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# Native American Bicultural Healthy Living

## FACT SHEET

for Asian Media Access by Maya Park

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Helpful knowledge for practitioners when treating Native American patients

- Spiritual development among medical practitioners.
- Cross-cultural evaluation model to assess practices
- Recognize they need spiritual support
- Listen and and be willing to answer
- Develop trust
- Have familiar objects from their culture present
- Allow for collaborative methods utilizing Native healers
- In Native Societies “intelligence” is determined by their ability to listen, hear and understand rather than their ability to ask “smart” question. Don’t interrupt and listen so your question will be answered. When a story is shared with you that means it’s for you and you only.
- Some Native American will carry or have items on them that they consider sacred. It may be stones, feathers, antlers, fur, claws or pouches of cloth or leather. Don’t touch sacred items. In case of emergencies keep sacred items with patients if possible.
- Before an amputation of any body part ask if their any traditional requirement after the procedure is done. Some may request the body part to be blessed and cremated
- When a family is performing a ceremony leave them in privacy unless they ask or want you to stay other than that then you may leave the family in private.

*It's all complicated, and so that—so often people are afraid to go for help because they're afraid whatever they share is going to be used against them. ... I mean, you don't really know who you can trust. And so if you've been raised with the people who historically don't trust the very agencies that are supposed to be helping you, where do you go? Healer 1*

*... People visit him. ... We take him to the longhouse, and he gets to do the songs every Sunday. ...He's going to learn more about his culture. ... Maybe this person will learn their language a little more because this person is going to listen ... learn to respect your elders and listen. ... When you're spiritual, you listen to your inside, you listen to who's there. You can understand that it would be good to have the Creator there. That's huge. That's a big difference ... you learn how to listen to your body a whole lot more. Healer 5*

### ***Medical Beliefs and Practices***

- Most Native American tribes have traditions about health and illness, such as the natural force of earth and prayer
- Native medicine places the roots of any imbalance in the world of the spirit
- There is no clinical diagnosis that applies to every case
- Many believe that the traditional healing way helps mankind better than taking western medication
- Believe there's an energy behind every trauma

### ***Demographics***

- 2000 there was an estimated of 4.1 million Native Americans living in the US
- Represents less than 1.5 percent of US population
- About 500 federal tribes overall
- The number of Native Americans living in reservations has decreased over the past few decades.
- Now there's only 1 in 5 Native Americans living in those areas

### ***Barriers to Health Care***

- Fear and distrust
- Financial Need
- Having to educate clinicians about Native context
- Lack of resources or lack of knowledge of them
- Shortage of healers

*In a series of articles, we are exploring the importance of culture when it comes to health care from the lens of the Somali, Hmong, African-American, Hispanic, and Native cultures: bi-cultural perspectives to inform current medical practice.*