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*Sex Trafficking
of Indigenous Youth:
Current State and Future
Action*

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Training Objectives

This presentation will address:

- Current human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation victimization rates against Native American youth and tribal communities
- Associated risk factors, vulnerabilities, and the intersecting impact of historical trauma
- Best practices for supporting Native American youth survivors of human trafficking from a trauma-informed, victim-centered, and culturally relevant perspective
- Current efforts to address human trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation against tribal communities and foster cultural healing for Native American youth and tribal communities

*Human Trafficking &
Exploitation Against
Native Americans*

Human Trafficking

According to the DOJ, human trafficking is a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex.¹

- Exploiting a minor for commercial sex is human trafficking, regardless of whether force, fraud, or coercion were used.
- The Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000 states that human trafficking involves:
 - a) Sex trafficking in which a commercial sex act is induced by force, fraud, or coercion, or in which the person induced to perform such act has not attained 18 years of age; or
 - b) The recruitment, harboring, transportation, provision, or obtaining of a person for labor or services, through the use of force, fraud, or coercion for the purpose of subjection to involuntary servitude, peonage, debt bondage, or slavery

¹ U.S. Dept. of Justice. (2018). *Human trafficking defined*. Retrieved from: <https://www.justice.gov/humantrafficking>

Trafficking of Native Americans

While exact numbers are difficult to identify, a study conducted in the U.S. and Canada showed that “an average of 40%” of sex trafficking victims identified as Native women.

It is important to note that Native women only represent 10% or less of the general population in the studied communities.²

Data on trafficking and exploitation among Indigenous populations is under-reported and often inaccurate

Trafficking often intersects with domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking

Trafficking also feeds into the Missing and Murdered Indigenous People (MMIP; MMIWG2S) crisis

Native Americans are over-represented in accessing trafficking services

Native women are trafficked and exploited at incredibly young ages

HTLA Class 5 Cohort Report

- Human Trafficking Leadership Academy (HTLA) is a fellowship program organized by the National Human Trafficking Training and Technical Assistance Center (NHTTAC) and Coro Northern California
- Class 5 (2019-2020) consisted of 11 Indigenous fellows
- Project Question:
How can culture be a protective factor in preventing trafficking among all Indigenous youth?

INDIGENOUS TRAFFICKING RISK FACTORS

Why are we targeted?



INDIGENOUS ANTI-TRAFFICKING STRENGTH & PROTECTIVE FACTORS

How are we strong & protected through Indigenous-Specific Advocacy and Services?



HTLA 5 Cohort Report

- Macro
 - Renew emphasis and adherence to the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA).
 - Promote programs and resources with appropriations that financially invest in and promote cultural healing for all Indigenous people.
 - Mandate trauma-informed cultural humility training for all child welfare and juvenile justice programs across the U.S. and territories.
 - Increase funding allocations to all communities to improve access to culturally specific support systems that develop individuals holistically in efforts to prevent human trafficking.
 - Invest in communicative data systems and informative research to illuminate the extent of and need for prevention/intervention of human trafficking of all Indigenous young people.

HTLA 5 Cohort Report

- Mezzo
 - Local governments and agencies seek, access, and allocate funding to:
 - Provide resources and support networks that assist in cultural healing for all Indigenous youth
 - Offer risk reduction and prosperity promoting programs that specifically address community-specific factors
- Micro
 - Implement mechanisms that increase and improve processes for all Indigenous youth to access prevention and intervention resources
 - Invest in measures of quality and accountability

Impact of Historical Trauma



It is important to note that this violence did not start overnight. It is the result of hundreds of years of colonialism, genocide, and targeted violence, upheld by systems of oppression. It continues to exist today.

A quote from the Garden of Truth study that captures this sentiment:

“[People] who are marginalized because of colonialism's devastating historical impact, because of their lack of opportunities and education, because of race and ethnic discrimination, poverty, previous physical and emotional harm and abandonment are the people [most often exploited]. [People] who have the fewest real choices available to them are those who are in prostitution. The critical question to ask with respect to the women we interviewed is not “did she consent?” but “has she been offered the real choice to exist without [this]?”¹

¹ Farley, M., Matthews, N., Deer, S., Lopez, G., Stark C., and Hudon, E. (2011). Garden of Truth: The Prostitution and Trafficking of Native Women in Minnesota. St. Paul, MN: William Mitchell College of Law. Retrieved from: http://www.prostitutionresearch.com/pdfs/Garden_of_Truth_Final_Project_WEB.pdf

"Trauma in a person, decontextualized
over time, looks like personality.

Trauma in a family, decontextualized
over time, looks like family traits.

Trauma in a people, decontextualized
over time, looks like culture."

RESMAA MENAKEM

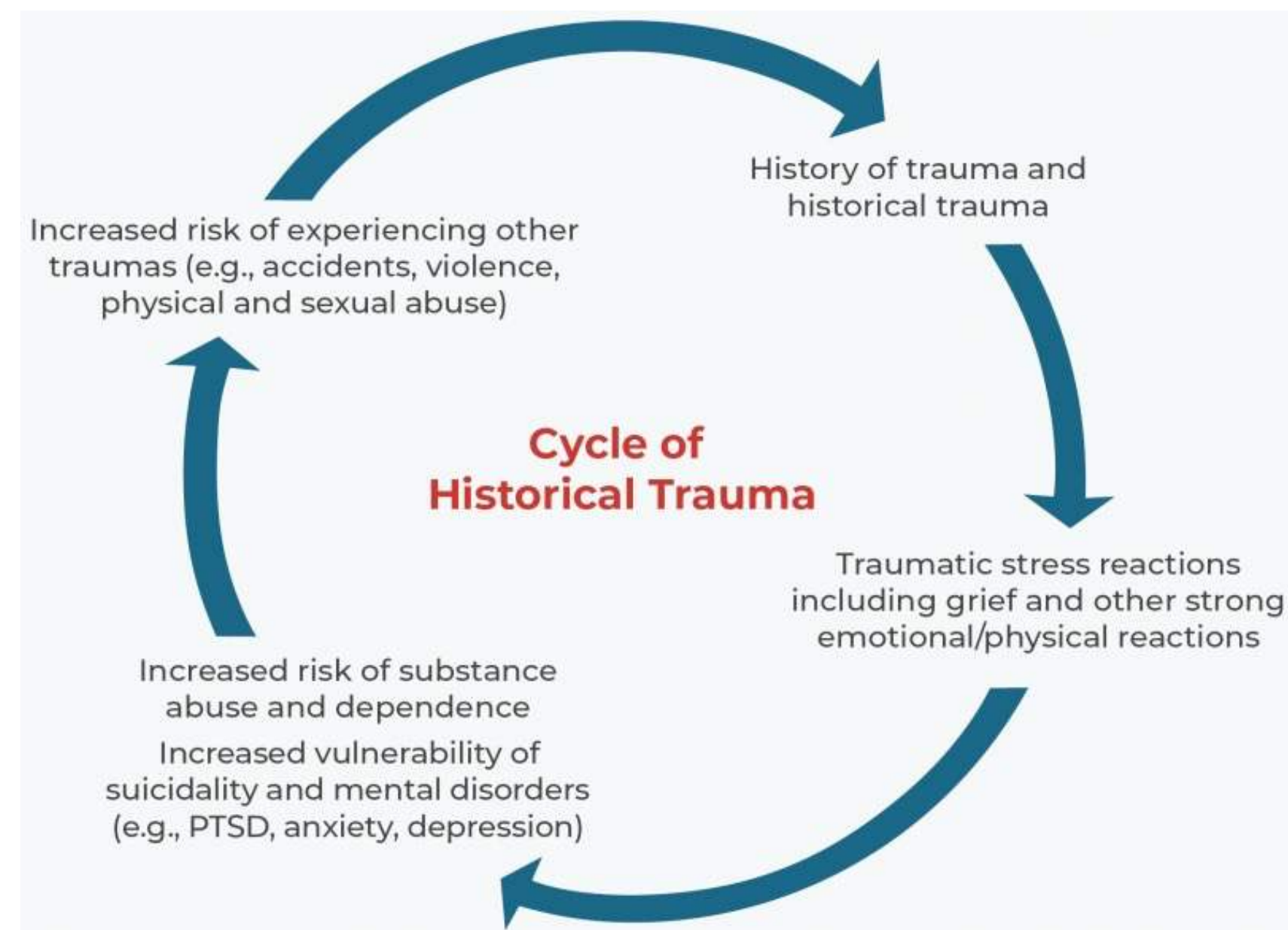


Historical Trauma & Intergenerational Trauma

Historical trauma refers to “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma”¹

Intergenerational trauma is trauma across generations within one family²

- Native Americans have experienced and continue to experience circumstances and events that contribute to trauma



¹Yellow Horse Brave Heart, M. (1988). Historical trauma and unresolved grief: implications for clinical research and practice with indigenous peoples of the Americas. Retrieved from: https://www.ihs.gov/telebehavioral/includes/themes/newihsthemel/display_objects/documents/slides/historicaltrauma/historicaltraumaintro_011113.pdf

²Coyle, S. (2014). Intergenerational Trauma—Legacies of Loss. *Social Work Today*, 14 (3), p 18 Retrieved from: <https://www.socialworktoday.com/archive/051214p18.shtml>

Behavioral Health Services for American Indians and Alaska Natives: For Behavioral Health Service Providers, Administrators, and Supervisors [Internet]. Rockville (MD): Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (US); 2018. (Treatment Improvement Protocol (TIP) Series, No. 61.) [Figure, The Effects of Historical Trauma on American Indians and Alaska Natives Today]. Available from: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK539584/figure/p1_f2/

*Best Practices
Recommendations*

General Best Practices

- **Prioritize safety first**
 - If they don't feel safe, ask what you can do to help them feel safer
- **Speak clearly, loudly, and simply**
 - Don't get caught up in jargon and check in that things make sense
- **Be supportive; LISTEN to what they are saying**
 - Ask open ended questions (not "yes/no" questions)
 - This is NOT the time to lecture/preach at them
- **Help them identify resources/people who can help outside of yourself**
- **Understanding humor/teasing/emotions**
- **Continue to remind them that this is not their fault—it is NEVER the survivor's fault**
- **There may be some trust resistance—be patient**
 - Don't take it personally
 - "This history is not your fault, but it is absolutely your responsibility"
- **Understand that it is the survivor's decision moving forward**

General Practices for Fostering Inclusivity

- **Focus on more gender-neutral language**
 - Ask preferred pronouns
 - “significant other” or “intimate partner” instead of “boyfriend” and “girlfriend”
 - Give scenarios of various relationship types, not just heteronormative examples
 - Why?
 - Boys/Men can be victims of relationship violence
 - Two-Spirit and LGBTQIA+ individuals can be victims of relationship violence
- **Move away from the idea that anything not following a Western-European patriarchal society is therefore “not normal”**
- **Focus on the behavior instead of the person**
 - “Bad behavior” versus a “bad person”
 - Domestic violence is a learned behavior
- **Encourage anyone involved that they can do better**
 - Whether they are a victim or a perpetrator
- **Assert the necessities of safety and respect**

Victim-Centered and Trauma-Informed Approaches

- Victim-Centered Approach:
 - Empowering the survivor
 - Offering choices and allowing the survivor to make decisions
 - Respecting the survivor's choices
- Trauma-Informed Approach:
 - Safety
 - Trustworthiness and Transparency
 - Peer Support
 - Collaboration and mutuality
 - Empowerment, voice and choice
 - Cultural, historical, gender issues
- When working with trauma survivors, it is also important to ensure:
 - Non-judgmental assistance
 - Exercising self-determination
 - Identifying ways to support themselves
 - Remembering that you are NOT their savior

How to Foster Cultural Healing

- Strong connection between cultural identity and healing¹
- Significant impact when survivors are able to connect with Native service providers
 - Importance in shared history
 - *“Just knowing that there’s healthy Native ladies out here that I can talk to.”*

**SONGS
LANGUAGE
CEREMONY**

How to Foster Cultural Healing

- Talk about the history of violence
 - Colonization
 - Targeting of Native women, men, and children
- Share pre-colonization teachings
 - “Women are Sacred”
 - Believing and supporting survivors
- Incorporate traditional practices with teachings
 - Beading
 - Hand games
 - Ceremony
- Resiliency and the 7th Generation Mentality
- Offer relevant resources at the community-, state-, and national-levels

Self-Determination and Healing

- Concepts of Self-Determination and Self-Governance
- The 7th Generation Mentality
- Focus on healing for ourselves and for our communities, while building towards a better future for all
- Keep up our cultural practices
- Educate yourself so you can educate others
- Focus on building up our peers and communities
- Self Care
 - Mentally—counseling, support from family/friends/community, cultural practices, etc.
 - Physically—exercise, eating right, rest and relaxation, etc.
- Think back to how our ancestors handled violence

Promoting Resilience in Indigenous Youth

- Access and connection regardless of location
- Humor and humility
- Native American providers
- Recognition
- Honest and uncomfortable dialogue



Promising Practices

- Harm Reduction
- Low barrier services
- Native specific programming
- **Non-judgmental** access to cultural teachings
- Safe spaces to explore identity with others who have similar experiences

Supporting Indigenous Protective Factors

- Access to Ancestral and Cultural Teachings
- Connection to Spirituality/Self/Community
- Strong Family Support System
- Traditional Medicine and Healing for Trauma and Substance Use
- De-stigmatization
- Survivor-led Programming

Youth Prevention Curriculum

- Not a #Number
 - Not culturally specific but is applicable to Indigenous youth
- Strong and Resilient: An Indigenous Trafficking Prevention Curriculum
 - Four sessions
 - Focus on:
 - Strength and resilience in Native identity
 - Understand trafficking and vulnerability
 - Looking at relationships through an indigenous lens
 - Connection with local cultural resources
 - Facilitator guide and training
 - Pilot sites needed

Strong and Resilient Highlights

- Designed for a variety of settings
- Can be adapted to specific tribal teachings
- Informed by research on proven risk and protective factors in Indigenous communities
- Best practices in youth prevention curriculum with focus on:
 - Respect
 - Identification of grooming and exploitation,
 - Risk factors and vulnerabilities
 - Knowledge about healthy and unhealthy relationships
 - Exiting unhealthy relationships
 - Rewriting negative narratives and building self-esteem
 - Connecting participants with local cultural resources

Nebraska Work

- Research studies in progress
- OVC Grant awarded to Nebraska Children and Families Foundation (NCFF) and Nebraska Indian Child Welfare Coalition (NICWC)
 - Focusing on long-term outcomes of trafficking of youth
 - Native youth trafficking survivor component
 - Development of training and statewide protocols to address trafficking of youth in Nebraska, along with best practices and response to address trafficking of Native youth in Nebraska
- Nebraska Tribes Addressing Violence Coalition (NETAV)
 - New nonprofit tribal DV/SA coalition focusing on addressing intimate partner violence (including human trafficking) against Native Americans and tribal communities in Nebraska

Minnesota Work

- Minnesota state funded grantees include Tribes and Indigenous-specific programs
 - Includes housing and shelter programs, advocacy, DHS ICWA tribal consultant, and Tribal police
- State specific data from MYST on rates of exploitation among Native+ students
- TRUST Task Force—Tribes United Against Sex Trafficking
- Institutional knowledge through MIWSAC, MSH, MIWRC, and NWICDC and Indigenous Survivor Leaders
 - Shattered Hearts
 - Garden of Truth
- MMIWR Task Force and Office for MMIR, state-funded
 - Dedicated to preventing and ending targeting of Indigenous people

Resources

National Resources:

- **StrongHearts Native Helpline**– 1-844-762-8483
- **National Indigenous Women's Resource Center**
 - Niwrc.org
- **OneLove Foundation and myPlan App**
- **National Domestic Violence Hotline**
 - 1-800-799-SAFE (7299)
- **National Human Trafficking Hotline:**
 - Call 1-888-373-7888
 - Text "BeFree" to 233733

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Thank you!
Questions?