



**The Immediate  
and Long-Term Effects of  
Adverse Childhood Experiences  
(ACEs)**



*prepared for the*  
**Montana Advisory Council on  
Indian Education**

*by*  
**ChildWise Institute**  
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*The science behind brain development and the long-term health effects of people living with ACEs are the same for everyone, everywhere. We are not presenting ourselves as an authority on American Indian culture or historical trauma. We are humbly offering a helping hand in understanding ACEs and the power of resiliency.*

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## What Are ACEs?

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic or stressful events, including abuse and neglect, that can impact a child's developing brain and create social and health problems later in life.

ACEs are widespread and are no respecter of persons. Regardless of race, creed, color, education or financial status, the impacts of ACEs are the same. The higher the ACE score, the greater the risk for heart disease, cancer, diabetes, drug and alcohol additions, etc. While ACEs cannot be undone, the effects can be lessened through resilience.

According to the CDC (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) almost two-thirds of surveyed adults report at least one ACE and more than one in five reported three or more ACEs. For those that have also experienced Historical Trauma, such as the American Indian People, those scores can be higher.

In Mary Annette Pember's report titled '*Intergenerational Trauma: Understanding Natives' Inherited Pain*' she stated, "According to a 2010 report from the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, '*The Foundations of Lifelong Health Are Built in Early Childhood*', advances in neuroscience, molecular biology, and genomics offer three compelling conclusions regarding Adverse Childhood Experiences:

- *Early experiences are built into our bodies.*
- *Significant adversity can produce physiological disruptions or biological 'memories' that undermine the development of the body's stress response systems and affect the developing brain, cardiovascular system, immune system, and metabolic regulatory controls.*
- *These physiological disruptions can persist far into adulthood and lead to lifelong impairments in both physical and mental health."*

## Our Hope

Our hope is that through continual ACEs Trainings and Presentations we can educate those that touch the lives of American Indian children as to the effects of ACEs. We want to equip school teachers, faculty, bus drivers, business owners, families, community members, etc. to understand ACEs so when they encounter a child that is acting out they aren't responding from their source of pain but from a place of understanding that children's brains are still developing and they may need help processing their feelings and developing healthy coping skills for when they feel overwhelmed by circumstances beyond their control.



ChildWise Institute was established in 2011 and our Mission Statement is "Advance awareness, accelerate knowledge; and advocate for change to optimize society's resources for the wellbeing of children". We, and our team of Master Trainers around the state, have conducted more than 350 ACE trainings since October 2014 and have educated more than 9,860 people including, community members, parents, grandparents, etc. These numbers do not include all of the ACE Overview Presentations that have been performed by our team of ACE Presenters throughout the state in workplaces, organizations and various associations.

Our intention is to educate those that work with or encounter children on how ACEs affect brain development. We want people to understand that when they encounter a child that is behaving in a way that appears to be "unacceptable" that there is a reason for that behavior. We equip people with a new understanding and hopefully a new way thinking. We want to change the thinking from "What's wrong with you?" to "What happened to you?" thus invoking a spirit of compassion and understanding for everyone.

## Upcoming ACEs Trainings

Later this month, Todd Garrison will be giving ACE Presentations in Lame Deer and Hardin.

## Educational Summits

ChildWise Institute has been conducting Educational Summits for years and we've seen an increase of participation of American Indians and American Indian Organizations, especially as we shifted our focus to Adverse Childhood Experiences:

75 attendees - Trauma Informed Schools (May 2017)

33 attendees - Resilience Summit (Fall 2016)

20 attendees - ACE Study Summit (Fall 2015)

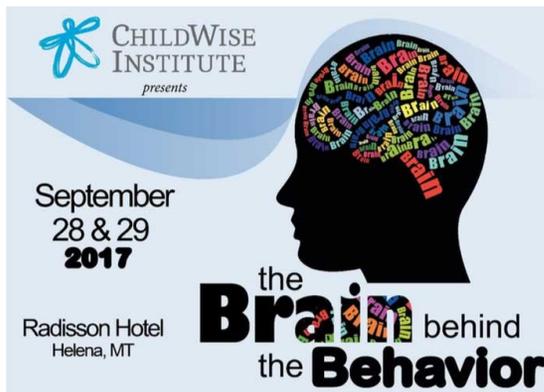
5 attendees - Why They Do What They Do (Summer 2015)

9 attendees - ACE Study Summit (Spring 2014)

For the Trauma Informed School Summit in May of 2017, 66 Montana schools sent representatives, and 16 of those schools were American Indian schools.

## Fall Summit - The Brain Behind the Behavior

Our upcoming Fall Summit will be 'The Brain Behind The Behavior'. Half of the seats have already been reserved and a number of representatives from OPI's Schools of Promise will be in attendance.



These statements are tragic but there is hope. As people learn about Adverse Childhood Experiences, compassion replaces judgment. Children develop resiliency through loving, caring relationships, which means cycles can be broken and healing can occur.

## ACEs and Historical Trauma

For many American Indians, they are not only dealing with the childhood traumas that create ACEs, they are also dealing with Historical Trauma. Mary Annette Pember went on to state in her report, *"According to researchers, high rates of addiction, suicide, mental illness, sexual violence and other ills among Native people might be, at least in part, influenced by historical trauma"*. She also shares some of her personal story and wrote *"I don't remember a time when I didn't know about the trauma my relatives endured there (Sister School on the Bad River Reservation in Wisconsin); although they aren't my direct experiences, their stories have always been with me. Today's rain is also filled with a bitter shower of their days."*



## Resilience

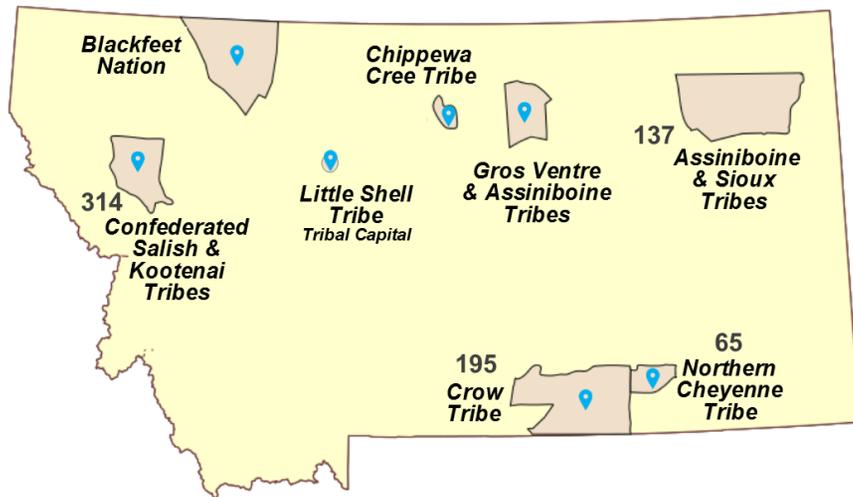
Resilience, as defined by the American Psychological Association, is the process of adapting well in the face of adversity, trauma, tragedy, threats or significant sources of stress. Resilience is nurtured by healthy relationships. As we realize that children's brains are still developing and are affected by ACEs, we can interact with that child with more compassion, understanding and empathy.

Through ACEs trainings and encouraging resiliency, changes can be made in children's lives, families, schools and communities.

## ChildWise ACEs Trainings with Direct Tribal Impact

We have conducted at least 38 ACEs trainings with more than 830 attendees that are either American Indian or work closely with American Indians and their children.

Only ACEs Trainings with direct Tribal impact are reflected here. These numbers do not include any ACE Overview Presentations or Educational Summits.



This symbol denotes representation at our Trauma Informed Schools Summit (May 2017). The number of attendees from each Tribe that attended the Summit are **not** included in the numbers above. Data from May's Summit can be found under "Educational Summits".

Please note, impact may be greater than reported here.

## Here are just a few of the comments that we have received after conducting ACEs Trainings with direct Tribal impact:

*"Ask what causes the behavior instead of dealing with the behavior without looking for a cause, show more empathy."*

*"Empathy!"*

*"Be open minded and really listen to the child and continue practicing what I learned in ACEs training."*

*"Understand that a child's poor behavior is due to their circumstances and not just the child choosing to behave poorly."*

*"Try to understand where the child's behavior is coming from, know that the brain has developed differently because of stress/trauma."*

*"Loved, loved the compassion and genuine interest in our youth. Thank you."*

*"ACEs is a great tool for communities to help the communities. More education needed in tribal communities, I loved the part about building resilience."*

*"I will be more patient."*

*"I will not think why are you doing this to me. I will try and think or look into what the problem is."*

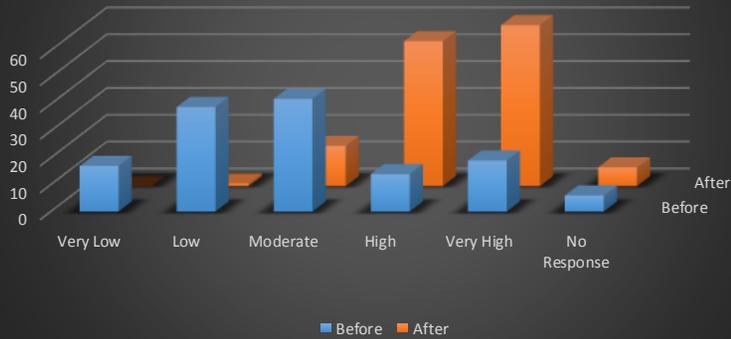
*"Engage my students with challenging behaviors with more compassion."*

*"Information and knowledge I gained was so informative. I will use the information in family and relationships. Encourages me to know there is a way of healing."*

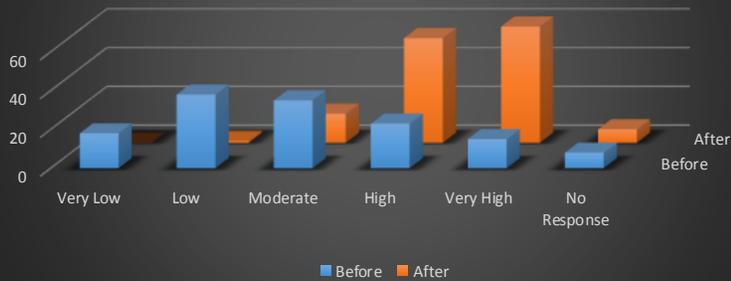
*"We need access to this info in all the small towns and communities-especially in the school system and childcare facilities. Extremely useful in changing our thinking and taking action to support families at risk."*

*"I will be the person I needed when I was younger for those who need it and others."*

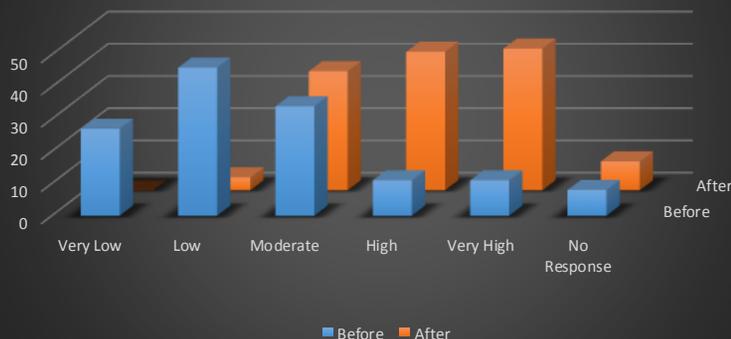
### ACEs' Implications For The Organization That Employs Me



### Why and How My Community Needs to Get Organized and Mobilized to Identify and Address ACEs



### What it Takes to Develop a Community-Wide, Trauma-Informed System



#### Assiniboine & Sioux Tribes - 137 Attendees

Brockton (17)  
 Poplar Schools - 2 trainings (32)  
 Poplar Educators Conference (72)  
 Wolf Point School (1)  
 Fort Peck Mixed Audience (15)

#### Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes - 314 Attendees

Arlee School District (65)  
 CSKT of the Flathead Nation (78)  
 Flathead Reservation HRC (20)  
 NEST Fundraiser (80)  
 Polson Early Childhood Coalition (42)  
 Two Eagle River School (29)

#### Crow Tribe - 195 Attendees

107 Committee at Black Lodge (45)  
 107 Committee at Lodge Grass (22)  
 107 Elders Committee (20)  
 BHC News Writer (1)  
 Bighorn Valley Health Center (8)  
 Greenwood Farm (2)  
 Hardin School Dist. Admin - 2 trainings (8)  
 Hardin High School Faculty (30)  
 HRDC Staff (4)  
 Little Big Horn College (2)  
 Lodge Grass Pub School (34)  
 Pretty Eagle Catholic School (19)

#### Northern Cheyenne Tribe - 65 Attendees

President Littlebear's President Council (5)  
 Leaders Assembly (6)  
 Northern Cheyenne Minister (10)  
 Northern Cheyenne Tribal Health Dept. (17)  
 Northern Cheyenne Tribal School Staff (19)  
 Prayer Lodge (8)

#### Various - 120 Attendees

Rocky Mountain Tribal Epidemiology Center (11)  
 Rocky Mountain Tribal Leaders Council (15)  
 Hopa Mountain Storytellers (34)  
 Missoula Urban Indian Health Center - 3 trainings (35)  
 Montana Indian Education Association Annual Conference (25)

## ACEs Trainings with Direct Tribal Impact

We have taken the feedback from 137 attendees from the last 5 trainings mentioned previously to show their impact.

We asked the attendees to rate their knowledge on each topic before and after the trainings.

