The Sweet Grass Suicide Prevention Project on the Oglala Lakota Nation includes Culture, Collaboration, and Coaching. (Wahokunkiya) Is a Lakota cultural value, which includes teaching, similar to providing presentations (QPR, Yellow Ribbon, Lakota Mental Health) to young people, providing them with tools and instruction on what to do when a friend or relative is experiencing suicidal ideation.

The Lakota Culture is very important in Suicide prevention in order to be effective; one primary aspect is (Wowaunsila) having compassion for the people. The other is (Wokigna) is comforting people when they are experiencing the psychic pain that prompts them to commit suicide. (Wazila) is a Lakota cultural way of using Sweet Grass or Sage to purify an area before one offers a (Wochekiya) which is an appeal to the creator and the spirits for assistance during a difficult time.

The Pine Ridge Reservation is a very isolated place, it takes over and hour for emergency personnel to reach an often-unspecified location. Coaching people not to panic when they are in a suicidal situation is important, because they need to stay with the individual until help arrives. This is where the cultural value (Woohitika) bravery, finding the courage within oneself to stay calm during this critical time. Most people on the Pine Ridge Reservation who express ideation are under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Which creates additional stress, therefore it is important to get others involved in the situation.

This is where collaboration is important, (Tiwahe) Nuclear family, (Tiospaye) Extended family, (Ospaye) Community members, (Chanksa yuha) Law enforcement, and Tribal Programs need to be mobilized and prepared for suicidal situations. The Sweet Grass Suicide Prevention Project is working to develop these collaborations in two of the nine districts on the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. The purpose is to work with partner agencies to establish a system for tracking all ideations, attempts and completions. The final goal is to establish a Referral Committee made up of past and present volunteers to create a referral and follow up plan for people who have attempted suicide. So they don’t fall through the cracks in the different Tribal, State and Federal systems.