

# The Power of Connection: Purpose, Partners and Progress in a Tribal Community

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May 20, 2026



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## Learning Objectives

- Identify potential partners and build relationships based on mutual respect, genuine curiosity, and active listening to understand shared goals and needs.
- Move beyond transactional goals to define a deeper “why” that inspires commitment and resilience among collaborators.
- Shift the focus from solely quantitative metrics to include qualitative measures that capture increased creativity, trust and shared knowledge within partnerships.
- Gain actionable strategies for fostering a collaborative culture and reinforcing the value of partnerships to motivate continued efforts.



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## Arrive and Revive!



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## Honoring the land and our elders

- We acknowledge that we are on the ancestral homelands of the Indigenous peoples who have called Wisconsin home since time immemorial. Today, Wisconsin is home to 12 Native Nations—11 of which are federally recognized—including the Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Brotherton Indian Nation, Forest County Potawatomi, Ho-Chunk Nation, Lac Courte Oreilles Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Lac du Flambeau Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Menominee Indian Tribe of Wisconsin, Oneida Nation, Red Cliff Band of Lake Superior Chippewa, Sokagong Chippewa Community, St. Croix Chippewa Indians of Wisconsin, and the Stockbridge-Munsee Community Band of Mohican Indians.
- We honor the enduring presence, sovereignty, and cultural traditions of these Nations. We especially honor the Elders—past, present, and emerging—whose wisdom, leadership, and resilience continue to guide their communities and all who share this land.
- We also recognize that Alzheimer’s disease and other dementias disproportionately affect Native American communities. This disparity is rooted not in biology, but in the long-term impacts of historical trauma, inequitable access to healthcare, chronic stress, and systemic barriers that continue to shape health outcomes today.
- We commit to learning from this history, supporting Indigenous health and wellbeing, and working alongside Native communities to promote culturally grounded, community-led approaches to aging and memory care.




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## The Oneida Nation

- <https://oneida-nsn.gov/resources/health/about/>
- **VISION:**  
A progressive sustainable health system that promotes ts’inyakwainoh’ (Our Ways).
- **MISSION:**  
We provide the highest quality, holistic health care to ensure the wellness for OUR Oneida Community.
- **VALUES:**
  - Responsive Leadership
  - Safety
  - Communication
  - Culturally Sensitive
  - Respect
  - Trust is the foundation




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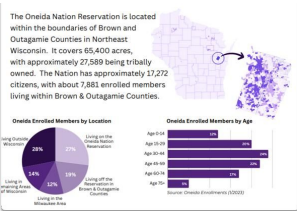
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## The Oneida Nation




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## The Remembering Fire



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## Understanding Dementia

### What Dementia Is

- Changes in memory, thinking, and behavior
- Not a normal part of aging
- Different types (Alzheimer's, vascular, etc.)

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## Alzheimer's and Dementia in Tribal Communities

### • Why Alzheimer's and Dementia Hit Tribal Communities Harder

- Higher rates of chronic conditions (diabetes, heart disease) increase dementia risk.
- Historical trauma and systemic barriers to healthcare create additional challenges.
- Underdiagnosis and late diagnosis are common due to limited access to culturally informed care.
- Caregiving often falls on family members with limited support.

### • The Emotional and Cultural Impact

- Loss of language, stories, and traditional knowledge.
- Stress on caregivers who balance cultural expectations with modern demands.
- Fear of stigma or misunderstanding from outside healthcare systems.

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## Cultural Impact



### When Memory Changes, Culture is Affected

- Loss of the language
- Disruption of traditional roles
- Emotional strain on families
- Fear or stigma around diagnosis



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## The Power of Purpose Cultural Identity as Healing

- Elders as knowledge keepers
- Purpose supports emotional well-being
- Cultural activities reduce stress and agitation



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## Examples of Purpose-based Support

- Storytelling circles
- Traditional foods and medicines
- Crafting, beading, weaving
- Land-based activities
- Intergenerational programs



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## Partners in Care Building a Circle of Support

- 1 Tribal health programs
- 2 Community Health Representatives
- 3 Elders' councils
- 4 Alzheimer's Association tribal initiatives
- 5 IHS and state programs



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## Why Partnerships Matter

-  No single program can meet all needs
-  Collaboration increases resources
-  Ensures culturally grounded care
-  Strengthens trust and continuity



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## Community Innovations What is working in Tribal Dementia Care

### What's Working in Tribal Dementia Care

- Memory cafés with cultural elements
- Mobile screening clinics
- Dementia-friendly tribal workplaces



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## Caregiver Realities Supporting Those Who Support Our Elders

### Supporting Those Who Support Our Elders

- Emotional and physical strain
- Balancing cultural expectations
- Need for respite and community support



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## Caregiver Wellness Strategies

Asking for help without shame

Using cultural grounding practices

Peer support circles

Stress reduction techniques

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## Connection as Medicine What Connection Looks Like

### What Connection Looks Like

- Singing or playing traditional songs
- Sharing meals
- Walking on ancestral land
- Youth visiting elders
- Speaking the language



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## Community Action Steps What We Can Do Together

### What We Can Do Together

- Encourage early screening
- Normalize conversations about memory
- Support caregivers
- Expand partnerships
- Create culturally grounded programs



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## Your Next Step



Please choose one:

- A cultural activity to try with an elder
- A partner to reach out to
- A caregiver support strategy to implement
- A community idea to advocate for



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## Why do Connections, Purpose, Partners and Progress Matter?

- **Connection protects dignity.**  
Even when memory fades, relationships remain a source of identity.
- **Purpose doesn't disappear with diagnosis.**  
People with Alzheimer's and dementia still have gifts to share.
- **Partners make the journey bearable.**  
Families, caregivers, and communities can transform isolation into belonging.
- **Progress is communal.**  
It's not about "fixing" memory loss but strengthening the web of support around the person.



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## Closing Reflection

When we walk together—elders, families, caregivers, and partners—we honor the past, strengthen the present, and protect the future.

Connection is our medicine, and through it, we create a path of healing for generations.



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## Thank you!

**THANK  
YOU!**

•What wonderings do you have?



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