



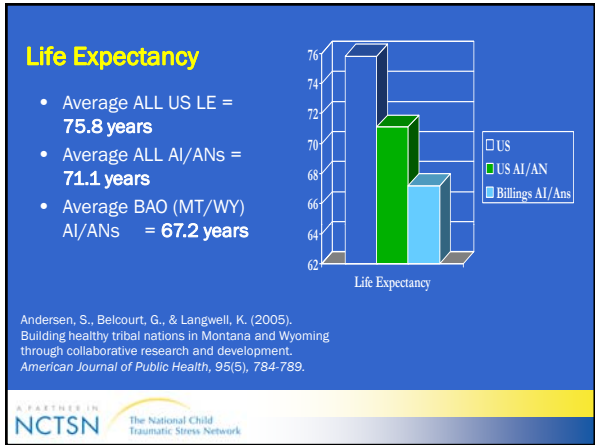
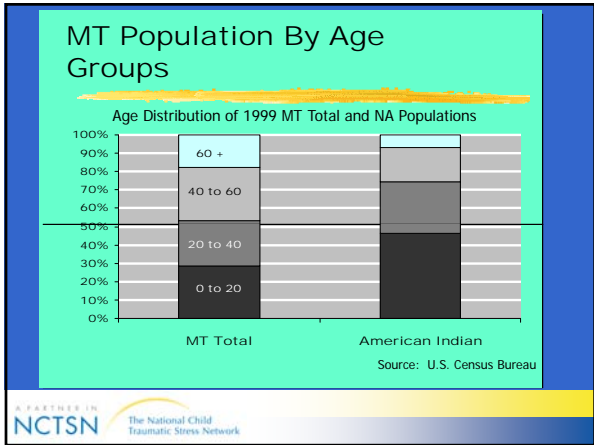
Grief, Loss, and the Path of Healing among AI/AN Children and Communities

Thomas Donovan, MA, LCPC
Debra Klemann, MS, LCPC
Paulette Running Wolf, PhD (Blackfeet)
Gyda Swaney, PhD (Confederated Salish & Kootenai Tribes)



What We Will Cover


- The experience of loss among AI/AN children
 - Demographics
 - Connection between trauma and loss
 - Intergenerational trauma and loss
- Grounding clinical interventions in culture
 - Community Based Participatory Research
 - Clinical perspectives
- Provide specific examples of adapting an intervention and screening instrument

10 Leading Causes of Death for AI/AN of All Ages*

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Heart Disease 2. Malignant neoplasms 3. Accidents (3.1 Xs) 4. Diabetes Mellitus 5. Chronic Liver Disease and Cirrhosis (4.4 Xs) 6. Cerebrovascular Diseases 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7. Pneumonia and Influenza 8. Suicide 9. Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Diseases 10. Homicide and Legal Intervention
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*Indian Health Service. (1997). *Trends in Indian Health*.



Children: Age-specific Mortality* Among AI/ANs and US All Races

Age Group	Overall Mortality/Leading Causes of Death	Rate Ratio**
5-14 years	All Causes	1.4
	Accidents (#1)	1.8
	Homicide (#2)	1.4
	Cancer (#3)	.7
15-24 years	All Causes	1.8
	Accidents (#1)	2.4
	Suicide (#2)	2.4
	Homicide (#3)	.9

*Age-specific mortality rates among AI/ANs based on data from *Trends in Indian Health—1996*.
 **Mortality rate among AI/ANs divided by rate for US all races.



Identity Development in Native American Youth

- The child's family members serve as the significant ethnic group model
 - Losing a parent/primary caregiver will have a significant effect on the child's development and understanding of who they are as a Native American, and more specifically as a Blackfeet or a Salish.
 - Losing a grandparent not only means losing a relationship, but also an important link to cultural knowledge



Prevalence of Trauma Exposure in American Indian Youth

AI/AN youth are exposed to trauma

- AI/AN are at a 2.5 greater risk of experiencing trauma (National Center for Children in Poverty, 2007)
- Per every AI/AN 30 children there is approx. 1 substantiated case of abuse (National Child and Neglect Data System, 2002)
- AI/AN women are sexually assaulted at a rate 2.5 times the U.S. rate (Amnesty International, 2007)
- In 2005, 39% of adult AI/AN women were victims of intimate partner violence (CDC, 2008)



Trauma is Often About Loss

- Cultural, historical, and generational loss
- Multiple losses within a short time span
- Violent deaths
 - Injuries and violence account for 75% of all deaths among AI/AN ages 1 to 19, including motor vehicles, suicide, homicide, drowning and fires (CDC 2007)
 - Suicide is the 2nd largest cause of death among AI/AN age group 15-34 (SPRC 2006)
 - AI/AN males age 15 to 24 have the highest rate of suicide among their peers (SPRC 2006)



Connection Between Grief and Traumatic Stress

- Among sites affiliated with the National Native Children's Trauma Center, counselors report:
 - Many children endorsed trauma symptoms on the CPSS: Child PTSD Symptom Scale
 - During the interview process, many students have stated that while taking the CPSS, the upsetting event that occurred to them was a death
 - The death associated with the PTSD symptoms did not necessarily involve a violent or even an unexpected death



An Example: Middle School Screening

- 67.2% were above criterion on Violence Exposure
- 43.2% were above the Child Traumatic Stress Symptoms criterion
- 38 % had experienced a death in the last two years
- 69.4% listed a lifetime loss
- 40.4% students scored high on both instruments

*Not feasible to interview so many, so decision was made to utilize the new classroom based "STAR" curriculum.



Inter-generational Loss

- Brave Heart & DeBruyn, (1998) noted that *historical trauma has a layering effect and is the "cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the life span and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma"*.
- **Generational Federal Policies:** colonization era, treaty era, boarding school era, removal of children, tribal reorganization era, termination era & tribal self-determination era.



Impact of Inter-generational trauma

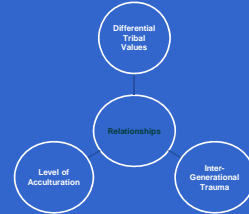
- Unresolved grief & loss
- Generational differences in perceptions & behavioral changes (e.g. land loss)
- Cultural identity confusion/disorientation,
- Pervasive sense of powerlessness, (i.e. individuals and communities)
- Impact on organizational activism



The Filtering Process: Relationships

All relationships (individuals/group) are filtered through:

- Impact of Trauma
- Acculturation
- Core values, beliefs



Two Examples of the Impact of Inter-generational Trauma

Destructive Behaviors

- **Internalized self-hatred** (i.e. obesity, diabetes, heart disease, depression, suicide ideation)
- **Externalized self-hatred** (i.e. crisis proportions of deaths by alcoholism and violence in the home & community)



Community Based Cultural Intervention

- Faculty In-service – brought in traditional leaders
- Conference: Improving access & transmission of culture
 - a) Introduction of traditional “societies” to youth,
 - b) “Pinning” of MS student cultural leaders
 - c) Evaluated student interest in culture
 - d) Messages to the youth (from adult participants)
- Student initiated cultural activities (honoring teachers)
- Continuing support in the school by traditional leaders
- Note: MS report generated community interest & collaboration!



Functioning within Two Paradigms: Non-Native Clinician Perspective

- Listen to, but don't force stories of loss
- Identify individual and family cultural/religious beliefs around death, loss, and mourning
- Realize that the normative grieving process within an AI/AN culture may conflict with the Caucasian concept of the “healthy” grieving process
- Help the child or family access their support system
- Be humble, admit what you do not know
- Know when to refer to spiritual and cultural leaders



A Culturally Sensitive Clinical Lens

- Silence
- Speaking about the loss
- Fears or beliefs surrounding the loss
- Metaphors
- Eye Contact
- Affect

Could be mistakenly seen as resistance or worse by the clinician!!



A Culturally Sensitive Clinical Lens

Culture honoring opportunities and experiences in therapy as a pathway to healing

- Music
- Nature
- Crafts
- Meditation
- Prayer



Other Points of Consideration

- Individual level of understanding of own culture, traditions and rituals may vary due to several factors.
- Education and assistance may be necessary.



Special Considerations: Impact of Culture & Experience in Help Seeking Behavior

- Reliance on peers & cousins for support – may be a way to engage youth in seeking help!
- Explore previous experience with death/loss (rituals, ceremonies, parental differences & conflicts)
- Self-identification of personal & family “connectedness” to culture (personal resources)
- External versus internal “locus of control” & lack of adult relationships



Special Considerations: Individual, Family, and Political Implications in Seeking Cultural Connections/Guidance

- Difficulty in engaging parents & families (mistrust & prior history)
- Differences in parental cultural responses to grief & loss
- Important to help youth clarify family & generational “practices” or “norms” when a death occurs (pre/post burial)
- Awareness that there is likely more than one “traditional” approach to addressing ceremonial responses to death – culture is fluid!
- Be cautious in promoting “blended” (e.g. church versus tribal) cultural approaches – potential ethical issues!



Examining the Cultural Content Validity of *The Inventory of Traumatic Grief* (Prigerson & Jacobs, 2001).

- **Focus Group**
 - all 5 are members of the target tribal population
 - 3 MAs & 2 PhDs; mental health providers in their own community
 - Of the 5 native professionals participating, 3 are fluent in their tribal language
- **Examined each question of the ITG**
 - Relevant (1-4; not, somewhat, quite, highly)
 - Offensive (1-4; not, somewhat, quite, highly)



Examining the Cultural Content Validity of *The Inventory of Traumatic Grief* (cont).

- **Recommendations of the Focus Group Participants**
 - Some words were changed in several of the ITG’s questions. e.g., Q5 “yearning” to “aching” (somatic), Q19 “bitter” to “resentful”, Q33 “pangs of grief” to “feelings of grief.”
 - Domains of distress (e.g., Separation Distress and Traumatic Distress) are predicted to vary for this population as a consequence the cultural norms and belief systems
 - Participants are predicted to experience more than one death of a significant other (a significant relationship or a close relative—father, uncle, and cousin) within the past year
 - **Preliminary analysis** indicates that for the sample (N = 53), 77% (41 had experienced a death within the past 12 months).
 - 16 suicides, 13 homicides, 61 MVA (almost all ETHO related), 8 accidents (fall, train, unknown cause)
 - The sample’s participants average age was 47.5 years (range 19 – 71 years)
 - Given the sample’s age it was not surprising for their aunts, uncles and parents to have died; however, deaths included
 - 25 siblings, 33 cousins
 - 16 children (3 miscarriages), friends of children, student
 - 2 grandchildren, friends of grandchildren



Modifications of a CBT Group Intervention

- The intervention may need to be made culturally sensitive
 - Example: Removing Christopher Columbus References
- Make room for cultural beliefs
 - Example: Taking caution in not challenging the experience of seeing spirits as irrational
- In groups settings utilize the cultural knowledge of the group members
 - Example: Allow and encourage brainstorming solutions in problem-solving to be culturally and spiritually based
- Bring in leaders from the community
 - Example: Share stories of triumph and recovery from trauma

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