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Development and implementation of an environmental health literacy facilitator's guide: Integrating Western and Indigenous science for American Indian youth

Environmental Health Literacy (EHL) includes the understanding of the actions one can take to reduce their health risks and protect their water and environment. Improving health literacy at an early age by focusing on skills related to protecting water quality in their environment may provide an opportunity for youth, their families, and their community to critically evaluate environmental risks and take actions to protect their health. This presentation will describe the process used to design and implement a community-based participatory research EHL intervention for elementary school youth living on a Northern Plains American Indian reservation. The Guardians of the Living Water facilitator's guide was designed to increase 4th grade students' water-related EHL skills. The guide was co-developed and co-implemented by university and community partners, integrating western and indigenous science, tribal research data and published learning activities. Students attending the summer camp and after-school sessions participated in hands-on activities, field trips, and learned from community member guest speakers. The development and implementation of the guide has been an iterative participatory process, consisting of facilitator training, activity assessment and evaluation, and learning objective clarification. Direct involvement of tribal cultural leaders and elementary teachers have been important components to the curriculum development, revision and implementation. The collaborating partners continue to revise the intervention components to further incorporate the EHL model components into the current after school and upcoming summer camp venues.

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