CHILDREN, YOUTH & FAMILY CONSORTIUM

Lessons from the Field Presenter Biographies

As submitted by presenters

Atum Azzahir

Atum Azzahir is the founder and Executive Director for the Cultural Wellness Center. Elder Atum is a Cultural Activist and a teacher of African Thought and Spirituality. She is a member of the Hennepin County Medical Center and Community Campus Partnerships for Health Boards of Directors.

Awards:
- 2007 D-Litt Kemii International Khepran Institute
- 1998 Elder & Cultural Community Mother - Ruby Hughes Community Excellence Award
- 1997 Leadership in Neighborhood- St. Paul Foundation Cultural Elders Study
- 1996 Robert Wood Johnson Community Health Leadership
- 1995 Salzburg Fellow - Salzburg Seminar McKnight Foundation

Other Acknowledgments:
- 2000 Race Unity Award-Minneapolis Baha'i Community
- 1999 100 Most Influential Health Leaders Physicians Monthly Magazine

Dr. BraVada Garrett-Akinsanya

Dr. Bravada Garrett-Akinsanya is a licensed clinical psychologist and Executive Director of the African American Child Wellness Institute, a children's mental health agency dedicated to the research, delivery and coordination of comprehensive wellness strategies for children of African descent. Dr. Akinsanya also serves as the President of Brakins Consulting and Psychological Services, which has the mission of “providing excellent, culturally competent mental health and consultation services that meet the needs of children, adults, families and organizations.” In August 2009, Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya became the first Board Certified psychologist in Minnesota to be named a Fellow/Diplomat in African Centered/Black Psychology by National Association of Black Psychologists. She also is the Past President of the Minnesota Association of Black Psychologists, and was the founding President of the Multi-Cultural Specialty Providers Mental Health Network. Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is a recognized leader in Multiculturalism in the American Psychological Association and was the first African American to serve as President of the Minnesota Psychological Association.

Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya has worked in the field of mental health for over 30 years in a variety of public and private treatment settings serving clients of ages spanning from birth to death. Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is a nationally recognized speaker who has written, presented and consulted extensively in the areas of developmental psychology, women's issues, multiculturalism, poverty, homelessness, severe psychopathology and African-American mental health. Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is also known...
for her “African-Centered Wellness Model” which explains mental health within the context of African American cultural identity and environment. Dr. Garrett-Akinsanya is recognized for her strength-based approach and her clinical expertise in assisting children, couples and families in the development of healthy relationships. She is especially effective with clients whose lives have been touched by severe psychopathology, abuse, trauma, sexual assault and domestic violence issues.

**Jessica Gourneau**

Jessica Gourneau is enrolled in the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa (Ojibwe).

**Degrees:** Bachelor of Arts at the University of North Dakota-Grand Forks, ND  
Master of Arts in Clinical Psychology at the University of North Dakota-Grand Forks, ND  
Doctorate of Philosophy in Clinical Psychology at the University of North Dakota-Grand Forks

**Current Position and Responsibilities:** Jessica was hired by the American Indian Family Center in 1999 to provide mental health services to the urban American Indian community in St. Paul, MN. Currently, she is the Interim Clinical Director for the American Indian Family Center as of August 2012. Prior to this role Jessica provided direct therapeutic services through a program called the Healing Generations Program that provides individual, family and couples therapy, life skills and case management services to American Indian community members in a culturally sensitive atmosphere. Jessica has also conducted community workshops on pertinent mental health issues and provides education to other professionals in regards to working more effectively with the American Indian community. Many other duties are included in this role, such as participation in outside boards and other administrative work. Jessica is the St. Paul representative for the American Indian Mental Health Advisory Council to the state of MN that provides guidance on mental health issues affecting American Indians and how to provide culturally sensitive therapeutic services. Jessica is also expected to participate in other community events that are held for the American Indian community. The Healing Generations Program collaborates with several other American Indian agencies to provide holistic services to the American Indian community in St. Paul.

**Melissa L. Walls**

(Ph.D., Bois Forte and Couchiching First Nations Anishinabe) is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Biobehavioral Health and Population Sciences at the University of Minnesota Medical School-Duluth. She is also a Co-Director of the Research for Indigenous Community Health (RICH) Center at UMN. Dr. Walls is a social scientist committed to collaborative research and has over a decade of experience working with tribal communities in the United States and Canada. Her involvement in community-based participatory research (CBPR) projects to date includes mental health epidemiology; culturally relevant, family-based substance use prevention and mental health promotion programming and evaluation; and examining the impact of mental health on diabetes. Dr. Walls' work has received funding from the National Institutes of Health and the Public Health Agency of Canada. Her most recent CBPR grant aims to investigate the nature and impact of stress on diabetes outcomes for American Indian adults.