

Topic 9 – Healing Historical Trauma in the Context of Parents and Children

Examples of approaches that facilitate healing historical trauma

- Bring back Native ways which helps heal historical trauma in many different settings and situations.
- Teaching youth and other tribal members about tribal history and memorials. Increase knowledge of boarding school history and other history of colonization. Also reteach the positives that have come from history. Have conversations about the history.
- Increasing tribal awareness within states so that white and other non-Native people know about Native history and culture.
- Getting into school systems and introducing restorative justice.
- Juvenile justice system – restorative justice process and adoption process.
- Tribal colleges developing classes on tribal sovereignty.
- Historical trauma training for staff; helps understand families.
- Education on sovereignty for tribal employees.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) training, include resilience.
- Resurgence of ceremony and traditional spirituality.
- Bring people together to share and heal.
- Create safety and connections.
- Body-mind healing.
- Talking circles.
- Address trauma and resilience together.
- Have language and culture classes include historical trauma.
- Cass Lake has a memorial run.
- Northern Cheyenne after Sand Creek Massacre.
- Sharing promising models around the country.
- Health Walk: Provide information and raise awareness about historical and perhaps to kick off a movement toward healing from historical trauma, or as an event to raise awareness about historical trauma.
- Resources: Individuals & organizations who are knowledgeable about trauma, historical trauma, and can provide training and consultation
 - Susan Kiplinger, Susan Bolinger, Linda Kills Crow, Bruce Perry.
 - Howard Bath, Australia, giving frontline workers support through safety, connections, and coping.
 - Walking with the Wounded, Lesley du Toit, British Columbia.
 - Moccasin Paths, Adrienne Brant James.
 - Takini Network, Josie Chase, Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart
 - Bessel van der Kolk.
 - Rosie Dominic, Bethel.

Challenges in healing historical trauma

- Trust issues between tribes and states.
- Discrimination (race and female).
- Historical trauma exists today. Noting what it looks like today. One way is how children are taken away from families in the child protection system.
- Unintended re-traumatization through oppression and policies by tribal leaders and government, especially when trying to introduce new programs. Sometimes there is little attention to building relationships between policymakers and on-the-ground staff.
- Colonization makes people think, “What’s wrong with you?”
- Note there is often a sense of paternalism in relations with U.S. government and funders.
- Silence – grandparents and parents don’t want to talk about historical trauma.
- Lack of awareness, not knowing or understanding how we are traumatized and effects.
- Substance abuse (drugs and alcohol) “medicates” the pain of trauma, and also creates more trauma. Substance abuse may stem from not being aware of the past.
- Western models of approaching trauma are deficient and are part of the problem. They can overshadow Native ability to progress.
- A “get over it” mentality without understanding impact of historical trauma.
- Lack of support.
- Maslow’s work was not carried out.
- Not able to surmount past experience.
- Requires courage to challenge.
- Micro-aggressions in daily life that are traumatic, such as shopping and being followed in the store, trouble renting motel rooms, and so on.

How communities can address these challenges

- Increase knowledge of tribal histories and awareness of how non-Native authors have distorted histories.
- Increase knowledge of the biological transfers of trauma through epigenetics and also adaptive/survival aspects of trauma.
- Bring tribal leadership on board, inform and educate them.
- Adverse Childhood Experiences training for teachers – more Native participation and adapting understanding of ACEs to the culture.
- Increase understanding that behaviors are symptoms of historical trauma – predictable responses to abnormal environment.
- Working on systems change – cities, tribal, state, schools, and working with federal agencies.
- Watch for policies that can unintentionally create re-traumatization. Have efforts to stop the ongoing trauma.
- Healing for frontline workers, offer practical skills.

- Finding people who need support, targeting resources and issues.
- Developing connections so that people don't feel so alone. Provide auntie, uncle, grandparent.
- Ask what is needed – listen and follow through.
- Involve families.
- Surround people with the positive.
- Resilience needs to be recognized.
- Use ceremonies for healing, wiping of the tears, etc.
- Need opportunities to create safety for people to be in dialogue, to co-learn, and co-create, has helped defuse defensiveness, especially by whites.
- Develop sustainability.