Out of our comfort zone: Short-term cultural immersion with community health nursing students

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Introduction
Preparing culturally-competent entry-level nurses is goal of curriculum1-2 & special emphasis in community health nursing (NUR 4120)

Good access to urban / suburban clinical sites therefore the Comfort Zone is large city, large health systems & urban hospitals – few rural or Native American tribal service-learning opportunities.

Cultural Immersion experiences are suggested as one way to augment classroom learning and to provide diversity experiences, enhance cultural competence knowledge and attitudes, and practice skills.3-6

Purpose of Project
Design, implement, and begin to test a short-term cultural immersion experience for CHN students with Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians in Petoskey, MI

Purpose of Poster
Preliminary report of project and changes observed by students, faculty, and tribal colleagues involved in the experience.

Going “Up North”
- One clinical group each term
- Began in Fall 2009 (Shmina */ Bickes)
- Three (3) four-day weekends in Petoskey
- Additional clinical experiences in Detroit
- Observations, supervised clinical practice in tribal clinic, home visitation with tribal members, and service-learning projects
- Experiential learning regarding Odawa history, geography, community traditions, and healing beliefs/practices
  - Sweat Lodges
  - Ghost Suppers
  - Sobriety Dinners
  - Area Tours including historic & culturally significant sites
- Low cost housing for students in collaboration with Northern Michigan College

Preliminary Findings

Student Qualitative Evaluation
New diversity experiences
- 1st Native American interaction for most students
- 1st small community exposure for many
- Being an “Outsider” / member of oppressor group
New awareness / knowledge gained
- Blood Quantum
- Traditional ceremonies
- Dynamics of relatively-closed community
- Non-western health / healing practices
- Collectivist orientation
New sensitivity / attitudes observed
- Openness / welcome by tribal members
- Enthusiasm for Odawa teaching “outsiders”
- Richness of Odawa history and culture
New Cultural Competence behaviors practiced
- Respectful listening
- Individual assessment & intervention
- Clinic and home visiting in native community
- Culturally congruent care with community nurses

Faculty Qualitative Evaluation
Travel is expensive and time consuming but worthwhile
Prior community connections are key
Consistency is essential
Building trust takes time
Growth opportunity for faculty with orientation to experience
Future opportunities for research & collaboration

Tribal Qualitative Evaluation
Initial concern for disruption to services in clinic
Found student clinical skills and enthusiasm helpful
Enjoyed teaching/ mentoring roles & being appreciated
Shared RN career options with their community
Eager to have students return

Next Steps
Quantitative evaluation using pre-post test design with NUR 4120 students to examine changes in Cultural Competence as measured with Schim et. al., Cultural Competence Assessment tool.*

Data being collected / Analysis pending.

Literature

* Special thanks to Kim Shmina for sharing her contacts with the Little Traverse Bay Bands of Odawa and for opening the door for this project.