

Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health: The protective power of Native American culture

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The Wisconsin Office of Children's Mental Health (OCMH) is detailing the power that Native culture has in protecting youth mental health. In the [Culture is Prevention](#) Data Bite, OCMH shares research showing that Native culture has a strong preventive effect on mental health. That is, Native children with a positive connection to their Native culture benefit with a lower risk of suicide, depression, and substance abuse.

Research also points to several actions we can take to support Native youth. Communities, schools, policymakers, health leaders, and providers alike can promote traditional cultural practices like talking circles, drumming, ceremonies, as well as indigenous arts and crafts. Investments in language revitalization and outdoor experiences for Native youth are also beneficial to their well-being.

"There are a number of actions - big and small - that we can take to support our Native communities. Understanding the power of strong family bonds, spiritual connections, and cultural practices is a start," says Linda Hall, director of OCMH. "For Native American youth, understanding that this power comes from their own culture and already exists within Native communities is equally important."

Hall says, "Though many Native children face poverty, intergenerational trauma, and live in under-resourced communities, our office will continue to highlight the strengths of these young people as we work to build youth belonging and more hopeful futures for all children in Wisconsin."

See [OCMH Data Bites](#)

See [OCMH Youth Belonging](#)