

# Community Conversation Discussion Notes

## BEMIDJI | SEPTEMBER 13, 2017

A Community Conversation was hosted jointly by the Minnesota Department of Health Center for Health Equity and the Northwest Indian Community Development Center in Bemidji on September 13, 2017. There were 40 individuals in attendance. Part of the event was a large group discussion where participants were invited to discuss health equity in the American Indian Community. Below are some of the major themes that emerged from the discussion.

- It is important to celebrate the success and resilience of communities and promote local community centers such as Northwest Indian Community Development Center and the critical role they play in communities.
- Disparities in the American Indian community are as result of structural racism – system failure.
- Communities impacted by disparities should be part of research and should own the research.
- Doula reimbursement issue is important to the community.
- Communities need resources to create their *own* health systems.
- Culture is prevention and the cure; success cannot be defined by fitting into systems not designed for the community.
- Want more educational opportunities for community members in health fields (e.g. CHW training)
- Acknowledging systems of oppression and trauma.
- Government institutions need to recognize and own that for generations government has oppressed American Indian communities and those impacts are still felt today.
- Need for local race relations task force in Bemidji – City Center.
- Acknowledging structural racism is the biggest barrier in Bemidji – e.g. hiring practices.
- Government should address threats to environment (e.g. sacred water)
- Division of services/resources between tribes/county/state results in people being cut-off or left behind.
- Enormous need for mental health resources; fast-tracking mental health worker positions.
- Need livable wages.
- Opioid crisis – need more resources, collaboration and reduced stigma around medication-assisted treatment.
- Systems support separation and competition among tribes; need to be united people.
- Native communities know what they need; need support and the independence to do it.
- Cultural support for native youth is needed.

- Holistic and spiritual approaches are critical for healing.
- Alternative and cultural healing practices are important.

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