

Honoring Innovations Report

“A Newsletter for System of Care Communities in Indian Country” Issue #2, June 2011

A newsletter published by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA) describing best practices in American Indian/Alaska Native systems of care for current and graduated system of care communities

A “best practice” in the field of American Indian/Alaska Native children’s mental health is a process, method, training, or event that is believed to have a direct link in providing the desired outcome.

NICWA believes that such a designated practice requires attention to seven specific criteria listed below.

- Longevity
- Replicable*
- Harmonious with Indigenous Values and Teachings
- Sustainability
- Community Acceptance
- Input of Stakeholders Across Generations
- Culturally Competent Staffing

*When/Where applicable

This product was developed with support from the Child, Adolescent and Family Branch (CAFB), Center for Mental Health Services (CMHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views, opinions, or policies of CAFB, CMHS, SAMHSA, or the Department of Health and Human Services.



Media and Social Marketing— Gaining access, creating partnerships

A cornerstone of social marketing is promotion. In Indian Country, the last few decades have seen tremendous change in the capacity for media usage and promotion of tribal public health initiatives.

This issue will present examples of public health messages transmitted to an American Indian/Alaska Native audience using various forms of media and the special impact of radio and television.

The availability of media coverage varies across the country, yet it still maintains a strong importance in order to reach your audience with the message you want them to take away. We hope that, with deliberate action and outreach, you might see an improvement over the years with your media relations and develop a critical partnership for your program and for your community.

Live well, live Native.

Kristy Alberty

For more information on the organizations profiled here...

KWSO Warm Springs Radio <http://www.kwso.org/>
KILI Radio Voice of the Lakota Nation <http://www.kiliradio.org/>
Storytellers’ Production Videography
http://storytellersproductions.com/videography_Cheghutsen_spots.html

Broadcasting Your Message to Indian Country

I’ve always been of the opinion that broadcast media gets the attention of Native people very easily because it’s still a novel occurrence for them to see their issues placed on the air. Natives are practically invisible on television, and many people take our access to print media, especially tribally owned print media, for granted.

Although cost is a factor, when a budget permits a video production project, or a community partner steps up to assist with on-air access, it can be a powerful tool for a public health initiative.

The director of the systems of care (SOC) program Ch’egutsen, which served the Fairbanks, Alaska, area and several other villages, shared this experience with me recently. Perry Ahsogak was the director of Ch’egutsen when they decided to produce promotional videos for their program several years ago.

Key to the project was finding the right vendor to produce the video clips. Ch’egutsen staff was committed to finding a Native vendor for the job, and they did.

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SOC program staff or volunteers served as extras, and one clip featured two elders well-known to the community and who had been involved with Ch'egutsen over the previous two years.

"We tried to hit when we knew there would be Native events in town," Perry said. Examples of this were Alaska traditional game events, tribal leadership conferences, and elder-youth conventions that pulled in locals and people from across the state. The clips ran three times weekly on four television stations, and the stations often matched the amount of time purchased in order to double the broadcasts of this nonprofit message. The program produced two to three clips per year, each year over the program's life.

Print advertising was not a part of these campaigns, but there was additional radio advertising, often by using the audio from one of the television PSAs.

"We saw an increase of calls, after the clips were run, to our program from within the community and across the state," Perry said. He also said that there was a response from other agencies that do similar kinds of work. "It did have a concrete, visible response because we saw an increase in calls and communication with agencies that wanted to work with us," he added.

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"We are a 100,000-watt, public/community radio station on Pine Ridge Indian Reservation," said KILI Radio Manager Tom Casey. "So we're committed to getting out as much



Screen shot from one of the Ch'egutsen television public service announcements, broadcast in the Fairbanks, Alaska, region

information as possible to the community. Children's health issues are certainly high up there—there's a high suicide rate on Pine Ridge. There are high rates of child neglect, abuse, and sexual abuse."

"Diabetes is a problem, not only for adults, but even younger than that, so we have a variety of programs. We work closely with the tribe, but we're not a tribal station. We have the Sweetgrass Project once a week that does a show on suicide prevention; there's a couple of diabetes prevention shows."

Another show deals with foster parenting and finding homes for children, child neglect/abuse, and child safety. "Wherever we can, we're very supportive," he added.

Tom noted that the Pine Ridge reservation in South Dakota is 50 by 100 miles, and he noted there are two weekly newspapers in the area. "But, if you want to connect with people across the reservation, you do it through the radio station. Because the radio station, through the airwaves, has access to every home, every kitchen, every car, across the reservation. So people know, if they want to get the word out, that's what they do—they come to the radio station," he said.

Usually, tribal public health staff will develop a show idea and do the show themselves once a week live on the air.

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Honoring Innovations Report is published by the National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA).

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Protecting our children • Preserving our culture

Accessing Tribal Media Coverage, or ...

It seems that when it comes to media coverage of community organizations and public health initiatives, many things have changed, and yet, some things have still remained the same.

Thanks to user-friendly software, the internet, social media sites such as Facebook, pocket-sized video cameras, YouTube, and email usage, there are a variety of affordable ways that organizations and program staff can communicate with their intended audiences.

At the same time, social marketing staff are aware of the power of even just one minute of television coverage or a photograph in a daily newspaper and struggle to get the attention of more mainstream media outlets.

Social marketing staff now have the strategic option of both internally created marketing efforts and the more traditional media coverage that comes from outside the organization. This article features a few hints on creating better relationships with your local and/or tribally owned media, which is only part of the strategy.

Indian Country's Media

Many tribal communities own media outlets: print, television, and radio. The advantage for tribal clinical and administrative services is that these tribal-owned media are a more "friendly" source of mass communication that you can gain easy access to, compared to the mainstream media.

It's true for nearly all media groups that they rely heavily on outside sources of news and information and, therefore, finding out what your local media needs from you is key to your coverage success.

Develop Relationships for Proactive Efforts

Setting up media relationships can be as simple as a phone call to the editorial manager or programming director. Call and ask for their submission guidelines, deadline days/times, a personal contact phone number or email address, and how to format submissions for greatest convenience to the editorial staff.

Your media partners could assist your program with coverage of events such as observances and actions on National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day, special days when enrollment for services/classes are open, or particular community events that your program is organizing. However, be prepared to write the news release in partnership with the publication's staff, if they don't have the reporter available to cover your event.

Another area of assistance could be printing public service announcements (PSAs) from NICWA, the National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI), the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and other sources. PSAs are more effective when the models are American Indian or even feature community leadership or elders. A media campaign could be organized once the relationship is established with editorial or management staff. Be aware that media groups are usually on deadlines and short on time, which could make extra projects for their staff challenging.

“Now that we're on Facebook, WHY should we still be concerned about coverage by tribal media?”

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KWSO radio host Brutis Baez on the air, broadcasting to the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon

Tom spoke about the Sweetgrass Project, which deals with teen suicide. “We have had a tremendous problem with teen suicide. A year ago, they declared a state of emergency, and we broadcasted the tribal president’s press conference, and then they developed a weekly show. They’ve also tried to do a series of events geared toward youth, and we’ve broadcasted live from them as well,” he said.

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What I have heard from program managers at radio stations is that they do not want to have a one-time show on a topic, but to be pitched an idea that will easily yield several shows and that the partnership ensures strong support for the content for that many shows.

Multiple shows seems like a win/win situation, but it also means a serious commitment from the program personnel who, in the case of KILI radio, often staff the shows live or produce most of the content with assistance from the station employees.

Brutis Baez (Warm Springs) is the program director/music director for KWSO-Warm Springs Radio, at the Warm Springs Indian Reservation in Oregon. We spoke about how KWSO airs

Native public service announcements and promotes public health initiatives on the radio.

The station meets regularly with clinical staff, who frequently do surveys at their clinic to measure the incidence levels of issues such as smoking, alcohol abuse, and other health concerns. With the survey data, the clinical staff set the priorities for which health topic will take precedence over others.

“The clinic decides mostly what they would like to promote. They have their

“As public community radio, if somebody’s promoting something, we usually like them to come up and make a PSA themselves. We’ll write it out, we’ll put it together, but it’s their voices actually promoting the project or the activity,” Brutis said.

own meetings and have one of us go over there, and they’ll talk about the survey results,” Brutis said. “Basically, they’ll give us insight on what it is. Because a lot of us here, we know technology, and they know what they know. So we get together and put it together,” he added.

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If there is a new health program, the radio staff will interview the program

staff to introduce the program on the air, including all the important details of the program and how to get connected to it. They develop PSAs from that recorded interview and play them throughout the day.

“They have Blue Ribbon Month around here, where you have blue ribbons posted around the community for child abuse prevention; they have diabetes month. For instance, right now we’re doing this fruit-of-the-month campaign, which fruit is ready for eating in May and its benefits health-wise,” said Brutis. He noted that often the clinical staff will come to the studio to record a radio PSA for specific campaigns, too.

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Like any other partnership created to support a public health initiative, media partnerships are about creating the win-win situation. Many mainstream and tribal media outlets are short-staffed, so it may require extensive input on your part to create the content.

However, finding the right medium for your program’s message will help you identify which organization has the greatest impact: print, television, or radio. You can completely control your online promotion, of course, but to reach a broader audience, the media plays an important role.

We hope you found this newsletter thought-provoking and that it generates discussion about what your program’s media relations are and where you want them to be.

Editor’s Note: My thanks to Tom Casey of KILI Radio, Brutis Baez of KWSO Radio, and Perry Ahsogek from Fairbanks, Alaska, for their insight into public health promotion and media.