
Thinking Matters Symposium

2021 Thinking Matters Symposium

Apr 30th, 12:00 AM

Indigenous Experiences of Social Services

Oaklin Blaisdell

University of Southern Maine, oaklin.blaisdell@maine.edu

Haley West

University of Southern Maine, haley.west@maine.edu

Sammy Ellie MacKinnon

University of Southern Maine, sammy.e.mackinnon@maine.edu

Brianna White

University of Southern Maine, brianna.white1@maine.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/thinking-matters-symposium>



Part of the [Social Work Commons](#)

Blaisdell, Oaklin; West, Haley; MacKinnon, Sammy Ellie; and White, Brianna, "Indigenous Experiences of Social Services" (2021). *Thinking Matters Symposium*. 3.

<https://digitalcommons.usm.maine.edu/thinking-matters-symposium/2021/poster-sessions/3>

This Poster Session is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Scholarship at USM Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Thinking Matters Symposium by an authorized administrator of USM Digital Commons. For more information, please contact jessica.c.hovey@maine.edu.

Indigenous Experiences of Social Services

Oaklin Blaisdell, Haley West, Brianna White, Sammy-Ellie MacKinnon (MSW Candidates & Authors) Rachel Casey PhD, MSW (Mentor)

Background

Native, Aboriginal, and First Nations individuals experience higher rates of homelessness, food insecurity, sexual violence, and other social inequalities than people of other races, and there is a distinct lack of resources for these individuals (Christensen et al., 2017; Shoemaker et al., 2020; Du Mont et al., 2017; Wahab & Olson, 2004; McCarron et al., 2018; Moullin et al., 2019; Myhra et al., 2015; Stevens et al., 2015; Cueva et al., 2020). However, when individuals do access available resources, they often experience anti-Native sentiment (Hoss & Blum, 2019; Pedersen et al., 2006).

Objective

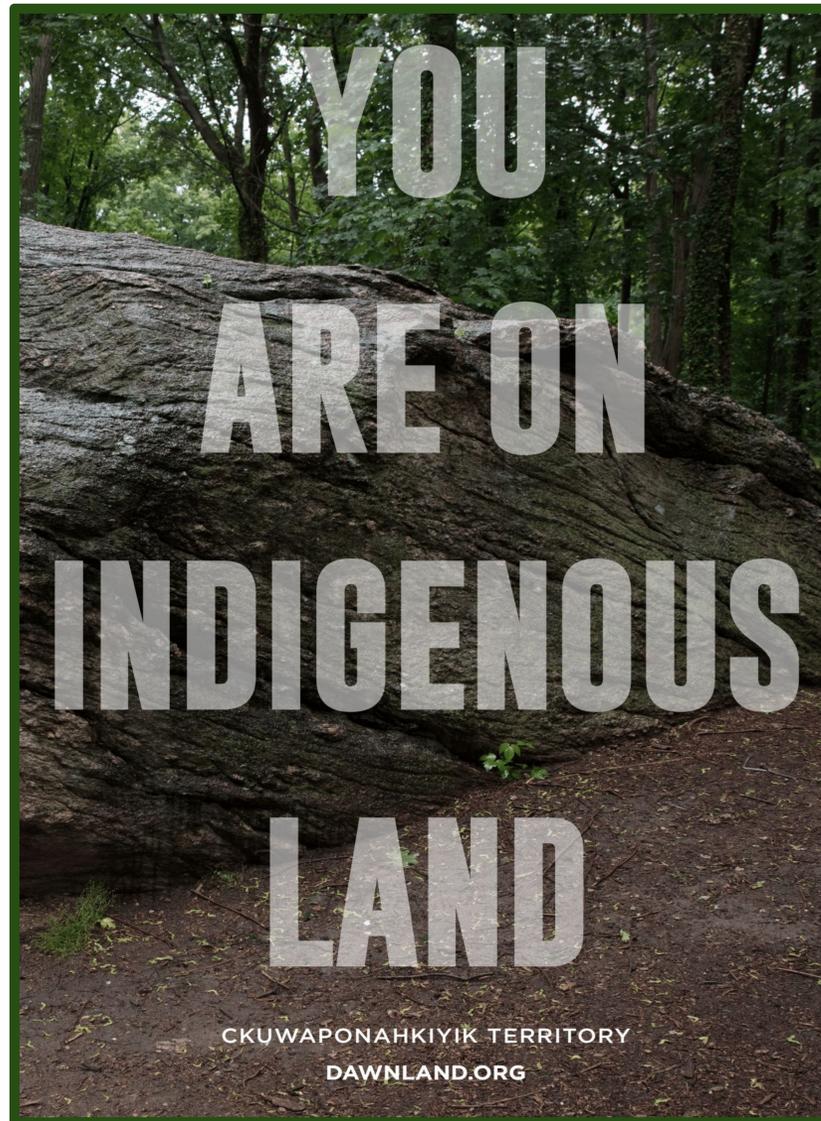
To learn about Indigenous peoples' perceptions of social services and how they can be improved to best meet their needs.

Methods

- A fourteen-question anonymous survey powered by Qualtrics was chosen as the data collection method. Nine of the fourteen questions were short answer responses.
- These questions examined the respondents' perceptions of their communities needs and the support various social service organizations provided.
- Five of the fourteen questions were multiple choice.
- After survey administration was completed, response data was analyzed and grouped into four overall themes, by way of open coding by two authors.

Abstract

This study involves a qualitative survey of Indigenous people about their experiences accessing social services. Preliminary findings indicate limited available resources and social services, especially those led by Natives; what is available often does not address specific cultural needs.



Results

- Upon analyzing responses and data from our 8 participants results show:
- Overall lack of supportive infrastructure for Native Americans
- Services not catered to Natives
- Distrust of social services
- Natives feel more comfortable and trusting of tribe-led services
- Six respondents answered that they have been able to access non-Native-led services
- Out of eight respondents, six reported they did not feel supported when accessing non-Native-led services

Discussion

- Our research findings mirrored the literature—that social support services in the US are not geared towards the needs of indigenous people
- This illustrates a dichotomy of services not being supportive of, or even available to indigenous people who have a higher rate of social inequities—and therefore would benefit from supportive social supports
- Colonialist oppression seems to have an ongoing impact on the experiences of some native people engaged with services
- Our research shows the need for tribal self determination

Limitations

- Convenience sampling approach increased likelihood of biased responses
- Small sample size
- Barriers to increasing sample size
- Physical barriers due to the pandemic
- Inability to establish trust

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to our classmates in SWO 652, our professor, mentor, and biggest support Rachel Casey PhD, MSW and to our participants who entrusted us with their own, deeply personal, experiences.

References

Christensen, J., Arnfjord, S., Carraher, S., & Hedwig, T. (2017). Homelessness across Alaska, the Canadian North and Greenland: A Review of the literature on a developing social phenomenon in the circumpolar North. *Arctic*, 70(4), 349-364.

Cueva, K., Lovato, V., Carroll, D., Richards, J., Speakman, K., Neault, N., & Barlow, A. (2020). A Qualitative Evaluation of a Community Based, Culturally Relevant Intervention to Promote Healthy Food Access in American Indian Communities. *Journal of Community Health*, 45(3), 458-464

Du Mont, J., Kosa, D., Macdonald, S., Benoit, A., & Forte, T. (2017). A comparison of Indigenous and non-Indigenous survivors of sexual assault and their receipt of and satisfaction with specialized health care services. *PLOS ONE*, 12(11), e0188253.

Hoss, A & Blum, J. D. (2019). Federal Indian law as a structural determinant of health. *Journal of Law, Medicine & Ethics*, 47, 34-42.

J. C., Moore, L. A., Novins, D. K., & Aarons, G. A. (2019). Attitudes towards evidence-based practice in substance use treatment programs serving American Indian Native Communities. *Journal of Behavioral Health Services & Research*, 46(3), 509-520.

McCarron, H., Griese, E. R., Dippel, E., & McMahon, T. R. (2018). Cultural and social predictors of substance abuse recovery among American Indian and Non-American Indian pregnant and parenting women. *Journal of Psychoactive Drugs*, 50(4), 322-330.

Myhra, L. L., Wieling, E., & Grant, H. (2015). Substance use in American Indian family relationships: Linking past, present, and future. *American Journal of Family Therapy*, 43(5), 413-424.

Pedersen, A., Dudgeon, P., Watt, S., & Griffiths, B. (2006). Attitudes toward Indigenous Australians: The issue of "special treatment". *Australian Psychologist*, 41(2), 85-94.

Shoemaker, E., Kendall, C., Mathew, C., Crispo, S., Welch, V., Andermann, A., Mott, S., Lalonde, C., Bloch, G., Mayhew, A., Aubry, T., Tugwell, P., Stergiopoulos, V., & Pottie, K. (2020). Establishing need and population priorities to improve the health of homeless and vulnerably housed women, youth, and men: A Delphi consensus study. *PLoS ONE*, 15(4), 1-14.

Stevens, S., Andrade, R., Korchmaros, J., & Sharron, K. (2015). Intergenerational trauma among substance-using Native American, Latina, and White mothers living in the Southwestern United States. *Journal of Social Work Practice in the Addictions*, 15(1), 6-24

Wahab, S., & Olson, L. (2004). Intimate Partner Violence and Sexual Assault in Native American Communities. *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse*, 5(4), 353-366.