

# Rethinking Approaches to Substance Abuse Treatment for Native Youth: Inclusion of Traditional Knowledge



Lisa J. Lefler, Ph.D.

Culturally Based Native Health Programs,  
Western Carolina University

# Treatment Issues



☞ “People in Indian country need to get connected with the spirit and medicine that is already there in the tribe and tribal community. It’s far more effective because a person who has an addiction problem has a broken spirit. If you find a way to deal with their spirit, you can deal with their addiction.”

(Indian Country Today Dec. 7, 2010, “Access to recovery promotes Native-style community treatment.”)



# The Future of Native Counseling?



- ❧ Need for Native **speakers**
- ❧ Need for tribally specific ceremony to be included – **treatment is a spiritual awakening and journey**
- ❧ Need for clients to be supported by community – **AFTERCARE!**

# Examples of Psychoanalysis of AI Youth in Treatment



Client #1 background:

- œ 14 y.o. female
- œ NW coast tribe
- œ Started smoking tobacco at age 7
- œ Started using marijuana at age 9
- œ Started drinking at age 10

# Treatment Notes



- ☞ Client has recently suffered the deaths of several friends and relatives. She has had 6 friends killed in alcohol-related MV accidents, one of which she was in and her boyfriend was killed. She is also grieving the loss of many close relatives.
- ☞ She describes her home as a crack house. Her home burned down last year, losing all her possessions, because her mom was smoking crack.
- ☞ Client also states she fears sexual abuse of her younger sibling still at home.
- ☞ She states she has daily crying spells and often feels hopeless.
- ☞ She has had 2 suicide attempts and spoke of hanging herself with her shower curtain while in treatment.

# Psychologist's Report



- ☞ “The profile of this young woman is characterized by **her negativism**, overt hostility, and her **mistrust of others**, combined with an defensiveness against criticism and her efforts to deny underlying feelings of dejection and self-condemnation. Fearing that others will dominate and brutalize her, she assumes a **socially provocative** if not overtly aggressive public posture. She believes that only alert vigilance and vigorous counteraction can obstruct the malice of others. Although she desires to be close to others, she fears displaying this weakness, and struggles to keep her melancholy feelings from public view.”

# Client #2



- ❧ 16 yo female
- ❧ SE tribe
- ❧ Started smoking at age 7
- ❧ Drinking by age 14, using cocaine by 15
- ❧ Her mother's church denounces these ceremonies

# Client Background



- ❧ Client raised by maternal great aunt until couldn't anymore.
- ❧ Her mother had her at age 14
- ❧ Her biological mother, father, and siblings used
- ❧ Her mother threw her through a window at 9 y.o.
- ❧ Sexual abuse by mother and mother's boyfriends began about 8 or age 9
- ❧ File reads: "raped at 9 yo by mother's drug dealer, suffered emotional, physical, and sexual abuse from biological mother; raped by an uncle who is now dead."
- ❧ She still grieves death of older brother who died when she was younger
- ❧ She has been arrested 6 times from alcohol/drug related offenses

# Clinical Interpretative Report



☞ “profile is characterized by an inflated yet insecure sense of self-worth, an edgy **defensiveness** against anticipated criticism, provocative peer and family behavior, indifference to the interests and needs of others, and a **seductive and self-seeking** social manner. Her more disputatious and abrasive tendencies may ultimately exasperate and anger others. Actions such as disregarding social conventions and the rights of others may be indicative of a deficient social conscience, possibly evident in drug use, alcoholism, and sexual acting out...”



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# Ceremonies



- ☞ Going to Water
- ☞ Spiritual and/or religious events
- ☞ Tribal-specific healing ceremonies
- ☞ Healing work with a Kituwah traditionalist that includes use of “medicine,” language, and ritual
- ☞ Meditation/prayer
- ☞ Sweat Lodge – for Cherokee *osi - hothouses*
- ☞ Talking Circles

# Ceremony



“Ceremony is important, but can’t waste it. It is done when the medicine person knows absolutely that the person seeking help will comply. Ceremony is to be repeated. It is a way to keep you from being lost.

It is the power of thought and spirit. When all are together, we have tohi’ .

You aren’t given a map by a healer, they are on the journey with you! They go where you are and take time to talk about these concepts with elders here and Oklahoma. They provide more than just advice, they know you need groundwork in understanding. They say, ‘we are going to do this....we are in the water together...’ How can you trust someone if they are not with you?”

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Healthy

Determined

Honorable

Father

Resilient

Son

Brother

Hope for the Future

Strong

Going to Water

Responsible

Protector

Husband

Humble

Provider

Connected to the Land

# The Future of Native Counseling? Fund These Efforts!



- ❧ Include Native speakers to develop tribally specific approaches
- ❧ Include tribally specific ceremony
- ❧ Include more opportunities for clients to be supported by community - AFTERCARE!