



13th National Indian Nations Conference December 2012

Engaging Native Men to Mend the Circle: Healing Trauma and Sharing Wisdom to Address Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

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Historical Trauma

The following clip is from the video Unseen Tears. It documents testimonies of boarding school survivors, their families, and social service providers.



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The Circle



The Circle has healing power.
In the Circle, we are all equal.
When in the Circle, no one is in front of you.
No one is behind you. No one is above you.
No one is below you.
The Sacred Circle is designed to create unity.
— Dave Chief, Oglala Lakota

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How Do We Mend the Circle?

Stitching together:

- Understanding
- Healing
- Teaching



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Understanding the Origins of Historical Trauma

"I do not believe that Indians...people who for the most part speak no English, live in squalor and degradation, make little progress from year to year, who are a perpetual source of expense to the government and a constant menace to thousands of their white neighbors, a hindrance to civilization and a clog on our progress have any right to forcibly keep their children out of school to grow up like themselves, a race of barbarians and semi-savages."

*T.J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs
1889 - 1893*

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Civilization Act, early 1800s

The act intended to "civilize" and "Christianize" Indians through federal and private means.



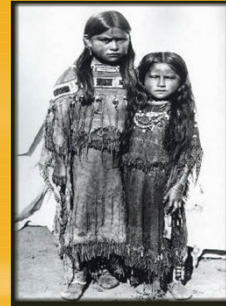
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Removal Act, 1830

Enacted to move Indians away from traditional homelands to “Indian Territory” west of the Mississippi

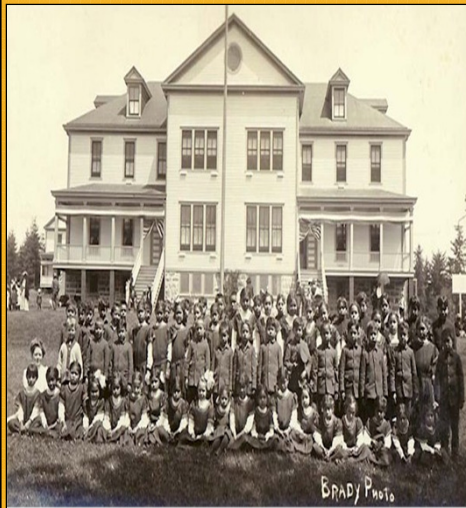
In a report to Congress in 1867, the commissioner of Indian services declared that the only way to deal with the “Indian problem” was to separate children completely from their tribes.

In support of this policy, both the government and private institutions developed military-like boarding schools for American Indian/Alaska Native children.



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Indian Boarding Schools 1860s – Current Day



Children were removed from home and sent to military style boarding schools

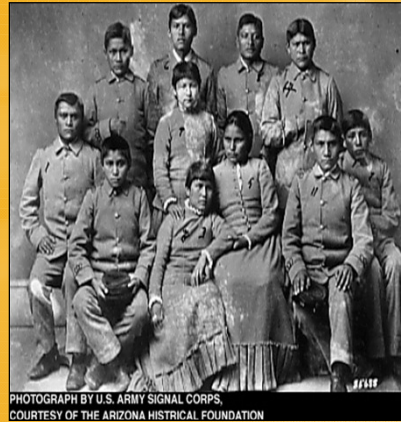
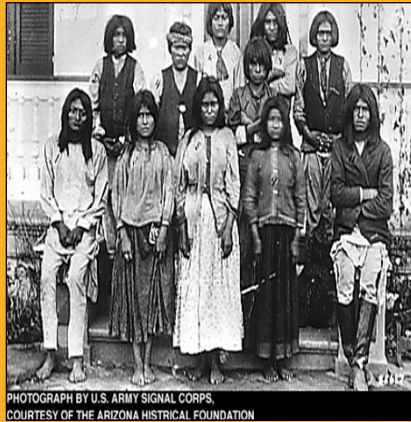
“Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit.”

Richard Henry Pratt

Founder and Superintendent of the Carlisle Indian School

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The intent was to assimilate Native Americans into mainstream society.



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By 1900 the rearing of Native children was largely under the control of the federal Bureau of Indian Affairs and tribes had been effectively stripped of the natural systems of child protection and deprived of traditional parenting concepts.

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Federal Policies have impacted Indian tribes since first contact

Treaties, dependent sovereign governments, and federal trust relationship play a role in all tribal communities

Dawes Allotment Act, 1887
Indian land divided up in effort
to turn Indians into nuclear
families and farmers

Introduction of “blood quantum”
concept of tribal enrollment



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Remarks of Kevin Gover
Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs
Department of the Interior
at the Ceremony
Acknowledging the 175th Anniversary of the
Establishment of the Bureau of Indian Affairs
September 8, 2000

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Apology to Native Peoples of the United States

SEC. 8113. (a) ACKNOWLEDGMENT AND APOLOGY.—The United States, acting through Congress—

- (1) recognizes the special legal and political relationship Indian tribes have with the United States and the solemn covenant with the land we share;
- (2) commends and honors Native Peoples for the thousands of years that they have stewarded and protected this land;
- (3) recognizes that there have been years of official depredations, ill-conceived policies, and the breaking of covenants by the Federal Government regarding Indian tribes;
- (4) apologizes on behalf of the people of the United States to all Native Peoples for the many instances of violence, maltreatment, and neglect inflicted on Native Peoples by citizens of the United States;

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Apology continued...

- (5) expresses its regret for the ramifications of former wrongs and its commitment to build on the positive relationships of the past and present to move toward a brighter future where all the people of this land live reconciled as brothers and sisters, and harmoniously steward and protect this land together;
 - (6) urges the President to acknowledge the wrongs of the United States against Indian tribes in the history of the United States in order to bring healing to this land; and
 - (7) commends the State governments that have begun reconciliation efforts with recognized Indian tribes located in their boundaries and encourages all State governments similarly to work toward reconciling relationships with Indian tribes within their boundaries.
- (b) **DISCLAIMER.**—Nothing in this section—

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Understanding Trauma

What is Trauma ?

"psychological trauma is the unique individual experience of an event or enduring conditions in which: The individual's ability to integrate his/her emotional experience is overwhelmed or the individual experiences (subjectively) a threat to life, bodily integrity, or sanity." (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995, p. 60)

A traumatic event involves a singular experience or enduring event or events that completely overwhelm the individual's ability to cope or integrate the ideas and emotions involved with that experience.

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Examples Of Trauma

- Being a victim of physical or sexual abuse
- Witnessing violence within the family or community - murder, gangs, bullying
- Witnessing violence on television, movies, video games
- Loss of a loved one - due to accident, illness, disease, or violence
- Loss or displacement due to a natural disaster - fire, tornado, earthquake, hurricane
- Loss due to traffic accidents - injury, death, disability
- Loss of a relative or friend due to suicide
- Exposure to an act of war or terrorism

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How is Trauma Experienced in Indian Country ?

- As an historical event with prolonged impact - relocation, massacres
- As a prolonged experience - removal from homelands, placement in boarding schools
- As a personal event that continues to have impact over several generations - boarding school, loss of children/grandchildren through the child welfare system, intimate partner violence, child abuse
- As a single event - car accident, shooting, stabbing
- As a cumulative effect of the above factors

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Incidence of Violence /Domestic Violence in Indian Country

- In 2010, the self-identified American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) population totaled 5.2 million, or 1.7% of the estimated 308.7 million people in the United States.
- 2008 CDC report on health and violence found that 39 % of Native women reported that they were victims of intimate partner violence some time in their lives – a rate higher than any other race or ethnicity surveyed.
- In the NVAWS, almost half of the rapes reported by American Indian women were committed by intimate partners (Tjaden & Thoennes, 1998; 2000) .
- AI/ANs are more than twice as likely as others to become victims of violent crimes
- Victimization of AI/AN children is 20 out of 1000 children compared to 10 out of 1000 white children

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Health Connections/Risk Factors

- Native American victims of intimate and family violence are more likely than victims of all other races to be injured and need hospital care.
- In general studies of American Indians, researchers have found evidence that this population has higher levels of alcohol abuse and dependence, suicide rates, and mental distress than the general population.
- A 2009 study that examined the overlap of intimate partner violence and alcohol, drug, and mental disorders found significant unadjusted prevalence ratios (severe physical and sexual abuse) for anxiety, PTSD, mood and any mental disorder.

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Health Connections/Risk Factors

- Given the multiple risks present in the AI/AN communities, the prevalence of posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is substantially higher among AI/AN persons in the general community
- It is likely that higher rates of exposure to traumatic events coupled with the overarching cultural, historical, and intergenerational traumas make this population more vulnerable to PTSD.
- Alcohol and drugs appear to play a larger role in the sexual attacks of American Indian and Alaska Native women compared to other women. Over two-thirds (68%) of American Indian and Alaska Native sexual assault victims believed their attackers had been drinking and/or taking drugs before the offense.

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Recent Study of Native Healers and Post Trauma Recovery (Winter 2012)

Among nearly 3000 injured trauma survivors at 69 hospitals nationwide, Native patients were found to have the highest risk of all racial and ethnic groups for developing symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of PTSD 12 months after injury.

- In-depth Interviews were conducted with 6 Native healers about their perspectives on traumatic injury and healing
- Analyzed interviews to identify common themes.

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Themes from American Indian and Alaskan Native Healers of PTSD

Risk Factors

- Historical Trauma
- Boarding School Abuse
- Not knowing one's culture or language
- Life long experiences of racism, interruption of cultural identity formation
- Not having a connection to Elders
- Growing up in unhealthy home environment
- Contribute to Native Traumatic Injury Response

Protective Factors

- Cultural Identity primary protective factor
- Active Involvement in Native Culture instills Native Pride
- Preparation for Participation in traditional ceremonies
- Having support of family and tribal community

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Causes and Consequences of Trauma

One of first questions asked the healers concerned what *traumatic injury* meant to them identified three related themes we subsumed under the category of “causes and consequences of trauma.”

Healer 5 explained that physical traumatic injury was caused by imbalance of three main domains: mental, physical, and spiritual. The lack of spiritual harmony, he emphasized, contributes to longer recovery from traumatic injury:

Traumatic injury is like three main things that I see people go through—that I've been taught. It's not just the physical, which is what I feel a lot of non-Native cultures see. ... and they're just now coming around to mental injuries. ... but the main thing that they don't have a clue about—a lot of them—is spiritual harmony. That's the main one. And if you don't have those in balance, if you don't check them, it takes a person longer to recover from a physical injury like a car accident.

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Healing/Transcending Trauma

- Understand & acknowledge prevalence of trauma in native men (and women) beginning in early childhood (cumulative exposure to violence and trauma)
- Native men are coping with PTSD and other emotional and behavioral impacts of trauma
- Engaging Native men often requires an approach that combines peer-to-peer native leaders to engage Native men in culturally relevant services toward healing

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Engaging Native Men

- Engaging Native men often requires an approach that combines peer-to-peer native leaders to engage Native men in culturally relevant services toward healing
- Use strategies that balance mental, physical and spiritual
- Elders, community and family can be strong supports for native men
- Culture Identity – strongest protective factor

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2010 Community Survey by Native Americans of Strategies to Solve or Talk about Family Violence

- Traditional healing measures and ceremonies.
- Groups, talking circles, and dances.
- Praying, singing, dancing, and education.
- Community dinners focusing on family violence.
- Reprisals, including violence against the perpetrator.
- Tribal Council meetings that focus on family violence.

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- Handling the problem within the family, including the use of family pressure.
- Addressing of the problem by tribal elders.
- Restorative justice approaches.
- Native American methods or traditions of dispute resolution or mediation
- One-on-one counseling.
- Women's groups focusing on building self-esteem.
- Workshops on family violence for Native Americans

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Example: Wisdom of the Elders: Healing with the Heroes Journey Model

- PORTLAND, OREGON – MULTIMEDIA PROJECT
- Recovers Loss Of Cultural Traditions and Family Structure across generations
- Native people learn about historical trauma, its history, its effects and treatment
- “Discovering Our Story” Project discoveringourstory.org
 - Integrates positive identity development with building healthy relationships
 - Encouraging appropriate conduct and skills development
 - Restoring cultural values back into family relationships

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Example: Oklahoma Awareness Walks

- 6 Tribes
- Held during Domestic Violence Awareness Month (October)
- Wanted to do something traditional so more men, tribal leaders and victims could get involved
- Drum circle played a prayer song and walkers released purple balloons to honor victims

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Lakota – Traditional Intervention Techniques to Transcend Trauma

- **Wokigna, or comfort** where a child is given care and gentle nurturing
- **Wopakinte, or spiritual cleansing**, designed for the four parts of the spirit, or nag;
- **Nagi Kicopi, or calling the spirit back** after having the spirit wander aimlessly;
- **Wiping of Tears ceremony** to address and release grief; and
- **Woapiye, or doctoring**, which process heals the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual parts of an individual

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Teaching

National Resource Center for Healthy Marriage and Families

Mission: Connecting healthy marriage education skills and safety-net services as an integrated approach to strengthening families.

Teaches skills such as communication, conflict resolution, parenting and financial literacy.

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Attributes of Healthy Relationships



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Family Stressors



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The Natural Process

“The natural process of growing up and becoming socialized is typically so full of disappointments and confusion that it's essential to have parents who can reliably offer us solace and calm us down when we've depleted our limited coping resources.”

Bonding vs. Bondage: What We Learn from Our Parents -Leon F. Seltzer, Ph.D.

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Disruption of the Natural Process

- Substance Abuse
- Attachment Issues
- Family Instability
- Domestic Violence
- Child Abuse
- Cultural, Historical, and Intergenerational traumas

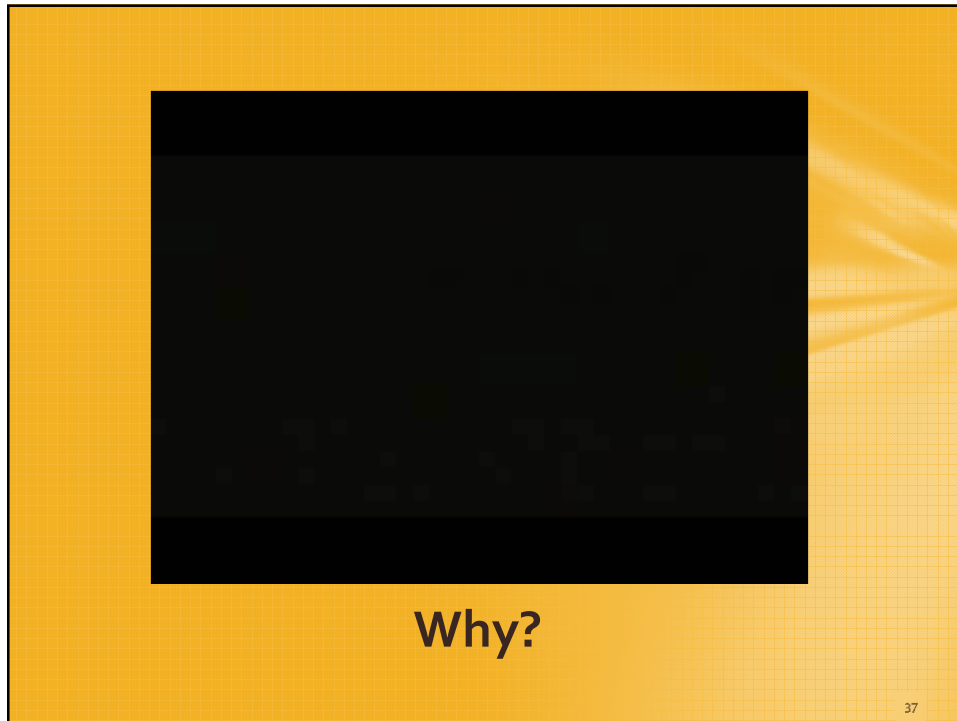
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Without New Skills



The Cycle Continues

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Healthy Marriage Education Skills

Healthy marriage education skills are the core components of healthy relationship education and include:

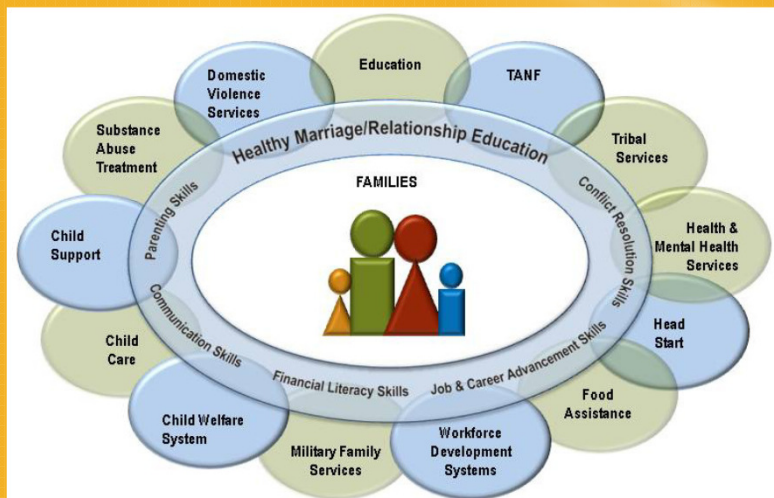
- **Interpersonal skills such as communication and conflict resolution;**
- **Along with critical skills like parenting and financial education.**

These skills can be successfully integrated individually or collectively into social service delivery systems to enhance and support program goals.

Levels of Integration

- Level 1** • Basic Engagement
- Level 2** • Partnerships
- Level 3** • Full Integration

Opportunities for Integration



Relationship Education Benefits

- Increasing family safety and stability by helping individuals recognize unhealthy relationship patterns;
- Increasing likelihood that adults will model positive relationships for children;
- Enhancing communication and conflict resolution in parent-child relationships.
- Reduce stressors and improve coping skills.

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As well As...

- Increasing the likelihood of getting and maintaining a job;
- Reducing co-parenting conflicts even with noncustodial parents;
- Improving management of personal finances supporting self-sufficiency goals;

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We Can Work With You to Strengthen Tribal Families and Communities



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RESOURCES

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/>

<http://www.childwelfare.gov/responding/trauma.cfm>

http://www.childwelfare.gov/pubs/issue_briefs/tribal_state/tribal_state.pdf

www.icctc.org

www.nctsn.org

www.nicwa.org

www.oneskycenter.org

<http://www.ccan.ouhsc.edu>

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