

Suicide increasing among Indian adolescents

According to a recent study conducted by Dr. Irving Berlin, suicide among American Indian adolescents has, on many reservations, increased by 200 to 300 percent in the last 20 years. The same increase has also been experienced by the Anglo Society. In both groups, says Dr. Berlin, suicide has become the second most frequent cause of death in the 10 to 20 year old age group.

However, Dr. Berlin pointed out the suicide rate has not increased on some reservations. He attributes that to the tribes being more traditional in their daily living and because the adolescents are able to remain at home because opportunities for employment and education exist within the tribal community.

On those reservations with high suicide rates, one American Indian young person out of a community of 800 will kill him or herself each year. Attempted suicides have increased among Indian adolescents nearly 1000 percent. This means that ten times as many Indian adolescents today are attempting suicide than did in 1963.

More male adolescents accomplish suicide but more female adolescents attempt suicide. In a 1974 study, it was identified that 70 percent of the American Indian adolescent suicides had more than one significant caretaker or parental figure before age 15 as compared to 15 percent of the adolescents in the comparison group.

Forty-percent of the primary caretakers or parent figures of the suicide group had five or more arrests compared to 7.5 percent of the comparison group's caretakers.

Fifty-percent of the suicide group had experienced two or more parental losses by divorce or desertion, compared to 10 percent of the comparison group.

By age 15, 70 percent of suicides had been arrested compared to 20 percent of the control group.

Eighty percent of the suicides had one or more arrests in the 12 months prior to their suicide.

Sixty percent of the suicides attended boarding school before ninth grade compared to 27.5 percent of the control group.

The suicides can be attributed to acute stress and chronic depression. Acute stress suicides often involve a youth who has done well and highly regarded by family, friends and community. The warning signs of acute onset of actual feelings are:

*A sudden behavior change from friendly to angry or withdrawn;

*Sudden sadness, depression and loss of appetite.

*Sudden sleeping problems.

*Sudden stopping of athletic, school or varied social activities and/or a reversal of good performance in any of these areas.

*Giving away valued possessions and clothes because "they are no longer needed."

*A sudden false cheerfulness and sense of relief resulting from a decision to kill oneself.

Chronic depression, says Dr. Berlin, is depression which has occurred over a long period of time. Teenagers who are chronically depressed feel hopeless, helpless and unable to look forward to a future that promises better things.

The warning signs that a chronically depressed adolescent may be consider suicide are:

*Increased drinking and drug taking to relieve increased bad feelings about himself.

*Increased risk-taking in driving or work activities.

*Increased violence towards others as if there is a need to hurt and to be hurt physically.

*Increased isolation from friends and family.

*Increased problems with sleeping.

*Refusal to eat as if one is not worth feeding.

*New or increased trouble with the law for drunk driving, assaultive behavior, etc.

There are a number of environmental factors which have been identified as contributing to chronic depression and suicide among adolescents. Some of these factors are specific to Native American youth, others are more universal.

The breakdown of tribal tradition has been found to contribute to the increased incidence of suicides. The lack of effective adult role models is also a contributing factor to the

suicide rate among all adolescents. Having alcoholic parents is a contributing factor as is coming from a broken home. Too early a marriage may also have a destructive impact. Failure to learn in school is another negative factor. Unemployment, or the inability of an adolescent to find work is another environmental factor which may influence some young people toward suicide. Also to be considered is the group contagion phenomenon where suicide is followed by several more in a short period of time. The anniversary reaction phenomenon needs to be kept in mind also. This is where an adolescent, on an appropriate

anniversary date, follows the example of a parent or relative who has suicided.

Many tribes have recognized this growing problem and have introduced different programs to reduce the rate of suicide among Native American youth. One northwest tribe used elders to stay with arrested adolescents who were jailed for minor offenses. Suicide prevention centers have been established on several reservations for adolescents who are threatening suicide or whose family and friends feel they may suicide. Many other programs have been used and have proven to be successful as well.

Another Sahaptin lesson

Indian language (Sahaptin):

Teachings

by Betty Lou Lucio, with the assistance of Ada Sooksooit

1. Čaunamun awiayunata twalut'awasna pštni wāla piapmi. Nūsux iwā autni tkwátat, kwinkinam awautta kwaana twalut'awasna kunam awiyanikaika.
2. Tl'aaxwtun awača autni miimi nč'inč'imaní anátun au kwinki tkwátat pa'anixana pmai paamikiin kutkutawaski. Čaunam pašapałq iwixana miyanašmaman kwinki.
3. Čaunam kwikwiikta sc'atpa; pašnam kwikwiikta sc'atpa kunam auku txanata qw'sm. Qw'sm wit iwā c'ii'ix šukwat kunam iyaxta anamku kwikwiikta sc'atpa.
4. Čaunam awaq'itta nč'inatxau tkwatatna. Anam awnpta yalmilk pašnam nč'inatxau awnpta qw'shim kunam auku pamali txanata čxauniyau wajanam imi txanata čxauniin.
5. Čaunamun čškta. Pašnam laxs čškta ku auku ittawaxta paxamyau čškt kunam iyaxta kunam itamapašikta kunam ha'ai natxanata ičškšanaaš. Kušxinam tl'aaxw šinam čau inuwik'ata anč'a.

Interpretation:

1. Don't step over your father's or your brother's fishing pole. Salmon is a sacred food, therefore you should respect that fishing pole and walk around it.

2. The elders long ago respected all the tools they used for making foods. They never let the children play with those

things.

3. Don't whistle at night; if you do whistle at night you'll become naughty (qw'shm). Naughtiness is easily tempting and it will find you if you whistle at night.

4. Don't look for the biggest serving of food. If heedlessly you keep on taking the biggest

piece, you will either be married to a fat person or you will become too fat yourself.

5. Don't lie. If you tell one lie it will grow five times and will find you and come back to you and you will have to say, "I lied." And so no one will ever believe you again.

New DUI law enforced July 1

On July 1, 1984 a new Oregon law concerning Driving Under the Influence of Intoxicants will become effective and will be enforced in the state. The new law will "have more teeth in it" and give a new blood level for the definition of being under the influence.

The new level for intoxication in the law now reads that .08 percent by weight of alcohol in the blood of a person as shown by chemical analysis of the breath, blood or urine is under the influence of intoxicating liquor of a controlled substance.

One of the most significant changes in the law will be the

"implied consent"; in Oregon any person who operates a vehicle on the highways of the state shall be considered to have given consent to a chemical test for the purpose of determining the alcoholic content of the person's blood. Refusal to take a test by a driver can cause the driver to face longer suspensions than those who take the test and have .08 percent in the blood.

At the time of the test a police officer can confiscate the person's license or permit and issue a permit that will be good for thirty days. A person can file for a hearing but it must be done within ten days after he is

issued the permit.

Application for an occupational permit does not guarantee the person will receive one. Past alcohol related problems will be reviewed before the permit is issued. There will also be a waiting period for the limited occupational permit before it is issued.

In the following issue of the Spilyay Tymoo a more in-depth article will be published. The important fact at this time effective on July 1, "Ignorance of the law is not a defense in court," according to the Court System.

YIKES YIKES Toe Ness YIKES YIKES

There were these two guys who went into a Topless restaurant. The waitress came over and asked for their order. One guy looks at the waitress and said, "I'll have raisin cake." The topless waitress leans toward the other and asks, "Yours raisin too?" YIKES

SS SS SS

There was this not-so-bright guy who went into a Pizza Parlor and ordered a large pizza. When it came out of the oven the waitress asked if he would like it cut into four pieces or eight. The not-so-bright guy said, "Better make it four. I'll never be able to eat eight pieces." YIKES

SS SS SS

A little boy asked his father, "Where did I come from?" The father started to stutter and stammer and decided to tell his son the facts of life of the birds and the bees and the whole bit and when he finished he said, "Now, son, do you understand?" "Well, not really. Jim said he came out here from New York. I still don't know where we came from." YIKES

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This golfer got home real late from his usual round of golf with Jim and the boys. He said, "I'm glad I don't have to play golf with Ole Jim anymore." His wife asked, "Why, what happened?" "Well, on the second green Ole Jim had a heart attack." His wife said, "Oh! That's terrible, then what did you do?" "That slowed us up real bad, it was hit the ball, drag Ole Jim, hit the ball and drag Ole Jim." YIKES

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