Lake County’s Native Americans

November is Native American and Alaska Native Heritage Month. There are seven Tribes in Lake County that celebrate their cultural ways with dancing, songs, prayers and ceremonies. These tribes are all federally recognized under the United States government and each maintains its own government as Sovereign Nations.

Lake County’s Tribal Nations are:

- The Elem Indian Colony located near Clearlake Oaks;
- the Habematolel Pomo of Upper Lake;
- the Big Valley Band of Pomo Indians near Lakeport;
- the Scott’s Valley Band of Pomo Indians near Lakeport;
- Robinson Rancheria near Nice;
- the Koi Nation of Northern California; and
- the Middletown Rancheria of Pomo Indians.

Something you may not know about the Pomo people is that their basket making is recognized worldwide for their finely weaved appearance, technique, and diversity of use. These beautiful and intricate baskets are still valued today by enthusiasts and scientific collectors. Such a beautiful culture right here in Lake County!

Cultural Competency in Behavioral Health

Cultural Competence is the ability to understand and interact effectively with people from other cultures. The foundation of cultural competence is a basic understanding of your own culture; a willingness to learn about the cultural practices and worldview of others; and a positive attitude toward cultural differences and a readiness to accept and respect those differences.

Cultural Competence is important for all fields, but especially for those in the behavioral health and substance abuse treatment communities. Culture plays a critical role in the way people of different backgrounds express themselves, cope with stress, seek help and develop social supports. Culture affects every aspect of the human experience, including how folks experience, express, understand and address emotional and mental distress. Culturally competent behavioral health staff greatly improve the retention and recovery rates for those seeking treatment.

LCBHS has committed to improving the support systems in place for those of different cultures, and offers Peer Support Centers geared toward both our local Native American population and our Spanish-speaking population. The Circle of Native Minds new location is at 525 North Main Street in Lakeport, and La Voz de la Esperanza Centro Latino is located at 14092 Lakeshore Drive in Clearlake.

For information on all LCBHS Peer Support Centers, click HERE.
“Our vision is to find a path of wellness by use of our Cultural ways to guide our Native families to heal and be treated with respect, dignity and honor.

We have overcome horrendous massacres and killings among our people by Europeans, the Mexican and Spanish armies and the Russians.

We now must take steps to begin the healing, wellness and education among all people of our plight to be accepted in the everyday life of the citizens of the United States of America.”

-Thomas Brown
One thing you should know about LCBHS Director Todd Metcalf is that he loves to advocate for housing. He recognizes housing is an issue for many of our clients. It is often difficult to focus on recovery if you don't have that basic need met first. Housing offers the first step at providing stability and security on the road to recovery. Having a home contributes to the well-being and improvement in mental health as well as physical health, reducing stress, and increases the opportunity for displaced individuals and families to establish strong social, economic and cultural ties with their community. When people are included and integrated into the local community, they are able to rebuild their lives and live in a dignified way.”

-Scott Abbott, MHSA and Housing Program Manager LCBHS

LCBHS Housing Programs

The Mental Health Services Act (MHSA) Full Service Partnership (FSP) program, first implemented nearly 15 years ago, forged a path for LCBHS to provide temporary housing, first through a program called “The Lighthouse” in Clearlake and later through funding motel stays. Permanent Supportive Housing support has also been in place and helps people receiving LCBHS FSP program services find housing and rental assistance as part of their treatment. LCBHS is very proud of our current talented housing coordinator, Axel Zijderveld. Further information on LCBHS housing supports can be found here.

LCBHS is currently working with an organization called Rural Community Housing Development Corporation to develop 40-45 permanent supportive housing apartment units in Nice. The project is expected to break ground around March of 2023. Recognizing that a number of unhoused people would likely meet the criteria for Behavioral Health services, LCBHS has also aligned with the Lake County Continuum of Care (LCCoC). Continuum of Care (COC) organizations are local planning bodies, made up of service agencies, local government, homelessness advocates, and interested parties that coordinate housing and fund services for unhoused families and individuals. This includes shelters, transitional housing, permanent housing, Point-in-Time counts, data collection, and reporting.

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) mandated the existence of CoCs in order to receive HUD funding and states have also utilized them for housing grants. At the beginning of 2019, LCBHS became the Administrative Entity for the LCCoC. Although the LCCoC has an Executive Board and volunteer committee members, our responsibility is to ensure things run smoothly through applying for and managing housing grants, including issuing Request for Proposals for sub-recipients to provide housing services and supports. More information on the LCCoC is located at www.lakecoc.org.

Another task of the LCCoC is the operation of a Coordinated Entry System (CES). A CES offers convenient access points throughout the community that can offer outreach, intake, and assessment in order to identify service and housing needs and provide a link to the appropriate level of both.

LCBHS has been assisting in the development of a CES for the past year and recently launched a pilot Coordinated Entry System that is centered on HUD’s recently provided Emergency Housing Vouchers to Lake County. These access points are made up of the Elijah House emergency shelter and Hope Center transitional housing, as well as our five peer support centers. The peer support centers already serve many people experiencing homelessness, so this is a natural fit. Carrie Manning, LCBHS MHSA Team Leader, is coordinating these efforts with the leads and staff of each of the peer support centers and Axel is again assisting by meeting with each center applicant to do a vulnerability assessment. Emergency Housing Vouchers are an important, but big project, done in partnership with the Lake County Housing Commission at DSS. More information on this program can be found here.
It's hard to believe that the holiday season is here once again, which typically brings a mix of joy and stress to most people. The anticipation of and preparation for holiday events as well as the change in weather is something with which we are all familiar. However, for some, the holidays can be a challenging time mentally.

If you find yourself feeling significantly overwhelmed or distressed in a way that interferes with your ability to get through day-to-day life, it may be appropriate to seek help. You can schedule an appointment with your Primary Care Provider to talk about what’s going on, and of course reach out to us here at Lake County Behavioral Health Services for referrals and resources to help.

The holidays are also a time to reflect, share and give thanks. It’s an opportunity to gather at home with family and friends. But for some Lake County residents experiencing homelessness, the holidays are not much different from any other season, aside from the additional stress of coping with colder weather. That’s why I’m so proud LCBHS is combatting homelessness along with other agencies as part of the Lake County Continuum of Care.

Lake County Behavioral Health Services takes pride in being a supportive, collaborative and cooperative community partner in working to address behavioral health and housing issues in Lake County.

I wish everyone a safe, happy and fulfilling holiday season.

Lake County Behavioral Health Services provides services for individuals in crisis, for youth, for adults, and for alcohol and drug treatment.

LCBHS offers several SUDS programs including: Outpatient, Dependency Drug Court, DUI, and Co-Occurring disorders as well as a Mental Health program which provides recovery-oriented care including crisis resolution, assessment, counseling and access to hospital and residential services for adults experiencing serious mental illness and children with emotional disturbances.