of Native youth are also in foster care or involved with the juvenile justice system.

The Humboldt County Juvenile Probation Department reported that Native American youth - although comprising only 7% of the county's population - represented 20% of all admissions to juvenile hall. [35] The Humboldt County Department of Health and Human Services reports that Native American children comprise 37% of children in foster care, while totaling only 7% of the Humboldt County youth population. [36]

Local Native American people experience profound co-occurring mental health crises due to historical grief and loss, manifesting as suicide, substance abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse. A distressing indicator of this suffering is demonstrated by a recent suicide cluster of Yurok peoples in 2017. Fourteen suicides occurred over a 15-month period amongst Yurok tribal members and descendants, driving the rate to 14 times the national average. This event affected not just the families of the suicide victims but also their entire youth cohort within the local school district (Klamath Trinity Joint Unified School District) and the surrounding communities. Several community members and teachers reflected that they have continued to see ongoing issues with student and community youth stemming from this incident including suicidal ideation; a sense of hopelessness; substance abuse; anger and violence.[37] Unfortunately, mainstream treatment models frequently do not adequately incorporate Native American values. To this end, American Indians working in mental health often argue that the "culture" of mental health and substance use programming must become more closely aligned to the "culture" of the American Indian communities while also addressing the lack of representation in the historical record as well as in the models of healing approaches.

Western research approaches frequently emphasize deficits, overlooking the protective factors that have been essential to preserving and revitalizing health for Native communities. These approaches unfortunately far too often reinforce a negative self-image amongst participants. Continuing research supports that Native American cultural practices and community support are positive indicators that can address issues of self-esteem, poverty, school performance, and resilient adaptation in adverse situations. [38] Stanford Professor Theresa LaFramboise (2006) found that a supportive relationship with one's mother, an involvement with cultural practices and also a supportive social community can support resilient adaptation by youth. [39] According to LaFromboise this finding supports that Native youth who may have stressful home situations yet seem "invulnerable" to these stressors, likely accomplish this because of support from other adult community members. [40]

The Two Feathers Native American Family Services: Stick Game & Flower Dance California Reducing Disparities project is an innovative preventative approach that impacts mental health by providing a point of reconnection. Present disparities are a direct result of a history focused on literal disconnection of Native American people from their families, culture, land, language and spirituality, creating sustained mental health disparities. Our CDEP strengthens individual and social identities supporting reconnection and pro-social behavior. A 2017 Los Angeles Times article on the Yurok, "How a remote California tribe set out to save its river and stop a suicide epidemic," articulates the importance of revitalizing traditional cultural practices and ceremonies to stem the devastating impact of cultural and environmental loss, highlighting the need to rebuild central cultural foundations to restore a healthy Native society. [41]

4A. CDEP PURPOSE

The Two Feathers Native American Family Services: Stick Game & Flower Dance project is an early intervention and prevention program that aims to reduce mental health disparities for Native Americans by reconnecting Native American youth to traditional cultural practices that positively impact hope for the future, mitigate historical loss and grief, improve mental health and increase health and wellness by improving family relationships, building community and strengthening intertribal connections and partnerships. The project is designed to address the provision of culturally-based and oriented practices that integrate mentoring, support for the community, early intervention and engagement, and traditional healing practices to the Tribes of the local area in Humboldt and Del Norte counties.

Both the Stick Game and Flower Dance are community-defined evidence practices (CDEPs) and innovative mental health approaches. In certain regions of Northwest California the Stick Game is primarily practiced by American Indian boys, as direct participants, and the multigenerational community of both men and women that come to watch and mentor youth participants. There are some tribal groups within this region where girls participate in the Stick Game (primarily in Tolowa country or the far Northwest coastal region of what is currently called California).

The Flower Dance is a coming-of-age ceremony that celebrates the onset of menstruation. As a public celebration of the young person transitioning into a new phase of life, the entire community is invited to participate. These CDEPs are ancestral cultural practices of local Tribal communities that have existed for time immemorial and were approved by local Elders, Medicine People, and community members as significant in promoting mental health and wellness.

About the Stick Game & Flower Dance:

The Stick Game is a regional inter-Tribal ancestral cultural event that brings community together, primarily engages American Indian boys, and is held across Tribal communities in the region. The game is played as a 3-on-3 team event in which players work together to throw a tossel across the opposing team's goal line.

The sticks used in the game are handcrafted sticks with a small hook end. Players also wrestle each other to try and stop the other team from scoring. Stick Game tournaments are often held as part of larger community events, and many community members will attend, support and provide positive reinforcement to stick game players throughout the tournament. The Stick Game is a centuries old traditional ancestral practice that is a cross between lacrosse and wrestling and has a much deeper cultural context, meaning and spiritual context than mainstream athletics. In many of the local tribes the First People (Immortals) are not only the creators of the Stick Game, they also continue to play in the world beyond. In the First People stories the Stick Game is tied to creating geographical formations, settling disputes and creating weather amongst other phenomena and practices. This spiritual connection to the ancient world remains key to understanding the cultural implications of the Stick Game.

Elders, mentors, and coaches are a particularly important part of youth training and learning about how to play the Stick Game. The game is thought of as an important cultural and prosocial event. Through training, practices, and tournament play, youth learn how to carry themselves before they are allowed to play. Stick Games happen in a social event where many community people watch and look for how the stick players act “in a good way." If they don't act in a good way then suitable cultural teachings are provided. The Stick Game becomes a method to socialize Native youth to be respectful, honorable members of their communities. These culture teachings are about respect, sportsmanship, discipline, and having the right mind. Customarily, players train hard to get ready for the Stick Game event. Indeed, participating in the Stick Game is a way to be healthy in mind, body and spirit.

The Stick Game is played by AI/AN boys, as direct participants, and the multi-generational community of both men and women that come to watch also experience psychological benefits. Older men frequently build relationships and coach the boys between rounds. English is the primary language being used, but the interaction provides the opportunity to introduce Native language education. In former times, designated spots held games. Now, the Stick Game is played anywhere outside, given Elder consent. It has always been an inter-Tribal competition and is played regionally on Tribal Lands and hosted in turn by various Tribes, from June to August. It traditionally could take place after a days-long Brush Dance, the most common ceremony to local Tribes, but now might be a stand-alone event or part of more public events such as the well attended and biggest local community event, Yurok Tribe’s Annual Salmon Festival.

The Flower Dance is a coming-of-age ceremony that celebrates the onset of menstruation. As a public celebration of the young person transitioning into a new phase of life, the entire community is invited to participate. The ceremony is a key part of local tribal cultures and is tied to the creation stories of the First People (Immortals). It was outlawed by the US government for over 100 years and rejuvenated by community elders 20 years ago.

4. CDEP PURPOSE, DESCRIPTION & IMPLEMENTATION PAGE 18

This community-based ceremony calls people together to participate and support a young person during the 1-2 years of preparation and multi-day (2-10) ceremony. It focuses on an individual young person who has started menstruating (age 12-16), but is a CDEP that impacts all who attend and participate. It also has a deep cultural context and meaning, and a significant spiritual context. It brings together AI community members of all ages, from children to elders, to recognize the changing role of a young person within the community. During the ceremony, the family and community support the young person through days of fasting, running and nights of singing. The ceremonial dance is an opportunity for community members to sing, dance and build relationships with each other and with the young person. It celebrates the ability to give life, and also supports young people in learning how to represent themselves, their family, their community, and supports positive education and self-esteem. Preparation includes learning prayers, songs in Native languages, gathering materials to make dresses out of bark and deer hide, preparing and storing acorns, pine nuts and salmon under the guidance of Medicine people, community members and family. Over one year, approximately 6 young people may go through a Flower Dance. The dance is an opportunity for extended community members to work together and build a supportive environment for each other and for the youth in the ceremony. The Flower Dance takes place on Tribal Lands in a traditional plank house either held in common by the Tribe or held privately by a family. As a public celebration of the young person, the entire community is invited to participate. Participation includes support such as staying up all night with the medicine woman, grandmother and singers or bringing food, or daily running.

The Flower Dance ceremony takes place over 2 – 10 days and varies based on participating member's availability and finances. It costs the family time and money to create the materials, food, and gifts necessary for the ceremony. Because these are time consuming tasks that require master teachers and hold great interest within the community, some families have designed these preparation activities as sharing times among inter-generations.

Cultural practices, like the Stick Game and Flower Dance, address the recommendation that strengthening community identity and restoring culture increase resiliency, positive mental health outcomes,and individual connection to community. These original ancestral Tribal practices were practiced prior to European contact and provide the community with a source of strength and positive cultural identity and direct connection with ancestral practices and knowledge. The project focus is the maintenance of health, balance, and well-being, that is consistent with our American Indian cultural worldview.

4B. CDEP DESCRIPTION & IMPLEMENTATION PROCESS

This project's overall approach is grounded in community-based/tribal participatory research and employs mixed-methods. The most important aspect of the methodologies is that the program was only developed after close, interpersonal work with local elders, cultural practitioners and experts in Indigenous based methodologies. The CRDP Phase 1 American Indian population report notes that "Knowledge of the use of traditional foods, traditional medicines and traditional ceremonial healers is the process through which tribal communities reclaim the rights to their knowledge and empower their communities to believe in their own teachings." [42]

This project prioritized building relationships with local tribal communities in order to "empower communities to believe their own teachings." The staff leading the project are local Tribal members as are the Cultural Consultants and Community Advisory Committee, many of whom are Elders and Medicine People. Project staff are all intimately familiar with local customs, languages, tribal variations and able to engage and develop community partnerships and stakeholder investment essential to project success. Project Director Dr. Virgil Moorehead, Jr., (Yurok, Tolowa, Big Lagoon Rancheria member) has a Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical Psychology from the Wright Institute and is both a Stick Game participant and past facilitator.

Project Evaluator, Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy (Hupa, Karuk, Yurok, enrolled Hoopa Valley Tribe), has a PhD in Native American Studies with a Research Emphasis in Feminist Theory from the University of California, Davis. She is a member of local tribal communities, and a Professor at Humboldt State University. She actively participates in the Flower Dance and has published an award winning book on the revitalization of women's coming-of-age ceremonies in Native California with the University of Washington Press.

This implementation project was designed to offer multiple opportunities for Native American youth (ages 7-17) to engage with cultural practices through camps, workshops, and gatherings. The name of the program is the ACORN Youth Wellness Program. The ACORN Youth Wellness Program consists of:

ACORN Youth Wellness Program

Make It Stronger	The program incorporates both physical and psycho/social interventions including values and traditions based on local Stick Game and Flower Dance teachings. "Make It Stronger" consists of 5 sessions that provide opportunities to engage with the theme of the day or one of the aspects of the ACORN program which not only focus on health, wellness and fitness but also includes language, cultural sharing, food sovereignty and cultural knowledge.
Stick Game Training Sessions Stick Cam[	The Stick Game program includes training/mentorship in regards to Stick game protocol, a Stick Game "camp" where participants learn about stick game training and also how to participate in a Stick Game tournament.
Flower Dance Workshops	The Flower Dance program is designed to help participants prepare to sing and dance in a Flower Dance. Programming includes six day long workshops: (1) Flower Dance Orientation; (2) Regalia Day; (3) Dress Making; (4) Bark Skirt making; (5) Necklace Making; (6) Songs, Singing and Flower Dance stick making.

IPP inputs included the development of a community-engaged partnership through a "Community Advisory Committee" who were instrumental in developing program activities and informing evaluation methodologies. The project base group was drawn from the local Tribal community, well versed in the history and culture, and established trusting relationships, to build the advisory committee and engage Cultural Consultants and Cultural Coordinators. All employees and project members are part of the intervention community, which will provide a stronger base for all aspects of the work. Outputs included:

- Building culturally based definitions of mental health, wellness, community-self-worth and community belonging
- Formalized mentorship relationships, mixed-methods survey tools,
- Building & Implementing a culturally based intervention program
- Providing access to researchers and technical assistance trainings to community members on Indigenous mental health and culturally based interventions

The first year of the program focused on designing program activities and evaluation based on community advisory input and feedback. The Community Advisory Committee worked alongside staff to develop, review and approve the curriculum for the project, project activities and cultural programming, and also to give feedback on evaluation surveys and methods. Committee members helped to identify key areas of health and wellness from our local Indigenous communities to help center Indigenous methods of addressing mental health issues into our program activities. Staff and cultural consultants then designed a culturally based intervention program that centered cultural protocols for the Stick Game and Flower Dance.

Photo of the Community Advisory Committee. The Community Advisory Committee was made up of cultural practitioners, elders, Medicine people, community leaders, and cultural leaders of both the Stick Game and the Flower Dance. This group brought to the project knowledge of the diverse tribal cultures and histories from our local region.

CBPR & Year 1 Community Advisory Committee Collaboration

The first year of the project was spent working closely with the Community Advisory Committee, Cultural Consultants, and staff, to theorize and develop an epistemological foundation based in cultural knowledge to guide program development, implementation and evaluation. Two Feathers spent several months utilizing talking circle methodologies to engage community leaders in discussions to agree upon “best practices” in cultural intervention for local tribal communities. Over the course of the project the Advisory Committee, project staff, cultural consultants and the local evaluator met 8 times. The first year the Advisory committee met with project staff to develop the program 4 times. After that the Advisory Committee met once per year to review ongoing project implementation with a final meeting in December 2021 where the Advisory Committee was presented evaluation findings and provided an opportunity to respond to the draft final report.

As part of the project, the CDEP worked with the Community Advisory Committee to build culturally based definitions of mental health, wellness, community-self-worth and community belonging. Community partners assisted in selecting mixed-methods survey tools and to design the intervention program and curriculum. In addition, community advisors and cultural consultants worked with the local evaluator to interpret and understand data and findings from the project.

Building culturally based definitions of mental health, wellness, community-self-worth and community belonging:

To build culturally based definitions of mental health, wellness, community-self-worth and community belonging project staff engaged the Community Advisory Board in talking circle methodologies. This process assisted in developing a community “paradigm of change” centered on “meeting the youth where they are'' and “bringing generations together.” Common themes included: bringing people together, healing relationships through actions; and the impact of bringing people into a balanced relationship with their culture, spirituality and community. “Healthy people need community,” one of our committee members stated. And another added “When we come together, and sing and dance together, that is the key to healing. We will do this together.”

Ongoing conversations focused on the importance of evaluation and how providing opportunities for community and young people to reflect on the impact of cultural practices on their mental and physical health could increase the participation of youth in cultural practices. Committee members highlighted the importance of data analysis and data dissemination. “Consider how we will strengthen our community with this information,” one of our members stated. Another added, “This cultural data can help our community to have additional language for talking about the importance of cultural practices to youth resilience and success.” Alongside this interest in collecting “cultural data” were necessary reminders that we need to be cautious with what we publish, the kinds of information that we share, and also what we prioritize in our teachings for our program participants. Finally committee members highlighted the lasting impacts of historical trauma in the communities. It was clear that trauma has been exacerbated by ongoing policies and programs sometimes sold as “helping” Native people when in actuality the goals of these programs are separation from language, culture, and community. But Committee members were clear:

> Our ceremonies heal. This is told in our very first stories. And we know that our ceremonies can resonate and heal our mind and body."

As a result of the ongoing work with the Community Advisory Committee Two Feathers developed the Meaning of Health and Wellness that would guide our project implementation. The thematic list included:

- Balance – That's the goal
  - Centeredness
  - Ongoing process, working toward balance
  - Not just with self
    - Relationships, people, environment, spiritual world, self
    - Relationship + protection of the natural environment
- Healing isn't isolated to individual
  - Relationships – Contribution to + responsibility to + for family/community
- Connection
  - Being conscious of, attending to spiritual self
    - Physical + spiritual + emotional well being
- Physically healthy/well

Additional conversations around health and wellness discussed grounding program development in a centralized phrase or cultural practice. The Advisory Committee introduced the concept of “being a human being” and discussed how Native peoples utilized their language to develop philosophical grounding in what it means to be “human.” Many Native cultures and peoples refer to themselves as “the people'' or “human beings.” In the Hupa language “human beings'' or “Indian people'' are referred to as k’iwinya’n-ya:n or “Acorn Eaters.” Tribes in California were all “Acorn Eaters'' prior to colonization. Advisory Committee members were struck by the fundamental connection between our sustenance and applying this to our existence.

> “How” asked one Committee Member “does this encourage a connected-ness of peers, community, culture, land, history, and mental health? Our very basic food and the care it gives to us provides us with what we need to be fully human.”

Acorns and “Remaking Acorn Eaters” became one foundational theme that emerged from the talking circle work.

> We are trying to reclaim and reconnect” one of our Committee Members stated “we must feed ourselves mentally, physically, and emotionally in order to do that.”

Building & Implementing a culturally based intervention program:

As a result of work with the advisory committee, Cultural Consultants and staff designed the ACORN Wellness Program. The ACORN wellness program includes five domains of health/wellness as defined by and tied to the local Native communities:

A
APPRECIATION OF OUR WHOLE SELVES
C
CONNECTING COMMUNITY, LANGUAGE & CULTURE
O
OPPORTUNITY & ACCESS
R
RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHERS
N
NURTURING NATURE & SPIRIT

These five domains of health and wellness were used to design the “Make It Stronger” program; a co-ed program focusing on health, fitness and cultural connection as well as cultural programming for Flower Dance and Stick Game related activities. Cultural Consultants and Advisory Committee members defined each of the areas with goals and connections to the program activities.

A. Appreciation of Our Whole Selves

- General Physical Preparedness strength and conditioning program will allow for participants to participate in activities that allow for growth in both strength and endurance, allowing them to be more in tuned with themselves and their bodies.
- Stick Camp will allow for youth to prepare themselves to be ready physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually to successfully compete in tournaments hosted by other Tribal entities and their own tournament.
- Participants of the Flower Dance will allow for young girls to appreciate each role and will understand considerations required to successfully hold ceremony for their own Flower Dance
- Participants will learn about the importance of running and strength conditioning as it relates to the Flower Dance and Stick Game, allowing for youth to be more mindful of their bodies, strength, and endurance.

C. Connecting Community, Language, and Culture

- Youth and families can engage with their larger communities in a healthy and balanced way
- This program will encourage parent/guardian involvement and participation
- Stick tournament will allow for the boys and young men to have a healthy competition amongst other boys and young men from communities outside their own.
- Various individuals and families that facilitate ceremonies in their own communities will be participating throughout the program. This will help youth to build relationships with elders and ceremonial leaders.
- Both the participants from the Stick Camp and Flower Dance workshop will participate in the Making it Stronger Program allowing for everyone to have a relationship with each other.

O. Opportunity & Access

- Allows youth and families to engage in culture in a way that may not have been previously available to them
- This program will give youth experiences and teachings, so they can demonstrate greater resilience and ability to buffer adverse childhood experiences
- The stick tournament will give the boys and young men that have trained the space to positively showcase their skills as stick players
- The Flower Dance Program will give participants insight into all that goes into making a Flower Dance happen

R. Relationships with Others

- Relationships, respect for others, gratitude, and pro-social behavior will be fostered through the Make it Stronger Program.
- This program will give participants experiences that promote stronger relationships between youth and adults, resulting in greater pro-social behavior and improve parent-child relationships.

N. Nurturing Nature & Spirit

- The primary locations the program will be using for the stick camps and Make it Stronger include tribal lands and will build land based connections.
- Youth will be given the opportunity to gather and use materials that our ancestors have used during both stick camp and the flower dance workshops. For example: acorns, hazel, maple, mock orange, etc. (sticks, tossel, regalia, mock orange sticks, hazel bundles, etc.)
- Connection to place- Storytelling and land acknowledgement. Stories about places, names of places in various tribal languages, prayers to introduce yourself to the land at important places, learning about bathing spots and identification of ancestral family villages (who do you dance for? Who are your teams?.

4B1. PROGRAM DELIVERY

Make It Stronger

"Make It Stronger" consisted of 5 sessions that provided opportunities to engage with the theme of the day or one of the aspects of the ACORN program (A-C-O-R-N) which not only focus on health, wellness and fitness but also included language, cultural sharing, food sovereignty and cultural knowledge.

The purpose was to provide Native American youth a holistic approach to wellness. The program incorporated both physical and psycho/social interventions including values and traditions based on local Stick Game and Flower Dance teachings. Physical development activities promote a healthy mind, body, and spirit as it relates to individual wellness as well as wellness to family, culture, and community. The physical activities included discussions woven in to discuss culture and fitness (traditional and contemporary), healthy nutrition (ancestral diet), body awareness, mental health, mentorships, positivity, hope, teamwork, relationships and community building. Traditional stories and native languages are emphasized to help youth internalize teachings. Indigenous language was a key part of engaging youth and community members through this program. At the beginning of each workshop youth learned to introduce themselves in an Indigenous language that is local to the area. In addition, there were exercises and activities led in Indigenous languages. Cultural leaders attended the events as well to help guide cultural protocols and to teach youth about culture in their lives.

General Agenda:

Each activity day varied in specific activities though there was a general structure followed to guide the day long event.

9:30am-10am: Snacks, visiting, etc., sign-in.

10:00am-10:15am: Welcome & Land Acknowledgement Opening prayer

10:15am-10:30am: Explanation of Wellness Intervention, set ground rules and intentions for the day.

10:30am-10:45am: Group ice breaker

10:45am- 11:00am: Dynamic Warm-up with Native Language Lesson incorporated.

11:00am -11:45am: Workout Station #1 Ancestral Movements: The coach will discuss how good mobility was important in our ancestral physical wellness and culture. Emphasize breathing, mobility, and circuit training.

11:45pm-1:00pm Acorns, Language, & Lunch: Each lunch begins with tasting acorn soup and learning how to give thanks for acorns in Native Language before eating. Youth are encouraged to practice eating acorns with positivity and “in a good way.” All food served includes native language labels.

1:00pm-2:00pm: Village Building Via Mentorship or Talking Circle: Examples of discussion topics include “positive relationships” or “resiliency.”

2:00pm-3:00pm: Traditional Story that focuses on resilience, hope, appreciation of our whole selves.

3:00pm-3:15pm: Reflection: Participants will reflect on the day's activities and complete local evaluation materials.

3:15pm - 3:30pm: Closing Remarks and Prayer

The first “Make It Stronger” program began in April 2019 and ended in July 2019. This program consisted of five different event days that covered the various parts of the ACORN programming (A- Appreciation our whole selves; C - Connecting community, language and culture; O- Opportunity & Access; R - Relationships with Others; N - Nurturing Nature & Spirit). At each of these events Community Advisory Committee members attended and also helped to lead various parts of the programing.

- A- included community advisory members who presented on the Tolowa culture and peoples; introduced Tolowa language and Tolowa knowledge about acorns.
- C- included community advisory members who presented on Yurok language, Yurok cultural practices, a demonstration of the Flower Dance dress and protocols and advising on stick game scrimmaging.
- O- included community advisory members who presented on Hupa language, Hupa knowledge of acorns, and Flower Dance and Stick Game creation stories.
- R - included community advisory members who presented on Karuk language, Karuk Ihuk ceremonies, and making instruments for Flower Dances.
- N- provided a chance to connect with land through the Wiyot language and Wiyot history and to spend the day doing physical activities to connect youth to the ocean.

Make It Stronger #1

4/20/19 **A: Appreciation of Our Whole Selves** Location: Two Feathers Native American Familly Services (Mckinleyville, CA)	**86**	*participants*
5/5/2019 **C: Connecting Community, Language & Culture** Location: Sumeg Village (Sumeg State Park, Trinidad, CA)	**71**	*participants*
5/19/2019 **O: Opportunity & Access** Location: Hoopa High School (Hoopa, CA)	**66**	*participants*
6/9/2019 **R: Relationships with Others** Location: Mckinleyville Middle School (Mckinleyville, CA)	**46**	*participants*
7/1/2019 **N: Nurturing Nature & Spirit** Location: Table Bluff Beach (Table Bluff, CA)	**49**	*participants*

The first session of ACORN: Appreciation of our Whole Selves happened on April 20, 2019 at Two Feathers Native American Family Services (Mckinleyville, CA). This day included physical exercise, storytelling, and engagement with the Tolowa language. 87 youth participated in this first session, far beyond the estimated goal of 30-50 youth.

The second session of Make It Stronger: Connecting Community, Language and Culture occurred on May 5, 2019 at Sumeg Village in Sumeg State Park. This day focused on the Yurok peoples and included teaching the youth introductions in Yurok, physical activities that were led with the Yurok language, a demonstration and discussion of Flower Dance protocols, a stick game scrimmage and sharing of Flower Dance songs with the youth. There were approximately 70 attendees at this event. The third session of Make It stronger: Opportunity & Access occurred on May 19, 2019 at Hoopa Valley High School (Hoopa, CA). This day included leading physical activities in the Hupa language, a discussion and sharing of creation stories of the stick game and flower dance, a stick game scrimmage and a training session for running in the Flower Dance. There were approximately 45 participants in this day's programming. The fourth session of Make It Stronger: Relationships with Others was held on June 9, 2019 at Mckinleyville Junior High School (Mckinleyville, CA). On this day youth learned about Karuk peoples, how to introduce themselves in Karuk, were given the opportunity to watch an Ihuk demonstration, and participated in an art project to make instruments that are used in Flower Dance ceremonies. The final session of Make It Stronger: Nurturing Nature & Spirit was held on July 1, 2019 in Loleta, CA. The Wiyot Tribal Chairman attended as well as the Wiyot Tribal linguist. The youth were taken on a scavenger hunt using the Wiyot language. They were also given the opportunity to continue to make instruments used in the Flower Dance or sticks used for the Stick Game. There were 49 participants at this event.

After the first session of “Make it Stronger” we hoped to offer a second “Make it Stronger” session the very next summer. However, with the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic we needed to postpone the program until Summer 2021. Because of ongoing COVID-19 restrictions, we were able to offer a modified “Make it Stronger” program for one day on Friday August 6, 2021.

Cultural Activities

The Cultural Programming Interventions were designed as a year-long program to help prepare participants to take part in a Stick Game or Flower Dance.

The Stick Game program included training/mentorship in regards to Stick game protocol, a Stick Game “camp” where participants learned about stick game training and also how to participate in a Stick Game tournament.

The Flower Dance program was designed to help participants prepare to sing and dance in a Flower Dance. Programming included regalia making, song making, discussion sessions and learning about plants and medicines.

Cultural Programming (Stick Game & Flower Dance)

- Stick Game
  - Stick Camp (07/30 – 08/01/2019)
  - Regalia Day (07/21/2019)
  - Stick Day Camp (07/21 - 07/23/2021)

- Flower Dance
  - Regalia Day (07/31/2019)
  - Flower Dance Orientation (08/11/2019)
  - Bark Skirt Workshop (09/15/2019)
  - Dress Show & Design Workshop (10/27/2019)
  - Necklace Making Workshop (07/22/2021)
  - Songs and Flower Dance Sticks (08/05/2021)

Cultural programming included community and spiritual leaders to help guide workshop activities. At each of the cultural programs parents, family and community members also attended. This intergenerational event allowed families to participate together in learning more about cultural items and practices. Youth were also invited to lead discussions and tell their own stories of cultural participation in the Flower Dance and Stick Games

Stick Training Camp

The goals of this training camp focus on preparing young men and boys to be ready mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually to successfully compete at tournaments. The purpose of this program is to give participants the necessary knowledge, values, skills and appreciation of the Stick Game and Stick Game training that promote a healthy mind, body and spirit as it relates to individual wellness as well as wellness to family, culture, and community. The Stick Game training activities are an infusion of culture and fitness (traditional and contemporary), healthy nutrition (ancestral foods), physical literacy, body awareness, mentorships, positivity, hope, teamwork, relationships, and community building. Discussion sessions include Stick Game rules, history, traditional stories, training methods, cultural importance and what it means to play the game of Sticks with honor and in the manner of the First People who created the game during the time before humans. Discussions also include ancestral physical wellness and how it relates to our resiliency, subsistence, and wellness and how being physically fit today can help keep our whole selves and Stick Game thriving.

Goals

- Teach youth / young men the techniques, training regimen, values necessary to be a stick player
- Send each youth / young man home with their own stick and tossel set so they can continue practice on their own
- Facilitate bonds with other young men interested in sticks – via teamwork drills and exposure to youth from different schools and towns
- Facilitate traditional cultural knowledge learning experiences via intergenerational learning practices
- Facilitate growth of sticks as a sport with regular participation and activities

Agendas & Activities:

Day 1
10:30am: registration,
12:30pm: lunch with introductions/ice breakers
1:45pm: work on stick making with boys
5:45pm: Dinner
Include conversation about traditional foods and nutrition
Post Dinner – cultural story telling with mentors / camp fire

Day 2
7:30am: Morning Stretches, etc. before breakfast
8:30pm: Breakfast
9:30am: Training sessions
12:30: Lunch
1:30pm: Training sessions
5:00pm: Dinner
Post Dinner – cultural storytelling with mentors / camp fire

Day 3
7:30am: Morning stretches, etc. before breakfast
8:30am: Breakfast
9:30am: Training sessions
12:30pm: Lunch
Post lunch: Review of lessons learned at camp

Flower Dance Programming

The purpose of this program is to give participants insight into all that goes into making a Flower Dance happen. Discussion includes a breakdown into everything a family goes through in deciding to do a dance for a young girl, from selecting principal singers, selecting helpers, identifying family members to fulfill roles, site/location selection, necessary resources, payment to medicine people, etc. Participants will leave discussion with an understanding of the many roles and considerations required to successfully hold ceremonies for their own Flower Dance.

Agendas & Activities

Session 1: Flower Dance Orientation

1. Welcome: Wiyot land acknowledgement. Opening prayer.
2. Introductions: Introduce yourself in your language.
3. Discussion panel: photos slide show of Flower Dances and what happens at the Flower Dance. Sharing from previous Flower Dance girls about what the dance has meant to them.
4. Acorns & Lunch: Begin lunch with tasting acorns and learning how to give thanks for acorns. Practice eating them with positivity and "in a good way."
5. Regalia Show: Showing the pieces of regalia that we will be making together in the program. A chance to touch, smell and get to know the regalia.
6. Mason Jar Pieces & Name Tag Decoration: Have pieces from each regalia that we will be working with (pine nuts, blue jay feather, abalone, bear grass, cedar berries, juniper berries etc.) and have youth pick up each piece and observe it. Then they will put it into their mason jar. These are the pieces that they will get to know better as the program goes on. Give them time to decorate their own nametag and tie it to the jar.

Session #2: Regalia Day

Participants will get the opportunity to view all of the regalia that goes into the Flower Dance (women's and men's). On this day Stick Game participants join to be a part of the program so youth have an opportunity to interact with the regalia that is a part of the Flower Dance. This shows how both women and men are a part of this dance and how it brings community together.

1. Welcome: Wiyot land acknowledgement. Opening prayer.
2. Introductions: Introduce yourself in your language.
3. Regalia Stations OR Plant ID/ Trail Run: Break youth into groups. Some groups will go to different regalia stations to learn from community members about the regalia pieces, how to handle them, what they are made of, and what they are used for. The other group of youth will go on a Plant ID/Trail Run and learn about local plants. Regalia stations will include a mindfulness activity (teaching them how they should act around regalia, how to be present, and how to make sure they don't hurt or harm the regalia. Youth groups will switch after they have visited all stations.
4. Acorns & Lunch: Begin lunch with tasting acorns and learning how to give thanks for acorns. Practice eating them with positivity and "in a good way."

Session #3:Dress Show & Dress Design Workshop

This workshop includes a "Dress show" with many different styles of dresses to look at for inspiration and design ideas. Youth will be given the opportunity to see how construction of dresses work.

1. Welcome: Wiyot land acknowledgement. Opening prayer.
2. Introductions: Introduce yourself in your language.
3. Dress Display & Learning About Materials: Youth are given an in-depth look at what construction of a dress looks like and all the different materials that are used.
4. Dress design: Youth are given a "blank slate" dress that they can color in the different pieces and make their own design of a dress.
5. Acorns & Lunch: Begin lunch with tasting acorns and learning how to give thanks for acorns. Practice eating them with positivity and "in a good way."
6. Materials Scavenger Hunt: Youth will be divided into teams. They will visit different stations where they are asked to clean and prep materials that are used on traditional dresses. They are also given an opportunity to match each of the materials and name each of the materials.

Session #4: Bark Skirt Making Workshop

This workshop includes a discussion about and construction of a maple bark skirt. Youth also have the opportunity to construct a doll skirt and take it home with them.

1. Welcome: Wiyot land acknowledgement. Opening prayer.
2. Introductions: Introduce yourself in your language.
3. Display and discuss bark skirts: Tell the traditional story of bark skirts. Discuss how bark skirts are made, what they are used for, how you gather and strip bark. Help youth learn how to identify maple trees. Show photos of bark skirts from all over California.
4. Construct a bark skirt: Help youth to create bundles of processed bark so they can construct a bark skirt.
5. Acorns & Lunch: Begin lunch with tasting acorns and learning how to give thanks for acorns. Practice eating them with positivity and "in a good way."
6. Doll skirts: Youth will construct a doll sized bark skirt, tops and necklaces for their dolls.

Session #5:Necklace Making Workshop

1. Welcome: Wiyot land acknowledgement. Opening prayer.
2. Introductions: Introduce yourself in your language.
3. Pine Nuts: identifying, processing, cleaning. Youth learn the entire process of what it takes to get a pine nut for a necklace. They will be taught how to identify the right type of pine tree, how to clean and how to care for pine nuts.
4. Acorns & Lunch: Begin lunch with tasting acorns and learning how to give thanks for acorns. Practice eating them with positivity and "in a good way." Break for lunch.
5. Making Necklaces: Youth will be given the opportunity to make their own necklace to take home with them or to give away.

Session #6: Singing & Making Flower Dance Sticks

1. Welcome: Wiyot land acknowledgement. Opening prayer.
2. Introductions: Introduce yourself in your language.
3. Singing: What do different songs sound like? Why is it important to sing? Youth will work with mentors to learn different songs and practice singing their own songs.
4. Acorns & Lunch: Begin lunch with tasting acorns and learning how to give thanks for acorns.
5. Song/Singing: Decorating Mock Orange Sticks: Each participant will select one mock orange stick that they would like to decorate.

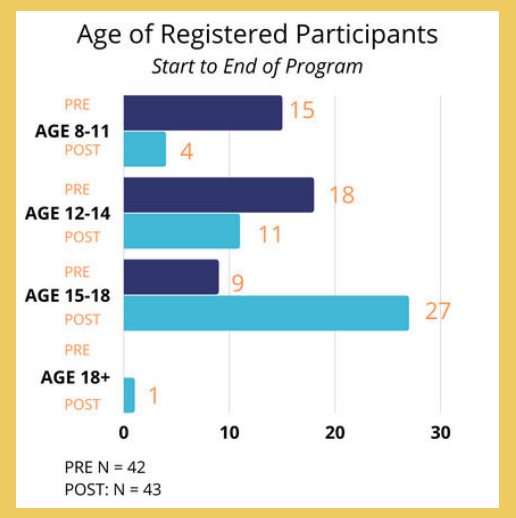


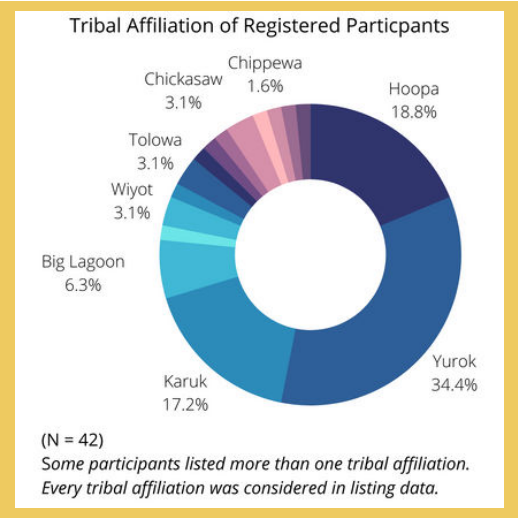
4C. DEMOGRAPHICS

Participants in this project were self-identified Native American/American Indian youth. The study focused on recruiting Native youth (ages 7-17) who would register to be part of Registered Participant Group #1 (pre- and post-surveys) or participate in Non-registered Group #2 (no pre- or post- surveys). The Community Advisory Committee advised that participation in the pre and post testing research program should not preclude other community youth from participating in the program. We did not want anyone in the community to feel like they could not participate in this project, which is why we created a broad base for our research group. There were two participant populations.

- Group #1 Registered Participants: This group consisted of registered participants who agreed to participate in the entirety of the ACORN Program (Make it Stronger and Cultural Programming). These participants completed the SWE Core Measures pre/post questions and pre/post surveys. The original goal was to recruit between 20-40 registered participants who would agree to fill out both pre and post surveys. There were a total of 45 registered participants. 42 of these participants completed the pre-survey while 43 completed the post-survey. A total of 37 participants (ages 7-19) fully completed the pre and post surveys which resulted in our final sample size of N=37.
- Group #2 Unregistered Participants: Participants could also attend and participate in the program activities whether or not they were registered or completed pre-surveys. Cultural intervention events were also open for participation and may have involved people who are not self-identified as Native American/American Indian. Completing post-event local evaluation surveys was entirely optional for unregistered attendees. The numbers of unregistered participants at various program days varied.

Demographic data on registered participants by age and tribal affiliation show that participants primarily included adolescents. There was tribal representation from multiple tribes in the region but the largest representation were the Yurok, Hupa, and Karuk.



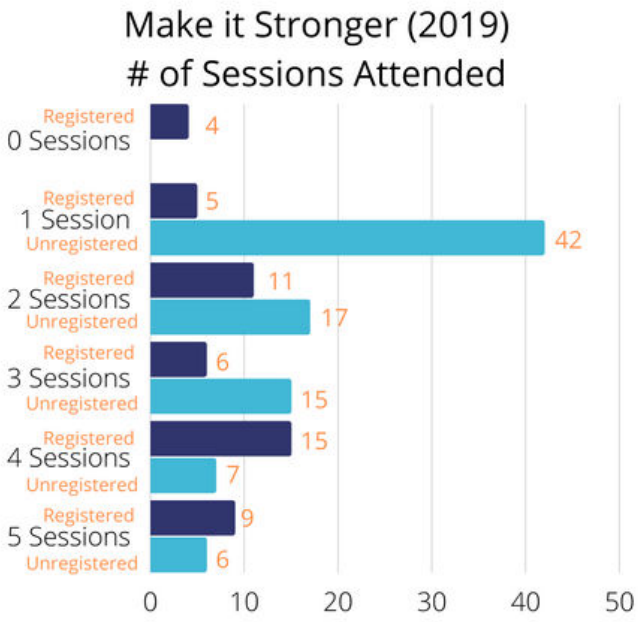


Attrition Rate:

There was an anticipated potential for attrition because of the project focus allowing community attendance of non-registered participants. During the first session of "Make it Stronger" there attrition rates of participants went from the Session 1 (86 participants) to Session 5 (49 participants). There could be several reasons why this attrition occurred but one particular reason could have been the project focus on moving to various tribal territories in order to connect youth to tribal lands and to provide an opportunity for the more rural youth to not have to travel to the more populous city regions every time they attended the program. Quite often, rural youth are expected to travel in order to attend programs in the more populous city areas. Two Feathers prioritized a diversity of locations in order to integrate opportunities for rural youth to see programming in their own home regions. The first program with 86 participants was held in a central location near many of the larger cities while the last session was held in a more rural region that required most of the youth participants to travel or be transported in order to attend. The largest attrition rate occurred between Session 3 and Session 4. This could be tied to the length of time between the first three sessions and the remaining two sessions. Primarily, this was due to scheduling conflicts with venues and community leaders.

The anticipated attrition rate could also be attributed to the types of participants who attended each session. For example: Make it Stronger #1 (2019) demonstrates that most attrition of participants is tied to unregistered participants while registered participants maintained a consistent attendance across sessions.

It was primarily registered participants who attended 2 or more sessions of Make it Stronger #1. Registered participants were also the most likely to attend at least 4 or 5 sessions. 60% of registered participants attended 3-5 sessions of the Make It Stronger Program.



4D. CHANGES MADE TO CDEP

The impact of COVID-19 shelter in place orders required that our project adapt to meet new standards set by the state and CDC that would help to keep our youth participants and community members safe as we addressed this ongoing pandemic. As a result we had to modify how we provided the second half of our program. Our programs, which are primarily offered in large groups, had to be postponed. We made the decision to postpone all in-person activities for the remainder of 2020 and to begin in-person activities in 2021.

Between May and July, we were fortunate enough to host a virtual version of our Make It Stronger Program. With the realization that COVID would impact our evaluations' outcome, upon registration for these activities, we were able to ask questions about our youth's perception of their ongoing connection to their culture, history, language, and how they were doing with regards to mental health at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were very intentional in our selection of questions to ensure that we were gathering the data that would best meet the needs for our evaluation piece but also, asked questions that our youth and families could relate to and engage with such as: “I have a strong sense of belonging to my Native American Community or Nation”, “I feel my life has value or worth”, and “I feel a strong connection to my ancestors”.

We recognized immediately that youth were more worried about their future than they had been in their initial surveys. They were also less interested in engaging in online programming. After this first attempt at an online version of our Make it Stronger Program was not well attended, we decided to postpone future events until we could safely gather in person in the hopes that we could host events prior to completing post-surveys for the project. This would help to potentially address some of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on our youth survey responses. We were concerned that if we completed post-surveys before we could complete at least another round of our cultural programming that our post-surveys would not actually be measuring the impact of cultural practices on youth mental health, wellness, cultural connectedness and hope, but would in fact be measuring emotional and mental health responses to COVID-19.

As the project is rooted in two deeply meaningful cultural practices of the Stick Game and Flower Dance, neither of these projects can be implemented remotely or at a social distance. The second “Make it Stronger” program and the remainder of the cultural programming which was supposed to be completed in 2020, was postponed until Summer 2021. This modified program included a 1-day “Make It Stronger” event and three days of cultural programming: 3-days of stick game practice and activities and three days of Flower Dance programming (Re-Orientation; Necklace Making Workshop; Songs & Flower Dance Sticks).

5. LOCAL EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Key Question: Do Native American community members, family members, and youth who participate in the Stick Game and Flower Dance reflect greater overall mental and physical wellness?

Further qualitative research questions:

1. How does participation in Flower Dance and Stick Game promote stronger relationships between youth and adults?
2. How will greater exposure to cultural activities improve mental health and wellness?
3. How will Native American youth reflect greater resilience and ability to buffer adverse childhood experiences?

6A. DESIGN

Our Community Advisory Committee played a key role in the development of our program and also our evaluation design and methods. We followed CPBR methodologies that included: identifying and naming issues facing our communities; identifying impacts that the cultural programming could have in our communities; and developing "evaluation foundations" for our project.

Identifying and naming issues facing our communities

We began by leading our Community Advisory Committee in a discussion session asking them to identify: What issues are you most concerned about in our communities? After breaking into small groups to discuss and brainstorm, the committee worked together to come to a consensus about their top 6 areas of concern which they identified as:

1. Impact of sexual abuse on my community
2. Lack of healthy foods (food desert) (salmon) - lifestyle choices physical activity, traditional food
3. Drug and alcohol abuse
4. Lack of "cultural data" (quantitative research)
5. Suicide
6. Relationships (human, natural, spiritual)

Following this discussion the advisory committee was asked to identify "What impacts does/should the stick game/flower dance have on the community?" They determined five areas:

- Health and wellness (physical, food, lifestyle)
- Cultural connectedness/ identity
- Relationships (human, natural, spiritual)
- Suicide prevention
- Self-esteem/ hope/ optimism

Community Advisory Members worked with the local evaluator through a talking circle discussion to create the project "Evaluation Foundations."

ACORN Wellness Program Evaluation Foundations:

1. Our communities have strengths and resources for positive change. Problems are generally why we try to build these programs/projects but focusing on problems will not solve them. We must focus on strengths, competencies, and beliefs because it is these assets that will make the difference.
2. We get the best outcomes when we include participants' views and interpretations of their own experiences.
3. Start with engagement and establishing relationships. Find ways to strengthen relationships through evaluation and research.
4. Move from problems to "wants." Assessing and setting goals based on hopes and wants will increase intrinsic motivation. Focus on possibility, keeping an eye on a better future.
5. Don't just be culturally competent or culturally sensitive – be "culturally responsive."

6A-1. QUANTITATIVE EVALUTION INSTRUMENTS

The Community Advisory Committee, Local Evaluator Dr. Cutcha Risling Baldy compiled quantitative evaluation instruments and drafted qualitative evaluation questions. Committee members reviewed each of the options and agreed upon the quantitative measures as well as the qualitative questions recommending they be included as part of the pre- and post-surveys for the local evaluation.

The project's inferential analysis was non-experimental with pre and post (single group) design that focuses on the local evaluation as potential case studies for the impact of cultural activities on mental health. Pre- and post-surveys were used for quantitative data collection to measure cultural connectedness; child resilience; and hope. Each of these survey instruments were peer-reviewed, previously tested instruments. Community Advisory Board members reviewed each of the surveys in order to help shape culturally relevant wording for the local area especially in regards to cultural questions.

Cultural Connectedness Scale

Cultural connectedness is related to resilience as it has been shown to be a protective factor against a variety of risk factors. Within Native communities, cultural connectedness involves being connected with other Native individuals, to the community, cultural traditions and values. This scale was adapted from a culturally based, 14-item measure rooted in beliefs and values emphasizing family, ancestors, culture, and harmony with nature

Child/Youth Resilience Measure

Resilience or the ability to overcome risk factors such as poverty, unemployment, traumatic events, historical trauma and discrimination through protective mechanisms of adaptation, self-esteem, enculturation, community support, perceived discrimination, spirituality and environment are all influenced by a person's culture

Herth Hope Index

This instrument was developed by Kaye Herth to measure levels of hope. The abbreviated 12 question index asks participants to engage with statements about hopes and statements of self-worth.

6A-2. QUALITATIVE EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Our qualitative questions were primarily designed and revised by the Community Advisory Committee. They were given throughout the pre/post surveys after the quantitative surveys. Post-test qualitative survey questions were repeated from the pre-survey but there were also added follow-up questions specifically asking youth to declare their wants and ideas for future programming; youth feedback to ongoing program planning; and their reflection on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their mental health and well-being.

What do you think are the biggest problems that youth face in our communities? (Pre)

What makes you most proud of being a Native American person? (Pre)

How would you describe a healthy Native person? How do you know that someone is healthy? (Pre)

Now that we have learned more through our ACORN programming (Make It Stronger, cultural programming): How would you describe a healthy Native person? How do you know that someone is healthy? (Post)

What do you think you will get out of playing a stick game?/ What do you think you will get out of being a part of a Flower Dance? (Pre)

What are some things that you know about the stick game? (What is it for? Why is it important?) / What are some things that you know about the Flower Dance? (What is it for? Why is it important?) (Pre)

What is something important that you learned about the stick game? What is something important you learned about the Flower Dance?(Post)

<u>Appreciation of Our Whole Selves</u>

Tell me about yourself. (What do you like most about yourself? What do you think you need to improve on?) **(Pre/Post)**

What did you learn about eating acorns that you will take with you and/or that you think is important for others to know? **(Post)**

Overall what do you think people should know about why culture is so important to you, your future, how youth grow up, or even how we address major issues in our communities? **(Post)**

Connecting Community, Language & Culture

Do you think it is important for young people to learn their tribal language and culture? (Why or why not?) [Pre/Post]

Do you want to learn more of your Native languages? (Why or Why not?) [Pre/Post]

What are some reasons why you think it is important to learn more about your Native culture? (Pre/Post)

What are some things you do at ceremonies that you really like? (Pre/Post)

What did you learn about eating acorns that you will take with you and/or that you think is important for others to know? (Pre/Post)

Overall, what do you think people should know about why culture is so important to you, your future, how youth grow up, or even how we address major issues in our communities? (Post)

Opportunity & Access

Are there any cultural activities (herbs, making regalia, learning language, singing, dancing, gambling etc.) that you would really like to learn more about? (Pre)

Are there any cultural activities (herbs, making regalia, learning language, singing, dancing, gambling etc.) that you really enjoyed learning about? (Post)

Nurturing Nature & Spirit

When you think about “the earth” or “nature” what do you think about? Tell us about some things that you do in “nature” in your own life. Do you think that it is important for youth to protect nature? Why or why not? [Pre/Post]

Do you want to learn more about spirituality? Why or why not? [Pre]

What have you learned about your culture and spirituality that you did not know before? [Post]

6B. SAMPLING METHODS AND SIZE

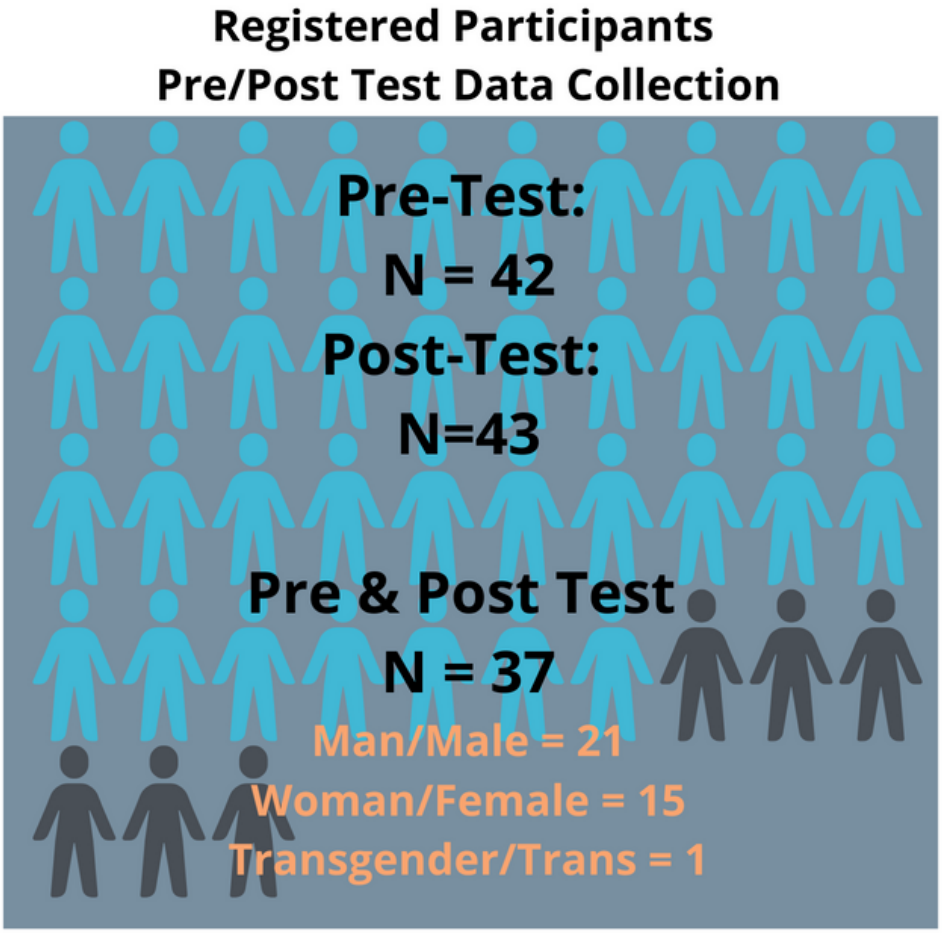
The nature of the programming required us to set an age range of 7-17 for program participation. Our Community Advisory Board noted that because of the length and in-depth questions of the pre and post surveys it would be best to make sure that youth were old enough to fully participate in the program and also the survey process.

Because we do not want to prevent community members from participating in project activities we focused on convenience sampling. This primarily consisted of participants who are not necessarily registered as part of the project. However, we want to capture community response to the events. Community members who are participating in the project were also excited about encouraging participation from their family and friends. We utilized wide ranging networks of our advisory committee to also help recruit participants. Their recruitment of participants by our already registered participants and our Community Advisory Committee members helped to assure that participants were truly invested in the project. Participants in this project also needed to be self-identified Native American/American Indian people. For this reason, we also focused our recruitment on events and organizations that primarily serve a Native American/ American Indian population and are located in the Northern California/Humboldt County/Del Norte county region. The first year of the project focused on recruiting activities and community engagement to bring participants into the program.

To recruit participants to complete the pre/post tests and other surveys, staff focused on public presentations provided by the Project Director and Local Evaluator at various local organizations. In addition, Two Feathers recruited participants via public events through tabling, and also through short presentations to local area youth organizations and clubs. Participants were offered incentives for their participation in the evaluation process including a $50 gift card for the pre-survey and a $150 gift card for completion of the post-survey. In addition, for attending program events participants were offered incentives like: a hooded sweatshirt with the program logo; jersey athletic shorts; water bottles; and stickers. During the Flower Dance cultural programming, youth participants were also provided with incentives for their participation as they were able to take home the items that they worked on or completed during the programs. Youth participants completed a doll size bark skirt; a collection of dress making materials; and a necklace. For youth participants in the Stick Game, youth were able to complete and take home a stick and tossel. These opportunities and incentives were highlighted in our recruitment materials.

The original goal was to recruit between 20-40 registered participants who would agree to fill out both pre and post surveys. We were able to recruit 45 registered participants. 42 of these participants completed the pre-survey while 43 completed the post-survey. A total of 37 participants fully completed the pre and post surveys which resulted in our final sample size of N=37.

There was virtually no attrition in the evaluation sample size. We began with a total of 45 registered participants with 42 who completed the pre-test. Two participants registered for the program but did not want to complete the surveys. One participant began the pre-survey but decided not to finish the survey, however they completed the program and the post-survey. Once we entered all of the data we were able to match a total of 37 pre- and post-surveys for our registered participants. In some cases participants only completed the Statewide Evaluation measures but not the local evaluation questions. In other cases participants only completed the quantitative questions but not the quantitative questions.



6C. MEASURES AND DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

Registered participants were asked to attend the full program of events and complete pre and post test survey instruments.

Pre-Survey
• Statewide Evaluation (SWE) Core Measures
• Local Evaluation
  ○ Cultural Connectedness
  ○ Child/Youth Resilience
  ○ Herth Hope Index
• Qualitative Short Answer
	• Data collection of pre-surveys took place 4/1/2019 - 4/30/2019.
	• Participants scheduled 2 hour appointment with Two Feathers Staff
	• Location of administering survey varied but was primarily at the Two Feathers office building or offices in Hoopa Valley Elementary School
	• Interviews/Survey appointments were completed in private rooms with only Two Feathers Staff, Youth Participants and Parent/Guardian present
	• Parents/Guardian were required to be present at the start of the session
	• Parent/Guardian, Youth participant, and Two Feathers staff reviewed the consent forms for SWE and also local evaluation
	• Once signatures were obtained Youth participants would be given the option of reviewing the surveys with their parent, having Two Feathers staff read and answer the surveys with them or answering on their own with Two Feathers staff remaining present if they had questions or needed assistance.
	• After each section of the survey staff would offer a break for bathroom, snacks, or stretching.
	• Surveys completed in the Two Feathers office were placed in a locked filing cabinet. Surveys completed off-site were placed in a secure folder for transport to Two Feathers office.

ACORN Program • Make it Stronger • Cultural Programming - Stick Game & Stick Game Camp • Cultural Programming - Flower Dance Workshops • Make it Stronger #2 (1 day)	Data was collected in Summer 2019 and Summer 2021 as post evaluation surveys of events for the Make it Stronger and cultural programming. Post-surveys were given to every participant at each event (registered or non registered). The total time to complete the survey was approximately 15 minutes. • All participants were given 1-page post surveys at the end of each program day. • The local evaluator would explain the survey questions. • Group leaders/mentors would provide the surveys to their group and remain available for questions or clarification. • For youth who requested assistance reading and answering the questions, Two Feathers staff was available to assist youth. • Once surveys were completed they were collected by the local evaluator and placed in a secure folder. They were then taken to Two Feathers offices and locked in a secure cabinet.

Post-Survey
• SWE Core Measures
• Local Evaluation
  ○ Cultural Connectedness
  ○ Child/Youth Resilience
  ○ Herth Hope Index
  ○ Qualitative Short Answer
  ○ Programming Feedback questions
	Data collection of post-surveys took place 9/1/2021-10/15/2021.
	
	As a result of ongoing COVID-19 concerns the Local Evaluator and Project Staff determined that surveys would primarily be given through an online collection platform. Paper surveys were converted to an online format and data was collected onto a secure drive.
	
	• Participants scheduled 2 hour appointment with Two Feathers Staff
	• Location of administering survey varied but was primarily at the Two Feathers office building or offices in Hoopa Valley Elementary School.
	• Each Two Feathers staff had an Ipad which could be used by Youth participants to complete the surveys.
	• Youth were given the option of completing the survey via the telephone as well. (No youth took this option).
	• Interviews/Survey appointments were completed in private rooms.
	• At the start of the survey Youth participants were given the option of reviewing the surveys with their parent, having Two Feathers staff read and answer the surveys with them or answering on their own with Two Feathers staff remaining present if they had questions or needed assistance.
	• After each section of the survey staff would offer a break for bathroom, snacks, or stretching.
	• Once surveys were complete they were submitted to a secure drive.
	• Youth who completed the post surveys received a final incentive for completing both the pre and post surveys ($150 gift card).



6C-1. MEASURES AND ADAPTATIONS

The Community Advisory Committee worked alongside the Local Evaluator to revise and update survey questions to better reflect the differing cultural contexts of local tribal groups. This involved naming specific ceremonial or cultural practices and also specific cultural protocols.

Cultural Connectedness: (DK) Don't Know; (0) Strongly Disagree; (1) Disagree; (2) Do not Agree or Disagree; (3) Mostly Agree; (4) Strongly Agree	
1.I have a strong sense of belonging to my [Native American] community or nation.	
2. Being [Native American] means I sometimes have a different way of looking at the world.	
3. I have done things that will help me understand my [Native American] background better.	
4. I have talked to other people in order to learn more about being [Native American].	
5. I feel a strong attachment towards my [Native American] community or Nation.	
6. I feel a strong connection to my ancestors	
7. I plan on attending a cultural ceremony in the future. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	
8. I have done things that will help me understand my [Native American] background better.	
Adapted	Original
9. Someone in my family or someone I am close with attends cultural ceremonies. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	Someone in my family or someone I am close with attends cultural ceremonies (examples: Sweatlodge, Moon Ceremony, Sundance, Longhouse, Feast or Giveaway).
10. I have a traditional person, Elder, or Medicine person who I talk to.	I have a traditional person, Elder, or Clan Mother who I talk to.
11. If a traditional person, Elder, or Medicine person spoke to me about being [Native American], I would listen to them carefully.	If a traditional person, Elder or Clan Mother spoke to me about being [Aboriginal/FNMI], I would listen to them carefully.
12. I believe things like animals and rocks have a spirit.	In certain situations, I believe things like animals and rocks have a spirit like [Aboriginal/FNMI] people.
13. When I am physically ill I look to my [Native American] culture for help.	
14. When I am overwhelmed with my emotions, I look to my [Native American] culture for help.	
15. When I need to make a decision about something, I look to my [Native American] culture for help.	
Adapted	Original
16. I have participated in cultural ceremony. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	I have participated in a cultural ceremony (examples: Sweatlodge, Moon Ceremony, Sundance, Longhouse, Feast or Giveaway).
17. I have helped prepare for cultural ceremony. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	I have helped prepare for a cultural ceremony (examples: Sweatlodge, Moon Ceremony, Sundance, Longhouse, Feast or Giveaway).

Child/Youth Resilience Measure: Yes, Sometimes, No, No Answer	
18. I try to finish activities that I start.	
19. People think I am fun to be with.	
20. When things don't go my way, I can fix it without hurting myself or other people (for example hitting others or saying nasty things).	
21. I am treated fairly.	
22. I have a chance to show others that I am growing up and can do things by myself.	
23. I know what I am good at.	
Adapted	Original
24. I know how to behave/act in different situations (such as school, home, or at ceremony.)	I know how to behave/act in different situations (such as school, home, and church).
25. I am proud of my [Native American] background.	
26. I think it is important to help out in my community.	
27. Getting an education is important to me	
28. There is enough to eat at home when I am hungry	
29. I know where to go to get help.	
30. I feel I belong at my school.	
31. I have chances to learn things that will be useful when I am older (like cooking, working and helping others).	
Adapted	Original
32. I like the way my community celebrates things (like ceremonies, culture, festivals).	I like the way my community celebrates things (like holidays, festivals).
33. I have people I want to be like.	
34. I share/ cooperate with people around me.	
35. My parent(s)/caregiver(s) watch me closely, they know where I am, and what I am doing most of the time.	
36. I feel that my parent(s)/caregiver(s) know a lot about me (for example who my friends are or what I like to do).	
37. I talk to my family about how I feel (for example when I am hurt or sad).	
38. I feel supported by my friends.	

Child/Youth Resilience Measure Cont.

39. I think my family cares about me when times are hard (for example if I am sick or have done something wrong.)
40. I think my friends care about me when times are hard (for example if I am sick or have done something wrong).
41. I feel safe when I am with my family.
42. I like the way my family celebrates things (like learning about my culture).

Adapted	Original
43. Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me (for example participating in Native ceremonies, believing in God/Allah, knowing my Native culture).	Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength of me (for example, believing in a God or Allah).

44. I participate in religious activities (such as church or mosque).

Adapted	Original
45. I participate in cultural/ceremonial/ Native American spiritual activities.	Added this question

Herth Hope Index: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Agree; (4) Strongly Agree
60. I have a positive outlook toward life.
61. I have short and/or long-range goals.
62. I can see possibilities in the midst of difficulties.
63. I feel scared about my future.*
64. I can recall happy/joyful times.
65. I have deep inner strength.
66. I have a sense of direction.
67. I feel my life has value and worth.
68. I believe that each day has potential.
69. I feel all alone.*
70. I am able to give and receive caring/love.

* *Item is scored reversed .*

6C-2. FIDELITY ASSESSMENT

While there were ongoing adaptations made throughout our program implementation because of the COVID-19 pandemic we were also able to complete significant progress toward meeting our proposed project goals.

Proposed	Implemented
Community Advisory Committee creates program and informs evaluation	Implemented as proposed: 13 tribal advisors from local tribal communities, primarily cultural leaders. 4 Advisory Committee meetings in 2018-2019. 2 meetings in 2020. 1 meeting in 2021.
Make It Stronger #1 (5 sessions - ACORN)	Implemented as proposed. 5 sessions over 5 days. Each session was 5 hours each.
Cultural Programming Stick Camp #1	Implemented as proposed. 3 days.
Cultural Programming Flower Dance (7 sessions)	Some modification required. 6 sessions of cultural programming were spread over two years instead of one. Programming was modified because of the COVID-19 pandemic and postponed until programming could be offered in person. By extending the programming to span two years, six sessions were completed. The only session that was skipped was participation in a cultural demonstration as this was cancelled during COVID and never rescheduled.
Make It Stronger #2 (5 sessions - ACORN)	Significant modifications were made to the second offering of Make it Stronger. Rather than 5 sessions over 5 different days the program was redesigned as a 1-day event that lasted 4-hours.
Cultural Programming Stick Camp #2	Implemented as proposed.
Cultural Programming Flower Dance (attend a Flower Dance)	This portion of the programming was not offered until after the evaluation concluded. The ceremony was postponed due to ongoing COVID-19 restrictions. It was offered after the evaluation post-surveys were completed. Several youth were able to attend though this was not an official part of the ACORN program.
Community Advisory Committee reviews evaluation findings and provides analysis and feedback	Implemented as proposed. Community Advisory Committee members met in December 2021 for a 3 hour long meeting where the local evaluator presented evaluation findings. Committee members were invited to peer-review the final report draft.

Our service area is vast and many of our youth do not have reliable transportation. As a result of these considerations we adapted the program through the following actions.

- We found that transportation is a key issue for youth participation and we continue to offer transportation to and from the program. This is an often complex scheduling challenge as most of our staff must not only transport youth but must also help to run the program.Offering the youth the opportunity to be picked up and dropped off by staff at each event.
- Moving events around to various places in the county so that it is not the same youth traveling long distances each time. Accessibility was an ongoing concern in terms of finding a location that is easily accessible and has the capacity to host the number of youth enrolled in the program.
- In addition, we are conscious of how to best address issues for youth who want to participate but can't because of accessibility. We have set up "safe spaces" at each event for youth and also have mentors assigned to each group who are available to help modify or guide youth in the activities. There were youth who expressed that they thought the Stick Game was too rough or that they were afraid of getting hurt. We found that helping to set ground rules for our activities, going through those ground rules with our youth at the start of every session and also setting a tone that values sportsmanship was helpful.

Ongoing Program Assessment & Staff Check-In

One key process to ongoing program implementation was post-event check-ins with staff and Cultural Consultants during the first year of program implementation to review program processes and recommend best practices for the next session. Staff on this project are primarily from the local regional tribes. Many of the staff are also participants in both the Stick Game and the Flower Dance and work closely with the tribal youth outside of event programming but also as ceremonial practitioners and community leaders. This means that staff and consultants on this program have particularly insightful observations and understandings of best practices for tribal programming in the local region.

For the first year of programming (2019) Two Feathers Staff along with Cultural Consultants and the Local Evaluator held 1-hour debriefing sessions after each event. The purpose of these sessions was to discuss the quality of delivery, participant responses, staff concerns, and recommendations for continuous improvement of the CDEP. Staff were also asked to utilize a "storytelling" methodology and were asked which questions they would like to consider when engaging in an assessment of the program. Staff agreed to the following questions as the basis for the ongoing assessment of program implementation:

- What does the “betterment of our people” look like?” What does a successful program look like?
- What has been hard?
- Tell us something that you noticed about the youth participating in this program or something someone else brought to the program that you thought was particularly powerful.

Staff were able to reflect on significant aspects of the program that were made clear during the implementation of each session:

> “It has been important to get to know people through more intimate connections and the programs have been a way to build these connections so that we can be better informed about what the community truly needs and also wants. These connections are at the heart of good community organizing and good mental health work. What our program is doing is really valuing the relationships with our clients because they are more than clients, they are part of communities that we are a part of. What I value in this program is that we are bringing people together and we need to continue to make an effort to bring people together.”

> “Connection is so key to what is happening in these programs. We are building significant connections between us and the youth but also connections with culture, community, and language.”

Staff also saw their own increase in cultural connectedness which informed their understanding of the potential impact on cultural connectedness for youth participants.

> “I’m finding my own path to becoming more culturally aware. To be able to do that alongside these kids is something special. I’m also surrounded by cultural leaders and people and I’m learning with the kids, showing them that we are always still learning about our culture.”

There were also other impacts and connections made with staff and youth participants outside of the programming focus.

> "I had a lot of conversations about college that just organically came up. A couple were like 'I'll be the first one to go to college.' And I said 'You have pretty good goals so that's awesome.' In just talking to the kids throughout the day they just organically brought it up, maybe because I'm Native and I'm also in Graduate School but they wanted to talk more and get more information."

Staff acknowledged throughout this process that "there were going to be mistakes" as the program was implemented but these post assessment and debriefing sessions were a way to continuously improve the program for future iterations. Significant adaptations were made to program implementation as a result of the check-ins with staff. The program was created from scratch so as Two Feathers was in the early stages of implementation it was important to remain adaptive to the needs of our communities.

- It was decided that program sessions would be held at different locations and in different tribal territories. Instead of having the location remain the same it was important to find ways to connect tribal youth to land but to also provide an opportunity for youth to engage with the more rural tribal territories.
- Transportation of participants was highlighted by staff as significant to maintaining consistent participation of tribal youth. Implementing transportation programming had a significant positive impact on tribal youth engagement.
- Staff reflected on the continued discussion about the use of cell phones by youth during the program. It was decided that youth would be asked to leave cell phones at home and would be given prompts by mentors not to use their phones during the programming.
- Staff noticed that youth preferred at least some time during the program sessions where they were given choices about the activities they could participate in. Following sessions were redesigned to include offering multiple physical activities at the same time where youth could choose how they would like to participate.
- Staff suggested that having multiple men and women in each of the groups was important as they noticed that some young women were uncomfortable doing physical exercises with primarily male leaders.
- In addition, some youth came to the sessions without proper attire for completing the activities. Staff noted that only about half of the youth reflected that they knew they would be working out. Future outreach focused on preparing and informing the youth about what to expect during each program session.

Having a consistency of mentors and placing youth in the same groups each time was an important step toward creating meaningful connections that could help youth to become more engaged with the program. One staff member noted: "One girl in my group has gotten so much better. The first time she came she was in a hoodie covering her face the whole day. She was really hesitant to do group ice breakers. This last session she was very talkative and outgoing. She really warmed up to me as a mentor."

Significantly, it was during these post-event sessions that staff were also able to more fully reflect on the importance of the research and evaluation process on this grant project.

> Now I can see how the research is an opportunity. At first I thought, why would we research our own people when we are our own people? But when you see how the discussion evolves and grows with what we are learning from the youth it becomes clearer that through this research we can soak up knowledge and become better at what we do."

It also became clear that youth felt connected to the program through the incentives that were offered as part of the programming. Staff noted: "I see the kids wearing the ACORN sweaters around a lot." Another even shared the story of one youth who continued to wear the ACORN sweater each day following the end of our first Make it Stronger program.

> One of our youth was wearing the sweatshirt every day at school for the last two weeks. One of the days it was like 80 degrees, maybe 85 and he was sporting his sweatshirt. It's a little dirty at this point. He might even need another one. He's wearing it every day."

6D. IMPLEMENTED DATA ANALYSIS PLAN

Quantitative surveys were primarily analyzed through paired t-tests, mean, and standard deviation. In some cases, like with the Child/Youth Resilience Measure, the Community Advisory Committee asked that the data be presented as mean percentages which they found to be more accessible for community interpretation and feedback. Qualitative survey responses were coded using a phenomenological approach to help identify themes of individual experiences. Coding categories were determined primarily by the local evaluator based on the research questions and impact statements previously provided by the Community Advisory Committee.

Coding Guide:

Research Questions	Qualitative Question (Pre/Post Surveys)	Coding Theme
Key Question: Do Native American community members, family members, and youth who participate in the Stick Game and Flower Dance reflect greater overall mental and physical wellness?	How would you describe a healthy Native person? How do you know that someone is healthy? **(Pre)** Now that we have learned more through our ACORN programming (Make It Stronger, cultural programming): How would you describe a healthy Native person? How do you know that someone is healthy? **(Post)**	Health and wellness (physical, food, lifestyle) Self Esteem, Self-Efficacy, Self-Worth Strengthen Cultural Identity (connectedness) Gratitude: Self Care: Healthy, nutrition, diet, spiritual + emotional
	Acknowledging Our Whole Selves Tell me about yourself. (What do you like most about yourself? What do you think you need to improve on?) **(Pre/Post)** What did you learn about eating acorns that you will take with you and/or that you think is important for others to know? **(Post)** Overall what do you think people should know about why culture is so important to you, your future, how youth grow up, or even how we address major issues in our communities? **(Post)**	
How does participation in Flower Dance and Stick Game promote stronger relationships between youth and adults?	What do you think you will get out of playing a stick game?/ What do you think you will get out of being a part of a Flower Dance? **(Pre)** What are some things that you know about the stick game? (What is it for? Why is it important?) / What are some things that you know about the Flower Dance? (What is it for? Why is it important?) **(Pre)** What is something important that you learned about the stick game? What is something important you learned about the Flower Dance?**(Post)**	Relationships (human, natural, spiritual) Gratitude Service to Others Pro-social behavior Gender equity & balance Respect for others
	Relationships with Others Think about what it means to be a "good Native person" – can you describe to us what a good Native person is? (Pre/Post) Tell us about the most important people in your life. Who are they? Why are they important to you (at least 3)? (Pre/Post)	

How will greater exposure to cultural activities improve mental health and wellness?	**"Connecting Community, Language & Culture"** Do you think it is important for young people to learn their tribal language and culture? (Why or why not?) Do you want to learn more of your Native languages? (Why or Why not?) What are some reasons why you think it is important to learn more about your Native culture? (Pre/Post) What are some things you do at ceremonies that you really like? (Pre/Post) What did you learn about eating acorns that you will take with you and/or that you think is important for others to know? (Pre/Post) Overall what do you think people should know about why culture is so important to you, your future, how youth grow up, or even how we address major issues in our communities? (Post)	Cultural Connectedness Self-esteem/ hope/ optimism Social belonging Community connectedness Social belonging
	Opportunity & Access Are there any cultural activities (herbs, making regalia, learning language, singing, dancing, gambling etc.) that you would really like to learn more about? (Pre) Are there any cultural activities (herbs, making regalia, learning language, singing, dancing, gambling etc.) that you really enjoyed learning about? (Post)	Belonging Self Esteem
How will Native American youth reflect greater resilience and ability to buffer adverse childhood experiences?	What do you think are the biggest problems that youth face in our communities? (Pre) What makes you most proud of being a Native American person? (Pre) **Nurturing Nature & Spirit** When you think about "the earth" or "nature" what do you think about? Tell us about some things that you do in "nature" in your own life. Do you think that it is important for youth to protect nature? Why or why not? Do you want to learn more about spirituality? Why or why not?	Suicide Prevention Self-esteem/ hope/ optimism Healthy relationship with something greater Land based connections

7A. QUANTITATIVE DATA FINDINGS

Quantitative data included in this report focuses on the Cultural Connectedness Scale; the Child/Youth Resilience Measure and the Hearth Hope Index. Each of these measures were determined by the Community Advisory Committee to be important areas of reflection for our local tribal community based interventions. Data was collected via pre- and post-surveys of 37 youth (N=37) although there were a number of skipped questions throughout each of the surveys which resulted in some variation in N (noted in each of the tables). Data provided here includes the Mean scores, Standard Deviation and t-test (paired) for both pre- and post-surveys. It is important to note that pre-survey data was collected between 4/1/2019 - 4/30/2019 and post-survey data was collected 9/1/2021-10/15/2021. There was approximately 1-year where youth participants were not participating in the ACORN program as it was on pause due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Of note, is how post-survey data responses were gathered both post a 1-year moratorium on public gatherings as well as a re-entry into both in-person school and in-person events. Analysis of these data points cannot be divorced from the ongoing effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Quantitative Themes/Findings

- Cultural connectedness results demonstrate an overall increase in cultural awareness and reliance on cultural practices as well as building connections with cultural leaders.
- Child/Youth Resilience measure data is demonstrative of an overall increase in resiliency behaviors and factors among youth participants. Alongside the Cultural Connectedness data there is a continued increase in feeling good about cultural practices and engaging in culturally based activities. There is also a demonstrated increase in youth adaptive behaviors for resilience where youth feel more able to access cultural practices to build their own resilience in challenging situations.
- Youth participants reflect an overall decrease in “hope for the future” in their post-surveys which alongside the COVID-19 pandemic may be more reflective of youth perceptions of the state of COVID as well as the effects of the pause in programming and the year of isolation. This data can be important in informing future programming for Native youth where cultural connections are built through stories of resilience that are a part of cultural practices and youth can be provided demonstrative opportunities to engage with how ancestral connections build resiliency and hope even through the darkest times. Even with a decrease in “hope for the future” youth reflected an increase in their sense of connection as they may see connections with their peers, mentors, and community who are all living through the ongoing experience of the pandemic.

Cultural Connectedness: (DK) Don't Know; (0) Strongly Disagree; (1) Disagree; (2) Do not Agree or Disagree; (3) Mostly Agree; (4) Strongly Agree	**PRE**		**POST**		**t-test (paired)**
N = 37	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	p
1.I have a strong sense of belonging to my [Native American] community or nation.	**3.18** N=33	.95	**3.39** N=36	.60	.054
2. Being [Native American] means I sometimes have a different way of looking at the world.	**2.97** N=33	1.16	**3.14** N=35	.96	.025
3. I have done things that will help me understand my [Native American] background better.	**3.37** N=35	.69	**3.53** N=34	.60	.822
4. I have talked to other people in order to learn more about being [Native American].	**3.57**	.69	**3.32**	.67	.095
5. I feel a strong attachment towards my [Native American] community or Nation.	**3.31** N=35	.83	**3.32**	.75	.667
6. I feel a strong connection to my ancestors	**2.97** N=34	1.03	**3.00** N=33	.87	.827
7. I plan on attending a cultural ceremony in the future. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	**3.53** N=34	.98	**3.75** N=32	.49	1
8. I have done things that will help me understand my [Native American] background better.	**3.33** N=36	.79	**3.64** N=33	.51	1
9. Someone in my family or someone I am close with attends cultural ceremonies. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	**3.54**	.56	**3.60** N=33	.50	.154
10. I have a traditional person, Elder, or Medicine person who I talk to.	**2.46** N=29	1.29	**2.60** N=33	1.20	.094
11. If a traditional person, Elder, or Medicine person spoke to me about being [Native American], I would listen to them carefully.	**3.48**	.77	**3.76** N=34	.76	.90
12. I believe things like animals and rocks have a spirit.	**3.09** N=34	.99	**3.17** N=36	.70	.24
13. When I am physically ill I look to my [Native American] culture for help.	**2.47** N=32	1.03	**2.30**	1.05	.510
14. When I am overwhelmed with my emotions, I look to my [Native American] culture for help.	**2.41** N=29	2.17	**2.5** N=36	1.06	.004
15. When I need to make a decision about something, I look to my [Native American] culture for help.	**2.33** N=30	2.26	**2.27**	1.07	.056
16. I have participated in cultural ceremony. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	**2.88** N=32	2.63	**3.37** N=35	1.03	.026
17. I have helped prepare for cultural ceremony. (examples: Brush Dance, Deerskin Dance, Jump Dance, Mountain Dance, Flower Dance, Sweatlodge)	**2.83** N=30	2.58	**3.31** N=35	1.05	.003

Question numbers are reflective of the numbers on the Pre/Post test surveys taken by youth.

Cultural Connectedness survey results reflect an increase in cultural belonging (Q1) and actions to support cultural connection (Q3). As this program primarily focused on introducing youth to cultural activities (Q3) is demonstrative of a successful intervention for cultural connectedness. Additional questions (Q7) and (Q8) also reflect youth connection to cultural practices both through their plans to attend a culture ceremony in the future and by demonstrating that they have an increased understanding of their Native American heritage. Seeing youth reflect (Q10) that they have additional cultural connectedness through relationships with elders is also demonstrative of the program's impact as youth are building relationships across generations through program activities.

However, (Q13) “When I am physically ill I look to my [Native American] culture for help;” (Q14) “When I am overwhelmed with my emotions, I look to my [Native American] culture for help;” and (Q15) “When I need to make a decision about something, I look to my [Native American] culture for help” reflected a slight decrease in youth participant responses though this could also reflective of the different N values (as noted in the chart). Overall we see from the increase reflected in (Q1) that our participants have increased their sense of belonging to their community or nation through the program.

Child/Youth Resilience Measure: Yes, Sometimes, No, No Answer **N = 37**	PRE				POST			
	Y	S	N	NA	Y	S	N	NA
18. I try to finish activities that I start.	23 62%	13 35%	1 2%		30 81%	7 19%		
19. People think I am fun to be with.	21 57%	15 41%	1 2%		22 59%	15 41%		
20. When things don't go my way, I can fix it without hurting myself or other people (for example hitting others or saying nasty things).	13 35%	3 8%	21 51%		21 57%	16 43%		
21. I am treated fairly.	22 59%	3 8%	12 32%		26 70%	11 30%		
22. I have a chance to show others that I am growing up and can do things by myself.	29 78%	1 2%	7 19%		28 76%	8 22%	1 2%	
23. I know what I am good at.	31 84%	4 11%	1 2%	1 2%	27 73%	8 23%	1 2%	1 2%
24. I know how to behave/act in different situations (such as school, home, or at ceremony.)	24 65%	12 32%	1 2%		31 84%	6 16%		
25. I am proud of my [Native American] background.	32 86%	4 11%		1 2%	34 92%	3 8%		
26. I think it is important to help out in my community.	33 89%	3 8%		1 2%	32 86%	5 13%		
27. Getting an education is important to me	30 81%	6 16%	1 2%		32 86%	5 13%		

28. There is enough to eat at home when I am hungry	33 89%	4 11%			33 89%	2 5%	1 2%	1 2%
29. I know where to go to get help.	33 89%	4 11%			32 86%	5 13%		
30. I feel I belong at my school.	21 57%	14 38%	2 5%		23 62%	10 27%	3 8%	1 2%
31. I have chances to learn things that will be useful when I am older (like cooking, working and helping others).	32 86%	5 13%			34 92%	3 8%		
32. I like the way my community celebrates things (like ceremonies, culture, festivals).	29 78%	7 19%		1 2%	33 89%	3 8%		1 2%
33. I have people I want to be like.	24 65%	8 22%	4 11%	1 2%	22 59%	10 27%	5 14%	
34. I share/ cooperate with people around me.	22 59%	14 38%		1 2%	23 52%	11 30%	2 5%	1 2%
35. My parent(s)/caregiver(s) watch me closely, they know where I am, and what I am doing most of the time.	27 73%	8 22%	1 2%	1 2%	28 76%	7 19%	2 5%	
36. I feel that my parent(s)/caregiver(s) know a lot about me (for example who my friends are or what I like to do).	29 78%	5 15%	1 2%	2 5%	27 73%	10 27%		
37. I talk to my family about how I feel (for example when I am hurt or sad).	13 35%	12 32%	9 24%	3 8%	17 46%	7 19%	13 35%	
38. I feel supported by my friends.	19 51%	13 35%		5 14%	24 65%	12 32%	1 2%	
39. I think my family cares about me when times are hard (for example if I am sick or have done something wrong.)	32 86%	2 5%		3 8%	31 84%	6 16%		
40. I think my friends care about me when times are hard (for example if I am sick or have done something wrong).	23 52%	9 24%	2 5%	3 8%	25 68%	11 30%	1 2%	
41. I feel safe when I am with my family.	31 84%	3 8%		3 8%	30 81%	6 16%	1 2%	
42. I like the way my family celebrates things (like learning about my culture).	24 65%	9 24%	1 2%	3 8%	27 73%	8 22%	1 2%	1 2%
43. Spiritual beliefs are a source of strength for me (for example participating in Native ceremonies, believing in God/Allah, knowing my Native culture).	22 59%	7 19%	5 14%	3 8%	26 70%	9 24%	1 2%	1 2%
44. I participate in religious activities (such as church or mosque).	10 27%	5 15%	18 49%	4 11%	6 16%	8 22%	23 62%	
45. I participate in cultural/ceremonial/ Native American spiritual activities.	17 46%	9 24%	8 22%	3 8%	22 59%	10 27%	5 14%	

Question numbers are reflective of the numbers on the Pre/Post test surveys taken by youth.

Data for the Child/Youth Resilience measure are indicative of increasing cultural connectedness as was found in the previous data. (Q32) saw an increase in youth “liking” the way their community celebrates things like ceremonies (78% Yes to 89% Yes). There was also an increase in how youth understand their role and ability to participate in cultural practices (Q24) and in being proud of their Native American heritage (Q25). In addition, there were increases in resilience protective factors like connections to family and culture (Q42) and identifying as a participant or as having actual participation in a ceremonial or cultural practice (Q45).

Alongside solidifying connections to cultural practices, data reflects that youth participants were more likely to build protective factors and behaviors therefore increasing their resiliency. (Q20) demonstrates how youth are able to address difficult situations and think of solutions. (Q43) asks youth to consider whether they find strength in cultural practices and overwhelmingly they see Native American culture as a key source of strength in their lives.

There were some responses which trended downward for resilience including (Q22) and (Q23) both of which are tied to doing things or demonstrating for others capability in completing tasks. In consideration of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and a pause in hands-on learning, classroom engagement, and community programs that build leadership skills for youth to interact with others, data like this may be reflective of youth disconnection from these opportunities.

Herth Hope Index: (1) Strongly Disagree; (2) Disagree; (3) Agree; (4) Strongly Agree	PRE		POST		
N = 37	Mean	SD	Mean	SD	p
60. I have a positive outlook toward life.	**3.46** N=35	.64	**3.27**	.61	1
61. I have short and/or long-range goals.	**3.48**	.51	**3.31**	.58	.086
62. I can see possibilities in the midst of difficulties.	**3.22** N=36	.59	**3.12**	.61	.850
63. I feel scared about my future.*	**2.54**	.87	**2.54**	.93	1
64. I can recall happy/joyful times.	**3.45**	.65	**3.32**	.67	.376
65. I have deep inner strength.	**3.34** N=35	.73	**2.75** N=36	.99	.071
66. I have a sense of direction.	**3.22** N=35	.69	**3.03** N=36	.70	.624
67. I feel my life has value and worth.	**3.37** N=35	.73	**3.30**	.66	.579
68. I believe that each day has potential.	**3.36** N=36	.59	**3.35**	.54	.619
69. I feel all alone.*	**2.67** N=33	1.02	**1.92** N=36	.73	.032
70. I am able to give and receive caring/love.	**3.5** N=36	.60	**3.25** N=36	.5	.013

Scores range from 1-4 with higher scores indicating higher levels of hope.
** Item is scored reversed .*
Question numbers are reflective of the numbers on the Pre/Post test surveys taken by youth.

Overall the Herth Hope Index data reflects a decrease in hope amongst youth participants. Several of the questions reflected that youth have less of a positive outlook on life (Q60); less short and/or long-range goals (Q61); less ability to see possibilities in the midst of difficulties (Q62) and less ability to recall happy/joyful times (Q64). In the context of COVID-19 this data seems reflective of ongoing pandemic issues. Even with a decrease in “hope for the future” youth reflected an increase in their sense of connection (Q69) “I feel all alone” saw a slight increase (scored reversed) with youth reflecting that they actually feel less alone than previously reported. Perhaps the connections they have built with peers, mentors, staff, elders, and community demonstrate to them that they are not alone facing current issues.

7B. QUALITATIVE DATA FINDINGS

We are interested not just in statistical significance amongst our youth population but also how youth reflect on their own change. Not all youth will be affected in the same way, nor will they reflect in the same way on the impact. We find that with our qualitative data that youth have embraced many of the themes that we set out to introduce to them as part of the programming. Some key findings include:

Now that we have learned more through our ACORN programming (Make It Stronger, cultural programming): How would you describe a healthy Native person? How do you know that someone is healthy?	Someone who is mentally and physically healthy: 25% Active in their culture & knowing traditions: 17% Doing good for others: 15% Sober:15%

Key to this section was how youth reflected both mental and physical health as important to what makes someone "healthy." This was different than the pre-test qualitative responses which mostly reflected "physical" health as important for being a "healthy" person.

Do you think it is important for young people to learn their tribal language and culture? (Why or why not?)	Because it is a part of your culture. 18% Because we don't have many fluent speakers or it may "die out." 18% Identity 15%

All answers to this question were "Yes" except for two youth participants who answered "I don't know." Clearly, youth see an important connection between language and cultural connectedness. Language seems to highlight for youth their role and place in cultural practices.

What are some reasons why you think it is important to learn more about your Native culture?	History 18% Pass down to next generations 18% "What it means to be a good person," strong, warrior, identity 12% Learn something new 9% Ties to Ancestors/History 9% Healing, feel better, guide you through life 9%

Participants and parents were asked to reflect on why they thought this program was important for participants and also what was the best part about the program. Youth primarily reflected that relationships and connection with others was the most important aspect of the program, followed by cultural activities and learning about culture.

Parents/Children: Why did you want your child to be a part of this program? Adolescents: What was the best part of being involved in this program?	Meeting people and being a part of a community (made new friends) 18% Learning culture 16% Building relationships with staff/mentors 9%

One question that stood out for how clearly youth reflected the same answers across age, location, and demographics was "What do you think are the biggest problems that youth face in our communities?" By far, youth answered this question overwhelmingly as "Drugs" and what is important to recognize is that this was not a multiple choice question but instead a fill-in answer. Youth were required to write-in their reflective responses and an overwhelming number wrote that drugs was the number one problem facing their communities.

What do you think are the biggest problems that youth face in our communities?	Drugs 56% Mental Health 16% Not knowing history/culture 7%

2021 saw the loss of several Hoopa Tribal members to overdoses of various drugs, with Perc 30 (a 30-milligram dose of the painkiller oxycodon) by far the most prevalent. In March 2021 a 13-year old nearly died in Hoopa of an overdose. Later in that same month, another youth did die of an overdose. In August, Hoopa Tribal Members held a protest against drug abuse involving young people and one Hoopa tribal member commented that her family had personally lost two young people in a five-month span. Hoopa Tribal Chair, Joe Davis, who attended the event made the following statement:

> "We have to get the word out that it's basically in a state of emergency now with the drug abuse. We're just going to do everything we can to prevent drug abuse, any more deaths and any more loss of life and dignity." [43]

It is no wonder that our youth reflected a concern about drugs in their communities. In fact, it was primarily youth who, via social media, called for a more rigorous response and the creation of new programs or ways for the tribe to address the drug epidemic. While a majority of our population are not from the Hoopa Valley Tribe the fact that so many of the youth wrote about this issue across tribal contexts demonstrates that is is widespread. The additional connections that youth have drawn between being a healthy person (15% of respondents said it means being "sober") and the importance of both physical and mental health, there is clearly a need to continue to build protective factors that can connect youth to each other to address these larger issues facing their communities.

Local Evaluation Program Response Data:

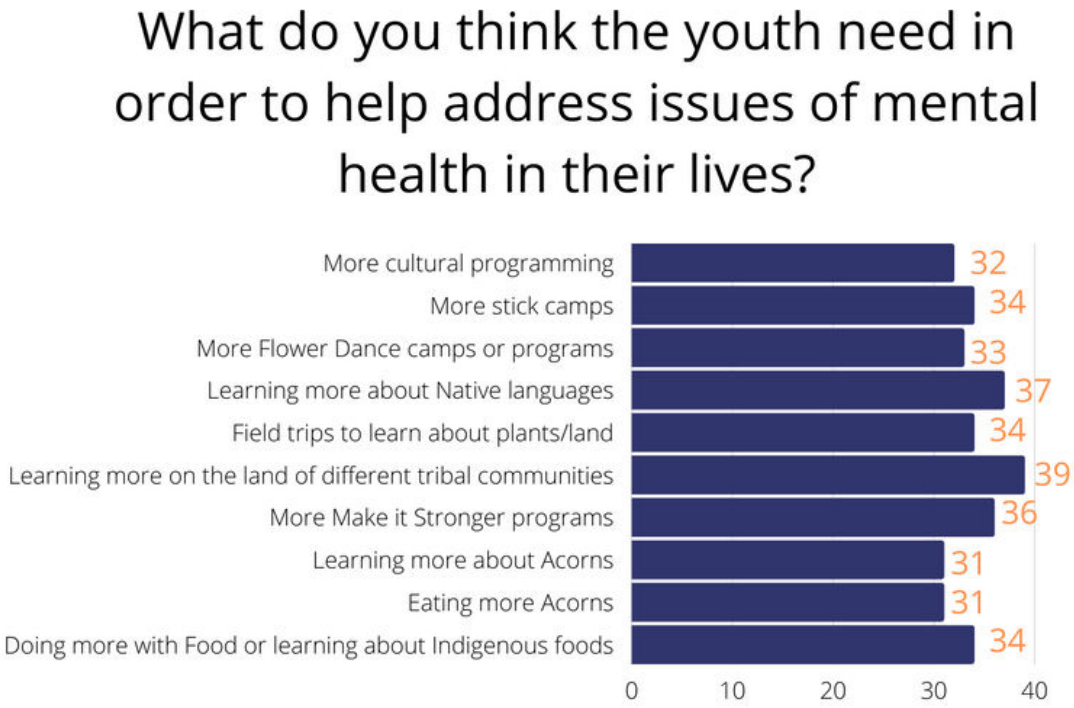
Registered youth participants were also asked to reflect on the impact of the programmatic activities and their recommendations for future programming as part of their qualitative survey questions. The highest rated programs and program elements were all centered around cultural activities and reflect that youth see cultural activities as integral to their own lives.

Please rate the following parts of the ACORN program Rating Scale: [4] Important [3] Somewhat Important [2] Neutral [1] Not at all important N=43	
The highest rated programs for Make It Stronger were:	
Cultural Storytelling	3.714
Learning about each tribe and their language	3.714
The highest rated programs for the ACORN Program: Boys	
Learning Native language	3.7
Stick Camp	3.65
The highest rated programs for the ACORN Program: Girls	
Cultural Programming: Learning about songs and singing	3.83
Learning Native language	3.8
Making Flower Dance sticks	3.79
Cultural Programming: Regalia day and learning about cultural regalia of different ceremonies	3.79

Interestingly, youth in several categories reflected an importance for learning Native languages. Each of the three areas mentioned Native language in some way as one of the “most important” aspects of the programming. This ties in with the previous question: Do you think it is important for young people to learn their tribal language and culture? (Why or why not?) where all youth (except for 1) answered “Yes” that it is important for young people to learn their tribal language and culture. We can also see a clear connection between cultural activities and youth perceptions of importance as there were questions about other aspects of the program (physical training; physical activity; panel discussions) but youth participants clearly resonated with the cultural activities and cultural aspects of their sessions. One youth wrote:

> “Culture is important to me because it's made me more mature and it's helped me with a lot of things in life and will help me in the future. It's important for more youth to grow up with their culture so they can carry on that knowledge to future generations. ...Culture can help out people in our communities that are struggling.”

We asked additional reflective questions about how we can further address mental health issues for youth following the completion of this program cycle. We asked: What do you think the youth need in order to help address issues of mental health in their lives? Every one of the listed categories received a majority "Yes" votes (minimal Maybe, No, or I don't know). The three most popular answers were (1) Learning more on the land of different tribal communities; (2) Learning more about Native languages: (3) More "Make it Stronger" programs.



- *Yes/Maybe/No/I Don't Know*
- *Chart reflects all "Yes" answers.*
- *Yes was by far the most popular answer. Maybe answers ranged from 11-4 votes. No answers ranged from 4-2 votes. IDN ranged from 0-2 votes.*

Finally youth participants were asked to reflect on why culture and learning about culture is so important to them. Many of their answers focused on previous themes like connections to history; connecting with people, and passing things on to the next generations. However, a clear theme emerged tying culture to personal growth and building support systems needed to face the world.

"I think culture can help with a strong support system, community history, and traditions."

"Culture is important to me because it makes me feel good to know I belong to a community as safe and respectful as this one."

"We can't let the way of life we have lived by forever change because of genocide, trauma, and more. We as a people are the luckiest on earth to have the culture and traditions we do. And we must always keep that alive."

WE BEGAN THIS PILOT STUDY WITH A KEY QUESTION:

Do Native American community members, family members, and youth who participate in the Stick Game and Flower Dance reflect greater overall mental and physical wellness?

Through a process of community participatory action research we were able to collect data on 37 youth ages 7-17 who completed pre & post surveys measuring their (1) cultural connectedness; (2) youth resilience; (3) cultural values; and (4) hope. Through our qualitative data collection we were also able to engage youth in their own reflections on the importance of culture to their overall mental and physical wellness.

Finding 1: Youth perceive a connection between mental and physical wellness and as a result of the ACORN Wellness Program have expanded their ideas about personal health to include mental health; community connection; and building relationships.

Finding 2: The effects of ongoing health crises in local communities (drug overdoses; alcoholism; violence etc.) informs youth understandings of the importance of connection to culture and the potential for healing and building strength against mental and social health issues increases.

Finding 3: Youth demonstrate a high level of resiliency before and after programming. The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has not diminished their levels of resiliency. That youth have reflected an increase in their resiliency scores in their Post-Tests indicates how cultural and prosocial activities can build resilience in youth populations.

Aside from the limited sample size, this study will benefit from additional program evaluation studies to re-test and confirm pilot study data. The associated paired t-tests were in some ways demonstrative of the limits of sample size and also necessary adaptations to programming that happened as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some youth wrote on their surveys that they "can't remember" about certain aspects of the program or even "it was a while ago, so I don't remember as much." While we attempted to host additional programming prior to collecting our post survey data, most of our youth participants were unable to attend the events. This means that they may have been filling out their post-survey with nearly a 1-year break in between programming. It is important to realize that post-survey results reflect not only cultural intervention practices but also COVID-19 related impacts. Native American communities faced some of the highest rates of COVID related deaths. In our region, tribes practiced an abundance of caution and closed several of the reservations to outside visitors, events, and ceremonies. There was nearly 1 year where some tribal communities did not host ceremonial events as well as postponing or cancelling cultural and community wide events and programming.

Key Question: Do Native American community members, family members, and youth who participate in the Stick Game and Flower Dance reflect greater overall mental and physical wellness?

Overall, it is clear from the quantitative and qualitative data that our youth participants reflected a greater overall mental and physical wellness as a result of the programming. The focus of our program was on interconnecting mental health with physical health to help our youth approach wellness from a holistic perspective.

The "Herth Hope Index" data collected during study could illustrate that while many of the youth still reflected a high range of "hope" in their survey responses, there were also those who reflected a lower hope related score than they had before. This could be a function of the COVID-19 pandemic, where physical distancing, restrictions on movement, cancelling of social events, and the closing down of schools, tribal lands, and other areas would of course be worrisome and overwhelming for young people. Increased "worrying" about the future is part of coping with the current situation, made all the more visible because of the constant discussion of this global pandemic on all media platforms. Couple this with the increase in food insecurity, the loss of jobs and income in families, inequality in medical care, and the way that COVID-19 highlights and exacerbates health disparities and the reflection of having "less hope" is to, perhaps, be expected. However, even with this reflective scale we see a pattern of cultural connection and growth in our youth participant population. Youth were more clearly able to reflect on the importance of mental and physical health as a result of the programming. Their qualitative data responses clearly demonstrate that program intervention helped to expand their understandings and ideas about the role that mental health plays in overall wellness.

It is also staff experiences with our youth throughout this program that have solidified how building these connections across generations and tribal communities are important prosocial factors for continued healing and mental health interventions. One staff member shared a particularly touching story about two of our youth participants to demonstrate noticeable significant changes that were being made as a result of participation in the program.

> There were two brothers and the day before I'd met with them and one of our therapists. They were like "I don't know if they could be good with these amounts of kids." A couple of years ago they saw their father stabbed to death in the car. I met with them the day before to talk with them about the program and what would happen. They showed up and they did great. One had gotten suspended eight times for fighting and had behavioral problems. I asked him "are you having fun?" and he said "yeah, I'm having fun" I didn't see any behavioral issues and people didn't think they could do it but they did. They took away a good feeling from that day - that they mattered. They connected with other Indian kids.

One of our youth wrote quite clearly in their own qualitative response:

> "My mental health got better being involved in this program."

In addition to the central research question there were other questions that were of interest to our Community Advisory Committee.

How does participation in Flower Dance and Stick Game promote stronger relationships between youth and adults?

Both our quantitative and qualitative data reflect that youth felt more connection to adults and elders as a result of the programming. Seeing youth reflect through the Cultural Connectedness Scale (Q10) that they have additional cultural connectedness through relationships with elders is also demonstrative of the program's impact. Throughout this process, Elders and Medicine People attended and led the events. Building this connection outside of the ceremony was an important part of the program goals. Western approaches to psychological health and well-being tend to focus on the prioritization of individual growth instead of approaching wellness through a community based intervention. Indigenous methodologies, however, understand health and wellness as being interconnected to ongoing community issues and also to finding community support. Two Feathers is a tribally led organization that is embedded in the community. Many of the staff members are members of local tribal nations and are involved in multiple aspects of ceremonial and cultural life. Likely our participants would not only encounter Two Feathers mentors and staff as part of this programming but in various parts of their cultural and community lives. Building the connection during the ACORN programming through the many activities and multiple days helped to open up avenues for continued connection in other areas of the community.

One staff member highlighted that there were a few of the participants who felt more comfortable to approach her while she was working as part of a ceremony because they had previously built a connection with her during the ACORN programming.

> "They came up to me and said 'Do you remember us?' I told them 'Of course I do. ACORN!' After that they wanted to help and when I saw them again they asked if there was any way they might help me again."

How will greater exposure to cultural activities improve mental health and wellness?

Youth saw a clear connection between cultural activities and their mental health and wellness. They identified a few key areas of value for building cultural connection and that they would like to see more of in future programming like: connections to Indigenous language; connections to land; and foregrounding cultural storytelling.

In discussion with the Community Advisory Committee language was tied to identity and to ongoing healing from historical processes that focused on forbidding Indigenous languages.

> "We need to know what it means to be healthy in our own languages," said one of the Committee Members. "Language like this can help to clarify what you are feeling and what you want to say about the world."

Our languages have words that cannot be expressed as well in English and these are words that build a language of health and wellness beyond colonialism. Prior to colonization California Indian peoples were mult-lingual and often spoke more than 3-4 languages. Held within language was not only knowledge about history, culture, and epistemological foundations but also a language of love, humor, and hope.

> One of the Committee Members shared: "I grew up hearing these languages spoken. They would be there talking Indian and just laugh, laugh, laugh. It's good for the spirit. It's good for the heart."

One of the main suggestions from Committee Members was to continue to connect with ongoing language revitalization programs that already exist in our regions. They would like to see a focus on understanding mental health, anxiety, and wellness through Indigenous languages. Localizing how we talk about mental health to include tribally based perspectives is important and demonstrative of the power of Native American philosophical and cultural interventions.

How will Native American youth reflect greater resilience and ability to buffer adverse childhood experiences?

The demonstrated quantitative increase in youth resiliency and ability to buffer adverse childhood experiences was discussed at length with the Community Advisory Committee. It was noted that while Herth Hope Index data implied a decrease in a sense of hope for the future for youth participants, quantitative data for Child/Youth Resilience actually increased. “Of course it did!” exclaimed one of our Committee members.

> “Children are stronger than we are and have knowledge that we don't. This came as a product of their ancestors. They know things we don't, which is amplified by their journeys before them. They can carry this resilience with them in this work, carry it in their being. What we want to do is help strengthen that.”

Resilience is not only a concept based in Western understandings of human nature, nor is it primarily built in response to negative experiences. This is an important distinction from ongoing child resilience work which foregrounds youth as building resilience only in response to trauma. As one of our Committee Members highlighted:

> “Resilience is part of how we view the world. Nature is resilient. Our animal relatives are resilient. Social, family, and community connections are resilient.”

Local tribal communities find resilience in the connections they build with everything around them and that resilience is part of the oldest stories.

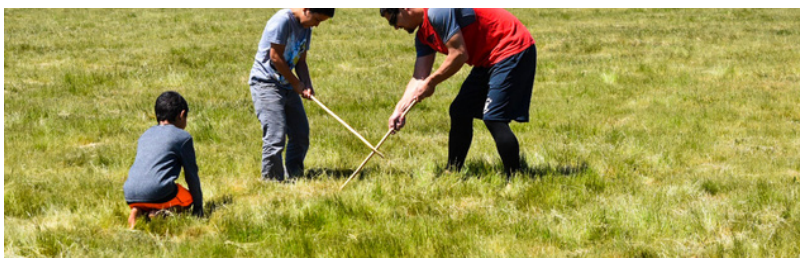
> “So we are resilient because we are Indian, a part of nature, connected to our ancestors, built from the land.”

8A. CONCLUSION

It is clear that the CDEP's goal of doing business differently to address mental health in tribal nations and communities was not only an admirable one but also a necessary step to address best practices for mental health and wellness for Native American peoples. Tribal communities and community leaders have insight and experiences to help address ongoing issues but are not actively engaged with by policymakers. Native communities are often dismissed by practitioners and professionals as well. When it comes to finding solutions, Native communities continue to design and enact solutions based on their own tribal and cultural practices in spite of the challenges to their expertise and the lack of funding or support for this work.

This research project was a first step in building what we hope will be a lasting and replicable ACORN wellness program. The collaborative nature of the project, the focus on building a community-based intervention, and the opportunity to demonstrate outcomes and findings has helped our communities and our youth to focus on what they want to build for the future and how they want to move forward with new programs and interventions. As one the Advisory Committee members stated:

> "Sometimes the rewards and joy is what happens while you are in the process of the study. When we started the project all of us knew the results of things that we talked about: connection to language; connection to the environment; relationships; and health of the body. But the beauty of it is that the children who are part of the program also discovered that in the process."



9A. REFERENCES

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9B. ABOUT US

Two Feathers Native American Family Services (Mckinleyville, CA) mission is to inspire healthy and balanced Native American communities in Humboldt County. To achieve our goal, we work with Native American children and families in a good way which includes using culturally based interventions that promote holistic health and developing respectful collaborations with both Native and Non-Native agencies. https://twofeathers-nafs.org/

Project Director: Dr. Virgil Moorehead (Enrolled Member of Big Lagoon Rancheria, Yurok, Tolowa) is the Executive Director at Two Feather Family Services and the Project Director for the Two Feathers Stick Game and Flower Dance California Reducing Health Disparities Project. A graduate of University of California at Davis (BA) and California State University, Sacramento (MA), Dr. Moorehead received his Doctorate of Psychology in Clinical Psychology from the Wright Institute in Berkeley, CA in 2015. During his graduate work, he completed his doctoral internship at the University of Michigan and post-doctoral fellowship at Stanford University. Dr. Moorehead's research focuses on developing and testing community based strategies for health promotion with Native American communities.

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9C. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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