

What Jade knows:

Jade, 15, doesn't remember her dad. Her mother once told her that he was a non-Indian oil worker who she had a brief relationship with while he worked on an oil rig just outside the boundaries of the reservation. Jade's dad was transferred to oil work in a different state when she was about 2 months old. She hasn't seen him since. Jade has two siblings and she remembers being most happy at the beginning of her mother's new relationships with men when things were stable and before the violence started. These good times were marked by attendance at tribal cultural activities. Her mom, Michelle, did not drink early in Jade's life, often saying that she wanted to be different than her parents who grew up in boarding schools which she believes contributed to their depression and alcoholism as a result of the physical abuse they experienced. However, as Michelle's relationships with men became increasingly volatile, she began to regularly consume alcohol, marijuana and eventually meth. Jade was often witness to her mom being physically assaulted by her boyfriends. "There were times I was really scared that one of her boyfriends might kill her or try to hurt one of my littler brothers so I would jump in the fight to try and protect my mom. I usually ended up getting roughed up too."

There were usually a lot of strangers in Jade's home who would use meth with her mom. Michelle became increasingly depressed and was regularly high on meth. When this would happen, Jade would take her brothers into the back bedroom to try and protect them from the drug use and violence that often broke out. When her mother disappeared for days or weeks at a time, Jade and her brothers would stay with their grandmother who had found sobriety through engaging in her tribal ceremonies. "My mom didn't seem to care if us kids had enough to eat or whether we had running water or heat in our house. As soon as she had any money, she'd spend it on drugs."

When Jade was in the care of her grandmother, she was encouraged to participate in tribal ceremonies. Even with the support of her grandmother and her participation in ceremonies, Jade began smoking marijuana, drinking and skipping school. "I got tired of always being the one to take care of everybody you know? I wanted to have fun too. When I hung out with my older cousins we would just drive around, drink beer and smoke weed not trying to worry about anything." Jade remembers when she and her cousins would get bored of driving around they would see how many buildings they could vandalize without getting caught. "We were really good at not getting caught. A couple times someone would notice we were spray painting or breaking windows but we always got away before the tribal police came. This last time we had been drinking a lot and a cop drove by and saw us. We all jumped in the car and I started driving as fast as I could. I must have been pretty out of it because I didn't realize we ran into the side of the gas station until I woke up in the hospital."

What the Indian Health Service Behavioral Health Psychologist knows:

Jade's father has been absent since she was about 2 months old. Her mother, Michelle, gave birth to Jade when she was 17. She delivered a son when she was 20 and a second son when she was 21. The boys were conceived in the context of physically, sexually and emotionally abusive relationships. At one point Jade was treated by Indian Health Services for injuries she sustained after trying to break up a fight between her mom and her mom's boyfriend at the time. Jade disclosed during her ER visit that she had witnessed her mom being sexually assaulted and tried to intervene.

Michelle was often under the influence of alcohol or methamphetamines. Her house on the reservation is a well-known hot spot for meth users. Tribal police are called there regularly to break up fights. Jade was often the primary caretaker for her little brothers. She would make their meals and walk them to school. Because of the persistent chaos in her home, Jade would often stay up all night to make sure her mom or little brothers weren't hurt. She was often tired and distracted at school and her grades began to drop as a result. In the heaviest bouts of Michelle's meth use, Jade and her little brothers would stay at their grandma's house. Jade's grandmother is a well-respected elder in the community and has tried to expose Jade to the traditional ways of their tribe.

As she got older, Jade started hanging out with some older relatives and began drinking heavily and engaging in misdemeanor criminal activity. She missed days of school at a time. When she did attend school she was disengaged and apathetic. If the teachers tried to talk to her about her school performance she would tell them she didn't care and would leave the building.

Jade has experienced significant loss. During an initial screening, Jade reported having lost 12 people who were close to her. As she states, "It seems like there's always a funeral happening for someone. You don't really get a break from all the sadness cause before too long someone else you know has passed."

What Jade's mother knows:

Michelle remembers what it was like being a single mom at 17. Though she was on her own after Jade's father left, Michelle was happy with her newborn baby who was generally content and healthy. "She was an easy baby. Not like the boys. She was always happy. It's like she knew I was young and on my own so she went easy on me." Michelle remembers Jade being happiest when she danced in the Tiny Tots and later the Junior categories at their tribe's Pow Wow. "That's where I met my sons' dad, Mike. He wasn't perfect but he was that father figure Jade never had since her dad left us when she was just a baby. Kids need that you know. Jade should have been happy, I tried to make sure she had some kind of dad in her life."

Michelle recalls that her and Mike's relationship was really good at first though they would occasionally use drugs together as a way to have fun. After a while things started to get tumultuous and there were regular events of violence. "When me and Mike started fighting a lot, it could get pretty bad. Jade always tried to help when we would fight. She'd try to break us up. I told her over and over not to do that. It was a grown up thing and to stay out of it. But she didn't listen. I think she saw some stuff she wasn't supposed to see."

Michelle remembers that as the fights started getting more and more frequent, she would drink as a way to help her relax. After being persuaded by Mike to try methamphetamines, Michelle began using and became addicted to meth. "It was a lot to manage. Those kids and stuff with Mike. I just needed a way to take my mind off stuff. I don't think it really affected Jade that much. She would take the boys to the back of the house or over to my mom's house. She liked to take care of the boys. She was always getting them ready for school and making them food. She was a good sister until she started hanging out with her older cousins. They were a bad influence on her."

Michelle thinks that Jade was getting into trouble to get attention. "She knew better than to be hanging out with those older kids. I think she was just mad because I wasn't giving her all my attention. Her grandma was looking after her so she was taken care of. I don't know why she cared if I was busy doing other stuff. I was just a little bit older than her when I became a mom and was living on my own. She should have been able to get herself to school and stay out of trouble. Being in juvie might teach her a lesson."

What the teacher knows:

Jade is in 10th grade at the Regional Juvenile Detention Center in Colorado. She is average in all areas of study except math. Jade is an exceptional writer though she has disclosed some concerning thoughts about feeling that there is no one who cares for her and that she sometimes wishes she were dead. She performs well on written assignments but is disengaged and apathetic in class. She does not participate in class discussions and will not answer questions from the teachers. Jade's teachers note that while in class she often looks like she's daydreaming and somewhere else entirely. It often takes several prompts before Jade will acknowledge the teacher is calling on her.

What the Security Staff Knows:

Jade refuses to engage with staff or professionals and has angry outbursts when given minor directives. Jade appears distrustful of all staff. She is jumpy and always seems to be watching the guards and other residents. She often sits upright in bed, watching her door, until about 2 in the morning when she finally falls asleep. She is difficult to wake in the mornings.

In the time Jade has been in detention, she has refused all visitation from her grandmother. Jade does, however, consistently attend the smudging ceremonies provided by a tribal staff member at the detention facility. In addition, staff members report that Jade has recently engaged with some of the younger residents and is often observed telling stories from her tribe's culture.