



OVERVIEW BRIEF

Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting

Project Description

The Good Life Vision is Lac Courte Oreilles Child Support Services' implementation of the Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting Grant, sponsored by the federal Office of Child Support Services. The Good Life Vision aims to provide Native youth with the opportunity to learn about culture, history, values, and practices by building a connection to culture, developing a positive sense of identity, and forming the assets needed to follow the Good Life.

Grant Purpose

The Charting a Course for Economic Mobility and Responsible Parenting Grant is intended to leverage the child support program's expertise on the legal and financial responsibilities of parenting to encourage teens and young adults to follow the success sequence.



Success Sequence

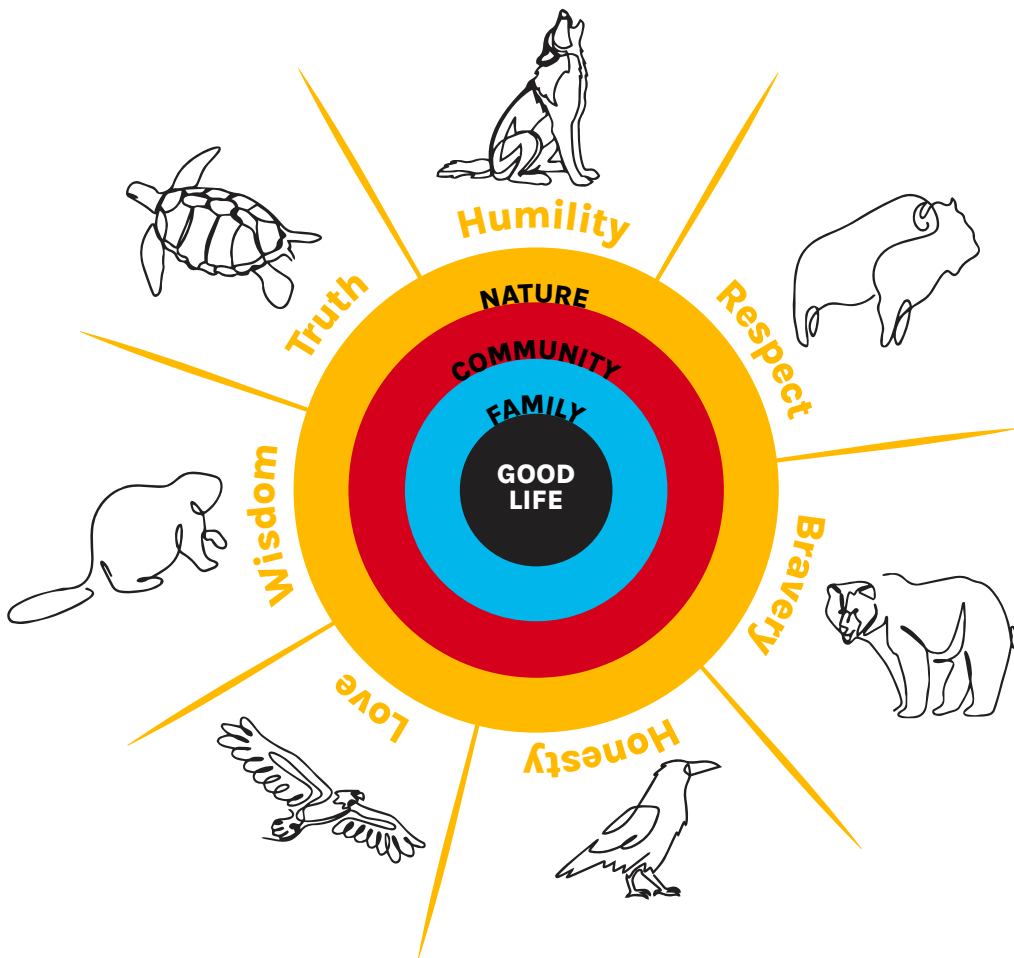
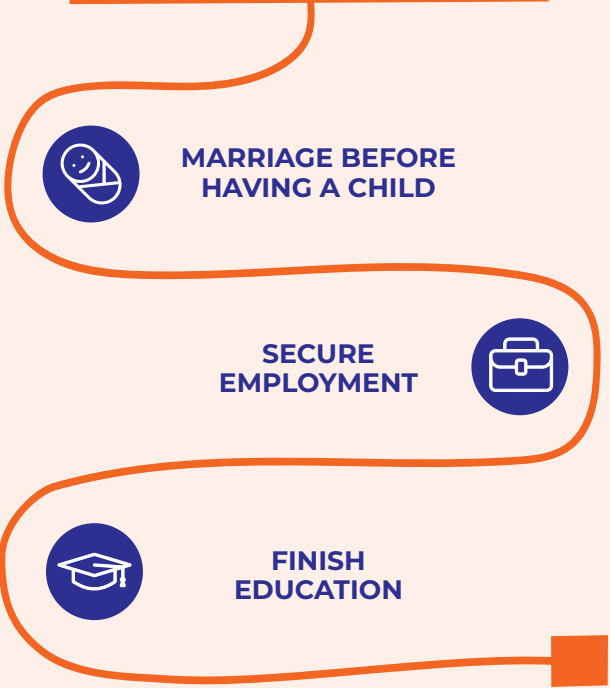
Research shows following these steps supports youth and young adults in moving out of or avoiding poverty.

Institute for Family Studies (2024)

Native Youth and the Success Sequence

While the “success sequence” is a logical formula for reducing an individual’s risk of living in poverty, cultural factors and significant barriers caused by historical trauma demand a more relevant approach to promoting economic mobility and responsible parenting for Native youth. Strengths-based strategies, founded on increasing participants’ connection to culture, have been shown to have positive impact on Ojibwe and other Native youth’s resiliency, mental health, use of substances, academic achievement, and other factors integral to living the Good Life. The Good Life Path is the Ojibwe “formula” for an integrated and healthy life, supporting positive parenting and a secure future for youth.

ACHIEVE SUCCESS



Seven Grandfather Teachings

The Good Life, or Mino-Bimaadiziwin, centers the individual in connection to family, community, and the land and offers guidance from the Seven Grandfather Teachings.

Key Components of the Project

The Good Life Vision brings the Lac Courte Oreilles Child Support Services together with community partners to preserve, strengthen, and renew Ojibwe values in Lac Courte Oreilles youth. By providing opportunities to learn about culture, history, values, and practices, the Good Life Vision builds youth's connection to culture, enhances a positive sense of identity, and forms the assets needed to follow the Good Life.

Good Life Culture Camp

Lac Courte Oreilles youth aged 11–14 participate in a week-long, overnight culture camp on the grounds of Camp Highlands, located on beautiful Plum Lake in northern Wisconsin.

2022

31

youth participants

11 Years

average age of campers

63%

male campers

37%

female campers

2023

53

youth participants

11 Years

average age of campers

58%

male campers

42%

female campers

30 Campers

who attended in 2022 also attended in 2023

Learn more about the Culture Camp in the film
The Good Life Vision Presents the Good Life Culture Camp

produced by nDigiDreams



A combination of cultural and recreational activities developed for the camp actively engages the campers:

Cultural Activities

- Ojibwe language lessons
- Traditional dance
- Drumming and singing
- Leather and birch bark crafts
- Creating ribbon skirts and shirts
- Feast preparation and protocol

Recreational Activities

- Swimming
- Canoeing and tubing
- Archery
- Sports
- Campfires
- Games





The payoff is going to be huge. I cannot wait to see the types of parents that these kids are going to be. Giving them an understanding and a connection to who they are as Native people is part of that gift. So that their parenting lives are rich and full and loving and supportive and cultural. So it's very intentional. Not every child's going to grow up to be a parent. But every child will be involved in parenting, whether you're an auntie or a we'enh, you ... have a role in our tribe as a parent, no matter what happens in your life.

**- Bonnie Beaudin,
Ojibwe Language Teacher**

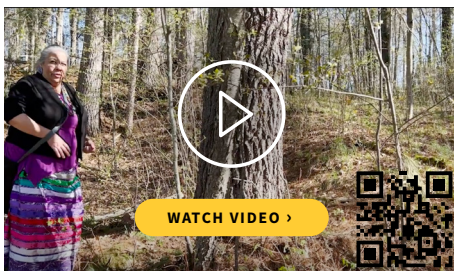


Digital Storytelling

In partnership with nDigiDreams, a Native filmmaking company, the Good Life Vision included the creation of storytelling videos that share the lived experiences of Lac Courte Oreilles parents and grandparents on the journey of the Good Life. Five digital stories were created that described the storytellers' experiences overcoming substance abuse, separation from children due to incarceration, child welfare engagement, divorce and overcoming adversity. The digital stories illustrate how a supportive family and strengthening their connection to culture helped the storytellers transition from difficult situations to following the Good Life Path. Following their premiere at a special event in July 2022, the storytelling videos have been incorporated into other Good Life programming and distributed through Facebook and YouTube.

nDigiDreams videos:

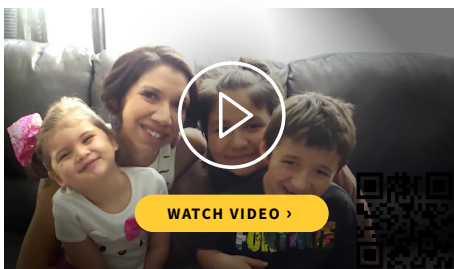
Paula



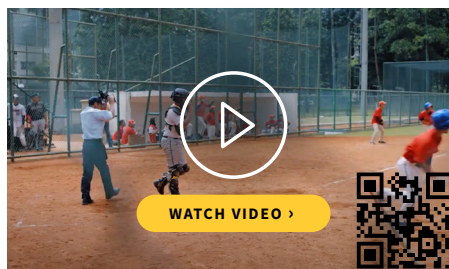
Danielle



Katrina



Lonnie



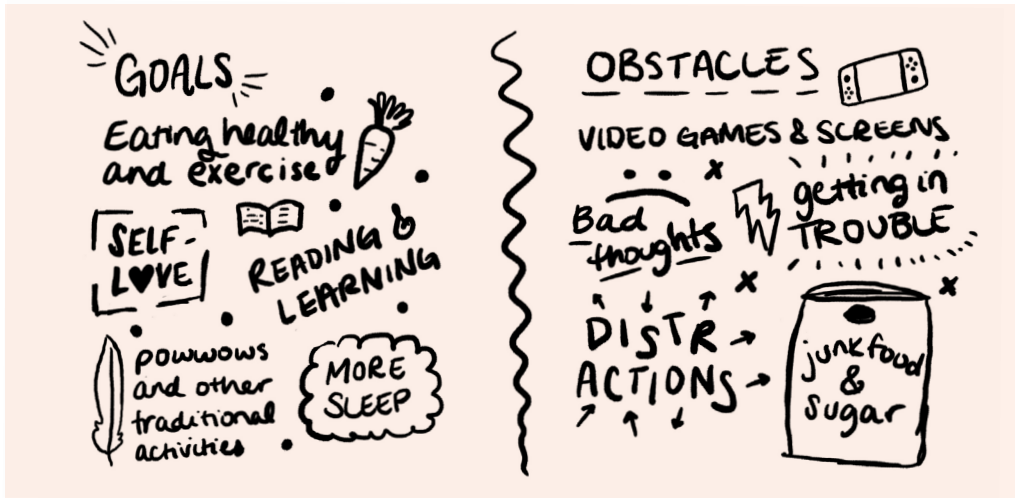
I pray the next generation will take these stories to heart.

**- nDigiDreams Digital
Storytelling Premier
Participant**

Middle School Parenting Program

Partnering with the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School, Good Life Vision implements a six-session program on Parenting and the Good Life for middle school students. In the spring of 2023, the six planned sessions were held over a seven-week period during school hours and included discussions, activities, and homework assignments on topics related to family, emotions, kindness, respect for elders, and staying healthy. The program culminated with youth creating an individual Good Life plan which included setting goals and avoiding obstacles and efforts for the physical, mental, and spiritual components of their Good Life paths.

Students Brainstormed Ideas on Goals and Obstacles for the Good Life Path



High School Parenting

Good Life Vision augments the health class elective offered by Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe School by providing RealCare Baby Infant Simulators for parenting education. Students practice responding to the dolls' cues and needs and experience the demanding realities of caring for infants. During their week-long assignment with the dolls, students also journal their experiences of the emotional, social, and financial impacts of caring for a baby.



Building Assets through Connection to Culture

Background

The colonization, forced relocation, and multigenerational trauma inflicted on Native Americans in the U.S. has left this population facing extraordinary challenges.¹ Though sometimes seen by those outside Native communities as no longer relevant, residential schooling and forced assimilation are not perceived by Native populations to be in the distant past but rather as ongoing sources of harm, linked inextricably to their present experiences, and highly relevant today.²

For the Lac Courte Oreilles, these experiences were manifested, in part, at the Hayward Indian School, which was created specifically for Lac Courte Oreilles children. The school was founded in 1901 and closed in 1934. At the time of its closure, the school housed 1,300 students with only 12–15 teachers. In his 2009 thesis, University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire student Titus Overturf described life at the Hayward Indian School as a “military-style life, where strict schedules dictated most of their day and children were forced to adopt Christian names, wear military-style uniforms and cut their long hair.”³

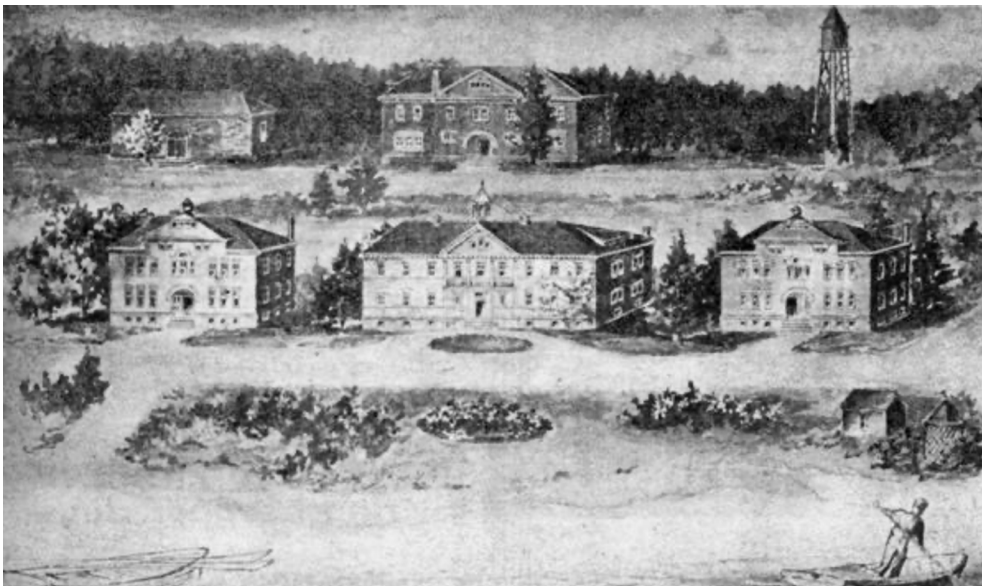


Image 1. Hayward Indian Boarding School. 1900. Drawing. Wisconsin Historical Society, Madison. <https://www.wisconsinhistory.org/Records/Image/IM83147>.



I really like the dances because that's when we all get together. The boys can sing and the girls can dance and everyone's dancing. Even the [non-Native] staff here ... they dance with us and ... it's amazing to see them coming out here and learning our culture.

– Jonathan,
Good Life Camp Participant





That’s culture. And that’s who we are in the way we start our day with putting down tobacco. And the way we look for opportunities to grow. And the way we look for opportunities to support others, to nurture, to love and respect. In the way that we care for our elders. In the way that we protect our youth. And in the way that we parent, grandparent, husband and wife. In the way that we build family and community. In the way that we look outside ourselves. So one of the things I like to instill upon students right away is the recognition that when you are speaking, you are breathing life into the language, and that your actual physical body is waking that language back up for our people. And that it belongs to you, it will always be yours, and nobody can ever take that from you.

– Bonnie Beaudin, Ojibwe Language Teacher

The experiences of Native Americans have resulted in multi-generational trauma, which in turn has led to Native youth experiencing high rates of mental and physical health problems, substance use and abuse, poverty, adolescent birth rates, and child welfare engagement. While the risk factors faced by Native youth may undermine their current and future quality of life, connection to culture is as a strong protective factor that can mitigate risk factors:

- The protective effects of cultural connectedness have been observed in Native groups across continents.^{4,5}
- Gray and Cote found that cultural connectedness acted as a strong protective factor against generational trauma; it was associated with positive mental health among individuals with family histories of residential schooling.⁶
- LaFromboise and colleagues found enculturation, or identification with Native culture, to be the highest predictor of resilience among tribal communities in the upper Midwestern United States.⁷
- A higher level of cultural connectedness was found to be related to lower levels of violent activity and alcohol abuse among Native youth in the Midwestern United States and Alaska.^{8,9}
- Whitbeck and colleagues found enculturation to be a factor in fostering academic success among Native youth in the Midwestern United States.¹⁰
- Tribal language use, as well as involvement in ceremonies and powwows, were found to be protective against delinquent behaviors in tribal communities in both the Southwestern and Midwestern United States.¹¹

A study by Snowshoe identified positive associations between cultural connectedness and “self-efficacy, sense of self (present and future), school connectedness, and life satisfaction and, in some cases, predicted mental health above and beyond other established social determinants of health.”¹²

Together these studies provide evidence of the value of the Good Life Vision’s core focus of building Lac Courte Oreilles youth’s cultural connectedness as an effective strategy to promote positive mental health, reduce substance use and its accompanying risks while increasing the healthy, pro-social behavior needed to follow the Good Life path.

Community Members Support Building Youth’s Connection to Culture

In a survey of community members at a Good Life Vision event, 100% expressed agreement that encouraging Lac Courte Oreilles youth to become knowledgeable and engage in cultural activities is important and provides benefit in these aspects of life:

- Sense of personal identity
- Sense of community
- Guidance on living the good life
- Becoming good parents
- Making good choices
- Importance of taking care of yourself
- Sense of place

References

- ¹Janet C. King et al., “The Culture Is Prevention Project: Adapting the Cultural Connectedness Scale for Multi-Tribal Communities,” *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research* 26, no. 3 (January 1, 2019): 104–35, <https://doi.org/10.5820/aian.2603.2019.104>.
- ²Andrew R. Hatala et al., “‘I Have Strong Hopes for the Future’: Time Orientations and Resilience among Canadian Indigenous Youth,” *Qualitative Health Research* 27, no. 9 (June 1, 2017): 1330–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1049732317712489>.
- ³Titus Overturf, “The Hayward Indian School: Realities of an Off-Reservation Boarding School” (2009), <https://minds.wisconsin.edu/handle/1793/38972>.
- ⁴Mandy Gibson et al., “Suicide Rates for Young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People: The Influence of Community Level Cultural Connectedness,” *Medical Journal of Australia* 214, no. 11 (May 13, 2021): 514–18, <https://doi.org/10.5694/mja2.51084>.
- ⁵Teresa D. LaFromboise et al., “Family, Community, and School Influences on Resilience among American Indian Adolescents in the Upper Midwest,” *Journal of Community Psychology* 34, no. 2 (February 6, 2006): 193–209, <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20090>.
- ⁶Andrew Gray and William Cote, “Cultural Connectedness Protects Mental Health against the Effect of Historical Trauma among Anishinabe Young Adults,” *Public Health* 176 (November 1, 2019): 77–81, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.puhe.2018.12.003>.
- ⁷LaFromboise et al., “Family, Community, and School Influences on Resilience among American Indian Adolescents in the Upper Midwest.”
- ⁸Jia Pu et al., “Protective Factors in American Indian Communities and Adolescent Violence,” *Maternal and Child Health Journal* 17, no. 7 (August 28, 2012): 1199–1207, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10995-012-1111-y>.
- ⁹James Allen et al., “The Tools to Understand: Community as Co-Researcher on Culture-Specific Protective Factors for Alaska Natives,” *Journal of Prevention & Intervention in the Community* 32, no. 1–2 (July 26, 2006): 41–59, https://doi.org/10.1300/j005v32n01_04.
- ¹⁰Les B. Whitbeck et al., “Traditional Culture and Academic Success among American Indian Children in the Upper Midwest,” *The Journal of American Indian Education* 40, no. 2 (January 1, 2001): 48–60, <https://eric.ed.gov/?q=resilience+&pg=405&id=EJ637908>.
- ¹¹Kristin Mmari, Robert W. Blum, and Nicolette I. Teufel-Shone, “What Increases Risk and Protection for Delinquent Behaviors among American Indian Youth?,” *Youth & Society* 41, no. 3 (March 24, 2009): 382–413, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0044118x09333645>.
- ¹²Angela Snowshoe, “The Cultural Connectedness Scale and Its Relation to Positive Mental Health among First Nations Youth,” Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository, 2015, <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/3107>.



This evaluation brief is the first of three descriptions of the Good Life Vision programs and approach, process of implementation, and outcomes. The briefs summarize the Good Life Vision evaluation conducted by the Center for Policy Research. Quotes included here were solicited through feedback surveys or were extracted from the *It's a Good Life* film, produced by nDigiDreams. For more information, contact dstarcher@centerforpolicyresearch.org.