



Bureau of Indian Education
**Behavioral Health
& Wellness Program**

March 1, 2022 | Issue 9

The BHWP Messenger

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

New! BHWP CEU Webinar Series

The Behavioral Health and Wellness Program (BHWP) is pleased to introduce a new behavioral health Continuing Education Unit (CEU) webinar series. These courses have been tailored especially for those in behavioral health related roles but are open to any staff interested in attending. CEUs will be available for any licensed behavioral health professional (LPCs, LMFTs, LCSWs, etc.) and will provide opportunities for behavioral health skill-building and obtaining the training hours toward continued licensure. For information regarding the March webinar or to register, please click on the link below.



Upcoming CEU Webinars

[March 25, 2022: Motivational Interviewing, Level 1](#) (6 CEUs)

April 22, 2022: Motivational Interviewing, Level 2 (6 CEUs)

May 13, 2022: Ethics (6 CEUs)

August 12, 2022: Educators and Secondary Trauma (3 CEUs)

Good Medicine: The Importance of Human Connection, Love, and Belonging By Fredricka Hunter, BHWP Behavioral Health Specialist Lead

Human connection is an important bond based on belonging between individuals and results in positive energy. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, people may have found themselves feeling isolated and lonely. Finding a new way to form or maintain connections can be challenging for all of us. Living within this new reality requires us to be intentional with our connections and relationships.



The following is a story on connection and my 84-year-old mother. Prior to the pandemic, she and my stepfather would go to their local senior center for their daily lunch, where they joined friends in conversation over a good meal. Since the pandemic began, they are no longer able to gather with friends the same way, and they were feeling lonely and isolated. However, during a recent phone conversation, my mother was upbeat, and I could hear the excitement in her voice. “Guess what happened today?” she asked. She had received a call from a relative who she had not seen or spoken with for years. They reminisced about childhood adventures, and she felt reconnected after years of absence. They shared laughter with one another – the deep, belly-laugh kind of laughter. The laughter and the connection were the “medicine” she needed to uplift her spirit positively.

I’m sharing her experience because belonging and connection are important needs we must cultivate in addition to the basic requirements of food, water, and shelter. We all carry a strong desire for relationships and connections with others. When these needs are met, our overall mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional wellbeing improves. The human connection does not necessarily require face-to-face interactions. It can be sending a heartfelt note, card, or letter to a friend or relative. It can be volunteering for an event, delivering meals, grocery shopping, or chopping wood for a relative or elder. Plus, we can connect virtually via Zoom or FaceTime with one another. These connections can all be an expression of friendship, kindness, gratitude, love, and belonging.

As professionals who work in academic settings, we have an opportunity to cultivate and nurture this sense of connection and belonging for our students. This may seem challenging because many schools are providing services virtually. However, it can be done! Below are a few tips to promote belonging and connection in a virtual academic setting:

- Greet each student by name as they enter the virtual classroom.
- Create a playlist of songs to welcome students into the virtual classroom. Ask students to help you select songs for a class playlist.
- Begin each class with a virtual check-in. Ask students to describe how they feel using a GIF or emojis using a chat feature.
- Build in time for announcements and free time for students to interact with you and each other online.





- Model vulnerability and share your feelings or uncertainties. This will encourage and signal to students that sharing their uncertainties is okay and safe.
- Encourage students to support and respond to each other. Using a chat feature can be helpful too.
- End class with a virtual closing circle. Have students express a takeaway, ask a question, or share their current feelings using a GIF or emojis.

We started with the story of my mother and the renewed connection she made with a relative. Although it was a simple phone call, it was also an instrument of connection and belonging, which is a healthy reminder for all of us. In our personal and professional lives or in the classroom with students, let's remember to take time to connect with one another. For our own good health or to model well-being for your students, I encourage you to communicate with someone you have not connected with in a while! Surprise them, share stories, and have a belly laugh! It is good medicine.

Virtual Talking Circles: March 1 and March 17, 2022

BHWP continues to offer virtual Talking Circles twice each month. This month, Talking Circles will occur on **Tuesday, March 1, and Thursday, March 17, 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 any staff or employee working for a Bureau-operated school (BOS), Tribally-controlled school (TCS), Navajo K-12 school, Southwestern Indian Polytechnic Institute (SIPI), Haskell Indian Nations University (HINU), or any Tribal college and university (TCU), and employees within any BIE department. To register for Talking Circles in March, [click here](#).

Wellness Wednesday: Balancing Social Media and Wellness

The Wellness Wednesday webinar series continues with **“Balancing Social Media and Wellness” on March 9, 2022**. The webinar will examine the effects of social media and discuss strategies focused on finding balance when engaging socially online. The webinar will help participants:

- Understand the various impacts of social media
- Recognize when a break from social media may be needed
- Learn effective coping skills when using and not using social media
- Identify other positive ways to socially connect without using social media

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. Facilitators for March will be BHWP Behavioral Health Specialists Dr. Nikki Factor and



Fredricka Hunter. 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!

Thank You for Attending Wellness Wednesday in February

We appreciate everyone who attended our **Wellness Wednesday: COVID-19 and Anxiety** in February. Your participation helped make this webinar a great success. If you were unable to attend, [click here](#) to watch the recording on the BHWP YouTube channel.

New Monthly Video Series: Cultural Connections



The BHWP Team recently debuted its new video series, **Cultural Connections**, which are monthly videos focused on various wellness topics and rooted in Indigenous culture. **Cultural Connections: Traditional Food Teachings** is available on the BHWP YouTube channel. [Click here](#) to watch the video, which was produced and narrated by BHWP Prevention Facilitator Maegan Ray.



Meet a member of our BHWP Leadership Team Lori King, BHWP Senior Project Director

"Aanii, Niigaanii O-mong Kwe n' dizhnikaaz. Ojibwe n'do, O-mong n'dodem miinwaa Baawting n'doonjibaa."

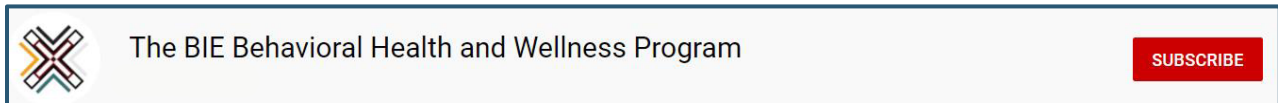
Greetings, my Ojibwe name is Leading Loon Woman. I am Ojibwe, Loon Clan from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan (the place of the rapids) and a member of the Sault Ste. Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians.

I am the Project Director for BIE BHWP. My background is in education, with a master's degree in educational administration. I have worked as a classroom teacher, an assistant principal, and a principal at a Bureau-funded school in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan. I was part of a team that started the school, and I highly valued the opportunity to work with my Tribal nation to create a culturally responsive, educationally welcoming environment for our youth. Additionally, I have served on the Tribal Indian Child Welfare committee and have held a foster license for nine years.

I get my energy from relationships and highly value visiting with friends and family. Face-to-face time is preferred, but I also schedule phone visits with those who are far away. I enjoy time with my grandchildren – seeing them happy and developing with lots of love and support. I maintain a regular schedule of activities that lend to my wellness. Every morning begins with giving thanks, putting down my seemah (tobacco), offering prayers, and walking or jogging on the treadmill for 30 minutes. Each night, I read before I go to bed and get at least eight hours of sleep. I believe sleep is a key to good health and a positive state of mind. Other activities I enjoy include cross country skiing, traveling, knitting, and gardening.



Subscribe to our YouTube Channel



Subscribe to the BHWP YouTube channel and receive updates when Wellness Wednesday webinars and Cultural Connections videos are released each month. Please click the picture above to visit our YouTube page or to subscribe.

We welcome your suggestions for the BHWP Messenger.
Contact us at biebhwp@tribaltechllc.com