



A Path for Native Americans to Become SLPs

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Project CIRCLE is a training grant funded by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Indian Education.

The main goal of Project CIRCLE is recruit and prepare Native American graduate students for employment in school settings with a significant number of Native American children.

Project CIRCLE began in the year 2000. It is an extension of the Native American Training Program which began in 1990 (Wilcox, 1990).

- .19 million Native Americans have communication disorders (ASHA, 1985).
- In the 1998-1999 school year, 1.3% of the children receiving special education were Native American (OSEP, 2000).
- Eighty percent of the 37,000 Native Americans who receive special education in the schools require speech-language services.
- Native American children surpassed the national average in nine disability categories (Battle, 2002).

Project CIRCLE has four goals:

- recruitment
- providing specialized academic and clinical experiences that focus on Native American children
- providing experiences that increase the trainees' knowledge of collaboration with regular educators, interpreters, special educators and related personnel in the classroom
- specific activities for the induction year when graduates are working in the schools

Outcome Competencies

- to be knowledgeable about different learning styles of Native Americans,
- to have the ability to provide culturally sensitive speech-language services with children and families from a variety of tribes and differing acculturation levels;
- to be able to differentially diagnose between a language disorder and a language difference;
- to be able to work effectively with classroom teachers, interpreters, and special education personnel,
- to conduct research that is relevant to working with Native Americans culturally diverse children with speech and language impairments; and
- to obtain practical school-based experience working with Native American children with special emphasis on working with different service delivery models (i.e., classroom-based, group, outside class one-to-one intervention).

Recruitment

Native Americans who are speech-language pathologists and audiologists are underrepresented nationwide.

Of the 96,636 individuals who are trained to provide speech, language, and hearing services, only 485 or .5% are Native American (ASHA, 1998).

Recruitment Methods

- Referrals from former Native American students
- Brochures and visits to Universities in areas with large Native American populations
- Website referrals

Barriers to Recruitment

- Many Native Americans who attend college or universities are not aware of the fields of speech-language pathology or audiology.
- There are few Native Americans pursuing undergraduate degrees in speech-language-hearing.
- Many potential students may not be able or want to leave their home to pursue studies elsewhere.

Mentoring

Mentoring was a major part of the student's experience.

Each student met weekly with the Project Director or Project Coordinator

Mentoring Circles were held monthly at off-campus locations.

Topics for Multicultural Seminars

- Semester 1: Different learning styles and Native American children
- Semester 2: Assessment and intervention issues with Native American children
- Semester 3: Working in the public schools and collaboration methods
- Semester 4: Communication disorders and Native Americans
- Semester 5: Multicultural values and beliefs about communication disorders

Sample Plan of Study

Spring		Spring	
Clinic	(3 cr)	School Field Experience	(7 cr)
Clinical Processes	(1 cr)	Professional Issues	(1 cr.)
Multicultural Issues Seminar	(1 cr)	Multicultural Issues Seminar	(1 cr)
School-age Language Disorders	(2 cr)	Research Practicum	(3 cr)
Fluency	(2 cr)	Total = 12 cr	
Infant & Toddler Language Disorders	(2 cr)		
Neuroscience of Voice	(2 cr)		
Total = 13 cr			

Summer		Summer	
Clinic	(3 cr)	Field Study	(5cr)
Clinical Processes	(1 cr.)	Multicultural Issues Seminar	(1 cr)
Multicultural Issues	(1 cr.)	Total = 6 cr	
Aural Rehabilitation	(3 cr)		
Total = 8 cr			

Fall	
Evaluation	(2 cr)
Clinic	(1 cr.)
Dev. Phonological Disorders	(2 cr)
Multicultural Issues Seminar	(1 cr)
Preschool Language Disorders	(2 cr)
Adult Language Disorders	(2 cr)
Professional Issues	(1 cr)
Total = 11 cr	

Specialized Academics

- Multicultural Issues Seminar (5 semesters)
- Working in the Schools Seminar
- Trainees plan and present an in-service related to communication disorders.
- Assessing Native American Children Seminar
- The trainees evaluate an assessment tool for its cultural bias with respect to the trainee's tribe.
- Collaboration in the Public Schools seminar
- Conduct research in the area of Native American children

Barriers to Academic Success

Academic

- Organizational skills
- Time management skills
- Study skills

Social

- Family illnesses and deaths
- Family demands on time and energy
- Feelings of isolation

Financial

- With tuition and a cost of living stipend, students still struggle with money demands. There is no reserve to fix cars, pay phone bill, etc.,

Specialized Clinical Experiences

Trainees obtain practical school-based experience.

Trainees also conducted speech-language-hearing screenings with Native American populations at:

- Haskell Indian Health clinic,
- Haskell Indian Nations University,
- Prairie Band Potawatomi reservation.

Barriers to Clinical Success

- Learning mainstream interaction styles that were not consistent with their own interaction style.
- Non-traditional status of many trainees did not allow for intensive clinical study.
- Difficulty with completing paper work in a timely manner.
- Warm up and observation time needed before being comfortable with group discussions.

Research Projects

- Optimal Learning Styles: Reflections from Native Americans in High School - *Michelle Tsosie*
- Fetal Alcohol Syndrome - *Anita Fisher*
- Intervention Literacy Units using Native American Stories - *Lara Reyes, Kathy Redbird*
- Minimizing Cultural Assessment Bias: The Non-word Repetition Task and Native American Children - *Ashley Makes Cry, Julia Treat Stiefel & Molly Pulliam*
- Newborn Hearing Screening of Native American Babies - *Jean Nez*

The Induction Year

- An additional year of mentoring support for graduates of the program during their CFY.
- We visit the graduate at their CFY site and provide input.
- We assist in preparing for the Praxis exam.
- Faculty mentors stay in contact with the trainees via email and chat discussions on the internet.
- Former trainees attend the ASHA convention either presenting their research or meeting with the Project CIRCLE faculty.

Evaluation Tools

Project Evaluation

Trainees provided feedback to the Project Director and Coordinator each semester.

Trainee Evaluation

Each semester trainees received feedback from their advisor & mentor.

CFY Evaluation

Employers provided feedback on the trainees performance at the end of the Clinical Fellowship Year.

Giving Back

Two years of work as an SLP or Audiologist in a school setting with a significant Native American population.

Our graduates are now practicing in:

- Kansas
- Arizona
- Washington

Critical Factors for Success

Meet with students weekly in groups and individually discussing a wide variety of topics.

Family is the highest priority. Respect student's choices when family is placed before school.

Competition, especially verbal, is not valued.

Many academic courses expect students to debate verbally and question the instructor.

Stay in contact with professors of courses in which students are enrolled.

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