Generational Trauma
How it Affects Native Americans and Their Communities

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Meet the Presenters

- Rene Chavez
- Austin Thoreson
- Nadine Veasley
- Tiffany Contreras
- Natalie Figueroa Félix
Land Acknowledgment

We acknowledge the land of which we sit and occupy today as the traditional and ancestral home of the Umónhón (Omaha), Bah Kho-Je (Iowas of Oklahoma), Otoe-Missouri, Iowa Tribe of Kansas and Nebraska (Ioway), Baxoje Ukiche (Ioway), Meskwaki Tribes and other Indigenous nations of this land.

Without them, we would not have access to this gathering and to this dialogue. We take this opportunity to thank and honor the original caretakers of this land.
Learning Objectives

● Build an understanding of generational trauma and its effects
● Bring awareness to mental health disparities in Native American communities
● Learn about how the generational trauma can affect Native students on our campus

*Disclaimer* In our presentation we will be using the terms Native American and Indigenous interchangeably, and acknowledge that individuals may not self-identify with our terminologies.
Defining Generational Trauma

Generational Trauma (Transgenerational, Intergenerational, Historical, Cross-generational trauma):

“It is essential to understand both the facts of the traumatic event(s), how family members coped or didn’t cope with the effects, and what lessons of life and survival were passed on, consciously and subconsciously.”
Grounding Activity
Native Americans were subjected to traumas that are defined in specific historical losses of population, family, land, and culture. These traumas resulted in historical loss symptoms related to social-environmental and psychological functioning that continue today (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004).
Native population decreased by 95% after Columbus came to America due to two main factors: intentional killing and the exposure of European diseases (smallpox, measles, diphtheria, etc.)
Loss of Land: Indian Removal Bill of 1830 & The Trail of Tears

Americans offered the use to treaties and guaranteeing peace in exchange for Native land east of the Mississippi river. The Choctaw, Cherokee, Chickasaw, Creeks, and Seminoles signed the treaties. Even though peace was promised, the travel of the Native people was met with violence, starvation, inadequate supplies, and death.
Loss of Culture: Code of Indian Offenses Law (1883)

As the government promoted Christian education, the Code of Indian Offenses law was enacted. This law punished Indian dances and feasts by imprisonment or 30 days of withheld food and also if a medicine man encouraged others to partake in traditional practices, he would be imprisoned for 10 days or until he could prove abandonment of his beliefs. This code continued on until the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.
A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma: Implications for Public Health Practice and Research (2009), Michelle Sotero, MPH, Ph.D - University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Continued (Part 2)

Physical Response
- Nutritional stress
- Compromised immune system
- Biochemical abnormalities
- Endocrine impairment
- Adrenal maladaptation
- Gene impairment/expression

Resulting in: malnutrition, diabetes, hyperglycemia, infectious disease, heart disease, hypertension, cancer

Psychological Response
- Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
- Depression
- Panic/Anxiety Disorders

Resulting in: anger/aggression, social isolation, shame, loss of self-worth, terror/fear, grief, withdrawal, numbness

Social Response
- Increase suicide rate
- Domestic violence
- Unemployment
- Substance abuse
- Child maltreatment
- Poverty

Resulting in: breakdown of community/family structures and social networks, loss of resources, separation from loved ones

Trauma Response

Resilience Protective Factors

Secondary and Subsequent Generations

A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma: Implications for Public Health Practice and Research (2009), Michelle Sotero, MPH, Ph.D - University of Nevada, Las Vegas
Continued (Part 3)

Modes of Intergenerational Transmission

- Physiological
- Genetic
- Environmental
- Psychosocial
- Social/Economic/Political Systems
- Legal and Social Discrimination

Influences on Health Disparities

Population

Individual

Proximate

Distal

Past

Present

Life course

Life stage

A Conceptual Model of Historical Trauma: Implications for Public Health Practice and Research (2009), Michelle Sotero, MPH, Ph.D - University of Nevada, Las Vegas
The Significance

**Epigenetics**: the study of heritable changes in gene expression that do not involve changes to the underlying DNA sequence — a change in phenotype without a change in genotype.

**Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance**: Environmental epigenetic markers, imprinting on genes that are passed onto future generations.
Common Mental Disorders in Native Americans:

1. Depression
2. Dementia

Statistics:

1. Suicide rate for Native American woman is up by 139%.
2. Suicide is the second leading cause of death for Native youth in the 15 to 24 year old age group.
‘America is a stolen country’
Pair and share

• What are your thoughts on this video?

• How does this video show the effects of generational trauma?
Impacts within Health

Among people age 65 and older, American Indians and Alaska Natives are more likely to have a hospital stay and certain health conditions.

- **Any Hospital Stay**: 15% (U.S.) vs. 33% (American Indian/Alaska Native)
- **Diabetes**: 8% (U.S.) vs. 22% (American Indian/Alaska Native)
- **Stroke**: 12% (U.S.) vs. 12% (American Indian/Alaska Native)
- **Heart Attack**: 12% (U.S.) vs. 20% (American Indian/Alaska Native)
- **Coronary Heart Disease**: 12% (U.S.) vs. 13% (American Indian/Alaska Native)
- **Depression**: 15% (U.S.) vs. 20% (American Indian/Alaska Native)

*During the past 12 months [...] did you stay in the hospital overnight or longer?*  
*Has a doctor, nurse, or other health professional ever told you that you had any of the following?*
Impacts within Health

Elderly American Indians and Alaska Natives experience greater barriers accessing care

Have any of the following kept you from medical care in the past 12 months?

- Too long a wait for appointment: 3% (American Indian Alaska Native, age 65+), 12% (U.S. population, age 65+)
- Too long a wait in waiting room: 3% (American Indian Alaska Native, age 65+), 11% (U.S. population, age 65+)
- No transportation: 1% (American Indian Alaska Native, age 65+), 11% (U.S. population, age 65+)
- Cost: 2% (American Indian Alaska Native, age 65+), 10% (U.S. population, age 65+)
- Office wasn’t open when I could get there: 3% (American Indian Alaska Native, age 65+), 1% (U.S. population, age 65+)
1. The U.S. Indian Health Service (IHS) has documented that these populations suffer tremendously from:
   - Heart disease
   - Diabetes
   - Alcoholism
   - Mental health problems
   - Asthma

2. Another factor in American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) health disparities is:
   - The shortage of physicians and other healthcare professionals.
IHS Facilities

American Indian and Alaska Native Population

Note: Alaska and Hawaii not shown to scale

Percent of Total Population by County
- 95.00 - 95.95%
- 90.00 - 94.99%
- 0.96 - 9.99%
- 0.00 - 0.95%
United States = 0.9%

IHS Facilities
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<tr>
<td><strong>American Indian/Alaskan Native (Undergraduate students)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Number</td>
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<td><strong>Undergraduate Total</strong></td>
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<td>30,671</td>
<td>30,406</td>
<td>29,621</td>
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Primary research is concerned with Indigenous-Settler relations with a special focus on the histories of anthropology or, more aptly, the anthropology of anthropology.

Works with many Tribal Nations in Toronto, Canada
- Residential Schools
  - Cut off family and language
- Evidence today
  - Mental illness
  - Alcoholism and drug abuse
  - Sexual abuse
  - Starvation
Student Interview

Morgan Bear

• Graduate Student at Iowa State

• Settlement

• Meskwaki Tribe

• Tama, Iowa
Pair and share

• How has hearing a personal story helped you understand the effects of generational trauma?

• Have you seen evidence of generational trauma within your own communities? If comfortable share examples of how.
Final takeaways

• Transmission
  • All communities and people
  • Genetically, environmentally, and culturally
• Mental Health
  • Acknowledge the stigma
• Breaking the cycle
  • Learn to work through trauma
  • Prevent projection and transmission
Questions?

Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart describes historical trauma as “…the cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over one’s lifetime and from generation to generation following loss of lives, land and vital aspects of culture.”
Work Cited


Hope, Native. "Understanding Historical Trauma and Native Americans." Understanding Historical Trauma and Native Americans, blog.nativehope.org/understanding-historical-trauma-and-native-americans


“Wakiksuayapi: Carrying Historical Trauma: Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart.” Wakiksuyapi: Carrying Historical Trauma: Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, 6 June 2016, blog.americanindianadoptees.com/2016/carrying-historical-trauma-maria-yellow.html.