

Positive Indian Parenting Partnerships

Katie Goger
Parent Educator

Lydia Place and Lummi Nation

Participating in the CE fellows this past year has been a generative and quality experience for me. The networking and relationship building with likeminded individuals set this apart from any other service learning group. Taking time out of my schedule was worthwhile after seeing the benefits to my professional development. I have worked in the field of social services in Bellingham since 2009. My primary role has been serving children and families in the context of parent education. The parents that I work with have often experienced childhood trauma and are trying to break the cycle of intergenerational poverty, homelessness and/or addiction, to name a few. Five years ago, I began working with Lummi Nation Behavioral Health to deliver evidenced based parenting programs. We wanted to adopt a curriculum that would not only reflect Native American teachings but also be adaptable to include Lummi traditions and values.

The goal of my CE fellows project was to support the Lummi System of Care team in adapting a culturally relevant parenting curriculum that reflects the traditional teachings of Lummi people. The project has been sponsored through the Lummi System of Care Initiative that aims to increase resilience, recovery and reunification for Lummi children, youth and families, with emphasis on families involved in child welfare. Many parents in the child welfare system are required to complete parenting classes in order to successfully reunify with their children. We wanted families to have reliable and accessible parenting classes located on the Lummi reservation to decrease cultural and transportation barriers. The parenting programs have been one of the various programs funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) at Lummi Behavioral Health Division. The four-year grant will end in October of 2018.

The original goal was to integrate Lummi teachings into the Positive Indian Parenting curriculum. Positive Indian Parenting is an eight-week class developed by National Indian Child Welfare Association (NICWA). Positive Indian Parenting draws on the strengths of historic Indian child-rearing patterns and blends old parenting values with modern parenting skills. The class is for parents of any age child, aunts and uncles or grandparents who are raising Native American children. This class is designed to be co-facilitated with tribal elders who provide culturally specific child-rearing practices. The Positive Indian Parenting Program is considered a “Best Practice” in Indian Country.

Since 2015, we have completed five sessions of the eight-week class with Lummi elders. We now offer the class quarterly. Using a participatory action research style approach, we are continually gathering feedback from parents and community members on ways to improve the class. We have created a new database to track deliverables with the

support of the Lummi IT department. We have integrated traditional hands on teachings into parenting classes. This included cedar brushing, cradleboard demonstration and child moccasin tutorial.

Writing this report helped me quantify the three main goals of the project which include:

1. Integrate Lummi teachings into the eight-weekly session topics.
2. Gather qualitative data on class effectiveness to utilize for future grant proposals.
 - a. Work with NICWA to provide “practice-based evidence” on outcomes.
 - b. Potential partnership with WWU Center for Cross-Cultural Research
3. Partner with Mary Dickinson’s paralegal class at Whatcom Community College to create a client guide to understanding tribal child welfare rights and laws.

My suggestion to future CE fellows would be to choose a project or academic publication that you are already planning to do in the upcoming year. This worked well for me because then the time supported a goal I had already hoped to achieve. I look forward to another year of networking, support and professional development.