



Navigating Dementia: Community Services at Home

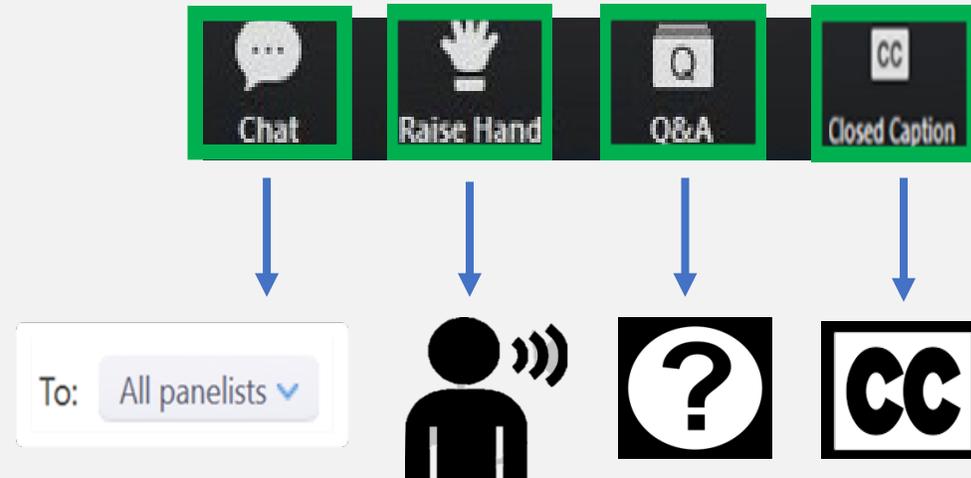
June 25, 2025

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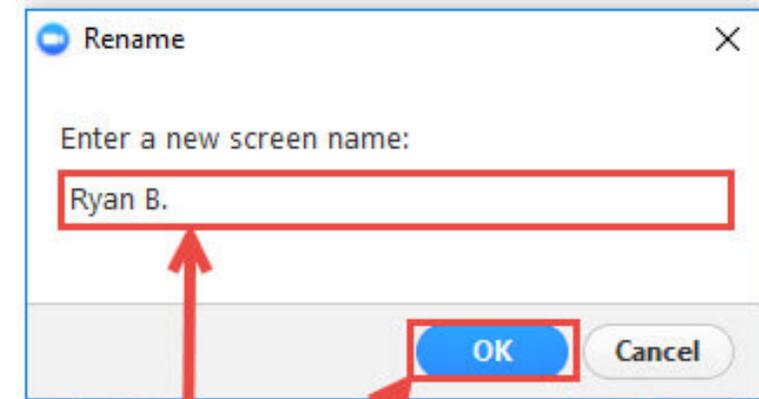
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Webinar Objectives

- Discuss the Spirit Lake Tribe's development and implementation of a dementia-capable HCBS system that provides access to relevant information, person-centered care, and streamlined eligibility for services
- Describe how the tribe trains elders, caregivers, health care professionals, first responders, and HCBS providers to recognize when dementia-specific services might be appropriate
- Explain how the tribe's information system helps meet the needs of Native elders with dementia

Today's Presenters



Shaylynn DeMarrias
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Spirit Lake Senior Services



Iris Walking Eagle
Director of Budget & Grants
Spirit Lake Senior Services



Navigating Dementia: Community Services at Home

Presented by:

Spirit Lake Senior Services

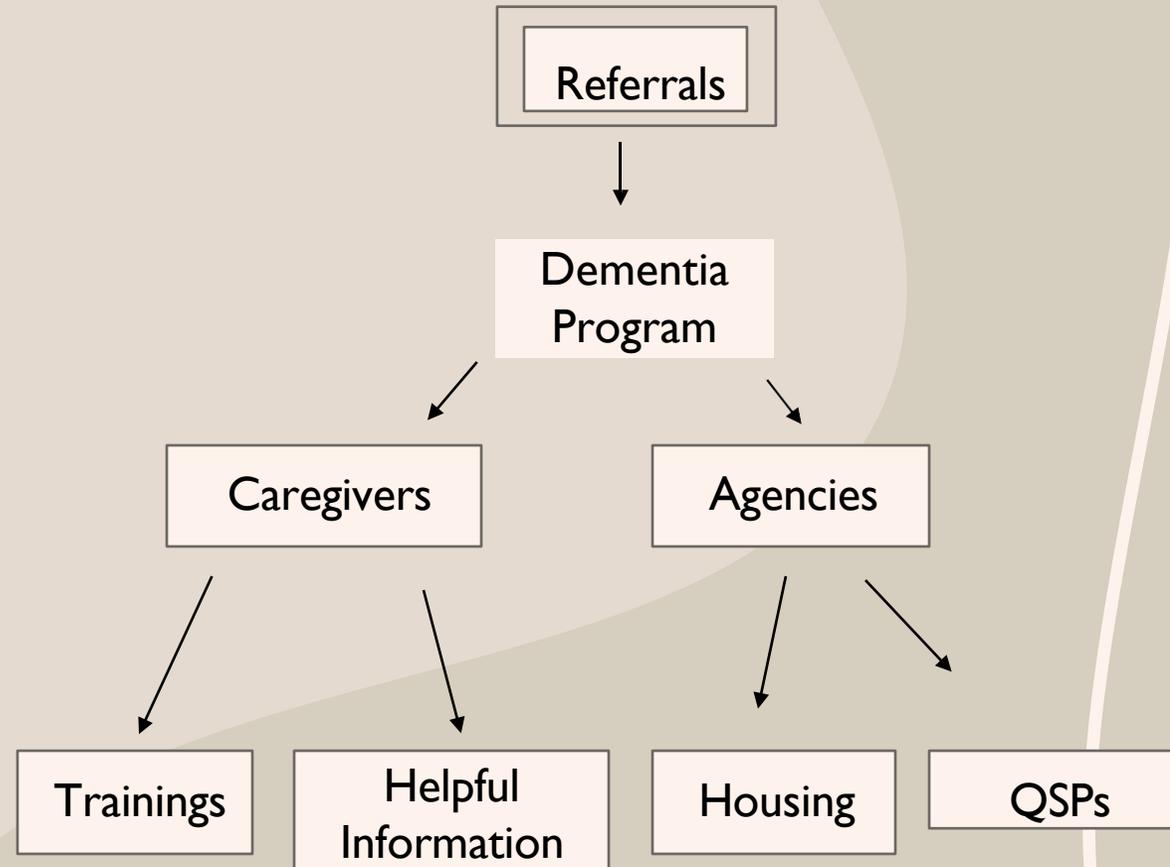
Dementia Program Staff

Presentation Overview

- Development and implementation of a dementia-capable HCBS system
- Implementation of dementia-specific trainings
- Use of the tribe's information system to identify and track Native American elders with dementia

Developing and Sustaining a Dementia-Capable HCBS System

- When a referral is made, the dementia program offers:
 - A Mini-Cog for care recipients
 - Training and care plans for caregivers
- The dementia program collaborates with different agencies and programs—e.g., housing, qualified service providers (QSPs), Spirit Lake Health Center, community health representatives (CHRs), Elder Protection.



Home Visits



- People with a Mini-Cog score of 3/5 or less are referred to the Spirit Lake Health Center for further testing.
- Caregivers are given information about dementia, behaviors such as sundowning, and online support groups.
- At-home safety risk factors are assessed.



Most home visits result in a Spirit Lake Housing referral for maintenance to improve roofing, windows, and doors.



QSP referrals are often provided to help with cleaning and meal preparation.



Tribal Health CHRs help with transportation to/from medical appointments and with other health-related needs, such as medication pickup.

Community Engagement

To increase awareness and understanding of dementia, the Senior Services Dementia Program has created culturally relevant PowerPoint presentations for the community, as well as a presentation specifically for health care professionals.

Understanding Memory Loss and Forgetfulness



Dementia Bingo

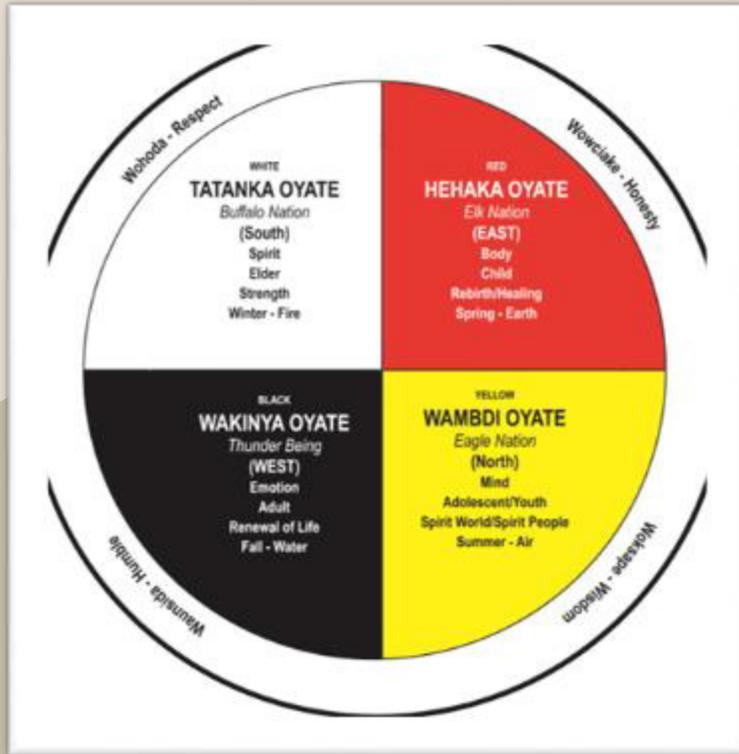


Medicine Wheel: Circle of life and How It Relates to Dementia



Different Types of Dementia

Culturally Relevant PowerPoint Presentation



- The dementia team created a medicine wheel specifically for the Spirit Lake Tribe with input from team members and community elders.
- The medicine wheel has four parts (child, adolescent, adult, and elder), which correlate with the mind, body, emotions, and spirit.

Developed by Vanessa Thomas, Former Director of Senior Services Program; Joseph Lawrence, Sr, Dakota elder; Kenneth Hill, Dakota elder; Loretta Heuer, PhD, RN; and Chris Burd, PhD, RN.

Medicine Wheel: Circle of Life and How It Relates to Dementia

- Presented:
 - At the National Title VI Training & Technical Assistance Conference in Washington, DC, April 2023, and in Minneapolis, MN, March 2025.
 - At the Northwest Tribal Brain Health & Dementia Summit in Anacortes, WA, July 2023.
 - During a virtual symposium, *Age Friendly Healthcare for American Indian Elders*, February 28, 2025.
- Also highlighted in the Healthy Brain Initiative: Road Map for American Indian and Alaska Native People.

PowerPoint Presentation for Health Care Providers



A two-part health care conference, presented by Karen Semmens, DNP, GCNS-BS



Part I: Types of Dementia



Part II: Caring for Someone with Dementia



69 HCPs attended



Handouts included a demographic form and pre/post surveys

Awareness

- Outreach is a key component of community education.
 - Brochures and quarterly newsletters were developed and distributed to highlight project events/staff and provide useful information about dementia and memory loss.
- Currently, Spirit Lake Senior Services Dementia Program reaches 1,578 individuals in the surrounding communities.
- Promotional items list contact information and help draw questions about the program.



Dementia Program's Annual Events

- Presentations about dementia to elders, family members, and health care professionals
 - Goals: To educate the public and decrease the stigma of dementia
- At each presentation:
 - Informative handouts, a demographic form, and pre/post surveys are distributed
 - Lunch and transportation are provided
 - Attendees have the opportunity to participate in memory-stimulating activities



Dementia Program's Annual Events (cont.)

- Dementia Awareness Week, third week in May
 - Outreach activities every day in each district
- The Longest Day, usually held the day of summer solstice (in June)
 - An annual walk to fight the darkness of different types of dementia
- Halloween bash, October 17–20
- Christmas event, December 16
 - Elders enjoy themselves while playing memory games



Implementation of Trainings

- Spirit Lake Senior Services used the Second Wind Dreams Virtual Dementia Tour and Savvy Caregiver in Indian Country training for caregivers
- P.K. Beville, a geriatric specialist, created the tour to allow participants to put themselves in the shoes of someone struggling with dementia

Virtual Dementia Tour

- 8-minute, hands-on simulation of dementia-related sensory and physical changes; participants complete ordinary tasks under these conditions
- Provides practical insights for clearer, more confident caregiving—speaking louder, using direct language, standing in front of the person, and practicing coping skills
- Consistently one of the program’s most successful trainings, especially popular with health care professionals

Challenges

- Keeping the VDT running smoothly was difficult for a larger group, as was monitoring participants for safety.
- The tour requires at least two rooms—one for the activity and another for the debriefing—which was an issue for some organizations.
- Local health care agencies in the area had strict schedules that prevented them from attending the VDT.



Savvy Caregiver in Indian Country

- Six-week course (2-hour sessions) led by Dr. Neil Henderson on understanding and managing dementia
- Challenges
 - Caregivers lacked respite care and could not leave home
 - Series was too long for their schedules
- Recommendation
 - Deliver the training to health care agencies that can reserve a full day for mandatory staff instruction

Identifying and Tracking Tribal Elders with Dementia



Successfully obtained information from participants at various events:

- Kept a sign-up sheet to track the number of attendees
- Identified each person as a community member, caregiver, or health care professional

Mini-Cog Screening

- Recently, the Dementia Program partnered with the Spirit Lake Tribal Health CHR Program for an Early Dementia Detection in AI/AN Older Adults: CHR Mini-Cog Screening Pilot from the IHS Division of Clinical and Community Services.
- **Purpose:** To screen as many individuals as possible who are struggling with memory loss or cognitive decline.
- **Tracking:** Every screening has a person's name attached, to avoid duplication of efforts.



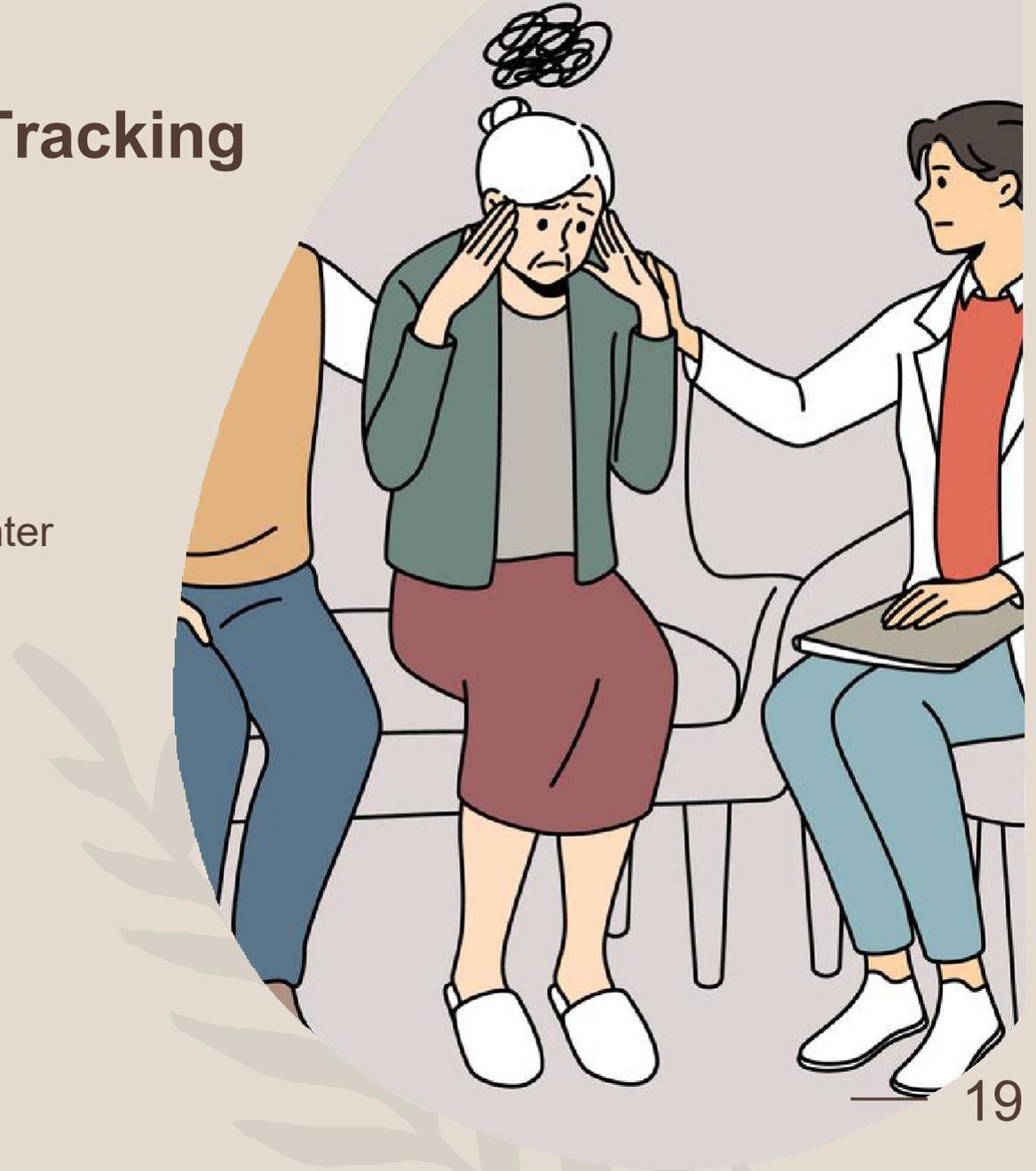
AD8 Survey Results

45 people participated in the AD8 dementia screening

- 79% were age 60 or older; all but 1 were Native American
- Nearly 75% were female
- Fewer than 1 in 5 had a caregiver
- Most caregivers were volunteers or relatives

Challenges of Identifying and Tracking Tribal Elders with Dementia

- The major challenge was not being able to obtain the number of elders with cognitive impairment.
 - Gathering statistics from the local Health Center was unsuccessful.
 - The information that we did collect helped us tailor the content of our presentations to the needs of our audience.



Summary

- Used an effective referral system that incorporates many agencies.
- To sustain and educate, the community holds annual events that include PowerPoint presentations.
- Implemented caregiver trainings that bring insight and different perspectives to caregivers while helping caregivers become more knowledgeable.
- To identify and track Native American Elders with dementia, used short screening and identified individuals as caregivers, community members, or health care professionals to ease the tracking of progress.

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Questions?

