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The BHWP Messenger

Culturally relevant, evidence-based, and trauma-informed behavioral health and wellness resources for schools, staff, students, and families.

Representation matters: Breaking the Chains of Generational Trauma

BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist Hunter Genia, MSW, LMSW



Growing up in America in an urban setting was quite an interesting experience for me as a native youth. Learning about my culture and history has come in many pathways and forms. Some of these experiences have been very positive, fascinating, and fulfilling. Still, it also had its share of mixed emotions of hurt, pain, and grief.

Growing up and attending public school provided many fun and fascinating experiences, most notably from the friendships I gained and the sports I participated in. On the other hand, I attended a school with very few minorities and, to my knowledge, was the only native student throughout my grade school experience. Although I am very proud of my culture, the classroom environment would place me in some uncomfortable experiences. One example of this is that everyone was aware of my cultural identity. When it came to learning about subjects and topics of Native Americans, I quickly felt uncomfortable because of how the topics were slanted or taught. I felt very frustrated, angry, and embarrassed by the misinformation on how the history was taught, especially the lack of information about tribes in my home state of Michigan. I had this feeling of everyone looking at me, which was very uncomfortable. I wanted to walk out of class and be absent.



I also had a solid relationship with my grandparents, who were first-language speakers. I would learn that they both attended the Mt. Pleasant Indian Industrial Boarding School as children. When visiting them, I would hear them speaking our language to each other, which interested me, and I wanted to learn. I did my best to learn the language while visiting with them. I asked them many questions and phonetically wrote down as much of the language on paper to study it. Unfortunately, they did not teach our language to my mom, aunts, or uncles. It wasn't until later that I would learn about why they did not teach us our language nor



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speak of their education during my history classes.

I've done several speaking engagements and trainings to public schools, institutions, and organizations as an adult. Throughout

these opportunities to teach others, I learned that adults are also victims of how most education is being taught about our past

and current history. When processing, many have expressed shame, guilt, embarrassment, anger, and frustration for not knowing some of the most basic information about their culture and history. I believe the key to learning, especially about some of our most painful history, is to create a safe and open, trauma-informed classroom environment.

Here are some ideas and tips that might be helpful as you strive to achieve this:

- Does the classroom represent and respect my culture and history, both past and current?
- Is the content being taught true and accurate, including the views of the local tribe(s) in my county, state, or region?
- Does the school and classroom invite and utilize local Indigenous speakers and guests who can share about our culture and history, both past and current?
- Does the classroom allow for respectfully sharing views and perspectives? Perhaps even utilizing local cultural processes if appropriate?
- Does the school and district value native expression, culture, and values in the school, including spirituality, cultural attire, and language, including at their graduation ceremony?



Wellness Wednesday

The next Wellness Wednesday webinar will be held July 13, 2022. The topic is “Covid-19 and Depression: Hope and Healing through Culture and Connection.” This webinar will focus on identifying the symptoms of depression and recognizing cultural resilience factors. The presentation will teach participants coping skills as well as how to develop a plan for safety utilizing available resources. The webinar will be led by Deputy Project Manager Cherrah Giles, MSW, LMSW and Behavioral Health Specialist LaDonna D. Richardson, MSW, LCSW, LCAS.

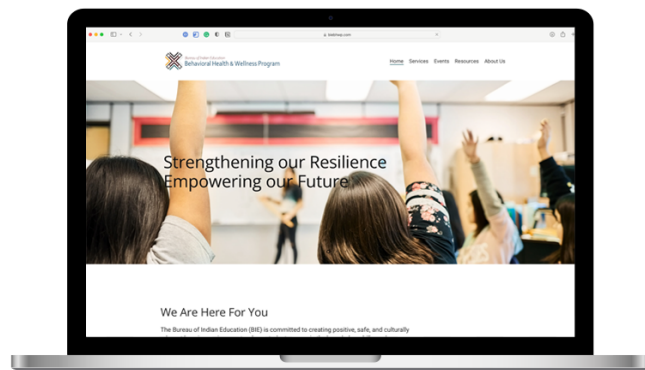
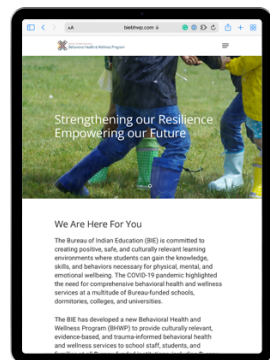
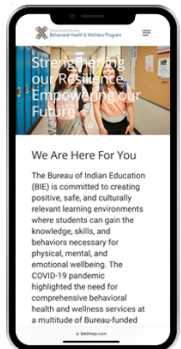


To register, please [click here](#) to visit the event page. After registering for this event, you will receive a confirmation email with the meeting link to join via Zoom and add the webinar to your calendar. *Note:* You may need to check your email inbox folders, including the spam or junk folder. Webinar start times are 1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern.

We look forward to seeing you there!

The BIE BHWP Has a New Online Home

Our website is live at: biebhwp.com

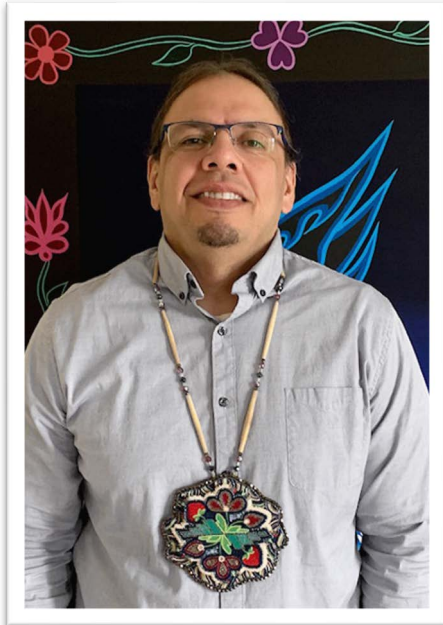


The Behavioral Health and Wellness Program is excited to announce the launch of our new website. The website offers culturally relevant, evidence-based information and resources aimed at helping your overall health and wellness. In addition, the website is a way for the community to stay connected with the BHWP and our many services.



Meet a Member of Our BHWP Counseling Team

BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist Hunter Genia, MSW, LMSW



Since I was a kid, there have been three constants in my life: family, culture, and sports. Family and culture are still the most important to me and are naturally woven together like a basket.

I understood and had a powerful bonding with my grandparents at an early age. This connection was my first memory of my culture. They were first-language speakers, and I learned later, survivors of the residential boarding school experiment. This cultural learning from my grandparents would eventually introduce me to drumming, dancing, language, and history. Learning more about my culture, language, ceremonies, and history shaped my direction, purpose, and walk-in life. This natural, cultural learning process shaped my views on wellness and how I incorporate wellness in my life and work. I enjoy and

practice the original teachings of paying it forward and service leadership. In addition, being a dad of three sons, I have strived to be a positive role model.

Finally, sports and recreation have been instrumental for my mental and physical health from childhood through parenthood. I coached youth sports for thirteen years and enjoyed challenging youth to strive to be their best. Coaching youth was also a great way to impart the values of overcoming obstacles and making healthy choices. Although COVID-19 has impacted my physical and mental health, I still try to incorporate and participate in fitness activities. I also try to be more mindful about nutrition, which is a constant challenge.

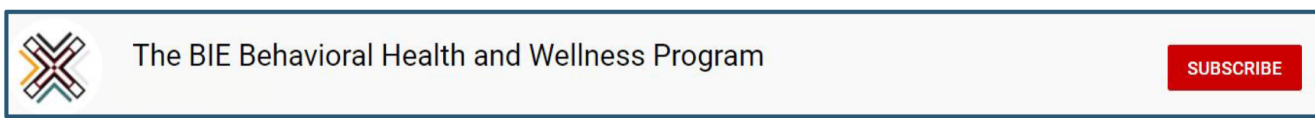
Virtual Talking Circles: July 5 and July 21, 2022

BHWP continues to offer two virtual Talking Circles each month. This month, virtual Talking Circles will occur on Tuesday, July 5, and Thursday, July 21, 2022. Both sessions will begin at 1:30 p.m. Pacific, 2:30 p.m. Mountain, 3:30 p.m. Central, and 4:30 p.m. Eastern. Virtual Talking Circles are available to all staff or employees from Bureau-operated schools (BOS), Tribally-controlled schools (TCS), Navajo District schools, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and employees within any BIE department.



To get started, we recommend that you watch our Talking Circle public service announcement (PSA) video which is available on the [BHWP YouTube page](#). It will give an introduction into the basics of Talking Circles and encourage people who are interested to join us for future sessions! You can also register by [clicking here](#) - just make sure not miss out because space is limited.

Subscribe to the BHWP YouTube Channel



Looking to improve your wellness? Subscribe to our YouTube channel and get access to the latest tips, tricks, and advice from experts in the field! From Wellness Wednesday webinars to Cultural Connections, we've got you covered. What are you waiting for? [Click here to visit our channel!](#)

**We Welcome any comments or suggestions for the BHWP Messenger.
Contact us at biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com**