



Culturally relevant mental health support **for a Native American workforce**

Story Overview

A Pacific Northwest tribally owned organization needed to strengthen how leaders responded to mental health concerns affecting both its community and workplace. The challenge was not just finding training quickly. It was finding an approach that respected the client's culture, addressed sensitive real-world cultural issues, and prepared managers to guide people to the right level of care.

Challenge

After a serious concern was brought to light within the work environment, the client wanted managers without native heritage better equipped to recognize mental health issues in their native workforce, be able to respond culturally appropriately, and connect people with the right support. Standard training was not a good fit. The program needed to be culturally relevant for a tribal audience, emotionally safe for participants, and practical enough to support people during moments of crisis.



IMA did more than source a vendor. The team helped design a solution around the client's specific context, goals, and boundaries.



IMA's Strategy and Actions

IMA's Whole Health team acted to support the client by:

- + Identifying a culturally sensitive Mental Health First Aid training partner after determining a tailored approach would be most beneficial for this situation
- + Using prior research and our Native Nations Practice Group to quickly narrow the right external solution
- + Coordinating planning meetings with client leaders to tailor the program to the organization's needs, concerns, and cultural expectations
- + Helping organize logistics, materials, communications, and participant preparation for a two-day on-site training
- + Providing a custom mental health resource flowchart so attendees could connect people to support based on level of need



Why It Worked

IMA did more than source a vendor. The team helped design a solution around the client's specific context, goals, and boundaries. That included respecting the client's decision to keep the training culturally relevant, preparing participants for difficult and heavy content, and supporting a program that fit into the broader community and whole-health planning.

Key Takeaways

This case shows the value of knowing when a standard solution is not enough. IMA helped the client move from concern to action by matching a sensitive challenge with the right specialized resource and guiding implementation without overstepping the client's culture or ownership.



THE RESULT:

Up to 15 leaders completed the training and became certified in Mental Health First Aid. The effort also helped spark broader engagement, with several participants joining the client's wellness committee and supporting ongoing whole-health communication efforts.

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