



Lummi Treatment Programs Highlight Value of Culturally Based Practices

Catching Up With COSSUP, April 2023

This newsletter article highlights the successes of the Lummi Chemical Addiction Recovery and Education (CARE) Opiate Treatment Program (OTP), a comprehensive substance use treatment program located in Whatcom County, Washington. The Lummi Nation, a Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Comprehensive Opioid, Stimulant, and Substance Abuse Program (COSSAP) grantee, is using its new project funds to further enhance its services and program reach. The following are highlights of the tribe's program innovations and lessons learned along the way.¹

CARE was established out of an immediate need to attend to opioid-related deaths. Long waitlists for treatment and a lack of services led to people dying. Therefore, tribal members decided that they were going to address this issue. Through the Healing Spirit Clinic, the Lummi Nation's tribally owned OTP, which operates under Lummi CARE, offers medication-assisted treatment (MAT) to individuals struggling with opioid addiction. The program uses medications such as Suboxone, Sublocade, methadone (coming soon), and naltrexone to help people manage their withdrawal symptoms, reduce cravings, and prevent relapse. In addition to medication, the program also provides counseling, behavioral therapy, and support groups to help address the underlying issues that led to addiction.

The Lummi CARE OTP follows evidence-based practices and guidelines established by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to ensure that patients receive high-quality care. The program is staffed by licensed medical professionals and counselors who are experienced in treating addiction. The Lummi CARE OTP also offers education and resources to patients and their families to help them understand addiction, recovery, and the steps needed to maintain sobriety. The program encourages patients to take an active role in their treatment and recovery by providing individualized treatment plans and ongoing support.

LESSON LEARNED: *It is important to address stigma in the community surrounding addiction and the use of MATs for a program to be successful.*

The Lummi CARE OTP also offers a mother-baby group to support pregnant women and new mothers who are in recovery from opioid addiction. The group provides a safe and supportive environment for women to connect with other mothers who are going through similar experiences. It focuses on helping women develop healthy coping skills and learn about the importance of self-care, providing education on topics such as breastfeeding, nutrition, infant development, and parenting skills. In addition, the group offers support for women who may be struggling with postpartum depression or anxiety, as well as opportunities for bonding between mothers and their infants. Mothers are encouraged to bring their babies to group meetings, where they can participate in activities such as baby massage and playtime. The group is led by trained facilitators who have experience working with pregnant women and new mothers in recovery. The facilitators provide a nonjudgmental and supportive environment where women can share their experiences and receive feedback and guidance.

LESSON LEARNED: *If we are to heal the cycle of addiction, we need to start with supporting attachment and bonding. Safe, supportive, nurturing relationships with caregivers are a strong protective factor against addiction.*

The Lummi CARE OTP has a culture room, which is a dedicated space that honors the cultural heritage of the Lummi Nation and provides a space for cultural activities and healing practices. The culture room is designed to support the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual well-being of patients and their families. It is used for a variety of activities, including traditional healing ceremonies, drumming circles, storytelling, and art therapy. These activities are designed to promote healing, build community, and connect patients to their cultural

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heritage. The culture room is staffed by cultural advisors who are knowledgeable about Lummi culture and traditions and can provide guidance and support for patients who are interested in learning more about their cultural heritage by participating in cultural activities. The culture room is an important part of the Lummi CARE OTP, as it recognizes the importance of culture and tradition in the healing process. It provides a safe and supportive space for patients to explore their cultural identity, connect with their community, and find meaning and purpose in their recovery journey.

Lummi CARE also utilizes the Reef-Net Wellness Model, a holistic wellness framework that was developed by the Native Transformation Project, a nonprofit organization based in the United States. The model is grounded in traditional Indigenous knowledge and practices and is designed to promote wellness and healing for Indigenous individuals and communities.

The Reef-Net Wellness Model is based on the concept of the reef-net fishing technique, which is used by Coast Salish communities in the Pacific Northwest to sustainably harvest salmon.² Through this method, a large net is suspended between two canoes and is lowered into the water when a school of fish is spotted. The fish swim into the net, which is then lifted out of the water, allowing the fish to be harvested without harm. Similarly, the Reef-Net Wellness Model is based on the idea of creating a safe and supportive environment that allows individuals to access the resources and supports they need to thrive. The model includes four components:

1. **Physical Wellness**—This component focuses on the physical health and well-being of individuals and communities, including access to healthy food, exercise, and health care services.
2. **Emotional Wellness**—This component focuses on supporting emotional well-being and resilience through cultural practices such as storytelling, ceremony, and connection with nature.
3. **Mental Wellness**—This component focuses on promoting mental health and addressing mental health challenges through culturally relevant practices and approaches, such as talking circles and counseling services.

4. **Spiritual Wellness**—This component focuses on supporting spiritual health and connection to culture and traditions through ceremonies, cultural practices, and connection to the land.

The Reef-Net Wellness Model emphasizes the importance of interconnectedness and the interrelatedness of the four components, as well as the importance of cultural practices and traditions in promoting wellness and healing for Indigenous individuals and communities. The model has been used in a variety of settings, including health care, education, and community development, to promote wellness and healing for Indigenous peoples.

LESSON LEARNED: Attending to the whole person is critical in addiction recovery, and this includes culturally attuned services that promote healing and build community.

Lummi CARE recognized the importance of not having tunnel vision when addressing the opioid issue. Accordingly, it has expanded its scope to include prevention services as well as coordination with criminal justice entities at Intercept 0 of the Sequential Intercept Model (SIM).³ The SIM is a framework used to guide the coordination of services and resources for individuals who are in contact with the criminal justice system because of a behavioral health issue, such as mental illness or substance use disorder. The SIM is designed to identify and address the needs of individuals at each stage of the criminal justice process, from initial contact with service providers to reentry into the community. The SIM framework is organized into six sequential intercepts:

Intercept 0: Community Services

- Involves opportunities to divert people into local crisis care services. Resources are available without requiring people in crisis to call 9-1-1, but sometimes 9-1-1 and law enforcement are the only resources available. Connects people with treatment or services instead of arresting or charging them with a crime.

Intercept 1: Law Enforcement

- Involves diversion performed by law enforcement and other emergency service providers who respond to people with mental and substance use disorders. Allows people to be diverted to treatment instead of being arrested or booked into jail.

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Intercept 2: Initial Court Hearings/Initial Detention

- Involves diversion to community-based treatment by jail clinicians, social workers, or court officials during jail intake, booking, or initial hearing.

Intercept 3: Jails/Courts

- Involves diversion to community-based services through jail or court processes and programs after a person has been booked into jail. Includes services that prevent the worsening of a person's illness during their stay in jail or prison.

Intercept 4: Reentry

- Involves supported reentry back into the community after jail or prison to reduce further justice involvement of people with mental and substance use disorders. Involves reentry coordinators, peer support staff, or community in-reach to link people with proper mental health and substance use treatment services.

Intercept 5: Community Corrections

- Involves community-based criminal justice supervision with added supports for people with mental and substance use disorders to prevent violations or offenses that may result in another jail or prison stay.

Lummi CARE is also coordinating with drug courts, law enforcement agencies, human trafficking prevention organizations, and housing services to provide comprehensive services to its community.

LESSON LEARNED: *It is easy to fixate on our areas of expertise and forget the bigger system or community within which the client is embedded. By attending to the full continuum through the development of relationships with other service providers, we are able to serve the person more fully.*

Looking toward the future: The Lummi CARE OTP, under the Lummi Indian Business Council, applied for and received an FY 2022 COSSAP grant award to further expand its services. Its program plans include:

- Outreach and case management services to tribal members at initial contact with the Lummi Nation Police Department (LNPD).

- Outreach and case management services to tribal members discontinuing OTP treatment against medical advice or missing OTP services for more than 5 days.
- Creation of a K–12 education and prevention program to connect students in schools and the community with the LNPD and its officers.

Endnotes

1. Much gratitude is due to Rene Ramirez with the Lummi CARE OTP, who provided much of this information in an interview.
2. Native Transformations Project Team, 2015, *Native Transformations in the Pacific Northwest*, https://canhr.uaf.edu/files/9215/2711/2572/NT_in_PNW-2015-reduced_size.pdf.
3. SAMHSA, 2022, *The Sequential Intercept Model*, <https://www.samhsa.gov/criminal-juvenile-justice/sim-overview>.