

NATIVE



FACETS

Columbia University Cancer Prevention Curriculum

NATIVE FACETS

*F*amily, friends, food and fun are all related to me—I will learn to make
*A*ctive healthy choices to prevent
*C*ancers associated with unhealthy lifestyles—and by
*E*ating wisely, exercising and not smoking—I will embrace life and learn to be
*T*hankful for my
*S*urvival and happiness as a Native American

Reducing Cancer Risks Among Native American Youth

**A Native American Culture-Based Curriculum For the Prevention of Certain
Cancers Associated with Diet and Tobacco Use**

FOREWORD

Cancer threatens the well-being and lives of Native people across America. Rates of cancer are unacceptably high among Native Americans and successful treatment rates for those who have fallen victim to cancer are far below comparable rates for whites. What can we do about combatting cancer among Native people?

The National Cancer Institute has helped to answer this question by sponsoring several research studies aimed at learning more about cancer among Native Americans. We were fortunate to be selected for that sponsorship. In carrying out our study, we learned vital information about the best ways to prevent cancer among Native American youth. As delighted as we are with the results of our research, we are even more excited about the response we received from the collaborating Native American communities. Their cooperation, enthusiasm, and tireless support have been impressive. On behalf of Columbia University and the National Cancer Institute, I want to extend my thanks for a job well done. Let's continue the battle against cancer in Native American people. We will not stop until we have scientifically proven methods for helping Indian youth completely avoid cancer from tobacco use and poor dietary habits. That is our goal. Together with your help, we will accomplish it.

Steven P. Schinke, Professor

Columbia University School of Social Work

INTRODUCTION

Native F.A.C.E.T.S., a project funded in 1990 by the National Cancer Institute, aimed to reduce cancer risks among Native American adolescents. Developed by Columbia University School of Social Work in partnership with Native Americans from urban and rural communities in the Northeast, the project studied interventions to prevent cancer among younger Native Americans. Native youths between the ages of 8-12 years old were recruited to participate in the program which took place in their community after school or on weekends.

To ensure a community-based focus, Columbia University staff worked directly with health and social service providers and representative members from the Native community to develop the curriculum. During intervention delivery, local storytellers and other Native American role models shared their knowledge and experience to enhance the cultural health concepts introduced by the site group leaders.

By encouraging the Native youths' decision-making skills, the results suggest that the project had a positive impact on youths' ability to make healthy lifestyle choices. In fact, youths' scores were significantly improved after participating in the project, especially where cultural reasons for not smoking or chewing tobacco were concerned.

The curriculum has several goals. First, to promote Native youths' awareness, integrity, knowledge, and self-determination concerning their immediate and long-term health. Second, to reinforce native Northeast cultural knowledge, values, and ancestral history related to healthful living. Finally, the curriculum's experiential, multi-disciplined approach to delivering information about cancer and its relationship to diet and habitual tobacco use teaches youths to increase their sense of self-determination.

The curriculum has 15 sessions, with the final session culminating in a community presentation by the youth participants. During this community presentation, participants exhibit the various projects and journals produced over the intervention, share highlights from the curriculum, and perform a short skit about healthy dietary and lifestyle practices.

Each curriculum session addresses general principles about how the body and mind work in relation to the social environment. Traditional Native American stories are included to promote cultural awareness. In addition, artistic and creative projects throughout the curriculum reinforce the lessons. A theater performance, for example, helps youths to refine their public speaking skills.

Purpose of the Curriculum

Delivery of the Curriculum

diet we promote as part of a healthy life-style incorporating exercise, a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, and occasional meat and fish.


Selected by the collaborating Native organizations, trained group leaders were primarily responsible for delivering the curriculum to participating youth. Group leaders were trained in a comprehensive week-long program led by curriculum developers, Native and non-Native educators, social workers, and performance artists.

Over the course of this five year study, we successfully implemented three separate skills interventions for reducing Native youths' cancer risks associated with dietary habits and tobacco use. Findings from our study are available through written requests to Professor Steven Schinke, Columbia University School of Social Work, 622 West 113th St., New York, NY 10025.

Sessions were held once a week for 15 weeks after regular school hours and beginning with the start of the fall term school year. Locations for sessions varied with participating community organizations or program sponsors. Transportation of youths to and from sessions was arranged by the group leaders, with assistance from the sponsoring organization

Outcome Goals

Typical Session Format



All sessions were scheduled to last one hour, with fifteen additional minutes allotted for clean up before returning the youth home. Group leaders were responsible for ensuring the safety of the participants. At least ten hours per week were reserved for group leaders to prepare and plan for each session.