

Development of Youth Soccer in New Mexico Native American Communities

Mark Siemon, RN-BC, MPH, MSN, CPH, & Marie L. Lobo, PhD, RN, FAAN, College of Nursing

Linda J. Peñaloza, PhD., UNM PRC; JoAnn Melchor, Southwest Youth Services; Clint Begay, NB3 Foundation

Background

The New Mexico Native American Soccer Project (NMNASP) was started in 2000 to increase youth soccer programs in New Mexico Native American communities. Patterned after the Northern Pueblo Soccer Project started in the 1990's, the NMNASP worked with Native American communities in New Mexico to develop youth soccer programs as a community based intervention to increase physical activity and promote healthy lifestyles among NM Native American children.

Community Partners

- **Southwest Youth Services (SYS)** provides positive youth development programming in partnership with Native American communities and organizations. SYS and the **New Mexico Youth Soccer Association** worked to create the **Native American Soccer Start** program to pave the way and introduce the game of soccer to Native communities and offer youth soccer skills and coaching skills clinics in Native American communities. SYS staff have lead introductory soccer clinics in 19 Native communities across New Mexico, reaching about 500 participants each summer (www.sysnm.org).
- The **NB3 Foundation** started by professional golfer Notah Begay III and his father have partnered with the **Pueblo of San Felipe** to develop the **San Felipe Soccer Club (SFSC)** in 2005. SFSC now has 220 Native American youth and 36 volunteer coaches from the Pueblo involved in youth soccer activities throughout the year. The partnership has paved the way for the creation of a model soccer program for other Native American communities. The Foundation's goal is to design a culturally appropriate and sustainable community soccer and coaches' training program that will enable soccer to be brought to many more Native communities nationwide in the future (www.notah.com/foundation)

A new soccer field built in the Pueblo of San Felipe with the support of the NB3 foundation is an example of positive environmental change to promote healthy lifestyles.



2010 ISC 8 v 8 Coed U-17



Collaboration with the University of New Mexico

- Members of the **UNM Men's and Women's Soccer** teams have participated in NMNASP soccer skills clinics and during the **SYS Indigenous Soccer Cup (ISC)**, an annual youth soccer tournament held in New Mexico for Native American and First Nations youth from around North America.
- **Southwest Youth Services** created the ISC in 2007 to celebrate American Indian culture, wellness, youth leadership and sport. **In 2010 more than 300 Native youth soccer players**, between the age of 10 and 18, from across New Mexico and North America--from urban areas, reservations, the Four Corners region, and First Nations communities of Canada participated in youth leadership development and health education programs during the ISC tournament.
- The **UNM College of Nursing** and **UNM Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention** worked with **SYS** and the **New Mexico Department of Health and Indian Affairs Department** to complete an evaluation of the health behaviors of 2009 ISC participants.
- The study of health behaviors of 2009 ISC participants found **ISC high school and middle school participants reported significantly ($p < .05$) fewer risky health behaviors related to alcohol use and smoking** compared to responses from 2007 NM YRRS and NM Native American high school and middle school students.

Future Opportunities for Collaboration

SYS was designated an **AmeriCorps VISTA** sponsor by the Corporation of National & Community Service. The **Native Youth Wellness Corps** service projects focus on positive youth development, prevention, and wellness with a broad anti-poverty focus, granting Native young people one-year service contracts. Members are placed in partnerships with NM Tribal communities.

2010 National Native Youth Leadership Conference & ISC participants visit UNM to learn about post-secondary educational opportunities.

