

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY

During 2009 to 2012, the Center for Healthy Communities at Oregon Health & Science University, the Shoshone-Bannock Tribes of the Fort Hall Indian Reservation, and the Northwest Portland Area Indian Health Board collaborated to implement and evaluate a school- and community-based positive youth development program entitled “HEY”, for Healthy & Empowered Youth. The HEY Program delivered an enhanced version of the Native STAND curriculum, a comprehensive healthy decision-making curriculum for American Indian and Alaska Native high school students. The enhanced version included hands-on training in media development and video production to engage students in the sensitive topics they face in their daily lives. Additional program components were designed to promote positive youth development constructs, including life skills, academic enrichment, cultural engagement, and career development. To evaluate the HEY Program, 117 junior and senior high school students were followed over a two-year period. Students completed a comprehensive pre- and post-survey, and focus groups and key informant interviews were carried out with students, facilitators, and community stakeholders to document their experiences with the program. Survey results demonstrated improvements in student leadership and achievement, physical and mental health, and healthy behaviors. Focus groups and interviews reported improvements in student self-esteem, life skills, health behavior, and community engagement. Notably, the media and filmmaking components were reported to be central to the program’s success by reinforcing and personalizing classroom lessons and generating health-related media (i.e., videos, posters, billboards) that resonated with family, friends, and the Tribe as a whole. Taken together, the HEY Program shows great promise as a culturally-appropriate, positive youth development program for AI/AN teens.