

nato' we ho win

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nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing

An Artistic and Cultural Program
for Indigenous Women Who Have
Experienced Intimate Partner Violence



Facilitator Guide



Cover Art: Leah Marie Dorion, Moon Cycle Birds, 2019. acrylic on canvas. From her exhibition 13 Moons, 2019.

Leah Marie Dorion is a Métis writer and artist currently living near Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, Canada. Her artwork celebrates the strength and resilience of Indigenous women and families. Leah is also a published children's book author and illustrator. Several of her Métis cultural books are available through Gabriel Dumont Press in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan and Strong Nations Publishing in Nanaimo, British Columbia. Visit www.leahdorion.ca for more information about her artistic practice.



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Title: nato' we ho win - The Art of Self-Healing Program Manual

ISBN: 978-1-7776859-1-1

Printed and bound in Regina, SK at the University of Regina Print Services

Photographs from original participants and support team.

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nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing was supported through the Public Health Agency of Canada's investment Supporting the Health of Survivors of Family Violence (contribution #1617-HQ-000035). The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the views of the Public Health Agency of Canada.

nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing program was designed by Barbara Frazer, with the guidance of Norma Rabbitskin, and Willie Ermine. Nato' we ho win was made possible by the facilitators (Amanda Scandrett, Barbara Frazer, Carmen Peekeekoot, and Norma Rabbitskin), domestic violence advocates (Lori Deets, Samantha Racette, and Theresa Lanigan), and Elders and Elders' helpers (Beverly Willer, Isabelle Kenowekesequape, Karen Parenteau, Margaret Masney, and Maryanne Machiskinic).

Thank you to Jo-Anne Dusel and Crystal Giesbrecht who provided guidance throughout the duration of the project.

Our thanks also go out to the many childminders who assisted throughout the course of nato' we ho win; those who prepared food for the group; and to King George Public School (Prince Albert), Moose Jaw Museum and Art Gallery, Family Service Moose Jaw, and the nanatawihowikamik Healing Lodge and Wellness Clinic at the University of Regina for providing space for nato' we ho win.

Research was conducted to add to the evidence base for cultural and artistic interventions for Indigenous survivors of intimate partner violence. Research reports are available at pathssk.org/natowehowin.



Financial contribution from
Avec le financement de

Public Health
Agency of Canada

Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



Leah Marie Dorion, *Moon Cycle Birds*, 2019. acrylic on canvas. From her exhibition *13 Moons*, 2019.

Leah Marie Dorion's work is not only beautiful, but richly symbolic and infused with her knowledge and lived wisdom as an Indigenous woman. Leah uses her creativity to move us all towards true Reconciliation, cultural healing, and a more equitable society.

My Indigenous people are in a process of healing, reconnecting with the land, resisting assimilation, and restoring our culture beliefs and values. We value the healing aspects of art creation and have used art to re-balance ourselves in our present world. As people who have been silenced, ignored, and oppressed, we often use the safety of art to say what we feel! As many others have encountered our society has not always been a safe place to feel and speak. In my art practice, I consciously work to share healing, peaceful, and harmonious imagery so as not to re-victimize or traumatize any person who may be coping with a very busy and violent world. I paint imagery to celebrate life, honor earth, women, and natural law. I believe the western world is more open minded to receive Indigenous philosophy, teachings and art imagery which makes our worldview tangible. The world is ready to listen to us, especially children, and I find that our Aboriginal cultural teachings regarding the human place in this existence is passed forward beautifully through art making with children. Children see the beauty in order and pattern and respond emotionally to color and concept in ways adults have lost or blocked due to life demands of adulthood.

PATHS is honoured to be able to use *Moon Cycle Birds* for **nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing** and we invite you to seek out other examples of her diverse body of work at www.leahdorion.ca

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Introduction

nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing

has been made possible by the hard work and knowledge sharing from Elders and child caregivers; knowledge keepers and advocates; survivors and artists; mothers and daughters. It has evolved over the last 5 years, and this guide combines the knowledge of many committed, accomplished women and the experiences of the original participants. As a Facilitator, you are now part of this ongoing organic process. We at PATHS thank you.

The ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** program is comprised of 13 weekly sessions to provide a safe, trauma-informed space, where gifts of traditional knowledge are offered as an aid to help participants heal from interpersonal violence. The women will have to look deeply into intergenerational, systemic trauma on route to authentic healing. A skilled Facilitator is needed to help guide their way.

The 13 sessions of the program correspond with the teachings of Grandmother Moon and follow a Sharing Circle format. Participants are introduced to traditional art forms, ancestral wisdom, work collaboratively on a group

project, always with prayer and ceremony integrated to guide the healing process. Sessions emphasize the personal giftedness of each participant and provide ways to engage in self-care. nato' we ho win puts into practice the principles of self-awareness and self-determination, validates cultural aspirations of identity, and equips participants to unpack and heal from historical and intergenerational trauma.


The Facilitator is leader of the nato' we ho win support team that includes Elders, Knowledge Keepers, Traditional Artists, Domestic Violence Advocates (DVA), Community Support Persons (CSP), and community volunteers.

Please use the information in this guide as your key resource for conducting the ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** program. It provides a deeper explanation of weekly session teachings, objectives, philosophies based on the lessons learned from the original groups. Make use of the tips and suggestions, but base the program you lead on the unique needs and assets of the local Circle.



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A historical perspective of nato' we ho win describes the actions that apply to the art of self-healing, the spirituality of wellness. It encapsulates the spirit and intent of a culturally nurturing curriculum, one that honours the collective living knowledge of Indigenous women and community. It is a reconnection to the grandmothers' ways that seeks to fill the gaps within our being. It is the connecting force behind the suggested activities during the sessions.

 As the Facilitator, you will explain the living practices that can arise from making and learning various traditional Indigenous art forms as crucial to the participant's healing.

There is a void created by the disconnect from traditional knowledge that nato' we ho win fills with love for self through the learning of traditional life skills.

nato' we ho win engages the legacy of cultural knowing that flows from our ancestry. The Facilitator and the Elder lead the group through an intervention process that uses cultural art as the vehicle. Each participant comes to understand their role within a larger context. Ancestral knowledge is maintained by learning and then passing on that knowledge from person to person and generation to generation.

Each participant is a knowledge carrier.

The participants may not know of their own inherent knowledge. The Facilitator celebrates each woman of the Sharing Circle's identity to instill a deeper sense of belonging. Exposure to a local grandmother's traditional art form and an opportunity to acquire the healing ways attached to it, helps the women discover a multitude of cultural self-care activities that exist within various Indigenous communities and language groups. Participants are encouraged to continue this exploration after completion of the sessions. Exploring Indigenous values and ways of being is a lifelong learning process.

When participants are given tools based in their own cultural ways to find healing; to smudge, feel the prayers, hear songs, create something traditional with their hands, and, if possible, sit beside a fire with tobacco; it is a gift.

Healing does take time; a lifetime. The critical conversations from the Sharing Circle of nato' we ho win allow the participants to have pride and confidence to engage their full capacity in heartfelt action. Ideally, each participant leaves with a goal of being a lifelong learner in the many forms of nato' we ho win, applying the ancestral knowledge systems they have acquired in their daily lives and, when they are ready, to pass along within their own Circles.

Trauma Informed Practice

In contemporary times, significant examination and scholarship have resulted in a deep understanding around the complexity of historical trauma within Indigenous lives, families, and communities. This attention to the harm that has occurred from the loss of language, culture, and livelihood requires continued life-long learning:

To understand the extent of Indigenous peoples' anger, grief, depression and loss, one must develop an awareness and understanding of the impact of having one's culture, family, children, language and way of life attacked over and over.¹

One of the greatest disruptions, according to Maria Yellow Horse Brave Heart, was that for women, *"...the traditional role of educator, healer, nurturer, head of the home, and sustainer of the family and Nation were gone"*; traditional systems were disrupted².

1 Absolon, K., Indigenous Wholistic Theory: A Knowledge Set for Practice. First Peoples Child & Family Review, Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, (p.74-79)

2 Brave Heart M. Y. H. (1999) Oyate Ptayela: Rebuilding the Lakota Nation through addressing historical trauma among Lakota parents. *Journal of Human Behavior in the Social Environment* 2(1–2): 109–126.

nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing, therefore, is a multi-disciplinary, cultural engagement process aiming to restore mental peace, well-being, and balance to Indigenous women's lives. Due to the nature of the information presented throughout the 13 sessions, it is important that the Facilitator and entire support team approach participants in a trauma-informed manner.

Trauma Informed Care emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both the providers and consumers, and helps survivors rebuild a sense of control and empowerment³.

Embedded in **nato' we how win: The Art of Self-Healing** are culturally competent trauma-informed practices. Each of the 13 sessions revolve around Indigenous perspective by continuously reinforcing the importance of balance; ceremony; connections; relationships; community. nato' we ho win returns women to the ancestor ways through traditional healing and self-care practices, hand-building knowledge, and a weekly Sharing Circle and smudge.

While these trauma-informed aspects are in the foundation of nato' we ho win, it is the role of the facilitator to *"create a personal connection with all members of the group and to create a safe and comfortable environment"*¹⁰.



The Facilitator must focus on participant's strengths, encourage open communication, and, if women are triggered, ensure that they receive the support required during and/or following the group. The Elder and DVA/CSP will also be critical helpers at this time.

Women struggling with complex trauma are often challenged with feelings of distrust, fear, and oversensitivity to others. These emotions are often expressed by anger, anxiety, or frustration. Therefore, it is necessary for the facilitator to possess maturity, insight, and understanding in order to deal with the complexity of the issues and emotions experienced (Courtois, 2004 as cited in Thera, 2016).

nato' we ho win focuses heavily on intergenerational trauma, using the following description for continuous reference:

Historical trauma is a complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation. It is the outcome of numerous traumatic events experienced by a community over generations and includes the psychological and social responses to those events. Historical trauma is accompanied by unresolved or prolonged grief over the losses associated with the trauma-grief that has not been expressed, acknowledged, or resolved. Like trauma, the unresolved grief can span across generations.⁴

³ Trauma Informed Project retrieved from <http://www.traumainformedcareproject.org/index.php> March 20, 2019. ¹⁰ Thera, D Lynn. (2016). Women healing from trauma: A facilitator's guide. Retrieved from <https://pathssk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/TIC-Women-healing-from-Trauma-Lynn-Thera.pdf>

⁴ Aguiar, W. & Halseth, R. (2015). Aboriginal peoples and Historic Trauma: The processes of intergenerational transmission. Prince George, BC: National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. (www.ccsa-nccah.ca)

We seek a greater understanding from the responses of historical trauma upon multiple generations. Social researcher Evans-Campbell (2008) identified three distinguishing features of historical trauma responses:

- ◆ Historical trauma events continue to undermine the well-being of contemporary group members;
- ◆ Responses to historically traumatic events interact with contemporary stressors to influence well-being;
- ◆ The risk associated with historically traumatic events can accumulate across generations.

The Indian Residential School experience is a historical trauma whose intergenerational effects, according to Horse Brave Heart, perpetuated a deep breakdown in the social-cultural functioning. This severing of ancestral knowledge systems impeded the transmission of positive child-rearing practices, and instead interrupted loving practices.

Hand building knowledge and cultural systems in many cases ceased and the consequences of the resulting cycles of parenting deficiencies altered the social norms.

*Within the hearts and minds of many, many, generation's,
unresolved trauma accumulated and now manifests in a multitude of ways.
Depression, anxiety, unresolved grief and loss, addictions, self-sabotaging
and self-destructive behaviour are all trauma responses.*

The multiple historical traumas did disrupt family, community and ancestral knowledge systems of cultural self-care.



An accurate awareness and greater knowledge of historical trauma is a critical first step to self-awareness and self-development.

Through the 13 sessions, participants will explore aspects of the knowledge systems, while they continue their personal exploration of how accumulated grief and loss over many generations has impacted their lineage.

This inquiry process will be unique within each individual as they will uncover many areas of intersectionality of colonization disruption. Indigenous peoples encounter many forms of systemic racism, which often intensifies the existing effects of intergenerational trauma.

Examples of loss include:

- | | |
|---|--|
| ◆ Relationships | ◆ Homeland and ancestral knowledge systems |
| ◆ Language and culture | ◆ Means of promoting self-Sufficiency (such as Hunting, Harvesting and Processing) |
| ◆ Spirituality - including healing customs and traditions | ◆ Cultural identity and pride |
| ◆ Parenting and grand-parenting skills | |

nato' we how win: The Art of Self-Healing helps identify the cultural knowledge systems that historical trauma disrupted, along with an invitation to explore one's own personal understanding of the origin of intellectual, physical, spiritual, and emotional trauma.

Participants use creative exploration when asked to recognize *"The unhealthy ways of behaving that people use to protect themselves that can be passed on to children, without them even knowing they are doing so."*⁵

nato' we how win seeks to break the cycles of destructive and dysfunctional behaviour by absorption of a new cultural knowledge system.

The guided weekly activities will promote cultural continuity and renewal while making cultural knowledge and social practices public in a nurturing environment.

There is genuine consensus across all sectors that any healing intervention must be grounded within the collective Indigenous knowledge system:

*Given the complexity of Historical Trauma for Aboriginal peoples, it is clear that disrupting the intergenerational transmission of trauma will require holistic and multi-faceted approaches to improving health and well-being*⁶

nato' we how win weaves healing and learning into practice by inviting the learning spirit of each individual to examine what separates them from their spirit. We must look at the trauma and how we want to be present to the past and find ways to call the spirit back through ancestral arts and creativity.

The practices of nato' we how win are found within all First Nations and Indigenous peoples around the world. To understand the connection of the four aspects of self and the view that a human being is part of a whole system is to understand nato' we how win. In that knowledge is direction for how to act accordingly, living in balance with the prominent values of **respect, gratitude, personal health/wellness, reciprocity, responsibility, reverence, harmony, wholeness, family, and generosity/sharing.**

The creativity and intelligence of an Indigenous knowledge system allows a safe place for the human mind to express and connect to the unseen beauty of creation and to come to that place of belonging.

The unseen connection between the land and the women participants is expressed through traditional arts. nato' we how win is grounded within Indigenous perspective and honours the diversity that exists within all Indigenous language groups as well as the integrity of the participants.



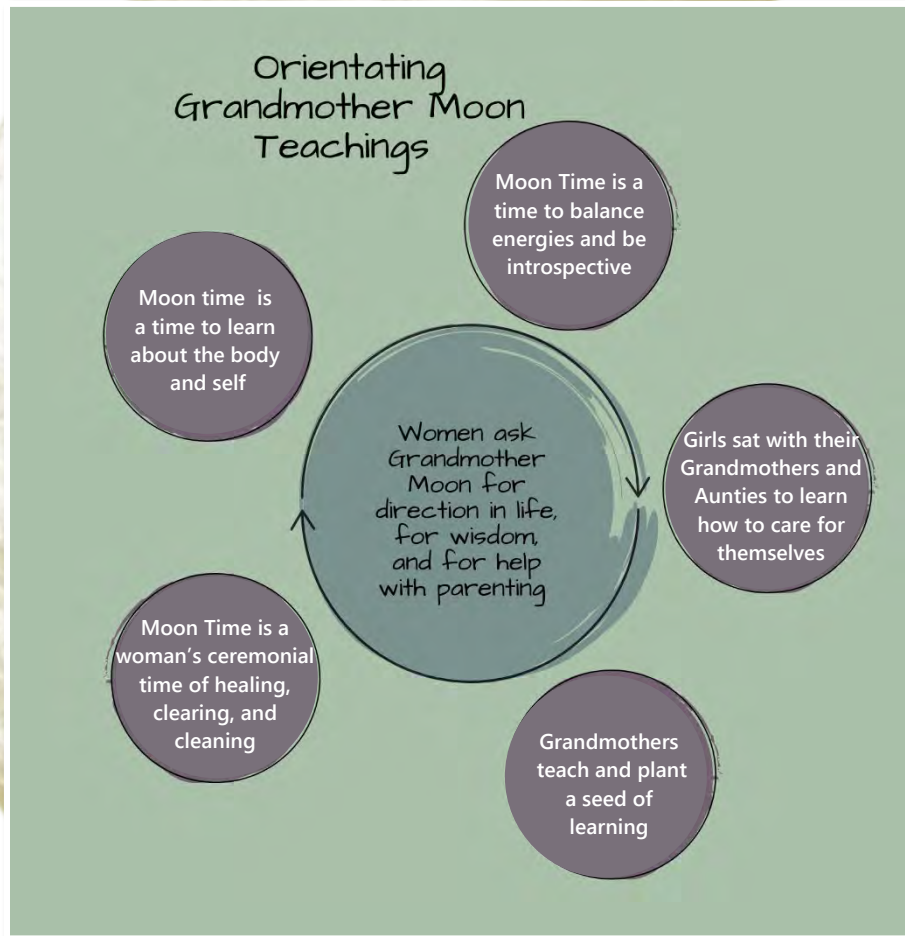
Acknowledge that each participant has her own experience and personal truth and is entitled to follow and choose her own healing path.

⁵ Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2004). *Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing*

⁶ Makokis, L., Bodor, R., Barker, C., MacArthur, C., Peters, L., Friesen, S. & Steinhauer, S. (2014). *Gently whispering the circle back: A facilitator's manual*. Edmonton, AB: Blue Quills First Nations College.

Integral to the structure of the ***nato' we how win: The Art of Self-Healing*** program are the teachings of the 13 Grandmother's Moons. Each of the 13 sessions Moon comes with its own knowledge and wisdom to impart.

The 13 moons in a year are traditionally a time when women came together with the grandmothers, aunties, and women Elders to gain and share women's teachings. Grandmother teachings spoke of child rearing and ways to live a balanced life while they reinforced natural laws. Grandmothers were the ones who spoke to rites of passage and traditional values in everyday life. nato' we ho win grounds itself within this cultural framework.



nato' we how win

Harmonious Knowledge Transfer

Each person who comes into the ***nato' we how win: The Art of Self-Healing*** Sharing Circle is meant to be there. The selected art form for the group activity has a purpose in anchoring ancestral, foundational, life-stage teachings in a kind way. We must acknowledge every action, every thought, every prayer shifts the energy and that it takes time to heal years of disconnection.

Attending to one's past trauma is like taking off a layer at a time. Seeking help must be a priority because *"trauma can be defined as an experience (or series of experiences) that overwhelms one's ability to cope."*⁷ It takes courage to enter the Sharing Circle. Filling the void with love, requires one to seek counselling – to ask for help -- attend healing ceremonies to shift negative energies. When we enter ancestral ways of knowing, there are three pillars we must position ourselves within; *"compassion, strength and the mystery!"*⁸ In many ways, every person who comes into the Circle is a helper, coming to help themselves and their families.

Participants must come into their own realization. Reciprocity is about giving and taking in a respectful way; this is how the spirit of ancestral knowledge has been maintained for thousands of years.

Knowledge systems hold ancient practices and together they create a wholeness. Each person is then called to personally commit to keeping the one of the teachings or a knowledge practice intact by, agreeing in their life time, to transfer it to the next generation. Thus making them responsible for keeping that teaching alive for another lifetime.



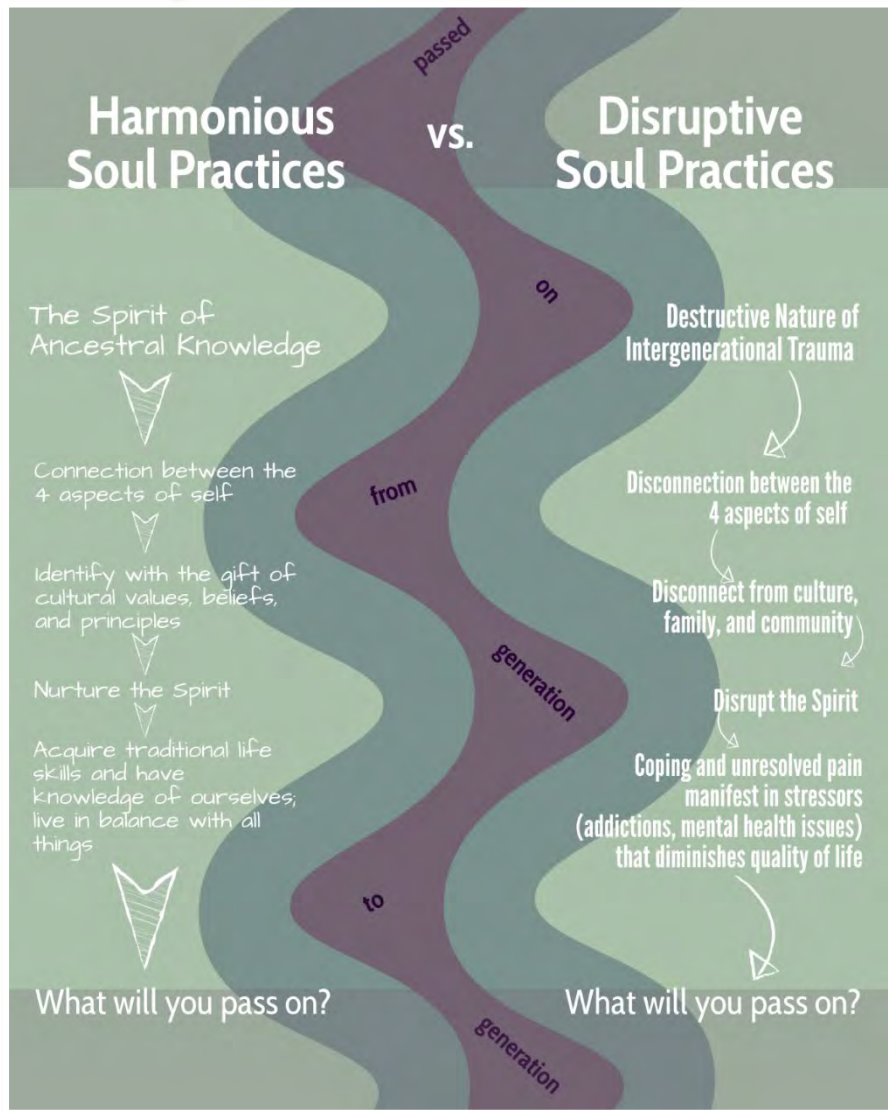
Participants must become aware of what is transferred or gifted to the next generation.

Each woman should come to see herself as a part of creation; she is in relation and balance with all things, and must carry forth the knowledge gifts she has received from generation to generation.

7 Makokis, L., Bodor, R., Barker, C., MacArthur, C., Peters, L., Friesen, S. & Steinhauer, S. (2014). Gently whispering the circle back: A facilitator's manual. Edmonton, AB: Blue Quills First Nations College. (p. 36-37)

8 Willie Ermine (Personal conversation, summer 2017).

nato' we ho win



Weekly Responsibilities Within the Sharing Circle

- ◆ Each woman within the circle is asked to accept her commitment and responsibility to be a conduit to learn ancestral and hand building knowledge, and to then, when she is ready, to pass on what she has learned within her family and personal circle.
- ◆ Traditional practices are essential to the transfer of traditional Indigenous knowledge. As they learn the ways in which to live out their responsibilities, participants actively seek a positive place to do the work in their lives.
- ◆ Each participant acknowledges the vital role they play in learning and acquiring at least one teaching or knowledge system and agreeing to keep it alive on their life long journey and to be care-takers of knowledge.

- ◆ Participants practice respect for self and thoughtfulness in what they say and do; words become impeccable.

The Facilitator and support team put emphasis on the participants' healing from intergenerational trauma. They work to unpack the critical components, build upon the knowledge of each person, and have a clear understanding of the impacts of accumulated trauma and unresolved grief.

Participants will embrace their own healing journey when ready.

True *nato' we ho win* is achieved by holding knowledge of the rawness, having the courage to feel the pain and lean into it. Once undertaken, participants can begin to understand of how to fill the gaps, and develop a willingness to work at filling that void they have identified with love for self. They begin to heal. ***nato' we how win: The Art of Self-Healing*** offers the tools needed for that understanding to grow while respecting each woman's personal journey.

Being part of this guided healing journey means the women have to acknowledge the feelings that rise from introspection of their lived experiences and realities.



The Facilitator and support team create the safe space that empowers participants to:

- ◆ Look within, release trauma within the body, trauma connected to the past and embrace our history by learning your history and what happened. Knowledge is power!
- ◆ The human mind needs to express the unseen connections of the human capacity to live within the beauty of life, to think of what brings life to us, and how to rejoin ourselves to that basic life cycle. This is the spirituality of life; we have to fulfill our potential.
- ◆ Understand the trauma by learning about trauma reactions and cultural practices to address grief and loss.
- ◆ Release the pain: usually through cultural ceremonies/practices that create a sense of belonging and connection to land, culture, and others with a shared history.
- ◆ Transcend the trauma by moving to healing which allows us to define ourselves in ways that move beyond the trauma.⁹

A holistic framework to work from provides a greater understanding about the nature of balance that is sought.

⁹ Union of Ontario Indians. *The Soul Wounds of the Anishinabek People: The Psychological and Intergenerational Impacts of the Indian Residential School System*. North Bay, On, 2013: Union of Ontario Indians.

הדבר הזה הוא לא רק תאוריה אלא גם מציאות. הדבר הזה הוא לא רק תאוריה אלא גם מציאות.

Each ancestral art form chosen for the group project must be a means to convey the deep meaning of the Indigenous perspective of being interconnected to all living things.

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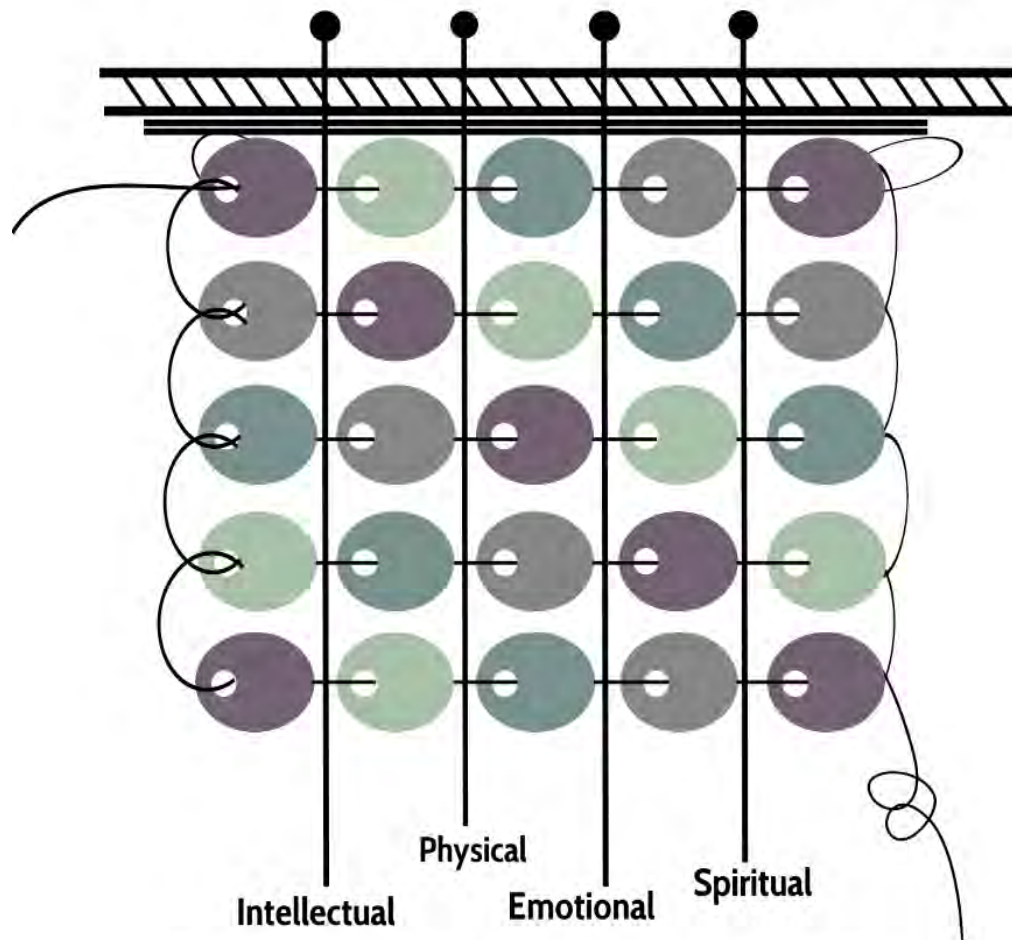
Facilitators are encouraged to pass on their individual knowledge, and collaborate with other local knowledge keepers. The following list offers a place to start, and provides only a few traditional art forms that can be considered, as long as the knowledge exists within the Facilitator or Elder:

- ◆ **Looming project to make a women's belt:** Women wore wide belts to protect their kidneys and their backs. Each woman's beadwork was unique and would reflect their personhood. Traditionally, porcupine quills were used and naturally dyed to create the patterns.
- ◆ **Making skirts, dresses or shawls:** Women's skirts symbolize the tipi covering/dress, which is the women's domain. Each woman has her own colours and design. The fringes that touch the ground signify the direct connection to the earth and the energy that flows from earth to the woman is healing.
- ◆ **Beading project:** Participants create their own design.
- ◆ **Leather work:** Of any sort.
- ◆ **Tooling:** Roots, bark or stone into cultural objects
- ◆ **Basket making/weaving:** Birch bark, red willow and roots.

- ◆ **Traditional medicine knowledge:**
 - ◆ Including instructions for identifying, locating, preparation, and proper use of medicinal plants.
 - ◆ Salves, skin & hair washes
 - ◆ Physical symptom relief
- ◆ **Traditional foods:** Preparation, cooking, preserving.
- ◆ **Oral history & Indigenous language preservation classes.**

Learning traditional hand-building art forms can also allow women to learn subsistence and self-reliance skills to create their own micro-cottage industries.

A series of actions when repeated manifests Nato'we ho win



Each bead symbolizes a Nato'we ho win activity.
Be mindful of what you are weaving into your life.

Program Overview

The ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self- Healing*** program is comprised of 13 sessions, representative of the 13 Grandmother Moon Teachings. In these teachings, Grandmother Moon brings women a special gift and imparts her wisdom of the feminine at each Moon time. The Moon sessions are divided into 3 phases: Moons 1-5 Seek nato' we ho win; Moons 6-10 Activate nato' we ho win, and Moons 11-13 Maintain nato' we ho win. The ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** sessions aim to provide gifts and wisdom to the group participants as well.

- ◆ Week 1 begins with an overview of the program and a Welcome Feast for the women who will lead and participate in the Sharing Circle tasks.
- ◆ A core Indigenous teaching with selected accompanying discussions and self-care activities take place during Weeks 2 to 11.
- ◆ Week 12 focuses on completing the chosen Traditional Hand-Built art form project.
- ◆ Week 13 is a closing feast and celebration.

Each week participants are encouraged to reflect on a question(s) in their journals. Ensure that participants are encouraged to take part in weekly creative writing/ journaling to help them grow in understanding as they seek clarity.



Not all participants will want to journal, and they may use a form of visual art, drawing or other means to express their emotional and spiritual wellbeing and growth. It is important for the women to make a commitment, follow it through to see the progression of their feelings and mindset by the end of the sessions.

The Facilitator and Elder welcome the participants at each session. Participant seating is arranged in a physical circle to reinforce the Sharing Circle protocol. An Opening Prayer and smudge at the start of the Sharing Circle, and a Closing Prayer at the end of each session are performed by the Elder. Traditional steeped tea (Nettle, Mint) is served each week in keeping with the custom of Indigenous Grandmothers serving guests upon their arrival. The tea also serves as a consistent reminder of the importance of self-care during the program.

Indigenous peoples' oral history contains many narratives of people making their own healing ointments, skin washes and other forms of self-care using only what was available to them. In many ways, practicing self-care is a return to our ancestor's self-reliance, where they tended to their own health needs by applying medicinal knowledge in its many forms.

Roles ᑭᓐᓂᑦ

Facilitator

The Facilitator sets the tone for the group and uses ancestral practices to lay out a foundation for change to happen at a spiritual and emotional level for the participants. They know of where their knowledge arises from and are aware of the protocols in accessing Elders. She must be able to draw upon their oral history and the knowledge it contains. A fluent connection to language is also a major asset and helps those present embrace their indigeneity.

Within the collective Circles of ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing***, she will weave a knowledge system of Indigenous culture and bring her own experience and knowledge to the group.

Facilitators must be able to construct visual knowledge and express the wholeness of life cycles and human responsibility to have a reciprocal relationship with all of Creation.



These women will also have previous experience with group facilitation, be trauma-informed, and possess the ability to provide an empowering space for women. **Nato' we ho win** is a learning space the facilitator, the Elder, and the Community Support Person protect and keep for all women in the Sharing Circle.

Facilitator Checklist

- ✓ Ensure that the Domestic Violence Advocate (DVA) and Community Support Person (CSP) and the Elder are prepared and understand their duties.
- ✓ Have materials and supplies ready each week, including handouts, journals, pencils, coloured pencils, paper, tea, and any other supplies required for weekly activities.
- ✓ Tobacco pouch ready with offerings such as cloth and an honorarium for each session according to a pre-arranged rate.
- ✓ Transportation for Elders is often a critical factor that needs to be arranged. It is important to ensure they have the required supports for any health needs and/or physical accommodations.
- ✓ Set up the meeting space to be functional for each sessions requirements:
 - ✓ Arrange the tables in a circle.
 - ✓ Post the Code of Conduct in the room.
 - ✓ Traditional tea steeping and ready for women as they enter.
- ✓ Create a task sign-up sheet for each week for participants to sign up for duties:
 - ✓ Kitchen clean-up
 - ✓ Activities area clean-up
 - ✓ Elder's helper
 - ✓ Assist with set-up and take-down
 - ✓ Other tasks as they arise

Elder

A woman/grandmother Elder will be involved in each session. Each woman Elder is unique in her experience, learning, personality, and knowledge of traditional culture; each has something different to offer. These individuals are often specialists in certain teachings. It is imperative to include Elders in the teachings of each session.

- ◆ The Elder may require a helper and assistance to attend each session and needs to communicate her needs to the Facilitator. At the beginning of each session, an Elder's helper will be assigned from within the group of participants who will ensure the Elder's needs, like thirst and hunger, are taken care of.

Community Support Person (CSP)

The Community Support Person (CSP) can be a Domestic Violence Advocate (DVA) or a Community Health Worker. They will be a woman whose experience includes providing support to survivors of Intimate Partner Violence. Support may be specifically related to domestic violence such as information sharing, safety planning, providing referrals, and being able to assist women in connecting with other relevant community agencies/supports.

- ◆ The CSP is an active participant in the group, providing support to group participants when necessary and assisting the Facilitator and Elder when asked.

Participant

Each woman participating in ***nato'we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** is ready to begin their healing journey. The healing inquiry process within each of the participants will be unique, and they will uncover many areas of intersectionality from colonization disruption.



Logistics ㄣㄣㄣㄣㄣㄣㄣ

nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing is a ground-breaking program that unites Indigenous culture and artistic methods as powerful intervention tools for victims of interpersonal violence. The success of the program comes from being able to effectively remove barriers to attendance and completion, while providing the structure and organization for each session. As the Facilitator, this falls to you. Be mindful of confidentiality and safety concerns of all attending the sessions.



Assemble a qualified Support Team (see Roles) you can collaborate with, and delegate and assign tasks to. Ensure you have adequate input and help from the other members of the Support Team and volunteers. You will be sharing much of the information in this guide with them.

The following list is far from exhaustive; as with the rest of the program, please adjust for your local Sharing Circle needs. Elements to consider:

- ◆ Administrative work
 - Database creation/e-mails/record keeping
 - Communications/promotion/recruitment
- ◆ Budget
 - Funding /grants/donations
 - Allocation of funds per session/activity
 - Who receives payment for involvement in program?
- ◆ Space
 - Location/Accessibility
 - Availability/Cost
- ◆ Transportation
 - Needs/Cost/Providers
- ◆ Childcare
 - Early childhood care workers/Volunteers/Kokums/Aunties/Siblings
- ◆ Nutrition/Refreshments
 - Welcome and Closing Feasts
 - Scheduled nutrition break for children and adults
 - Consider dietary needs/restrictions/allergies
 - Utensils/crockery/condiments/napkins
- ◆ Hand-Built Art Form supplies
- ◆ Self-care Activity supplies
 - Include sourcing enough nettle and peppermint for tea each session.
- ◆ Artifacts
 - For display and conversation
 - Sharing Circle Talking Stick
- ◆ Miscellaneous – Tobacco/gifts/pens/paper/tape/scissors/Kleenex/cleaning supplies/etc.

Guiding Philosophies

nato' we ho win works within the natural law of interconnection, and holds a deep, embedded understanding that the culture of First Nations and Indigenous peoples revolve around a connection to Mother Earth and the interconnected relationships with all things.

We are spirit first.

The two-legged (human beings) were put on this earth last. All the animals (four legged, swimmers, winged ones and the crawlers), minerals, rocks, plant life came first.

We are a part of something much greater than ourselves. We are entrusted with certain knowledge systems in the perpetuation of a good way of life.

Our customs and knowledge are both understood and practiced through the relationship to our land and in the ways it nurtures, nourishes and ensures our continuance and survival as a people.

The laws of circular interaction were given as values; as ways to be and to live. These values are the natural laws with protocols to guide our relationship with creation.

The emotional, intellectual, physical and spiritual dimensions are not separate but understood as being part of the whole.

We honour the circle of life.

Strong family units are the backbone of the community. They enable the development of the individual skills and values required to sustain our ancestral ways of life. Strong families are born from customs associated with women's knowledge and cultural practice.

We are all born sacred.

We must be respectful of all things with the understanding of fulfilling our responsibility of learning and passing on the collective wisdom and knowledge of the ancestors.

Core Outcomes

May all who participate:

- ◆ Share in the cultural practice of learning the uses for natural products of Indigenous culture.
- ◆ Develop an appreciation of the core concepts from an Indigenous perspective and worldview and the underlying knowledge of their Indigenous culture.
- ◆ Reflect on their relationships with self, family and the natural world.
- ◆ Come into a meaningful understanding of personal and cultural practice that honours an acknowledgment to a spiritual reality of their own definition.
- ◆ Understand
 - All women present are each singularly gifted
 - The importance of passing knowledge on from generation to generation, and that it is their inherent duty to do so
 - There is one world and we are a part of a greater whole
- ◆ Acknowledge
 - There is an intimate and profound connection among all things, which is manifest in the spirit of the Creator.
 - They are not defined by their past experiences.



Seek nato' we ho win

Moon 1

nato' we ho win Orientation & Feast

Moon 2

Grounded Within the Worldview

Moon 3

Inherent Responsibility to be a Carrier of Knowledge

Moon 4

Understanding Traumatic Disconnect from Grandmother's Knowledge

Moon 5

Examining Childhood Impacts from Intergenerational Trauma

Activate nato' we ho win

Moon 6

Setting Your Intentions

Moon 7

Practicing Mindfulness

Moon 8

Grandmother Moon Teachings

Moon 9

Women's Health: Physical, Emotional, Spiritual, Intellectual

Moon 10:

Being in Service: Respect, Reciprocity and Humility

Maintain nato' we ho win

Moon 11:

Family and Home Well-being

Moon 12:

Filling the Void with Love

Moon 13:

Celebration and Closing Feast



Teaching Notes

Moon One: Welcome Feast & Orientation

Discussion Ideas:

- ◆ Identify the cultural practices, ancestral knowledge forms and traditional arts witnessed, observed, participated and practiced from participant's childhood to the present.
- ◆ State the knowledge system one wishes to retain, renew, reclaim or recover.
- ◆ Share stories of women in your circle who have modeled self-sufficient and self-reliant behaviours. What knowledge systems did they embrace and celebrate?

Welcome Feast

The support team organizes and puts on the Welcome Feast for the new group of participants, just as Grandmothers from the past would honour guests. This helps the women feel special, and allows for informal interactions to ease any anxiety the women may have about beginning a new program. Feasts are a traditional way to give thanks and show gratitude for all that is provided. A Welcome Feast honours our interconnection and is a renewal of our inter-relationships. The food offerings feed our spirits, and the ancestors that always walk with us.



- Consult the Elder regarding proper protocol for a welcoming feast and prayer.
- Have the Elder speak about the historical role feasts have played for Indigenous people.
- Have her talk of her fondest memories.

Everyone must be part of the knowledge transfer process of their ancestors. The understanding of life must be grounded in the spirit and *this knowledge must be sought through inward-ness in unison with all the instruments of knowing and the conditions that make individuals receptive to knowing.*¹⁰

Lived ancestral knowledge is embodied in ancient processes which should be engaged in with great regularity. Our ceremonial and traditional practices as Indigenous peoples are tools for helping people experience a spiritual and healing connection. Our collective knowledge continues forward into the next generation, recognizing that each person is singularly gifted. By sharing their gifts, they actualize their full potential of being emotionally, intellectually, physically, and spiritually healthy. - Barb Frazer



ka-kaspotahk means 'carrying it onto the next generation', and encapsulates Indigenous peoples' innate role. This concept gives life to the many gifts from the Creator, and takes the form of songs, ceremonies, languages, customs, traditions and material culture. Self-development will be grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown.

¹⁰ Ermine, Willie. (1995). Aboriginal epistemology. in M. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.), First Nations Education in Canada: The circle unfolds (pp. 108). Vancouver: UBC Press.

Hand Built Knowledge

The practice and maintenance of hand built art forms is about living from the heart; being connected; being whole. First Nations people continue to tell stories and engage in traditional art, ancestral song and dance.

Local resources for hand building knowledge:



Harmonious Practices

Selfless actions & weekly commitment

Embedded within First Nations cultures are harmonious practices and processes, which we must continue in the same manner as our ancestors. The women seated within the circle have made a decision to be a part of an Indigenous learning practice.



Instill the philosophy that Indigenous knowledge is kept alive by each person becoming responsible for one art form.

Participants are brought into the Grandmother's Moon way of healing. Through these teachings women were taught to give up something they enjoy doing or begin to practice mindfulness from full moon to full moon; about one month. Performed willingly, through these selfless actions women made pledges and gave offerings. They invested emotionally, intellectually, physically and spiritually in themselves and entered into a reciprocal healing process with all of Creation.

In ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self- Healing***, we encourage a participatory process and ask the women to make a different weekly pledge, from one session to the next. The women are empowered to choose the personal elements they target each week, starting the healing process ceremonial and spiritual abstaining bring.

The offering is a personal commitment to give up or add something participants want to do to assist themselves and for their own personal growth and development. It is a self-investment that will keep them actively engaged in the process throughout the week.

Notes:

Teaching Notes

Moon Two: Grounded Within the Indigenous Worldview

In Indigenous world views, individual and collective responsibility for all members of one's community is emphasized. Leroy Little Bear (2000) articulates this component beautifully:

Wholeness is like a flower with four petals. When it opens, one discovers strength, sharing, honesty, and kindness. Together these four petals create balance, harmony, and beauty. Wholeness works in the same interconnected way. The whole strength speaks to the idea of sustaining balance. If a person is whole and balanced, then he or she is in a position to fulfill his or her individual responsibilities to the whole. If a person is not balanced, then he or she is sick and weak — physically, mentally or both and cannot fulfill his or her individual responsibilities.¹¹

Powerful laws were established to protect and to nurture the foundations of strong, vibrant nations. Foremost amongst these laws are those laws related to human bonding and relationships. These are known as the laws relating to **miyowîcêhtowin**.

The laws of miyowîcêhtowin include those laws encircling the bonds of human relationships in the ways in which they are created, nourished, reaffirmed, and recreated. They are as a means of strengthening the unity among First Nations people and of the nation itself. For First Nations, these are integral and indispensable components of their way of life. These teachings and constitute the essential elements underlying the First Nations philosophies of peace, harmony, and good relations, which must be maintained as required by the Creator. The teachings and ceremonies are the means given to First Nations to restore peace and harmony in times of personal and community conflict. These teachings also serve as the foundation upon which new relationships are to be created.¹²

The terminology used in this session originated from the oral language of the First Nations people of Saskatchewan. These are the key words to begin a knowledge base:

- ❖ **Manitou**: Creator/Great Spirit: Cree or **nehiyaw** believe in a Great Spirit or Creator called **Kise-manitou**; **Nakawe** speak of a Great Spirit called **Gitchi Manito**; and the Sioux people, who have three dialects, **Lakota**, **Dakota** and **Nakota**; their word for the Great Spirit is **Wanka Tanka**.
- ❖ **Interconnected**: **e-miciminitomakahki** (Plains Cree) "they are interconnected"
- ❖ **Respect**: **Manachihitowin** (Plains Cree) Act of treating each other with care and respect
- ❖ **Miyowîcêhtowin**: Laws of getting along with others, maintaining good relations, and expanding the circle in generosity.

2 Little Bear, L. (2000). Jagged worldviews colliding. In M. Battiste (Ed.), Reclaiming Indigenous voice and vision. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

12 Cardinal, H., & Hildebrandt, W. (2000). Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as Nations. Calgary, AB: University of Calgary Press. (p. 15).

Teaching Notes

Moon Three: Inherent Responsibility to Become a Knowledge Carrier

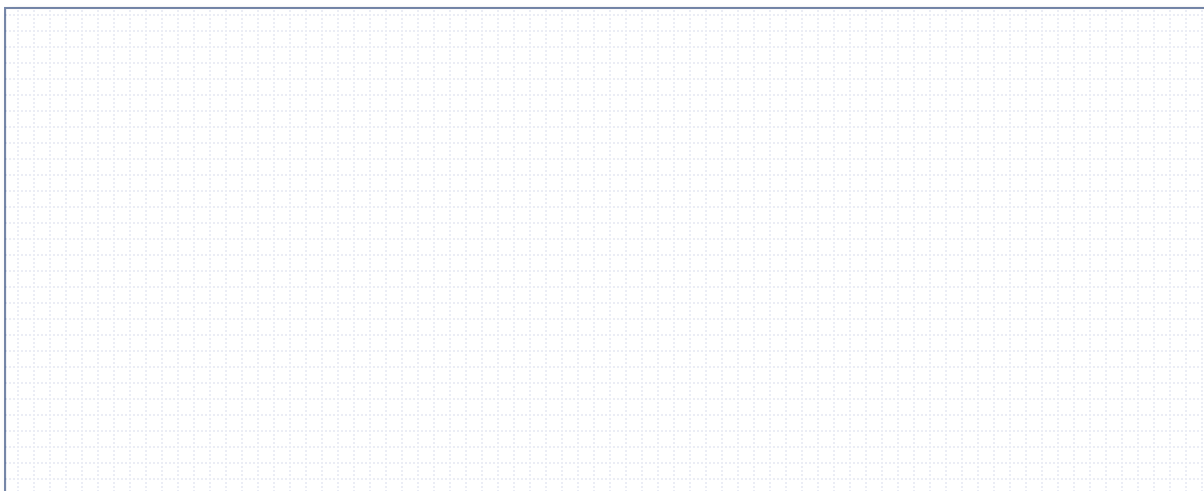
Indigenous knowledge systems and ancient practices, processes, and laws have always sustained and maintained from person to person and generation to generation. These oral traditions were interrupted and systematically starved, yet have managed to be with us still today as a testament to the resiliency and innate interconnectedness Indigenous people share.

- ◆ The recent resurgence of interest in learning Indigenous cultural history, including language, ceremony and traditional hand-built art forms, is encouraging.
- ◆ **nato' we ho win: The Art of Self Healing** is a unique program that bridges healing for survivors of interpersonal trauma with a reconnection and reaffirmation of being knowledge keepers themselves.
- ◆ Participants will be able to maintain and sustain what they learn to their own children and circle.
- ◆ nato' we ho win being utilized in this way is a tangible example of Reconciliation.

Indigenous collective knowledge arises out of the oral tradition and lives within person to person *"In turn, we acknowledge our responsibilities to pass on the original intent, use, and practice of our knowledge to our children, grandchildren and the future generations of our people (ka kaspotahk)"*.¹³ Each participant who comes into the nato' we ho win learning circle enters into a cultural sustaining process by engaging in the ancestral knowledge system of acquiring hand building knowledge skills



Participants gain pride and confidence to utilize their minds and to act from the heart. It is hoped that each participant comes away with a goal of being a lifelong learner of their cultural ways and that they will apply the ancestral knowledge systems to their daily lives and give life to the knowledge left in their care as they pass it on.



⁴ Ermine, Willie. Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Medicines (kiskeyihtamowin ekwa Maskihkiya). Unpublished paper.

Passing on Hand-Building Knowledge Key Messages

The Elder must lead this activity and share her own understanding of '*a gentle process of integration: Becoming a carrier of ancestral knowledge. Upholding the gift of oral history*' ¹⁴

- ◆ Knowledge is encased by language. Learning ancestor language reclaims our heritage and intrinsic rights as Indigenous women.
- ◆ We have an individual responsibility to carry forth the practice of our ancestral knowledge onto the next generation.
- ◆ We must embody our awareness of the intimate and profound connection among all living things.
- ◆ Promoting these values and keeping our distinct cultural ways alive serves to keep us emotionally, mentally, physically and spiritual healthy.
- ◆ Everyone has a role to keep their culture alive; everyone is a purveyor of knowledge
- ◆ Learn one craft at time, learn how to do your family of origin art forms.

Displaying Cultural Objects

The Facilitator, (with input of the rest of the support team as deemed beneficial) create a display for group participants of traditional hand building art forms and related cultural significance. The Facilitator and Elder must be prepared to share their intimate knowledge of the items.

- ◆ Encourage the group to examine and study the details; really observe the pure craftsmanship.
- ◆ Introduce how experiential learning preserved knowledge from generation to generation. People were trained to know how to craft items needed for everyday life. They did not only preform necessary tasks; the quality, durability, and beauty of the items embody the culture that made them. Creating items for ceremony and spiritually was about making ascetically pleasing functional items.
- ◆ Examine the role of women and grandmothers in gathering, harvesting and creating traditional art forms.
- ◆ Introduce the stages of life; create awareness and understanding of the cultural knowledge systems that were fully intact before colonization and settler interference. Help the participants be mindful of all the hands and fingers, trained over millennia, that worked tirelessly to ensure survival doing what gave beauty and meaning to their lives.

Help participants understand they can access this same knowing through the 5 gifted senses: to see, feel, hear, smell, and taste. These senses and the women's knowing are honed through exposure to traditional practices and made available to Indigenous people through blood memory.

¹⁴ Ermine, Willie. Indigenous Knowledge and Traditional Medicines (kiskeyihtamowin ekwa Maskihkiya). Unpublished paper.



The participants may not have had much exposure to many traditional arts (quill, birch bark, seed beads, looming, hide), and it can be grounding for them to look at and handle artifacts that were made by hands just like their own.

- ◆ Traditional Hand Building Knowledge focuses on the gifts, strengths, values, and beliefs as First Nations people and our role in carrying ancestral art forms forward.



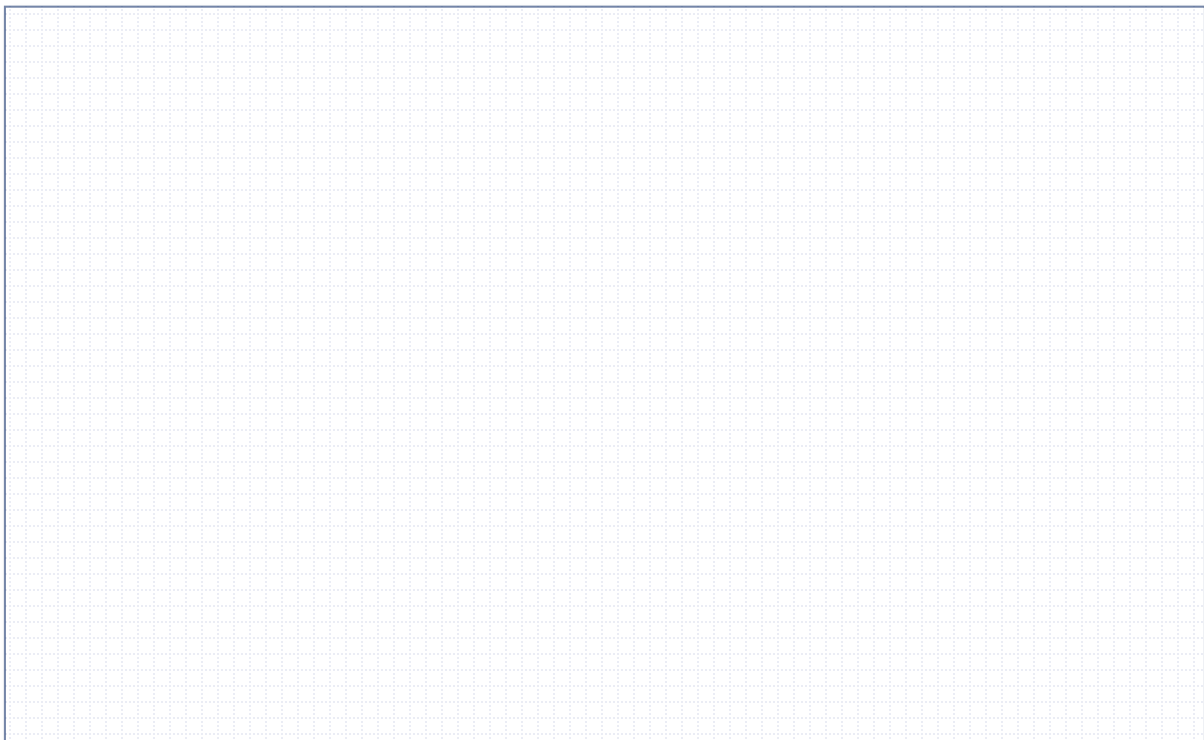
Encourage participants to observe how all parts of nature are used (animal hide, bone, sinew, quills, plants, roots, bark, seeds, feathers, rocks, sand, soil, etc.) and to notice the mastery that arises from continuing the art forms. Note the various family design; people often have their own telling "signature".

- ◆ Continue to speak to the women of their design, of how they will learn their ancestral art hand building.



Continue to monitor and encourage participants. As they learn to do their art form, their patience will be tested and they will be challenged. Enforce that struggle is part of the learning process: It is an analogy for life.

- ◆ Struggle and hardship are realities for all people. Our power lies in how we respond and what we can learn. When we know better, we can do better the next time we are presented with a challenge or pain. We build on what we have survived and endured. We respond from our knowledge; we react from our fear.



Teaching Notes

Moon Four: Understanding Traumatic Disconnect from Grandmother's Knowledge

Note: It is crucial the Facilitator and support team do their best to ensure the participants are prepared for the unfolding of truth in this session.

We are addressing the historical process of displacement and dispossession. This is a heavy topic and can be traumatizing and re-traumatizing.



Introduce historical trauma and the reality Indigenous people find themselves in during contemporary times as a direct and indirect result. Reinforce that it is necessary to understand trauma to be able to release the pain it has caused. Only then, can one transcend the trauma, and reclaim their life and spirit.

Preparing Participants for Video (or DVD)

From Wishmac Productions:

Gently Whispering Back the Circle (49:13) was commissioned by Blue Quills First Nations College (Alberta, Canada) as a community resource for "Healing and Reconciliation". Inspired by the work of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Gently Whispering the Circle Back* shares a journey of healing for all Canadians in a nation wounded by the Indian Residential School System (IRS). With dignity and deep sincerity, survivors and the children of survivors share their personal stories with us. We become part of a "circle of healing" as participants confront the trauma of the IRS; come to understand the trauma; release their pain; and speak of transcending the trauma through the recovery of tradition, language, ceremony, and personal dignity. *Gently Whispering the Circle Back* is a powerful story of human resiliency and generosity.

Beth Wishart MacKenzi

Producer/Director/Writer

Richard Gustavsen

Cinematographer/Location Sound

David Cunningham

Writer/Picture Editor

Herb Stanley

Original Flute Music

Gently Whispering the Circle Back is owned and distributed by University Blue Quills.

Available with a facilitator's guide for community and classroom engagement.

Contact Blue Quills:

Phone: 780-645-4455

Toll Free: 1-888-645-4455

email: inquiries@bluequills.ca

Blue Quills Store:

<http://www.bluequills.ca/tipi-mart/>

Briefly introduce assimilation, trauma, and abuse suffered within Residential schools. Begin video after the Elder has performed a smudge and opening prayer to create a healing space, turning the Sharing Circle into a Learning Circle.



If there is a problem in getting the video, Facilitator and Elder can spend more time discussing their own stories and the implications of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission findings and reports at www.trc.ca

Harmonious Versus Disruptive Practices

How Intergenerational Trauma works:

- ◆ Intergenerational trauma is the result of unresolved or untreated trauma-related stress experienced by the survivor which is passed onto the next generation.
- ◆ Intergenerational trauma is not the result of targeted events against an individual, but rather the consequence of an ongoing history of systemic assimilation on Indigenous people.
 - Children were traumatized when taken from their parents, homes, and communities and placed in foster homes or Indian Residential schools. These were either government funded or church-controlled, mandatory “boarding” academic institutions.
 - The important work the participants are doing will help prevent disruptive, unhealthy behaviour from continuing onto the younger generation.
- ◆ **Intergenerational trauma reverberates within the individual, as it affects their families and most certainly their communities as well.**
 - Quite often, the individuals passing the trauma on do not recognize it, nor do they have the opportunity to begin to heal or address their accumulated pain. If the accumulated pain and unresolved trauma is not attended to, the next generation of that family continues to experience the trauma in some form.
- ◆ Unresolved pain will manifest and materialize in many different ways; often destructive behaviour becomes normalized within the individual, their family, and community.
 - Front-line mental health workers confront clinical depression, anxiety, family violence, suicidal thoughts, and addictions when working with clients who have experienced direct or intergenerational trauma.
- ◆ The healing journey into intergenerational trauma or pain is a life-long learning process and may require several avenues of support in order to break the cycle of trauma.
 - An inward healing journey may come in many forms; there is no one way to achieve healing, mental peace or wellness. It is a lifelong process.



When the individual is ready, they will begin to explore or introduce healthy actions, self-development decisions, and identify healthy coping mechanisms.

Self-Care

Facilitator can explain briefly the medicinal uses and traditional knowledge of Nettle as outlined in manual. Once the women are holding a cup of tea to sip, read this statement from the Truth and Reconciliation Report:

Physical genocide is the mass killing of the members of a targeted group, and biological genocide is the destruction of the group's reproductive capacity. Cultural genocide is the destruction of those structures and practices that allow the group to continue as a group. States that engage in cultural genocide set out to destroy the political and social institutions of the targeted group. Land is seized, populations are forcibly transferred, and their movement is restricted. Languages are banned. Spiritual leaders are persecuted, spiritual practices are forbidden, and objects of spiritual value are confiscated and destroyed. And, most significantly to the issue at hand, families are disrupted to prevent the transmission of cultural values and identity from one generation to the next. In its dealing with Aboriginal people, Canada did all these things¹⁵



nato' we ho win is the way back to the wisdom and strength of our ancestors.



¹⁵ Truth and Reconciliation Commission. (Retrieved August 2018 www.trc.ca).

Teaching Notes

Moon Five: Setting Your Intention

Note: This session may trigger past memories or a strong grief response, be prepared to have a plan in place with the other members of the support team.

The entire support team must do their very best to ensure that a participant is not “opened” up by grief and then left to feel re-traumatized by this session.

This session will have an opening and closing smudge, as well as a tobacco offering.

Trauma Informed Practice is Imperative



It is very important, during this session particularly, to allow participants time to process the information and to provide them with time for discussion. Pay attention to signs of distress in the women. Follow-ups with some participants may also be necessary from the CSP. Try to provide a private area where a support worker can hold space with someone if they must remove themselves from the Circle temporarily.

As Facilitator, you and/or Elder must be willing to draw upon your healing journey. You are asked to use your own understanding of unresolved grief and how emotional distress cycles until a choice is made to begin the healing process.

The two dimensions of grief that will be studied and explored are the emotional and physical. This session is meant to introduce participants to the Indigenous approach the ways grief and loss are attended to by working within the interconnectedness.

Cultural Learning

nato' we ho win draws upon the sacred ancestral origin teachings that follow the natural, cyclical laws of creation. When we understand that Indigenous spirituality opens us up to see the beauty in the world around us and in each other, we are provided solace when we are in pain. Learning teachings and conducting ceremony connects us to everyone and everything in this world and the spirit world.

- ◆ Tobacco is always offered first before the start of any gathering. Begin this session with the offering of tobacco to open all the doorways for healing.
- ◆ At the beginning of this session, pass out tobacco for the opening prayer. Gather it up in a bowl, and let the Elder decide to either burn it or put in a clean place as per the traditional teaching.

Activity 1: Historical Grief and Loss Timeline

To create a 150-year Timeline on 3 pieces of flip-chart paper:

- ✓ Tape 3 sheets together along the short edge (landscape).
- ✓ Each sheet can represent 50 years.
- ✓ Draw a thick line through the middle of the sheets, and mark years in 5 year increments.
- ✓ Mark dates of significance below the line with date; be prepared to explain the historical facts surrounding each date.
- ✓ Participants mark their birthday and other significant dates above the line.

Participants will notice the key historical dates of assimilation policies, laws, and legislation, along with other significant dates of events that shaped the quality of life of Indigenous people in Canada. The women can “see” the history they have lived through, and are mindful of what their relations have lived through for them to be sitting in the Sharing Circle today. To be reminded of your history of survival can lend significant strength to the self-healing process.

Cultural Understanding of Trauma, Grief, and Loss

When a person experiences a traumatic event in their childhood, a part of their spirit remains locked in that time and space. This is known as “being present with the past”. As we confront the past, we are then allowed to process and release our pain. Culturally based coping skills are used to ground the spirit; to smudge is to cleanse our spirit of life’s negative aspects. Smudge, prayer, mindfulness, and ceremony are all healthy mechanisms for seeking balance within the 4 aspects of self.



Grief is complex and can express itself in multiple ways such as anger, sadness, depression. It varies from person to person, and transports across time...Often, we feel alone when we are suffering. It helps to remember that everyone has a story we know nothing about. We can pull strength from remembering we come from survivors.

Indigenous peoples in other countries, such as in Australia, are also healing from traumatic grief in the following understanding:

The legacy of traumatic experiences and oppression sustained through ongoing colonisation has ensured that the injury experienced has not been given an opportunity or space to heal. Grief and loss have been felt deeply and in ways people were not able to effectively deal with; instead, they had to fight just to survive. The legacy of this unacknowledged trauma and unresolved grief has resulted in its internalisation and festering of wounds which have been labelled as dysfunctional behaviours of the individual and collective sufferers. These labels have further injured those who are in agony and require support in that they become terms used to punish individuals and their families by dominant main stream agencies.¹⁶

¹⁶ Sherwood, J. (2015). Intergenerational trauma isn't just another determinant of Indigenous Peoples' health. *Journal of Ethics in Mental Health*, 1, 1-7.

Three Principle Components of Grief Treatment

The participants under guidance for the support team have all been traumatized in their personal lives in addition to the historical trauma all Indigenous people share. As grief is processed, they will become better capable to competently respond to every day life demands with their fullest potential.

- ◆ Processing and coming to terms with the horrifying and overwhelming experience;
- ◆ Controlling and mastering physiological and biological stress reactions; and
- ◆ Re-establishing secure social connections and inter-personal efficacy.

nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing allows for participants to exercise personal choice. It is about exposing the women to something that can resonate and promote healing. Cultural educator and grandmother, Norma Rabbitskin describes how the deep healing of unresolved grief can occur only when the person is ready to begin their healing journey:

This speaks to our core teachings, sets into motion that we must help ourselves, to look after ourselves in the most possible best way. It is our greatest responsibility, to care for and what we must attend to - our own wellbeing. If it is wellbeing and wellness we seek, then we are to balance these four aspects of ourselves. We are given one Earth life and Creator gave us these teachings and ways in how to live a good life, it is these ancestral teachings we must follow, as this was left in our care. If we desire and wish for good life and wellbeing and if we want to see wellbeing in each of our four aspects of self; then we have to work hard at this to maintain balance. We are to work with our spirit and all of creation, this is what we were given in this life to observe. The main teaching is to keep going and to begin and to continue that the finishing of it all is a life work.¹⁷



Unresolved trauma within First Nations communities is often termed generational, intergenerational or multi-generational grief.

The experience of historic trauma and intra-generational grief can best be described as psychological baggage being passed from parents to children along with the trauma and grief experienced in each individual's lifetime. The hypothesis is that the residue of unresolved, historic, traumatic experiences and generational or unresolved grief is not only passed from generation to generation, it is continuously being acted out and recreated in contemporary Aboriginal culture. Unresolved historic trauma will continue to impact individuals, families and communities until the trauma has been addressed mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually.¹⁸

¹⁷ Rabbitskin, Norma. Women's Healing Using Grandmother's Teachings. Unpublished paper, 2012.

¹⁸ Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2004). Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing. Ottawa: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. (p. 3)

Teaching Notes

Moon Six: Setting Your Intention

The mind is a powerful tool. Intention is the starting point of self-development. It can define how you want to live and be within the world. The power of setting intent and following through is potent for self-esteem and feeling reliable; we attract what we are.

Help to Form Healthy Intentions

Have the women sitting comfortably in the Circle. Guide them through the following statements, allowing some time in between each:

First, we must plant seeds within our hearts that which we want to happen within our lives.

Face inward, name what we want to see.

Align your spirit with the Earth, which gives all life, and speak your intent to live a balanced life.

It is ones' commitment to change and strengthen their emotional and spiritual selves.

Identify what needs to be in place to achieve wellness and be thoughtful in what you do and say.

Living within Core Values

Introduce the values and universal principles for the perpetuation of a good way of life. These values govern our relationship to all living things and how we are to treat each other. Introduce to the group five actions to put into daily life:

- ◆ **manatisiwin** - Respect
- ◆ **yospatisiwin** - Gentleness
- ◆ **kisewatisiwin** - Kindness
- ◆ **kwayaskatisiwin** - Honesty and Fairness
- ◆ **kanatisiwin** - Cleanliness



Impress upon participants the more they practice, the more they can integrate their spirit with what they want to happen in their lives. In many ways, this is how we all can begin to ground ourselves, to come into our own well-being.

Teaching Notes

Moon Seven: Practicing Mindfulness

What is Mindfulness?

According to Flora Weanos, a 99-year old Elder of the Big River First Nations, in a personal communication from Dec. 2, 2012, "...each and every day we are to be diligent to have perseverance. *ahkameyimo* in how you live your life." In her lifetime, this endearing woman adhered to the principle of the Cree word **ahkameyimo**: persistence by keeping active and mindful. Flora speaks of the determination to live life one's life according to teachings, paying attention to the task needed most in this moment. For our purpose:

*Mindfulness is experiencing the present moment without judging it. It is noticing whatever we are experiencing in our body, thoughts, emotions, and soul. Practicing mindfulness teaches us to relax and remain alert in the midst of the problems and joys of life. It encourages us to pause in the moment and respond to life with curiosity and an accepting attitude. The practice of mindfulness focuses on four areas: body, emotions, thoughts and soul. Mindfulness can then extend to noticing: - feelings in the body such as pain, pleasure, heat, cold, tension, relaxation - emotions such as fear, anger, sadness, happiness - thoughts that arise in the mind in the form of sentences, words, fragments, or images - connection with the spirits and universe."*¹⁹



This session must impress upon the participants how stay grounded and to become mindful. Every breath, every thought, every action witnessed in the now will help the women achieve a level of peace in their lives.

Gratitude:

- ◆ As necessary as it is to confront trauma, it is equally necessary to see all there is to be grateful for. Shifting focus from what has been lost doesn't make what we are grieving less important when we are thankful for good and healthy elements present in our lives. **nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing** honours the courage in the women participants, and reminds them of the possibilities for growth and healthy choices.
- ◆ Acknowledging the many gifts we have been given, being thankful and showing deep appreciation can ground us in the present moment. Every morning we are to give thanks that we have been given another day, to put into thought and prayer of what we want to see happen that very day.
- ◆ Share the following statements with participants:
 - Our purpose in life is to understand our role.
 - Appreciate your own gift from Creator.
 - Everybody has a sacred role within their family and community.
 - Practicing gratitude is the foundation of prayer.

¹⁹ Indigenous Approach. Cognitive Behavioural Interpersonal Skills. (Retrieved Aug. 2018 www.gpscbc.ca).

Teaching Notes

Moon Eight: Grandmother Moon Teachings

- ◆ Within First Nations worldview, the coming of age of a young girl was carefully observed: *"When a First Nations' girl reaches puberty there are teachings and practices in place to guide her into womanhood"*
- ◆ These time honoured teachings were practiced in seclusion, under the guidance of the grandmothers and other older women of the family *"At this time a woman is considered to be at her most powerful and therefore cannot be near sacred items and ceremonies"* ²⁰
- ◆ A young girl is spoken to extensively about her roles as a future mother, leader and partner; particular attention is paid to the sacred teaching that the woman is the home.
 - Through this teaching the young girl learns the importance of love, honesty, compassion and honour to keep the integrity and strength of the home.
 - Most importantly, the young girl is taught the creation stories, role of women, women's laws and other relevant teachings. **nato' we ho win: The Art of Self- Healing** calls upon the female energy of Grandmother Moon to instill wisdom in all participants.

*It is said that Grandmother Moon watches over the waters of the Earth. We see this in her regulating of the tides. Grandmother Moon controls all female life. Much of the water-life spawns according to the cycles of the moon. Just as Grandmother moon watches over the waters of the Earth, it is said that women watch over the waters of the people. Water always comes before new life. It is said that Grandmother Moon is especially close to women because she governs the woman's cleansing cycle, the natural cycle of menstruation known as the Moon Time. The moon cycle is a gift to women. It is a time to cleanse herself mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually and to prepare for new life.*²¹



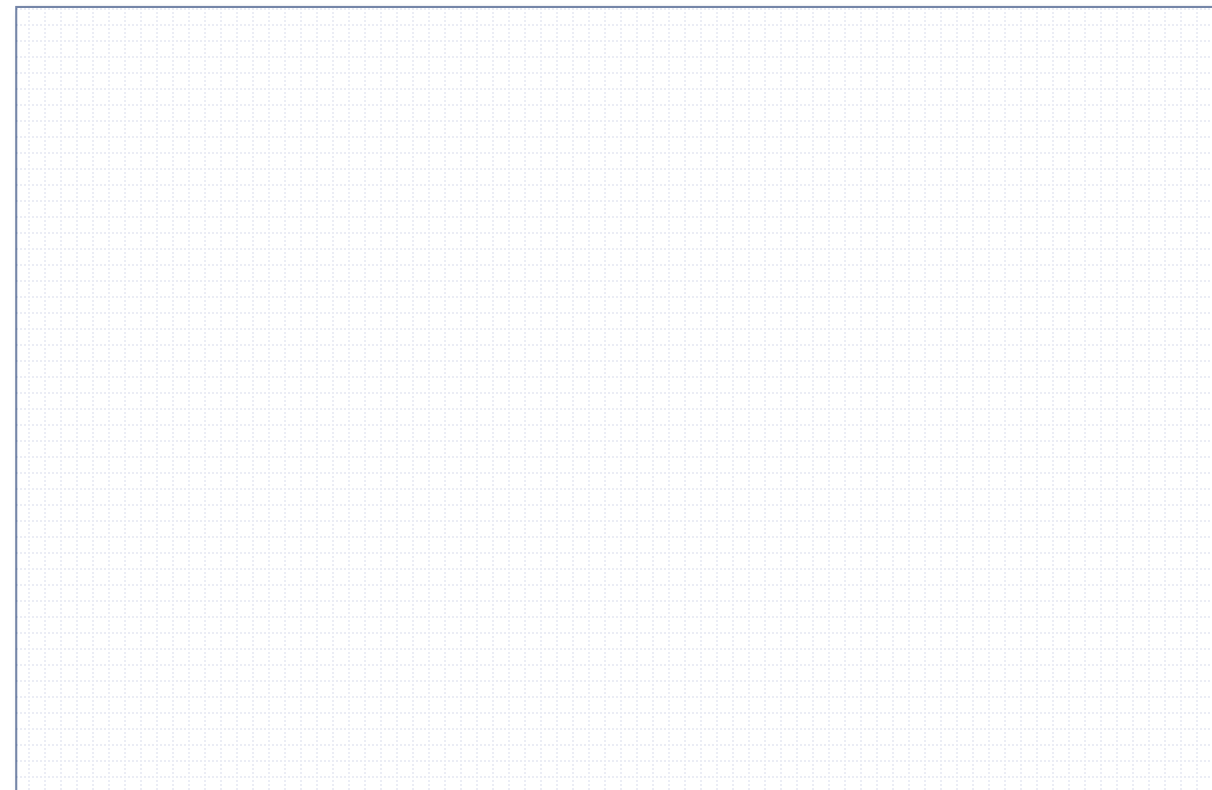
Women are the life givers and the ability to bring life into the world is the most sacred gift. Encourage the following discussion, of their individual experience and what they have now come to learn about moon time teachings. Ask them to share their learning.

11 Grandmother Time or Moon Time. (2009). Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College. (p. 31)

12 Grandmother Moon Teachings: Uniting Three Fire Against Violence - Helping and Healing for all Directions. (Retrieved July 2016 from Anishnawbe Health Toronto, www.aht.ca).

Read the following quote from a collection of stories that show the daily lives of Cree women from the last 100 years. From household chores, berry picking, and snaring rabbits, to school, marriage, and raising children, *Our Grandmothers' Lives: As Told in Their Own Words* provides insight into traditional teachings of an Indigenous society where practical and spiritual matters are always nearby:

*Truly, Our Grandmother is kind, 'Old-Woman-Spirit' as she is called. If it were not for that kind [woman], if woman had not put here on earth by the powers, we would not be sitting here; who would give birth to our existence as human? - no one; that grace [i.e., to bear children] was given to women. That is why the old people used to say, "Think of one another with compassion, you women! You all, think of the women with compassion!"*²²



²² *Our Grandmothers' Lives: As Told in Their Own Words* Paperback – Illustrated, April 3 1998 by Freda Ahenakew (Editor), H.C. Wolfart (Editor), page 98.

Teaching notes

Moon Nine: Women's Health

Begin session with the teaching from Cree Elder Mary Lee that speaks to how the Medicine Wheel represents life. *"When you look at the Medicine Wheel, you start from self. And as you look out, you make your circle. This is how the Medicine Wheel represents the life journey of people."*

Have the women take turns to read sentences.

Note of caution: Women can be triggered by the information presented in this session. Be sure to do this session as a trauma-informed practice. See the Additional Resource section of guide.

Ensure that members of the support team, especially a DVA and the Elder, are available to speak to women during, and after this session, as necessary.

Women's health includes mental health, intellectual health, physical health and spiritual health. The focus of this session is to introduce the '4 Aspects of Self' and have the Elder speak to her own understanding of this.



Remind participants that as change is constant and at any given moment, any of the four aspects of self can shift; that is life. We are all an accident or diagnosis away from life changing. The best we can do to prepare is to seek wholeness and balance in all four aspects of ourselves. nato' we ho win helps provide balance.

Activity 2

Spend approximately 30 minutes on this activity. Impress upon the women that to gain a better understanding the 4 aspects of their personhood, they must strive to balance each part of the whole as they attend to daily life.

Women's Safety in the Era of Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women

Every First Nations community within Canada has at least one woman who has been murdered or has gone missing. Indigenous women are more conscious of the vulnerabilities they face for physical safety and of the additional emotional stress that accompanies the staggering statistics.

Not only do Indigenous women deal with higher rates of interpersonal violence, they deal with poverty, addictions, and gang related issues more, including the related consequences of loss and additional trauma. The statistics are staggering. The lived reality of the women in the Circle contain painful to horrific moments that need to be supported and acknowledged. Here, in this session, we again try to dig deeper, face fear, and seek its' lesson to experience nato' we ho win.

Discussion about the crises of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women

nato' we ho win: The Art of Self- Healing provides a safe space for the women to share their fears and anxieties surrounding MMIW. As Facilitator, it is your responsibility to notice how participants are managing with the discussion. You have gotten to know these women over the last weeks; what you have observed will guide you as you organize this discussion, and decide what measures will ensure the discussion stays on track. See Additional Resources for Trauma Informed Practice information.

These prompts can help the discussion process to acknowledge and validate fears surrounding MMIW:

- ◆ How much does MMIW affect your decision making?
- ◆ How do you trust? What else could be part of that process?
- ◆ Have you sought other programs or counselling to help with your feelings about this?
- ◆ How much violence against women have you been exposed to in your own life?
- ◆ How would you see the world, and men in particular, if you never had those experiences?
- ◆ Ask who knows someone who went missing? Who knows a woman who was murdered?
- ◆ Do you know more than one? How many? How close were you?
- ◆ How does that make you feel? Why?
- ◆ What have you done to cope with this? How has that worked? Why? Why not?



This is not only a Canadian problem. Leading up to this session check for current stories from local news and around the world that can be brought into the discussion.

To create a Circle of Understanding within the Sharing Circle remind participants of protocol:

- ◆ Reinforce they are safe, and that speaking your fear and pain authentically will lead to healing.
- ◆ First Nations women have a voice in this crises and personal safety is critical at all times.
- ◆ For many this will be the first time they are sharing about a loved one murdered or missing—allow them the space to speak about their experience.

As Pamela Palmater, chair in Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University, explains:

If you speak to Indigenous women today, they will tell you that the crisis is far from over. The Indian Act still discriminates against Indigenous women and their descendants in the transmission of Indian status and membership in First Nations. Indigenous women suffer far greater rates of heart disease and stroke; they have higher rates of suicide attempts; they disproportionately live in poverty as single parents; their overincarceration rates have increased by 90% in the last decade; and 48% of all children in foster care in Canada are Indigenous. With this list of harrowing statistics, is it any wonder that thousands of our sisters are missing or murdered?²³



23 Reclaiming Power and Place: The Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls; Palmater, "Sexualized Genocide." <https://www.mmiwg-ffada.ca/final-report/>
<http://www.fourdirectionsteachings.com/transcripts/cree.htm>

Teaching notes

Moon Ten: Being In Service

Being in service fulfills our responsibility as caretakers of the gifts from Creator. Within Indigenous communities and cultural gatherings, there are specific roles that must be fulfilled and maintained. Everyone within the language group belongs to a whole and are taught to live within the interconnection and as a part of something greater than themselves.

Primary Values and Principles of Our Indigenous Culture

The values of Respect, Reciprocity, and Humility are held in the highest esteem and passed by the women/grandmothers onto the children and next generation are respect, reciprocity and humility. Coming to know our own giftedness begins with understanding how we incorporate and live out the full expression of these teachings in the three core values:

- ❖ Respect for oneself, others, and for all life forms is shown when we take only what you need and not wasting.
- ❖ Reciprocity is a true partnership between sharing what you can, and accepting what is offered.
- ❖ In the Indigenous worldview, Humility, never placing one's self above another, is a paramount teaching; no one is more important than another.

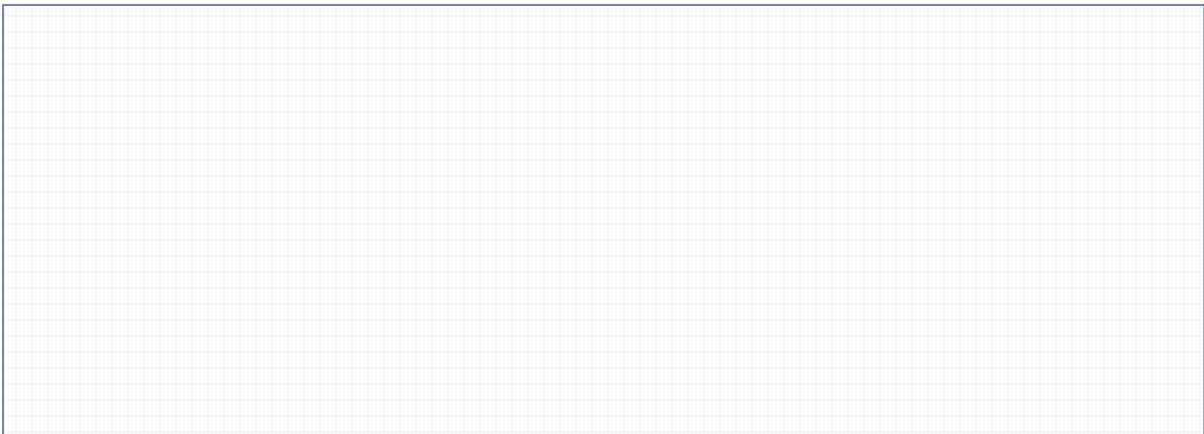


Therefore, we must be grateful for what we have and show our gratitude through ceremony. Our ancestors gave thanks for all we were given as human beings; we must do the same.

Traditional Art Project

Gather the supplies needed, and enough precut patterns of the outlined dress on chosen material (felt/canvas/hide) for each woman. Have enough safety-pins, beads, needles, thread, and scissors. This process should take over an hour. Monitor and decide accordingly how much time to allot.

Consider allowing time to work on group project or personal Hand Built project. We are nearing completion. Remind women of the timeline.




Teaching notes

Moon Eleven: Family and Home Well-Being

See Additional Resources.

Share the following suggestions of a modern-day spin on the traditional tasks:

- ✓ Create a chore list so everyone knows their task and responsibility, based on task and age.
 - Before tasks are assigned, ask children what they may want to do or learn. This can give them a sense of ownership and competency.
 - Show gratitude for a job done enthusiastically.
- ✓ Follow a regular schedule for meals, homework, bathing/shower/self-care and sleep time.
- ✓ Maintain consistent, age appropriate House Rules and expectations
 - Putting coats and shoes away at the door; picking up after one's self; keeping bedroom space clean; putting things away when you're done; taking out garbage; manners and respecting each other, etc.
- ✓ Teach children learned how to look after their personal possessions, and those shared by family.
 - Guide children to not borrow or take another's possessions without asking, and model how good it feels to earn something of their own.
 - When we appreciate what we have, instead of thinking about what we do not, we are showing gratitude to Creator.
- ✓ Ask questions to get children to talk about their experiences, joys and fears, by providing a safe place for them to learn how to express themselves.
 - Teach children to think about their response when asked a question, and to wait for their turn. Remind them to ask children for their input as they maintain family meetings and talking circles.
- ✓ Give praise always when something is done well.
 - Do not only notice when children do something wrong. They are learning every day, even if we don't want them too; we cannot guarantee what they remember or not as they grow. But they will remember when they feel valued. All humans do.
 - We can just try our best to let them know they are loved and their efforts are needed and appreciated.
- ✓ Hugs every day. A disconnect from Residential school was a lack of fond touching.
 - Impress upon the women that this can stop with them.



Teach children to believe and trust in themselves to make good decisions. Children must understand they play an important role within the family structure. Remind participants that they can raise their children differently than they were raised. They can keep all that was good from their childhood, and commit to not repeating what was dysfunctional. The women are called to lead by example.

Teaching notes

Moon Twelve: Filling the Void with Self-Love

Women's groups often have a tight schedule when project oriented. Begin to prepare women for the close of the project. Use this session to have participants finalize art project



The bonding and sense of belonging that has formed over the last 3 months can also cause abandonment issues in some participants. Consult with Elder and support team to watch for this and to be able to incorporate reassurance to the women that what they have learned will stay with them even when the program is finished.

Filling the Void

- ◆ Many choose ways to escape dealing with what has caused this void. Avoidance takes the easy (at first) way of substance abuse, over-eating, and slacking off on our responsibilities and self-care. This is self-sabotaging behaviour can only lead to unhealthy consequences for us, and our loved ones.
- ◆ Hardest part of healing is confronting what we want to escape from. When we put our spirit first and focus on coming to know the life force and our own unique gifts, we gain strength to face our fears to begin the healing process.

Oral History & Soul Flame

The Elder leads this portion.

Many grandmothers, when it comes to women's teachings, ensure women's roles and responsibilities. They continue to pass knowledge through ceremony. They re-create ancestral art-forms, learn and maintain hand building knowledge and craft family art forms, use nature to tool cultural objects, and uphold the healing songs, stories, dance, and language.

Grandmothers and grandfathers create cultural learning spaces that help their communities and families maintain healthy cultural lifestyles. Everyone who participates acquires sacred thought and can see the spiritual interconnection and depth of an enlightenment of lived knowledge of their ancestors.



Indigenous oral history has an integral role in keeping culture alive. Creation stories are how First Nations people come to know who they are, and provide information about their world and universe. Oral history builds layers upon layers with each stage of life, until as an adult a worldview is solidified.



It is through the language that oral history unfolds the heritage, the identity, and customary ways. Protocols must be observed for the transfer of living knowledge via narratives. When First Nations Elders are asked to speak about their history, they will acknowledge the reverence they have for their language. To illustrate what is meant by oral history, read this sacred telling of the 'soul flame':

Our human birth - our Indigenous birth, the Creator gave this to us and Spirit of the tree to bless us with. It was at that time the Creator blessed us before our human birth, from the Creator's flame, a "soul flame" - the soul flame is there to look after our bodies, our minds and our souls. We picked from the Creator's flame before our human birth - the tiny flame we picked became our soul, which is called a soul flame that is half-man half woman when we go to pick our soul flame - it is then that it's decided whether you would be male or female or what you would look like.²⁴

Sylvia McAdam, lawyer, author, and activist, wrote *Cultural Teachings: First Nations Protocols and Methodologies* in 2009. It was the first book that captured oral history in written form. Though no spiritual and sacred information could be written down, it provides a rich account of the beauty and depth of Saskatchewan Indigenous peoples oral culture. Read an account of the Soul Flame from her:

...it's translated into the creator's flame we make our journey to that creators flame and it's shaped like a Sun, it's like the shape of a Sun and you go to that flame and you take a tiny flame from it and you put it on the top of your head and when you're putting on the top of your head where the soft spot is it becomes your soul flame it becomes your soul and that's when it's decided whether you will be male or female and what nation you'll be born into and when you're born into that nation you're born into that nations responsibilities and obligations so when you're make your journey to the earth and you're born into your human birth you're born with this creators flame it is said that when you're born with it you're connected with all of humankind because of that soul flame this is how come as indigenous people one of our most sacred greetings or sayings is "all my relations".²⁵

24 Ahenakew, Barry. (2010). *Cultural Teachings: First Nations Protocols and Methodologies*. Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre. Saskatoon, SK: SICC. (p. 3.)

25 McAdam S. *Cultural Teachings: First Nations Protocols and Methodologies*. Saskatoon, SK: Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre. 2009:1891-921. <https://www.nccie.ca/knowledge-space/indigenous-governance/sylvia-mcadam/#>

Teaching notes

Moon Thirteen: Celebration and Closing Feast



Feasts are one way of expressing gratitude for whatever one has been given or achieved. Organize a potluck with the help of the support team, or make preparations as will best suit your group. Work from the lessons learned from the Welcome Feast to streamline preparations.

- ◆ Discuss with participants the possibility of maintaining contact with new friends.
- ◆ Prepare with help from support team a display table of all the completed projects.
- ◆ Reinforce that each woman within the circle has a responsibility to pass what they have learned onto their loved ones.
- ◆ Final Closing Sharing Circle: What nato' we ho win will the women maintain in their life?

Many thanks for taking on this role for **nato' we ho win: The art of Self-Healing** from PATHS. This program has the potential to be replicated and adjusted to reach many Indigenous women who have experienced interpersonal trauma. We hope that it does.

Please look through the Additional Resources we have included, and we invite you to suggest more. We would appreciate any feedback you have about the program; this is a living document, brought forth from many hands.

Hiy Hiy!



Additional Resources



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