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2015-10-15 / Headlines

## Medical professionals promote alternative healing

By Natalie Hand

Special to the LCT

Photos by Nehemiah Stark

OGLALA—A diverse group of volunteer medical professionals converged on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation last week to offer alternative mind-body medicine techniques to help the Oglala Lakota Oyate.

Hosted by Allie Bad Heart Bull of Pine Ridge School and cultural advisor Basil Brave Heart, The Center for Mind-Body Medicine held a four-day training at Prairie Winds Casino Hotel on October 1st-4th, 2015.

The Center for Mind- Body Medicine bills itself as "...the world's largest, most effective, and



CMBM staff / volunteer faculty with Pine Ridge Team; Bim Pourier, Natalie Hand, Edwin Brown Bull, Allie Bad Heart Bull

culturally adaptable program for healing populationwide psychological trauma.”

The CMBM model directly addresses the causes and symptoms of psychological trauma, stress, depression, and burnout. Adaptable in any culture, the model begins by teaching grass roots based educators, community leaders and clinicians to use the technique of mind-body medicine (meditation, guided imagery, yoga and exercise, biofeedback);

self-expression in words, drawings, and movement; and small group support to deal with their own stress and trauma. After that, the participants are taught to use the CMBM model in their communities.

For the Pine Ridge session, the focus was on learning techniques to combat “historical trauma” and “generational oppression”. We often recycle grief and trauma from our older relatives and the cycle of sadness continues for generations, without even realizing why. These traumas and their by-products have led to multiple suicides over the last six months on Pine Ridge.

Blackfeet Tribal Elder Linda Eagle Speaker, who traveled to Pine Ridge as an advanced trainer, uses the CMBM's model to help Native women and girls who are victims of sexual trafficking in the Twin Cities.



Little Wound Student, Sharifah Ferguson.



Dr. James Gordon and Elder Linda Eagle..Speaker Facilitate small

“When we learned about mind-body medicine, we realized it was the missing piece of our trauma programs. Now we use the techniques and model as we work on selfidentity: reconnecting to our customs, knowledge, people and tribe,” stated Eagle Speaker.

Another component of the model is “Food is Medicine”. This was a particularly popular topic, given the extremely high rates of diseases/disorders throughout Indian Country. In the presentation, Dr.

group session

Kathy Farah, a board certified family physician at the Mayo Clinic in Wisconsin, shared the cause and effect of unhealthy food choices. Dr. Farah, a volunteer to this training, integrates CMBM's holistic and integrative health techniques into her medical practice. Having spent time on Pine Ridge for previous trainings, Dr. Farah referenced the "food desert" that we live in, meaning the lack of fresh produce in remote areas, and shared strategies of how to eat healthy and improve nutrition to curb diabetes and heart-related diseases.



One participant noted that, as a diabetic, she has a "need" to have a candy bar every night. On the fourth day of the program she was pleased to report that she hadn't had a candy bar during the entire training. The meditation and breathing techniques curbed her cravings.

There were a few high school students that were in attendance for the entire training. Bad Heart Bull recognized them as student leaders who will be able to take what they learned at the training back to their peers and families. Oglala Lakota elder Carol Iron Rope- Herrera, a long-time advocate for children, conducted a ceremony for two young female participants at the conclusion of the conference. They were honored with eagle plumes, painted with wase' and brought into the circle as young women. It was a fitting way to conclude the gathering.

Founder and Executive Director, Dr. James Gordon, noted that his staff have worked with key reservation based organizations such as Sweet Grass Suicide Prevention Program, Great Plains Tribal Chairmen's Health Board, Oceti Wakan, Pine Ridge Hospital, Pine Ridge Elementary and High School, and Indian Health Services since 2009.

Dr. Gordon informed all participants that his staff wants to keep the momentum going and will continue to work closely with them to ensure that they will have the necessary training to share this model with all community members.

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