



# Applying the Sweetgrass Method

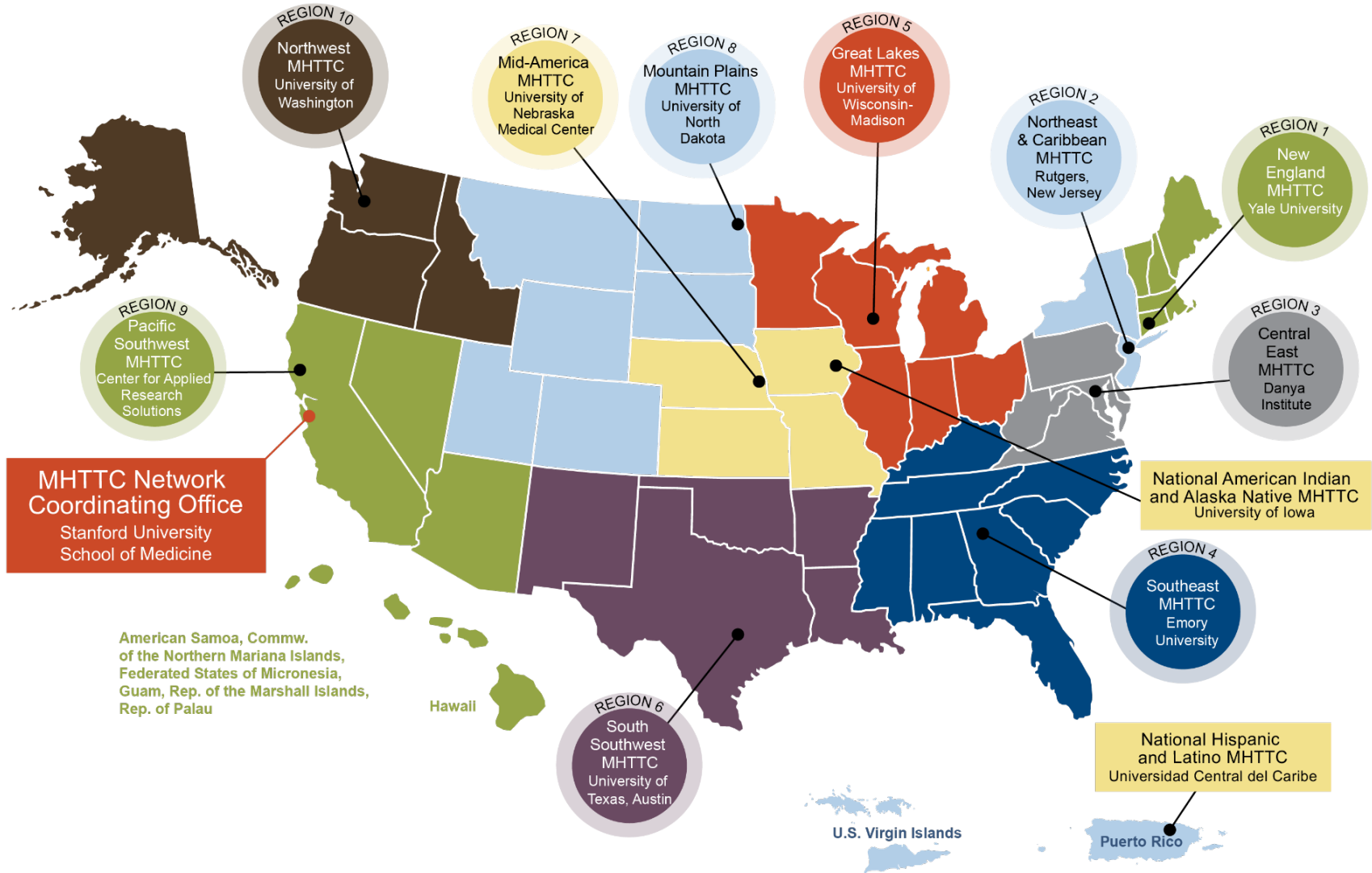


**MHTTC**

**Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network**  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

**MHTTC Network**

**American Indian & Alaska Native Mental Health Technology Transfer Center**  
*K-12 School Mental Health Supplement Project*



# ***SAMHSA***

Substance Abuse and Mental Health  
Services Administration

The National American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Technology Transfer Center is supported by a grant from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

The content of this event is the creation of the presenter(s), and the opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of SAMHSA, HHS, or the American Indian & Alaska Native MHTTC.



# Land Acknowledgement

We would like to take this time to acknowledge the land and pay respect to the Indigenous Nations whose homelands were forcibly taken over and inhabited.

Past and present, we want to honor the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

This calls us to commit to forever learn how to be better stewards of these lands through action, advocacy, support, and education.

We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of Native American territories, and we respect the many diverse indigenous people connected to this land on which we gather from time immemorial.

While injustices are still being committed against Indigenous people on Turtle Island, today we say thank you to those that stand with Indigenous peoples and acknowledge that land reparations must be made to allow healing for our Indigenous peoples and to mother earth, herself.

Dekibaota, Elleh Driscoll, Meskwaki and Winnebago Nations  
Ttakimaweakwe, Keely Driscoll, Meskwaki and Winnebago Nations  
Keokuk, Sean A. Bear, 1<sup>st</sup>. Meskwaki Nation



# HOST

- Teresa Brewington is the Program Manager for the National American Indian & Alaska Native Mental Health TTC – K- 12 School Supplement. She is an enrolled member of the Coharie Tribe and a descendent of the Lumbee Tribe. She holds a Master's in Educational Leadership, a Master's in Business Administration, and has 36 credit hours towards a Master's in Counseling. She has held positions as a director at several mental health agencies and worked as a school guidance counselor serving mostly Hispanic/Latino students. She has also served as a foster care agency supervisor, where she worked directly with the Salt River Pima Indian Community placing Native American children in foster homes. Her last position was as the Elementary School Principal for Native children at the Meskwaki Settlement, located in Iowa, where she currently resides.



# Before getting started...

- House keeping
- K thru 12 Program: Guide and TA Request
- - [K-12 Program guide \(006\).pdf](#)
  - [https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_9XOxrEwk4RwamTX](https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9XOxrEwk4RwamTX)
- Blessing



# TODAYS SPEAKERS

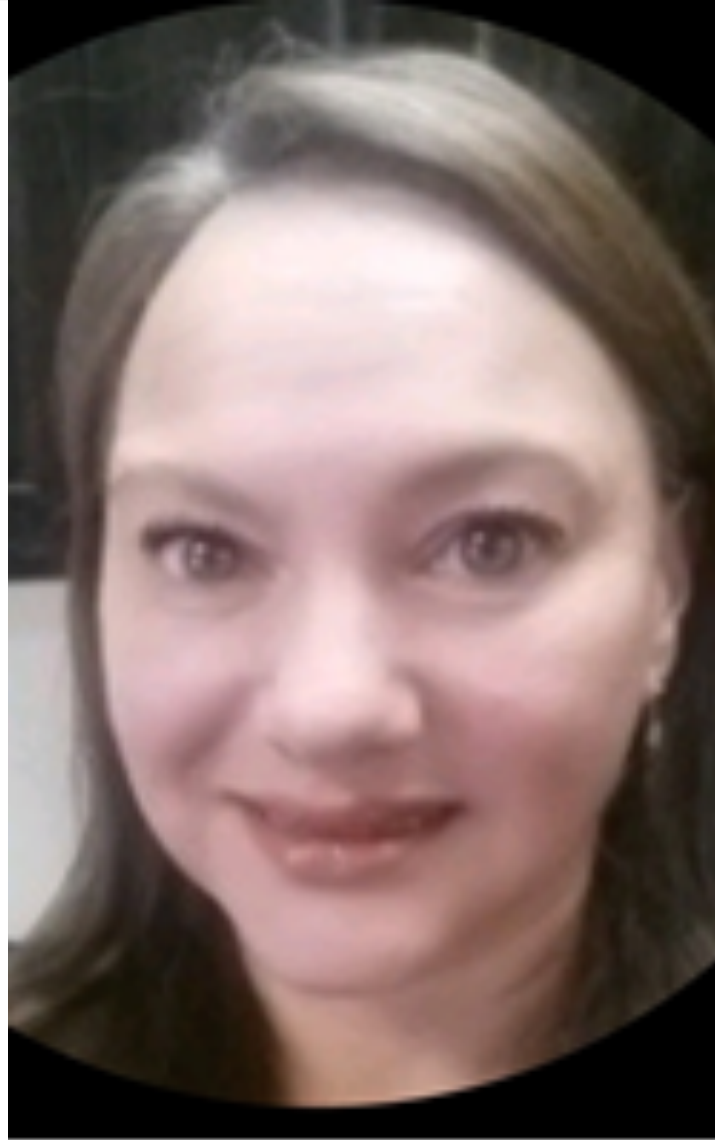
## **Dr. Allison Baez**

Educational specialist serving Native communities. Dr. Baez has led research projects, helped create programs and worked with students and their families towards academic success for over 25 years. She has shared her expertise in education in K-12 and Higher Educational environments. Much of her research is among Native populations to find along with the communities, best practices from a Native perspective. Allison's passion is to continue to work with the Indigenous populations to share, collaborate and educate on culturally responsive approaches and methodologies in and out of a classroom setting.

Today's Speaker

## **Dr. Mark Standing Eagle Baez**

Mohawk/Pawnee/Coahuiltecan/Mexican/French descent. He is a certified educational psychologist, licensed substance abuse counselor, certified anger resolution therapist and a mental health consultant based in Texas. Mark has provided a variety of consulting services to Tribes across Indian country, non-profits, hospitals, treatment centers, and Higher Educational Institutions since 2003. His concepts are intended to strengthen and empower not only the individual skills but also work to improve mental health services provided by non-Native practitioners to Tribal communities and Native American clients. He has been published in several academic journals and presented at numerous national conferences. Clinically, Mark has worked with diverse clients in both inpatient/outpatient and academic settings. His areas of expertise include assessment, substance abuse, historical/intergenerational trauma/Native American wellness spirituality, self-care, bullying among Native American youth, and suicide among Native American populations. Mark's research interests include strength-based psychology and resiliency, culturally sensitive measurement development, psychological well-being, and the epidemiology and treatment of mental health and substance use in ethnic minorities



# Weaving Strategies: The Sweetgrass Method

Dr. C. Allison Baez

Dr. M. Standing Eagle Baez, LSP, LCDC, CBT, CART

6/25/2021





# Prayer & Welcome



# What is sweetgrass?



# Collaborative Care Models

CCMs are team-based intervention to enact system-level redesign by improving patient care through organizational leadership support, provider decision support, and clinical information systems as well as engaging patients in their care through self-management support and linkages to community resources

# Collaborative Care Model w/ Culturally Responsive Approaches

## *Culturally sensitive psychiatric assessment for Asian- Americans*

Participants completed an informed consent form before they received a psychiatric assessment from one of the bilingual research psychiatrists. The culturally sensitive assessment has components: a standard psychiatric interview component and a cultural component that is used to explore patients' illness beliefs (NCBY, 2010)

# Weaving Strategies: Sweetgrass Method

- The Sweetgrass Method is a prevention tool that can be applied to early childhood intervention for families & professionals dealing with various traumas. It speaks to how the introspective (self/flexible), collaborates and continues a healthy support for Indigenous populations (Baez et al., 2016).





- In some Nations it is used in prayer, ceremonies, dancing, and to honor individuals during a rite of passage.



- Sweetgrass is used as a spiritual purification, as the smoke rises, our prayers rise to the spirit world where the grandfathers and our Creator live. Sweetgrass is also used for healing one's mind, spirit and body as well as to harmonize energies (Baez, 2011).





- “Sweetgrass is used to cleanse one’s heart so that our hearts feel the truth, grow in harmony and balance, for compassion, gentleness and thoughtfulness for others. Similar to our roles as school psychologists and educators, I believe that as Native Americans we appreciate the value in clearing negativity, promoting harmony, and providing a welcoming atmosphere with compassion and gentleness” (Baez, 2011).

# Beginning to Braid

- The Sweetgrass Method looks at the introspective, collaborative and continuous strands as a process of significant, healthy, and engaging partnerships, for possibilities of our youth embracing their ceremonies, cultural values, and applying them in everyday life situation.

# Sweetgrass Strands



# The Strands of the Sweetgrass

- Introspection- levels of understanding, administrators/ educators/ support staff
- Collaboration (Communication/ Consultation)- engaging among staff and local resources.
- Continuity- ongoing successful educational/ social/ emotional support.



# Introspective strand

Brings understanding, clarity and preparedness in various situations, strategies and support.

# Collaborative strand

- Partnerships with the families and communities are key for school students.
- For practitioners/educators, valuing traditions and ceremonies is just as important.
- The three reasons why collaborating with the community people are a must because:
  - 1) Trust and respect of the culture and ceremony.
  - 2) Validating the traditional teachings of morals, leadership, respect & life.
  - 3) Acknowledging the wealth of healing of what works in their community and what doesn't work.

# Continuous strand

With continued efforts, we can provide holistic strategies to each reservation school one braid at a time.



# Flexible Framework

- Early Childhood Education infrastructure and culture;
- Staff training;
- Linking with community partners;
- Academic instruction for traumatized children;
- Nonacademic strategies;
- School policies, procedures, and protocols.





# Flexible in our Approaches

- ~~Plan A~~

- ~~Plan B~~

- Plan C

- Model a positive attitude toward unexpected changes
- Offer choices
- See things in a new way
- Look at a challenge with a new lens

“ Adaptability is the simplest secret of survival.

”



- Jessica Hagedorn, playwright, poet & artist

# Sweetgrass Method in Schools

- As educators begin to understand the SM with the introspective strand- begins with themselves- knowing who they are - their sensitivity -developing tools to understand the culture - the stories- the importance of relationships of the communities and families giving teachers the strategies to be successful and implement it.
- Understanding of the goals and work towards ongoing academic success with students.
- Teaching non-native teachers to understand and respect traditional ways.
- NEA OnFocus - The study says that culturally responsive educators must teach students about empathy and compassion and establish social norms and rules that respect all students. That way, American Indian and Alaska Native students attending culturally responsive and inclusive schools will feel connected, empowered and better prepared to address concerns or issues that may arise.

# Sweetgrass Method & Bullying



- Introspective (self)- the work on self. For Native and non-Native staff, it is important to prepare and educate yourself about what is in front of you.
- If we prepare ourselves to be flexible (i.e., working around parent's schedule/community/educators/administrators/etc.,) we are prepared make accommodations for a successful outcome.
- Before applying strategies and/or producing suggestions or activities for that student and or parent/guardian, it is important that 'WE' have an understanding how much we understand and identify about the population we are working with (i.e., strategies that are culturally sensitive and culturally responsive) to have self-examination.

# Sweetgrass Method & Bullying

COLLABORATIVE

Partnerships from the parents and community is essential in order to produce reduction of bullying in your community.



# Sweetgrass Method & Bullying



## CONTINUOUS

- Schools may have many non-Native approaches to bullying; however, institutions would benefit with the understanding of Native students, families and community by incorporating the cultural/ceremonial values into the daily norms or school policy of behavior.

“Strong communities are born out of individuals being their best selves.”

-Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Michi Saagig Nishnaabeg scholar, writer and artist

# Sweetgrass Method & Family Engagement

- A strong (healthy) and or positive relationship (partnership) with a student's parent or guardian and his/her teacher can help in the success of the student (academically/mentally/spiritually/emotionally).
- Partnering with parent/guardian can keep them informed of how their child is doing (school-behaviorally/academically, etc.) as well as to communicate with parent/guardian to inform and/or provide strategies of continued support that will assist them assist their child.
- A partnership with parent/guardian is important because it meets the needs of the student. It provides a level of consistency between the home and learning environment. A partnership helps counselors/teachers/professional support team to tailor their service around the specific needs of the student in their care.



# Indigenous Resilience



# We are Resilient

Definition of resilience. “a dynamic process that enables the individual to respond or adapt under adverse situations” (Thornton & Sanchez, 2010)

Resilient youth share:

- Self-esteem and self confidence

- Sense of self-efficacy - a belief in their ability to affect their own lives

- A range of social, problem-solving approaches

- One significant adult

- External support system

Questions?

