

What aspects of modern Native American life contribute to the higher suicide rates of their youth?

Possible Audiences:

- Mental Health Specialists
- High schoolers
- People between the ages of 14-25

Thesis: Native American suicide rates

Possible factors of elevated suicide rates:

1. Substance abuse
2. History
3. Mental Illness
4. Poor conditions inside reservations
5. Intergenerational Trauma
6. Lack of opportunity

Links to Articles:

<https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamapediatrics/fullarticle/347063>

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/07481180701244587>

[https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/native-american-youth-suicide-rates-are-at-crisis-levels\\_u\\_s\\_560c3084e4b0768127005591](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/native-american-youth-suicide-rates-are-at-crisis-levels_u_s_560c3084e4b0768127005591)

[https://www.jstor.org/stable/1166217?seq=81#page\\_scan\\_tab\\_contents](https://www.jstor.org/stable/1166217?seq=81#page_scan_tab_contents)

<http://mtpr.org/post/new-committee-mandates-montana-school-suicide-prevention-plans>

[https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/the-hard-lives--and-high-suicide-rate--of-native-american-children/2014/03/09/6e0ad9b2-9f03-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28\\_story.html?utm\\_term=.5b706a364e4c](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/the-hard-lives--and-high-suicide-rate--of-native-american-children/2014/03/09/6e0ad9b2-9f03-11e3-b8d8-94577ff66b28_story.html?utm_term=.5b706a364e4c)

<https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/images/Fast%20Facts.pdf>

<https://www.lakotalaw.org/news/2016-05-12/native-americans-facing-highest-suicide-rates>

<https://www.teenvogue.com/story/shiza-shahid-aspireist-pine-ridge-reservation-suicide-epidemic>

<http://time.com/4054087/suicide-rate-american-indians/>

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/johnkoppisch/2011/12/13/why-are-indian-reservations-so-poor-a-look-at-the-bottom-1/#79cb460b3c07>

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/issues/native-american-communities-and-mental-health>

[http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=naa\\_livingconditions](http://www.nativepartnership.org/site/PageServer?pagename=naa_livingconditions)

<https://www.psychiatry.org/news-room/apa-blogs/apa-blog/2015/11/american-indians-mental-health-and-the-influence-of-history>

<https://www.drugabuse.gov/about-nida/noras-blog/2014/09/substance-use-in-american-indian-youth-worse-than-we-thought>

<http://indianyouth.org/american-indian-life/poverty-cycle>

## SCRIPT

- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death for Native American youth between the ages of 15 and 24
- This is 2 ½ times the national rate
- (Question) This made us wonder, what aspects of modern Native American life contribute to the higher suicide rates of their youth?
- (Thesis) Health issues, intergenerational trauma, and poor conditions inside reservations are all aspects of Native American life that may contribute to elevated suicide rates of their youth. Native American youth are more vulnerable to substance abuse and even suffer from mental illness. They also deal with intergenerational trauma as aspects of their culture are degraded through generations, affecting the lives of their youth. Living inside reservations, natives experience poverty, poor living conditions, and a lack of opportunity.
- The reported rate of binge alcohol use over the past month was higher among AI/AN than the national average. Additionally, Native American youth are twice as likely to be exposed to substance abuse than other groups. This high substance use leads to suicide and heightens feelings of depression.
- Mental illness plays a role in almost 90 percent of suicides, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and such conditions are often treatable. In the case of the AIAN community, however, mental health resources are in short supply and don't always reach them, and without professional help their conditions often worsen.
- Not only this, but 28.3% of American Indians were in poverty in 2014, the highest of any ethnic group

- Additionally, Native unemployment rates are at more than 70%, higher than any other race in the US, and poverty rates are at more than 50%. Many Native children are burdened with the mindset that their future holds less potential than that of another race. Because the high school graduation rate inside reservations for Native Americans is only 67%, they often lack the skills and training needed for many professions.
- It is no secret that Native Americans have suffered a history of violence and wrongful treatment within the United States. As a result, “Intergenerational Trauma” suggests that past generations’ negative experiences carry on to later ones, and take a large emotional toll on Native American Youth. A new branch of science known as epigenetics has begun to draw connections between psychological and traumatic experiences, that result in loss of culture and identity, that are carried throughout generations and make N.A.’s prone to mental illness.
- They have a 2.3 percent higher rate of exposure to trauma, twice the rate of neglect and abuse, and at times their levels of PTSD are comparable to Afghanistan veterans.
- Federal government’s policies don’t necessary alleviate these conditions, and many times worsen them. Inside Indian Country, the land is communally owned. This leads to what’s called “the tragedy of the commons”: If everyone owns the land, no one does. As no one invests, the land is worn down and left untreated, which leads to poor quality of life.
- In the end, a trail of broken promises and the lack of will to fix them incite a feeling of isolation and sadness within Native American Youth, that is sometimes too deeply interwoven to be swiftly fixed.

## BUT, WHY THEY ARE MORE VULNERABLE THAN OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS?

Native American youth are also twice as likely to be exposed to domestic violence, sexual abuse, substance abuse, and poverty compared to other groups. With unemployment rates at more than 70 percent, poverty rates at more than 50 percent, and high school graduation rates at 67 percent on the reservations, “[Native] children carry the outlook that things may not get better for them,”

In 2012, the U.S federal government began a round of 23 youth-suicide prevention grants which totalled \$500,000 per year for three years. However, only 43 of the 566 federally recognized tribes received these grants, and given that these suicide rates are only increasing, it’s not sufficient funding to heal more than a century’s worth of damage. Native American leaders like

Clifford are still asking Congress for more aid to adequately provide health care and school counselors to help these children and prevent suicide.

blames poverty entangled with a lack of jobs or access to mental health care for the high suicide rates. He said that the federal government's policies in the American Indian community made these conditions worse.

**- Substance abuse**

- **History**
- **Mental Illness**
- **Poor conditions inside reservations**
- **Poverty**
- **Unemployment**
- **Intergenerational Trauma** (the transmission of historical oppression and its negative consequences across generations. There is evidence of the impact of intergenerational trauma on the health and well-being and on the health and social disparities facing Aboriginal peoples in Canada and other countries.)

These realities can be explained in three ways. First, the differences can be accounted for by demographic, social, and political differences experienced by American Indians.

Demographically, the American Indian population is relatively young (in 1988 the median age was 32.3), and younger populations overall tend to have much higher rates of alcohol-related death. Sociopolitical considerations such as low socioeconomic status also exacerbate alcohol-related problems. Second, American Indian drinking styles tend to be more flamboyant, characterized by abusive drinking (such as binge drinking) and high blood alcohol levels. Third, the mixing of alcohol impairment with risky behaviors and risky environments further contributes to higher mortality rates. Most Indian people still live in rural Western states where higher death rates can also be expected due to higher-risk environments, greater distances from care facilities, and lack of availability of services. **Mental illness plays a role in almost 90 percent of suicides, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness, and such conditions are often treatable. In the case of the AIAN community, mental health resources are in short supply and don't always reach them.**

Cultural Continuity is a factor that seems to affect suicide rates for every culture

Intro	Did you know that
Just facts about higher N.A. suicide rates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Suicide account for 75% of deaths for AI/AN youth age 12-20.</li> <li>- Suicide is the 2nd leading cause of death – and 2.5 times the national rate – for AI/AN youth in the 15-24 age group. 22% of females and 12% of males reported to have attempted suicide, while 5% had</li> </ul>

	<p>serious thoughts of suicide in the past year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Only 1 in 8 (12.6 percent) of AI/AN adults (24,000 people) in need of alcohol or illicit drug use treatment in the past year received treatment at a specialty facility.</li> </ul>
<p>Reasons WHY (has to be most of the video)</p>	<p>Poverty - (employment) Typically, Tribal and Federal governments are the largest employers on the reservations. Many households are overcrowded and earn only social security, disability or veteran's income. The scarcity of jobs and lack of economic opportunity mean that, depending on the reservation, four to eight out of ten adults on reservations are unemployed. Among American Indians who are employed, many are earning below poverty wages (2005 BIA American Indian Population &amp; Labor Force Report). Indian Reservations are considered Domestic Dependent Nations. Conditions at reservations- To explain the poverty of the reservations, people usually point to alcoholism, corruption or school-dropout rates, not to mention the long distances to jobs and the dusty undeveloped land that doesn't seem good for growing much. But those are just symptoms. Prosperity is built on property rights, and reservations often have neither. They're a demonstration of what happens when property rights are weak or non-existent.</p>
<p>Conclusion- based on these facts, we came to this conclusion (thesis)</p>	

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