



SAMHSA Native Connections

Culture & Hope: Promoting Mental Health within the Blackfeet Nation

2023-2028

Our main goals and objects are as follows: (as per our grant narrative 9/2023)

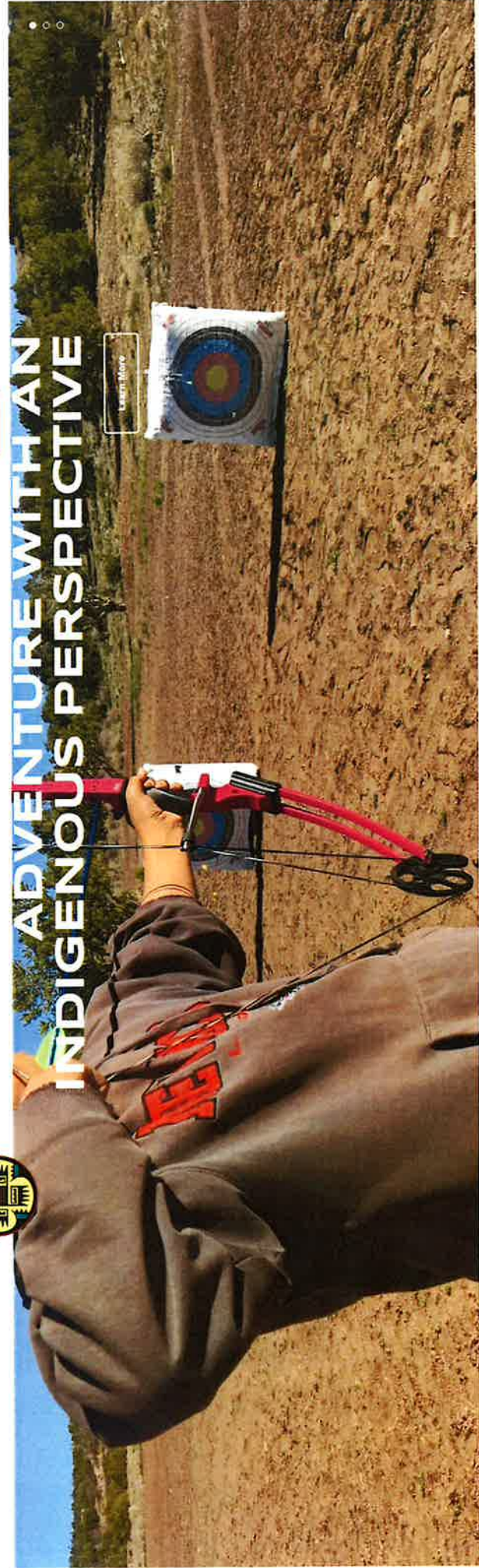
- 1) Engage in preliminary and ongoing Assessments to better understand where the community is
 - a) Conduct a Community Needs Assessment within the first 4 months of the grant
 - b) Conduct a Community Readiness Assessment within the first 6 months of the grant
 - c) Engage in Ongoing Assessments to ensure project goals align with community needs
- 2) Engage in holistic Planning for the Blackfeet mental health support system
 - a) Make recommendations to revise the Blackfeet Tribal Strategic Action Plan
 - b) Make recommendations to revise the Blackfeet Pre and Post vention protocols
- 3) Increase Community Education and Outreach activities to move towards a more education Blackfeet community and effective Blackfeet mental health support system
 - a) Distribute 100+ Crisis and 100+ Mental Health Wellness Packets into the community
 - b) Help coordinate 6+ mental health/crisis trainings for the Blackfeet community
 - c) Awareness Raising at 12+ community events
 - d) Coordination of monthly live Native Connections news letters to enable better coordination of Blackfeet mental health services
- 4) Culturally Based Youth Engagement with a youth advisory council and provide on the land Project Venture Program activities.
 - a) Develop and maintain a Youth Advisory Board with Bimonthly meetings
 - b) On the land Project Venture Program with high-risk youth and biweekly meetings

Blackfeet Culture & Hope, P.O.Box 850, Browning, MT. (406)338-3843



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See Our Impact

Youth Aware of Mental Health 2023-2024 Impact Report

DATE: June 30, 2024

TO: Blackfeet Nation

FROM: Jayne Downey, PhD
Director, Center for Research on Rural Education

Kelley Edwards, YAM Program Manager
Center for Research on Rural Education

Thank you for partnering with Montana State University in our efforts to reduce the suicide rate for youth in Montana. We are pleased to present our year-end report, highlighting the impact of the Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) program within Blackfeet Nation for the 2023-2024 school year.

Youth Aware of Mental Health (YAM) program is designed with the following core purposes:

- 1. Promote Mental Health Awareness:**
To increase awareness and understanding of mental health issues among young people. This involves educating students about the importance of mental health, recognizing signs of mental health challenges, and understanding the impact of mental health on overall well-being.
- 2. Fostering Open Discussions:**
To foster an environment where students feel comfortable discussing mental health issues. The program aims to break down the stigma associated with mental health, encouraging open and supportive conversations within schools and communities.
- 3. Encouraging Peer Support and Help-Seeking Behaviors:**
To train students as peer support leaders who can offer support to their peers and encourage help-seeking behaviors.
- 4. Increase Access to Resources:**
To ensure that students have access to mental health resources and support services. This includes providing information about local, state, and national resources.

By addressing these key areas, the YAM program aims to create a healthier, more supportive environment for young people, ensuring they have the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary to navigate mental health challenges effectively.

Achievements for 2023-2024:

- **Student Reach:** 170 students from Browning and Heart Butte participated in YAM.
- **Cumulative Impact:** Since 2016, we have reached a total of **1,000 students**, contributing to a growing culture of mental health awareness.
- **Positive Feedback:**
Voluntary program evaluations conducted at Browning (n=85) indicated that:
 - **73%** of participating students believe mental health should be taught in schools
 - **71%** felt that what they learned in YAM was useful, highlighting the effectiveness and relevance of our efforts.
 - **71%** felt that YAM increased their knowledge and awareness about mental health, which is a protective factor against suicide.
 - **80%** of participating students said because of YAM, they were more likely to reach out to an adult to get help for a friend.
- **Student Testimonials:** Many students reported feeling more informed and better prepared to manage their mental health. Here is a sample of student responses to the question, “What did you like about YAM?”
 - *“I was fun.”*
 - *“Getting to know how to deal with stress.”*
 - *“It’s cool.”*
 - *“The role-plays were fun.”*
 - *“I liked that they didn’t force us to participate, we could go at our own pace.”*
 - *“It gave me knowledge about mental health.”*
 - *“YAM helped me with my problems.”*
 - *“It was inclusive.”*
 - *“YAM taught me to tells someone what I’m going through.”*
 - *“My opinion about this class is that this class is kind of alright, yeah, they just need some comfy chairs!”*

As we conclude this year, we reflect on our progress with pride and look forward to continuing our mission. The success of the YAM program would not be possible without the unwavering support of our dedicated instructors and assistants. **A heartfelt thank you to Larry Woolf, Tom Shawl, Laura No Runner, Amber Williamson, and Ben Gallagher-Horn.** Thank you to Blackfeet Nation for being a vital part of our journey towards promoting mental health awareness and well-being among our youth