



# An Assets Approach in Tribal Communities in Northern Minnesota

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*Building on Family Strengths*

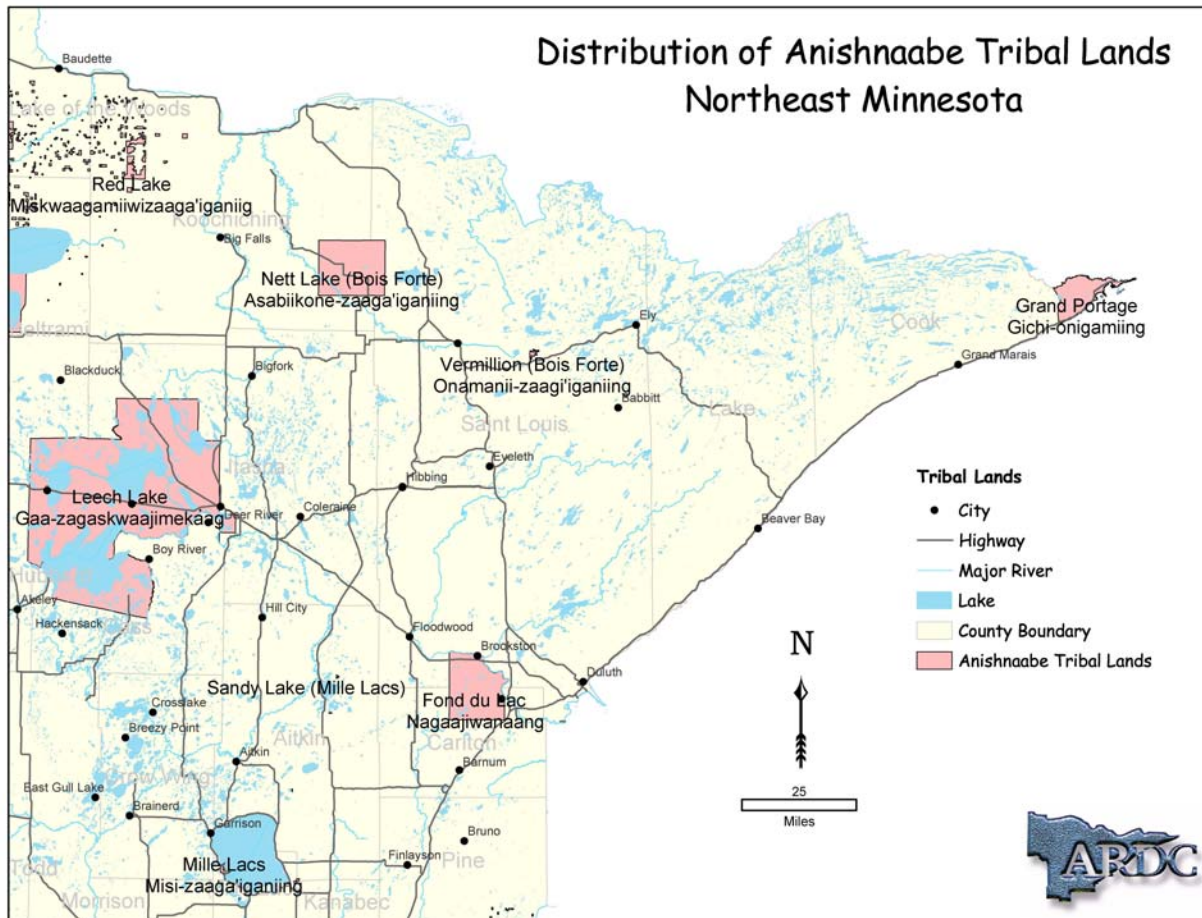
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# Background



- American Indian Projects is affiliated with UMD Department of Social Work and works with the Ojibwe tribes from across N. Minnesota on issues related to family preservation
- American Indian Project's is advised by their Community Advisory Committee (CAC), which is made up of elders and human service professionals from each of the reservations in the area.
- The CAC oversaw this project throughout its' development

# Background and Methodology

- Focus on N. Minnesota Anishinaabeg
- Partner with the SEARCH Institute; funding from the Bremer Foundation
- Goal was to record process and content
- Formal request to Bois Forte tribal council
- Conducted focus groups with elders Interviewed key informants
- Summarized data to develop an adapted version of Search Institute's Developmental Assets

# Search Institute

## Developmental Assets:

- External Assets: Things that surround children to help them feel positive about themselves (mediating factors)
- Internal Assets: Values, behaviors, and beliefs children develop that assist them in making life choices (resistance skills)
- Domains: Areas in a child's life that impact their interaction with their world

For more information: <http://www.search-institute.org/>

# Assets are:

“key building blocks in children’s lives that help them grow up strong, capable and caring. Like a dream catcher, assets are the supporting threads in a young person’s life that can keep away harm and invite goodness”



(AlaskaICE, 2002)

# Definitions of a healthy Anishinaabe child

*Elders spoke about both what a healthy Anishinaabe child “looked like” and what kind of parenting and support is needed to raise a healthy child.*

A healthy child is:

- “One that makes good decisions on his own and applies values to their life”
- “Has a positive self identification”
- “Is comfortable with who they are”
- “Has spiritual connectedness”
- Part of a family unit/extended family, cultural community

# Adapted Domains for Anishinaabeg Families

## External Assets:

Support  
Empowerment  
Boundaries and expectations  
Constructive use of time

## Internal Assets:

Commitment to learning  
Positive values  
Social competencies  
Positive identity

# Adapted Domains for Anishinaabeg Families

## External Assets:

### **Support:**

- Family, extended family, other adults
- Positive communication
- Caring community/school
- Parents involved with education

### **Empowerment:**

- Youth feels important and safe in community
- Youth learn importance of service to others
- Youth are involved in cultural activities

# Adapted Domains for Anishinaabeg Families

## External Assets:

### **Boundaries and Expectations:**

- Family, school, and community expectations clear
- Has positive adult role models
- Has high expectations for self

### **Constructive Use of Time:**

- Engages in creative activities (cultural, organized youth activities, school)
- Engages in spiritual/religious activities
- Has roles at home/family/community

# Adapted Domains for Anishinaabeg Families

## Internal Assets:

### **Commitment to Learning**

- Wants to achieve-believes in self
- Engaged with school (activities, school work, positive school relationship)
- Enjoys reading
- Cultural activities are integrated into life (language, ceremonies, crafts)

### **Positive Values**

- Concern for others
- Big picture (social justice, interconnectedness of all life)
- Exhibits honesty, integrity, humility, humor, responsibility, respect

# Adapted Domains for Anishinaabeg Families

## Internal Assets:

### **Social Competencies**

- Able to plan and make good decisions (resistance skills)
- Gets along with others
- Understands and appreciates culture (own and others)
- Demonstrates leadership
- Engages in and facilitates conflict resolution

### **Positive Identity**

- Feels good about self
- Has a positive view of future (hopeful)
- Believes they can make a difference in the world (“When I grow up I want to be...”)
- Feels connected to family/culture/tribe

# Initial Findings

While the basic tenants of what it takes to raise a healthy child are the same across cultures (food, shelter, security) the order of importance or prominence with native children is different.

For example, the importance of culture, spirituality, extended family and tribal connections play a central role.

# Elders say

- Involve children in daily activities like house keeping, and take them along when hunting, fishing and berry picking.
- Involve them in cultural activities, arts, pow-wow, which allows them to take pride in their culture by participating in it. Feeling a part of the group – “culture reinforces identity”

# Approaching Tribal Communities



- Knowledge of diverse nature of tribal communities
- Respectfully engaging community
- Personal commitment
- Understanding of traditional beliefs

# Diverse Nature of Tribal Communities

- Over 500 Native American nations currently in the U.S.
- These nations have different languages, religions, social structures, political structures
- Memberships range from less than 100 to over 100,000
- Live predominately off reservation but strong ties to home community
- Wide range of differences within groups as well as between groups (traditional to acculturated)

# Engaging Communities

- Establish relationships and build trust over time
- Invite involvement at the beginning of process
- Listen to interests, needs and concerns
- Treat as equal partners
- Knowledge of and respect for political structure
- Knowledge of key people in community
- Process takes time

# Personal commitment

- Recognize cultural and individual differences
- Knowledge and understanding of history and roots of culture/group
- Build personal relationships over time
- Listen, show humility
- Sensitivity, tolerance and an open mind
- Ability to cope with fragmentation and frustration
- Identify and read tribal publications/media

# Traditional beliefs

- Respect for the autonomy, worth, and self-determination of each person - every person's contribution is important to the well-being of the community
- Individuals are expected to respect, understand and contribute to the well-being of their family, clan, band and tribe.

A pair of traditional moccasins with white fur trim and embroidered floral patterns in blue and green on a tan leather base. They are placed on a woven basket containing dried grasses and several brass bells. The word "Questions" is centered over the image.

# Questions