

# Healing to Wellness: A Cultural Approach to Addressing Substance Use Disorder

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# Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa Indians Reservation and Trust Lands





# Overview

- Origin of Waabshkii Miigwaan Drug Court Program
- How the use of culture and cultural practice has evolved within the program over time
- How the change in the approach to incorporating culture into the program has improved outcomes for clients

# Waabshki-Miigwan





# The Origin of the WMDCP

The White Feather story:

- Redemption and healing-to-wellness
- Valuing our community members
- Healing the community



# Brief Overview of the Original WMDCP Program

- 44 weeks in length
- Heavy emphasis on AA
- Wellbriety/White Bison as the basis of client programming
- Sanction oriented, including using jail as sanction for use
- Cultural programming was primarily image based; posters and manuals with “tribal” imagery, and presenting them with a feather upon completion of the program, and occasionally a sweat lodge
- Clients (male/female) received a ribbon shirt upon graduating the program




## FIRST ENHANCEMENT

- Programming still based on Wellbriety
- Phase fires are introduced, clients receive flint/steel strikers
- Cultural Resource Advisor was still highly restricted in their activity → there was an expectation that they would be in the office
- Very little participation in cultural activities except at the powwow



## SECOND ENHANCEMENT

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- Added female cultural resource advisor to the team
  - Cultural resource advisors facilitated the participation of clients in some cultural activities outside of court
  - CRAs worked with clients on the seven grandfather teachings
  - Clients begin receiving feast bundles
  - Female clients begin receiving water bundles
  - Woven approach to justice, clients and team sit together in a circle for hearings





## THIRD ENHANCEMENT

- Welcome Fire prior to client's entry hearing
- Clients learning their protocol introduction in Anishinaabemowin
- Clients receive language binder
- Medicines are present in court room
- Judge, team and clients use protocol introduction in court hearings
- Feast bundles, fire bundles and water bundles provided earlier in the program
- Participation in community activity counts as peer recovery meeting

# Current Program Overview

- Interwoven approach to justice
- 18 month program, over 5 phases
- Encouraging long term recovery through traditional teachings and cultural activities



# Cultural Resource Advisors

- Traditional teachings
- Sacred fires
- Sweat lodges
- Weekly talking circles
- Harvesting
- Wellbriety
- Transportation
- Beading
- Weaving
- Language classes





## Current Client Manual Revisions:

### Client Workbook Phase 1

**Week 1:** Welcome Fire; receive fire bundle or water bundle

Entrance hearing; Cultural assessment using TPF tool

First Hearing

**Week 2:** Introduction in language; language workbook

Introduction to asemaa; small copper cup, asemma pouch

**Week 3:** Introduction to doodem, Anishinaabe noozwin



## Current Client Manual Revisions:

### **Week 4:**

Mishomis Book: Chapter 1

Who is Anishinaabe?

How were our teachings recorded?

What else stood out to you in Chapter 1?

Seven Grandfather Teachings; give them Vukelich Book

### **Week 5:**

Mishomis Book: Chapter 2

What is the relationship between original man and the wolf?

What are the similarities between man and wolf?

What original man's first work? What ceremony does that relate to now?

What is the significance of having a spirit name?

Seven grandfather teachings Honesty (begin on p. 70 of Vukelich)



## Current Client Manual Revisions:

### **Week 6:**

Mishomis Book: Chapter 3 (pages 11-14)

How did original man respond to the challenges he faced?

How does this relate to the challenges you are facing?

What do you think about how original man observed others and asked for help with his challenges?

7GF Honesty



## Current Client Manual Revisions:

### **Week 7:**

Mishomis Book: Chapter 3 (pages 15-20)

The firekeeper describes fire as containing both good and evil, how do you think might relate to you and to your journey in recovery?

Fire is a sacred gift, what do you think about the relationship described between Anishinaabe and fire?

Thinking about fire as a metaphor for recovery, if you take care of your fire what will that do for you?

What did you think about the idea that Anishinaabe had to leave a place that was comfortable in order to grow?

During ceremonies what entities are we imitating?

Honesty:



## Current Client Manual Revisions:

### **Week 8:**

Reflecting on the Mishomis book and the grandfather teaching of honesty relate to your recovery?

Your phase fire is happening in a couple of weeks, how do you think the description of fire in Chapter 3 and Anishinaabe's role in caring for it relate to your recovery?





## Current Client Manual Revisions:

**Week 9:** Review of Phase 1

**Week 10:** Morning Fire



# Cultural Engagement and Client Outcomes





## Measuring Client Cultural Engagement

- Implementing a cultural assessment tool;
- Thunderbird Partnership Foundation;  
<https://thunderbirdpf.org/>
- Why this matters; establishing promising practices, best practices, evidence based modality











# MNOBMAADZIWIN: RESTORING CONNECTION AND IMPROVING OUTCOMES

- Focus on creating connections within the community
- Encourage clients to learn Anishinaabemowin, bungii eta
- Teach clients about medicines and their use
- Teach clients how to begin fulfilling traditional roles, fire keeping, water ceremony
- Engage in activities “on the land”
- Value cultural engagement → participation in community activity counts as a peer recovery meeting







# What is meant by culture?

- ❖ Language
- ❖ Community relationships
- ❖ Family relationships
- ❖ Spiritual practice and ceremony
- ❖ Relationship to land

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# Small Group Activity

- What are your views on using culture as a framework?
- What obstacles do you see in utilizing culture as a framework in your community?
- What benefits do you think could be achieved by utilizing a cultural framework?



# Peer Graduate

Benefits of having a peer graduate:

- Honors cultural norms of giving as a sign of gratitude

What we lost in the program without it:

- Insight into how different program elements worked/were perceived

Cultivating connection with participants and the community

- Role models





Miigwetch for your attendance today!

Please ask any questions you may have at this time.

If you have any questions you would like to follow up on, please  
or Matthew Lesky at [leskylaw@gmail.com](mailto:leskylaw@gmail.com)

More information about the programs discussed in this  
presentation can be found at  
<https://ltbbodawa-nsn.gov/judicial-branch/waabshki-miigwan/>

