

# Project Venture: Positive Youth Development for AI/AN Youth

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September 20, 2017



**NATIONAL  
PARTNERSHIP  
FOR ACTION**

to End Health Disparities



# Project Venture

An Evidence-based program for  
Indigenous youth

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Executive Director  
National Indian Youth Leadership Project



# About NIYLP

Incorporated in New Mexico in late 1980's

All-Native Board

Guidance from Native Elders in program development

Positive Approach to developing resilient youth

Internationally recognized



# Credentials

NIYLP developed Project Venture: the first Native-developed Evidence-based Positive Youth Development program.

Recognized by the US Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHSA, HHS) and the National Registry of Effective Programs & Practices (NREPP)





# National Recognition

- 2001 Exemplary Program Award: State of NM
- 2002 Promising Program Award: CSAP
- 2003 Effective Program Award: CSAP
- 2005 Model Program Award: CSAP/NREPP
- 2007 Milestone Program Recognition: WK Kellogg Foundation
- 2008 Exemplary Program Recognition: First Nations Behavioral Health Association



# Recognitions

Most Effective Program for Native Youth: National High Risk Youth Study

First Nations Behavioral Health Association: Best Practice for American Indian, Alaska Native and Pacific Island Indigenous Youth

Recognition by National Centre for Prevention of Crime (Canada)



# What is Project Venture

Year long program, in school, after school, weekends, school breaks, summer (Curriculum)

Mid school youth

150-200 hours of contact over a year

Outdoor adventure

Culturally-based group development process with positive norms

Service learning

Qualitative & quantitative evaluation



# Guiding Principles

Connection to the natural world

Strength-based approaches

Experiential Learning

Ethic of Service

Connection Building to family, community and culture





# Facilitated by Native Staff



Cultural Competency  
Outdoor skills & certifications  
Medical/first aid certified  
Youth Development skills  
Average length of service 10+ yrs  
Expert trainers



# Where has PV been implemented

25+ states since 2000

8 Canadian Provinces

Hawaii

Hungary (Roma Gypsy youth)

Schools, communities, alternative schools, treatment centers, diversion programs, camps



# In School Program

One class period per week (45-60 minutes)

Team building, group problem solving, decision making

Themes introduced, can be connected to academic curriculum

Help change classroom environment

Recruiting opportunity for after school program





# After School Program

In depth follow up to In-School lesson plan  
1 to 2 hour session

Introduce students to outdoor equipment and outdoor  
activities

Examples:

Fire-making, camping gear, setting up tents, map and  
compass, GPS, Leave No Trace

Cultural Activities, elders, speakers





# Weekend Programs

One day activity or overnight

Outdoor adventure outings

Rock Climbing, Mountain Biking

Kayaking, Canoeing

Cultural Activities (pow-wows, ceremonies)

Practicing with outdoor equipment



# Prevention Outcomes

Substance Abuse

Teen Pregnancy

Suicide Prevention

Other areas

25 years of outcomes in resiliency-related areas



# Behavioral Outcomes

Culturally based group development, Building Trust  
Full Value Commitment

Be Here, Be Safe, Speak Your Truth, Set Goals, Let go and  
Move On

Healthy Relationships (Defined and discussed)

Communicating and Listening Intentionally

Group Problem Solving and Decision Making

Asking for and giving help

Emotional Health

Body Language



# TYP Behavioral Outcomes

Social Competence, short/long term

School attendance/Grades

Family Functioning/Relationships

Pro-social Behavior

Substance Abuse reduction/elimination

Gang Resistance

Cultural Pride/Skill Building

Positive Community Involvement





# Rites of Passage

NIYLP developed Walking in Beauty and Tacheeh  
Based on gender specific ceremonies from various  
cultures

Incorporated into Camp and other programs

Help youth understand the transition from childhood to  
young adulthood,

Roles and responsibilities

Respect and healthy relationships



# Readiness

Is there a plan in place to implement Project Venture?

Attended PV training?

Have adequate funding in place?

Have key partnerships in place, schools, community, MOU's?

Do the key people understand Positive Youth Development?

Qualified Staff, the “right” people

Elders, cultural experts available



# Lessons Learned

Communities must build capacity to support/sustain programs

Must have community support/buy in

Must use culturally appropriate approaches

Must develop culturally appropriate evaluation approaches and measures

Must have the “right “ staff

Multiyear grants needed to successfully implement programs that get results

Coaching and mentoring is needed for success



# Unique Perspective

Only Native-developed EBP being replicated  
25 years experience implementing Project Venture  
17 years experience helping replicate PV in Native communities in many different settings  
Developed curriculum, in school, after school, weekend and summer  
Developed training approach  
15 years of PV training  
Developed readiness assessment tool





# Perspective on Youth Programs

SAMHSA Expert Panel on Prevention 10 yrs

Indian Health Service/SAMHSA Action Alliance

American Indian/Alaska Native Suicide Prevention

Task Force 5 yrs

SAMHSA One Sky Center Consultant 5 yrs

Look at research on what works

Why do we keep doing approaches that don't work or have minimal results?



# What NIYLP Offers

Direct Service Programming: write grants and deliver PV in schools and communities

Assist tribes, schools and communities in replicating

Offer customized Training, TA and Coaching

Grant Writing Assistance

Presentations at national/international conferences



# Project Venture Curriculum

Detailed Lesson Plans for school year for In-school  
Lesson Plans for After School (subject to local  
adaptation)

Sample Lesson Plans for day long and multiday trips

Local Community integrates culture, language and  
seasonal and ceremonial content

Project Venture Implementation Guide

Project Venture Facilitator Guide





# Contact NIYLP



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# Questions and Answer Session

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