



The author(s) shown below used Federal funding provided by the U.S. Department of Justice to prepare the following resource:

Document Title: Taku Eyachantognaka Owihankeya
Wanica, Community Brief

Author(s): Carmen O’Leary, Bridget Diamond-Welch,
Anna E. Kosloski

Document Number: 309605

Date Received: October 2024

Award Number: 15PNIJ-21-GG-02808-RESS

This resource has not been published by the U.S. Department of Justice. This resource is being made publicly available through the Office of Justice Programs’ National Criminal Justice Reference Service.

Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.



This research was funded by the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) (15PNIJ-21-GG-02808-RESS). Opinions, findings, and conclusions or recommendations expressed in this report are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of NIJ.

Research Overview: The purpose of this project was for Native American community members to work with researchers to determine what type of research they would like to see happen in Native communities on issues related to Native youth violence and resiliency. This research was conducted with Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains, and researchers at the University of South Dakota and the University of Colorado Colorado Springs. This research was funded by the National Institute of Justice. Through a series of workshops with Native Americans in the Great Plains, we identified areas of interest related to Native youth violence and resiliency.

Locations & Participants: Three workshops were held between October 2022-April 2023. There were two in-person workshops. The first was in Rapid City, South Dakota and the second workshop was held in Bismarck, North Dakota. A third workshop was held online. All participants needed to identify as Native American, be at least 18 years old, speak English, and be concerned about Native youth violence and resiliency. Across the workshops, a total of 55 Native people participated in these discussions.

Research Questions: We asked the participants who volunteered to participate in the workshops a series of questions on violence and resiliency among Native youth. Participants discussed with each other a variety of topics pertaining to violence and resiliency (see below for sample of questions asked).

Sample of Questions on Violence	Sample of Questions on Resiliency
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you hear the term violence, what does that mean to you? • If violence is a reduction in well-being, what does that look like in your communities? • What are the causes and effects of this violence? • How does this affect youth? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When you hear “resiliency”, what comes to mind? • What does resiliency look like for you? For your family? For your community? • How do you see resiliency at different levels of our life (e.g. interpersonal, community, policy)? • How do violence and resiliency relate?

Initial Findings: After the workshops, the researchers removed any identifying information and compiled the notes to look for common areas of discussion from the participants. Several areas of concern and strength were shared across the workshops. We’ve provided an initial snapshot of some common areas discussed. First, violence was present in many ways. Participants shared examples of violence towards self (e.g. substance use), in families (e.g. domestic violence), in institutions (e.g. violence in schools), in the community (e.g., gang activity), in public policy (e.g. impacts of boarding schools and historical trauma), and in cultural ideologies (e.g. lack of connection to Native cultural traditions and language).

What does violence look like in your community?

“I have noticed in our communities that obituaries are more frequent or young. I wonder, what are they dying from? Is it suicide? A lot are from drugs like overdoses. We are seeing that in our communities. We are losing our younger people earlier.”

“Most of what I see in the community is how the parents treat the kids. Then the kids go to the schools and treat other kids that way. I see the parents treating the kids, kids treat other kids that way and it becomes a big mess...like bullying, name calling, and cyber bullying.”

“One thing we are running into is the loss of our elders, people who keep our traditions. Lost to substance abuse. These are the ones that you would turn to if you needed to know about traditions.”

“It is very difficult to sit in tribal court and have children taken out of home and the people supporting them. There are no resources for the people that are trying to get their kids back. Our systems are very oppressive and the simple fact that we allow this to continue is violence.”

“I think of cultural trauma, historical trauma, divide and dissention, loss of culture. Violence has to come from somewhere. It is a learned behavior. If we don’t know our culture, how do we tell our stories? How do we teach our kids not to be violent.”



When asked about resiliency, participants identified personal ways that someone can be resilient but also how resiliency can be encouraged among community. Key points of discussion included the need to learn, grow, and adapt. A second key concept that was shared in all the workshops was the importance of connecting to Indigenous knowledge, culture, land, and food, and having an Indigenous mindset. As outlined in Box 2, participants gave examples of both resiliency they use or see others using and areas for growth within their Native communities to foster resiliency.

Examples of Resiliency Identified by Participants

“To be resilient is to be Indigenous.”

“Being able to speak to people you don’t know and it’s going to bring up something for someone in this room. I bring my light and when someone else comes in and shines their light and I’m like that makes sense. Then someone else shines their light and then I get to see the full picture. This is resiliency and I see that betters my family.”

“Learn from mistake and learn from our peers of how to deal with our trauma and all the things we deal with in our life.”

“Our culture is key. Our identity. Our LANGUAGE. If we do not know who we are, how will we know where we are going?”

“The kids asked to be safe and we taught them about safe touch, not okay touch, their body parts, and how to say their body parts in Lakota. We taught them not to be ashamed of their body parts and you know, parents didn’t realize and I don’t think they pay attention.”

Areas for Strengthening Resiliency

“The youth showed us that they could lead. Let’s get them involved and keep them involved. They are the future.”

“We need more programming where we can teach each other.”

“Not only for school but for our justice system, I think they need to include more of us in the conversation when it comes to decision making and implementing programs. I think a lot of us are missing from those conversations. That’s the first step. Every time I find myself at a community event, I feel like not enough of us are showing up or not enough of us are invited. Where are we? We are here to help each other but not very many of us are coming to the table to talk about things.”

“I think each of us in here has a personal stake in here to help our child/ and youth. How do we instill resiliency in them when [we] are still experiencing trauma?”

Next Steps

The research team is working to identify another research project based on the input from community members that participated in the workshops. We are developing a more extensive report for Native Women’s Society of the Great Plains (NWS). We are also currently talking with potential Native partners and looking to identify a way to address Native youth violence and promote resiliency in a culturally informed and responsive way based on the information shared from this research.

Interested in Connecting?

If you are interested in learning more about this research or any upcoming research, please don’t hesitate to reach out to us through the information provided below.

Carmen O’Leary

carmen@nativewomenssociety.org

Bridget Diamond-Welch

Bridget.K.Diamond-Welch@usd.edu

Anna E. Kosloski

akoslosk@uccs.edu



**Native Women's Society
of the Great Plains**

“Reclaiming Our Sacredness”



UNIVERSITY OF
SOUTH DAKOTA



University of Colorado
Colorado Springs

This resource was prepared by the author(s) using Federal funds provided by the U.S. Department of Justice. Opinions or points of view expressed are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.