

Fifth N-NURSE Symposium  
“Strong American Indian Women Build Health Indian Communities”  
November 3-4, 2011  
Speaker Biosketches

**Michael Chandler, PhD**



Professor Chandler is a developmental psychologist, Professor Emeritus, and Distinguished CIHR and MSFHR Investigator working in the Department of Psychology at the University of British Columbia, Vancouver. His research interests include socio-cognitive development, young people's developing 'theories-of-mind' and the cross-cultural study of the process of identity formation. His ongoing program of research explores the role that culture plays in setting the course of identity development by shaping young people's emerging sense of ownership of their personal and cultural past, and their commitment to their own and their community's future wellbeing. He is deeply involved in the study of Canada's Aboriginal youth, and how their struggles to achieve a sense of coherent personal and cultural identity impact on a range of health outcomes and other measures of socio-emotional wellbeing. In particular, he has studied the phenomena of youth suicide as it manifests itself in Canada's First Nations youth, and (internationally) among other Indigenous groups.

In a long series of published research findings (e.g., Chandler & Lalonde, 1998; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008) his work has made it clear that: young persons who lose a sense of their own personal and cultural continuity are at special risk to suicide, and a host of other negative outcomes; and b) that whole communities (especially Aboriginal communities that have suffered a loss of connectedness to their cultural past and civic control over their future) are especially vulnerable to a long list of negative social outcomes, including high suicide, accident, and school drop-out rates. All together, this collection of findings help to demonstrate that achieving a sense of both personal and cultural persistence in time is key to Indigenous peoples' future health and wellbeing.

These efforts, along with more than 150 published books, articles and book chapters, have earned Dr. Chandler the Killam Memorial Senior Research Prize, the Killam Teaching Prize, and resulted in his being appointed a Peter Wall Institute Distinguished Scholar in Residence. His research and scholarly efforts have also led to his being named Canada's only Distinguished Investigator of both the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research, and resulted in his being chosen as a member of the Advisory Board of CIHR's Institute Of Aboriginal Health. Dr. Chandler's research with children at risk began more than 35 years ago with an article (co-authored with A. Sameroff) that was selected by the Society for Research in Child Development for inclusion in a book entitled *Twenty Studies That Revolutionized Child Psychology*. Professor Chandler's program of research dealing with identity development and suicide in Aboriginal communities was recently singled out for publication as a book and as an invited Monograph of the Society for Research in Child Development, and is the only program of Canadian research featured in WHO's just released report on the social determinants of health.

**John Lowe, PhD, RN**



Dr. John Lowe is a Cherokee Native American Indian tribal member and currently one of only 15 doctoral prepared Native American Indian nurses in the United States. Dr. Lowe is a pre-doctoral ANA Ethnic Minority Fellowship alumnus and now serves as the Vice-Chair of the Advisory Committee. He is also a Fellow into the American Academy of Nursing. Dr. Lowe recently received the John Wymer Professorship award. He actively serves in elected, appointed, advisory and consultant positions such as the American Colleges of Nursing (AACN) California Endowment for Cultural Competencies in Graduate Nursing, American Nurses Foundation, Florida Nurses Association, Florida Nurses Foundation, National Coalition of Minority Nurses Associations, National Alaskan Native American Indian Nurses Association, Pathways into Health, United States Department of Health and Human Services, Cherokee Nation Healthy Nations

Programs, and the Indian Health Service. Dr. Lowe has represented Native American Indian nurses in many national forums and with national leaders such as the U.S. Surgeon General and the former first lady, Mrs. Rosalyn Carter. Globally, he has provided health-care services to underserved/disadvantaged groups in countries such as Tanzania, Costa Rica, Jamaica and China.

He advocates for the cultural competent health care of Native Americans and indigenous people globally. Models that have emerged from his funded research are being used to promote the health and well-being of Native American Indians. He developed and studies an intervention for the reduction of substance abuse and other risk behaviors among Native American Indian youth. Dr. Lowe developed the Cherokee Self-Reliance Model which is being used in several intervention research projects that utilizes the traditional Talking Circle format to reduce substance abuse and other risk behaviors among Native American Indian youth. He is currently the Principal Investigator of several National Institutes of Health funded research projects. Dr. Lowe also co-authored the Native American Nursing Conceptual Framework which is being used to guide nursing curriculums. His work has been acknowledged through his induction as a fellow in the American Academy of Nursing and numerous awards such as the Florida Nurses Association Cultural Diversity Award, Great 100 Centennial Research Award, and the Nursing Educator of the Year Award. Dr. Lowe has presented nationally and internationally and has published several articles and books that report the findings of his research.

### **Dolores BigFoot, PhD**



Dolores Subia BigFoot, PhD, is an enrolled member of the Caddo Nation of Oklahoma and is an Assistant Professor of Research in the Department of Pediatrics, Oklahoma University Health Science Center. Dr. BigFoot is the Director of Project Making Medicine, a national training program for mental health providers in the treatment of child physical and sexual abuse and the newly funded Indian Country Child Trauma Center that is part of the National Child Traumatic Stress Network. Dr. BigFoot is a doctoral-level counseling psychologist and provides consultation, training, and technical assistance to tribal, state, and federal agencies; mental health and family service agencies; and Indian Head Start programs in 22 states.

Dr. BigFoot is recognized for her efforts to bring traditional Indian practices and beliefs into the formal teaching and instruction of Indian people and professionals working with Indian populations. Dr. BigFoot developed an American Indian parent training program which builds on the strengths of Indian parents, families, and communities to parent children. She co-authored, "Helping Indian Parents Discipline their Children," a brochure distributed by the Prevent Child Abuse American that is being used by a number of tribes in their child abuse prevention and treatment programs. She has recently completed the IHS/BIA Handbook on Child Protection that will be distributed as a CD-ROM and web-based. In addition to those publications, she developed the cross cultural training manual, "Upon the Back of a Turtle" and the OVC Monograph Series for Indian Country consisting of 15 publications directed at criminal justice personnel. Dr. BigFoot provides clinical services in treatment of adolescent sex offenders and Parent Child Interaction Therapy.

### **Corinne Sanchez, MA, BA**

Ms. Sanchez is the Executive Director of Tewa Women United of Northern New Mexico (TWU), a collective intertribal women's voice in the Tewa homelands of Northern New Mexico. This non-profit organization started in 1989 as a support group for women concerned with various issues related to domestic and sexual violence and transformed from an informal volunteer group to a formal 501(c)3 in 2001. TWU programs include "Circle of Grandmothers", "V.O.I.C.E.S" which is a culturally based response to sexual violence and trauma, a Community Doula Program, and programs relating to environmental justice. Ms. Sanchez has been a trainer in the Sex Crimes Unit for the Department of Public Safety in New Mexico for the past 13 years and in that role provides presentations and trainings both statewide and at National conferences. Presentations include forensic interviewing, sexual violence in Indian country and the needs of victims, cultural considerations in forensic interviewing with children, honoring Native traditions, cultural considerations for sexual assault response and aftercare in Indian County and holistic healing modalities.

## **Barbara Overman, PhD, CNM, MPH, RN**

Barbara Overman is an Associate Professor at the College of Nursing, Health Sciences Center, University of New Mexico in Albuquerque. Dr. Overman earned a Bachelor of Science in Nursing from the University of Delaware, a Masters in Public Health from the University of Pittsburgh and a Master of Science in Nursing with a specialty in Nurse-midwifery from the University of Colorado. Dr. Overman's PhD is in Nursing from the University of Colorado where her dissertation research examined the relationship between urogenital infection and preterm labor and birth. Dr. Overman has been involved in nurse-midwifery and nursing education since 1986 having held faculty positions at the University of Colorado and the University of Florida prior to coming to New Mexico to coordinate the nurse-midwifery concentration in 1994.

Dr. Overman's scholarship has focused on access to education for rural and underserved populations and systemic issues impacting rural maternity and midwifery care. She was co-investigator on the New Mexico Partnerships for Training Project funded by Robert Wood Johnson and the Navajo Nurse-Mentorship project funded by the William Randolph Hearst Foundation. Her interests include economic and social determinants of health, culture and health care and innovative models of service delivery for women and infants. Dr. Overman is involved in a research project to develop an understanding of cultural affirming health care and health outcomes important to care from a cultural perspective. This research began in 2009 and is in process with collaboration between N-NURSE and the University of New Mexico College of Nursing whereby the Principal Investigator is a faculty member in the College of Nursing and the co-investigator is president of N-NURSE.\

## **Pamela Iron, MEd Executive Director**

National Indian Women's Health Resource Center  
Tahlequah, Oklahoma



Pamela Iron has 30 years of experience in the Indian health field as a health administrator, health planner and health educator. Her work experience has varied from Co-Founder and Director of the Tulsa Indian Health Care Resource Center, one of the first urban Indian clinics, to Health Director of the Cherokee Nation Health Systems and to health management consultant working with tribal programs. She is well-known to tribes and to tribal urban programs. She assisted these entities with strategic planning, program planning and quality assurance, data analysis, and health needs assessments, which included focus groups, and proposal development and writing. Ms. Iron is a member of the Cherokee Tribe of Oklahoma. She serves on the National Advisory Committee on Violence Against Women as well as several other national health-related organizations.

The National Indian Women's Health Resource Center (NIWHRC), is a national non-profit organization whose mission is "To assist American Indian and Alaska Native women achieve optimal health and wellbeing throughout their lifetime." In 1993, the Director of Indian Health Service assembled a group of Indian women, recognized as leaders in the health field, to serve on a Steering Committee and to advise IHS on the health needs of Indian women.

With the scope of the work to be accomplished the Steering Committee decided to organize an independent organization to complete the tasks. The members represent the twelve Areas of Indian Health Service: tribal, urban and Indian Health Service operated programs. They are health providers, health planners, health administrators, and elected tribal leaders that have a common concern with the health status of Indian women. In addition elders, youth, young women, and males have a representative on the board. Their strong commitment is based on their roots in their communities.

### **Daniel Conrad, MD**

Dr. Conrad is a psychiatrist working at Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility and has worked as a child psychiatrist in community mental health since 1994. In addition to his work in Flagstaff he has served in several parts of the Navajo Nation between 2009-2010, working at the Adolescent Care Unit, a residential program at Ft Defiance Hospital, and for the last year at Chinle Hospital as a child psychiatrist. As part of this work he visits Chinle Junior High on a weekly basis and participates in a group for at-risk students to help build social skills.

### **Ursula Knoki-Wilson, CNM, MSN, MPH**

Ursula Knoki-Wilson is the supervisor of nurse-midwifery services within the Department of OB/GYN at Chinle Comprehensive Health Care Facility and serves as Indian Health Service Chief Clinical Consultant for Advanced Practice Nursing. She currently works 70 percent of time as Community Liaison for the Office of the CEO at Chinle Service Unit. She is former Dean of the Division of Nursing at Navajo Community College (now Dine College) at Tsaile, AZ and Director of practical nursing at Chinle Unified Schools Vocational Programs. She has served as faculty and adjunct clinical faculty at several Universities in the Southwest Area in nursing and midwifery education programs as well as nursing minority recruitment and retention. Ursula has worked as research associate and Navajo cultural consultant on several projects related to health and culture. Her focus area is cultural foundations of health and cultural competence for health professionals. She has recently trained to facilitate the Navajo Wellness Model and attended the Navajo Medicine People retreats to develop a unit within the Wellness Model dedicated to teachings against sexual assault.

### **Donna Bruzzese, LPCC, LMFT**

Ms. Bruzzese is in private practice in Albuquerque, New Mexico with expertise in Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR), a practitioner of Psychodrama and Certified expert in Traumatic Stress. Currently she is involved with the University of New Mexico Catholic Newman Center, Peace and Social Justice Commission and has lead delegations to El Salvador to work with The Association of the Promotion of the Human Rights of the Children of El Salvador (APRODEHNI). She also assists her husband New Mexico State Senator Gerald Ortiz y Pino with legislative activities. Ms. Bruzzese has trained mental health workers in Level I EMDR in Baku, Azerbaijan and San Salvador, El Salvador (HAP) and completed Level I Training as a HAP Facilitator in Bangladesh, Oklahoma City, and El Salvador. She has been a past board member of the Center for Action and Contemplation, ran experiential personal growth workshops at Dismas House (halfway house for ex-offenders) and The Los Lunas Correctional Facility, Los Lunas, NM, has been a leader of "Healing Teams" to El Salvador and has volunteered at St. Martin's House of Hospitality (homeless shelter).

### **Kass Atkinson, MA, LPCC, LMSW, LMFT**

Ms. Atkinson is in private practice and has worked as a therapist, consultant and trainer for 34 years in the fields of sex crimes, suicide, domestic violence, individual & family therapy including cultural specialities and the military. She began using EMDR in 1994 as a primary treatment modality with all forms of trauma and has spent the resulting years refining and adapting EMDR to as many therapeutic settings as possible. Understanding how people get hurt and how they get better is her primary therapeutic goal.

### **Michelle Kahn-John, MS, APRN-BC**

Ms. Kahn-John is the Director of Behavioral Health at TSEHOOTSOOÍ Medical Center in Fort Defiance, Arizona. She has presented internationally on the "Concept Analysis of Diné Hózhó: A Navajo Wellness Philosophy" and is the recipient of the National Indian Health Service Directors award for her efforts leading to the establishment of a new inpatient adolescent psychiatric unit. She has guest lectured at the University of New Mexico College of Nursing on psychiatric assessment and given presentations on "Depression in Native Americans" and the nurse's role in suicide prevention and intervention.