

Enhancing Child and Family Resilience in Indian Country

Lessons From the Field

Background



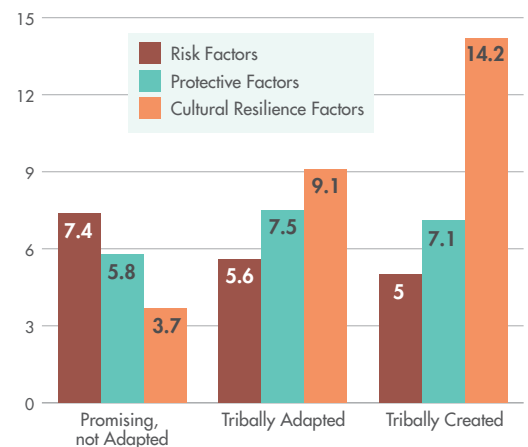
“We know that Native American wisdom exists within our stories, language, ceremonies, songs, and teachings. We know our Native ways are effective. We know that these ways are different from the Western worldview. We know we are experts in practicing and implementing our traditional ways to enhance the health of our people. We know our ways are unique and specific to Tribal groups. The authenticity of our Native American cultural wisdom is acknowledged and validated by our families, our clans, our communities. This knowledge has been validated for centuries by our ancestors. This knowledge exists within American Indian and Alaska Native communities, it is known by our people, and we will protect this sacred knowledge.”

—“American Indian and Alaska Native Cultural Wisdom Declaration,” *National Tribal Behavioral Health Agenda*

Many prevention models in Indian Country build resilience by using American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) cultural values, the transmission of family traditions, and the experiences of Tribal youth. The experiences of Tribal communities suggest that these approaches are often effective in enhancing family resilience and in reducing the risks of harm to children and adults.

In the follow-up to our 2019 literature review, the Center for Native Child and Family Resilience (CNCFR) undertook an environmental scan to capture Indian Country’s diversity of programming. CNCFR identified important community-level research and innovative demonstrations of **cultural and practice-based strategies** not addressed in the formal literature. The environmental scan incorporates and centers cultural resilience factors that are unique to Indian Country, such as issues pertaining to **spirituality, land connection, foods, language, and mind-body connection**.

There was a remarkable pattern in the way that cultural resilience factors manifest in programming at each level of Tribal adaptation, demonstrating a completely opposite pattern from risk factors. Tribally Created models and programs target significantly more cultural resilience factors than Tribally Adapted and Promising, Not Adapted ones. This engagement of cultural resilience factors is related to increased Tribal agency and uplifting of Indigenous ways of knowing.





The lists of the top risk, protective, and cultural resilience factors found in the environmental scan are:

TOP RISK FACTORS	TOP PROTECTIVE FACTORS	TOP CULTURAL RESILIENCE FACTORS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Substance abuse • Low self-esteem • Social isolation • Mental health problems • Exposure to conflict or violence • Exposure to stress • Child temperament or behavior • Child disability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social and emotional competence • Relational skills • Involvement in positive activities • Problem-solving skills • Positive social connection and support • Positive school environment • Self-regulation skills • Self-efficacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural identity/Sense of belonging to cultural group • Increasing coping • Ethnic pride/Self-esteem • Expressing Native identity • Connecting with cultural resources • Hope/Looking forward/Optimism • Support/Interdependence • Personal capacities

The models that we found typically involved one or more of the following seven categories of prevention or intervention strategy:

Parenting Skills	In Native communities, these programs are often linked with cultural models of community and familial care and frequently focus on the child as a center for the family organization and care giving.
Family Life Skills	These programs generally focus on developing family organizational and cultural skills to increase competence in culturally defined expectations and family relationships.
Home Visitation	Widely used in Native communities in part due to the acceptance and effectiveness of community health representatives, these programs engage parents and family care-givers in the home, coaching developmental mentoring, increasing family functioning, and educating about the care and stability of the children and family.
Family and Community Resilience	Programs and models in this category prepare community members to not only help themselves, but to help others within their wider social network by creating trauma-informed and resiliency-focused communities that share a common understanding of the effects of trauma and chronic stress and of how to restore resilience.
Social Services/Case Management	Family case management programs help otherwise ineligible at-risk families to obtain the health care services and other assistance they may need to have a healthy pregnancy and to promote the child’s healthy development.
Traditional Life Stage	Enacted through traditional, life-stage interventions addressing childhood exposure to violence, these programs empower participants with culturally engaged and bicultural life skills.
Behavioral Health and Wellness	Mental health, substance abuse treatment, and community response systems are critical to resilient communities and families. Many models build on the Native American worldview that understands health and wellness as framed by the notions of connect- edness, reciprocity, balance, and completeness.





The models included in the environmental scan were:

The models included here are the ones we turned up during the environmental scan process. If you know of other child welfare programs or models in use in Indian Country that we should include in our catalogue of programs, please contact us.

American Indian Family Strengthening Program	Parent-Child Assistance Program
American Indian Life Skills	Peacemaking Circles
Families and Schools Together	Positive Indian Parenting
Fatherhood Is Sacred/Motherhood Is Sacred	Project Launch
Gathering of Native Americans/Gathering of Alaskan Natives	Project Venture
Leading the Next Generation	Qungasvik Toolbox
MOCKINGBIRD FAMILY Model	Successful Transitions for Adult Readiness
National Child Welfare Workforce Institute Tribal Coaching Leadership Academy Middle Managers (LAMM)	Wakanyeja Ta Wiconi Ki Awayang Kuwapi - Rosebud Sioux Tribe's Defending Childhood Initiative (RST DCI)
Parents as Teachers	

For more information, the complete Environmental Scan, and catalog of programs turned up during the scan, visit <https://cncfr.jbsinternational.com>.

