



WAHWALA IYOHLOGYA (Peaceful Means)

Lakota pronunciation: Wock-wa-la / Ee-yo-khlohgya

Establishing and Evaluating an Indigenous-led Sexual Violence Prevention Initiative, Pine Ridge Reservation

OVERVIEW

As part of its 2022 Grand Challenges Catalyst Competition, the University of Nebraska–Lincoln (UNL) has committed \$3.2 million to establish an Indigenous-led sexual violence prevention initiative on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. Wahwala Iyohlogya, which translates to Peaceful Means in English, was named with community input. The project will create jobs, provide training and education opportunities, and bring sexual violence prevention to K-12 youth across the Pine Ridge Reservation.

The project's approach will be adapted from IMpower United, an evidence-based, impactful and comprehensive sexual violence prevention program and support system for survivors. After initial implementation, the project's Indigenous staff will work with other Tribal/Indigenous communities across the U.S. to offer the culturally adapted IMpower sexual violence prevention programming. Sustainability of the project as an Indigenous-led organization is a key focus of the work. This initiative also includes a youth-led documentary component.

Collaborators

The project includes the Interpersonal Violence Research Laboratory, IMpower United, and a number of Tribal nations, Indigenous leaders and Indigenous-led organizations.

go.unl.edu/ivrl

Support

The project is housed in the Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Youth, Families and Schools, and funded by the UNL Office of the Chancellor and the Office of Research and Economic Development.

research.unl.edu/grandchallenges

IMPACT

The expected impact of this collective work is to witness dramatic reductions in sexual violence among Indigenous persons across the U.S. with the hopes that all Indigenous youth will have the opportunity to receive a culturally adapted version of the IMpower initiative by 2050. The Wahwala Iyohlogya project is unprecedented in terms of scope and likely impact.

“The ones’ that matter the most are the children.” -Lakota proverb

BACKGROUND

Indigenous peoples experience sexual violence at rates higher than any other racial/ethnic group in the U.S. Sexual violence among Indigenous peoples is rooted in colonization and multiple historical traumas, as well as ongoing systemic racism and oppression. Despite this, Indigenous peoples are highly resilient — and connection to one's Indigenous culture is an important part of this resilience. As such, there is increasing recognition that effective prevention efforts for Indigenous peoples need to be culturally grounded.



IMpower United

impowerunited.org

IMpower United is a K-12 sexual violence prevention program that teaches youth evidence-based prevention strategies, while providing critical life skills and promoting self-worth. The IMpower program can be culturally adapted for diverse global contexts. **Results from a recent pilot evaluation of IMpower on an reservation in South Dakota demonstrated that a culturally adapted curriculum reduced rates of sexual violence by 80%.**

VISION & APPROACH

The long-term goal of this work is to significantly reduce, if not eliminate, sexual violence among Indigenous peoples across the U.S. To achieve this goal, we will accomplish the following:

YEAR 1: Establish the Wahwala lyohlogya on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

- Focus will be on project start-up, feasibility and community needs assessments, community engagement and coordination activities, cultural adaptation of IMpower and intensive training of staff, largely Indigenous.
- Staff will learn how to conduct cultural adaptations, as well as process and outcome evaluations. All research will receive appropriate Tribal approval and tribes will own the data from their respective communities.
- Staff will also begin to learn about grant writing and other sustainability efforts.

YEAR 2: Staff will lead a community-wide implementation and evaluation of the culturally adapted IMpower program on the Pine Ridge Reservation.

- Staff will receive intensive, hands-on training in program implementation and evaluation.

YEAR 3 & 4: Staff will work with Indigenous community members and other partners in South Dakota and Nebraska to adapt, implement and evaluate the IMpower system in their communities.

- Staff will host trainings and share findings from their work to diverse audiences.
- Staff will continue to work towards sustainability of the project.

DOCUMENTARY: A youth-led documentary will be produced to highlight via storytelling and other Indigenous methods the strengths and resilience of Indigenous communities and the impact of the project and IMpower in reducing sexual violence among Indigenous peoples.

- Indigenous youth will learn about the film-making processes.
- Indigenous youth and Elders will participate in the premiere of the film, locally and nationally.

CONTACT



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Learn more about the project on our website, including opportunities to get involved.

go.unl.edu/peacefulmeans



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