



SOLIDARITY

P R O J E C T

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By Suzy Subways

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En Español

<http://www.champnetwork.org/>

HIV and Indigenous Peoples: In the Aftermath of Trauma

When stigma is attached to HIV, people's vulnerability to the virus is discussed in terms of individual behavioral choices, and a community with disproportionately high HIV rates is blamed for its supposed failures. The injustice that drives HIV is covered up. But when we take the stigma away and look at history, we see that homophobia shapes the epidemic among gay men to a devastating degree, and that sexism makes women vulnerable. In Native American communities, homophobia and sexism also drive the epidemic, but in ways that are deeply rooted in racism, colonialism, and genocide.

"When conducting research among Native Americans, dispossession must be considered as the underlying cause of the many existing health disparities, including those that result in HIV/AIDS," according to a 2007 research brief by John Lowe for the *Journal of the Association of Nurses in AIDS Care* called "**The Need for Historically Grounded HIV/AIDS Prevention Research Among Native Americans.**" Lowe continues: "The policies enacted by the United States government that enforced the dispossession of Native American Indian lands and termination or assimilation of Native American culture have resulted in a trauma of catastrophic proportions with destructive outcomes. Aside from disease, these include disenfranchisement; extermination of tradition, language, and land rights; broken treaties; sterilization of women; placement of children in Indian boarding schools; and other strategies of colonization."

Lowe explains that many generations have endured this trauma – and it has many symptoms. A **Center for AIDS Prevention Studies fact sheet** states that HIV in Native communities is linked to high rates of poverty, ill health, family violence, and drug and alcohol use, which are among the symptoms of the intergenerational trauma that Lowe discusses. According to the **National**

Native American AIDS Prevention Center, HIV rates among American Indians and Alaska Natives rank third after those of African Americans and Latinos, and Native peoples' life expectancy after diagnosis is the shortest of any ethnicity. High imprisonment rates and substandard health care contribute to the problem. The numbers of Native people living with HIV in the United States are significantly under-reported for many reasons, including the misclassification of individuals as white or Latino.

In this issue of *Solidarity Project*, we look at innovative ways that Native communities are organizing to heal from the intergenerational trauma that has increased their vulnerability to HIV. The Boarding School Healing Project is not only documenting the abuses Native people experienced at government-sponsored Christian schools, but also creating space for community healing and fighting for reparations.

In Oaxaca, Mexico, *muxhes*, whose assigned sex at birth was male and gender expression is female, celebrate their traditional roles in indigenous culture and lead AIDS activism in their communities. Indigenous rights activists in Oaxaca are challenging massive government corruption, which has crippled AIDS services there, and helping farmers keep their land so they won't have to seek jobs in the United States, where HIV risk is greater for them and for their partners when they return home.

Cultural Healing: Native American Activists Say Boarding School Abuses Harmed the Health of Generations

"Many of the problems of alcoholism and drug abuse now prevalent in Indian country can be traced back to the physical, emotional and sexual abuse suffered at the hands of our keepers in the BIA [Bureau of Indian Affairs] and mission boarding schools," Lakota journalist and boarding school survivor Tim Giago wrote in the *Huffington Post*. Government-sponsored boarding schools have created a legacy of trauma among Native American peoples in the United States. The [Boarding School Healing Project](#) documents the abuse and demonstrates how it has led to high rates of childhood sexual abuse, family violence, violence against women, alcoholism, and drug use in Native communities. In addition to the homophobia the schools enforced in children from cultures traditionally welcoming of gay and gender-nonconforming people, most of these symptoms of trauma are the same factors that make Native communities vulnerable to HIV. A look at the brutal history of these boarding schools can teach us a lot about the ways that social injustice fuels the epidemic – and how to fight back.

"Kill the Indian, Save the Man"

In the late 1800s, the U.S. government debated how to remove Native Americans from their land – "extermination or civilization," as one former commissioner of Indian Affairs put it – and it paid Christian churches to run boarding schools as a "civilizing" alternative. Cherokee activist Andrea Smith writes in her book, *Conquest: Sexual Violence and Native American Genocide*. Army captain Richard Pratt opened the first of the schools in 1879, arguing that they would "kill the Indian and save the man" by destroying the cultural link between children and their communities. Until the 1930s, Native children were forcibly taken from their families at age 5, and parents who resisted were jailed.



EDUCATING THE INDIAN RACE. GRADUATING CLASS OF CARLISLE, PA.

An 1890s photo of Carlisle Boarding School graduates. Carlisle, the first Native American boarding school, was opened by Captain Richard Pratt in 1878.

For 100 years, from the 1880s through 1980s, about 100,000 Native people grew up at the schools. Abuse was rampant, and children were physically punished for speaking Native languages or practicing their religion. "I want people to know how we were beaten with leather straps, shorn of our hair, and used as child slave-laborers at these boarding schools," Giago writes. "My eight-year-old sister, along with dozens of Lakota girls the same age, was raped at the mission school [she] told me about her abuse on her deathbed and I, along with her three children, finally understood why she had become a violent, alcoholic woman for so much of her life."

"I agree that the effects are intergenerational on families, primarily in the area of sexual, mental, physical, and emotional abuses," activist Charmaine Whiteface told the [Native Press](#). "My parents both attended a Catholic boarding school and experienced, as well as saw, all these types of abuses. They refused to speak the Lakota language to us and only wanted us to be 'white.' There was alcoholism and major physical, emotional and mental abuse in our home. They knew no other way: They were terrified of being Indian. If it were not for my grandmother who taught me in secret, I might not have even a little knowledge about my culture."

Canada forced Native children into residential schools until the 1970s, and abuses there are better documented. According to the [Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada](#), churches and government are responsible for the deaths of more than 50,000 Native children. Survivors tell of witnessing church and school officials murder their classmates through beatings, hangings, electric shock, and other forms of torture. Many children starved because the schools were run on chronically low budgets. Until the 1940s, students were intentionally exposed to tuberculosis. Survivors say they were forced to play and share beds with children dying of the disease. There is testimony that babies born to Native girls raped by church officials were killed and buried on school grounds. The Canadian government issued an apology this year, but activists say that nearly half the survivors will be left without compensation, and witnesses will not be allowed to give the names of perpetrators or describe any misconduct.

"The effects are intergenerational on families, primarily in the area of sexual, mental, physical, and emotional abuses ."

Being torn from family leaves its own scars. "I didn't know how to relate to my mom, because she didn't know how to relate to her mom, because my grandma was also in a boarding school," says Sammy Toineeta, a third-generation boarding school survivor and Boarding School Healing Project activist. "Kids, even if they're not in boarding schools today, feel that sense of isolation. As a result of that, they turn to alcohol."

Martha Burnside, a tribal liaison and trainer for [Commitment to Action for 7th-Generation Awareness & Education: HIV/AIDS Prevention Project](#) in Colorado, also traces alcoholism to the isolation engendered by boarding schools. "Children in boarding schools were not nurtured or parented," she says. "It was a military environment. This is why so many Native men and women have joined the military – they continued what they had learned all their lives. Because they did not receive nurturing, these children were left without the bonding parents develop with their children. This can lead to low self-esteem and a feeling of not belonging. So what do they do? They self-medicate. Drinking and drugging put our people at very high risk for HIV and other sexually transmitted infections. When someone is high, they are more likely to have unprotected sex, because inhibitions are lowered, and they are much more willing to say yes, whereas if they were sober they would never consider saying yes. Tribal members in the Southwest have told me that there has been an insurgence of crystal meth on their reservations. You give this to someone who has low self-esteem, and bam! They feel good, they feel sexy and invincible! This is very, very scary for someone who is lonely and looking for someone to love them, even it is just for one night."

Institutionalized Sexual Abuse and HIV

Andrea Smith, who also works with the Boarding School Healing Project and [INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence](#), argues in *Conquest* that, in order to take Native land, European colonizers had to try to destroy the traditional social structures of Native communities, where violence against women and children was very rare. During the time of its colonization of the Americas, Europe was a place where witch-burnings, wife beating, and torture were accepted. Smith argues that the frequent use of sexual assault by European colonizers and their descendents is a tool of genocide that attacks the identity of Native women. "The project of colonial sexual violence establishes the ideology that Native bodies are inherently violable – and by extension, that Native lands are also inherently violable," she writes.



St. Michael's Residential School, run by the Anglican Church for Native children in Alert Bay, British Columbia, until 1974. The building is now owned by the 'Namgis First Nation and houses a community center.

The boarding schools continued that legacy by creating a cycle of sexual violence. In her 2007 article [Soul Wound: The Legacy of Native American Schools](#), Smith quotes Willetta Dolphus, survivor of a South Dakota boarding school: "Dolphus, now director of the South Dakota Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, sees boarding school policies as the central route through which sexual abuse became entrenched in Native communities, as many victims became molesters themselves."

Research compiled by [Advocates for Youth](#) shows that, because childhood sexual abuse can destroy the sense of personal power needed to negotiate safer sex in adulthood, survivors of this abuse are more vulnerable to HIV. Childhood sexual abuse survivors are also more likely to manage their

emotional pain with alcohol or drugs, which makes sex without condoms more likely. One study found that male sexual abuse survivors had double the HIV rate of non-abused males. In another study, 65% of HIV positive participants reported physical and/or sexual abuse histories.

Institutionalized Homophobia and HIV

In an interview with the [Bay Area Reporter](#), Joan Benoit, executive director of the [Native American AIDS Project](#) in San Francisco, says that when her group first brought information tables to Pow Wows, community elders would ask them to remove the condoms. After the activists respectfully met with the elders to discuss the urgency of HIV, that changed. Still, Benoit said, "There's quite a bit of homophobia in Native settings. Not on all reservations. But the ones who have been impacted more by missionaries and boarding schools are more closed and homophobic. It's difficult to come out there."

Sammy Toineeta says that before the 20th century, the Lakota people respected *winktes*, men who had feminine characteristics. "They went from being a revered person to being a freak," she says. "The role of the *winkte* starts in childhood. It's about the recognition of those characteristics and their development in a spiritual way. The *winkte* gives each baby a secret name, and my grandmother told me that when I was born it took them almost a year



before they could find one who grew up in that spiritual [Lakota] way." Toineeta is inspired by the Two Spirit movement of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender Native Americans, who claim the Two Spirit identity to honor traditional roles in many tribes for people who embody both female and male spirits.

Healing and Reparations

The Boarding School Healing Project has taken its documentation to global authorities such as the United Nations. Next, the project will return to community organizing to document more testimony from survivors. This is very difficult, Toineeta says, because many of them are elderly, isolated on reservations, and distrustful because of their trauma. "They are reluctant to talk to even a member of their own community about their experiences." Speaking about the abuse can be healing for some, but many survivors withdraw from their loved ones afterward. In Canada, 22 of the 29 men who first spoke out in 1998 about their sexual abuse in residential schools have committed suicide, a Vancouver counselor told Smith.

"Our dream is to have a safe space where people can come in and talk about it, and the psychological component can be addressed," Toineeta says. "We don't want to stir up old, painful memories and not do anything about it." The project is also developing innovative ways to involve communities in the healing work. "At every Pow Wow, the veterans of foreign wars march at the front," she says. "We talk about recognizing the boarding school survivors at Pow Wows like we do veterans, because they are survivors of their own wars." Honoring survivors can break the shame individuals feel for what was done to them and, in the process, break the isolation the boarding schools created.

Toineeta credits her mother and grandmother for her spiritual survival. "My first school was right there in my hometown, so I could go home on Saturdays, but we had to be back for mass on Sunday morning. On Saturdays, my mom and grandma took us to ceremonies, and when the school found out about that, they sent us to another school 100 miles away. But I'm forever grateful that my mom and grandma did that. I was able to retain my language and knowledge of ceremonial rituals."

"Our dream is to have a safe space where people can come in and talk about it, and the psychological component can be addressed."

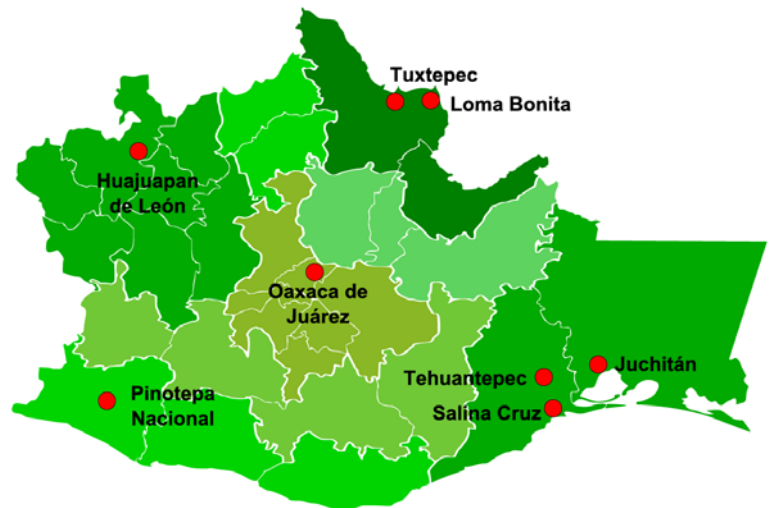
Now, spiritual ceremonies are a place for healing and rebuilding community. They're also a place where the Boarding School Healing Project can build trust with survivors. Instead of the usual methods, like going door-to-door, she says, "You have to do a whole different kind of community organizing. We'll send an organizer from that community to public gatherings where everyone goes. Then, when the elderly people see some of their friends talking to us, they're more willing."

Toineeta says the project is working with lawyers to develop Congressional legislation for reparations. "We're not looking for an apology, because we've got stacks of them," she says. "Something physical has to come of it, whether it's a return of land, or payments for teachers to teach the language of that particular area. If part of the reparations is money, we don't want the U.S. government overseeing it, because they created the problem. We have to hold the system accountable, and we can't let them tell us how to heal."

Land and Freedom: Indigenous Communities in Oaxaca, Mexico Fight HIV and Repression

The United States has twice the HIV prevalence of Mexico, so it isn't surprising that the need to cross the border for work has increased Mexican communities' vulnerability to HIV. But the reasons for HIV's increase in some places in Mexico – indigenous, rural communities far from the border – may not be so obvious. "The state of Oaxaca has the highest HIV rate in Southeastern Mexico," Oaxacan queer activist Leonardo Tlahui says. "One of the primary factors is immigration. The Mixteco people [one of Oaxaca's largest indigenous groups] have a high population of immigrants to the United States." He explains that migrating to a country with double the HIV rate makes immigrants more vulnerable to HIV, and that increased vulnerability is then shared with their home communities since most of the immigrants return home to Oaxaca.

Half a million indigenous people from Oaxaca (roughly one-seventh of the state's total population) live in the United States, according to Rufino Dominguez, a founder of the [Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations](#) (FIOB) in Oaxaca. Interviewed by David Bacon for a Truthout.org article called "[The Right to Stay Home](#)," Dominguez said, "There are no jobs here, and NAFTA [the North American Free Trade Agreement] made the price of corn so low that it's not economically possible to plant a crop anymore. We come to the U.S. to work because we can't get a price for our product at home. There's no alternative."



Oaxaca, Mexico

Treaties and Lovers

Two years after the Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN) launched its 1994 offensive in the state of Chiapas as NAFTA was implemented, the EZLN won a potential victory for indigenous land rights with the San Andres Accords, an agreement it negotiated with the Mexican government. But in 2002, the government gutted the accords, and now, indigenous activists say that large corporations are buying their peoples' land. As more young

people come to the U.S. to work and send money home, families are separated for years at a time, and individuals far from their partners become vulnerable to HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

For a new study called **"Migration and ruralization of AIDS: reports on vulnerability of indigenous communities in Mexico"** ["Migración y ruralización del SIDA: relatos de vulnerabilidad en comunidades indígenas de México"], researchers from Mexico City and California interviewed migrant workers and indigenous women in poor rural areas. Before a young man leaves as a teenager, the researchers report, he often partners with a girl who is also too young for legal marriage and hopes for pregnancy so that she will remain faithful while he is away. Some of the women said that, although they understand the likelihood that migrants have other sexual partners, it is very difficult to ask the men to use condoms when they return. It doesn't help that Oaxaca's archbishop **condemns the use of condoms** ["Condena el arzobispo de Oaxaca el uso del condón"] to prevent HIV.

One Zapoteca indigenous woman in Oaxaca, age 23, told the researchers, "I am here with my in-laws while my husband is in the United States, and he sees that somewhere they pick up other women. Now it is long that my husband hasn't come, like five years. He already entered [the U.S.] for six years [once before]... When he returns, he always comes looking for another pregnancy."

In a 2008 **poster presentation** at the Conference on Retroviruses and Opportunistic Infections (CROI) about HIV risk behaviors of Mexican migrant workers, Melissa Sanchez and other researchers reported that migrants, often struggling with unsafe working and living conditions, generally had more sex partners while in the U.S., and had more sex while using drugs or alcohol. A **related study** found that migrant men in California were 13 times more likely to have sex with another man than they were before leaving Mexico. Condom use increased while away from home, but migrants were unlikely to get tested for HIV for fear of deportation.

Sanchez also told **TheBody.com** that young men are being targeted for sex work at day-labor pick-up sites where they wait for construction work. "There are actually Web sites developed now where they give tips to people who want to approach Mexican-migrant, job-pick-up-site workers and actually recruit them," Sanchez said. "They are told, 'Go after three o'clock, when there is a clear indication that there is no work coming for the day.' They target young, young men, thinking, 'Well, they're going to be more naïve, they're perhaps more desperate to make some money given that they're not going to get a landscape job during the day.'"

Corruption and Repression in Oaxaca

In 2001, the **Frente Común Contra el SIDA** (Common Front Against AIDS), a community organization in Oaxaca, began buying bus tickets for people living with HIV in the countryside to see their doctors at the clinic of COESIDA, the state AIDS council, in Oaxaca City. While meeting this need, activists got to know the people they were serving. The stories they heard – many of the people weren't getting their medication regularly, were told to come back next month for medicine, or were given only one or two antiretrovirals rather than the standard combination of three – shocked the activists. According to the Frente's website, this revelation set in motion a clash with COESIDA that culminated in the Frente's closure amid threats and violence by government thugs in 2006.

"It was agreed I would sign a document with the government promising...to cease activities concerning HIV/AIDS in Oaxaca."

First, the Frente went to the press in 2001 with the information they had gathered about substandard HIV treatment at the clinic. Next, they negotiated with COESIDA officials, who allowed the activists to conduct a more formal survey. For one month – in March 2002 – the Frente interviewed each patient who came to the clinic. The results were astonishing: Of 145 patients, 33 weren't receiving any medication, and 20 were given only two antiretrovirals, which could do more harm than none by fostering drug resistance. Thirty-one patients opted out of the survey. While it's possible that some may not have needed medication, it's more likely that impoverished people from rural areas would come to the city for treatment only if they were very sick.

At their next meeting with the Frente, COESIDA officials revealed enough boxes of medications to treat 50 more people. After this victory, the Frente continued its work, publicly criticizing the under-reporting of rapidly increasing AIDS cases in rural areas where indigenous peoples live – and where the official HIV rates are the lowest.

Leonardo Tlahui, a founder of Oaxaca's Nancy Cardenas Sexual Diversity Collective and an organizer with the [Popular Assembly of the Peoples of Oaxaca \(APPO\)](#), explains, "There are no resources for our culture, for health, for housing... All the budgeted money that comes in to serve people with HIV, mostly indigenous people, is lost. The indigenous people who are HIV positive in Oaxaca are invisible, even though more than ten years ago there was an armed uprising in Chiapas." Under the current governor, Tlahui says, the situation has only become worse. "In this period, we have a pseudo-governor of Oaxaca, a man named Ulises Ruiz," he says. "We are asking for his removal because he does not know how to govern the state, because he is a repressor, he has sent many people to prison, and we have many deaths and disappeared people. We are demanding justice."

Bill Wolf, an artist from San Francisco who lived in Oaxaca and had worked with the Frente since 1995, took his own life earlier this year after a long struggle with lung cancer. Excerpts from his journals, available in English on the Frente's website, describe the depth of corruption in Oaxaca's government. In January 2007, he wrote, "The current Secretary of Public Health, appointed by Ulises Ruiz, in one short year has become one of the wealthiest men in Oaxaca, recently buying an enormous mansion.... The director of COESIDA, Gabriela Velásquez, is the wife of the largest contributor to the political campaigns of both ex-governor José Murat and current governor Ulises Ruiz."



AIDS activist Bill Wolf and other Oaxaca artists built this "Day of the Dead Altar" on November 1, 2006, to honor 56 activists assassinated by the government and paramilitaries in the previous year. The sign is a play on Oaxaca Governor Ulises Ruiz's slogan, "Giving our face to the nation." The slain activists are portrayed rising from their graves.

In June 2006, teachers on strike occupied Oaxaca City's central plaza. They held it for seven months with the support of APPO, which was formed during the uprising by representatives of Oaxaca's 17 distinct indigenous peoples, many of the 400 majority-indigenous municipalities, and hundreds of grassroots organizations, all demanding the removal of Ruiz. Fifty-six movement leaders were assassinated during the government crackdown on the uprising that year.

"Five indigenous leaders were killed on the very weekend we received the final threat from COESIDA," wrote Wolf, who was also an APPO supporter. "We later met and it was agreed I would sign a document with the government promising to have no part in the national [AIDS] convention, to cease activities concerning HIV/AIDS in Oaxaca, to not speak with the media, and to not mention the above 'incident.'"

The "incident" Wolf mentions is described in a quote from fellow expatriate Stan Gottlieb's blog: "They showed up at Condón Mania, the highly successful store [run by the Frente] that sells condoms at just enough over cost to stay in business. They gave a little demonstration by smashing the windshield on one of the worker's car. They gave everyone some advice about how to avoid these kinds of visits in the future...."

Visions of Survival and Resistance



Oaxaca AIDS activist
Amaranta Gómez Regalado.

Despite the repression by Oaxaca's government, its indigenous communities are creating new ways to survive and resist – with inspiration from their historical roots. Zapoteca AIDS activist Amaranta Gómez Regalado's essay "Transcending" offers a glimpse of her hometown, Juchitán, Oaxaca, and its traditional embrace of muxhe, whose identity she defines as "people who are born a man and grow up with the generic identity of a woman; this is an identity not unlike a gay or transgender identity, but with truly unique characteristics." Muxhes like Gómez have traditionally been embroiderers, seamstresses, and fish-sellers, she writes. And now, they are community leaders, especially in the AIDS movement.

"In 1995, a group of women and muxhes formed [Juchitán's] first civil HIV/AIDS organization, called Gunaxhii Guendanabani (Love for Life), and in 1997 the muxhe community created other sources of civil movement for the promotion of sexual rights and the prevention of HIV/AIDS, like Colectivo Binni Laanu (Our People) and the group Las Intrépidas Contra el Sida (Fearlessly Against AIDS)," Gómez writes. She has become a leader in the international movement against HIV in indigenous communities." ["Transcending" is available in [English](#) and [Spanish](#) on the Internet.]

The Binational Front of Indigenous Organizations (FIOB) works with farmers in Oaxaca who are exploring new food crops to replace corn and beans, so that they can support themselves on their land and make the basic human right they speak of as *el derecho de no migrar* – the right *not* to migrate – a real option in people's lives. In "The Right to Stay Home," David Bacon writes, "Over the years, FIOB has organized women weavers in Juxtlahuaca, helping them sell their textiles and garments through its chapters in California. It set up a union for rural taxis, both to help farming families get from Juxtlahuaca to the tiny towns in the surrounding hills, and to provide jobs for drivers. Artisan co-ops make traditional products, helped by a co-operative loan fund."

Human Rights for Indigenous Peoples

In a conversation at the Indigenous Peoples' networking zone in the Global Village area of the 17th International AIDS Conference in Mexico City in August, Leonardo Tlahui spoke about the role of APPO in the Mexican AIDS movement. "Part of being here in the Global Village is to demand respect for the human rights of all indigenous peoples, and of those of us who are in favor of justice in the state," he said. "We use all the possible forums where we can get space to outreach about this. They didn't want to open up a space for APPO, because they thought we



were going to talk about guerrilla war and political issues. In the APPO, we also work on health and security issues and many policies that we want applied in Oaxaca. But we are closed from doing this. We have a thirst for information, but they don't want to inform us."

Amaranta Gómez closes "Transcending" in the spirit of nurturing her community's heritage as a source of strength in the face of threats to its survival. "It is difficult to explain everything about what it is like to be a *muxe* from Juchitán in this small article, however I hope that this brief look at our vision of the world has enlightened some," she writes. "A vision which is not exempt from the social, economic, political and cultural changes taking place in Mexico, yet it has the goal of continuing to conserve the social and cultural harmony that has existed throughout the years and has allowed for different identities, like that of the *muxe*, to flourish and be expressed. This goal becomes even bigger when those from the outside look at Juchitán as a society with its own reality that resists disappearing."

TAKE ACTION – What You Can Do

- 1) **Break the silence about boarding school abuses.** Order the 18-minute documentary [A Century of Genocide in the Americas: The Residential School Experience](#) by Rosemary Gibbons and Dax Thomas (2002) and host an event to show it with friends, in your neighborhood, school, or organization. After the film, you can hand out paper and pens so everyone can write letters to the editor of your local paper. Pass the hat for donations to the Boarding School Healing Project. Check the Project's [Take Action](#) page and write letters to the United Nations and other authorities to demand investigation of human rights violations. Distribute the video to libraries and media outlets in your community.
- 2) **Demand sexual assault services for Native women.** For most women living on reservations, the Indian Health Service (IHS) emergency room is the only place to go after a sexual assault. But in 2005, the Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center found that 44% of IHS facilities lack trained personnel to provide emergency services after a rape, including post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV infection. According to Department of Justice statistics, rape in American Indian and Alaska Native populations is 3.5 times higher than among all other racial groups. 85% of perpetrators are non-Native men, most of them white. The U.S. government is required by legally binding treaties to provide health care to Native communities, which it promised in exchange for land it took. Go to the center's [Action Alert](#) page to send an advocacy letter. For background info on sexual assault and Native women, watch the center's videos on YouTube: [Indigenous Women's Reproductive Health Rights](#) (2005) and [Violence Against Women is Against the Law](#) (2007). Amnesty International also has an [Online Action Center](#) page devoted to the issue.
- 3) **Join or start a Oaxaca solidarity group** – like the ones in [Austin](#), [Chicago](#), [Flagstaff](#), [Portland](#), [Santa Cruz](#), and other cities – in your hometown. There will continue to be urgent calls for solidarity with social movements in Oaxaca asking people to demonstrate at their nearest Mexican Consulate, and a group can help people mobilize quickly. Your group can also host speakers and film screenings to educate the community and raise money to support organizing and media work in Oaxaca. If there isn't already a group in your area, contact one of the existing groups or visit elenemigocomun.net [The Common Enemy] for help starting one.

- 4) **Research local archives and government and church records for evidence of crimes in Native American boarding schools.** If your church or government is responsible for abuses and/or deaths of Native children, take steps to hold it accountable. This could start just by talking with others in your community about it. Then, for example, you could work within your church organization to help (and pressure) it to gather information, release it publicly, and reach out to Native groups to offer restitution.

 - 5) **Protest the Olympics in Vancouver, Canada.** The 2010 Winter Olympics will take place on unceded indigenous land from February 12 to 28, 2010. According to the [Olympics Resistance Network](#), the harmful effects have already begun – expansion of sport tourism and resource extraction on indigenous lands; increasing homelessness and gentrification of poor neighborhoods; more privatization of public services; union-busting, especially for migrant labor; the fortification of national security; ballooning public spending and public debt; and unprecedented destruction of the environment. Building on a call by Native activists, the network is organizing a protest convergence between February 10 and 15, 2010.

 - 6) **Stay informed and involved.** Visit [Intercontinental Cry](#) for frequently updated news, videos, and info about how you can support indigenous struggles around the world to reclaim their lands and protect their lives, their traditions, and the environment.
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RESOURCES

Bilingual Links:

What are American Indian/Alaskan Natives' (AI/AN) HIV prevention needs? (2002, factsheet)

English: caps.ucsf.edu/pubs/FS/nativeamerican.php

Español: caps.ucsf.edu/espanol/hojas/pdf/IN-NAFS.pdf

This Center for AIDS Prevention Studies (CAPS) factsheet from UCSF links the history of colonization, outlawing Native languages and spiritual practices, and centuries of forced relocation with a disproportionate burden of HIV risk factors.

El Enemigo Común (The Common Enemy)

elenemigocomun.net (website)

News and videos from social movements and media collectives in Oaxaca, Mexico.

Risk Across Borders: Sexual Contexts and HIV Prevention Challenges among Mexican Gay and Bisexual Immigrant Men (August 2008, monograph)

These findings and recommendations from a new CAPS study are an easy-to-read resource for immigrants, gay men, HIV educators, activists, policy makers, and scholars.

English Links:

Native American HIV/AIDS organizations (web page, 2008)

Current list from the UCSF Center for HIV Information.



HIV Cultural Competency within Native American Communities (2005, video)

Native American Women's Health Education Resource Center video on how to respectfully provide HIV services in Native communities. Viewable on YouTube.

Lisa Tiger, HIV/AIDS educator and motivational speaker (website)

A longtime Native activist speaks about living with HIV and how to fight AIDS in Native communities.

Bay Area American Indian Two-Spirits (organization)

A community-based volunteer organization to restore the role of Two-Spirit people within the American Indian/First Nations community.

Allies of the Lakota (organization)

Donate to the Porcupine Clinic, the only independent Indian community-controlled health clinic in the United States.

Turtle Island Native Network – Focus on Indian Residential Schools (web page)

Videos and documents about the genocidal history of Canada's Indian residential schools, with healing resources for survivors.

Lakota Woman by Mary Crow Dog (1990, book)

An activist's autobiography, covering her boarding school experience and the birth of her son during the 1973 American Indian Movement takeover at Wounded Knee.

The Grid of History: Cowboys and Indians (2003, article)

American Indian Movement veteran and writer Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz discusses current U.S. wars as a continuation of the white supremacy and imperialism that began with the conquest of Native lands. See also **The Opposite of Truth is Forgetting**, an interview with Dunbar-Ortiz in *Upping the Anti* #6 (2008) about organizing for indigenous sovereignty today.

The Pinky Show: "How to Solve Illegal Immigration" (2007, online video, 15 min.)

Pinky, an animated cat, argues that Native American peoples have been made invisible in the national debate on immigration so that descendents of white settlers can claim that they have the right to this land and scapegoat recent immigrants as criminals.

Rethinking Columbus: The Next 500 Years (2004, curriculum)

Edited by Bill Bigelow and Bob Peterson, lesson plans for kindergarten through college to re-evaluate the myth of Columbus and issues of indigenous rights.

generationFIVE (organization)

Through survivor leadership, community organizing, and public action, generationFIVE works to end the sexual abuse of children within five generations.

No One Is Illegal – Vancouver: Indigenous Support (2008, web page)

Background and updates about Canada's strong, militant indigenous resistance movements, and what you can do to support them.



Links en Español:

[¡Impacto! Transnacional](#) (Winter 2008, magazine)

This issue of AIDS Project Los Angeles' international Spanish-language magazine covers HIV in indigenous communities throughout Latin America and the United States.

[Second International Pre-Conference For Indigenous/Native Communities and Afro-Descendants Responding To HIV/AIDS, Sexuality And Human Rights](#) (2008, web page)

by Amaranta Gomez Regalado and Patricia Ponce Jiminez, about the indigenous peoples' summit before the International AIDS Conference in Mexico City.

[Mal de Ojo TV Oaxaca](#) (website)

Videos documenting social movements in Oaxaca, from an activist collective of independent, indigenous and community media workers.

Solidarity Workshop

HIV Prevention Toolkit for Native Communities: Historical and Socioeconomic Health Risks

The National Native American AIDS Prevention Center (NNAAPC) created this HIV Prevention Toolkit for Native Communities to help public health workers better serve Native communities. With this toolkit, we hope to enhance your knowledge, skills, abilities, attitudes, and behaviors as they pertain to HIV/AIDS prevention among Native peoples.

The Toolkit is composed of six stand-alone modules. You can use individual modules to improve a specific area of your agency's program, to learn more about a section of HIV/AIDS prevention, and/or to learn more about Native people and health care. As a set, the modules progress from basic concepts to more complex strategies for HIV/AIDS prevention. We encourage you to access the toolkit for your specific needs. In each module, you will find links to key terms, websites of health and Native-focused organizations, and other useful resources. If you need further assistance with your program beyond this toolkit, please contact NNAAPC at information@nnaapc.org.

The entire toolkit is available online at <http://nnaapc.org/resources/toolkit/index.htm>.

Module 2: Historical and Socioeconomic Health Risks

Addressing HIV/AIDS isn't an easy task in itself. Addressing HIV/AIDS among Native populations is even more difficult. It involves the health and psychosocial effects of many other issues: a traumatic history, homophobia and discrimination, poor communication, poverty, and substance abuse. In order to address HIV/AIDS among Native populations, it is essential to understand and respond to these historical and social barriers.

Impacts of Contact and Colonization

Native communities still experience trauma as a result of colonization. Native people suffer from depression, marginalization, alienation, identity confusion, substance abuse, violence, and suicide. All of these traumas play a role in the transmission of HIV/AIDS among Native people.

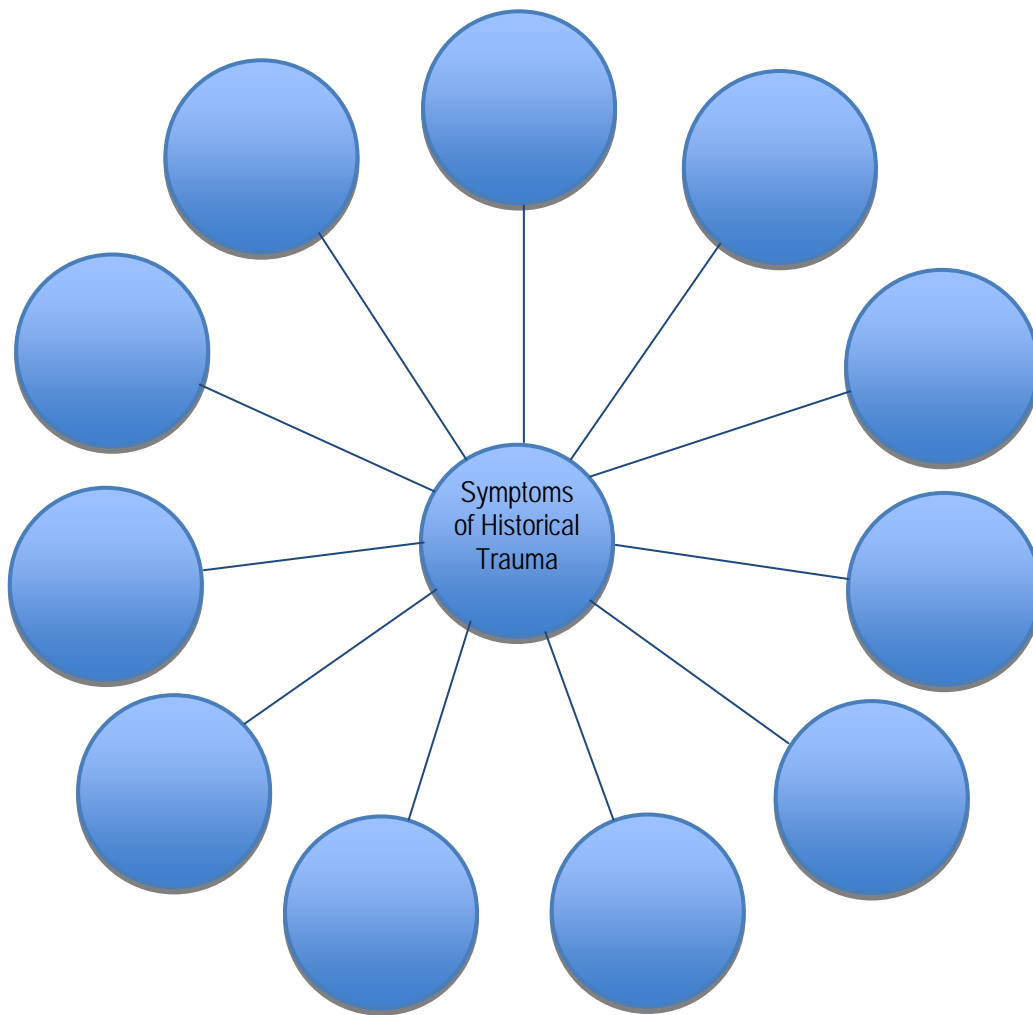
- Study the colonization history of your community. How did Native people in your location get to be where they are today? Who did they come into contact with? How were they treated by the colonizers?



- What type of intergenerational trauma has your community experienced as a result of colonization? Study the diagram above, and think about physical and psychological health problems that seem to transfer from generation to generation.

Activity: Identifying Symptoms of Historical Trauma

Review the information presented in Module 2, sections 1 and 2 [please see the full [toolkit](#)]. With one or more of your coworkers, discuss the health and psychological issues that are common to Native people in your area. Do your best to base your responses on real experiences with Native members of your community. As you discuss each health issue, write it into the diagram below, and think about how it connects back (at least in part) to contact [with European settlers] and colonization.





Solidarity Project

CHAMP is committed to a solidarity approach in the fight against HIV/AIDS. The purpose of *Solidarity Project* is to provide information on key HIV/AIDS issues that affect people in the United States and around the world. We also provide conversation starters and training exercises in each issue to help spur discussion of hard topics on these issues in our own communities. *Solidarity Project (Proyecto Solidaridad)* is also available in Spanish.

We Want To Hear From You!

We appreciate hearing from you about specific articles and issues of *Solidarity Project*. Your input helps *Solidarity Project* be relevant to our readership while remaining true to CHAMP's mission. To contribute a letter, please email champ@champnetwork.org or write to one of the addresses below. If you'd rather not include your name with your letter, we will respect your confidentiality. But please provide contact information in case we need to get in touch with you for clarification or verification.

We look forward to hearing from you!

Lead Writer: Suzy Subways

Suzy Subways has been writing for HIV/AIDS community publications since 2000. Previously an editor at POZ magazine, she has also written for AIDS Treatment News and A&U, mostly covering the work of AIDS activist movements. She works with the Independent Media Center and writes for the New York City Independent and other Left media outlets. Her social justice activism began in the early 1990s, organizing against the first Gulf War and with the successful ACT UP Philadelphia-led movement for condoms in her high school. She was a founding member of the Student Liberation Action Movement (SLAM) at the City University of New York (CUNY) from 1996 to 2001. SLAM was a women of color-led radical activist group that fought tuition hikes and the elimination of open admissions at CUNY, and organized youth in New York City to resist police brutality and the prison industrial complex.

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