

# SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION FOR MONTANA TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

Culturally Informed Programs to Reduce  
Substance Misuse and Promote Mental Health  
in American Indian Populations

*Montana Department of Public Health and Human  
Services*



---

# INTRODUCTION

The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services identified a need to provide additional resources for substance use prevention in American Indian communities. The goal of this document is to provide tribal communities with substance abuse prevention programs they can implement that are culturally relevant, adaptable to their community, and have documented evidence that they are effective within tribal populations. Most traditional prevention programs have been based on explanatory theories of change that may not resonate with tribal communities. The programs listed in this document are informed by cultural practices and traditions that are meant to acknowledge and validate indigenous ways of thinking.

It is our hope that tribal nations can use this document to identify and implement culturally relevant programs that will effectively prevent substance abuse and other behavioral health challenges within their communities. The following pages will outline what sources were used to evaluate the efficacy of each program, define the different levels of evidence, and provide information on how tribal nations can implement these programs in their schools and other community settings.

## How Can Tribes Use This Information?

The program overviews in this document will provide a brief snapshot of culturally relevant substance abuse prevention programs identified by the Evidence-Based Workgroup of the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. In addition to a detailed description of the program, the overview will also include the risk and protective factors targeted by the program as well as the current evidence supporting its efficacy. The first set of programs are evidence-based programs that have been proven to be effective through rigorous research. The next set of programs are culturally informed programs that currently lack sufficient evidence showing a reduction of substance use but could prove to be beneficial after conducting additional research.

Before selecting a program, community leaders should review local data to identify the risk and protective factors they would like to address within their reservation and/or tribal nation. After the risk and protective factors are identified, these leaders can search for programs within this document that are culturally relevant and address the concerns of their community. Once a program has been identified as a best fit for a community, the contact information section will provide details about how to begin the process of putting the program into action.

---

# SOURCES USED TO EVALUATE PROGRAMS

**Athena Forum:** The Athena Forum hosts Washington State's Excellence in Prevention Strategy List, which provides detailed information about direct service and environmental prevention strategies. All programs listed include substance misuse prevention as an area of interest. The researchers behind this list also identified prevention programs that were designed within and for tribal communities to create a Tribal Best Practices list.

**Blueprints for Healthy Youth Development:** Blueprints is an online registry hosted by the Institute of Behavioral Science at the University of Colorado Boulder. This registry includes evidence-based programs that are effective in reducing antisocial behavior and promote healthy youth development and adult maturity.

**California Evidence Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare (CEBC):** The CEBC is a searchable database of child welfare related programs. The registry identifies and disseminates information on practices that have empirical research supporting their efficacy.

**Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP):** The OJJDP's Model Programs Guide includes information about evidence-based juvenile justice and youth prevention, intervention, and reentry programs.

**Partnerships for Success (PFS):** The PFS list of evidence-based practices, policies, and programs contains prevention strategies that have been approved by SAMHSA.

**SAMHSA's Cultural Approaches to Prevention:** SAMHSA created a booklet of culturally informed programs designed to reduce substance misuse and promote mental health in American Indian and Alaska Native populations.

---

# EVIDENCE-BASED PROGRAMS

**Evidence-Based Programs** are programs that have demonstrated effective outcomes after evaluation through peer-reviewed research. Based on the outcomes of this research, evidence-based programs receive an evidence level in accordance with the definitions below:

- **Effective:** Multiple sources provide evidence of statistically significant long-term effects resulting from the program.
- **Promising:** At least one source provides evidence of positive effects from the program, but more thorough research may need to be conducted to confirm those results.
- **Innovative:** The program is relatively new or has mixed results, more thorough research is required to determine the effectiveness of the program.

**Tribal Specific Prevention Programs** are evidence-base programs that were developed with the intention of being implemented on reservations and/or within native communities.

**Prevention Programs with Tribal Adaptations** are evidence-based programs that were originally developed for all audiences but have created specific adaptations for the program to be implemented on reservations and/or within native communities.



---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## American Indian Life Skills

### Description

American Indian Life Skills is a skills-based curriculum that addresses key issues in Native American Indian adolescents' lives and teaches such life skills as communication, problem solving, depression and stress management, anger regulation, and goal setting. The program is designed for suicide prevention, but the same principles apply for underlying substance use disorder problems.

### Program Information

**Domain:** School / Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Adolescence

**Cost:** \$40 for curriculum textbook

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Depressive Symptoms

**Protective Factors:** Opportunities and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Promising

**Athena Forum:** Research-Based Tribal Program

**PFS:** Evidence-Based Program

**SAMHSA:** Culturally Informed Program

### Contact Information

**Program Developer:** Teresa Lafromboise (lafrom@stanford.edu)

[Program Textbook](#)

---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Bicultural Competence Skills Approach

### Description

Bicultural Competence Skills Approach is a program designed to prevent substance use in American Indian adolescents by teaching them bicultural social skills. The program draws on bicultural competence and social learning theories. A bicultural competence approach teaches American Indian individuals to draw on both Native American and popular American cultures to better adapt to, interact with, and thrive within both cultures.

### Program Information

**Domain:** School

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Late Childhood

**Cost:** Program is \$240 or \$20/month for a subscription

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Opportunities and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Promising

**Athena Forum:** Research-Based Tribal Program

**OJJDP:** Promising

**PFS:** Evidence-Based Program

**SAMHSA:** Culturally Informed Program

### Contact Information

**Program Developer:** Steven Schinke (schinke@columbia.edu)

[Program Manual](#)

---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Family Spirit

### Description

Family Spirit is a culturally tailored home-visiting program designed to promote optimal health and well-being for parents and their children. Family Spirit combines the use of paraprofessionals from the community as home visitors and a culturally informed, strengths-based curriculum as a core strategy to support young families. Parents are given information and taught skills designed to promote healthy development and positive lifestyles for themselves and their children.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Family

**IOM:** Selective

**Target Population:** Young Adult Parents

**Cost:** \$12,600 + travel expenses

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Poor Family Management

**Protective Factors:** Family Attachment; Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Promising

**Athena Forum:** Research-Based Tribal Program

**CEBC:** Promising

**PFS:** Evidence-Based Program

**SAMHSA:** Culturally Informed Program

### Contact Information

**Email:** [familyspirit@jhu.edu](mailto:familyspirit@jhu.edu)

**[Program Website](#)**

---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Healing of the Canoe Project

### Description

Healing of the Canoe is a culturally grounded life skills curriculum for youth focused on suicide and substance abuse prevention. The program is an 8-session, skills-based course that uses aspects of the canoe journey as well as other Native symbols to teach life skills such as decision-making, communication, and goal setting, as well as provide information about alcohol and drug use and its consequences. The curriculum template allows each community to use their own metaphors for a successful life journey.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Adolescence

**Cost:** Materials are free, unspecified costs for trainers + travel

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Opportunities and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Innovative

**Athena Forum:** Research-Based Tribal Program

**SAMHSA:** Culturally Informed Program

### Contact Information

**Principal Investigator:** Dennis Donovan (ddonovan@u.washington.edu)

**Program Email:** info@healingofthecanoe.org

**[Program Website](#)**



---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Hero Project: Cultural/Adventure Rites of Passage

### Description

The Hero Project is a high-risk behavior prevention program for Native and Non-native youth ages 11–18, which is based on the traditional stories of heroes and heroines from around the world. Through mental and physical adventure-based rites of passage, and activities such as hiking, rock climbing, camping, fishing, archery, white water rafting, cultural activities, and teachings, students awaken to the adventure of self-discovery. By placing their feet in ancient footsteps, they awaken to their heroes within.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Late Childhood / Adolescence

**Cost:** \$2,500 for recruitment event, \$4,000 per year for 4-day pre-program training

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Opportunities and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Innovative

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

### Contact Information

[Program Website](#)

---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Listening to One Another to Grow Strong (LTOA)

### Description

LTOA is a family-centered drug and alcohol abuse program that includes 15 weekly experiential learning sessions for adolescents and their families. Youth learn communication and social skills to avoid bullying, alcohol/substance abuse, and other risky behaviors, and adopt a healthy lifestyle. Parents and other family members connect with each other during separate sessions in which they discuss challenges and solutions to parenting issues. Tribal communities can adapt the program to their local culture, incorporating rituals, stories, and perspectives.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Family

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Childhood / Adolescence / Adult

**Cost:** Materials are free to access

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Poor Family Management; Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Family Attachment; Opportunities and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Innovative

Peer-Reviewed Journal Articles

### Contact Information

**Program Coordinator:** Michelle Kehoe (ltoanationalcoordinator@gmail.com)

[Program Website](#)

---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Native FACETS

### Description

Native FACETS teaches facts about tobacco and nutrition using films, storytelling, lectures, activities, and demonstrations, as well as media literacy exercises and problem-solving role plays. Group leaders build subjects' knowledge of ancestral tobacco use and its modern-day abuse, and the meaning and significance of ancestral food and traditional respect for the body. Leaders also stress the importance of family and the survival of American Indian culture as a way of combating negative peer pressures and other social influences. Youth learn and practice resistance skills, decision making, problem-solving, and self-reward skills.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community

**IOM:** Universal / Selective

**Target Population:** Late Childhood / Adolescence

**Cost:** Materials are free to access

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use; Perceived Risk of Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Opportunities and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Innovative

**Athena Forum:** Research-Based Tribal Program

### Contact Information

**Program Developer:** Steven Schinke (schinke@columbia.edu)

[Program Website](#)

---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Project Venture

### Description

Project Venture is a Positive Youth Development approach, with a unique culturally based group development process and does not focus on deficits, but on the positive behaviors and healthy lifestyles that young people can choose. Project Venture is a yearlong sequence of challenges and growth opportunities, implemented in-school, out of school, weekends, multi-day trips and summer camps.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Late Childhood / Adolescence

**Cost:** \$6,000 + travel for training

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use; Perceived Risk of Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Opportunities and Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Promising

**Athena Forum:** Research-Based Tribal Program

**OJJDP:** Promising

**PFS:** Evidence-Based Program

**SAMHSA:** Culturally Informed Program

### Contact Information

**Program Developer:** Sheri Pfeiffer-Tsinajinnie (info@niylp.org)

[Program Website](#)

---

# TRIBAL SPECIFIC PREVENTION PROGRAMS

## Red Cliff Wellness School Curriculum

### Description

The Red Cliff Wellness School Curriculum is a substance abuse prevention intervention based in Native American tradition and culture. Designed for grades K-12, the curriculum aims to reduce risk factors and enhance protective factors related to substance use, including school bonding, success in school, increased perception of risk from substances, and identification and internalization of culturally based values and norms. The Red Cliff program is taught by teachers who have been trained in interactive, cooperative learning techniques and facilitation.

### Program Information

**Domain:** School / Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Late Childhood

**Cost:** \$3,125 for materials, training, and evaluation

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Perceived Risk of Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Innovative

**Athena Forum:** Excellence in Prevention

**PFS:** Evidence Based Program

### Contact Information

[Program Website](#)

---

# PROGRAMS WITH TRIBAL ADAPTATIONS

## Families and Schools Together (FAST) for American Indian Children

### Description

The FAST Program is an internationally acclaimed parent engagement program that supports the family bonding necessary for children to thrive. By applying research and evidence-based family therapy practices, this program promotes the full potential of every child.

### Cultural Adaptations

The tribally controlled College of Menominee Nation worked with program developers to adapt the FAST program for American Indian children. Adaptations for American Indian children include: 1) making interventions for at-risk youth and families more accessible; 2) using role modeling, behavioral rehearsal, action-oriented, and present-focused intervention approaches; 3) integrating traditional healing methods; and 4) having a culturally represented team of tribal community members facilitate program implementation.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Family / School

**IOM:** Selective / Indicated

**Target Population:** Childhood / Early Adolescence

**Cost:** \$5,045 for training, \$1,000 for evaluation each cycle

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Parental Attitudes Favorable Toward Drug Use and Antisocial Behavior

**Protective Factors:** Family Attachment; Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Promising

**Athena Forum:** Research-Based Tribal Program

**OJJDP:** Effective

**SAMHSA:** Culturally Informed Program

### Contact Information

**Program Email:** [answers@familiesandschools.org](mailto:answers@familiesandschools.org)

**[Program Website](#)**

---

# PROGRAMS WITH TRIBAL ADAPTATIONS

## Incredible Years

### Description

Incredible Years is a set of comprehensive, multifaceted, and developmentally based curricula targeting 2- to 12-year-old children and their parents and teachers. The parent, child, and teacher training interventions that compose Incredible Years are guided by developmental theory on the role of multiple interacting risk and protective factors in the development of conduct problems. The three program components are designed to work jointly to promote emotional and social competence and to prevent, reduce, and treat behavioral and emotional problems in young children.

### Cultural Adaptations

Program developers at Incredible Years, Inc. have created an Incredible Years program with focus on implementation in Tribal Communities. Contact the Incredible Years team for more information.

### Program Information

**Domain:** School

**IOM:** Universal / Selective / Indicated

**Target Population:** Early Childhood / Adult

**Cost:** \$400-\$500 for training, \$1,150-\$1,895 for program materials depending on series

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use, Poor Family Management, Low Commitment to School

**Protective Factors:** Family Attachment, Opportunities for Prosocial Involvement, Interaction with Prosocial Peers

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Effective

**Blueprints:** Effective

**CEBC:** Effective

**OJJDP:** Effective

### Contact Information

**Program Email:** [incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com](mailto:incredibleyears@incredibleyears.com)

**[Program Website](#)**

---

# PROGRAMS WITH TRIBAL ADAPTATIONS

## Indigenous PAX Good Behavior Game

### Description

The PAX Good Behavior Game is an evidence-based universal preventive intervention applied by teachers in the classroom. The practice consists of a set of research-based strategies with origins in behavioral science, neuroscience, and cultural wisdom that operate together to improve children's self-regulation.

### Cultural Adaptations

As of 2018, the PAX institute was in the process of developing a culturally adapted tribal version of PAX GBG. Some communities have not implemented a formal tribal adaptation of PAX GBG, but the process by which the program was introduced to the broader community and tribal stakeholders was done in a way that respected their community's values. This included paying attention to "putting students first", encouraging community ownership of the program, having both students and teachers jointly identify the vision for their school, and describing the program as part of a collaborative "journey".

### Program Information

**Domain:** School

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Childhood

**Cost:** \$600 per teacher / class for materials, \$3,000 per day + travel for on-site trainer

### Risk/Protective Factors

**Risk Factors:** Attitudes Favorable Toward Antisocial Behavior and Drug Use

**Protective Factors:** Interaction with Prosocial Peers, Rewards for Prosocial Involvement

### Supporting Evidence

**Evidence Level:** Effective

**Blueprints:** Promising

**OJJDP:** Effective

**PFS:** Evidence-Based Program

### Contact Information

[Program Website](#)

[Contact Page](#)



---

# CULTURALLY INFORMED PROGRAMS

**Culturally Informed Programs** are programs that were designed to be culturally relevant to tribal communities but have not been rigorously evaluated through peer-reviewed research. Many of these programs focused their funding on providing direct services to their communities without creating experimental trials that could be reviewed by national registries. While these programs certainly have the potential to effectively combat substance abuse, additional research evaluation to show evidence supporting successful outcomes should be considered before implementation.

Despite not having peer-reviewed research supporting their effectiveness, these programs could still prove to be beneficial for communities, which is why they have been included in this document. The Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division is interested in conducting a research-to-practice project that will establish and evaluate evidence for programs that do not have sufficient peer reviewed research to support them. If a tribal community is interested in implementing any of the following culturally informed programs or perhaps another program that shows potential for American Indian communities but is lacking an evidence-base, please contact the Behavioral Health and Developmental Disabilities Division at [hhsamdemail@mt.gov](mailto:hhsamdemail@mt.gov). This year-long evaluation process could allow for a culturally informed program to reach the criteria of becoming an evidence-based program.

---

# CULTURALLY INFORMED PROGRAMS

## Daughters of Tradition

### Description

Daughters of Tradition provides a prevention education program that will enable youth (ages 8-17) to create healthy identities for themselves as young Native women. The program is designed to coincide with the school year and other weekly programs, plus it can extend over the summer months.

### Program Information

**Domain:** School / Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Adolescence

**Cost:** \$550 for training

### Contact Information

[Program Information](#)

## Fatherhood is Sacred/Motherhood is Sacred

### Description

Fatherhood is Sacred, Motherhood is Sacred is a parenting curriculum for Native Parents. The curriculum provides individuals the knowledge and skills to implement a 12-session program that assists fathers, mothers, and families to fully realize their potential.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Family

**IOM:** Universal / Selective

**Target Population:** Adult

**Cost:** \$1,800 for training and certification

### Contact Information

**Program Email:** [training@aznaffa.org](mailto:training@aznaffa.org)

[Program Information](#)

---

# CULTURALLY INFORMED PROGRAMS

## Medicine Wheel

### Description

The goal of the Medicine Wheel program is to get behind the symptoms of alcohol and substance abuse, and focus on the emotional, mental, physical, and spiritual foundations that cause young people to begin using alcohol and drugs in the first place.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Adolescence / Early Adulthood

**Cost:** \$550 for training

### Contact Information

**Phone:** (719) 548-1000

**Program Email:** [info@whitebison.org](mailto:info@whitebison.org)

[Program Information](#)

## Mending Broken Hearts for Youth

### Description

The purpose of the Mending Broken Hearts for Youth program is to train facilitators who work with youth in a culturally based way of healing from unresolved grief, loss, incomplete relationships, and Intergenerational Trauma. The program develops the capacity in Native Youth to build healthy communities by helping them heal from unresolved grief created by historical and intergenerational trauma.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Childhood / Adolescence

**Cost:** \$550 for training

### Contact Information

**Program Email:** [info@whitebison.org](mailto:info@whitebison.org)

[Program Information](#)

---

# CULTURALLY INFORMED PROGRAMS

## Sons of Tradition

### Description

Sons of Tradition provides a character-building framework that will enable youth (ages 13-17) to create healthy identities for themselves as young Native men. Designed to coincide with the school year and other weekly programs, plus it can extend over the summer months.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community / School

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Adolescence

**Cost:** \$550 for training

### Contact Information

**Phone:** (719) 548-1000

**Program Email:** [info@whitebison.org](mailto:info@whitebison.org)

[Program Information](#)

## Understanding the Purpose of Life for Youth

### Description

Understanding the Purpose of Life for Youth trains caring adults to assist our youth and help them develop their cultural consciousness, a sense of direction, create and implement healthy lifestyle and choices, and to help them recognize their purpose that can create meaning and identity for their lives.

### Program Information

**Domain:** Community

**IOM:** Universal

**Target Population:** Adolescence

**Cost:** \$550 for training

### Contact Information

**Program Email:** [info@whitebison.org](mailto:info@whitebison.org)

[Program Information](#)