

# Act With Courage

Bullying Prevention Month: October 2022



## What is Bullying?<sup>2</sup>

Bullying is defined as "unwanted, aggressive behavior among school-aged children that reaches a real or perceived power imbalance." More specifically, bullying is more intense than childhood disagreements. Children who bully may select targets with less power either physically or socially. Other characteristics of children who bully include repetition (picking on target every day) and intention (purposefully wanting to see target afraid and upset).

## Impacts of Bullying<sup>2</sup>

Children who are bullied may display withdrawn behavior, sadness, frustration, and aggression. They may also avoid peers at school and other activities, possibly resulting in attendance issues and poor schoolwork. Bullied children might show signs of stress like headaches, stomachaches, or trouble sleeping. Serious signs from the effects of bullying include depression and hopelessness.

***"Bullying is a problem for all kids, but it may be an even bigger problem in the Native American [Aboriginal] community."***

**-Tanya Lee, Indian Country Today<sup>1</sup>**



## Bullying and Native Youth

School should be a safe place for children to grow and learn, but it can often become a place where bullying permeates the learning environment. Bullying Prevention Month provides a space to recognize the effects of bullying and work to ensure our Native youth have a positive school experience.

According to the CDC, many children dread going to school and may even refuse to go due to verbal and physical aggression from peers.<sup>3</sup> A school atmosphere poisoned with bullying will exhibit declining student achievement, low teacher morale, and low parent confidence & trust in the school.<sup>4</sup>

Bullying is harmful to any child who experiences it, but it can be even more challenging for American Indian & Alaska Native youth because of the suffering and violence Native peoples have historically experienced throughout generations.<sup>5</sup> In fact, 54% of all American Indian students reported experiencing bullying behavior. Of those experiencing bullying behavior, 29.3% experienced threats, 47.5% experienced physical violence, and 23.5% experienced both.<sup>6</sup> Native youth may be targeted because of negative stereotypes and misconceptions, which are difficult to combat as part of the accepted history of the United States. The marginalization of Native peoples still seeps into school environments through stereotypes that encourage discriminatory beliefs and actions.<sup>2</sup>

# Resources

## Programs & Curricula:

We Are Native: WeRNative is a multimedia health resource for Native youth, by Native youth. It has a particular focus on the prevention of bullying, substance use, and suicide. The service includes an interactive website, a text messaging service (Text NATIVE to 94449), a Facebook page, a YouTube channel, a Twitter account, TikTok, and print marketing materials. Special features include an “Ask Your Relatives” Q&A service and medically accurate information reviewed by experts in public health, mental health, community engagement, and activism. It’s chock full of youth-friendly tips and resources as well.

American Indian Life Skills Development Curriculum: The AILSDC is a school-based suicide prevention curriculum designed to address bullying by reducing suicide risk and improving protective factors among American Indian adolescents 14 to 19 years old.

Not In Our School (NIOS): Even though it is not a Native-specific program, Not In Our School addresses student bullying by building safe and inclusive school environments. NIOS offers trainings, films, lesson plans, and other resources to encourage students to take a stand amongst their peers against bullying.

## Other Resources:

- [SAMHSA Tribal TTAC: Bullying in Indian Country Factsheet](#)
- [Indian Health Service: Stop Bullying in Your Schools and Communities](#)
- [Soaring Eagles Sentinel: Bully Tactics and the Native American Child](#)
- [Center for Parent Information & Resources: Resources on Bullying and Cyberbullying of Native Youth](#)
- [Unity Inc.: Anti-Bullying Resources for Native Youth](#)
- [EPICS/NAPTAC: Bullying and Cyberbullying: Focus on Native Youth with Disabilities \(Webinar\)](#)
  - [PDF Handout](#)
- [Cyberbullying: What American Indian and Alaska Native Parents Need to Know](#)



# References

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6. Campbell, E. M., & Smalling, S. E. (2013). American Indians and bullying in schools. *Journal of Indigenous Social Development*, 2(1) 1-15.



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