

**2008 National Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Institute  
University of California, Center for Human Services, U.C. Davis Extension  
Summary of Selected Keynote Speeches and Workshops attended by Welfare Peer  
Technical Assistance (TA) Network Staff  
July 21-24, 2008**

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## I. Introduction

Welfare Peer Technical Assistance (TA) staff attended the 2008 National Tribal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Institute that took place July 21-24, 2008. Sponsored by the University of California, Center for Human Services, U.C. Davis Extension, the Institute consisted of a three day training course designed to promote the development of culturally sensitive case management practices and delivery of services to Tribal TANF participants in a culturally appropriate way. The Institute was designed to offer solutions to Tribal TANF programs and to offer skill building and networking opportunities for participants. Unique spiritual and cultural aspects of Native American tribes were presented, along with their importance in assisting TANF participants and Native communities in reaching self-sufficiency. The workshops were divided into two themes: “leadership, management and supervisory workshops” and “client services and case management workshops.” The first theme was organized to be helpful for tribal TANF managers, supervisors, and directors, while the second theme was set up to be beneficial to Tribal TANF case managers. Summaries of selected keynote speeches and workshops that Welfare Peer TA staff attended are presented below. For more information about the National Tribal TANF Institute and for other useful tribal professional development materials, please see: <http://humanservices.ucdavis.edu/TribalTANF/summer.asp>.

## II. Keynote Speaker: Creating Pathways for Change in American Indian Culture

Dr. Stephanie Fryberg, faculty at the University of Arizona and a member of the Tulalip Tribes, began the Institute by speaking to participants about how social representations of race, culture, and ethnicity influence psychological well-being and educational attainment. She discussed the results of several studies she and her colleagues had conducted, focused specifically on Native Americans, which explored social representations present in the mainstream media.

In a content analysis conducted in national newspapers in 1997, and throughout major films from 1990-2000, researchers found very few representations of American Indians. Specifically, they found that 0.2 percent of social representations in these media realms pertained to American Indians. The representations that were found, though, were largely stereotypic and negative and American Indians were rarely presented as modern people or living in modern domains. These findings sparked interest among Dr. Fryberg and researchers. In turn, they conducted studies to determine how these representations affected American Indians in terms of self-esteem and other variables. The social representations the researchers used included a picture of Pocahontas, a picture of the Cleveland Indians mascot, a general picture that represented social problems, and a picture used as a control. Participants in the study were given one of the four conditions (meaning they were shown one of the four pictures) and asked to complete a measure of self-esteem. Dr. Fryberg and the researchers found that participants scored lowest on the measure of self-esteem when they were shown the picture of either Pocahontas or the Cleveland Indians Mascot. These participants scored even lower than the participants who were shown the picture representing social problems. Further studies measured these

representations in relation to participants' senses of community, achievement, and motivation and academic identification with school; with similar results.

### **III. Workshop: Creative Work Participation Rates**

This session included four panel discussions focused on innovative work participation activities in four Tribes. The speakers included George G. Kipp IV, Director of the Blackfeet Manpower Program; Dorris-Reed Duncan, Case Manager of the South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency; Holly Snowball, Senior Manager of Employment and Training Services at the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.; and Sakinah Bismillah, Case Manager of the Washoe Tribal TANF Program.

#### **1. George G. Kipp, IV, Director, Blackfeet Manpower Program**

George G. Kipp, IV, from the Blackfeet Manpower Program, shared information about all aspects of his program. The Blackfeet Tribe has an unemployment rate between 70 to 75 percent. An innovative way that the Blackfeet Tribe has helped TANF participants gain employment and meet their work participation rates, which are set at 20 hours a week for single parents and 30 hours a week for two-parent families, is through their Montana House Project. The project is an agreement with the Housing Authority to allow TANF participants to build houses. So far, five participants have completed the program. Once the houses are built, they are sold at cost to community members and Tribal programs. Participants work for 12 months. They earn a stipend throughout their participation and a construction certification upon completion.<sup>1</sup>

Another way the Tribe supports employment is through the Blackfeet Hawks Project. The project is funded by the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services, among others. The Blackfeet Housing Department provides facilities for classroom and hands-on training that lasts 10 weeks, and the Blackfeet Manpower One-Stop Center provides work stipends of \$150 per week, per participant. Eleven TANF participants have participated in this project. Areas that participants can earn certificates include Hazardous Waste Operations and Emergency Response, Construction Safety, Disaster Response and Equipment, and Montana Department of Transportation Flagging and Financial Literacy.<sup>2</sup>

#### **2. Dorris-Reed Duncan, Case Manager, South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency**

Dorris Reed-Duncan manages two urban sites for the South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency in Washington. The agency is tribally chartered and its TANF program focuses on empowering participants to become self-sufficient through training and employment.

The South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency sets their work participation rates at 20 hours a week for single parents and 30 hours a week for two-parent families. Dorris-Reed Duncan discussed some of their strategies, which include a heavy emphasis on education

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<sup>1</sup> Kipp, G. G. IV. (2008, July). *BlackFeet housing: Cooperative working agreement*. Handouts presented at the Creative Work Participation Activities Workshop at the National Tribal TANF Institute 2008, Sacramento, California.

<sup>2</sup> Kipp, G. G. IV. (2008, July). *Project: Montana family economic security "Blackfeet hawks" project*. Handout presented at the Creative Work Participation Activities Workshop at the National Tribal TANF Institute 2008, Sacramento, California.

and training so that participants can eventually get higher paying jobs. If participants come into the TANF program with no high school diploma or GED, they are required to attend GED classes. Recently, the Intertribal Planning Agency partnered with a local community college to be able to provide a GED program for TANF participants at the TANF agency. The college also provides additional resources for participants if they need them. The participants attend classes four days a week for two hours. The case managers track participants' progress and can get involved if barriers become issues. All classroom time, time spent doing homework and studying, and time spent commuting to and from classes, counts toward participants' weekly work participation requirements.<sup>3</sup>

The South Puget Intertribal Planning Agency also operates "Paddle to Success", which is an eight week program that participants participate in to learn soft skills and set achievable goals for themselves. The four main components throughout the eight weeks include career planning, human relationships in the workplace, self-esteem, and computer skills. Participants also learn how to write their resumes. One innovative aspect of the program is that participants are required to research their family history and present the information in a PowerPoint to staff, their families, and other participants. This allows them to learn internet research skills, and also allows them to gain a sense of identity through learning their family background. Ms. Duncan discussed that participants generally experience great feelings of accomplishment and growth in their self-esteem through this program. All of the program hours are counted towards the participants' work participation requirements.<sup>4</sup>

### **3. Holly Snowball, Senior Manager, Employment and Training Services, Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc.**

In the next panel presentation, Holly Snowball discussed aspects of the Tribal TANF program at the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. (CITC). The program has a caseload of approximately 480-560 participants, with a much lower caseload during the summer months when there is a lot of seasonal employment available. CITC serves many different Tribes, so their allowable work activities encompass many different cultures. Some cultural work activities available to TANF participants that count toward the work participation rates include beading, drum making, dance classes, dream catcher classes, sweat lodge sessions, and subsistence activities in which participants go back to their villages to do traditional harvests of resources. Because the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. is located in an urban area in Anchorage, Alaska, it is important for the program to incorporate trips back to Tribal villages to "keep clients' spirits up."<sup>5</sup>

The TANF program at the Cook Inlet Tribal Council, Inc. also has structured training programs for participants that are offered on site. "Paths to Success" is a two week course that includes soft skills training such as resume writing and interview skills. Retail customer service training is also offered over the span of two weeks through collaboration with the University of Alaska. Off site structured training programs include computer classes,

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<sup>3</sup> Reed-Duncan, Dorris. (2008, July). *Creative work participation at South Puget intertribal planning agency*. Handout presented at the Creative Work Participation Activities Workshop at the National Tribal TANF Institute 2008, Sacramento, California.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Snowball, Holly. (2008, July 22). *Cook Inlet tribal council, inc. creative work activities*. Presented at the Creative Work Participation Activities Workshop at the National Tribal TANF Institute 2008, Sacramento, California.

driver's education classes, heavy equipment training, hazardous waste training, construction training, and more.<sup>6</sup>

#### 4. Sakinah Bismillah, Case Manager, Washoe Tribal TANF Program

As a case manager, Ms. Bismillah discussed the strategies that she uses at the Washoe Tribal TANF program to engage participants and help them achieve success. She starts out by asking participants to fill out a planning form consisting of two questions: "What do you see yourself doing six months from now?" and "What do you see yourself doing one year from now?" She uses this form to gauge where the participant is at and begin a conversation about his/her goals. Eventually, she is able to work with the participant and his/her family to come up with an in-depth success plan. Ms. Bismillah frequently uses the phrase "Failure is NOT an option" to motivate her participants. The Washoe Tribal TANF program is able to help participants pay for education, transportation, and child care.<sup>7</sup>

### IV. Workshop: Using Story Telling in Case Management

Barbara Aragon and Gayle Zepeda presented during this workshop. Ms. Aragon was formerly the Director of Training at the American Indian Training Institute, taught social work and cultural competency at CSU Sacramento, and was a fellow at the California Department of Health Services. Gayle Zepeda is a Career Development Coordinator with the California Tribal TANF partnership and a consultant who has worked with the American Indian Training Institute, Northern Circle Indian Housing Authority, California Rural Indian Health Board and other agencies. The goals of the workshop included that participants learn to "honor the journey of the participant through storytelling, appreciate traditional storytelling as a means of teaching native values, learn to utilize the themes of Hero stories to identify personal resiliency factors, identify cultural strengths for serving families and learn to utilize stories to empower participants to create healthier chapters in their lives."<sup>8</sup>

Ms. Aragon began the session by telling a traditional story about how a tribe received its sweat lodge. The story was a tale of adventure for a young boy who set out on a mission, lost sight of his goal, entered into despair about having lost his way but, with a little help, was restored to hope. Mr. Aragon and Ms. Zepeda then described the elements of the story cycle: vision - loss - struggle -despair - helper - hope, with the intention of helping attendees be able to identify where their participants may be in this cycle when they encounter them. They emphasized the value of telling one's story and hearing another's story for native people. Attendees were encouraged to empower participants by helping them recognize their past triumphs through their own stories and how to harness that perspective to move forward in the story they are presently living.

### V. Keynote Speaker: "Imaginary Indians" as Artifacts of Power

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Bismillah, S. (2008, July). *Planning*. Handout presented at the Creative Work Participation Activities Workshop at the 2008 National Tribal TANF Institute, Sacramento, California.

<sup>8</sup> Handout presented at the 2008 National Tribal TANF Institute.

During this plenary session, Dr. Brian Baker discussed ideas about Native Americans becoming “commodities” through peoples’ stereotypical depictions of them and limited sets of ideas associated with them. He began the discussion with a dialogue about “historical unresolved grief,” which is important when discussing economic problems seen on Native American reservations. He argued that historical trauma, through institutionalized racism and internalized oppression, account for the high rates of poverty that Native Americans face today. For example, Dr. Baker showed an advertisement from the early 1900s for Boston Baked Beans in which Uncle Sam is shown spoon-feeding beans to Sitting Bull, depicted as a stereotypical Native American. Dr. Baker argued that subtle messages of oppression exist in this advertisement through the fact that Uncle Sam is much taller than Sitting Bull and that Sitting Bull is depicted almost like a child—he is not feeding himself and he is on his tip-toes as Uncle Sam spoon feeds him at such an angle that it looks as though he is almost shoving the beans down Sitting Bull’s throat.

In order to heal, Native Americans might embrace their unresolved grief, accept it as part of their being, and use those feelings as a platform to grow. Acceptance allows them to teach other generations about the struggles that were encountered and develop a framework for positive advancement of tribal culture.

## **VI. Workshop: Questions of Culture: Tradition and Case Management**

Dr. Geni Cowan and Tom Lidot presented during this session. Dr. Cowan is a professor of educational leadership and policy at California State University, Sacramento. She is also a trainer and facilitator for The Center for Human Services at UC Davis, where she has worked extensively with Native American tribes on planning, professional development and case management training. The goals of this workshop included that participants learn how to “develop culturally specific case management programs and deliver services in culturally appropriate ways.”<sup>9</sup>

## **VII. Workshop: ICWA and Tribal TANF**

Nanette Gledhill, Director of Operations and Expert Witness for the California Indian Child Welfare Act, spoke during this session on how TANF and Indian Child Welfare can work together to help Native American children and families. She began with an overview of the Indian Child Welfare Act and Tribal TANF legislation, and then discussed how the two are connected.

The Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) was passed in 1978 “to protect the best interests of Indian children and to promote the stability and security of Indian Tribes and families.” The purpose of ICWA is to keep Native American children in their own communities and preserve the Tribes’ culture. Tribes need a code in place so state courts can recognize the Tribal courts in regard to Tribal welfare. If there are any proceedings that take place in which ICWA could be involved, a notice of the child’s Indian status is sent to their Tribe through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA). The Tribe responds and the case is either

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<sup>9</sup> 2008 National Tribal TANF Institute Agenda.

transferred to the Tribe, or the Tribe specifies their placement preference to the state for foster care and adoption.<sup>10</sup>

Tribal TANF allows federally recognized Tribes to apply for federal funding to operate their own Tribal TANF programs so they can implement TANF in ways that are culturally appropriate and meet the unique needs of the children and families in their communities. Tribes can define TANF work activities that fit their cultures, such as assisting in ceremonies and dances, and/or subsistence hunting and fishing.<sup>11</sup>

Some of the common goals of ICWA and TANF, as discussed by Ms. Gledhill, include the preservation of Native American culture, the reduction of dependency on public assistance, and the maintenance of family units. ICWA and TANF can work together by identifying families that are involved in multiple systems, signing releases of information so they can communicate with each other, having families sign releases of information with other agencies, communicating about the requirements for families receiving TANF, offering services to assist in CPS cases, and providing advocacy and support. To communicate with other agencies, Tribes can offer “wraparound case management” in which representatives from many service agencies meet with the family in one cohesive meeting to address the client(s) needs and goals.<sup>12</sup>

### VIII. Workshop: Career Assessment and Development Objectives

Georganna O’ Keefe-Schwering led this session. She is currently the Program Counselor for Sacramento City College Sutter Extended Nursing Program and an Associate Counselor for Butte and Sacramento City Colleges. She was also recently the Regional Career Development Manager for the Washoe Native TANF Program.

Ms. O’ Keefe-Schwering first discussed the importance of conducting career assessments. She mentioned that conducting assessments can help a participant confirm his or her goals, can save time and money, are helpful for reporting requirements—they can show the government why the TANF program supported a participant in a specific career path—, and they can help determine the appropriate placement for TANF participants, such as in GED or pre-GED classes.<sup>13</sup>

There are three different types of assessments: informal, semi-formal, and formal. Informal assessments occur when someone simply talks to a person about their career goals in an informal setting, such as a Pow Wow. Semi-formal assessment occurs when someone talks to a person in a setting such as a conference or a case management interview, but the assessment is still just an impromptu conversation. Lastly, formal assessments occur when a person conducts actual testing through basic skills or career assessments, gathers

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<sup>10</sup> Gledhill, N. (2008, July, 22). *The Indian child welfare act and tribal TANF: How do we work together in the best interest of native children and families*. Presented at the ICWA and Tribal TANF Workshop at the 2008 National Tribal TANF Institute, Sacramento, California.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> O’Keefe-Schwering, G. (2008, July, 23). “*Wa doda ang-awee*” working well. Presented at the Career Assessment and Development Objectives Workshop at the 2008 National Tribal TANF Institute, Sacramento, California.

information from other agencies, such as college transcripts, or does labor market research.<sup>14</sup>

A semi-formal tool that case managers and career counselors can use to help participants achieve their goals includes the “Brick Exercise.” The “Brick Exercise” takes place within a group. Each person in the group is given a brick and asked to write down the one most important thing that is stopping them from achieving their goals, for examples, low self-esteem or difficulty in a math class. Then, everyone places their brick in a bag to determine how “heavy” a load they are collectively carrying. One person is supposed to carry the load, but eventually, others join in and take some of the bricks from the bag to “share” the load. Another symbolic piece of the exercise includes lining the bricks up to form a bridge and asking each person to walk across the bridge to the other side, symbolizing the end of their specific challenge.<sup>15</sup>

Some formal assessment tools that case managers and career counselors can use and that are recommended by Ms. O’ Keefe-Schwering include the Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment System (CASAS), which is a basic skills test and is available online; the Career Occupational Preference System (COPSsystem), the Career Occupation Preference Survey (COPS), the Career Ability Placement Survey (CAPS), and the Career Orientation Placement and Evaluation Survey (COPES), which are all career assessment tools; the Barriers to Employment Success Inventory (BESI); the Self-Directed Search (SDS); and the Learning Style Survey.<sup>16</sup>

Lastly, Ms. O’ Keefe-Schwering discussed how to synthesize career assessments into a comprehensive summary and handed out a sample Individual Vocation Plan that includes “employment goals; education goals; employment/education plan summary; releases of information between TANF and the career development person, if applicable; education history; employment history; comprehensive summary of assessments, including basic skills tests, career interest tests, career aptitude tests, work values inventories, and other test data; potential concerns regarding goal achievement; employability issues and considerations; employment/training research; and employment/education achievement plan.”<sup>17</sup>

## **IX. Workshop: Working with the Hard-to-Serve Client**

Barbara Aragon and Gayle Zepeda presented during this workshop. The goals of the workshop specified that participants develop an “understanding of what motivates clients, learn how to assess strengths, understand client resistance, view resistance as a strength, and learn strategies for working with resistant clients.”<sup>18</sup>

The presenters started out the session by asking participants to brainstorm what they thought were defining factors among the “hard-to-serve” TANF population. Some responses included multi-generational TANF families, those with Learning Disabilities,

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<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> 2008 National Tribal TANF Institute Agenda.

those who feel a sense of entitlement, ex-offenders, participants with no transportation, those with no child care, those experiencing domestic violence, those with political family members, young teen parents, those with no education, those with physical health issues, clients with language barriers, participants in unstable relationships, participants with ICWA involvement, and participants with no role models.<sup>19</sup>

Next, Ms. Aragon and Ms. Zepeda discussed how to reframe participants' barriers into positives to help empower them to change and become successful. The presenters discussed the stages of change, which include "pre-contemplation, contemplation, determination, action, and maintenance." They also thoroughly discussed what motivates people to change and take action. Some ideas included "removing barriers, providing choices, being empathetic, providing feedback to clients, clarifying their goals, and practicing active helping and coaching."<sup>20</sup>

Case managers in TANF programs act as change agents, meaning that they show the participant his/her need to change, believe that the participant can change, and show the participant that help is available. The case manager should also assess what is specifically important to each individual participant to determine what will be effective in helping the client change and become successful. For some participants, incentives are more effective than sanctions and for others, vice versa.<sup>21</sup>

Ms. Aragon and Ms. Zepeda lastly discussed that case managers also act as resources for their participants. They listen, help solve problems, help participants plan, link them to community resources, help them build skills, and help motivate them by focusing on their strengths and identifying past successes.<sup>22</sup>

## X. Conclusion

The training was very helpful in providing both Native attendees and non-Native attendees the means to most appropriately address the needs of Native American TANF participants. All of the discussions presented centered on the importance of keeping in mind Native American culture and created excellent skill building and networking opportunities for participants.

Welfare Peer TA staff were excited to have participated in this Institute and look forward to the upcoming 2009 National Tribal TANF Institute.

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<sup>19</sup> Aragon, B. & Zepeda, G. (2008, July 23). *Working with the hard-to-serve client*. Presented at the Working with the Hard-to-Serve Client Workshop at the National Tribal TANF Institute 2008, Sacramento, California.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.