

# MEDICINE IN ACTION

## A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PREVENTION STRATEGY

### Anticipation

An elder and teacher was asked how best to define and assure effective prevention. She replied firmly, “*Create healthy human beings.*” That means before we start “doing” prevention, we must prepare by thinking well beyond any immediate plans or programs. Always moving from large to small, our Traditional Teachings insist we first establish where we belong in the Universe. Only from that perspective can we develop meaningful approaches and specific fruitful actions.

Seven Generations thinking requires getting outside ourselves and moving both forward and back in time: looking to Traditional stories and songs to ground us in essential Wisdom that never changes; imagining our own expressions of these Teachings to carry them into the future; learning how to wait well as “practice-based evidence” reveals itself in its own time.

### Approach

Engaging in prevention work is no small thing. We have grounded ourselves in Seven Generations thinking, Traditional Teachings, and Prayer. Now we can begin to work in this moment in time.

We shape our approach not by first developing a program, but by asking questions of Elders, community members and ourselves:

- “*What do you find troubling about how we are living?*”
- “*What reminders do we need to hear to get back on track?*”
- “*What resources might we draw on to help us on our way?*”

We actively and purposefully listen to the answers and reflect on what we each carry with us to contribute to this work. A Traditional Medicine Bag includes healing medicine – herbs, roots and plants. What can we pull from our respective caches to contribute? A gift of song, storytelling, listening, cooking, dancing, healing ceremonies, exercise routines, or being in nature?

We assume that people already know what it means to live well and in harmony with each other and everything in our world. How can we remind them of that intrinsic knowledge? How can we ourselves live as healthy human beings? Being aware of our own gifts, the gifts of our Traditions, and what others have to give will guide our approach.



# MEDICINE IN ACTION

## A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PREVENTION STRATEGY

### Action

It's good to anticipate and plan, but that is not enough. As we act, we must remain open to spontaneously changing our preset plans to embrace and integrate what is going on around us. In some cases, this means transforming a crisis into an opportunity. This is hard work, very sensitive work. We never want to exploit someone's suffering simply to make a point or push an agenda. But we must remain open and ready to respond to life as it is being lived.

When our work is Creator and community driven, true leaders and changemakers emerge, spark and direct Medicine In Action out of their own and our collective pain. That pain can provide fertile soil from which solid growth will rise. A tragedy can generate positive support and change.

Someone may organize a search for a missing relative; another may call the community together for a Feed as a memorial for a domestic violence homicide victim; yet another may ask for help gathering young girls at a camp to experience a Tribal Ritual of Passage and to learn Traditional skills such as beading and sewing protective, medicine gathering ribbon skirts because her own daughter is hurting. Each contributes by bringing gifts from her own Medicine Bag, practicing Medicine in Action in response to lived experience.

And now we are back to where we began, asking questions: Where are we now? What have we done? Where have we fallen short? What do we need to celebrate? Taking stock of what we have and what we need to begin again with grateful and humble hearts. Opportunity presents itself to us as we live our lives, from the simple act of calling someone to talk, to complex acts such as standing to initiate community action.

We, each one of us, are **Medicine In Action**.



# MEDICINE IN ACTION

## A CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE PREVENTION STRATEGY

