



Restoring Cultural Traditions to Strengthen

Family and Community

The Yerington Paiute Tribe in Nevada strives to give their young children a good start in life and prepare them to be future leaders. One of their key strategies is to revive their cultural traditions as a way to alleviate parental stress and increase the sense of community. The Tribe's Pudu Momo'o Home Visiting Program is playing a leadership role in this effort by adding cultural enhancements to the services they provide families with young children.



The Tribe's project is supported by a grant from the Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program, administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families (ACF). The Yerington Paiute Tribe is one of 25 tribal communities participating in the federal Tribal Home Visiting program.

"Native American tribes in this area have struggled historically," says Holly Ditzler, the Pudu Momo'o program coordinator. "Many of them have lived in generational poverty while being isolated in a rural area. For a lot of these native people, there was a great extent of cultural trauma, with some of the Elders having been put into boarding schools as children and their language and their culture taken away from them. It's almost an identity crisis, which the cultural enhancements have really addressed, bringing people back into community and gathering people to find one mind."

Parent educator Renee Rogers talks about traditional ways of homemaking and child-rearing when she visits families in their homes. "We talk about different foods and the time that they're harvested and some ways that they can be prepared. We talk about the different types of medicine that come from the land and how they can help you feel better. I also let families be aware of different cultural activities on and off our reservation."

Storytelling is another important part of the culture. Rogers teaches families traditional stories that they can share with their children. The Tribe has also made books of traditional stories, such as Cottontail and the Sun, that parents can read with their children and that the children can color.

Rogers' father, who is experienced in many traditions, taught her about smudging with sage as a way to cleanse one's body, mind, and home. "I put the sage in an abalone shell and light it," Rogers describes. "It starts smoking and it's believed that any prayer that you say while you're smudging is carried by the smoke up to the creator. I give my families the option if they want to pray. To some of them it's more like a relaxing energy."

Evaluators Bill Evans and Julianna Chomos at the University of Nevada-Reno work with Rogers in designing the enhancements and tracking their implementation and outcomes. Due to the small sample size, the evaluators are using a single-case design, in which all of the families are acting as their own baseline and all are receiving the cultural enhancements. Evans and Chomos are excited by the process and hope their experience will benefit future research with small communities.

"From the beginning of this project, we realized that we really could make a difference," says Ditzler. "We're talking about a whole generation of children who are going to grow up, be school ready, and become the next leaders of the Tribe. What do we want them to take with that? I think one of the most important parts is the tribal ownership of all of its culture. We feel very blessed as a Tribe to have incorporated this into many of the teachings, and we feel that this whole cohort of children will be taking on some of these cultural enhancements to pass on to future generations."

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For more information, contact Holly Ditzler at hditzler@ypt-nsn.gov or 775-463-3301, ext. 370.

The Yerington Paiute Tribe is a federally recognized tribe with nearly 1,700 acres of land located 85 miles southeast of Reno. The Tribe is constantly striving to better the lives of its members and working to foster a sense of social responsibility, educate youth, cherish Elders, and celebrate and share their rich heritage. Find out more about the [Yerington Paiute Tribe at \(http://www.ypt-nsn.gov/joomla/index.php\)](http://www.ypt-nsn.gov/joomla/index.php).

ACF's Tribal Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting program provides grants to tribal entities to develop, implement, and evaluate home visiting programs in American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) communities. The grants are intended to help develop and strengthen tribal capacity to support and promote the health and well-being of AIAN



Tribal Home Visiting Success Story

families; expand the evidence base around home visiting in tribal communities; and support and strengthen cooperation and linkages between programs that serve tribal children and their families. Find out more about the Tribal Home Visiting program and grantees at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/home-visiting/tribal-home-visiting>.

