Trauma Informed Care in Indian Country

February 18

Dolores Subia BigFoot, PhD
Indian Country Child Trauma Center
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Oklahoma City, OK
http://www.icctc.org
dee-bigfoot@ouhsc.edu
Our grandparents, elders, and ancient ones have long prayed and offered sacred words to the Creator to watch over all things from the past, the present, and the future.

We are taught to pray for all things because we are all connected. The air we breathe comes from the trees. The food we eat comes from the earth. The rain that cleanses us comes from the sky.

Through sacred words comes healing from the past, strength for the present and hope for the future.
Trauma Informed Care

-is an approach to engaging people with histories of trauma in which you recognizes the presence of trauma symptoms and acknowledges the role that trauma has played in their lives. In all of the different environments in which a traumatized person would find themselves, each person encountered would seeks to change the paradigm from one that asks, "What's wrong with you?" to one that asks, "What has happened to you?"

National Center for Trauma-Informed Care
http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic/

Retrieved and revised 09/06/2011
Trauma Informed Care

Understanding and reacting with intent to greatly lessen or eliminate the impact of prior trauma exposure especially as a child may be responding to current perceive or actual threat, harm, reminders, restraints, or other conditions either emotionally, physically, cognitively, or environmentally resulting in their aggressive or otherwise undesirable behaviors.
Trauma Informed Care

• Trauma – Experience/Fear/Threat
• Informed – Knowledge/Thoughtfullness/Considerations
• Care – Action/Engagement/Interaction
• Transition – From one status to the next

DS BigFoot, 2015
Definition of Trauma and Child Traumatic Stress

Child traumatic stress refers to the physical and emotional responses of a child to events that threaten the life or physical integrity of the child or someone critically important to the child (e.g., a parent or sibling). Exposure to a single traumatic event that is limited in time (e.g., an auto accident, a gang shooting, or a natural disaster) is called an *acute trauma*. 
## Common Reactions to Traumatic Stress

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emotional</th>
<th>Physical</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Terror</td>
<td>Rapid Heart Rate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intense Fear</td>
<td>Trembling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Horror</td>
<td>Dizziness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helplessness</td>
<td>Loss of Bladder or Bowl Control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorganized or Agitated Behavior</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
TOXIC STRESS
TOXIC ENVIRONMENTS
TOXIC REACTIONS
Trauma in Indian Country

Oppression and cultural trauma

Incarceration

Accidental Death

Violence

Substance Abuse

Cumulative (Collective) Trauma

Child Abuse and Neglect

Poverty

Suicide

Domestic/Family Violence

Individual Situations

Historical Events & Historical Trauma

DS BigFoot, 2015
Indian People Were Conditioned Not To Fight Back, Each Time They Fought Back, Something Was Taken Away……………

- Children
- Food
- Shelter
- Land
- Warmth
- Tools
- Religion
- Language
- Homes
- Elders
- Signature
- Teachings
Definition of Historical Trauma

• The cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences. (Brave Heart, 2003, p. 7).

• The multiple traumas encountered by American Indian and Alaska Native people have contributed to the uprooting of traditional tribal cultural practices and a dismantling of the American Indian and Alaska Native family structure. In combination, these “historically traumatic events” resulted in a significant loss of culture, language, and traditional ways of life.

DS BigFoot, 2015
Indigenist Model of Trauma, Coping, and Health Outcomes


Stress

- Trauma
  - Historical Trauma
  - Microaggressions
  - Traumatic Life Events
  - Physical & Sexual Assaults/Abuse

Coping

- Cultural Buffers
  - Identity Attitudes
  - Enculturation
  - Spiritual Coping
  - Traditional Health Practices

Health Outcomes

- Health
  - HIV Risk & Morbidity
  - AOD Use
    - Abuse/Dependence
  - Mental Health
    - PTSD
    - Depression
    - Anxiety
Micro Aggressions

• Often unconscious and non-intentional, micro-aggressions are small, subtle, everyday verbal and nonverbal behaviors that leave people feeling overlooked, undervalued, disrespected, and silenced. Leaving people off emails, not thanking a co-worker, checking email or texting in a meeting when someone is speaking are all examples of micro-aggressions. While such behaviors may seem quite trivial and harmless, they have a toxic impact on the working environment, impairing the performance of individuals and teams in the workplace.
THE ADVERSE CHILDHOOD EXPERIENCE STUDY
Kaiser Permanente’s Dept of Preventative Med.

Access to 58,000 Medical Psychological and Bio-Social member evaluations per yr. 18,000 volunteers studied 8 categories of childhood abuse household dysfunction

Abuse:
Recurrent Physical, Emotional and Sexual Abuse

Household [Family] Dysfunction:
Someone in prison
Mother treated violently
Alcoholic or drug abuser
One bio-parent lost for any reason
Someone chronically depressed, mentally ill or suicidal

DS BigFoot, 2015
The ACE Study found that the number of categories, not necessarily the frequency or severity of the experiences within a category, determine health outcomes.
Vulnerability of American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Youth (ACE Comparison)

- Physical abuse (over represented in foster care system)
- Emotional abuse (higher rates of disruptive behavior and substance use disorders than other same age children and youth)
- Sexual abuse (over 75% of US Attorney’s caseload)
- Alcohol and/or drug abuser in household (12–16% vs. 4–6%)
- Incarcerated household member (estimated 3 out of 5 males incarcerated, on probation, or other legal condition)
Vulnerability of American Indian and Alaska Native Children and Youth (ACE Comparison)

• Someone who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal (injuries, suicide & homicide leading causes of death; high levels of depression, anxiety, PTSD)

• Mother is treated violently (highest rate of all populations, 50% higher than Black males)

• One or no parents (40% living with one parent)

• Emotional or physical neglect (highest rate of all populations)
Children with toxic stress live their lives in fight, flight or fright (freeze) mode. Unable to concentrate, their brains are incapable of learning and they fall behind in school. They respond to the world as a place of constant danger, not trusting adults and unable to develop healthy relationships with peers. Failure, despair, shame and frustration follow.

http://wellcommons.com/groups/aces/tags/ace-study
As they transition into adulthood, they find comfort by overindulging in food, alcohol, tobacco (nicotine is an anti-depressant), drugs (methamphetamines are anti-depressants), work, high-risk sports, violence, a plethora of sexual partners….anything that pumps up feel-good moments so that they can escape – even briefly – the sharp, tenacious claws of agonizing memories and despair.

http://wellcommons.com/groups/aces/tags/ace-study

DS BigFoot, 2015
Task Force is composed of both Advisory Committee and Federal Working Group

- This American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) Task Force has been anchored by an Advisory Committee consisting of non-federal experts in the area of AI/AN children exposed to violence and a federal working group which includes federal officials from key agencies involved in issues related AI/AN Children Exposed to Violence.
Two relevant prior reports

- The Advisory Committee report will build upon the record created by two highly relevant reports that preceded it. The 2012 Report of the Attorney General’s National Task Force on Children Exposed to Violence and the 2013 Indian Law and Order Commission Report, “A Roadmap For Making Native America Safer.”
Final Report:
Attorney General's Advisory Committee on American Indian and Alaska Native Children Exposed to Violence

http://www.justice.gov/defendingchildhood/aiian.html

Ending Violence So Children Can Thrive
What Is Resilience?

• Resilience is the ability to adapt well over time to life-changing situations and stressful conditions. While many things contribute to resilience, studies show that caring and supportive relationships can help enhance resilience. Factors associated with resilience include, but are not limited to:
  • The ability to make and implement realistic plans;
  • A positive and confident outlook; and
  • The ability to communicate and solve problems.
A Trauma Informed Care Practice

• **Supporting Control, Choice, and Autonomy** by helping children regain a sense of control over their daily lives
• **Cultural Competence** by respecting diversity of families
• **Integrating Care** by believing that establishing safe, authentic, and positive relationships can be corrective and restorative to trauma survivors.
• **Recovery is Possible** by understanding that recovery is possible for everyone regardless of how vulnerable they may appear
A Trauma Informed Care Practice

• **Understand Trauma** by recognizing that many behaviors and responses are ways of adapting to and coping with past traumatic experiences.

• **Promote safety** by establishing a safe physical and emotional environment where basic needs are met through ensuring your agency’s discipline and behavior management practice do not add new traumatic experiences.

• **Competency** by ensuring your staff responses are consistent, predictable, and respectful.
Different experiences that produce trauma reactions have always been part of the circle of life within American Indian and Alaska Native people.

When trauma can be better understood and the trauma experience can be embraced by choice to define the experience(s) from their own human/spiritual ways, this can increases the capacity of those with trauma experiences.

DS BigFoot, 2015
Guiding Values of Trauma-Informed Care

Healing Happens in Relationship

Communicate with compassion.

Share power.

Pursue the person's strengths, choice, and autonomy.

Respect human rights.

Provide holistic care.

Promote safety.

Earn trust.

Embrace Diversity.
This is a significant part of the healing pathway. One must know how to change one’s thinking, feelings, and beliefs about a traumatic experience in order to regain balance or harmony. Others can help in the healing pathway. Others can be the protection for the healing pathway to be open and shared.
Model of Well-Being

- Balance
- Harmony
- Respect
- Connectedness
- Wellness
Trauma Informed Care

- Information
- Resources
- Curriculum
- Models
- Toolkits
- Practice
- Policies
- Follow up
- Feedback
- Evaluation

DS BigFoot, 2015
Effective Approaches

- Policy Development
- Intervention(s)
- Interventionist(s)/Practitioner(s)
- Training/Professional Development
- Administrative Support
- Implementation Strategies/Benchmarks
- Evaluation/Reassessment

DS BigFoot, 2015
American Indian Beliefs/Practices

• The Blessed Way
• Being a Good Relatives
• All My Relations
• We are Pitiful People
• Gather Together in a Good Way
• Offering Blessings in Others Behalf
• Medicine Wheel
• Medicine Lodge

DS BigFoot, 2015
It Starts With Me
As a caregiver I can...

• Greet each child each morning by name
• Feed the child with laughter and food
• Read or tell a story to a child each day
• Offer a blessing each day to a child
Well-being is considered balance in the spiritual, emotional, mental, physical, and relational dimensions of a person. The goal is to achieve and maintain balance.
American Indian and Alaska Native Society of Indian Psychologists

"Psychologists and Mental Health Workers in Service to First Nations Peoples"

Commentary on the American Psychological Association’s (APA) Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct

DS BigFoot, 2015
National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting our Children. Preserving our Culture.

Trauma Informed Care Fact Sheet for Indian Country

DS BigFoot, 2015
Honoring Child Series

• Trauma Focused Cognitive Behavior Therapy – Honoring Children, Mending the Circle
• Parent Child Interaction Therapy - Honoring Children, Making Relatives
• Treatment of Child with Inappropriate Sexual Behavior – Honoring Children, Respectful Ways
• American Indian Life Skills Curriculum – Honoring Children, Honoring the Future

DS BigFoot, 2013
Community Based Interventions

• Gathering of Native Americans (GONA)
• American Indian Life Skills (AILS)
• Circles of Care Tribal Grantees
• Community Readiness Model
• Digital Storytelling
• Garrett Lee Smith Tribal Grantees
• Urban Indian Initiatives
• Project Venture
• Native Pride
• Language Classes/ Immersion Camps

DS BigFoot, 2015
AMERICAN INDIAN AND ALASKA NATIVE CHILDREN AND MENTAL HEALTH
Development, Context, Prevention, and Treatment

Michelle C. Sarche, Paul Spicer, Patricia Farrell, and Hiram E. Fitzgerald, Editors
Contact Information

Dolores Subia BigFoot, PhD,
Indian Country Child Trauma Center
University of Oklahoma Health Sciences Center
Oklahoma City, OK

dee-bigfoot@ouhsc.edu or
www.icctc.org