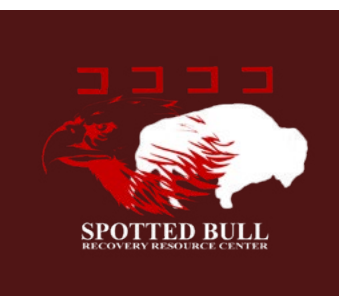
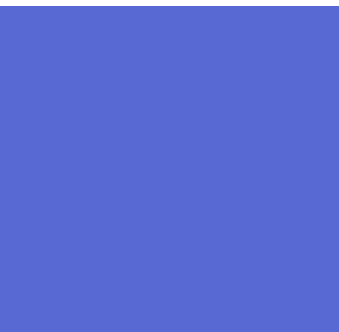




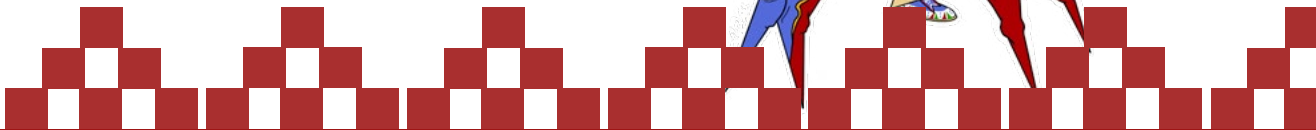
30th Annual Fort Peck Tribes
**YOUTH LEADERSHIP
 CONFERENCE**
 EVALUATION REPORT
 September 2022





Executive Summary

This conference is about laying a foundation for a better future by teaching and focusing on the youth of today. The adults and elders on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation understand that we have all the tools we need to create a good life for ourselves and for our people. This conference helps youth to identify such tools and teaches them how to effectively use them. Throughout this conference the youth were able to create a deeper and more meaningful connection with themselves and their peers through cultural education, spiritual enlightenment, and equine therapy. 56% of the attendees claim to have gained more knowledge about their sources of strength, multigenerational trauma and breaking unhealthy cycles, spirituality, and more. We as a community are stronger because of our youth. This report shows that youth are capable, worthy, qualified, and called to be the next generation of leaders on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation.



Acknowledgments

We appreciate all of the prayers, time, and effort that went into planning the 30th Annual Youth Leadership Conference. The support of Courage Crawford, Dale Four Bear, Ernie Big Horn, Carrie Manning, and everyone who comes forward each year to make this conference possible. For more information about this report, contact Spotted Bull Resource and Recovery Center at 406-768-3852.

Funding information

Indian Health Service COIPP grant # H1H5IHS0016 COIPP

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History

Thirty years of hosting a youth leadership conference for the youth on the Fort Peck Indian Reservation, many youth, families, and generations have been positively impacted. The annual conference elevates SBRRC's mission to incorporate cultural medical, and spiritual teachings to help individuals make healthier lifestyle choices. SBRRC believes that the resources people need to grow lie within the person themselves. Walking in balance is one of the main teachings for all youth, families, and individuals involved in SBRRC activities. The conference and SBRRC efforts address at-risk behaviors such as substance abuse, violence, bullying, negative peer pressure, unhealthy relationships, and suicide ideation. Because some youth report limited connections to culture and spirituality, activities are designed to build resilience and cultural connections.

SBRRC partners with Native PRIDE to host a youth leadership conference and includes the Good Road of Life (GRL) curriculum ([link here](#)), including a 1-day Training of Trainers GRL workshop and a 3-day Good Road of Life (GRL) training for students and adults.¹ The event includes guest speakers, interactive activities, horse demonstrations, swimming, and downtime for youth to spend with healthy peers in a sober and safe environment. The goals of the youth conference are to share ideas, build relationships, build self-efficacy and confidence, and cultivate leadership skills.

SBRRC's Approach

1

SBRRC works with the Nakoda Dakota Oyate (NDO) youth council, Native PRIDE, and tribal elders / cultural specialists to plan the conference and activities.

2

SBRRC and NDO recruit youth between the ages of 14 to 21 to attend. All expenses are paid with funding from the Indian Health Service COIPP grant # H1H5IHS0016 COIPP.

2

Conference activities begin with a GRL Training of Trainers and a strategic planning process on the first day.

4

Youth arrive on the second day and activities begin.

5

Adults, older youth, and elders work to support clans and discussions.

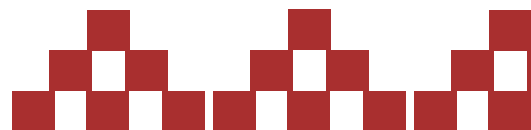
6

Information is collected throughout the event by the AKA evaluation team and SBRRC staff.

7

Evaluation report documents value, meaning, impact, and recommendations for future work.

¹Note the term student, youth, and participant are used in this report and represent the same individual, adults are also called participants.



Our Purpose


To document how the leadership conference connects youth with their history and with each other and to highlight best practices in Indian Country, at SBRCC, within programs, and for Native all people. Our report uses podcasts and sketches to reach and relate to as many people as possible. This honors learning styles and sources of inspiration. We know that visual and audio media helps influence the mind and create stories that may not be possible by reading a report.

Our Methods

Native PRIDE contracted with [Allyson Kelley & Associates PLLC](#) to evaluate the conference. AKA evaluation interns Brighten Crawford, Kaden Martin, and Ashley Weigum attended the conference and various activities. Their job was to collect data, interview participants, and help tell the story of what happened. They used a semi-structured interview guide to ask participants questions about their experiences at the retreat; they also captured the activities through photos and documented their perspectives through journaling. After data collection ended, interns sent all data to Allyson Kelley to analyze and report back to the community. The evaluation team met with Carrie Manning, Ernie Bighorn, Courage Crawford, Tina Jackson, and Clayton Small to share preliminary results from the evaluation. Data in the report were reviewed, discussed, and validated through verbal agreements and discussions.

Our Data Sources

 **Podcast and transcript-1 recording**
by Ashley Weigum, Brighten Crawford, AKA Interns

 **Photos** shared by Tina Jackson and Carrie Manning

 **Sketches** created by Kaden Martin, AKA Intern



The Narratives

Our team wrote narratives about this experience by reflecting on what this conference meant. This writing process occurred after the conference and highlights the unique positions and perspectives of the evaluation team in working with the data to find meaning and value.



Ashley Weigum

These events are what make this work so worth it. To see these students growing from day one to the last day is absolutely priceless. This project will go so far; it will make these kids feel seen and allow them a safe space to be who they are. The world is such a scary place, and with the help of these adults, it makes it seem not so bad. As we went through the days of the conference, you could see them feel more confident within their identity, their groups, and even the community. They talked of what they would do when they got back and how they would use these skills in various capacities later on. I attended thinking I was just going to observe, but even for me, it became so much more. I became close with the participants, learning their stories, and ambitions; these kids have strong heads on their shoulders that will take them so far, not to mention so many mentors that will help them every step of the way. Also, we could not have had a better facilitator. Dr. Small shows you that it is okay to be silly, it is okay to be vulnerable, and it's okay to step out of your comfort zone; within doing that is growth. I think that is a powerful, powerful message. I cannot wait to see what happens for years to come. I leave here feeling like our youth is in good hands.



Brighten Crawford Martin

This conference is about connection, and you can feel it. Connection to culture, to peers, to spirituality, and this year, connection to horses. I love watching the youth create these special bonds and connections in a safe and fun environment. I could feel the love and the pride the elders had for the youth that attended and I loved watching the youth come out of their shell and feel safe to express themselves and be who they are. These youth want to lead; they want to help, and this conference is a way to teach them how they can do this within their community and within themselves.

I enjoyed seeing the youth work together through play and hearing them laugh as they do. It was humbling to see the youth step outside of their comfort zones by speaking in front of an audience, expressing themselves, or reaching out and befriending one another. I know this conference was intended to help them but being there helped me too.



Kaden Martin


During my time at this youth leadership conference, **I saw through the examples of the leaders what it means to raise up the next generation.** It amazes me the amount of love and effort that goes into supporting these youth. In my community growing up, I cherished every opportunity to be with others my age and learn life skills with them. I have no doubt in my mind that this conference was everything younger me could have needed. Watching these youth practice fellowship and leadership with one another gives me hope about their futures and the futures of their families. The skills they learned, the experiences they've had will help in supporting their moral foundations for the rest of their lives. I have no doubt about that.

Allyson Kelley

I've been doing this work for a while now. I've been to these conferences and watched the youth and adults build confidence and connections. The process always works, no matter what. Everyone takes something with them - skills, understanding, knowledge, and healing. This work matters because, without it, many youth and adults would never know or have access to healing resources and people. The training helps everyone reach their full potential and feel connected to a greater sense of purpose, community, and culture. This is what matters, and this is what I know for sure.



ADDITIONAL NARRATIVES AND DOCUMENTATION

- Our evaluation team also captured the message of presenters during the conference, Dorothy Dupree, Walter Runsaabove, and Sunny Realbird  [**CLICK HERE**](#)





The Surveys

GRL Training of Trainers

Training helps TOT participants...

92% understand the **importance of cultural competence.**

92% become **familiar with the team-trust-building process.**

92% about the **group process.**

80% learn how to **create a safe/sacred place for learning.**

74% practice **facilitation skills.**

Because of this training, TOT participants ...

85% understand the important role of the **Community Mobilizer.**

72% have information that will help them in their **personal wellness.**

68% understand their **role as a facilitator, clan leader, or rover.**

64% understand the logistical **responsibilities of the training.**

72% understand how to **facilitate lessons for participants.**

68% understand the **content of the chapters of the curriculum.**

76% committed to **delivering the GRL Curriculum.**



27

participants completed the TOT surveys

19 Youth

5 Adults

3 Unknown



88% felt the **facilitators, clan leaders, and rovers were effective or very effective.**



Most important things TOT participants learned...

- #1 TEAMWORK** ²
- #2 COMMUNICATION AND TALK MORE** ³
- #3 PEER SUPPORT AND ENCOURAGEMENT** ⁴
- #4 PARTICIPATE AND HAVE FUN, HOW TO DEAL WITH MY PROBLEMS/COPING, TRUST IS KEY** ⁵

Respect, cooperation. I can spend money pretty fast. **MOTIVATING TEAMMATES.** Prayer is important. Horses are good therapists. Get to know others. **STEP OUTSIDE OF MY COMFORT ZONE=GROWTH.** Everyone is getting over something, and you are not always alone. How to be happy, how to make new friends. **HOW TO BE A LEADER.** Things get better when you open up, it's more fun when you know people. **Friendship, communication, and uplifting others. Confidence, trust building.** The way kids come to this. **DON'T BE SHY, BE OUTGOING; I AM IMPORTANT.** Kids need to open up more, we are all important. **Motivation, bonding. COMPANIONSHIP, JUST STAY YOU.** Working together isn't that bad; keep your loved ones close, and embrace your Native culture always. **Leadership, responsibility.** Having fun

One thing TOT participants will do with the information...

- #1 TAKE IT HOME AND SPREAD IT WITH FAMILY, PEERS, YOUNGER SIBLINGS, AND OTHERS** ⁶
- #2 COMMUNICATE WITH TEAMMATES, INVOLVE MYSELF MORE IN THE COMMUNITY** ⁷

Help others. **Not be in my shell. TALK AND CONNECT WITH HORSES MORE.** Be a better leader. Teach it. **PRACTICE MORE.** Something. **Continue growing.** Team bonding skills. **Be myself.** Survive in life.

² n = 8

⁴ n = 4

⁶ n = 5

³ n = 6

⁵ n = 2

⁷ n = 2



I will become better than what people expect.





GRL Evaluation

We asked the youth to rate their level of knowledge before the GRL training and after the training using a 10-point scale where 1=No Knowledge and 10= A Great Deal of Knowledge. Table 1 shows significant knowledge increases for all topics; the largest increase was related to knowledge about colonization, racism, and the role of Native people, a 56% increase from before the GRL and after, Table 1.

Table 1. GRL Before and After Knowledge

	Before	After	Percent Change
Spirituality	5.4	7.5	38% ↑
Sources of Strength	5.1	7.9	56% ↑
Colonization, Racism, and the Role of Native People	6.2	8.2	32% ↑
Multigenerational Trauma and Breaking Unhealthy Cycles	5.6	8.2	48% ↑
Grief-Loss	6.6	7.7	17% ↑
Suicide Prevention	7.4	8.8	19% ↑

Next, we asked youth how the GRL training impacted them. They were instructed to select all responses that applied to their experience. The largest impact was understanding the impact of historical trauma and racism (n = 11).

58% understand the impact of **historical trauma and racism** on my life

53% understand the **impact of colonization**

53% understand how to **deal with grief**

42% can **help someone who is suicidal**

42% know how to **break unhealthy cycles**

32% feel more **connected to my spirit**

15% were **not impacted at all**

19

participants completed the survey

10 Female

8 Males

1 Unknown

Average age

15.05

(SD=2.9, range 8 to 18 years)

100%

agreed or strongly agreed that facilitators were **organized, knowledgeable, and supportive.**

Suggestions

- More rest time (n = 2)
- More interactive
- It was a good experience
- Everything was great
- Stay on time
- We should go to the mall

Equine Therapy Boys and Girls Club Ranch

Participants **learned** about equine therapy...

- About horses, they are good listeners; they can feel what I feel and listen.
- Horses can help us understand and are spiritually connected to humans.
- Horses are soft and are used in different therapies, they are medicine.
- I made friends with people and kids I see every day.
- I learned how to control my emotions, be more respectful, work together, communicate, and de-stress.

Participants **disliked** equine therapy...

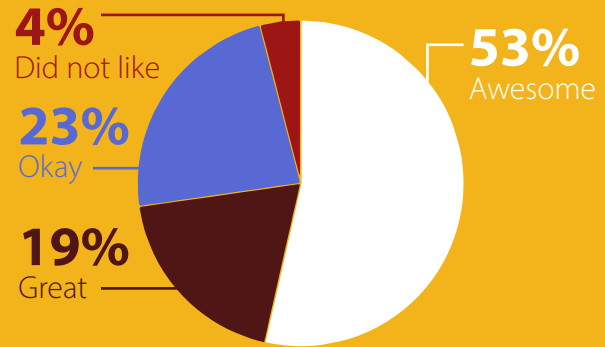
- Saying my name in front of people, not being dressed properly, it was dirty there.
- There were bugs.
- We could not ride the horses; they pooped.
- It was hot, and they kept putting their face in my face.
- They followed me.
- We did not have enough time.

Participants **recommend** improving equine therapy by...

- Getting more kids involved and not grouping everyone.
- More time is needed with the groups

28 participants completed the survey

Participants rated the Equine Therapy.....



Participants **loved** equine therapy...

- Being invited, the connection to horses, talking to horses, petting and brushing the horses, the smell of the ranch.
- It was a peaceful and calming environment, there was a softness to it.
- I liked being split into groups with similar ages and involving young kids.
- The horses kept following me and putting their face in my face.
- I wish we could stay longer.
- I loved everything.

Participants **want to learn more** about equine therapy...

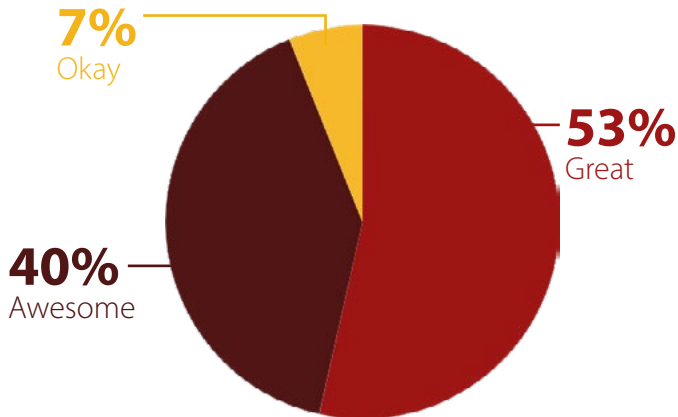
- Communicating with the horse and getting to know them before we ride them.
- How do they understand your feelings and what are they feeling?
- I want to learn how to be a horsewoman, how to handle a horse, and more about the history of the horse, archery, roping, bull riding, rodeo, and barrel racing.
- Teach us our language.
- We need more days of the conference and more help.



Crystal Red Grave History of the Horse to Our People

18 participants completed the survey

Participants rated the History of the Horse to our People Event...



We asked participants what they learned, what they loved, liked the least, and still want to learn.

History and Culture

- #1 **FANCY DANCE COMES FROM A DREAM AND FANCY DANCER OUTFITS** ⁸
- #2 **ABOUT MY CULTURE AND HISTORY, REGALIA HAS MEANING** ⁹

How to Communicate

- #1 **HOW TO TALK TO PEOPLE** ¹⁰

Self-regulation and Mental Health

- #1 **SIT STILL AND LISTEN** ¹¹
- #2 **BEING PATIENT** ¹²

⁸ n = 5 ¹⁰ n = 2 ¹² n = 2
⁹ n = 2 ¹¹ n = 3

One person had a recommendation for improvement...

“Talking to younger kids about paying attention.”



Impact



#1 A LOT ABOUT HORSES AND MEANING ¹³

What I loved the most...

#1 THE STORIES AND SONGS ¹⁴

#2 TALKING ABOUT HORSES AND DANCING ¹⁵

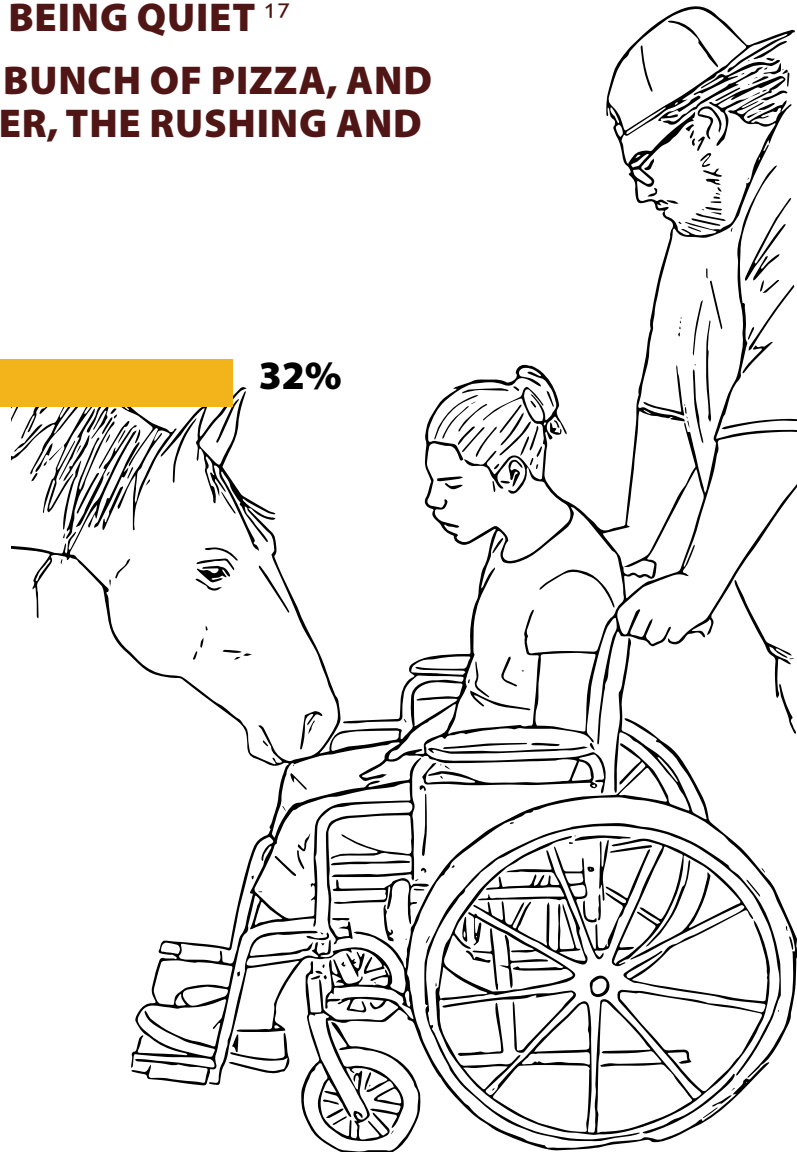
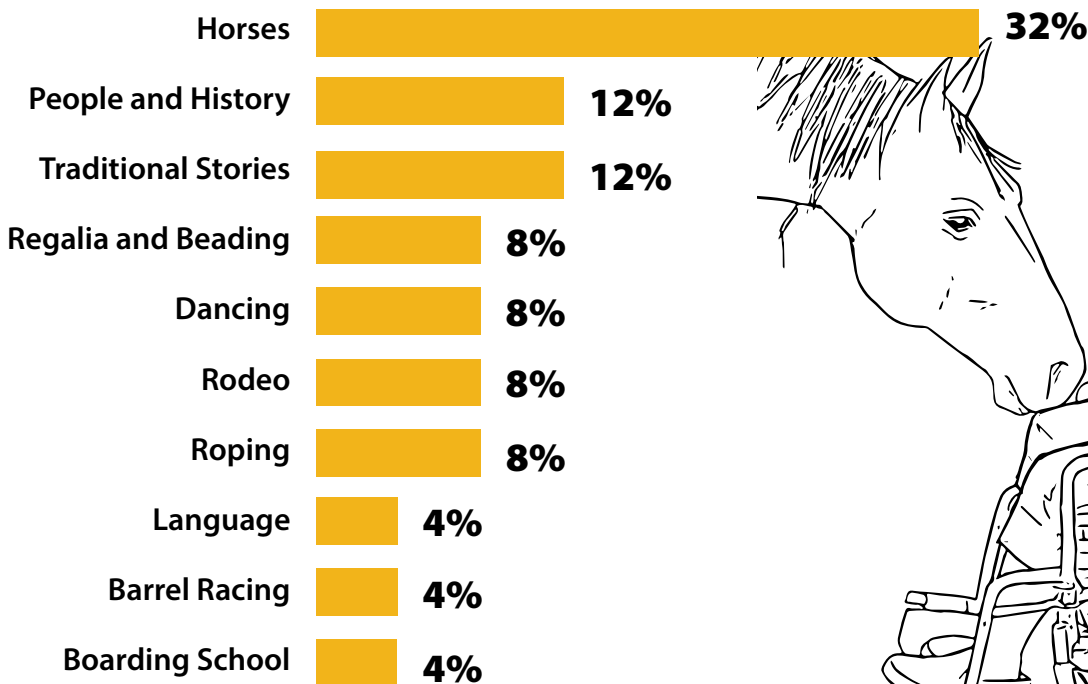
#3 DOROTHY DUPREE PRESENTATION AND HISTORY, LEARNING, MEETING NEW PEOPLE AND GETTING TO KNOW EVERYONE BETTER ¹⁶

What I liked the least...

#1 SITTING STILL FOR A LONG TIME, BEING QUIET ¹⁷

#2 HAVING TO WAKE UP EARLY, THE BUNCH OF PIZZA, AND SNACKS AT HOTEL, THE PRESENTER, THE RUSHING AND CONSUMING OF TIME ¹⁸

Like to learn more about ¹⁹...

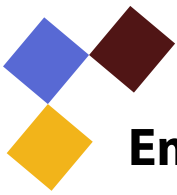


¹³ n = 4
¹⁴ n = 7

¹⁵ n = 6
¹⁶ n = 2

¹⁷ n = 6
¹⁸ n = 2

¹⁹ Based on 25 responses from 18 participants, excludes one response of anything.

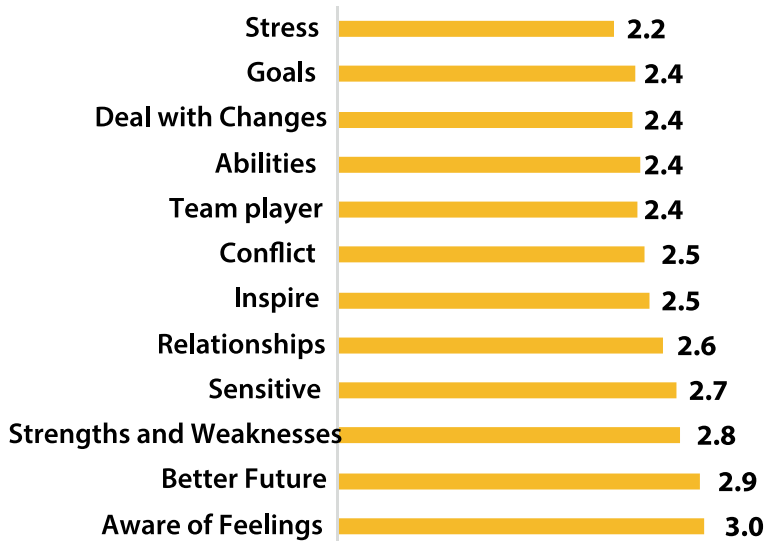


Emotional Intelligence

27 participants completed the survey

Respondents rated each statement using a 4-point Likert type scale where 1= seldom, 2=occasionally, 3=often, and 4= frequently. The highest score was for the statement, "I am aware of my feelings" (average of 3.0 or often). The lowest score was for how to manage stress, (an average of 2.2 or occasionally).

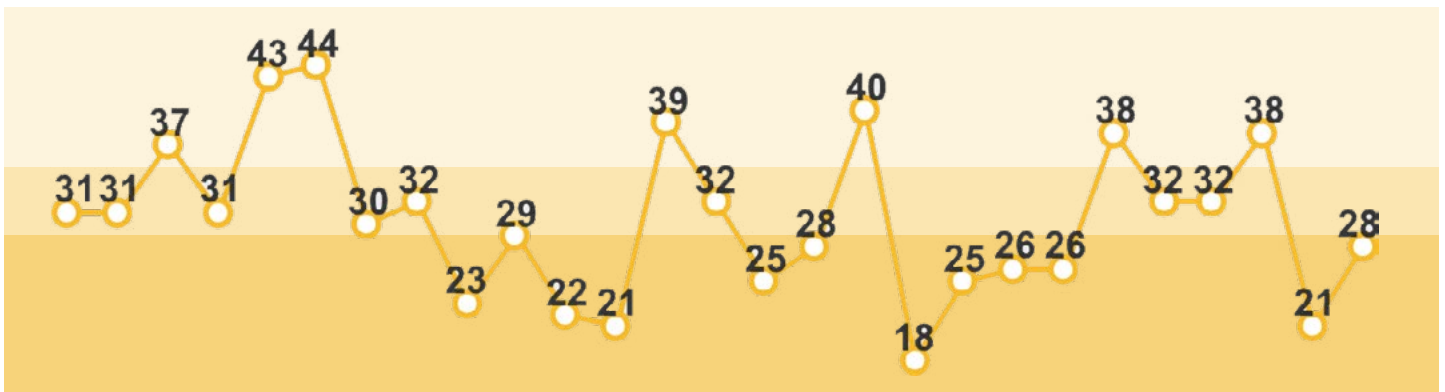
Average Emotional Intelligence Scores



The survey included 12 questions about emotions.

- I am aware of what I am feeling
- I know my strengths and weaknesses
- I deal calmly with stress
- I believe the future will be better than the past
- I deal with changes easily
- I set measurable goals when I have a project
- Others say I understand and am sensitive to them
- Others say I resolve conflicts
- Others say I build and maintain relationships
- Others say I inspire them
- Others say I am a team player
- Others say I helped to develop their abilities

Emotional Intelligence Overall Scores from 27 participants



A score of 36 or higher suggests that individuals are using key leadership abilities well. A score of 30 to 35 suggests that some leadership abilities are being used, but not all. A score of 29 or less suggests unused leadership abilities and room for improvement.

Sources of Strength Pre and Post

SOS Pre Post Average Scores

 = Increase on SOS scores

	Pre	Post
Family cares about me	8.1	8.3
Healthy friends/peers	7.4	7.2
Good caring relationships	8.2	7.8
Involved in healthy activities	8.3	7.8
Helping others, generosity, leadership	7.7	8.3
Healthy beliefs	7.4	7.5
Good access to mental health services	6.2	6.6
Good access to medical help	8.0	7.8
Participate in leadership programs	6.6	6.8
Working on personal wellness	7.0	7.2
Volunteer at school or in community	6.5	6.2
Deal with my problems in healthy ways	6.9	6.2
Feel connected to my culture and community	7.4	7.5

18

participants completed the pre-SOS survey

10 Female

6 Males

2 Unknown

Average age

15.5

(SD=2.2, range 14 to 17)

26

participants completed the post-SOS survey



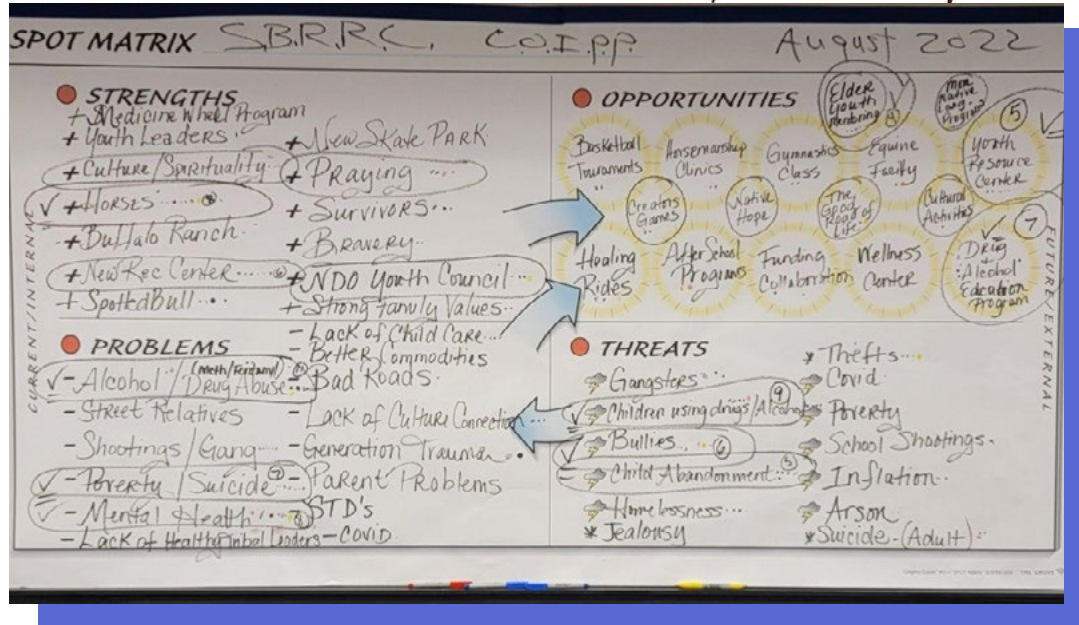


Documenting Youth Strategic Actions and Visioning



Throughout the conference, youth identify strengths, problems, opportunities, and threats, see the SPOT Matrix to the right.

Building on the SPOT matrix, youth identify what changes they would like to see in their community and steps to make these changes happen. This process begins with listing shared values that are necessary for change.



Values

These are the values that participants identified during the strategic action planning process.

Higher power. Respect. **Listening.**

Prayer. Humility. **Self-care.**

Positive outlook. Talking about our trauma. **Sobriety.** Quality family time.

Communication. **Accountability.**

Therapy. Honor. Honesty. Integrity.

Dedication. Education. **Bravery and loyalty.**

Programs & Support

Programs and support are necessary for youth to reach their fullest potential. Youth listed out the programs they want in their community.

Equine therapy. Ongoing cultural activities.

Creators Game, GRL/Native HOPE training.

Drug and alcohol education programs.

Youth resource center/safe place.

Elder youth mentoring opportunities.

Interviews with Youth

Q How did you feel before you went to these sessions?

A LONELY, BORED, ANXIOUS

Q Once you got there and you saw the horses, how did you feel?

A EXCITED, EXCITED TO WORK WITH THE HORSES

Q What about now, how do you feel now the sessions are over?

A SAD, I WANT TO GO BACK

Q So, did you enjoy these sessions?

A YEAH!

Q What could improve?

A NOTHING, THERE WAS SO MUCH GOOD

Q What was your favorite part?

A WORKING WITH THE HORSES, HOW POWERFUL IT IS. I WISH I COULD HAVE RIDDEN THE HORSES

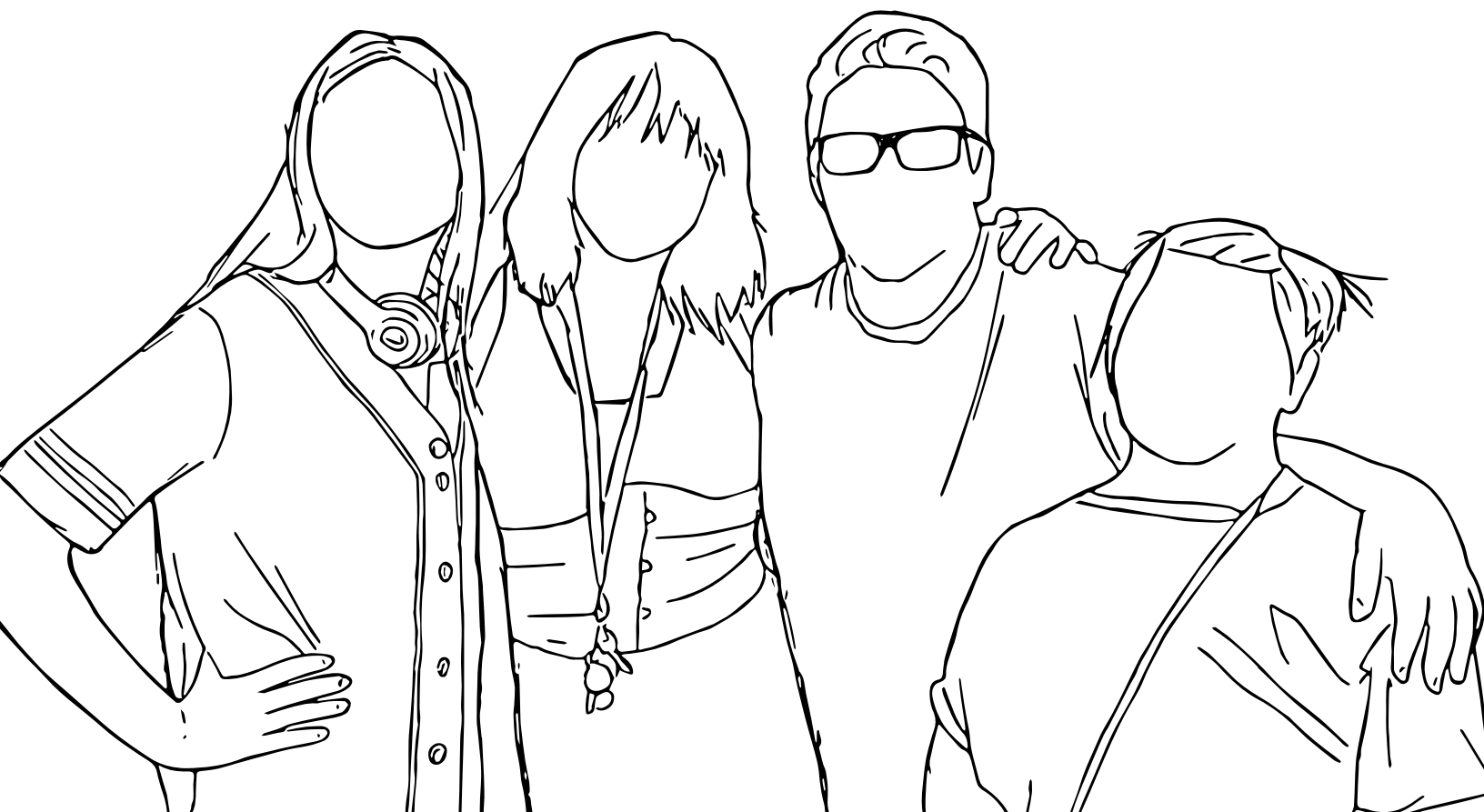


[CLICK HERE](#)

A podcast featuring more interviews is available to listen and learn about the strengths and dreams of youth.

Q What did you learn that keeps you healthy?

A THE HORSES FEEL EVERYTHING, SO WORKING TO STAY CALM WITH THEM THEY FEEL EVERYTHING, YOU CAN'T HIDE PETTING HORSES HELPED, WE LOVED THIS



Interview with Equine Therapist, Makenzie Warren

Intern: As an equine therapist what do you think has been the most beneficial for the kids?

Therapist: Probably them being able to come up with their own solutions rather than having someone tell them what to do and how to fix things that they are struggling with. So, being able to identify with the horse's struggles and being able to relate to a horse and helping that horse with something specific and then we ask the question, "Would that work for you?" and then the kids respond, "Yeah, but nobody ever does it." Sometimes you have to go and experience it to figure out what would help you personally, because everybody is different. So the kids get to be in control of their own treatment and their own therapy.

Intern: I love that; it is a cool way for them to identify their own needs through helping the horses.

Therapist: Yes! I have one question that has been the most beneficial question when a person likes a certain horse I say, "How do you think this horse could be misunderstood?" and then they talk about that and then I ask, "How are you misunderstood?" A lot times even as therapist we will think, "I did not know that about that kid. Like I definitely thought that was true and they are saying that it's not true" So, that's a super helpful question I have noticed in therapy.

Intern: I'm sure, that is very self-reflecting for the kid. I know as a teenager that was the biggest thing I struggled with because I had all these big emotions, I had no idea where they came from, I had no idea what to do with them and so it was outburst all the time or crying, or whatever. So that is so awesome. As we start moving forward with this program up on the Fort Peck Reservation what are some suggestions that would help us make it the most effective for the community?

Themes

- Equine therapy helps youth identify their own emotions
- Equine therapy helps youth to come up with solutions to their problems/ needs
- We can help youth break down walls by explaining how connected horses are to humans
- Create a calm/ peaceful place for Equine therapy on the Fort Peck Reservation

Therapist: I would say figure out what the biggest and most common struggles are. For us what has made it the most successful is making it a place of peace. It is quiet more quiet than it is in town. It is creating almost like a sanctuary of peace.

Intern: You can definitely feel that right when you drive up that this place is special.

Therapist: Yeah, so creating that. You don't necessarily have to be somewhere off on your own, you can be in the city, or you can be around other things, but just creating that space and telling them when they walk in, "Okay this is a space for you guys to be who you are." Just kind of taking all the walls down just right off the bat and being like, "You get to be who you are out here with these horses." Also, letting the kids know that the horses can feel all of your emotions, they can hear your heartbeat when you are close to them or on them. So if you are super nervous or you are struggling with something they know and you can't hide it from them. That immediately takes down a wall automatically. And again just creating a space where it is calm and that is the first thing I tell kids when they come here like, "Okay everybody you have to be calm and quiet." So, that has been probably the most helpful thing. So if you guys can figure out a way to preface that before people even walk through the door and they will get that in their mindset. And having a variety of horses too. We don't have a bunch of horses that are kind of dead heads and just mope around. They all have personalities and that has been super helpful because then they are more relatable to the kids.

Our Findings



Why This Matters

People matter. The 30th annual youth leadership conference shows us that SBRRRC and the Fort Peck Tribes care about Native youth; they are investing in the future through these conferences. One reoccurring theme in the evaluation data is that the training builds confidence, self-esteem, strengths, and connections.

Consistency matters.

The GRL training is consistent in its approach, using clans, experiential activities, healing ceremonies, and humor, it follows an evidence-based curriculum that is proven to reduce the risk for suicide and substance use in youth. Clans, clan leaders, and elders are always part of the GRL trainings- this consistent approach works and should be used in the future.

Focus on opportunities.

While there are many threats to youth wellbeing and conditions that are difficult to change, the youth leadership conference focuses on strengths and opportunities. In this evaluation, opportunities abound, from sports to cultural activities; these create a sense of purpose, hope, and connection for youth and the community.

Build the next generation of Native youth leaders and visionaries.

The youth leadership conference is really about building and growing individuals in their values, beliefs, and connections for the greater good. Youth learn how to heal and help others heal along the way. This evaluation report and other information collected during the event through the SPOT matrix and visioning board may be used by the community to develop, refine, or implement new youth-focused programs.

What We Learned

Youth knowledge of their sources of strength increased by 56%.

This tells us that it is possible to increase youth strengths during a week-long leadership conference. We do not know how long this feeling or knowledge lasts, but we know it is valuable in helping youth make healthy decisions, walk through adversity, and live resilient lives.

Youth want to know more about horses, traditional stories, and their culture.

Youth have ideas about how this should happen, from youth-elder mentoring programs to more Creators Games. It is possible.

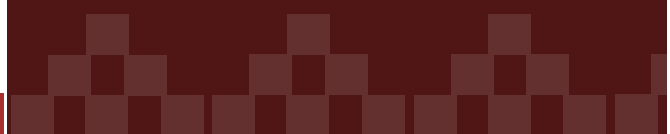
We learned that youth are

connected to culture.

These evaluation findings uplift, give hope, support, and empower us to continue sharing stories created by youth.

APPENDICES

- Conference Report Highlights by Tina Jackson, COIPP Contractor  [CLICK HERE](#)
- Summaries from Presenters  [CLICK HERE](#)





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