

Integrating Culturally Responsive Practices into Psychiatric Care for Native Youth Experiencing Psychosis

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EASA Statewide Learning
Collaborative Meeting

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Learning Objectives

1

Review the principles of culturally responsive mental health practices and understand how these approaches inform assessment, engagement, and treatment.

2

Increase knowledge of Native American traditional healing values and practices.

3

Identify inequities for Native American youth, including economic, educational, health/mental health, and family /community systems.

4

Develop a knowledge base of local resources and community organizations who are building community-based interventions rooted in traditional healing values and connectedness.

Agenda

- Principles of Culturally Responsive Care
- Inequities of Native Youth: Economic, Education, Health/Mental Health, Family and Community
- Introduction to Traditional Healing Values and Practices
- Turning to Our Community Partners

Principles of Culturally Responsive Care

- Cultural sensitivity (awareness/respecting difference) vs. competence (gaining knowledge) vs. humility (reflection/commitment to learning) vs. **Culturally responsive**
- Culturally responsive care includes providing treatment in the patient's preferred language, utilizing cultural formulation interviews (APA's CFI) to understand the patient's cultural definition of their problem, recognizing how cultural factors affect help-seeking behavior, and creating safe environments that convey understanding and acceptance.

APA, Resource Document on "How Psychiatrists Can Talk with Patients and Their Families About Race and Racism," 2020

APA, "Resource Document on Ethics at the Interface of Religion, Spirituality, and Psychiatric Practice," 2021

APA Guidelines on Evidence-Based Psychological Practice in Health Care, 2021

Eken et al., 2021

Does it improve mental health outcomes?

- Meta-analytic evidence demonstrates that individuals from racial and ethnic minority groups have **better therapy outcomes when participating in culturally adapted mental health interventions** compared to traditional or unadapted interventions. (APA, 2021)
- **Patient perspectives strongly support the value of culturally competent care.** (Eken et al., 2021)
- A recent randomized controlled trial demonstrated that **community health worker-led, linguistically appropriate interventions can effectively reduce mental health symptoms** in underserved populations. (Alegría et al., 2025)

What about for psychosis?

There is substantial evidence supporting culturally adapted interventions for psychosis in ethnic minority populations.

- Culturally adapted CBT for psychosis (Rathod et al., 2013; Husain et al., 2017)
- **A comprehensive meta-analysis of 46 studies with 7,828 participants** found significant post-treatment effects favoring culturally adapted interventions for schizophrenia across multiple symptom domains; **culturally adapted interventions were more efficacious than usual treatment in proportion to the degree of adaptation.**

Key themes: language, concepts and illness models, family involvement, communication styles, content modifications, cultural norms and practices, context and delivery, therapeutic alliance, and treatment goals (Degnan et al., 2018)

- Despite evidence for effective interventions, **significant disparities persist in pathways to care** for ethnic minority youth with first-episode psychosis. (van der Ven et al., 2022)
- Research specifically focused on Indigenous populations with psychosis remains limited, representing a critical gap.

Cultural Considerations for Native Youth and Families

The slide features a light gray background with a subtle gradient. At the bottom, there are several decorative, overlapping wavy lines in shades of gray, creating a modern, flowing aesthetic.

Indigenous, Indigenous Peoples, Native American, or American Indian?

- **Indigenous:** people with pre-existing sovereignty who were living as a community prior to contact with settlers, most inclusive term
- **Indigenous Peoples:** shared national identity
- **Native American and American Indian:** peoples living within US prior to European contact, AI also has a legal context
- Whenever possible, use the name of an individual's particular Indigenous community or nation of people

Inequities of Native Youth

Economic

Education

Health and Mental Health

Family and Community



THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

Economic Inequities

- Nearly 1/3 of AI/AN children were living in poverty in 2022
- AI/AN kids are nearly 3x more likely to live in high-poverty neighborhoods
- Just under half of AI/AN children live in families where parents do not have secure, full-time employment
- 1/8 AI/AN teens ages 16-19 were not in school or working in 2021
- Median income for AI/AN has steadily increased but far below the average family income



Education Inequities

- About half of AI/AN 4th grade students were considered chronically absent from school in the previous month (2022)
- 82% of AI/AN 4th graders were below proficiency in reading
- 89% AI/AN 8th graders scored below proficiency in math
- 25% AI/AN high school students not graduating on time



Health and Mental Health Inequities

- AI/AN kids ages 0-18 are more than twice as likely to lack health insurance
- Death rate for AI/AN children and youth ages 1-19 from all causes has remained above the US rate
- AI/AN communities face the ongoing crisis of missing/murdered women and girls
- AI/AN HS students are more likely to consider suicide (CDC 2021)
- Impact of trauma (2023 [National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine report](#))



Family and Community Inequities

- Over 1/3 of AI/AN children have had at least 2 ACEs
- Overrepresentation in the foster care system
- Among AI/AN youth transitioning out of foster care, 43% reported homelessness between 19-21
- Disproportionately detained and incarcerated by the justice system



National Key Indicators by Race and Hispanic Origin

| | | National Average | African American | American Indian or Alaska Native | Asian and Pacific Islander | Hispanic | Non- Hispanic White | More Than One Race |
|---|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|---|----------------------------------|----------|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| ECONOMIC WELL-BEING | | | | | | | | |
| Children in poverty | 2022 | 16% | 30% | 29% | 11% | 22% | 10% | 18% |
| Children whose parents lack secure employment | 2022 | 26% | 40% | 42% | 19% | 31% | 20% | 28% |
| Children living in households with a high housing cost burden | 2022 | 30% | 45% | 31% | 29% | 39% | 22% | 34% |
| Teens not in school and not working | 2022 | 7% | 9% | 12% | 3% | 8% | 5% | 7% |
| EDUCATION | | | | | | | | |
| Young children not in school | 2018–2022 | 54% | 53% | 60% | 52% | 61% | 52% | 57% |
| Fourth graders not proficient in reading | 2022 | 68% | 84%* | 82%* | 45%* | 80% | 59% | 63%* |
| Eighth graders not proficient in math | 2022 | 74% | 91%* | 89%* | 44%* | 86% | 66% | 73%* |
| High school students not graduating on time [^] | 2020/21 | 14% | 20%* | 26%* | 7%* | 18% | 10% | N.A. |
| HEALTH | | | | | | | | |
| Low-birthweight babies | 2022 | 8.6% | 14.2% | 8.7% | 9.3% | 7.9% | 7.1% | 9.1% |
| Children without health insurance | 2022 | 5% | 4% | 11% | 4% | 8% | 4% | 6% |
| Child and teen deaths per 100,000 | 2022 | 30 | 53 | 37 | 16 | 26 | 26 | 17 |
| Children and teens ages 10 to 17 who are overweight or obese | 2021–22 | 33% | 39%* | 37%* | 22%* | 42% | 27% | 32%* |
| FAMILY AND COMMUNITY | | | | | | | | |
| Children in single-parent families | 2022 | 34% | 63% | 50% | 16% | 42% | 24% | 39% |
| Children in families where the household head lacks a high school diploma | 2022 | 11% | 10% | 20% | 10% | 25% | 5% | 15% |
| Children living in high-poverty areas | 2018–2022 | 8% | 21% | 21% | 4% | 11% | 3% | 8% |
| Teen births per 1,000 | 2022 | 14 | 21 | 16 | 4 | 21 | 9 | 13 |

* Data are for non-Hispanics.

N.A. - Data not available.

[^] Due to data quality concerns and late delivery of data, the national average was calculated using imputed data for Illinois and Washington.



Native American Traditional Healing Practices

Introduction to Traditional Healing Values and Practices



Introduction

- Important Values
 - Interconnectedness
 - Reverence for nature
 - Tradition
 - The Great Spirit
- Well-being or wholeness comes about through walking in harmony with the forces of nature and the universe, “to walk in beauty”
- Healers are conceptualized as facilitators and counselors to help patients heal themselves. Most of the healing is done by the patient.
- Healing practices: stories, humor, music, tobacco, smudging, ceremonies, dancing, singing, drumming, prayer, feasting, fasting
- Healing includes community and relationships

Ceremony

- An essential part of traditional Native Healing
- Physical and spiritual health are intimately connected
- Ceremonies promote wellness by reflection of Native conceptions of Spirit, Creator, the Universe
- Can include: prayers, chants, drumming, songs, stories, sacred objects
- Structures used for healing are called medicine lodges

Ceremony: Powwows



OHSU Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Fellowship
at NAYA's Annual Neerchokikoo Powwow



Ceremony: Smudging



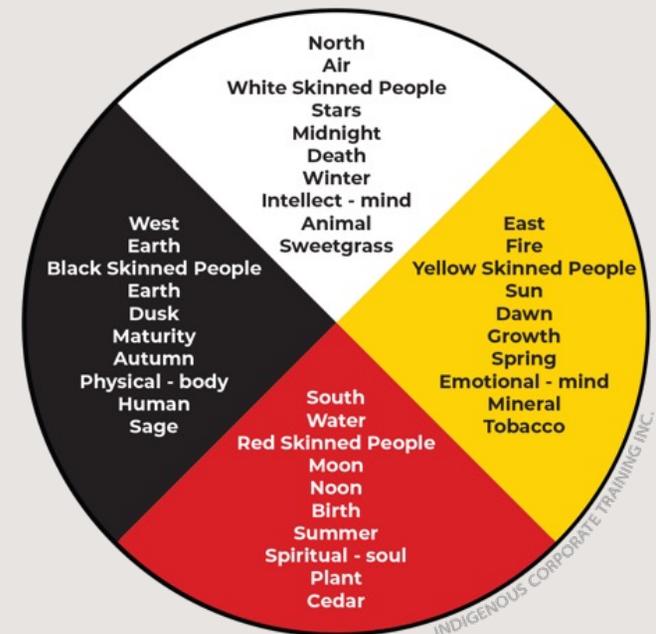
Ceremony: Sweat Lodge



- Heated, dome shaped structure (usually) where people can connect with the Creator, connect with nature, restore order and balance
- Often incorporates prayer, creation of steam, drumming, and chanting
- Can last for several hours

The Medicine Wheel

- Embodies the four directions, as well as the Father Sky, Mother Earth, and Spirit Tree, which symbolize the dimensions of health and the cycles of life
- Different tribes interpret the Medicine Wheel differently
- Each of the Four Directions (East, South, West, and North) is typically represented by a distinctive color, such as black, red, yellow, and white.
- Emphasis of balance



Healing Plants

Tobacco

Cedar

Sage

Sweetgrass

Goldenseal

Garlic

Ginseng

Cranberry

St. John's
Wort

Evening
Primrose

Yellow Flower
Leafcup

Nettle

Many more!

Intergenerational Healing





Community Partners

Native American Youth and Family Center (NAYA)

- College and Career
- Community Economic Development
- Community Engagement
- Community Garden
- Elder Services
- Foster Care Support
- Health Equity
- Housing
- Home Ownership
- Many Nations Academy
- Youth and Education



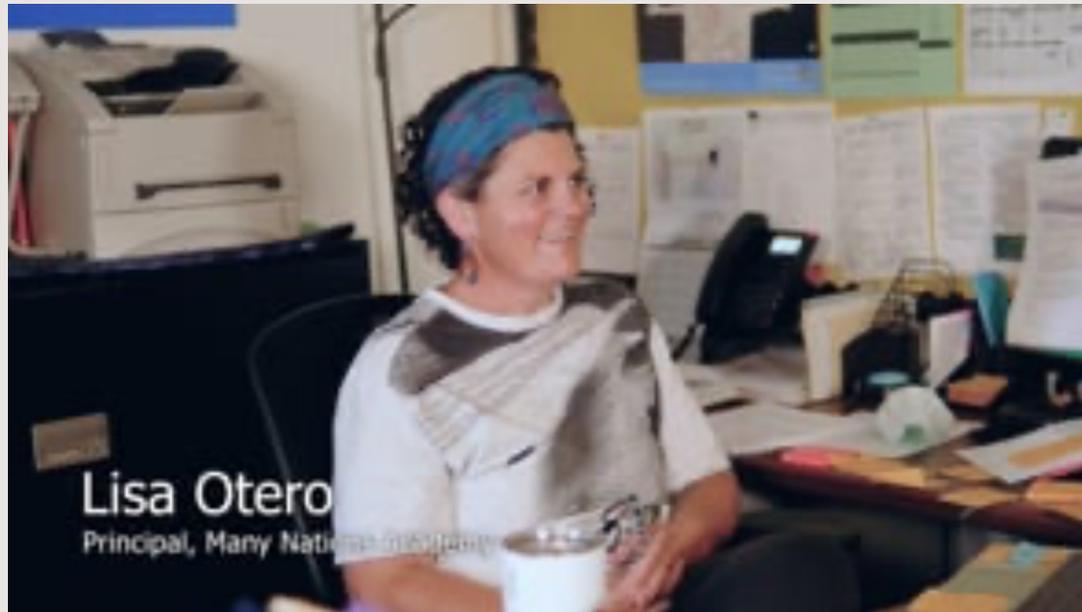
NAYA Overview



NAYA Many Nations Academy



Principal



Student



Chloe Marie St. Martin (Cowitz)
Mary Nottam Academy Senior

Native American Rehabilitation Association of the Northwest (NARA)

Example of services -- NARA NW Youth Residential:
24 beds, primary dx of SUD, ages 12-17, LOS 90-
180 days

- Circle of services modeling after teachings of the medicine wheel, balance is the goal
- Spiritual and cultural activities
- Physical wellness
- Mental Health (DBT, DBT, family, trauma recovery)
- Emotion Well-being

Incorporates **White Bison curriculums**: Sons and Daughters of Tradition, Mending Broken Hearts, The Medicine Wheel and 12 Steps for Youth, and Understanding the Purpose of Life: 12 Teachings for Native Youth



Northwest Native American Center of Excellence

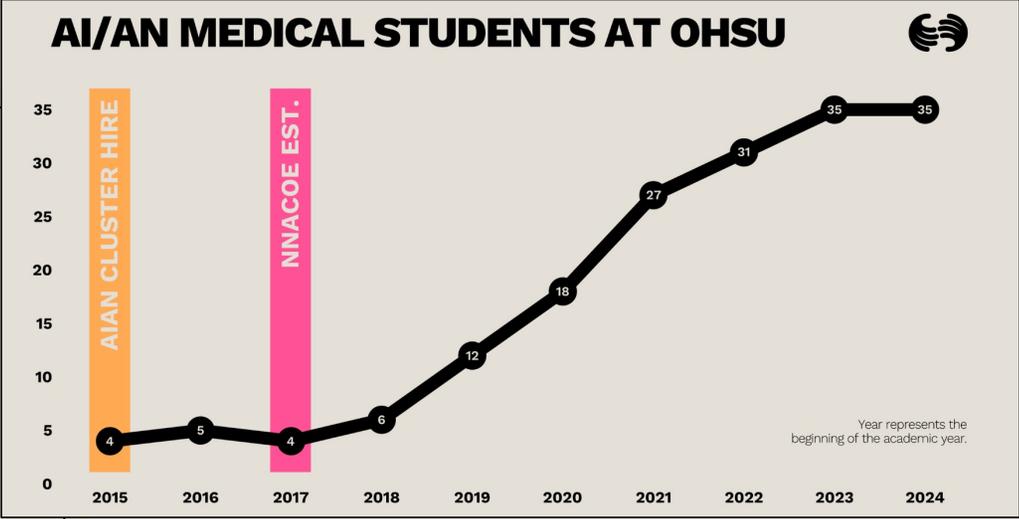
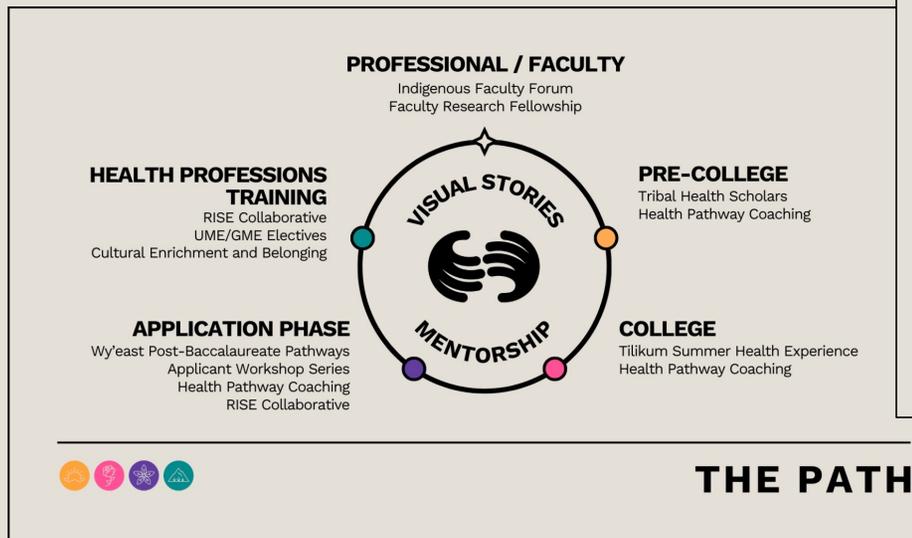


Figure 1. The Path



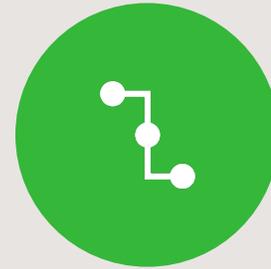
Integrating Traditional Healing into Activities with Youth



LOOKING AT HOW TO BRING
FORWARD CULTURALLY-ATTUNED
CONCEPTUALIZATIONS



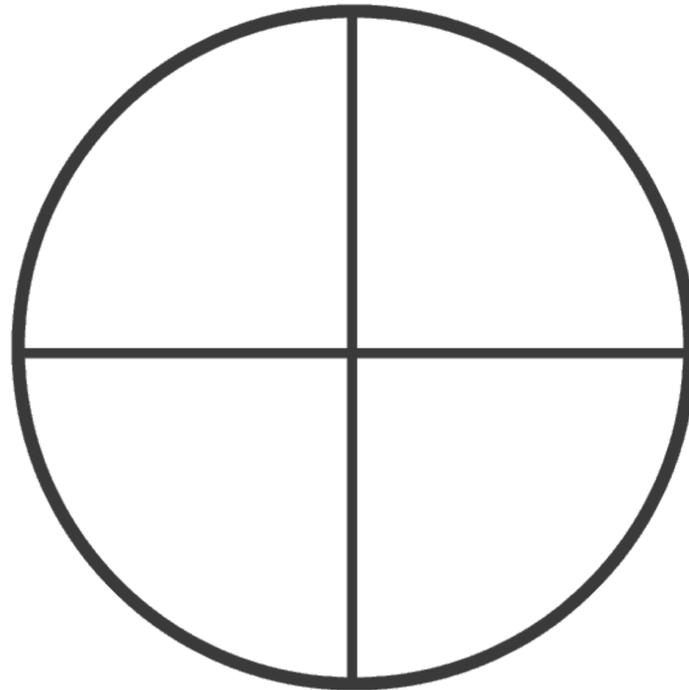
INCORPORATE THE YOUTH'S
CORE VALUES INTO SELF-
CONCEPT



INTEGRATE CHALLENGES INTO
NARRATIVE, DEVELOP MEANING
AND CONNECTION

Let's look at some examples...

Activities with Youth: Protect and Balance Self



Activities with Youth: Storytelling

- Invite Elders and storytellers to discuss the art of storytelling and share oral traditions and teachings.
- Can have youth tell their own story, share an important object, share a sacred teaching, create a story for younger children



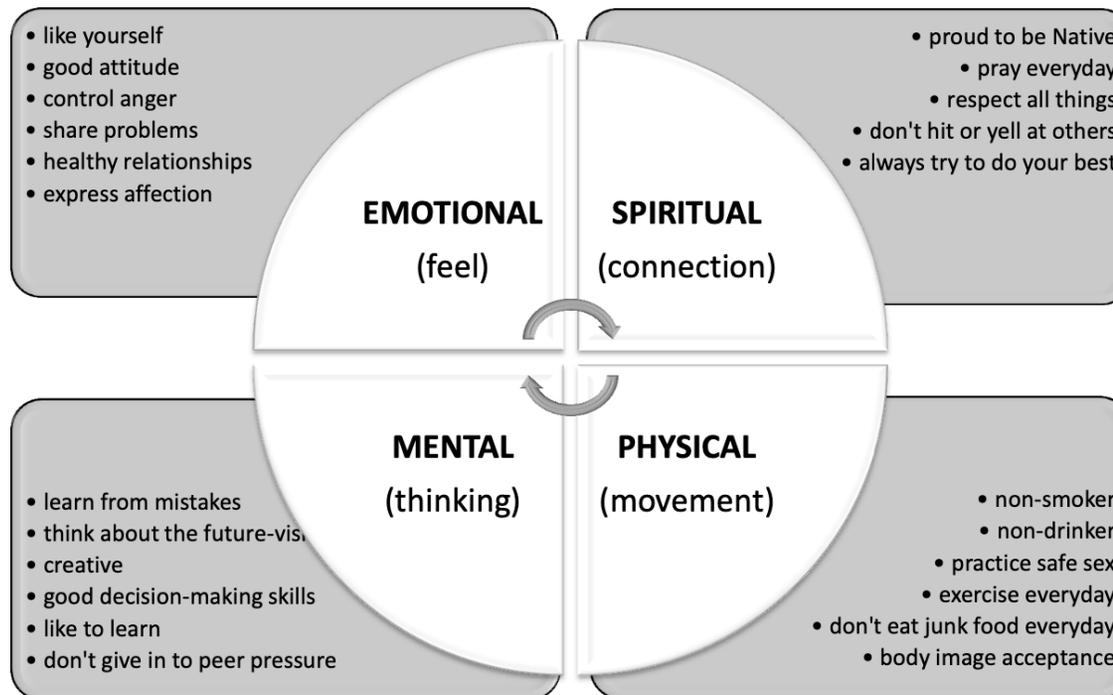
Activities with Youth

- My journey: making a timeline
- Making a poster of someone who has inspired them
- Talking circle
- Pride
- Medicines – reviewing traditional vs non-traditional medicine



Native Youth Wellness

- Is a cultural and traditional model of *lifestyle*
- Is a *holistic* approach to living one's life in a good way
- Has four "Directions"...directions are interdependent
- Is about GOOD CHOICES and GROWING up to make your CULTURE PROUD!

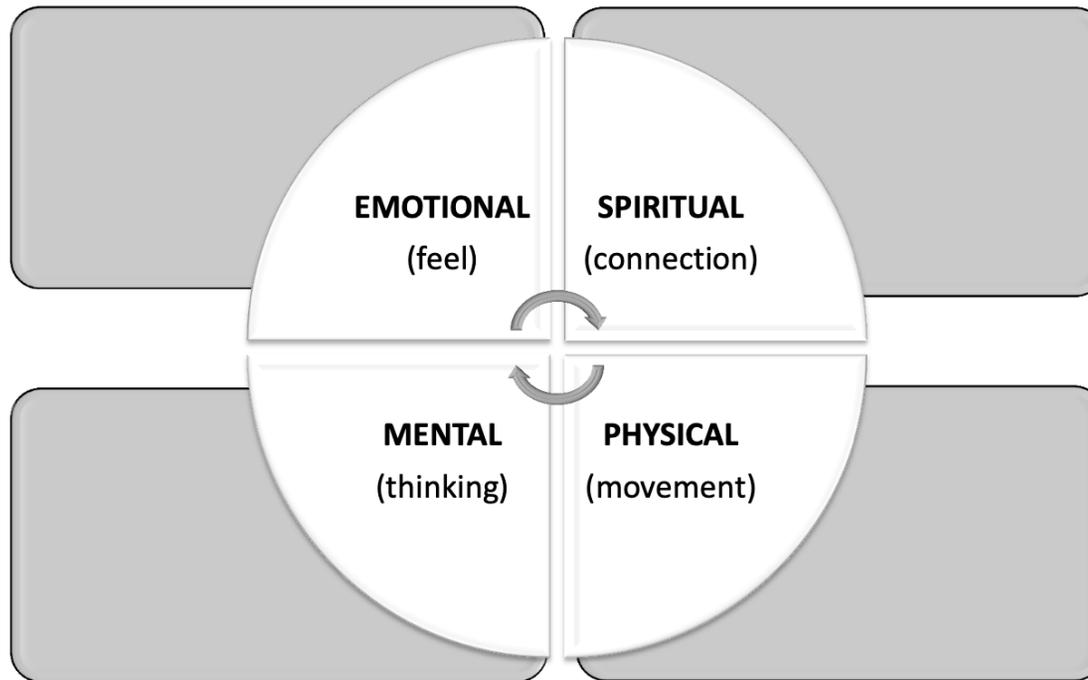


WALK in BALANCE

Billy Rogers, Native Wellness and Healing Institute, 2004



GOOD CHOICES & GROWING UP HEALTHY MAKE YOUR CULTURE PROUD!



WALK in BALANCE

Billy Rogers, Native Wellness
and Healing Institute, 2004



White Bison Curriculum

MISSION

White Bison is a Native American-operated 501(c)3 nonprofit dedicated to creating and sustaining a grassroots Wellbriety Movement – providing culturally-based healing to the next seven generations of Indigenous People.

THE WELLBRIETY MOVEMENT

To be sober and well. That's what White Bison wants for our community, that's why we're a proud facilitator of the Wellbriety Movement. We must find sobriety and recover from the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol.

TO GO BEYOND

The "Well" in Wellbriety is the inspiration to go on beyond sobriety and recovery, committing to a life of wellness and healing everyday. Many use White Bison's healing resource products, attend its learning circles, & volunteer their services to help themselves and others achieve wellness.

A RESOURCE TO THE COMMUNITY

White Bison offers sobriety, recovery, addictions prevention, and wellness/Wellbriety learning resources to the Native American/Alaska Native community nationwide. Our resources are also available to non-Native people.



<https://whitebison.org/youth-programs/>

Social Media



notoriouscree  ...
James Jones
2,531 posts 1.3M followers 3,581 following
Entrepreneur
Cree (Nehiyaw)
✦✦ Booking Inquiries ✦✦ notoriouscree@gmail.com
👤 Notorious Cree and 1 more
📧 notoriouscree

<https://www.instagram.com/notoriouscree/>



TIME100 Creators 2025

Conclusion

- Culturally responsive practices are valuable for improving mental health outcomes, including outcomes for those with psychosis.
- This is by no means comprehensive but is a starting point for better understanding value systems and some traditional Native American healing practices.
- Native youth and families face significant inequities, including economic disadvantage, gaps in educational attainment, health/mental health inequity, and disproportionate representation in community systems (foster/legal).
- We look to the wisdom of our community partners and humbly join them in envisioning well-being for their communities and future generations.
- I hope you feel curious enough to continue your own learning about these communities!

Thank you!

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