

Heal - *to make whole*

(Meriam Webster Dictionary)

Intergenerational Trauma

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**Indigenous Peoples
acknowledge that many
generations have
experienced Trauma
associated with contact
with Non-Native Peoples**

Colonization – North America was “Discovered”

- Brought Diseases
- Brought Alcohol
- Enslavement
- Theft of Lands
- Religious Indoctrination
- Theft of children
- Brought Different Economic Systems
 - Monetary vs. Subsistence and Trade
- Brought Different Value Systems
 - Individualistic vs. Community Minded
 - Nuclear Family vs. Extended and Qagzri

Communal Trauma

- There are links between colonization and the mental health of First Peoples today.
- Many academics in the field of Native mental health identify the effects of colonialism resulting in whole communities as locations of injury.

“There are high rates of social problems, demoralization, depression, substance abuse, suicide and other mental health problems in many, though not all, Aboriginal communities...the long history of cultural oppression and marginalization has contributed to the high levels of mental health problems found in many communities” - *Dr. Laurence Kirmayer, Canadian Transcultural Psychologist, McGill*

The Alaskan “eras”

- 1700’s Russian invasion and enslavement
- 1800’s US purchases AK and US continued enslavement of Unangan People until 1966
- Mid 1800’s – 1920’s Whaling Industry resulting in famine
- Late 1800’s Missionary religious indoctrination
- 1900’s Gold Rush
- 1800’s - 1900’s The Great Deaths – illness
- 1900-1980’s Boarding Schools and illegal adoptions
- 1970’s ANCSA
- 1990’s Federal Tribal Recognition

Turtle Island “eras”

- 1492 – 1600’s Doctrine of Discovery
- 1600’s – 1871 Treaty Breaking
- 1830 – 1850 Removal – Many Trails of Tears
- 1850 – 1880 Reservations
- 1880’s – 1930’s Allotment & Assimilation
- 1930’s – 1945 IRA’s created
- 1945 – 1961 Termination / Relocation
- 1970’s – Present Indian Self Determination

Native Children from all Native Nations were sent to Government or Church run Boarding Schools

- Loss of Native Identity
- Loss of Language
- Loss of Traditional Knowledge
- Loss of Traditional Ecological Knowledge
- Loss of Positive Native Parenting Ways
- Many had loss of Belonging upon Return
- Internalized Oppression

The incidence of various types of child abuse in boarding schools was high.

Native Children were put in an environment where punishment, abuse, and control were common approaches.

Similar to the other mass traumatic events, boarding schools added to the post-contact Trauma through Native generations.

This is often referred to as Historical Trauma, Intergenerational Grief or Multi Generational Grief.

What are the SYMPTOMS of Historic Trauma and Grief in our Native Communities?

- Suicide
- Alcohol and Drug Abuse – self medication
- Child Abuse
- Lateral Violence in the form of Domestic Violence and Sexual Violence
- Loss of Parenting Skills
- Loss of “Sense of Community”
- Internalized oppression due to multigenerational discrimination – disliking oneself due to your race
- General Decrease in Health and Wellbeing

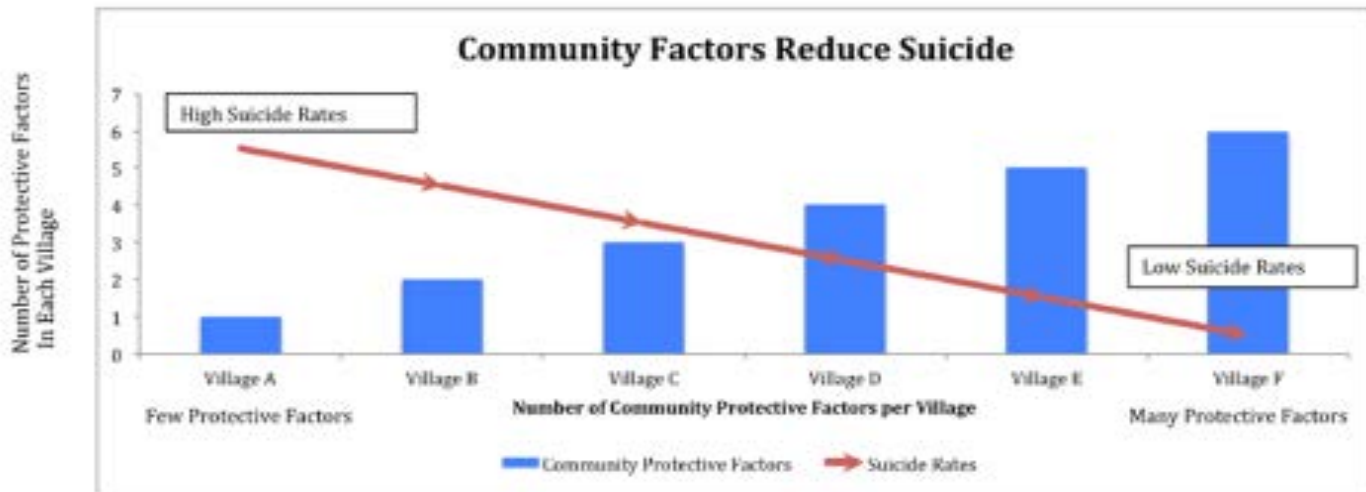
“Governments and social agencies have failed to see many indigenous social problems as being related to any sort of history... Many Indigenous activists have argued that such things as mental illness, alcoholism and suicide, for example are not about psychological and individualized failure, but about colonization or lack of collective self-determination.”

–Linda Tuhiwai Smith, 1999

Local control and self-determination are important factors that contribute to individual Native wellness.

In Canadian wellness studies conducted by Dr.'s Chandler and Lalonde, communities that presented the most agencies and leadership positions filled by Natives were the communities that had the least amount of youth committing suicide.

Chandler and Lalonde's factors...



Community Protective Factors

1. VPO, VPSO and other community members enforce local option and other laws.
2. Many adults talk to, teach and (when needed) scold children and teenagers.
3. Schools –teachers, principals, staff – respect the local culture and work with the community.
4. Cultural activities and community events happen regularly.
5. Self-determination: Village leaders have authority and work to improve the village.
6. Health and social services are easy to get and are helpful to those who receive them.

Western research is confirming what we know... That the restoration of Indigenous self-determination and a realignment with Indigenous definitions of wellness for the individual, family and community is the solution.

ACES and Native America

The Adverse Childhood Experiences study brings light to how trauma can have long reaching health and mental health affects

1. Child sexual abuse
2. Child physical abuse
3. Child psychological / emotional abuse
4. Childhood physical neglect
5. Childhood emotional neglect
6. Growing up with mental illness
7. Growing up with substance abuse
8. Domestic violence in home
9. Family member in prison
10. Loss of parent

ACES

- ACES study gives us insight and allows us to serve with a trauma informed approach
- Fails to take into account communal injuries sustained by entire populations – the need for communal healing. We need to be brave and careful when we engage communities about population trauma. The discussion has to happen with a safety net present.

Some definitions...

- **Historic Trauma:** Cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma. –Yellow Horse Brave-Heart
- **Internalized Oppression:** A sense of inferiority in self and one's cultural group due to colonial oppression and exploitation over lifetimes and generations –EJR David
- **Lateral Violence:** Peoples who are victims of dominance, perpetuating violence on others of same race. –SAMHSA Tribal Training and TA Center

Important questions...

What Counts As Knowledge?

What Knowledge Counts?

Who Decides?

- -Bentham Ohia, 2014

“Resilience” (pull yourself up by your bootstraps)

- To encourage people to be resilient in the face of multigenerational traumas is unrealistic. The word resilience as used in Alaska Native and Native American mental health initiatives is comforting to the current power dynamic because it implies that we can all just get over it and heal from historic and current oppressive policies and systems.
- Current power systems in the form of health initiatives and mental health programming in the western sense intruding and scheduling the healing that needs to happen is another form of colonization. Indigenous Peoples need to do that in their own time, on their own terms.
- Hurting someone and telling them that they will be ok because they are resilient does nothing to acknowledge a wrong committed, or provide for accountability. Telling someone they are resilient does not translate into stopping the abuse. Telling someone they are resilient does not encourage policy improvements or justice.
- This approach puts all the responsibility on those communities being hurt, and removes the responsibility from the systems to operate in an ethical way. Acknowledging the wrongs committed, recompense, education about true history, and policy change should be our next steps as a society.

Helpful....

Cultural activities such as:

Drumming & Singing Potlucks

Language Restoration Programs Story Telling

Community Gatherings Talking Circles

Use of Tribal Doctors

are *all* seen as acts of teaching and healing.

Service delivery is successful when it is done in a culturally appropriate way, and used in conjunction with Western methods.