



Peaceful Means Programming Positively Impacts Youth on the Pine Ridge Reservation

"The ones that matter the most are the children" -Lakota Proverb

OVERVIEW

WHAT IS PEACEFUL MEANS?

The goal of Peaceful Means is to end sexual violence across Indian Country, starting on the Pine Ridge Reservation. During the 2023 to 2024 academic year, Lakota instructors at Peaceful Means taught 561 elementary and middle school youth at five schools. Elementary and middle school classes focus on permission to say no. Kids also learn (1) verbal and physical self-defense skills that they can use if their "no" is not respected and (2) that they are worth defending. Middle school boys' classes guide boys along a healthy, positive journey to a Lakota culture-based manhood and skills to manage life challenges. All classes include the Tell Campaign—youth are encouraged to *"tell and tell and tell until someone believes you and you get the help that you need."*

HOW DID YOU MEASURE IMPACT?

Youth in grades 3rd to 8th completed surveys before the program and about one month after. The surveys were used to make sure the program is working in the way it is supposed to work. The things we measured are a little different for the younger versus older youth and middle school girls and boys since the programs are tailored. Youth also participated in group discussions to give us feedback on what they liked about the program and how to make it better. Only youth whose guardians said they could be in the project were in the project. Youth had the chance to also say yes or no if they wanted to be in the project. The Oglala Sioux Tribe Research Review Board approved this project, this report, and owns all the data.

RESULTS

3RD TO 5TH GRADERS

Children who did the Peaceful Means Program increased in feelings of safety and overall knowledge of child sexual abuse while building effective safety skills (e.g., scream NO) to resist an attacker. Kids also reported liking the program and said it positively impacted them. For example, one youth said, *"I feel strong and confident"* and another said, *"it made me feel brave."*

MIDDLE SCHOOL GIRLS

Girls who did the Peaceful Means Program increased in emotional awareness, confidence in resisting an attacker, knowledge of skills to reduce an attack, and commitment to staying in school and getting a job or going to college after they graduate. Girls also reported liking the

program and said it positively impacted them. For example, one girl said, “I feel powerful,” and another girl said, “I learned that I’m worth defending.”

MIDDLE SCHOOL BOYS

Boys who did the Peaceful Means Program increased on the belief that men and women should be treated equally, thinking it is important to get consent, and confidence in resisting peer pressures. Also, boys who did the program decreased on rape myths (stereotypes about rape like “she was asking for it because of how she dressed”). Boys also increased on some aspects of healthy masculinity like being more willing to talk about emotions. Boys also reported liking the program and said it positively impacted them. For example, one boy said: “I will use what I learned to teach my children when I get old.” Another boy said that he learned to “feel positive” about himself.



FINAL THOUGHTS

SUMMARY

The findings from this project are very exciting and suggest the Peaceful Means programming is a promising strategy to reduce sexual violence on the Pine Ridge Reservation. More research is needed to look at the long-term effects of Peaceful Means programming and to see if it reduces rates of sexual violence on the Pine Ridge Reservation. We will do this in future research.

NEXT STEPS

We aim to teach over 1,000 youth in grades K to 12 during the 2024 to 2025 academic year. We will continue to look at the impact programming is having. We also will be teaching out-of-school youth and offering community classes to adults as well. After we teach all kids with guardian approval on Pine Ridge, we will work hard to get money to keep the program going on Pine Ridge. We also will go and train people in other tribal nations to teach this type of programming to their youth. We have a lot of interest from other tribal nations and are excited to share the good word!

