



Implementing Dementia Programs in Practice: Process, Strategies, and the Virtual Dementia Tour

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Introduction

- Amber Hoon is a Tribal Brain Health Program Coordinator and Senior Public Health Specialist for the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center's Together Strong: Tribal Brain Health Program.
- Background in nursing with 14 years of experience on the Special Care: Alzheimer and Dementia Unit at the Milwaukee Catholic Home in Milwaukee, Wisconsin.
- At GLITEC, she helps Tribal staff, caregivers, families, and individuals living with dementia understand and learn what to expect by providing culturally appropriate training, educational resources, and emotional support.



Disclosures:

- I have no financial disclosures or conflicts of interest





What is the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center (GLITEC)?

- GLITEC is a program within our parent organization, the Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Council (GLITC).
- The mission of GLITEC is: To support Tribal communities in their efforts to improve health by assisting with data needs through partnership development, community-based research, education, training, and technical assistance.
- We are one of 12 Tribal Epidemiology Centers across the United States

<https://www.bemidjiareaemergencyresponse.com/home/showpublisheddocument/460/637800979761670000>

Link to detailed information about GLITEC

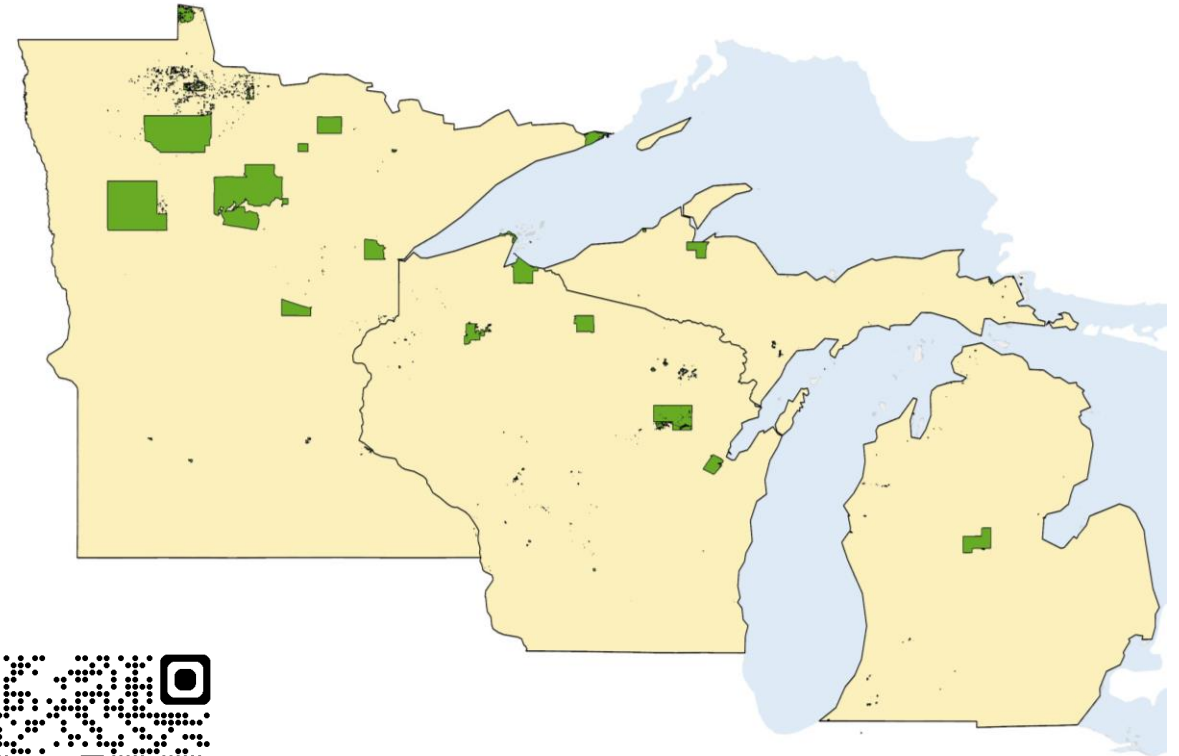


What is our Service Area?

- The **Great Lakes Inter-Tribal Epidemiology Center**, or GLITEC, serves the 34 federally-recognized Tribes, four urban Indian communities, and three Indian Health Service (IHS) units within the Bemidji IHS Area—Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Chicago, Illinois.

Website: Bemidji Area Emergency Response (BAER)

idjiareaemergencyresponse.com/



GLITEC
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Process, Strategies, and the Virtual Dementia Tour



GLITEC's Together Strong: Tribal Brain Health Program





The Beginning

- GLITC's Together Strong; Tribal Dementia Program was established in October of 2020 through a Cooperative Agreement and funding provided by the Administration for Community Living Tribal Alzheimer's Disease Program Initiatives Grant (ADPI)
- New program
- Unfamiliar Issue
- Staff
- COVID





Process

- Identifying need
- Build relationships



Relationship Building: The Importance of Connection and Being Present

Where to Start?





Identifying Need:

- Dementia affects entire families and communities
- Stigma still exists
- Limited culturally safe services and diagnostic assessment
- Limited to no regional Tribal data available
- Limited educational resources on culturally meaningful dementia/brain health topics
- Safe environment to discuss concerns
- Elders are important





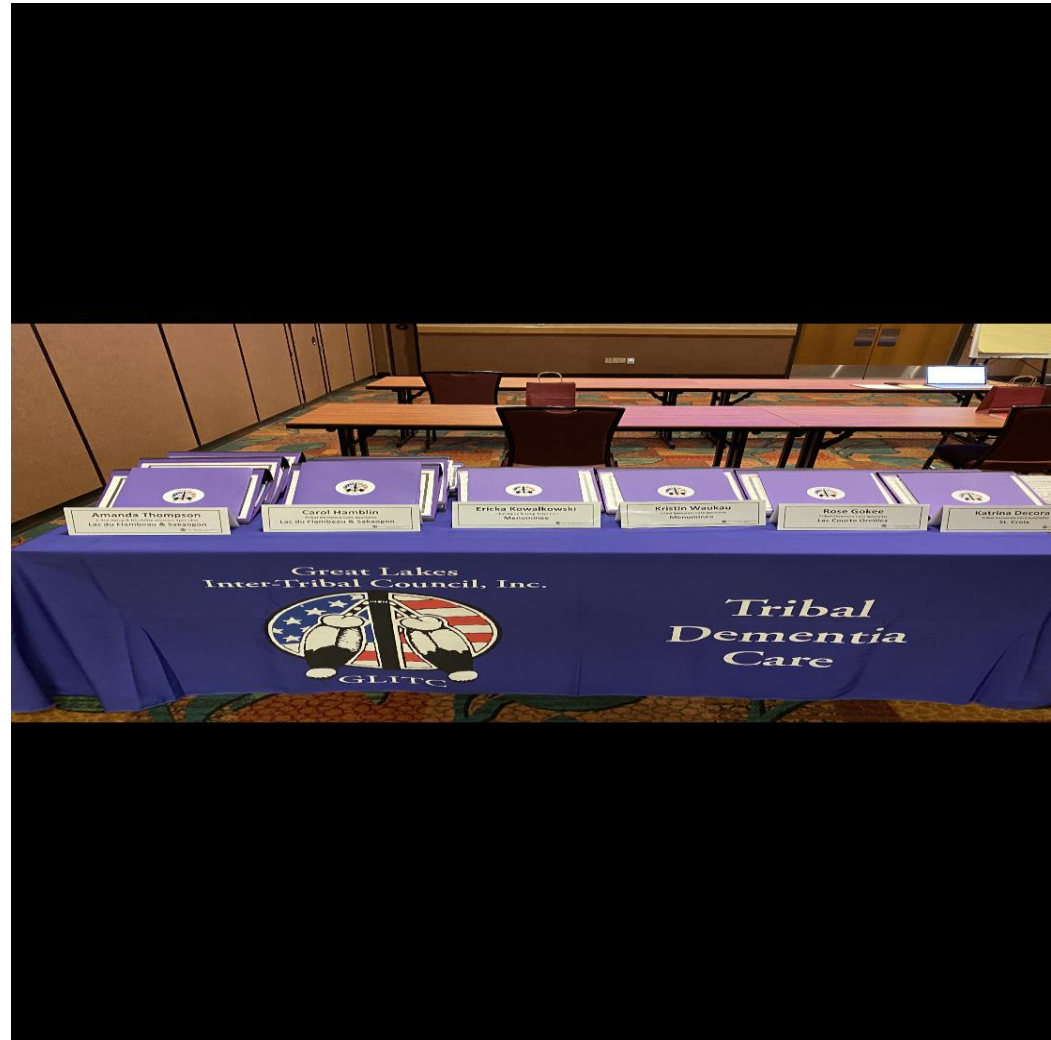
Meeting the Need

- GLITC initially offered one program
- The Savvy Caregiver in Indian Country Program, Principal Author Dr. J Neil Henderson
- For Community Caregivers
- Facilitator Training for Tribal staff





Growth: Meeting the Need: Savvy Caregiver in Indian Country: Facilitator Training





What is the Savvy Caregiver in Indian Country (SCIC) Training?

- A six-week program designed to support Indigenous Caregivers who are caring for someone with dementia
- Teaches Caregivers about the stages of dementia and how everyday tasks can be done differently
- Helps Caregivers identify and respect the abilities of the person living with dementia and enhance their quality of life by keeping them engaged in a way that is meaningful to the person living with dementia
- Educational sessions, activities, discussions, and caregiving assignments
- Cultural components to the programming. Can be adapted to individual Tribal communities





SCIC-Challenges

- Length
- Delivery confidence





SCIC-Successes

- Concept
- Culturally relative



The Need for More

- Due to the challenges of implementing the SCIC Program, GLITC decided to add a second Program, the Virtual Dementia Tour





The Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT)

- Experienced by more than 3 million people in 20 countries
- Evidence-based and studied across cultures and over time with consistent results across variables and outcomes
- Used in more than 200 colleges and universities as an adjunct to existing curriculum
- Meets and exceeds the federal government mandate that requires additional training for every healthcare entity providing care to those with memory impairments





What is the Virtual Dementia Tour (VDT)

- VDT is an interactive, in-person experience designed to give individuals a better understanding of the behaviors and needs of people with middle- to late-stage dementia by having them walk in their shoes
- Uses patented equipment to alter the participants' senses and perception
- Ideal experience for health care professionals, Caregivers, or anyone interested in learning more about dementia
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCSFZ3msvjw>



VDT-Challenges

- Getting volunteers/enough people to run the VDT experience
- Having a viable space for VDT
- Time VS Demand
- Limited time in the debrief session to answer all questions or discuss all aspects of the experience and dementia
- Strict licensure agreement
- Cost



VDT-Successes

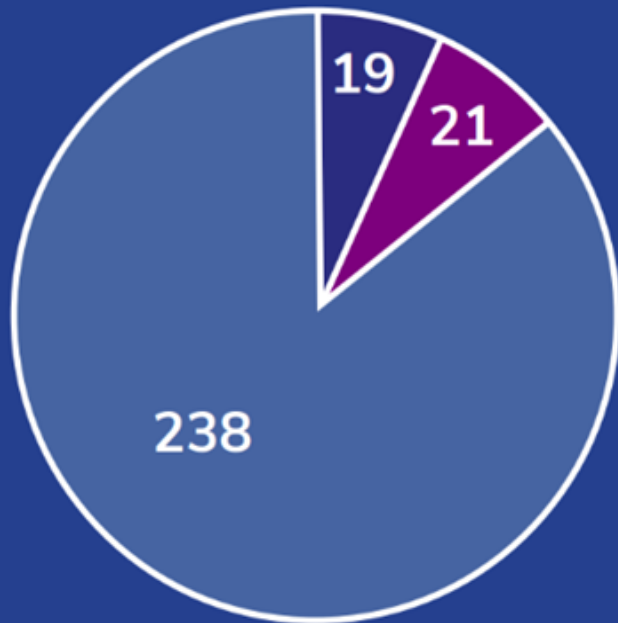
- GLITEC was able to adapt a culturally relevant program around the VDT experience while still adhering to fidelity
- Sustainability
- Growth
- Profound impact
- Furthers the desire to learn more
- Better understanding of the challenges and behaviors associated with dementia
- Referral potential
- Relevant to all people



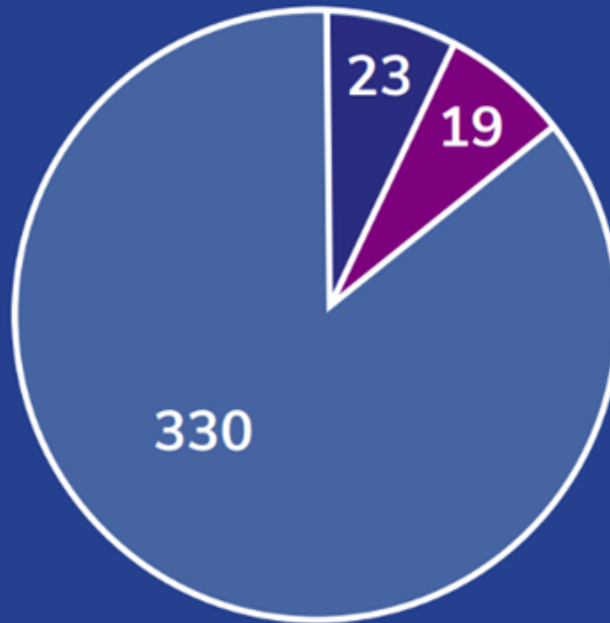
Success-Impact of SCIC and VDT

Tribal Brain Health Program Reach

2020 to July 2024

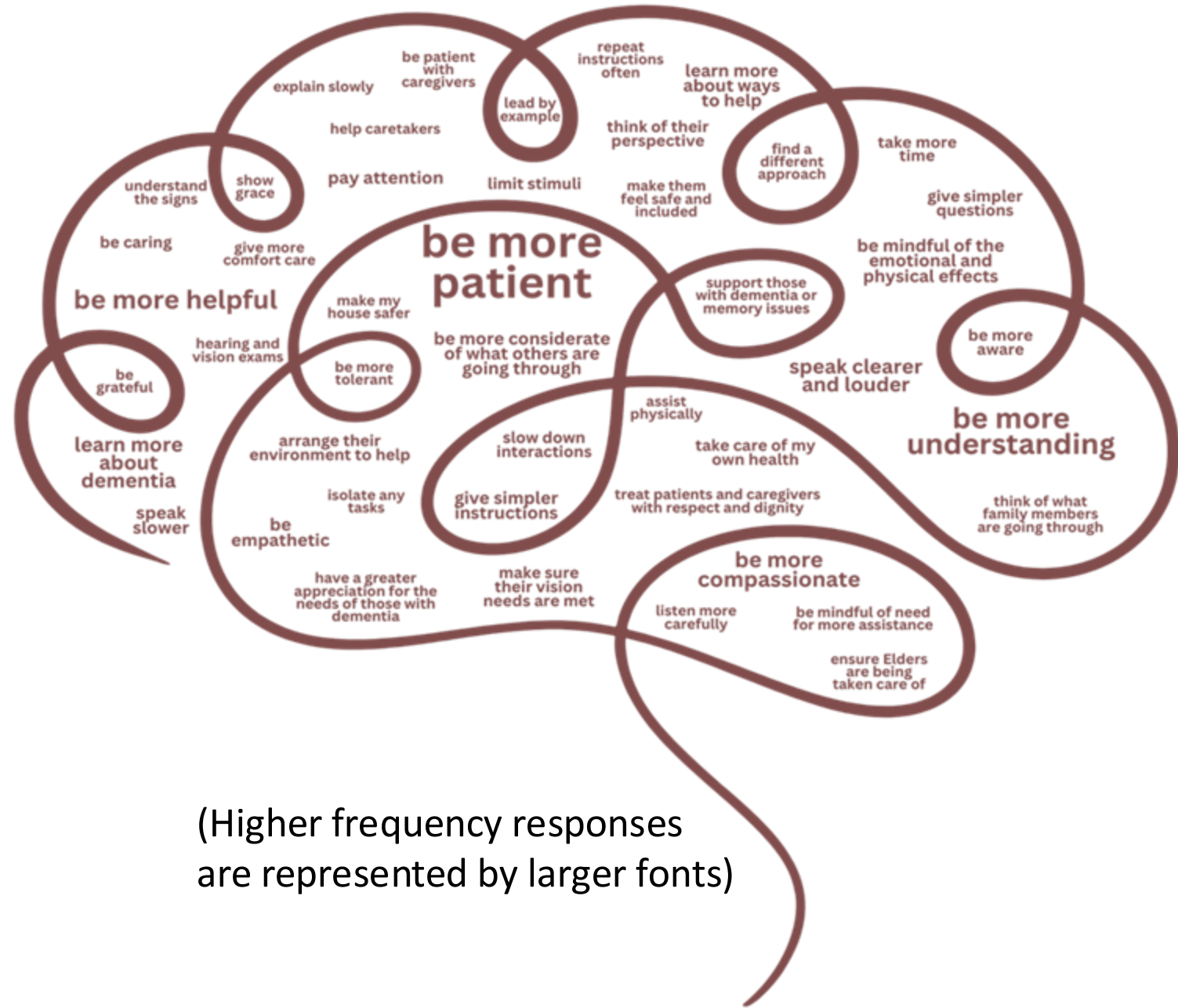


January to September 2025



- Community members (including Elders, youth, health care staff, and Tribal leaders) participated in the VDT experience
- Tribal Staff Trained to Deliver VDT
- Tribal Staff Trained to Facilitate SCIC

Participants' responses to the question, "What will you do differently because of the VDT experience?"



(Higher frequency responses are represented by larger fonts)



GLITEC Together Strong: Brain Health Program Today

- GLITEC's Together Strong: Tribal Brain Health Program provides comprehensive and culturally relevant training and education for Tribal community and staff, as well as program development assistance, outreach, and resource material creation.
- Additionally, it offers person-centered Caregiver support across the Great Lakes region.






For Tribal Programs and Staff

- Facilitator Training: VDT, SCIC, Dementia Friends for American Indian and Alaska Native People
- Needs Assessments
- Survey development
- Evaluation of data
- Evaluation report writing
- Workshop development and implementation
- Culturally relevant educational presentations
- Training delivery assistance
- Event planning support
- Planning and facilitation of brain-healthy activities
- Resource/educational material creation, like factsheets and infographics




For Tribal Community

- 1:1 Caregiver education and community education sessions
 - Savvy Caregiver in Indian Country Training: Can be delivered 1:1 in the home or in a group setting
 - VDT Experience Dementia Friends for American Indian and Alaska Native Communities. This is approx. 90 minutes in length
 - GLITEC's Brain Health Bingo
 - Educational information packets based on Caregiver/Community member requests
- 




Brain Health Bingo

Health Bingo

PATHWAYS	30-50%	HEARING LOSS	OTHER PEOPLE	WELLNESS
FOOD LABELS	NATURE	SCREEN TIME	VISION	THINKING
TAU	LAUGH		COGNITIVE RESERVE	TRADITIONAL
DEHYDRATION	HEART RATE	ACTIVITIES	DEEP SLEEP	TALK
YOUR	MYTH	CORTISOL	GUT	LIGHT

TOGETHER STRONG



Healthy Habits, Healthy Brain

Your brain is in charge of your personality, your thoughts, how you move your body, and your memories.¹ We need to take care of our brain, just like we take care of the rest of our body. Problems with your brain (like Alzheimer's and dementia) are often seen as an issue that affects Elders. But did you know that these issues can come from choices you make throughout your life?

Keeping your brain healthy as a kid, adult, and Elder can help to reduce your risk of brain diseases.² Build and keep the healthy habits below to protect your brain and keep it working well.



Move your body

Exercise regularly with activities that raise your heart rate and increase blood flow to the brain. Unhealthy brains are twice as common among adults who are inactive.³



Eat nutritious food

Choose nutritious foods like corn, beans, or wild rice. Limit or do not eat highly processed foods. These choices lower your risk of brain problems.²



Get good sleep

Your brain restores itself when you sleep. You need to sleep enough and get high-quality sleep to keep your brain healthy.¹



Take care of your health

Certain medical conditions (like diabetes, heart disease, and high blood pressure) increase your risk of dementia. Stay on top of your health conditions and follow any treatment plans.¹



Quit commercial tobacco

Current smokers are 30% more likely to develop dementia. The risk is even higher for heavy smokers. It is never too late to stop! Quitting smoking (especially earlier in life) can reduce your risk.⁴



Keep your head safe

Wear a helmet when doing activities like biking. This protects your brain from head injuries that can lead to brain problems in the future.¹



Work your brain

Learn new skills and challenge your mind. Like a muscle, it is good to exercise your brain.¹



Be with your community

Being socially isolated and lonely is linked to brain diseases. Hang out with your loved ones and stay active in your community.¹

Factsheets

...er 21, 2023. Accessed April 18, ...
...depth/brain-health-tips/ ...
... Accessed April 18, ...
... brain ...
...y 31.



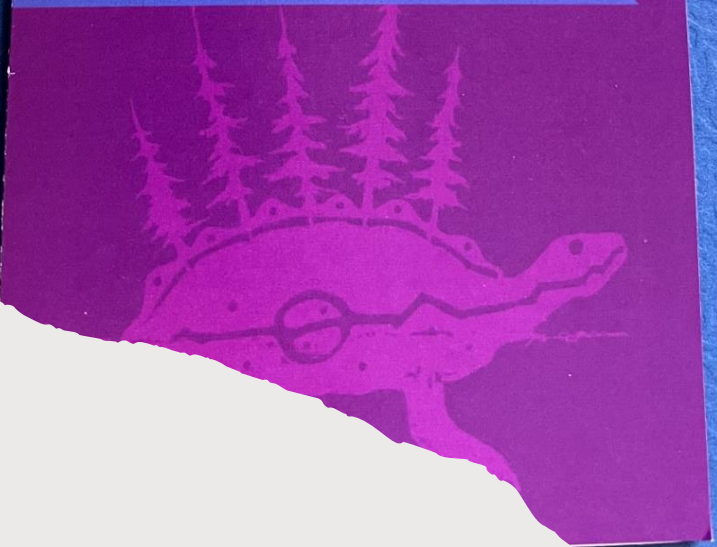
**GREAT LAKES
INTER-TRIBAL
EPIDEMIOLOGY
CENTER**

A program of Great Lakes
Inter-Tribal Council, Inc.



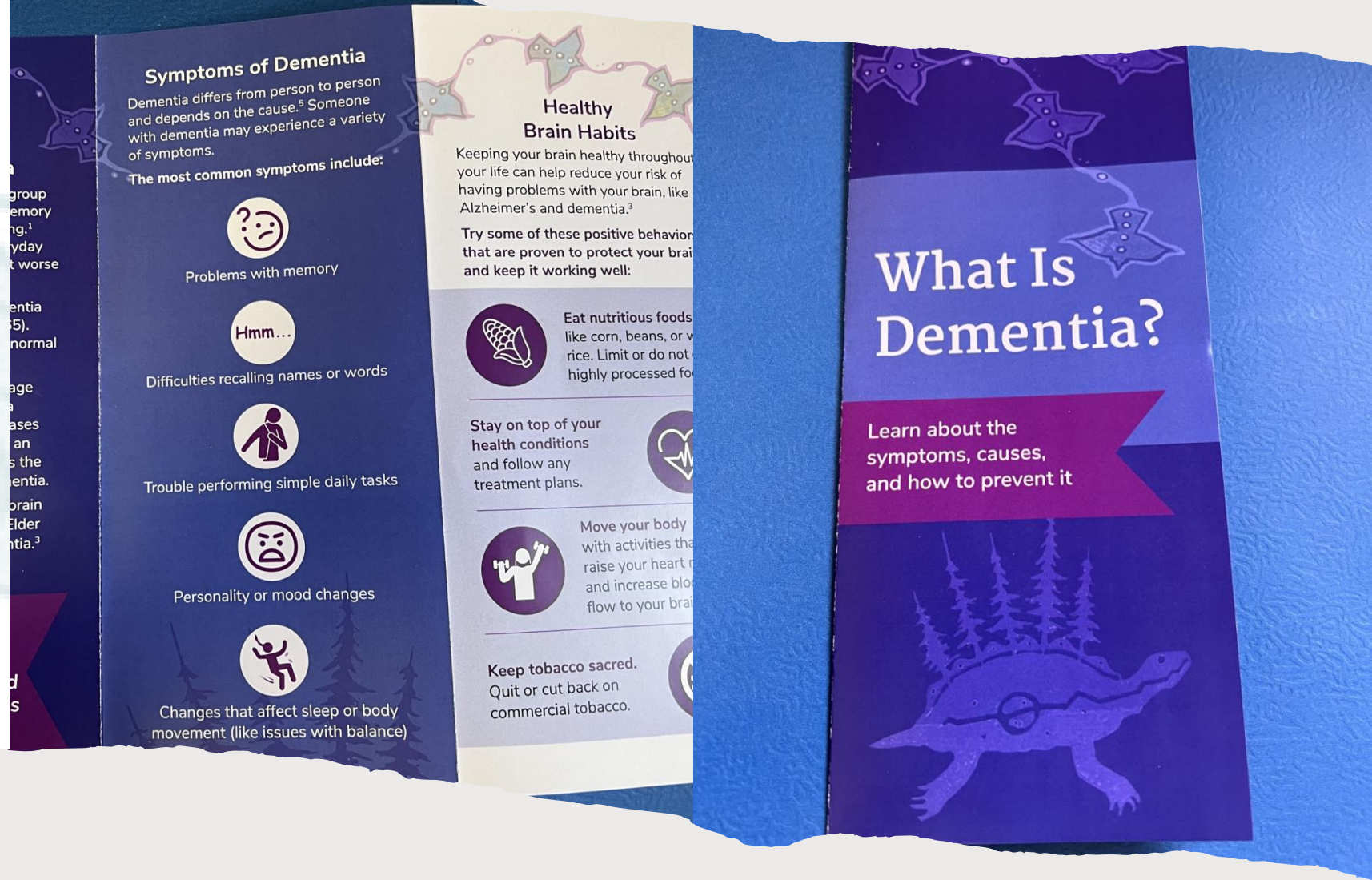
Brain Health Resources

Offered by the
Together Strong:
Tribal Brain Health Program



Pamphlets

Pamphlets





What the Future Holds

- Continued growth to meet the needs and requests of Tribal community
- The development of a new Tribal informed Caregiver Training in Partnership with Dr. J Neil Henderson and Dr. Carey Gleason
- Continued creation of resource and educational materials related to brain health and dementia
- Expand our Train the Trainer offerings
- Implement Brain Health Gatherings in partnership with interested Tribal communities





References

1. WMUR-TV. *NH Chronicle: A Virtual Dementia Tour*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PCSFZ3msvjw>. 2023, November 28. Accessed February 6, 2026
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3. Second Wind Dreams[®]. *About the Virtual Dementia Tour[®]*. <https://secondwind.org/>. Accessed February 11, 2026.



Miigwech! Questions?

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Secondwind.org

