

Celebrating Life: White Mountain Apache Suicide Prevention Program

Novalene Goklish, DrBH, MS

Mary Cwik, PhD

Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

Center for Indigenous Health



CENTER FOR
INDIGENOUS HEALTH

Overview

- Background on White Mountain Apache Tribe
- White Mountain Apache Tribe and Johns Hopkins University partnership
- Celebrating Life Surveillance System and Programing
 - New Hope
 - Elders' Resilience Curriculum
- Conclusions & Next Steps



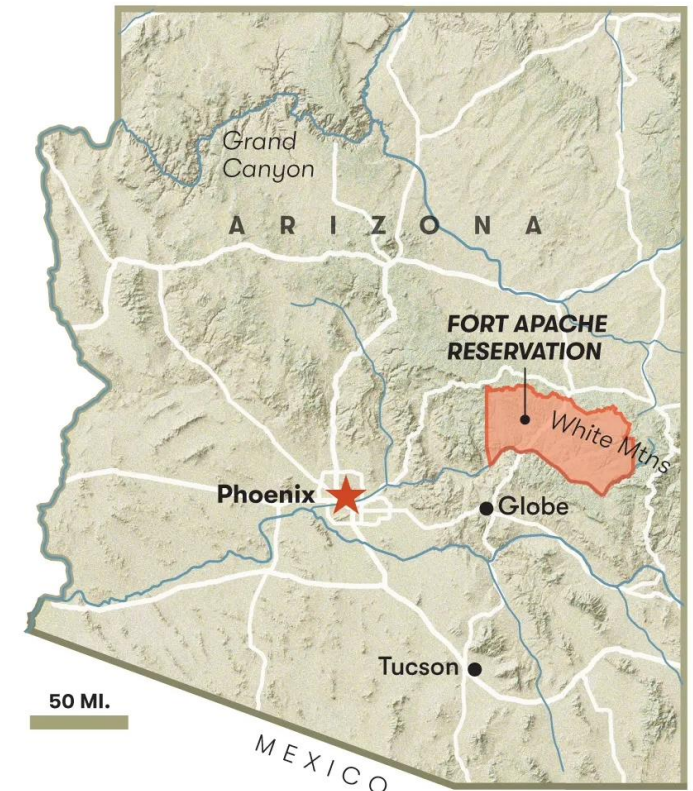
Background

White Mountain Apache Tribe



CENTER FOR
INDIGENOUS HEALTH


- 17,500+ enrolled tribal members
- Fort Apache Reservation (1.6 million acres – the size of Delaware)
- Diverse elevation (2600 ft to 11,000 feet) and natural resources
- Proud of traditional language, traditions and knowledge
- Governed by 11-member Tribal Council
- Over 40-year relationship with JHU CIH





Background

Apache Youth Suicide

- Very low suicide rates prior to 1950
 - Episodic spikes in youth suicide rates beginning in early 1990s
- 
- A decorative graphic in the bottom right corner consisting of several stylized human figures. The figures are composed of light gray circles for heads and vertical bars for bodies. Some figures have horizontal bars at the base, suggesting they are sitting or standing on a platform. The figures are arranged in a cluster, with some appearing to be in the foreground and others slightly behind.

American Indian/Alaska Native Youth Suicide Inequities

This inequity gap is predicted to increase post-COVID-19 unless effective interventions are proven and scaled – a strong focus of our Center.

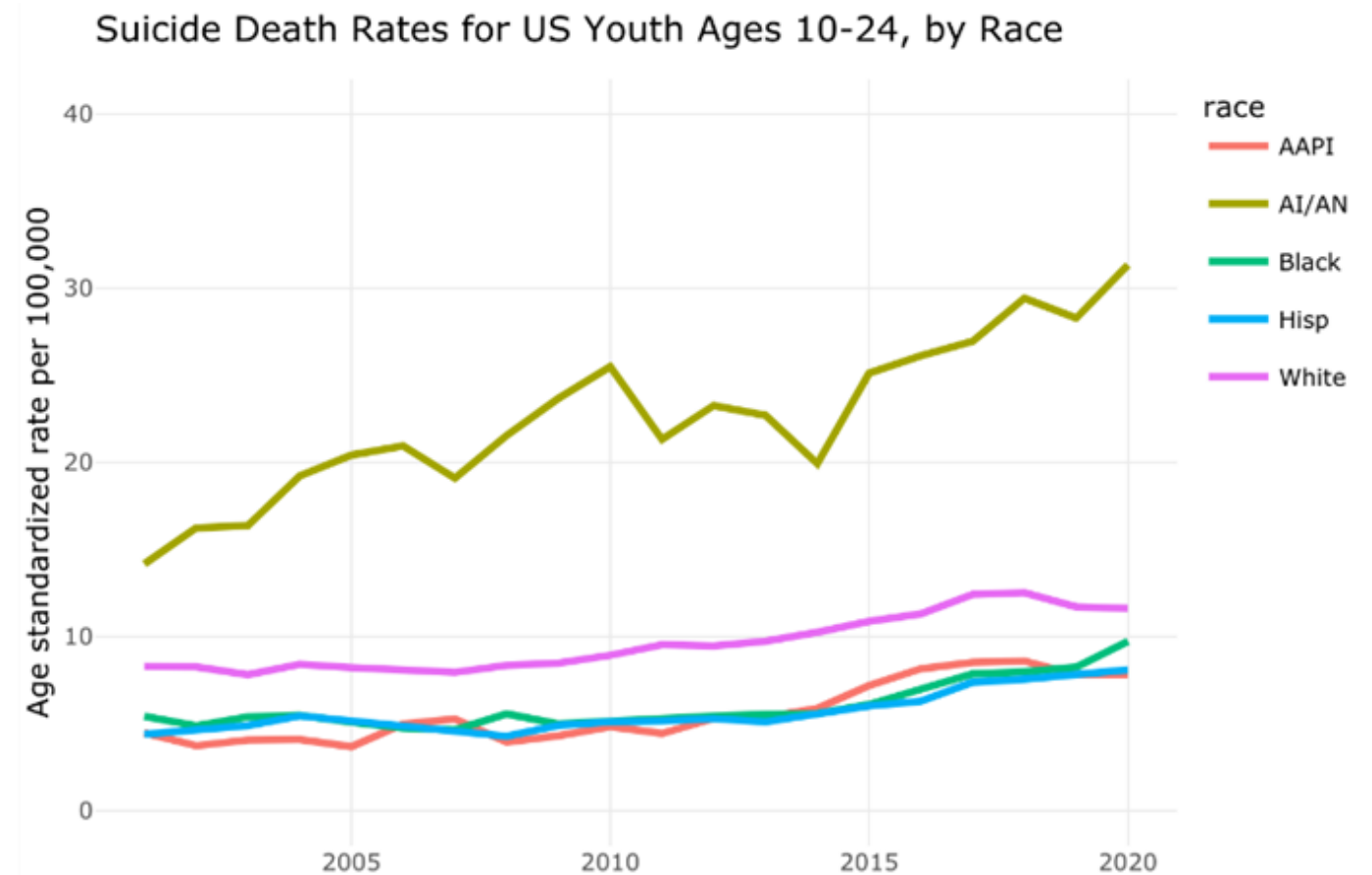


Figure 1. Data from WISQARS, uses 2019 census population for direct age standardization

Celebrating Life

Suicide Surveillance and Case Management System

In 2002, White Mountain Apache Tribe passed a resolution that mandated all community members to report individuals at risk for self-injurious behaviors.

In 2006, Tribal mandate expanded to include Case Management and designated JHCAIH to manage data and case managers.

Reportable behaviors include:

- Suicide Death
- Suicide Attempt
- Suicide Ideation
- Non-Suicidal Self-Injury
- Binge Substance Use



Celebrating Life

Suicide Surveillance and Case Management System

Celebrating Life team conducts in-person follow-up on each report and provides case management and support to:

- Verify reported incident
- Aid referrals to services
- Provide wellness checks
- Problem-solve accessing services



Celebrating Life Innovations to Curb Suicide



- ✓ Celebrating Life suicide and substance use surveillance links to real-time case management
- ✓ Real-time data helps to understand what's happening and new concerns that are emerging (i.e., non-suicidal self-injury, binge substance use, meth, fentanyl)
- ✓ Link youth to additional brief interventions:
 - New Hope risk reduction
 - Elders' resilience curriculum
 - Bright Horizons

“New Hope”

Adaptation & Implementation



- ❑ Adapted delivery method:
 - Shortly after a suicide attempt and before start of outpatient care
 - Conducted in ED, office or home
 - Taught by Apache paraprofessionals (“Natural Helpers”)
- ❑ Developed more detailed workbook
- ❑ Adapted video with messages from Elders
- ❑ Consulted community members about cultural appropriateness



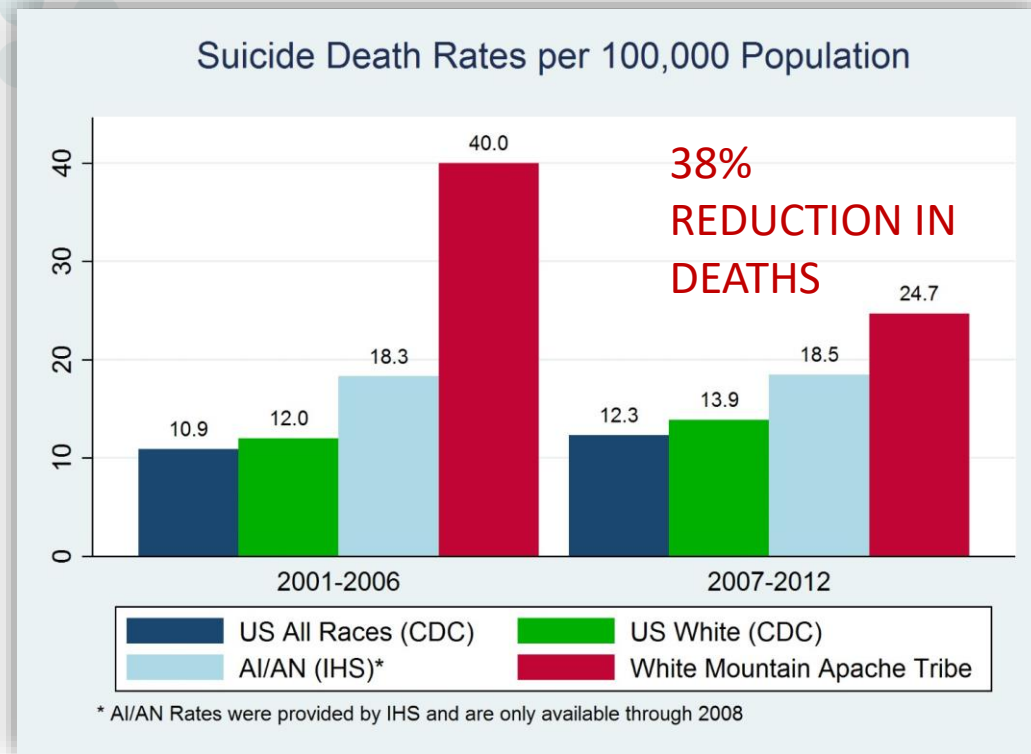
Elders' Resilience Curriculum

Monthly lessons in 3rd-8th grades

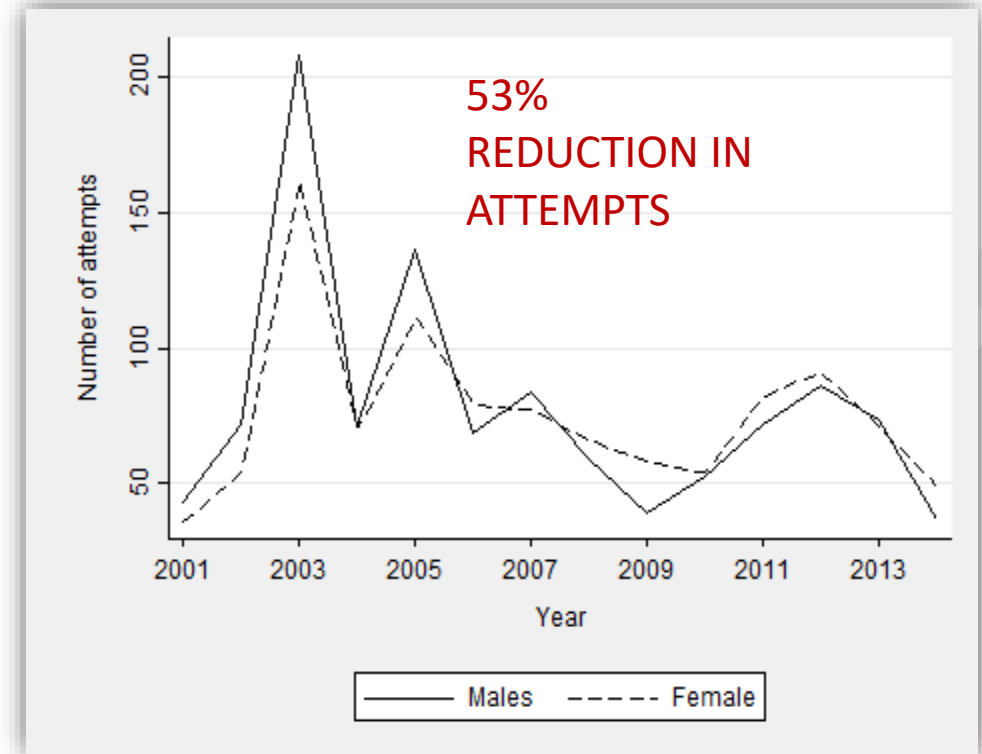
MONTH	CURRICULUM TOPIC
January	Respect
February	Apache Culture
March	Spirituality/Our Way of Life
April	Self-Esteem/Self -Worth
May	Endurance
June	Gender Roles
July	Apache History
August	Importance of Education
September	Health and Fitness
October	Relationships and the Clan System
November	Discipline
December	Communication

Decreases in White Mountain Apache Suicide Deaths and Attempts

During 5-year time-period when multiple community and family-based interventions



Suicide Deaths



Suicide Attempts

A photograph of a field of yellow flowers, possibly lupines, in the foreground. In the background, there is a dense forest of tall evergreen trees. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day. The text is overlaid on the lower left portion of the image.

CURRENT WORK:
**Southwest Hub for American
Indian Youth Suicide Prevention
Research**

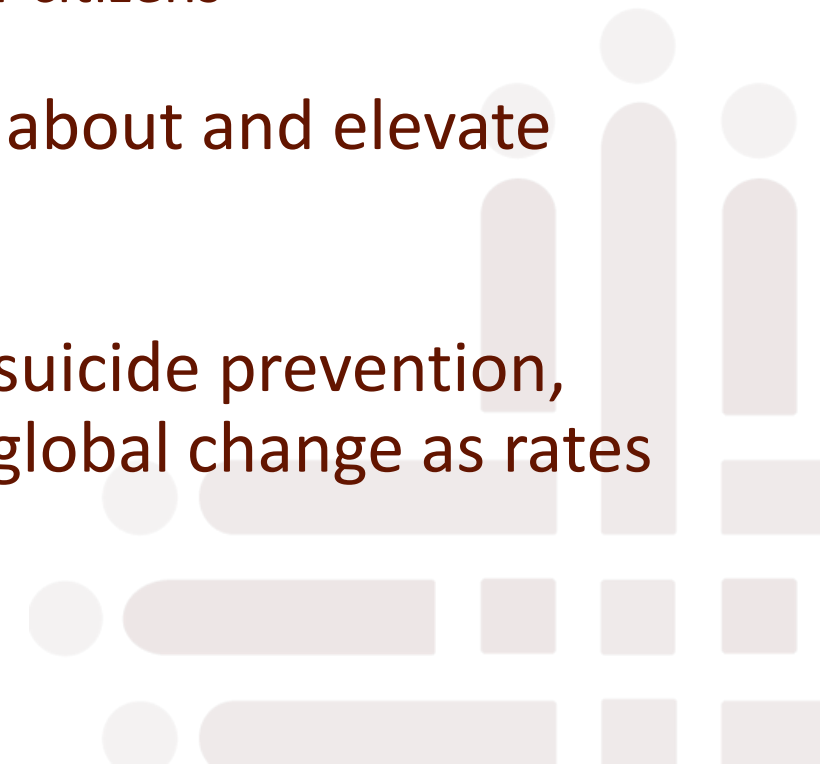


Background on CIH Southwest Hub for Youth Suicide Prevention

- **Create strong partnerships between tribal community stakeholders**, to produce evidence-based, culturally-informed public health approaches to AI youth suicide prevention that can be delivered in diverse, low resource settings.
- Study of **New Hope** and **Elders Resilience** brief interventions, in combination with **Celebrating Life Surveillance and Case Management** is being studied with n=304 White Mountain Apache youth & young adults ages 10-29.
- **Technical assistance** also provided to Navajo, San Carlos Apache, Hualapai, and Cherokee Nations **for adapting Celebrating Life surveillance and case management system.**



CONCLUSIONS

- Tribal Sovereignty provides key opportunities to do what others can't
 - We are taking a collective approach to protect all our citizens
 - Need to go beyond crisis intervention and learn about and elevate protective factors
 - Indigenous communities are at the forefront of suicide prevention, and there is much to learn and share to impact global change as rates continue to increase
- 

***Ahiy'ee* – Thank you**

Q&A

ngoklis1@jhu.edu

mcwik1@jhu.edu

