

## Overview

The Brave Heart Society is the revival of a traditional cultural society for women and works tirelessly at “calling home the spirit of the culture.”

## Mission

*“To enhance and preserve the Dakota/Nakota/Lakota culture for coming generations, thereby creating strong, competent, worldly families with a strong foundation of values, morals, and worldview.” – BHS website*



## Constituency

- Native Americans (Yankton & Oceti Shakowin tribes)
- Ages 15-65+

## Local Conditions & Critical Issues Impacting 0-5 Childhood Health in Lake Andes

### Lack of Parental Presence

10% of low-income children live in families with no parent present; 10% of children above the low-income poverty level live in families with no parent present.<sup>1</sup> *“The parents not being present [means] many children are essentially raising themselves”*

### Need for Drug Education

*“We need to educate all families regarding the intrusion of meth and other dangerous drugs but [we also need] to create a skill set for them to navigate that, cause the meth use is so high.”*

### Need for More Male Mentors & Role Models

#### Limited Affordable Childcare

*“It’s very limited...they have two Headstart centers in our tribe...anybody who wants [child care] can’t afford it, usually... for daycare, or preschool. But Headstart is probably the main... they’re in overcrowded homes, so often they’re taken care of by older brothers and sisters [and] grandmothers in the absence of parents.”*

#### Need for Space to Teach Indigenous Education (e.g., Culture, Language)

*“[There are a] lack of places to teach the culture and language...[it is] equally important to decolonize [and] deconstruct colonizer attitudes [and] to equip the community to negotiate oppressive systems once they learn how those structures are created to continue to colonize them.”*

*“I think there is a high rate of a lack of male role models...many of the children are now parents [who] are used to not having men around as role models, so they’re quick to accept that that’s just a natural condition, and it’s not! And so consequently, overtaxed, usually female parents, [try] to provide for a numerous amount of children with little or no male support.”*

### High Unemployment Rates

South Dakota has a 45.2% American Indian unemployment rate, compared to their White counterparts at 12.5% unemployment rate.<sup>2</sup>

### Need for Indigenous Parenting and Healing Spaces

*“I think the parents sometimes are taxed that children don’t have opportunities for readiness skills for school. Even learning the ABC song or things like that would help them be less stressed when they get to kindergarten. So preschools are really helpful for that. I think there’s a large need for indigenous parenting models to be developed, rather than just saying ‘you’re a bad parent, you gotta take this.’”*

### Lack of Housing

For American Indians who own or rent, just over 61 percent are considered burdened by housing costs, meaning that households pays more than 30 percent of their income to keep a roof overhead.<sup>3</sup>

## Current Wellness & Safety Efforts

### Enhancement of Cultural Esteem

Based on the indigenous model of culture and utilizing activities (i.e., through respect, honoring, and being an important part of the society) that are from a cultural base, they primarily enhance cultural esteem in our families and children through parenting, physical activities, rites of passages, hunting games etc.

## BHS Accomplishments in Wellness & Safety

**Tradition Revival** – rite of passage for young girls, which they would receive traditional teachings of how to function and support each other through marriages, divorces, losses regarding death, and how to be a larger kinship system. It creates an informal support system.

### The Revival of Lacrosse in the Community

## Key Indicators of Childhood Health in Lake Andes

American Indian adults in South Dakota have the highest **binge drinking** percentages compared to other groups in the state.<sup>4</sup>



Many Indians on the Yankton Sioux reservation in Wagner travel 110 miles along rural roads to the Indian Health Service Hospital.<sup>5</sup>



American Indian and Alaskan Native children are overrepresented in the nation's **foster care** system at more than 1.6 times the expected level.<sup>6</sup>



## Community Defined “Best Practices” to Improve Childhood Health

- **Teach strategies of resilience** of traumatic experiences within a cultural framework
- **Teach intergenerational model to be a “good relative”** through the teachings and writings in Water Lilly, a Yankton relative that teaches about all the practices that people use to become good relatives
- **Recreate the meaning of sisterhood** in a woman’s society to combat misogyny and violence against women and girls by liberating young girls and young men from the specter of misogyny by building their sense of confidence
- Hold an annual event where we partner with the area schools, serving about 1,200 kids during 4 days of storytelling. **The idea is to bring back the strong stories that told people how to behave as good relatives.**



**Website:** <https://www.braveheartsociety.org/>

**Address:** 500 Union St, Lake Andes, South Dakota

**Telephone:** 605-487-7769

**Facebook:** [www.facebook.com/braveheartsociety](http://www.facebook.com/braveheartsociety)

**LMU | LA**  
Psychology Applied  
Research Center

Loyola Marymount University



1. National Center for Children in Poverty [http://www.nccp.org/profiles/SD\\_profile\\_6.html](http://www.nccp.org/profiles/SD_profile_6.html)
2. <http://www.epi.org/publication/bp370-native-americans-jobs/>
3. South Dakota Dashboard: <http://www.southdakotadashboard.org/lack-of-stable-housing-at-root-of-many-native-american-hardships>
4. South Dakota Substance Abuse Epidemiological Profile <https://dss.sd.gov/docs/behavioralhealth/southdakotasubstanceabuseepidemiologicalprofile.pdf>
5. Star Tribune: <http://www.startribune.com/american-indians-in-south-dakota-slip-through-cracks-of-health-overhaul/278603381>
6. The Pew Charitable Trusts <http://www.pewtrusts.org/en/about/news-room/press-releases/2007/11/19/american-indian-children-overrepresented-in-nations-foster-care-system-new-report-finds>