

Deep Thinking on Tribal People Taking Their Own Lives

Are we using the word so many times that we are actually putting it out there as an option? Are we using the word so many times that we are keeping the spirit of it alive and energized? Are we using the word so many times that it becomes something we all think about too much?

LASTING IMPACTS OF COLONIZATION

We know that 100% of our tribal ancestors experienced historical trauma. Genocide through massacres, biological warfare (small pox, cholera, and more), chemical warfare (alcohol), boarding schools, reservations, relocation, termination and more sought to erase us from the land. We continue to be erased from history books, classrooms and society through racist and oppressive behaviors, attitudes, policies and stereotypes.

HISTORICAL TRAUMA → INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA → PRESENT DAY TRAUMA

The lasting impacts of trauma play out in tribal and urban Native communities on the daily. Addictions, chronic negativity, mental unbalance, hopelessness, poverty, violence and more continue to plague many of our people. From young children to elders, many of our people live under a dark cloud. Academia, the federal government through their grant programs and tribal and urban programs, consistently and constantly repeat the “doom and gloom” narrative of our people. We have to compete against each other by proving how pitiful we are. We repeat the word “suicide” so many times in reading funding announcements, in writing about the negative statistics, in prevention work, in training, in conversation. This is deficit-based thinking.

HISTORICAL WISDOM → INTERGENERATIONAL WISDOM → PRESENT DAY WISDOM

Many of our people in tribal and urban Native communities live by the lasting impacts of historical wisdom. Forgiveness, generosity, kindness, healing, love, respect, care and honor continue to guide our thoughts, words and behavior. From babies to elders, these values and actions have kept and keep our people in the light. When we surround ourselves with others who also think and behave like us, more of the wisdom is perpetuated and these norms radiate out as hope, possibility, vision and purpose. Our ancestors experienced hardship, however, they had the tools and protocols in place to regain balance. Native people in the human and community development field often use the healing language. This is abundance-based thinking.

LET'S BRING HEALING LANGUAGE TO THE FOREFRONT

“Where there has been trauma, healing is the answer.” The Native Wellness Institute is encouraging tribal and urban programs to do your own deep-thinking about this. Visit with your colleagues, community members and funders. Let's begin to change the narrative from deficit-based to abundance-based. Let's require staff, community, partners and funders to be trauma and healing-informed.



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