

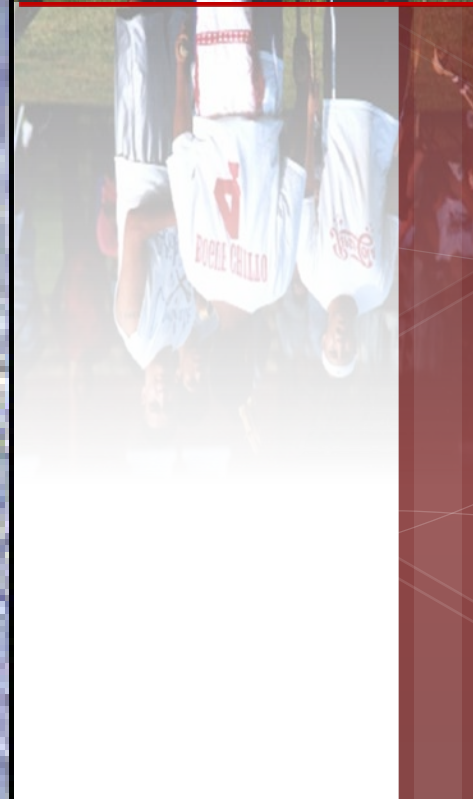


Two-Spirit Native American/Alaska Native Health

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Public Seminar on Amplifying Visibility and Increasing Capacity for
Sexual and Gender Diverse Populations, Aug 5, 2019, Washington, DC

American Indian/Alaska Native Demographic Overview

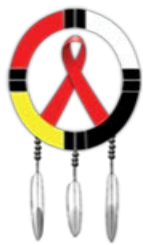




AIAN Demographics

- **AIAN are here!** 5.2 million AI/AN
 - 2.9 million AIAN alone
 - 2.3 million AIAN in combination with other races
 - 1.2 million report hispanic/latino ethnicity (23%)
- **Rapidly Growing.** 2000-10 AIAN pop grew by 26.7% vs. 9.7%
 - Projected to grow to 2% of population by 2050
- **We are young.** Median age 29 years vs. 37 years
- **Majority live off reservation/cities, but of all races, most likely live rural.**
 - 22% live in AIAN land statistical areas
 - 40% live in rural areas vs 16% of other race/ethnic groups combined
 - 60% + live in urban areas





AIAN Demographics (cont.)

- **We are diverse.** 565 fed recognized tribes & over 100 state recognized tribes
- **There is a Federal Trust Responsibility to ensure health for our people.**
 - In addition to private/public options we are eligible for care under the federally funded Indian Health Service (IHS)
 - Health care services are provided to 2 million AIANs by programs operated by IHS-- some are tribally operated or urban Indian Health centers (< 1% funding) and these programs are collectively referred to as ITU facilities.





Two Spirit Peoples

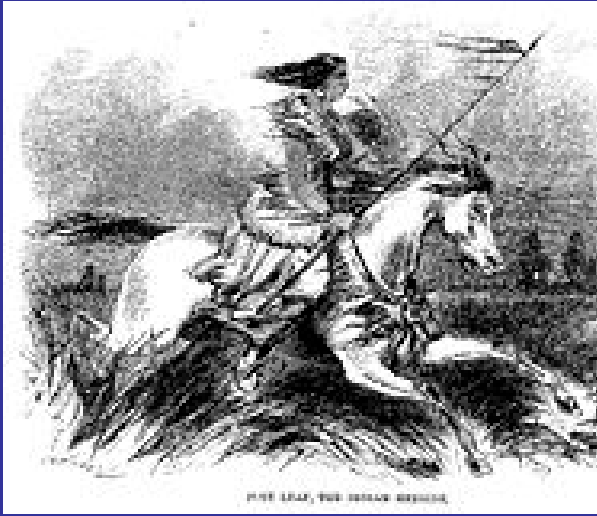


“Two-Spirit” Terminology

- Traditional Native communities embraced more than two genders (e.g., biological males might adopt dress and social roles that were typically associated with females)
- They were NOT denigrated; in fact, they were often assigned high status ceremonial positions (e.g., name givers; dreamers)
- Had tribal specific words such as *winkte*



“Two Spirit” Native Women



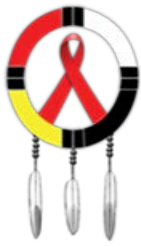
Pine Leaf (Crow)
1800s
Dressed as female;
warrior, medicine
4 wives; in circle
among heads of
families she ranked
3rd lodge/160



Running Eagle (Piegan)
1800s
Warrior woman; men's
society; spiritual vision
forbid her marrying a man;
woman partner



Lozen- Apache 1850s-1889
Dressed as male, propohet;
healer, warrior; vision to live as
Man; could detect movement of
enemies



Concept of Two-Spirit

- The term/identity of two-spirit does not make sense unless it is contextualized within a Native American frame
- Two-Spirit within a traditional setting was a gender analysis and not a sexual orientation
- Today, most people associate the term with LGBT Natives; however, the work of the two-spirit organizations is more akin with the traditional understanding

“Two-Spirit” Today

- The term “two-spirit” was adopted by the GLBT Native community only recently and is not accepted by all tribes or individuals
- Allows contemporary Native LGBTs to align with ancestral roles while simultaneously resisting White LGBT hegemony





- Setting the Context

Settler Colonialism & Traumatic Stress



Colonization and Sexuality

- ◆ Ceremonial and social roles deteriorated with intrusion of non-AI/AN belief systems and Christianity
- ◆ With colonization and Christian missionization, a binary and exclusively heterosexual system was enforced
- ◆ Boarding school experience has stripped many Nations from traditional understandings of sexuality and gender roles
 - Sexual, physical, and emotional abuse rampant in boarding schools
 - In 1987, the FBI found that a teacher, John Boone, at a BIA-run Hopi day school had sexually abused at least 142 boys, but the principal had never investigated the allegations





Microaggressions

Microaggressions are the chronic, everyday injustices that Natives endure—the interpersonal and environmental messages that are denigrating, demeaning or invalidating. These verbal and non-verbal encounters place the burden of addressing them on the recipient of the encounter—creating stress (Derald Wing Sue, 2007)

Three types:

1. ***Microinsults***

Behaviors that convey rudeness, insensitivity, or reflect unfair treatment or demean identity or heritage (e.g., eye-rolling)

2. ***Microinvalidations***

Communications that nullify the experiential reality or identity of Native persons (e.g., are you a “real Indian?”)

3. ***Microassaults***

Characterized by explicit racial derogatory attacks or purposeful discriminatory actions—intentionality more clear (e.g., “don’t go and do a war whoop now”)



Everyday Microaggressions- in LGBTQ communities too



**'THE SWEAT LODGE
A Way into Deeper Brotherhood'**



Gay Pride Event

Discrimination: Double Jeopardy

Stonewall Study Focus Group Findings

Racism in non-Native LGBT communities

- Objectification and eroticization as partners
- Denial of admittance to gay bars
- Asked for multiple pieces of identification
- Invisibility in LGBT settings

Double Jeopardy

Stonewall Study Focus Group Findings

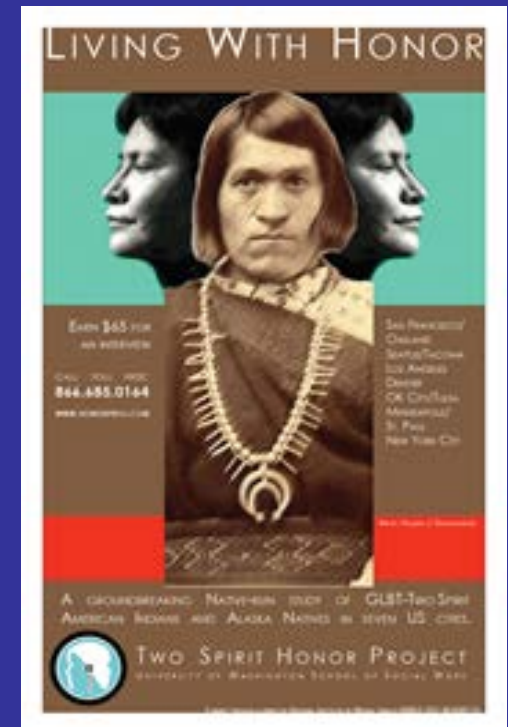
Heterosexism in Native communities

- Denial of two-spirit existence and history
- Same-sex relations seem as a “White thing”
- Shunning or being kicked/harassed out of communities or ceremonies
- Avoidance of the topic
- Cultural beliefs that same-sex relations are sinful, immoral or against traditions

The Honor Project: Two-Spirit Health Study

5-year multi-site national study [5RO1 MH65871] 2002-2008

- Funded by the NIMH
- 6 sites:
 - ✓ Seattle/Tacoma
 - ✓ San Francisco/Oakland
 - ✓ Los Angeles
 - ✓ Minneapolis/St. Paul
 - ✓ Tulsa/Oklahoma City
 - ✓ New York City
 - ✓ Denver (a few)
- 65 qualitative interviews
- 452 survey interviews



Purpose, Aims, & Methods



- Purpose: To examine Two Spirit health with a focus on trauma, HIV and Mental Health prevention needs
- Aims:
 - To identify indigenist stress-coping processes
 - Establish baseline prevalence rates of trauma, HIV and health outcomes
 - Develop and evaluate innovative sampling method
 - Develop and test new measures (HT, Micro)
 - Develop research infrastructure at Native agencies
- Methods
- Mixed methods Design
 - Qualitative
 - Interviewed 65 Two Spirit leaders across nation
 - Focus Groups
 - Conducted 4 measurement development groups
 - Survey
 - Face-to-face interviews with 452 Two Spirits, yielding a data analytic sample of 447
 - 2-3 hour ACASI interview

Eligible Participants

- Self-identified AI, AN, First Nations (or)
- ¼ Blood Quantum (all tribes combined) (or)
- Enrolled or eligible for enrollment in Tribal Nation
- Self-identified as GLBT or Two Spirit (or)
- Heterosexually-identified but same sex behavior within past 12 months
- 18 years or older
- Live or work/play in one of six sites



Survey Components

- **Demographics** (ancestry, migratory patterns, sex orient, gender identity, income, poverty, etc.)
- **Physical Health** (Tobacco use, HIV status, QOL, women's reproductive health)
- **Mental Health** (PTSD, Anxiety, Depression, Suicidality, alcohol and drug use)
- **Trauma Exposure** (Historical Trauma, Lifetime trauma, childhood traumas, IPV/DV)
- **Stressful Events** (Discrimination, Stigma, Bias-Related Victimization, etc.)
- **LGBTQ & Two Spirit connectedness**, activities and connectedness
- **Spirituality, Religiosity, Traditional Health and Healing practices**
- **Health Services access**
- **Sexual Risk** (trading sex for housing, food etc; sex risk behaviors, sex risk cognition (awareness))
- **HIV/AIDS** (healthcare access and utilization, HIV testing, medication use, stigma)

Indigenist Model of Trauma, Coping, and Health Outcomes

(Walters & Simoni, 2002; Walters, Simoni, Evans-Campbell, 2002; Duran & Walters, 2004)

Stress

Coping

Health Outcomes

Trauma

Historical Trauma
Microaggressions
Traumatic Life Events
Physical & Sexual Abuse/Dependence
Assaults/Abuse

Cultural Buffers

Identity Attitudes
Enculturation
Spiritual Coping
Traditional Health Practices

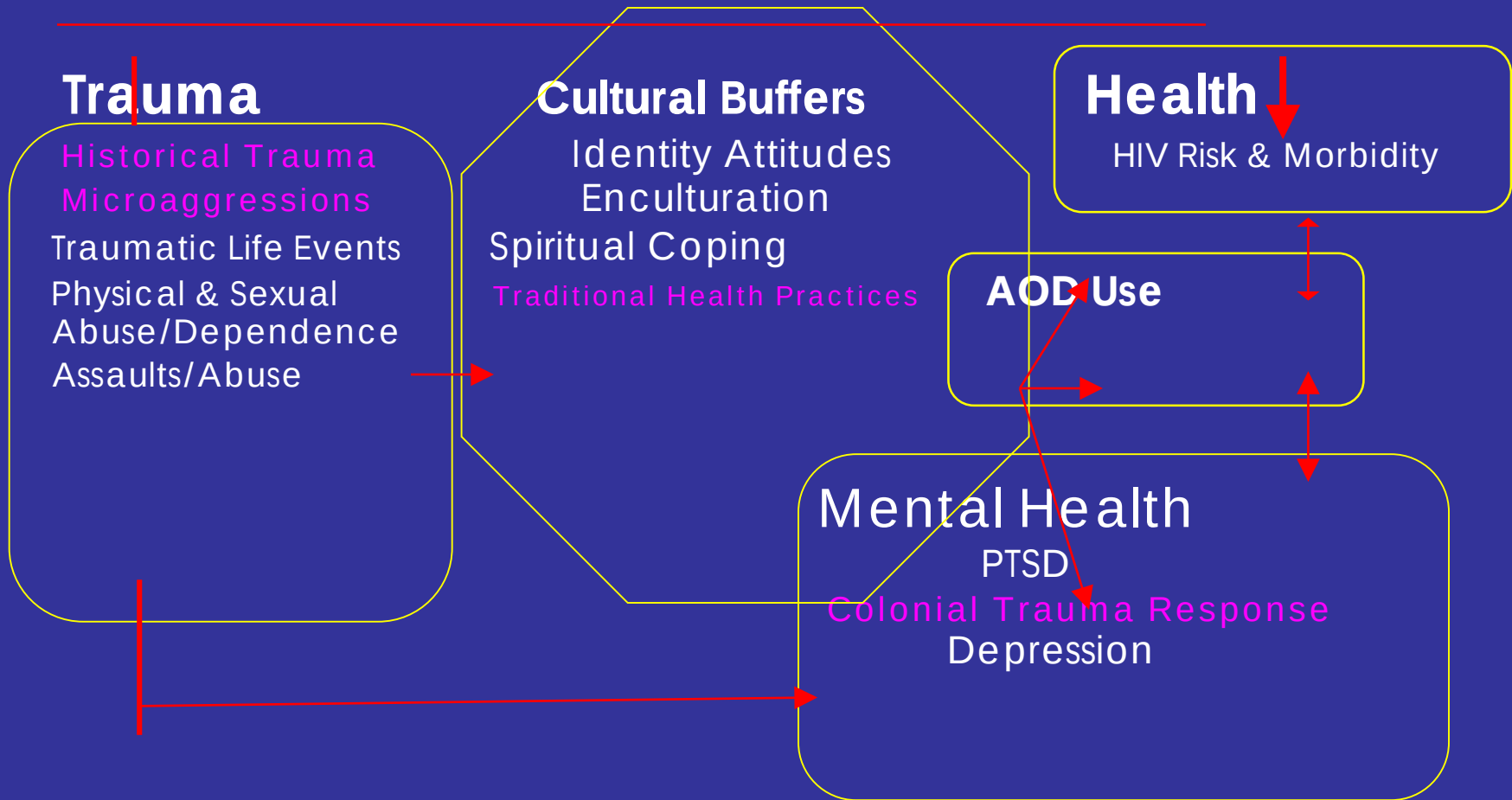
Health

HIV Risk & Morbidity

AOD Use

Mental Health

PTSD
Colonial Trauma Response
Depression



Demographics (N = 447)

- Where born?
 - 43% urban born
 - 25% rez/tribal
- Age = 39.8
- Education (82% graduated HS)
 - 18% less than high school
 - 29% high school grad
 - **53% more than high school**
- Gender assignment at birth and identify as
 - 51% males (n=227)
 - 41% females (n=185)
 - 7% trans (n=35)
- 25% Foster Care
- Tribal Enrollment
 - 73% enrolled in tribe
- Blood Quantum
 - 76% more than ½- full-bloods
- Income
 - 75% < \$18,000
 - 12% > \$30,001
- Employment
 - 59% unemployed
 - 19% part time
 - 22% full time
- Housing
 - 64% in stable housing
 - 32% unstable/no housing
- Relationship Status
 - 49% in steady relationship

Childhood Trauma: Two Spirit Women (*n*=152)

- 85% (*n*=128) sexual assault
 - 74% by a family member or acquaintance
 - 63% by a stranger; 53% by both
- 78% (*n* =118) physical assault
 - 70% by family member or acquaintance
 - 67% by a stranger; 59% by both
- 38% had experienced *both* physical and sexual assault by *both* strangers and family members or acquaintances



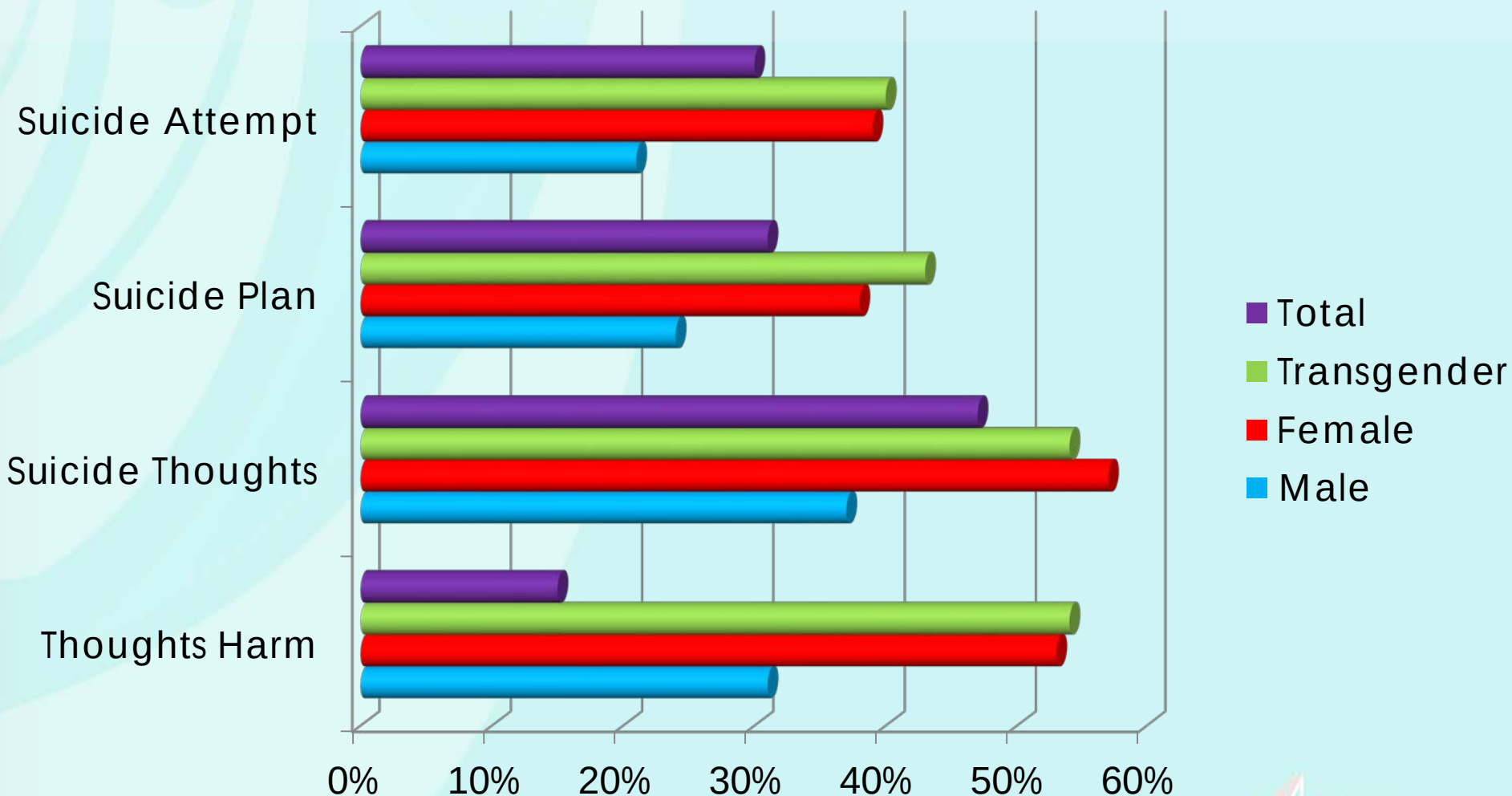
Physical Health

- 47% indicated they had a diagnosed physical or mental disability, including significantly more transgender participants (63%).
- Lifetime physical health
 - 60% health limits vigorous activities
 - 71% weighed down by health problems
 - 24% obesity (37% women 15% men, 17% trans)
 - 18% Hep C (20% trans, 19% women, 11% men)
 - 16% high cholesterol
 - 11% diabetes
 - 11% hypertension (20% trans, 12% women, 10% men)

Mental Health

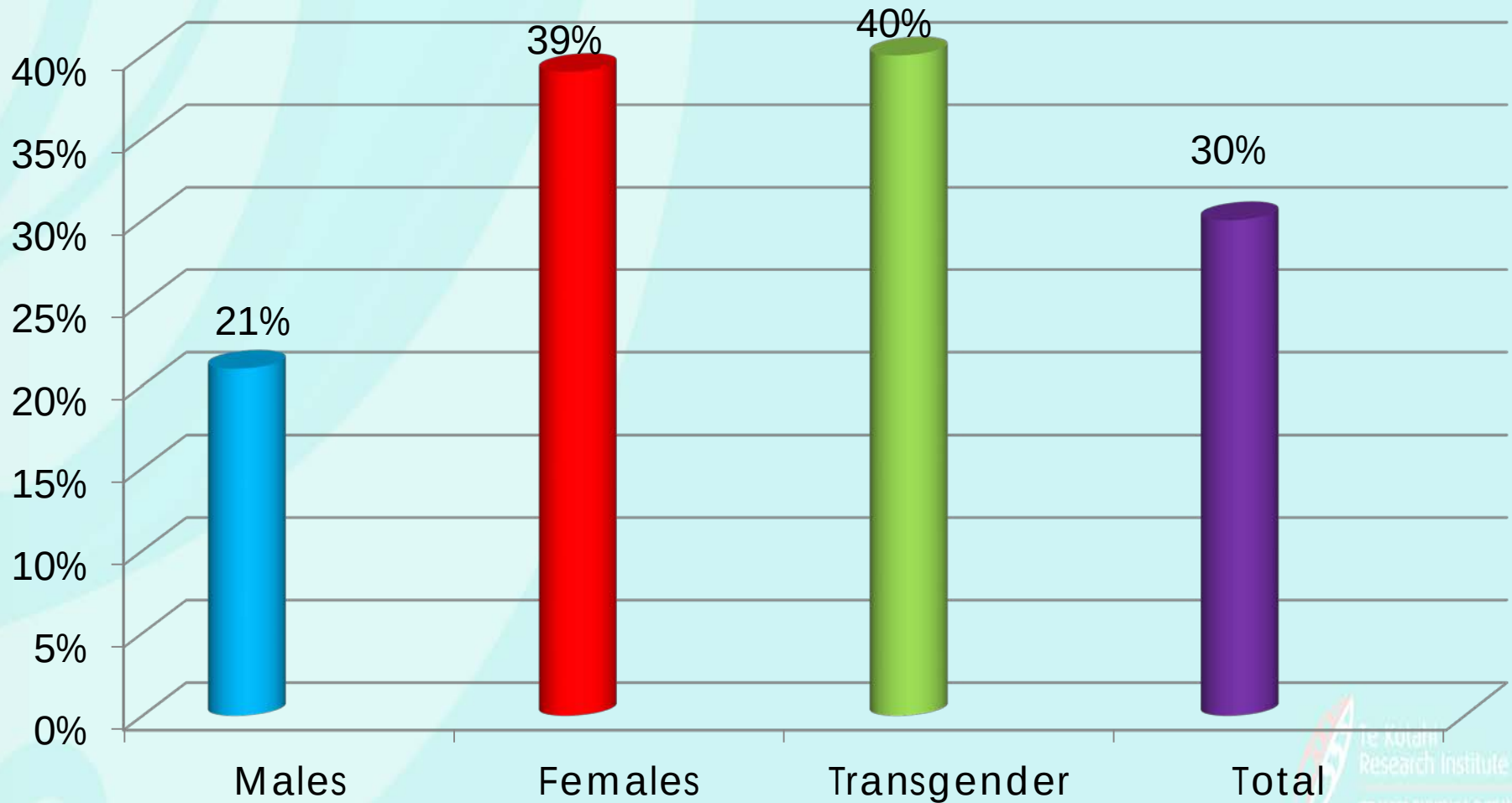
- Anxiety
 - 43% generalized anxiety disorder
- PTSD
 - Total sample 9% (vs. 5% for US pop)
 - 86% met criteria for sub-threshold PTSD – symptoms (high, but not diagnosable)
- Depression
 - 36% major depression; 4% Dysthymia
 - 28% TS men, 43% TS women

Suicide –Thoughts to Action



53% expressed risk of suicide, with transgender (66%) and women (63%) participants at significantly higher risk than men (44%)

Ever Attempt Suicide?



Mental Health Services

- 71% of participants have been in counseling/therapy
- 41% of participants at time of survey were in counseling
(80% of women / 62% of men)

Alcohol and Substance Use

- 59% reported being affected by alcohol problems over their lifetime
- 31% report injecting drugs in their lifetime, with over half of transgender participants reporting IDU (58%) vs. women (39%) vs men (28%).
- 38% had a clinical diagnosis of current alcohol dependence – highest among transgender participants (46%)
- Nearly twice as many men (20%) were currently abusing alcohol, compared to women (11%) or transgender participants (10%).

Smoking

- 67% of total sample use non-ceremonial tobacco
 - 88% of TS Women
 - 85% of TS Men
 - 78% of Transgender TS
- CDC general Native Tobacco use
 - 8.4% smokeless tobacco
 - 4.1% cigars
 - 33.9% cigarettes

HIV /AIDS & Risk Indicators

- Overall Sample % report HIV+
 - ❖ 31% MSM
 - ❖ 31% Trans
 - ❖ 15% WSW/M
 - ❖ 8% WSW
- Concurrent partners (N=330)
- 36% MSM
 - 5.2% ? HIV status
- 19% MSMW
 - 15.6% ?HIV status
- 15% WSWM
- 2% WSW (n= 65)

- Always have protected sex
 - 63% Trans
 - 43% Women
 - 42% Men
- Ever traded sex for food, \$, shelter
 - 17% Trans
 - 36% Women
 - 29% Men



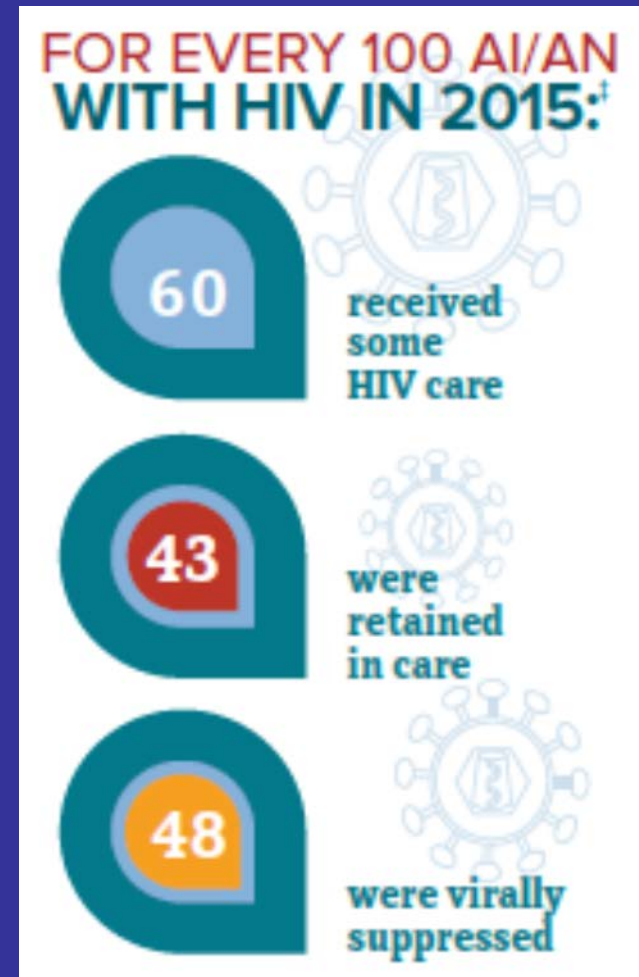
HIV prevalence in MSM in US is 19% and among African American MSM 28% and in sub-Saharan African Countries (12-44%).

Sexual Risk Cognitions

- Sexual risk cognitions UAI examples:
 - “I figured I would acquire HIV at some point in my life, so there has been no reason to regularly use protection.”
 - “Native Americans aren’t “gay” so they don’t need to worry about getting HIV”
 - “It’s OK to not use condoms any more since HIV medications will save me.”
- Independent of mental health, alcohol dependence and childhood abuse, AIAN MSM with high sexual risk cognitions were 2 times more likely to engage in UAI and discordant UAI

CDC Data

- 9 in 10 AI/AN men who received an HIV diagnosis were gay or bisexual men
- 2010 to 2016 HIV dx AI/AN overall increased 46%
- AI/AN gay and bisexual men increased 81%



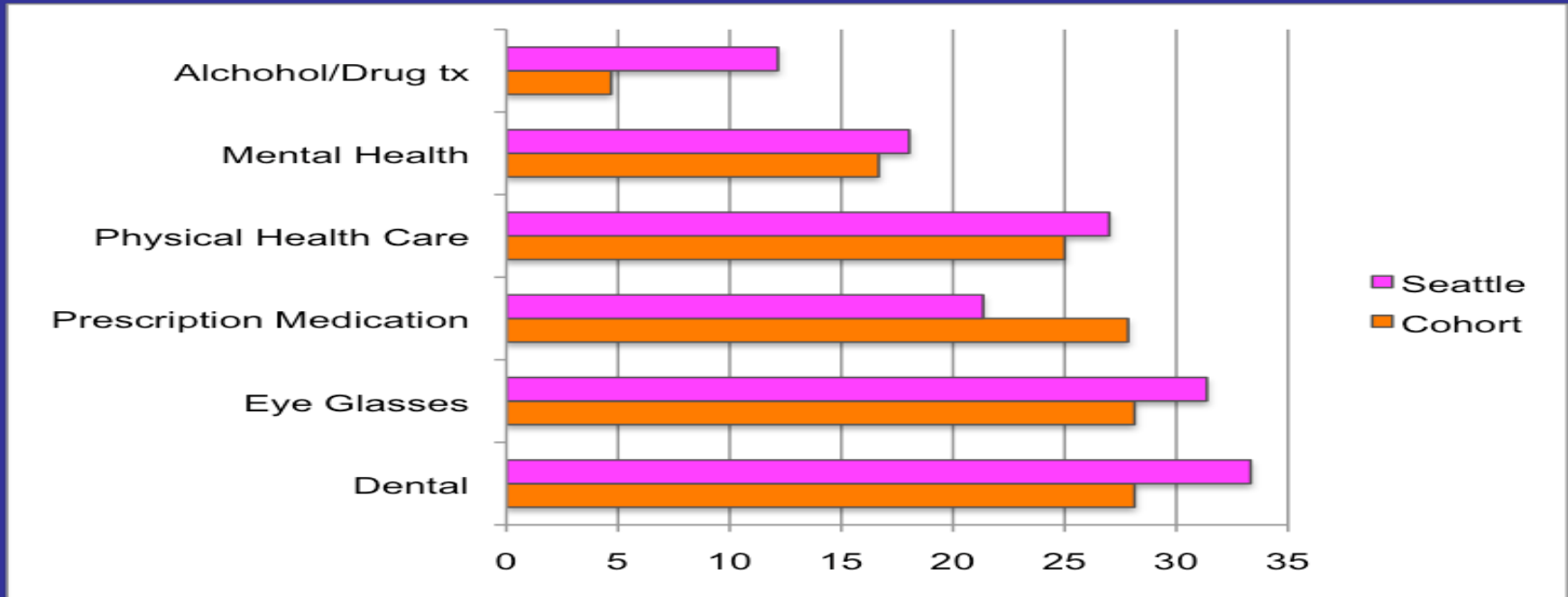
What places some AI/AN at higher risk of HIV?

- Poverty: 3x other ethnic/racial groups
- Poverty, including limited access to high-quality housing, increases the risk for HIV and affects the health of people who have HIV.
- Pre-term: AI/ANs have higher infant mortality rates, higher mortality rates due to alcohol and injury, and higher low birth weight rates
- Having another STD increases the risk of getting HIV. AI/AN have the second highest rates of chlamydia and gonorrhea among all racial/ethnic groups. An estimated 82% of AI/AN with HIV in 2016 had received a diagnosis.
- Alcohol and other substance misuse can impair judgment and lead to behaviors that increase the risk of HIV. AI/AN tend to use alcohol and drugs at a younger age, more often, and in higher amounts, compared with other races/ethnicities.
- AI/AN gay and bisexual men may face culturally based stigma and confidentiality concerns that could limit opportunities for education and HIV testing, especially among those who live in rural communities or on reservations.
- It can be difficult to create prevention programs because there are over 560 federally recognized AI/AN tribes, whose members speak over 170 languages.

Impact of Historical Trauma on Health

- 96% said their grandparents experienced an HT event
- 67% said their own parents experienced HT event
- Over 25% said they think about historical trauma losses at least once a week
- Among the 296 participants whose personally or their parent personally experienced an HT event:
 - 89% had PTSD symptoms
 - 39% had a diagnosis of alcohol abuse or dependence
 - 37% had significant symptoms of PTSD
 - 7% had a diagnosis of PTSD

Services Needed but Not Received Due to Financial Reasons Seattle (last 12 months)



1 of 3 needed but did not receive eye/dental care

1 of 4 needed but did not receive physical health care

1 of 5 needed but did not receive mental health care

1 of 10 needed but did not receive alcohol or drug treatment

Good Health News

- 84% had worked out in last month
- 70% blood cholesterol screening
- Quality of life:
 - 45% Good
 - 32% Very good
 - 12% Excellent

Resilience



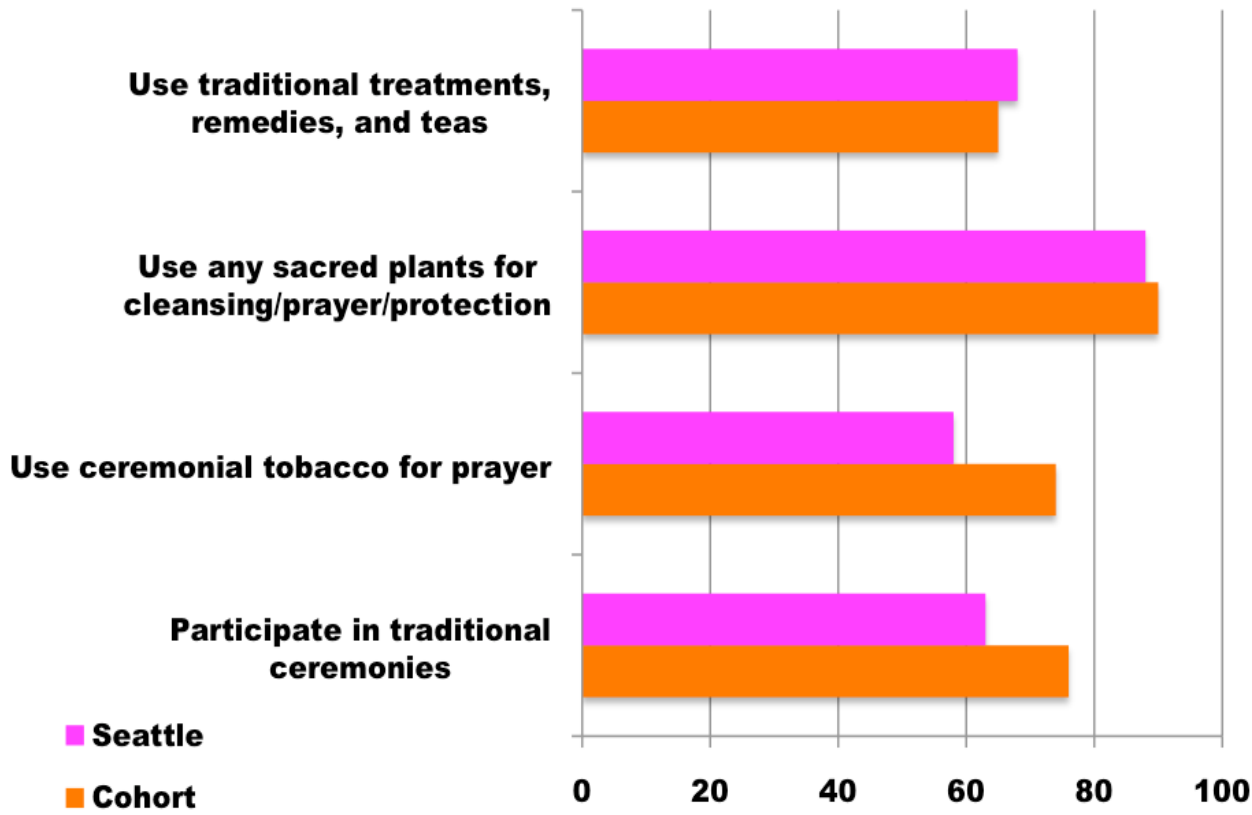
Our Elders say.....

Our Culture
is the Cure



Participation in Traditional Ceremonies

Total Sample & Seattle



24% saw a traditional healer or medicine person in past year

Friends, Family, Community, & Identity

- 82% accepted by their friends
- 79% accepted by their family members.
- 75% treated fairly by their employers and supervisors
- 68% said NOT feel they had to choose between their Native and TS identity in Native communities
- 60% do not feel they need to be “on guard” at Native community events
- 46% participate in TS-specific events
- 46% visit TS websites, chat rooms
- 71% go to LGBTQ bars, clubs, parties
- 50% use LGBTQ websites, discussion groups

What is being done today to bring back the Two-Spirit role?

- Gay American Indians, San Francisco (est. 1975)
- Currently 17 Two-Spirit Societies in the U.S.
- Drumming circles in Denver, CO; Tulsa, OK and San Francisco, CA
- Coming back into the Circle in the Reservations
- National and International Two-Spirit gatherings in the U.S. and Canada
- National Confederacy of Two-Spirit Organizations

Thank You

- Karina Walters, IWRI.ORG and honorproj.org
- Other Two-Spirit people who have risked their lives to help pave the way for a new generation and have shared their stories with us
- Honor Project Partners:
 - Northwest Two Spirit Society, WA
 - American Indian Community House and Northeast Two Spirit Society, NYC
 - John Cocke' and IHCRC, OK
 - Indigenous Peoples Task Force, MN
 - Urban American Indian Involvement, LA
 - National Native American AIDS Prevention Center, San Fran./Oakland
 - BAITs, San Francisco
 - Site coordinators: Sharon Day, John Cocke', Rose Clark, Raven Heavy Runner, Alison Whitmore and Dennis Manuelito, Laura Oropeza, and special thank you to Randy Burns for his tireless efforts
 - All the interviewers on the project!!
 - And many others too numerous to list here for their support, guidance, and stories