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Students as agents of change: An environmental health intervention for American Indian Youth.

Elementary school students have the capacity to share knowledge with their caregivers, peers, and community. While previous research suggests that children can successfully act as change agents for health, empirical evidence is lacking. This study explores the transfer of knowledge between elementary school students and their parents during and after a 5-day summer camp focused on water-related environmental health. This study was part of a larger community-based participatory research project in the Crow community. We conducted open-ended interviews with caregivers. Questions focused on what their child had shared with them, and to what degree they had participated in camp related take-home activities. Interview transcripts were analyzed using thematic analysis. We found that children can serve as agents of change relaying information to parents. Children shared knowledge, and demonstrated attitude and behavior changes related to environmental health as a result of the camp. The overarching community context impacts how children share knowledge, and experience attitude and behavior changes. This context and evidence of the reciprocal relationships between caregivers and their children support that children did act as agents of change for environmental health, or 'Guardians of the Living Water'.

Acknowledgements: Velma Pickett (Little Big Horn College)