

## **Indigenous Culture and Language Affect on Health of Indigenous Youth**

WHEREAS, indigenous peoples have endured and prospered through centuries with a strong belief in a spiritually inherent philosophical infrastructure that directs their interactions and relationships with other humans, their environment, and cosmology; that form and shape who they are, the way they think, act, and feel;<sup>2,4,5,6</sup>

WHEREAS, the social, educational, economical, and political growth and development of unique indigenous groups require an understanding, knowledge, and respect for their culture, history, and civics;<sup>2,3,5</sup>

WHEREAS, identity to culture, heritage, and language, is fundamental to the healthy physical, emotional, social, mental, and spiritual development of indigenous youth;<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

WHEREAS, preserving and perpetuating the language is important for the survival of indigenous peoples and is an essential element of life, culture, and the identity of people;<sup>3,4,5</sup>

WHEREAS, the influence of increased technology and accelerated social change that potentially place indigenous youth at risk for practicing unhealthy and maladaptive behaviors may compromise their ability and opportunity to learn and practice cultural values;<sup>4</sup>

WHEREAS, this new era of commitment to the excellence of education and health will enable indigenous youth to achieve their highest aspirations, academic goals and the practice of healthy behaviors in western educational settings by combining the best learning and knowledge of other societies with that of their own while maintaining and retaining strong bonds to ethnic culture;<sup>2,4,5</sup>

WHEREAS, recognizing youth as an invaluable asset to the future existence and perpetuation of an indigenous population and its culture, a curriculum infused with cultural knowledge, language, and practice of traditional values positively affects the future health and well-being of indigenous youth;<sup>4,5,6</sup>

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT:** the American School Health Association and the Council on Indigenous Health encourages school administrators and policy makers to:

- 1) Recognize that cultural identity, one's ability to practice cultural values and/or to speak indigenous languages, serve as protective factors for indigenous youth.<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- 2) Provide health education curricula for indigenous youth that incorporate culturally appropriate instructional strategies, integrate traditional knowledge, and allow practice of cultural traditions and values that support the adoption of healthy behaviors.<sup>4,5,6</sup>

- 3) Adapt and implement a culturally appropriate model of Coordinated School Health for indigenous populations based on traditions and culture, as well as indigenous ways of knowing and learning (epistemological models).<sup>4,5,6</sup>
- 4) Ensure that all school personnel are professionally prepared to work with indigenous youth by providing cultural competence training or hiring personnel with previous training and/or experience.
- 5) Offer instruction in native language for all grade levels in schools serving indigenous groups including those schools that provide health services.<sup>2,3,5</sup>
- 6) Include thinking, speaking, reading comprehension, writing, and formal grammar in the study of native languages.<sup>3,5</sup>
- 7) Advocate for programs and/or course content that enable indigenous youth to acquire knowledge, understanding, and respect for culture, history, and civics.<sup>3,5</sup>
- 8) Partner with local governing bodies, parents, students, and communities to increase the probability for successful academic and school health programmatic implementation and sustainability.

THEREFORE BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the American School Health Association calls upon its members and all school health professionals to be conversant in the cultures of the students they serve.

#### **References:**

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