Domestic Violence is Not Traditional:

Impact of Colonization and Indigenous Resilience
What Does History & Culture Have to Do With Ending Violence Against Native Women & their Children?

Culture:
- creates our view of the world and language
- values, beliefs and life ways
- defines our relationships
- determines how we interact with each other

History:
- tells the story of how we got to where we are today (depending upon the story-teller & their culture!)
- provides lessons that can be used to determine our future.

Without this knowledge, we will continue on the same destructive path, providing reactive services, rather than ending the violence through social change.
One spring morning three sisters left camp with their buckets to get water from a nearby stream. The stream was narrow, but deep and fast-flowing. The sisters were enjoying the warm weather and visiting as they walked to the stream. But as they got closer to the stream, they began to hear the cries and screams of babies. The sisters dropped their buckets and ran to the stream. To their horror, there were dozens and dozens of babies floating down the stream; many were drowning.

The first sister jumped in and began catching and throwing babies on to the bank of the stream as fast as she could. The second sister yelled, ”You’re not saving enough babies!” She jumped in and began teaching the babies to swim so they could save themselves.

The third sister began running up stream. Her sisters yelled at her to help. She turned and hollered, “I am. I’m going up the stream to see how the babies are getting in the water in the first place.”
More than 4 in 5 American Indian and Alaska Native women (84.3%) have experienced violence in their lifetime. This includes:

- 56.1% who have experienced sexual violence
- 55.5% who have experienced physical violence by an intimate partner
- 48.8% who have experienced stalking
- 66.4% who have experienced psychological aggression by an intimate partner

American Indian women are the most battered, raped, stalked and murdered group of women in the US ...70% of the time by non-native offenders.

IMPACT OF VIOLENCE

Among American Indian and Alaska Native victims of lifetime physical violence by intimate partners, stalking, and sexual violence —

- 92.6% of women and 74.3% of men talked to someone about what the perpetrators did.
- 49.0% of women and 19.9% of men needed services because of what the perpetrators did.
- 40.5% of women and 9.7% of men missed days of work or school because of what the perpetrators did.

- Most common service needed:
  Medical care (38.0% of female victims and 9.3% of male victims).
- Unable to get needed services:
  38.2% of AI/AN women and 16.9% of AI/AN men

Between 95 & 98% of victims of battering/IPV are women. Approximately 3-5% of battering/IPV victims are men.

Battering/IPV occurs within Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, Transgender/sexual and Queer/Questioning and Two Spirit (LGBTQ2S) communities. Just as racism makes Native women increasingly unsafe, heterosexism & homophobia makes members of the LGBTQ2S communities increasingly unsafe.

Violence against women is seen internationally as a human rights violation.
Violence against women was extremely rare before colonization. Consequences were immediate and severe.
Violence Against Women & Children is NOT Natural – Then Why...?

What is the Root Cause of Violence Against Women?
WHEN GENOCIDE FAILED, THE NEXT TACTIC

COLONIZATION = OPPRESSION

NATIVE NATIONS

NATURAL WORLD

- DEHUMANIZATION & DEMONIZING OF NATIVE PEOPLE
- DEHUMANIZING & DEMONIZING OF NATIVE WOMEN
- RESERVATION SYSTEM
- ISOLATION (FAMILY)
- "TREATIES"
- BOARDING & MISSION SCHOOLS

- CHEMICAL WARFARE
- RAPE
- FEMICIDE
- CHRISTIANITY
- CAPITALISM
- INTIMIDATION & THREATS
Kill the Indian,

Tom Torlino, Navajo, as he appeared when he arrived at Carlisle Indian School in 1882

Save the Man

(ExplorePAhistory.com, 2014)
Hugh Chee, Bishop Eatennah, Ernest Hogee, Humphrey Escharzay, Samson Noran, Basil Ekarden, Clement Seanilzay, Beatrice Kiahtel, Janette Pahgostatum, Margaret Y. Nadasthilah, Fred'k Eskelsejah.

November 4, 1886

Photos Courtesy of http://home.epix.net/~landis/histry.html
IMPACT OF COLONIZATION
INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

Patriarchy
Indian against Indian
Chemical dependency
Violence of juvenile against juvenile
Elder abuse
Fear
Loss of language

Shame
Rape
Incest
Distrust
Individualism
Suicide
Loss of rituals

Male privilege & dominance
Battering
Double standard
Identity confusion
Man against sacred elements
Cultural confusion
Spiritual confusion

Materialism
Alienation (family)
Loss of songs

Poverty

Native Nations

Unnatural World

High mortality
INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

External Oppression becomes INTERNALIZED oppression when we come to believe and act as if the oppressor’s belief system, values and life way is reality.

Internalized Oppression means the oppressor doesn’t have to exert any more pressure, we now do it to each other and ourselves.

Divide and conquer works!
RESULTS OF INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION

• Shame & disowning of our individual & cultural reality.
• See no value in Indigenous culture.
• Drunkenness, disrespect for God, fighting, cussing & disrespect for women were “foreign” behaviors modeled by the Cavalry that worked their way into our communities.
• Competitiveness, gossip, negativity, etc.
• Previously unseen levels of violence, especially against women and children. Includes among men, against LGBTQ2S and others.
• Materialism
Result of Internalized Oppression:  

Lateral Violence

- Lateral violence is displaced violence directed against one's peers rather than adversaries.
- Lateral Violence occurs within marginalized groups where members strike out at each other as a result of being oppressed.
- The oppressed become the oppressors of themselves and each other.
THE ROOT CAUSE OF VIOLENCE:

Unnatural Belief System

HIERARCHY

Racism
Sexism
Heterosexism
Classism
& Other Oppressions
HIERARCHY

- FAMILY
- CHURCH
- BUSINESS
- WORKPLACE
- MEDICAL
- GOVERNMENT
- JUSTICE SYSTEMS
- HUMAN SERVICES
- LAW ENFORCEMENT
- SCHOOLS
Hierarchy is like the game King of the Hill:

- Requires ongoing violence
- Values or requires:
  - violence as positive and necessary
  - must maintain the threat of violence
  - being “above others”
  - competition
  - winning
  - separation/ individuality
  - masculinity as violent & superior
  - breaking relationships
Breaking relationships is required for hierarchy to exist, resulting in oppression, violence and battering/IPV and sexual violence/rape.
THE IMPACT OF COLONIZATION

THE NATURAL WORLD
CHARACTER-BASED

THE UNNATURAL WORLD
GENDER, RACE, CLASS, ECONOMIC, SEXUAL ORIENTATION-BASED

Produced by Sacred Circle – National Resource to End Violence Against Native Women
Gender-based institutionalized system of overlapping continuous violent tactics used to maintain power & control

Intimate Partner Violence aka Battering
VIOLENCE:

- Chemical abuse
- Boarding schools
- Witnessing violence
- Stereotypes
- Confusing anger with violence

VIOLENCE IS THE BELIEF SYSTEM

- Values might over right
- Power defined as violence
- Colonization
- View reality as a male dominated hierarchy
- Justifies violence and oppression
- Promotes myths of white male superiority
- Treats women and children as property of men

ROOT:

- Understand that all things have spirits and are related
- Respect is the foundation of all relationships
- People are spirits in physical bodies on individual lifepaths
- Women are sacred
- All people and things of creation are part of the sacred circle of life

TRUNK:

- Prayer, ceremony
- Honor the gift in others
- Ways of non-violence and respect modeled
- Mental self-discipline
- Seek advice of Women and Elders

NON-VIOLENCE:

- Compassion
- Peace
- Honoring of Relationships
- Laughter
- Freedom
- Understanding
- Love
- Humility
- Life
- Wisdom
- Respect
- Courage
- Health
- Generosity

BRANCHES:

- Destruction
- Racism
- Fear
- Murder
- Sexism
- Battering
- Ageism
- Incest
- Isolation
- Classism
- Child Abuse
- Cultural Abuse

NON-VIOLENCE: NATURAL LIFECYCLE

- Peace
- Laughter
- Freedom
- Understanding
- Love
- Life
- Wisdom
- Courage
- Health
- Generosity

VIOLENCE: UNNATURAL LIFECYCLE

- Compassion
- Peace
- Honoring of Relationships
- Laughter
- Freedom
- Understanding
- Love
- Humility
- Life
- Wisdom
- Respect
- Courage
- Health
- Generosity

VIOLENCE: CONTRIBUTORS
ROOT CAUSE OF NON-VIOLENCE:
Natural Belief System

Respect
Equity
Equality
Connection
Relationships
It’s About Relationships.
ACCOUNTABILITY

“We must be the change we wish to see in the world.”

“We must return to honor.”
“Addressing lateral violence will require courage, goodwill and determination.”

—Mick Gooda, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner

Source: https://www.creativespirits.info/aboriginalculture/people/bullying-lateral-violence#ixzz4zwgTQMde
In response to the destruction caused by lateral violence in Indigenous communities, the concept of lateral kindness has emerged, drawing on Indigenous values that promote social harmony and healthy relationships.

Emmy Manson of the FNHA defined lateral kindness in the simplest of terms: “It’s holding each other up.” Instead of focusing on negative behaviours and issues, lateral kindness celebrates positive behaviours in others, even small ones. It is a system in which individuals are lifted up and supported.

First Nations Health Authority, Nova Scotia; Karen Fish, Jaime Stief
Lateral Kindness

Model policy:

First Nations Health Authority will not tolerate ‘lateral violence’ in the workplace. FNHA employees support one another as a collective and will respond to lateral violence using the organizational values of respect, fairness and the importance of relationships to create an environment that is built on the foundation of kindness. They will strive to replace lateral violence in any of its forms with acts of kindness.

First Nations Health Authority, Nova Scotia; Karen Fish, Jaime Stief
It’s About Relationships

Policy and procedure matter, but may have little or no impact if there isn’t a connection, trust or safety.

NCDVTMH 2018
"There is no more effective neurobiological intervention than a safe relationship."  Bruce Perry

Professor Peter Cohen argues that human beings have a deep need to bond and form connections...

If we can't connect with each other, we will connect with anything we can find -- the whirr of a roulette wheel or the prick of a syringe.

He says we should stop talking about 'addiction' altogether, and instead call it 'bonding.' A heroin addict has bonded with heroin because she couldn't bond as fully with anything else.

So, the opposite of addiction is not sobriety. It is human connection.

Johann Hari's Chasing The Scream: The First and Last Days of the War on Drugs; Bloomsbury
Indigenous Culture and Spirituality are about Relationships

- We Are All Related
- We do not heal alone.
- Values: respect, generosity, privacy and humility; spiritual realities.
- How we refer to each other matters, i.e., relative names vs. titles and labels.
- Safety
Culturally-based Responses Are Trauma-Informed

- We Heal as a Collective - we heal together!
- Identity and sense of belonging
- Experiences with discrimination and oppression
- The meaning we give our experiences
- Beliefs and traditions we draw upon

- Identifying our individual gifts and strengths is necessary for individual transformation & healing
- Identifying our traditional/cultural gifts and strengths is necessary for healing & transformation as individuals, families and nations
Being Trauma-informed is more than being nice. To be nice is to be human.

Being trauma-informed requires:

- Understanding the neuroscience of trauma
- Genuine empathy
- Attention to sensory information (as the victim experienced it)
- Understanding the impact on the individual from their perspective
- Attention to Explicit & Implicit memories

SAMHSA Six Key Principles of Trauma-Informed Approach:

• Safety
• Trustworthiness and Transparency
• Peer support
• Collaboration and mutuality
• Empowerment, voice and choice
• Cultural, Historical, and Gender Issues

SAMHSA - Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration  https://www.samhsa.gov/
Trauma-Informed Approach

• Normalizes human responses to trauma
• Supports healing; minimizes revictimization
• Shifts our understanding of symptoms from “What’s wrong with you?” TO “What happened to you?”
• Recognizes symptoms as survival strategies
• Recognizes the importance of understanding the meaning people make of their experiences
• Actively honors survivor- and woman-centered and gender-inclusive approaches, voices and expertise

C. Warshaw/NCDVTMH 2012
Key Factors in Building Culturally based and Trauma-Informed Responses:

• Understanding the neurobiology of trauma/violence
• Necessity of making relationships/connections as individuals
• Trust-worthiness
• Confidentiality & Respect for Privacy
• Maintain Survivor Sense of Control
• Emotional Safety
• Respond to Challenges People Face, Not Labels
• Screen In, Not Out
• Critical Thinking About Who’s Needs Are Being Met
• Priorities of Safety & Accountability
• Safety Planning As Process, Not Product
• Allow for Time
Resilience

Remembering the strength of

- Oral history
- Storytelling
- Cultural teachings
- Cultural values
- Ceremonies
- Connections

Kim Zahne, NIWRC
- Matrilineal society
- Elders
- Language
- History
- Customs
- Art
- Humor
- Values
- Spirituality

Kim Zahne, NIWRC
Recentering leadership and decision-making

• Many tribal women have/had their own culture and societies within tribal societies. A woman-centered program is a way of re-creating and nurturing Native women’s societies.

• Indigenous nations also honored those in the LGBTQ2S communities, and those who are differently-abled. They have unique roles in traditional society and our work.

• Men also had/have their own culture and societies and roles within tribal societies.

• Survivors are the experts. They know “how it works,” what’s needed, what the challenges and barriers are, and how resources and advocacy are best provided.
Our roles as Relatives are essential to non-violence, accountability and healing.

*SAFETY is integral.*

What have we been taught as Indigenous people about how to treat our Relatives?
Visitors in our homes?
Facilitating Healing, Resilience, and Well-Being

- Provide resources and access for participation in ceremonies
- Work with survivors on strengthening or developing new skills for dealing with painful or disruptive feelings such as:
  - relaxation training or exercises
  - grounding techniques
  - mindfulness or body-based strategies
  - developing an emotional safety plan
- Incorporate experiences of mental health and substance abuse coercion into planning
- Work with survivors to anticipate and prepare for trauma reminders
Culturally Based Healing and Resilience

- Sharing food
- Laughter is Medicine
- Water is medicine
- Prayer
- Ceremony
- Being Together
- Traditional music, singing, dancing
- Herbal medicines
- Outside in Nature
“...being part of the interconnectedness is that we don’t lose ourselves ... many identify themselves first by their job title, but first and foremost, we are human and spiritual beings with hearts and compassion to help those who are hurt and that we need each other to help and support one another so we carry the heaviness of what we do together, so we don’t burn out and loose sight of who we are.”

Lisa Brunner
always defend your right to heal at your own pace.
you are taking your time.
you are allowed to take your time.
Remember that you are WATER

Remember that you are FIRE
Burn. Tame. Adapt. Ignite.

Remember that you are AIR

Remember that you are EARTH

Remember that you are SPIRIT
Thank you!

For more information, visit niwrc.org

Click on Advocacy Center, then Advocacy Materials for:

- Advocacy Information Packet
- Shelter & Other Safe Space Information Packet
- much more!