



# INTERGENERATIONAL & HISTORICAL TRAUMA

Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart, PhD, conceptualized historical trauma to better understand the unresolved grief resulting from the massive group trauma of genocide and its continued impact on Native American communities. It is important to understand that historical trauma is intergenerational; the emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations is cumulative. It is also important to remember that historical strength and healing are intergenerational – traditional cultural practices can provide support and pathways to healing for Native people and communities. The resources and links below provide more information.

## Historical Trauma and Cultural Healing

What is historical trauma? How do people and communities experience it? How can reconnecting to cultural practices help families and communities heal? The University of Minnesota Extension offers videos, discussion questions, book lists, and research for those interested in learning.

## Genetic Memory: How Trauma Can Change DNA

Science points to a broader understanding of genetics and what many Indigenous cultures have long believed: past memories, experiences, and traumas can be passed on through DNA. These resources from the Center for Tribes share introductory information on genetic memory and the interconnectedness among genetics, intergenerational/historical trauma, PTSD, and adverse childhood experiences.

## Native Wellness Institute

Resources on this website include: Being Trauma and Healing Informed, ACE and Resiliency, Trauma in Indian Country, and gatherings that focus on healing from historical and intergenerational trauma.

## Native Hope

Native Hope uses the power of storytelling to raise awareness, address the injustice done to Native Americans, mentor youth, and bring healing and hope to communities.

Understanding the Destruction: Native American Life Today has numerous resources for both Native and non-Native audiences, including Understanding Historical Trauma and Native Americans. Their post on How Trauma Gets Passed Down Through Generations discusses historical trauma in the context of epigenetics.

## Native American Tribal Communities Provide Hope for Overcoming Historical Trauma

Elicia Goodsoldier, a leader in the field of Native mental health who, through her work at the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation in South Dakota, developed a historical trauma intervention model that she believes can lead to lasting healing. The four main intervention model components include confronting the trauma, understanding the trauma, releasing the pain, and transcending the trauma.



**Rebuilding TRUST: A Community, Multi-Agency, State, and University Partnership to Improve Behavioral Health Care for American Indian Youth, their Families, and Communities**

Recommendations for improved behavioral health outcomes for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) youth that recognize the need to move beyond western models of care are included within this report. A discussion of historical and contemporary colonialism, intergenerational trauma, and resiliency provides context for the numerous health disparities and challenges experienced by AI/AN youth, including high suicide rates.

**Wicasa Was'aka: Restoring the Traditional Strength of American Indian Boys and Men**

This 2012 article examines health disparities among AI men and boys within the framework of historical trauma and describes historical trauma-informed interventions used with Lakota men and Southwestern AI boys. The researchers offer public health implications and recommendations for strategies to use in the planning and implementation of policy, research, and program development.

**Addressing Trauma in American Indian and Alaska Native Youth**

This 2016 report submitted to U.S. Department of Health and Human Services provides an environmental scan of practices and programs for addressing trauma and related behavioral health needs in AI/AN youth. The authors identify which models have been tested and documented in the literature, describe the interventions identified, and summarize the evidence base for each. Several interventions that AI/AN communities are currently using but that have not yet been systematically evaluated are included.

**LEARN MORE**

[Trauma & Resiliency Resource List](#)

These key websites, videos, and books offer more information on trauma and resilience. Recognizing the impact of trauma on children, families, and professionals within the local tribal community context is an important piece of the trauma-informed and trauma-resilient puzzle. It is an ongoing relationship-building process to recognize and identify the strengths and resiliency of individuals and families.

[National Native Children's Trauma Center](#)

Their mission is to co-facilitate trauma focused healing for native children, families, and communities. This work requires understanding, respect, and honoring of tribal sovereignty, specific community needs, and the use of traditional healing practices.

[SAMHSA: Understanding Historical Trauma When Responding to an Event in Indian Country](#)

This fact sheet helps disaster response workers better understand historical trauma in the American Indian culture and how it may affect disaster preparedness and response efforts. It also offers strategies for providing disaster response assistance with cultural sensitivity.

