

# Methamphetamine, Alcohol and HIV in Native American Communities



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# Substance Abuse USA

- Substance abuse directly affects more than 17 million Americans  
(Archives of General Psychiatry, August 2004)
- > 40 million are indirectly affected
  - Alcohol responsible for approximately 17K traffic deaths per year
  - Responsible for 630K traffic-related **injuries** (Alcoholism: Clinical & Experimental Research, August 2006)

# Substance Abuse USA

- 1 in 10 Americans classified w/ abuse/dependence (NIH Medline Plus, Spring 2007)
- 1 in 5 people with a substance use disorder have a co-occurring mental disorder
- Cost in dollars is inestimable

- We pay in social costs
  - Lost productivity
  - Domestic violence
  - Crime
- Criminal justice costs
- Health related services costs
- Child welfare costs

# Cost Benefit Analysis

New Iowa State University study  
presented to United Nations,  
March 16, 2009:

For each \$1 spent on substance  
abuse treatment, the taxpayer is  
saved \$10 in health, welfare and  
criminal justice costs!

Spoth & Gyll, 2009



# **Native Americans & Substance Abuse**

“American Indians have the highest prevalence of substance abuse and dependence among all the racial and ethnic groups comprising the United States.”

(American Journal of Public Health, August 2006)



# Native American Substance Use Stats

- Women age 18+ ↑ rates etoh/illicit drug abuse/dependence than other races
- Youth < 18 more likely to binge drink
- Men aged 25 – 34 3X as likely to die in car wrecks or by suicide while intoxicated (SAMHSA Household Survey 2003)
- 5 of top 10 NA causes of death are related to alcohol (Join Together, March 30, 2006)

# Substance Use Risk Factors in Native Communities

- Historic trauma (hx of colonization & oppression)
- Cultural conflicts (Native vs dominant culture)
- Poverty/unemployment/hopelessness
- Depression/PTSD/↓self-esteem/↑suicide
- Domestic violence
- Family substance use

# NAs & Suicide

- Studies indicate that NAs experience the highest rates of suicide of any ethnic group (Olson,& Wahab, 2006)
- Suicide contagion = exposure to suicide within family/peer group (NIMH, 2003)
- Autopsy studies show ***substance use a factor in over 50% of suicides*** (APA, 2003)

# NA HIV Statistics

- AI/AN have 40% higher AIDS rates than non-Hispanic white counterparts
- AI/AN men have 20% higher AIDS rates than non-Hispanic white men
- AI/AN women have twice the AIDS rates of non-Hispanic white women

Office of Minority Health, July 2009



# HIV Risk Factors for NAs

- Substance use & inadequate tx resources
- ↓ access to health care
- ↑ rates diabetes & TB
- Hidden risks (diabetes kits)
- ↓ access to HIV tests
- Confidentiality issues

# Risk Factors for NAs

- Modesty/unwillingness to discuss sex
- ↑ rates STDs, which facilitate HIV transmission
- ↓ education
- ↑ poverty

# Risk Factors for NAs

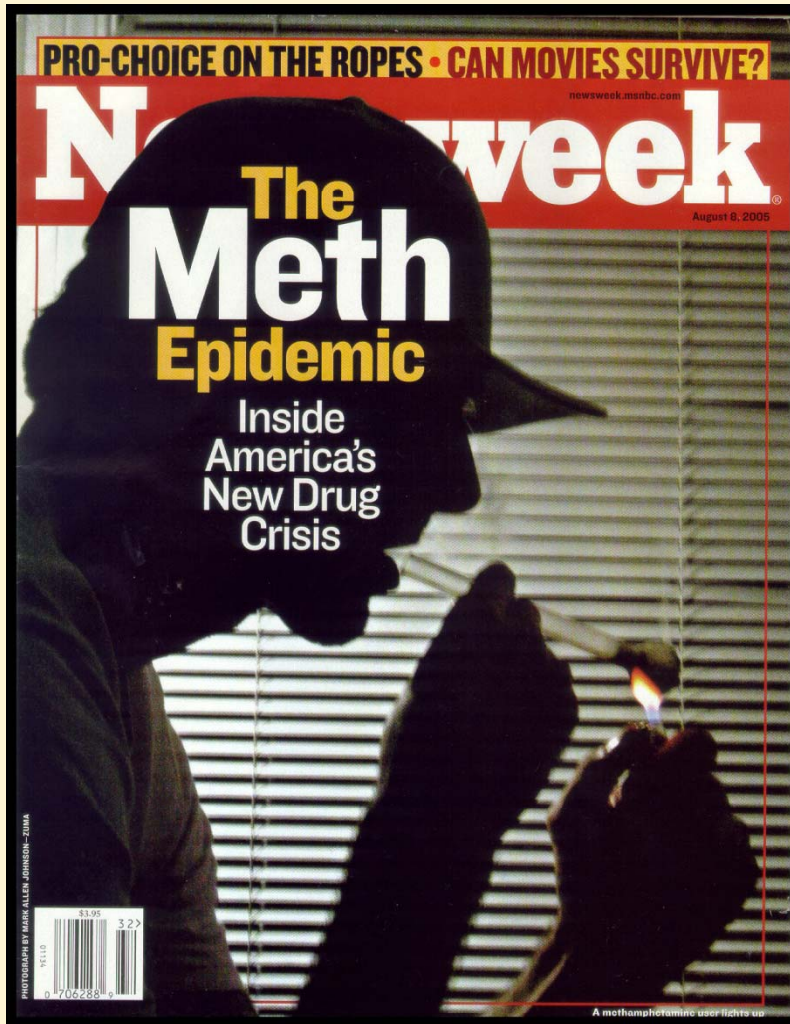
- Misperceptions & lack of HIV knowledge
  - “I’m not gay”
  - “We don’t have HIV here”
- “Wakusa”
- Violence

# Violence, Abuse & HIV

- Correlation between childhood abuse and adult HIV
- Correlation between gender-based violence and HIV (AMfar 2005)

# Native American Women & Sexual Assault

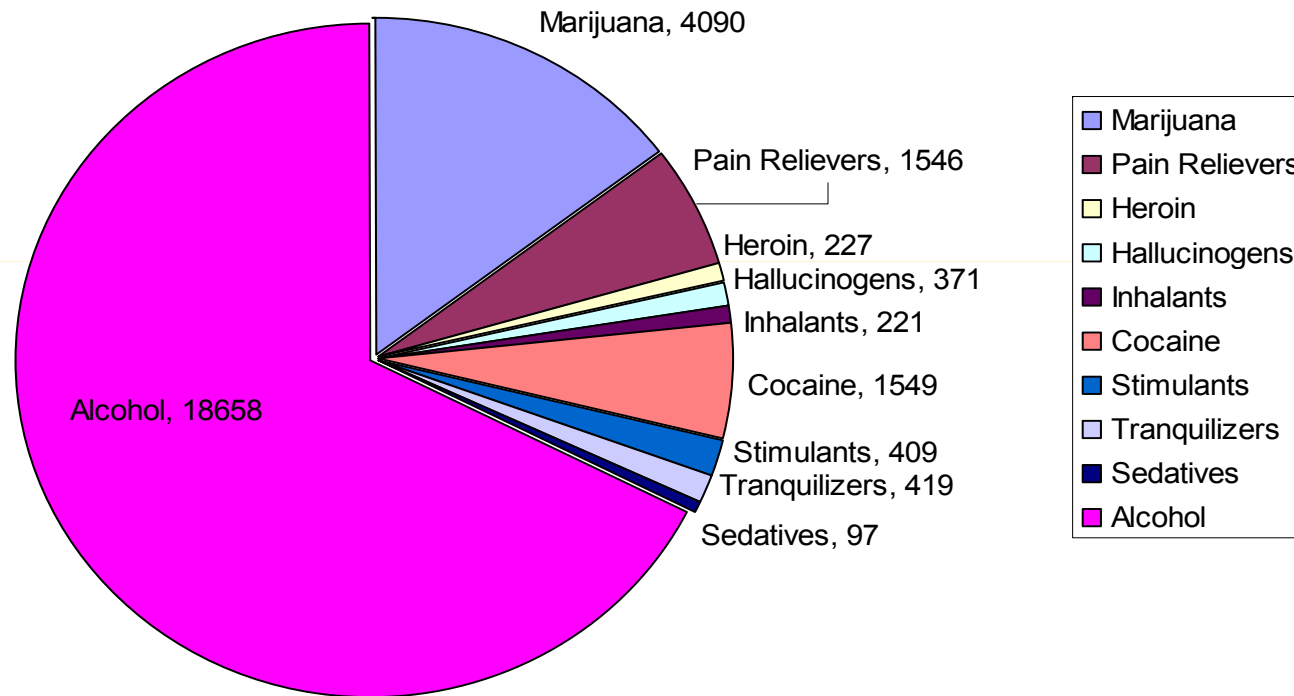
- Native American women experience higher rates of violence than any other group in the United States (Bhungalia, L., 2001; US Department of Justice, 1999)
- 2 ½ times more likely to be sexually assaulted than other women in U.S. (Amnesty International, April 2007)
- Less likely to report



Is there really  
an "epidemic"?



### Number (in Thousands) of Americans Age 12 and Older Dependent on or Abusing Alcohol and Illicit Drugs



SAMHSA, 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health



# Alcohol and HIV

- Positively associated with high risk sexual behaviors and injection drug use
- ~60% of HIV-infected patients meet diagnosis for alcohol abuse or dependence (Fiellin, 2004, *Topics in HIV Medicine*)
- Once infected, this population has higher vulnerability to virus progression

# Alcohol and HIV

- Increased risk of streptococcal pneumonia, TB, & Hep B & C
- May increase severity of AIDS-related dementia
- Negative correlation between alcohol use and medical adherence

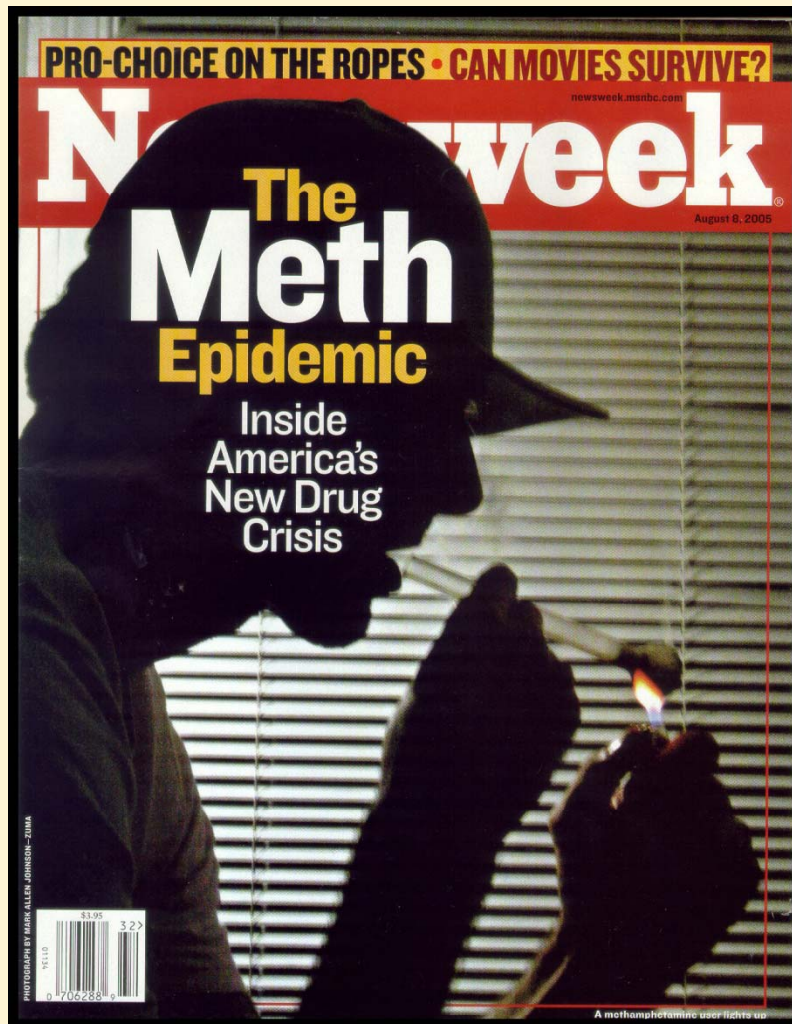
# Meth

According to the United Nations:

- After marijuana, meth is the most widely abused illicit drug on earth
- More users than cocaine and heroin combined

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime. World drug report 2005





**Is there really  
an "epidemic"?  
It appears that  
in Indian  
Country there  
is.**



# NIH Meth Study

- Nationally, meth users are disproportionately:
  - White, male, live in the West, often MSM
- Rurally:
  - Even #s of men/women, White, working class
- **Native Americans are 4.2 times as likely as whites to use the drug** (National Institute of Health news release, June 2007; J. of Addictions, June 2007)



# Meth in Indian Country

Drug cartels target Indian country because of:

- Jurisdictional loopholes
- Large areas of unpatrolled land
- Shortage of tribal law enforcement
- Poverty an incentive for Native youth to run drugs

# 2006 BIA Law Enforcement Survey

Methamphetamine impacts according to Bureau of Indian Affairs survey of 96 law enforcement agencies in Indian country:

U.S Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, 2006



# BIA Survey

- 74 percent said meth was biggest drug threat they faced.
- 60 percent said meth arrests had gone up in past year.
- 64 percent said meth was responsible for an increase in domestic violence.

# BIA Survey

- 64 percent said assault and battery had increased because of meth.
- 57 percent said burglaries were up because of meth.
- 48 percent said child abuse and neglect cases were up because of meth.

# Native Americans and Child Welfare

- Although ***contrary to traditional teachings of all tribes***, NAs have ↑ rates of child abuse
- Reasons include:
  - Poverty
  - Forced relocation
  - Forced assimilation
- **95% of cases related to *substance abuse***

National Indian Child Welfare Association, 2006



# Behaviors that ↑ HCV/HBV/HIV Risk

- Injection practices
- Syringe in/availability
- Sexual behavior
- Beliefs about risk of HIV in rural areas
- Fear of HIV testing
- STIGMA

# Substance Use & Sexual Behavior

Sex & drugs are inextricably linked for many people. Substances that especially fuel STD/HIV risk are alcohol & methamphetamine

- Stimulants make sex more exciting
- Alcohol makes sex less frightening
- Alcohol commonly associated with all forms of substance use and high risk sex behaviors

# Meth & HIV

Methamphetamine associated with:

- Hypersexuality
  - ↑ # partners, unknown partners
  - ↑ risk behaviors (anal sex, no condoms, etc.)
- MSM who use meth
  - ↑ rates of HIV than MSM who don't
  - ↑ other STIs

# No Substance is “Impossible to Treat”

Treatment implications:

- Client-centered
- Culturally appropriate
- Risk reduction focused
- Specialized for substance of abuse
- LONG TERM (in many cases)
- **AVAILABLE!!!**

# Prevention in AI/AN Communities

- View substance abuse as a family and a community problem
- Use community to fight etoh & s.a.
- Use tribal traditions & spiritual factors
- Engage elders
- Measure progress in small increments

# Banishment

- A tribal member's first conviction would lead to banishment and loss of privileges such as housing, health services, monetary payment, burial assistance and other benefits for five years
- A second conviction would result in permanent banishment and disenrollment from the tribe

# Cultural Immersion

- Sentencing youth to spend time with elders
- Remember tribal resistance and resilience over many historic challenges
- Design treatment/sentences that reinforce tribal community, cultural pride, NA identity

# Enculturation

- The degree to which an individual is embedded in his/her cultural traditions, as evidenced by traditional practices, language, spirituality and cultural identity (Whitbeck et al, 2004)
- Generally considered a link to prosocial behaviors, and a protective factor against substance abuse, illness, suicide, etc. (Garrouette et al, 2003)

# Enculturation as Risk Factor

- Often occurs in enclosed communities with few outside resources or support systems
- Growing up in two cultures may produce conflicting behavioral demands

• (LaFroboise & Bigfoot, 1988)



# Enculturation as Risk for NA Youth

- Reservation life amplifies risks (Freedental & Stiffman, 2004)
  - Economic deprivation
  - Limited employment opportunities
  - Lack of education
  - Hopelessness
- High rates of adult alcohol use weaken support systems for youth
- Earlier age & higher rates of use for kids

# Tips for Creating Effective Prevention Programs

- The more an intervention derives from within the community, the more likely it is to be used
- Use evidence-based practices
- Holistic

# Use the Community

- Ask people how substance use affects community
- Ask what's being done to combat problem
- Create committee to develop plan
- Divide planning & implementation responsibilities
- Use volunteers from whole community
- Don't get discouraged



# NA Prevention Programs

- National Indian Country Methamphetamine Initiative
  - Ad campaign
  - Tribal meth tool kit
  - Task force
  - News
  - Resources
- [www.ncai.org/meth/](http://www.ncai.org/meth/)



# Resources

- **Healthy Nations Initiative:**  
Based at the University of Colorado Denver, the project helps Native Americans develop programs in their communities to reduce the harm caused by all kinds of substance abuse, tobacco, alcohol and illegal drugs. Descriptions of funded community programs are on the site as well as a Resource Center page with links to substance abuse and other relevant organizations.
- <http://aianp.uchsc.edu/>



# Resources

- Commitment to Action for 7<sup>th</sup> Generation Awareness & Education: HIV/AIDS Prevention Project (CA7AE: HAPP)
- Funded by CDC, uses community readiness model to assess appropriate interventions for change
- Housed in Ethnic Studies Dept. @ CSU
- <http://www.happ.colostate.edu/>



# Resources

## National Native American AIDS Prevention Center (NNAAPC)

- Vision/Mission: To help organizations that serve Native communities to plan, develop and manage HIV/AIDS prevention, intervention, care and treatment programs. through culturally appropriate advocacy, research, education, and policy development in support of healthy Indigenous people.
- [www.nnaapc.org](http://www.nnaapc.org)



“I think we are engaged  
in a battle for hope.”

-- Richard H. Carmona, MD, MPH,  
FACS, Surgeon General, Addressing  
the Indian Affairs Committee of the  
United States Senate

June 2005

