

Intergenerational Trauma, Culture, and Native Youth Mental Health

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Learning Objectives

Through this presentation you will:

- #1 Learn 2 ways in which intergenerational trauma impacts Native youth today.
- #2 Acquire new knowledge and understanding of the importance of integrating culture into care
- #3 Learn 2 ways in which culture can be woven into mental health practices



Taking Care of Ourselves

Warning	Recognize	Take
Trigger Warning	Recognize Body Responses	Take a Break if Needed

**Trigger
Warning**



What is Trauma?

No universal
definition

More easily defined
as events that cause
adverse effects on
well-being

Anything that
overwhelms an
individual's capacity
to cope



https://www.chcs.org/media/understanding-trauma-fact-sheet_071217.pdf



Historical Trauma

Historical trauma is multigenerational trauma experienced by a specific cultural, racial or ethnic group

- Transferred to subsequent generations through biopsychosocial means

Historic and Current Trauma in Native Communities

- Forced Loss of language, culture, and land
- Removal from land
- Breaking up of the Indian family
 - Indian Child Removal
 - Boarding Schools
- Forced to be part of oppressive and harmful systems



Impact

Intergenerational Transmission

- Trauma is woven into DNA
- Genes carry memories of trauma
 - Influence how we react to trauma and stress

Culture and Identity Confusion, disconnection, and Loss

Negative coping mechanisms

Abusive behaviors

Racism / Microaggressions



Statistics

More than **two-thirds of children** reported at least 1 traumatic event by age 16 – Center for Disease Control (CDC)

Native youth are 2.5 times more likely to experience trauma compared to non-native peers – Indian Country Child Trauma Center

The poverty rate among AI/ANs in 2018 was 25.4% ([United States Census](#)), and more than one in three AI/AN children live in poverty

The [National Indian Child Welfare Association](#) (NICWA) reports that AI/AN children are **overrepresented in foster care** – at more than 2.4 times the general population



Trauma Informed Care

Understanding the trauma (or potential trauma) that our clients have experienced

How it impacts their symptoms and daily living

It may be ongoing

Is not simply checking a box

We need ongoing learning as helpers



Weaving in Culture

Understand that
not all of our
cultures are the
same

The Tribes and
families are the
experts

Connect clients
with appropriate
cultural programs



Weaving in Culture

Language

Tools

(toys, games, etc)

Environment



Utilizing Cultural Bearers

Need to feel safe
when coming to help

Need to be heard and
honored for what they
bring

Can partner with
therapist to run
groups / talking
circles

May be able to
provide cultural
training to staff

- For understanding – not for
them to later teach culture

Helpers

Ceremony

Need to be
compensated fairly



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