

Cultural Report

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According to the Chicago Sun-Times, there are approximately 34,000 Native Americans in the greater Chicago area as of 2020, which is an increase of more than 21,000 people since the last census. Since many indigenous people are in Illinois, we must be familiar with these people's customs to provide culturally competent care.

The indigenous people of America don't have a religion per se. They do not see a division between the spiritual and real worlds. They firmly believe they coexist with one another. For instance, The Lakota term "mitakuye oyasin" means that all are related or that all beings are relatives of each other. This explains the belief that spirit exists in everything or that everything is connected in some way (Cohen, 2018). Native American culture values honesty, integrity, and respect. They also greatly appreciate elders in the tribe, including women, and value the relationship between all beings, including animals, the universe, and nature.

Giving birth in the Native culture is sacred and is often a cause for celebration. The Native American culture is rich with traditions that make the pregnancy and labor experience unique. Before birth, Cherokee women were not allowed to eat pheasants because pheasants lost most of their babies, and it was feared that the pregnant woman would therefore lose her baby if she ate the bird (Rose, 2018). During the labor process, a woman from the tribe, usually a family member or someone close to the family, is present at the time of birth. Too many people in the birthing space are not recommended. Stoicism is valued in Native culture, so many patients may not express their pain. The same stoicism is expected from the birthing parent as well. Pain medications are only given if the medication condition warrants it (Rose, 2018). Traditional healers may be combined with the use of Western medicine. In some Native tribes, the mother and infant may stay inside and rest for 20 days post-partum or until the umbilical cord falls off.

Native Americans often use anecdotes and metaphors to describe their health status. A story about an ill neighbor may indicate that the individual is experiencing the same symptoms. Long pauses generally suggest that careful consideration is being given to a question. Direct eye contact when

providing care may be avoided out of respect and concern for soul loss/theft. Due to a history of misusing signed documents, some may be unwilling to sign informed consent or advanced directives (Cohen, 2018).

When caring for anyone from a Native American background, it is essential not to rush the patient when speaking, as they tend to use long pauses in conversation. Since direct eye contact is forbidden, try to avoid doing so. It is common for Native Americans to display hostility towards health care providers due to the treatment of Native Americans by Caucasian people. Assure them that your job is to advocate for them in any way possible.

References

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