

# Shifting the Mental Health Paradigm to a Mind Body Healing Practice

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Deconstructing & Decentralizing White-ness

In Practice

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12pm-2pm



# Introduction & Disclaimers

Who I am and what we do

At times I will generalize

I do not know everything

Some of what I will be saying is my opinion

American Indian History in relation to trauma and wellness

It is good to acknowledge the incredible variety and expanse of American Indian experiences.



## Who are We?

**Mission:** To provide American Indian families with programs and services enriched by traditional American Indian values and culture.

**Vision:** AIFC provides culturally specific, holistic services for clients and their families. Our programming is defined by the philosophy of the medicine wheel, which teaches that the four parts of each human being – physical, spiritual, emotional, and intellectual are equally important. Additionally, we work closely with partner agencies and community organizations to provide the best resources for our families.



# Historical Trauma Experience

- Entry of Europeans in 1492
- Seizure of land
- Reservations
- Cultural Dispossession
- Entry of physical, emotional and sexual abuse
- Removal of children from home
- Destruction of resources
- Outlawed spiritual practices



# Impact

- Traditional child rearing practices were disrupted or warped (boarding schools)
- Entry of physical, emotional, verbal and sexual abuse
- Spiritual practices and traditions were outlawed (Freedom of Religion Act, 1978)
- Replaced with foreign religious forms that tore apart community's social cohesion.
- It is like an epidemic hitting a society when its doctors and healers have been exterminated.



Subjugation of  
Indian People



Physical and  
Psychological  
Violence

Segregation &  
Displacement

Economic  
Destruction

Cultural  
Dispossession



The First or Primary Generation: Our Great Grandfathers and Grandmothers



**Physical Response**

- Nutritional Stress
- Compromised Immune System
- Malnutrition
- Diabetes

**Social Response**

- Increased suicide rate
- Family Violence
- Substance Abuse
- Breakdown of Family
- Separation/Loss

**Psychological Response**

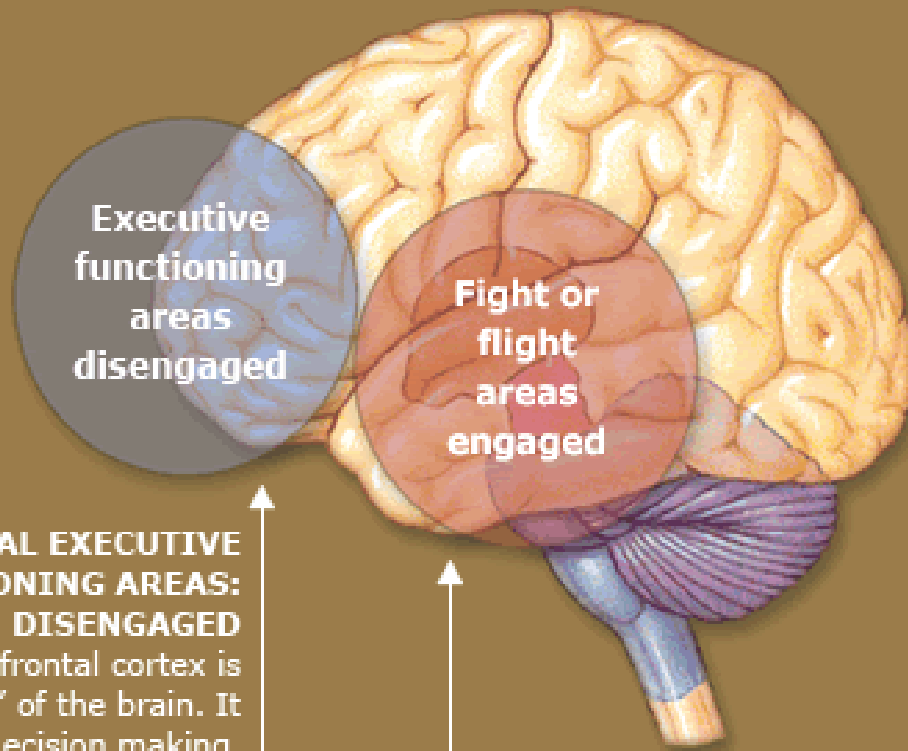
- PTSD
- Depression, withdrawal
- Conduct Disorders
- Anger, Aggression, grief
- Shame, Loss of self worth



The Second or Subsequent Generations: All of us, The People



# The Impact of Trauma on the Brain



## FRONTAL EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING AREAS: DISENGAGED

The prefrontal cortex is the "CEO" of the brain. It regulates decision making, judgment, planning, moral reasoning, and sense of self. Stressful experiences (academic pressure, sleep deprivation, substance abuse, etc.) disengage the frontal lobes. Over time, this can lead to impulsive, short-sighted, even violent behavior; increased anxiety; depression; alcohol and drug abuse; learning disorders; and increased stress-related diseases.

## SUBCORTICAL FIGHT OR FLIGHT AREAS: ENGAGED

The subcortical arousal system—thalamus, hippocampus, brainstem, and hypothalamus—mobilizes the body for action, increasing heart rate, respiratory rate, and muscle tone. The nature of this system is to bypass the frontal executive functioning and trigger the fight or flight mode.

# What are the effects of prolonged, repeated trauma?

- ❖ The immediate effects of prolonged trauma are the same as for one-time trauma, only they recur with each new wave of traumatic experience. The long-term effects include Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, Complex Post-traumatic Stress Disorder, and a variety of mental and physical illnesses.





# Current Social Trauma

- Sports Mascots
- Groundwater purity standards (Dakota Access Pipeline)
- Opening of private or state run casinos
- Immigration law discussions
- Current myths regarding American Indian standards of living and cultural identity
- Columbus Day
- Halloween
- Intimate Partner Violence
- Social Service System/Child Protection/Foster Care
- Pandemic
- Current civil unrest



# Microaggressions

- Overt Racism - obvious and intentional
- Covert Racism – disguised and subtle. Is usually more harmful than overt racism in re: mental health.
- Systemic/Organizational Racism – most institutions have positions filled by men in the dominant society.
- Microaggressions reflect the active manifestation of oppressive worldviews that create, foster, and enforce marginalization. None of us are immune from this as we are socialized into the environment on a micro and macro level.



# Example of Collective Trauma and Healing

- Alkali Lake Indian Band (near Williams Lake, British Columbia)
- The Honor of All: The Story of Alkali Lake (1986)
- Entry of Euro-Canadian Miners and Settlers in 1850's



# Example of Collective Trauma and Healing

- Disease decreased population by two-thirds
- 1860 – Canadian govt. seized native land
- 1891 – forcible removal of children for 3 generations into Residential Boarding Schools
- Destruction of language
- Indoctrination of inferiority of Indian culture



# Example of Collective Trauma and Healing

- Introduction of physical, emotional and sexual abuse
- Subhuman physical conditions (hunger, spoiled food, whippings, beatings, public humiliations, sexual abuse)
- 1960's – tribe's social and cultural fabric had unraveled



# Example of Collective Trauma and Healing

- High rates of unemployment, child abuse and neglect, suicide, domestic violence, hunger and over 93% alcoholism rate.
- Mid 1980's – sobriety rates were the norm and were projected to be around 95% and remain consistent today





# Example of Collective Trauma and Healing

- Summer of 1971-Andy & Phyllis Chelsea
- Elected Andy as chief on anti-alcohol platform
- Trained counselor to run AA groups
- Prohibited neighboring ranchers from trading alcohol for haying rights
- Ran out the bootleggers

Introduced language classes

Brought back traditional practices



# Cultural Strengths & Resiliency Factors



# Cultural Strengths/Resiliency Factors

- Mitake Oyasin – We are all related
- Experience with Trauma
- Strong spiritual tradition that is inherently within us
- Highest rate of abstinence from substances after obtaining sobriety
- Holistic vision for life and healing
- Elder Respect
- Our culture and traditions have built in models of healing



# Views on Illness from a Western vs. Native Model

- Western ideology of illness is within a medical model
  - Diagnostic, rigid categories
  - The focus is on problematic behaviors without looking closely at the impact on other aspects of being a human being
- Native American ideology of illness
  - Multifaceted, fluid and descriptive



# Views of Health & Wellness

## Native View

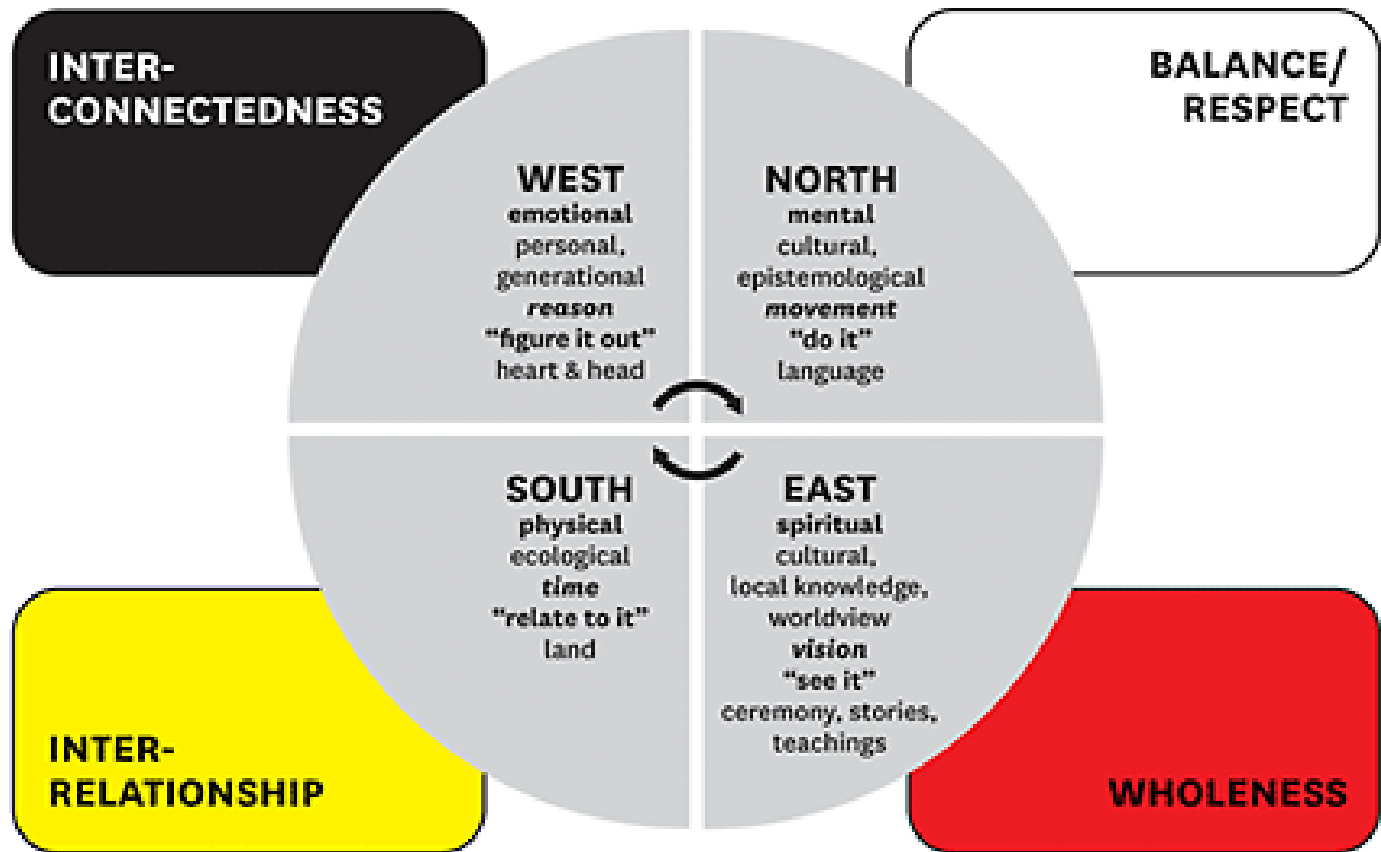
- Holistic model
- Being and living in balance
- Use of ceremony, traditions, and values
- No formal diagnoses
- Way of life

## Western View

- Model of sickness with an end goal of eliminating sickness
  - Person comes in to treat a problem
  - Diagnose a disorder
  - Prescribe a treatment plan
  - Follow the treatment plan
  - Language (disorder, problem, treatment) and it's relation to healing



# Medicine Wheel





# Healing

- There are ways in which to heal “soul wounds”.
- When people engage in genuine healing, they become more accountable, and in touch with reality. Healing generates compassion and tenderness. To heal collective trauma, you must heal the individual; healthy individuals give birth to healthy institutions and cultures. It’s circular, just like our medicine wheel.
- Intervene at macro and micro levels at once.



# How to Heal

Individually:

- Healing through values, customs and traditions that they find meaningful
- Increase positive self concept
- Develop and work on positive and supportive relationships



# How to Heal

## Individually:

- Be involved in community
- Create meaning by giving back in your own way
- Promote positive identity practices with those around them
- Allies need to say that something is wrong when they see it



# Examples of Individual Healing Practices

- Naming Ceremonies
- Atonement Ceremonies
- Coming of Age Ceremonies
- Learning the language
- Use of traditional medicines



# How to Heal

## Community:

- Bring back values, customs, traditions, and language and embed within the community.
- Conduct healing ceremonies
- Create positive social community activities
- Educate the public about our history



# Examples of Community Healing

- Language camps
- Mentorship of Native people who want to learn their traditions, values and customs
- Sweats
- Sundance Ceremonies
- Talking Circles
- Smudging
- Gathering for our Children and Returning Adoptee's Pow Wow  
"The Dakota 38"





# Indigenous Stress Coping Model



# The Four Sacred Medicines



# Tobacco (Eastern Door)





# Sage (Western Door)



Mai Duong  
PHOTOGRAPHY

# Cedar (Northern Door)



# Sweetgrass (Southern)





# Indigenous Models of Healing and Cultural Adaptations of Western Models



# Example of Healing through Spirit Doll Making

- PBS Documentary



# Spirit Doll





# Spirit Doll Story



Cold Dark Winter Night the Stars Light Up the Sky  
I stand in the barren garden of truth.  
What I am hearing has penetrated to the deepest core of my  
being.

Holding her in my arms I rock her like a baby.  
I must stay strong as she sheds tears of her own blood...  
Blood memory of our ancestors are awake within me as the  
women, men and children stand up behind me.

Silently I scream no more, never again.  
I take my scissors cutting out a new body. Threading my bone  
needle with sinew I begin to stitch and reattach that which has  
been violently taken.

As I sew, my spirit takes me back to the stars, remembering and  
healing.

My body is filled with wisdom, resiliency, and strength of my  
ancestors.

I carry sacred medicine within me.  
Cedar and Bear Hide fill The Lodge, cleansing, restoring and  
renewing life.

Come I say as I hold her hand. We must live again in accordance  
to our original instructions...

The sacred bundle is within us carrying the star seeds of those  
ancestors that have been dreamed of but have yet to come.  
Dressed in new regalia, we stand in beauty in The Creator's  
garden nurturing and protecting new life.

Beedashi Aki Ikwe



# The Dreamcatchers

This is a trauma informed psychoeducation group for children ages 7-12 years of age that follows a curriculum that interweaves traditional stories and activities as a way to assist children in developing self regulation skills to manage trauma responses.



# The Dreamcatcher's

- Smudging before group and end with a grounding exercise
- Native storytelling
- Focus on American Indian value system
- Utilizes cultural practices
- Builds cultural identity and positive self worth

Integrates cultural practices





# Dreamcatcher Curriculum Model

## Individual Development

Medicine wheel teachings, learning to balance harmony of self to counter the deregulation of trauma

Group play/trauma building: Attachment focused activities designed to lower trauma related stress/anxiety

Therapeutic Activities: Activities designed to work on feelings identification and self-esteem building activities

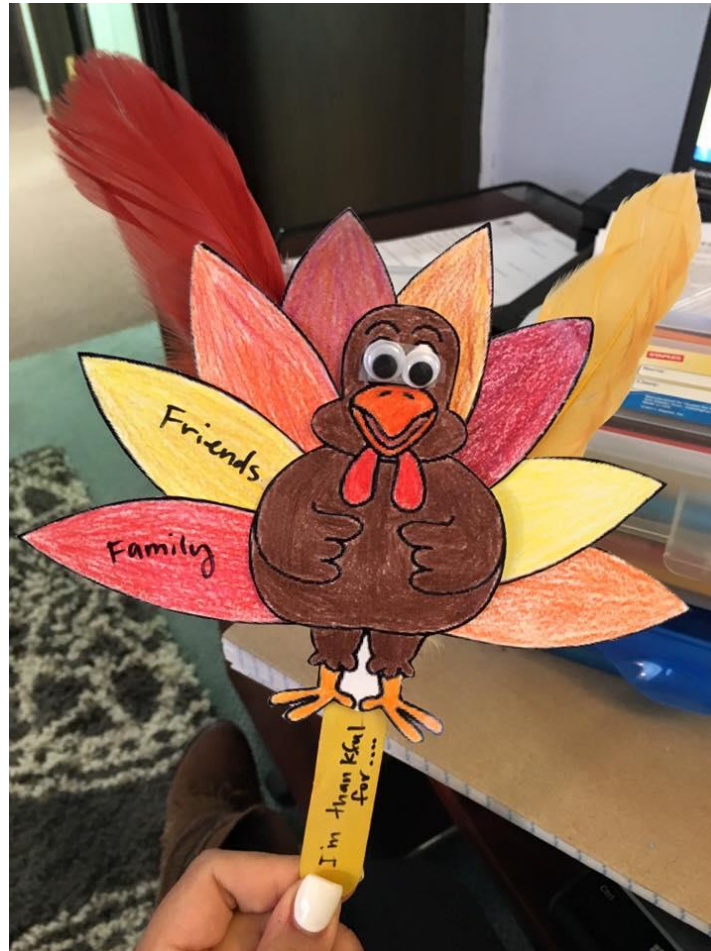


# Experiences through art therapy





# Fall



# Fall

## Physical/Fall

Fall reminds us that we are preparing for winter, new beginnings, and



# Values, Treasure Box Activity



# Fall Continued

## P-Psychoeducation/ R-Relaxation

Psychoeducation around trauma. Explain the statistics of children, children, those who have been affected by trauma. Explain the physical/emotional/relational/cognitive/spiritual impacts of trauma. trauma. Discussion of balance and the wellness wheel. Implement Relaxation skills

## Self-Calming Techniques

Yoga for kids

The Eagle-Stretch, breath in hands up, breath out hands down

Mindfulness-Feel feet on ground, feel seat on chair

Smell the roses/blow out the candle



# Winter



# Winter

## Mental/Winter

Winter reminds us of a time of wisdom, our **elders**, white hair, contemplation, healing and dreams.

Core Values: Caring, empathy, giving, kindness, sharing, fun, creativity, creativity, compassion, knowledge, forgiveness

**Animals/Nature**-Buffalo, moose, bear

Discuss teachings of the animals, how can we learn from animals how how do they survive in the winter?





# Painting Project



# Winter Continued

## A- Affective Modulation/C-Cognitive Coping

Train children in accepting, labeling, identifying and expressing feelings, coping with wide array of feelings associated with trauma. trauma. SUDS feeling scale. Cognitive coping-grounding, mindfulness, mindfulness, relaxation skills. Cognitive triangle teaching.

## Self-Calming Techniques

Brain Storming Bubbles (talking to ourselves)

Journaling (tracking thoughts)

Magnifying glass

Socratic Method

Turtle or STOP technique





# Spring



# Spring

Spring reminds us of **newborns**/new birth, the rising sun moves us to action.

Core Values:

Love, respect, humility, wisdom, awareness, vision.

**Animals/Nature:** Winged animals, hummingbird, owl, hawk

Discuss teachings of the animals, how can we learn from these animals?



# Growth Activity



# Spring continued

## T-Trauma Narrative/I-In Vivo Desensitization

Gradual exposure in the trauma narrative, narrative timeline, trauma trauma book. Identifying fears of the children, gradually expose child child to dissolve fear, hierarchy of fear, praise to enforce child.

## Self-Calming Techniques

Help children dispute dysfunctional beliefs

Test accuracy of thoughts

Use Socratic Method

Role play, best friend example



# Summer



# Summer

## Emotional/Summer

Summer we learn to grow into **adolescents**,

Core Values: Assertive, confidence, courage, faith, self-determination, determination, strength, perseverance, persistence, optimism, personal power, competence.

**Animals/Nature-** Eagle, lion, wolf

Discuss teachings of the animals, how can we learn from these animals?





# Appreciation



# Summer Continued

## C-Conjoint Parent-Child Sessions/ E-Enhancing Future Safety

Caregiver models skillful coping, narrative conjoint preparation, communication is key. Personal safety skills, increase awareness, assertive communication.

## Self-Calming Techniques

Guided meditation

Feelings identification

Body scan

Muscle relaxation

Dancing





## Soogizin Dodem (Strengthening Families)

This is a trauma-informed family psychoeducation group that couples traditional and cultural teachings with the creation of art with current mental health knowledge about trauma and trauma response. This class focuses on education and healing.



# Common Elements in Creation of Adaptive Approaches

- Connecting people back to their traditional Native teachings and culture
- Conducting activities in small groups
- Mentorship
- Implementing Elders and Medicine Men/Women into the treatment



# Common Elements in Creation of Adaptive Approaches

- Self Regulation Skills
- Positive coping strategies and skills
- Allowing a safe place to talk about their experience



# Examples of mental health shift

- The Maori in New Zealand and the interweaving of culture into the fabric of their health care system
- New Mexico and the Navajo
- Minnesota (Traditional Healing)
- Others?
- Impacting larger social systems through active legislation



# What can you do to be the change?

- You can do a deep dive into your own beliefs
- Become educated
- Be an ally
- Begin to advocate on micro and macro levels
- Work on changing the mental health field and insurance systems
- Begin relationships with Native communities and learn their worldview



# QUESTIONS





# Questions

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