



# 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



Program Manual



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](http://www.leahdorion.ca) for more information about her artistic practice.



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An Artistic and Cultural Program  
for Indigenous Women Who Have  
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*nato' we ho win*



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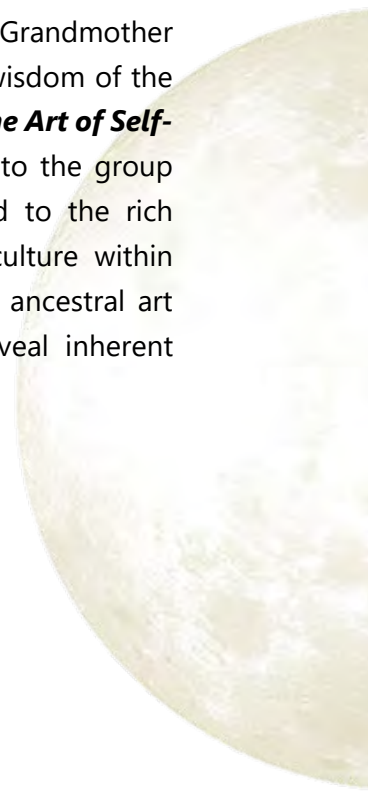
Moon 11	Family and Home Well-being
Moon 12	Filling the Void with Self-love
Moon 13	Celebration & Closing Feast





A close-up photograph of a person's hands operating a white sewing machine. The machine is stitching a vibrant, multi-colored ribbon (orange, yellow, green, and pink) onto a piece of fabric with a complex green and white geometric pattern. The person's arms and hands are visible, guiding the fabric and ribbon through the machine. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people in the room.

There is no right or one way to achieve healing; it is a life long learning process. The suggested activities contained in the nato' we ho win sessions provide opportunities for reconnection to the grandmothers' ways to help participants navigate not only generational trauma, but their own personal, situational trauma.



Historical context of why traditional knowledge, language, ritual, and art was lost or diminished is needed to re-establish and strengthen connection to the land. The idea is to use what is in and around us, drawing from local expertise to include what the landscape offers us to help find meaning. This healing work fosters love for self through learning traditional life skills to fill a void. The sessions seek to fill the gaps in the participant's knowledge and to breathe renewed life to the traditional practices.

The group is always facilitated by an Indigenous Knowledge Keeper or a Trauma-Informed Artist. An Elder and Domestic Violence Advocate (DVA) and/ or Community Support Person (CSP) are present at every group session. The organizers of ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** know who the Elders, the language speakers, the knowledge keepers, cultural educators and traditional artists are within their respective communities. Bringing these women into a Learning Circle to practice cultural traditions and customs will prepare the way for genuine nato' we ho win to occur. They are a crucial cultural resource to draw upon. Offering participants access to a locally based nato' we ho win activity can lead to a greater sense of personal reliance upon one's acquired self-care knowledge and skills.

Each session utilizes prayer and ceremony to guide the cultural and healing process. The program is structured to emphasize the personal giftedness of each participant, to put into practice the principles of self-awareness and self-determination. It will validate the cultural identity of the participants as they unpack and heal from historical and intergenerational trauma.

Nato' we ho win engages the legacy of cultural ways of knowing that flow outwardly from the lines of our ancestry. Facilitator and Elder will both lead the Circle and will help the participants come to understand their role in life within a larger context. Ancestral wisdom was maintained by passing on the lived knowledge from person to person and generation to generation. ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** adds to the wisdom legacy





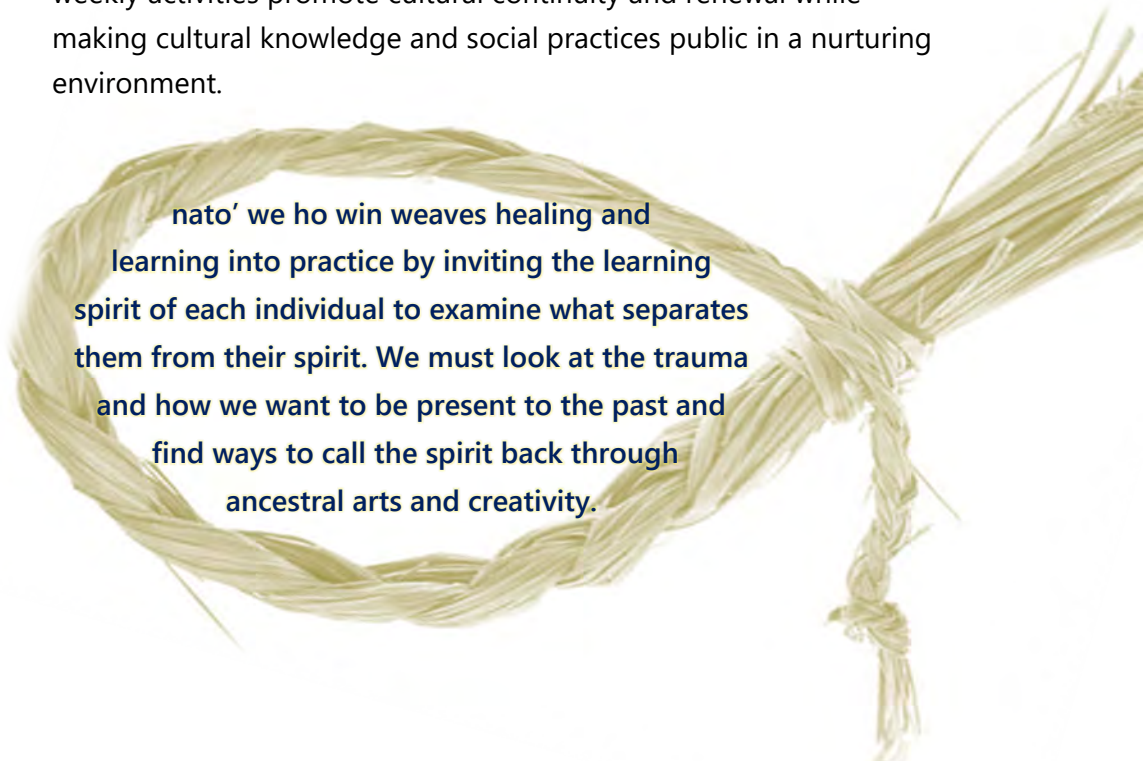
***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** helps participants celebrate their Indigenous identity, instilling a deeper sense of belonging for the women in the group as they heal. Exposure to a local grandmother's traditional art form alongside its' attached healing ways helps nurture an inward healing journey.

At the core of ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** is the desire to assist the women participating in the sessions to discover the multitude of cultural self-care activities that exist within the many Indigenous communities and language groups.

*nato' we ho win is grounded within Indigenous perspective and honours the diversity that exists within all Indigenous language groups*

***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** honours the integrity of the participants. Everyone connected to nato' we ho win must acknowledge that each participant has her own experience and personal truth, and is entitled to follow and choose her own healing path.

***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** seeks to break the cycles of destructive and dysfunctional behaviour in participants' lives by helping them acquire a new cultural knowledge system. The guided weekly activities promote cultural continuity and renewal while making cultural knowledge and social practices public in a nurturing environment.



*nato' we ho 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.*



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

May all participants:

**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.

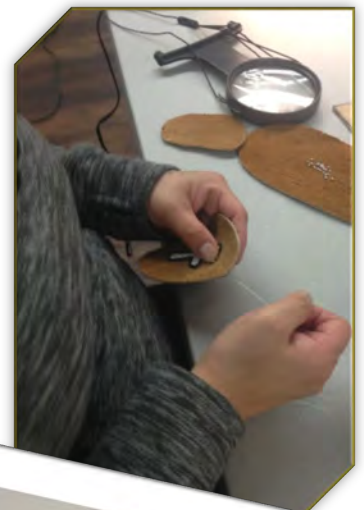
**Come** into a meaningful understanding of personal and cultural practice that honours an acknowledgment to a spiritual reality of their own definition.

### 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 Creator.
- ◇ They are not defined by their past experiences.



# nato' we ho win

nato' we ho win works within the natural law of interconnection, and holds a deep, embedded understanding of how 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.

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

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 our 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.



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We must be respectful of all things, with the understanding of fulfilling our responsibility to learn and pass on the collective wisdom and knowledge of the ancestors.



Grandmother's Moon teachings spoke of child rearing and ways to live a balanced life; they reinforced natural laws.

The 13 moons in a year were when the grandmothers, aunties, and women Elders gathered to gain and share women's teachings. 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 frame.



### Orientating Grandmother Moon Teachings

Moon time is  
a time to learn  
about the body  
and self

Moon Time is a  
time to balance  
energies and be  
introspective

Women ask  
Grandmother  
Moon for  
direction in life,  
for wisdom,  
and for help  
with parenting

Girls sat with  
Grandmothers &  
Aunties to learn  
how to care for  
themselves

This is a woman's  
ceremonial time of  
healing, clearing,  
and cleaning

Grandmothers  
teach and plant  
a seed of  
learning



Leah Marie Dorion, Moon Cycle Birds, 2019. acrylic on canvas.



Practices for nato' we ho win are found within all First Nations groups. All feature the connection of the 4 aspects of self (Physical, Spiritual, Intellectual, Emotional) and share the view that a human being is part of an entire, whole system.

That knowledge gives us direction for how to act accordingly, to live a life 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 Indigenous knowledge systems allows a safe place for the human mind to express and connect to the unseen beauty of creation and come to that place of belonging. The unseen and intimate connection between the land and people is expressed through traditional arts.

When we access ancestral ways of knowing, there are three pillars we must position ourselves within "compassion, strength and the mystery!" In many ways, every person who comes into the circle is a helper; they are coming to help themselves and their families.



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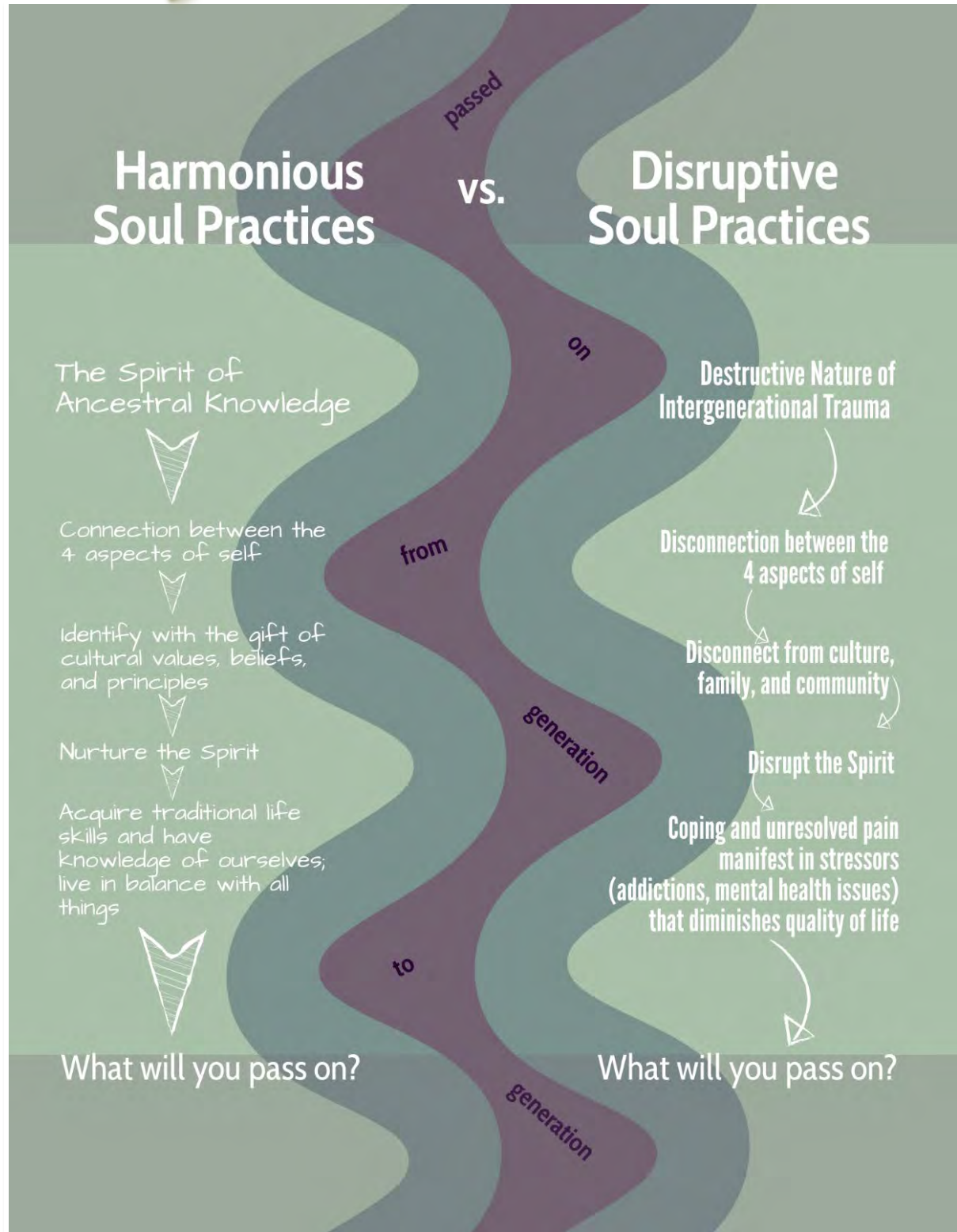
We must acknowledge that every action, every thought, every prayer shifts energy. We must acknowledge that it takes time to heal years of disconnection. Attending to one's past trauma goes layer by layer, one at a time. Seeking help must be a priority because "trauma can be defined as an experience (or series of experiences) that overwhelms one's ability to cope."<sup>1</sup> It takes courage to enter the learning circle. Filling the void left by trauma with love requires the women to seek counsel; to ask for help. Attendance at healing ceremonies will shift negative energies as participants grow into their own realization for healing and learning new skills.

The ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** support team focus on the helping the participant to heal from intergenerational trauma. They work to unpack the critical components, build upon the existing knowledge of each person, and have a clear understanding of the impacts of accumulated trauma and unresolved grief.

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)



# nato' we ho win



Working within a holistic framework provides a greater understanding about the nature of balance that is sought.



As participants practice respect for the self and thoughtfulness in what they say and do, their word becomes impeccable.

This is a gift to themselves, other women of the Circle, and the next generation.



Being part of this guided healing journey is to acknowledge the feelings that come from these words as follows:

- ◇ 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.<sup>2</sup>



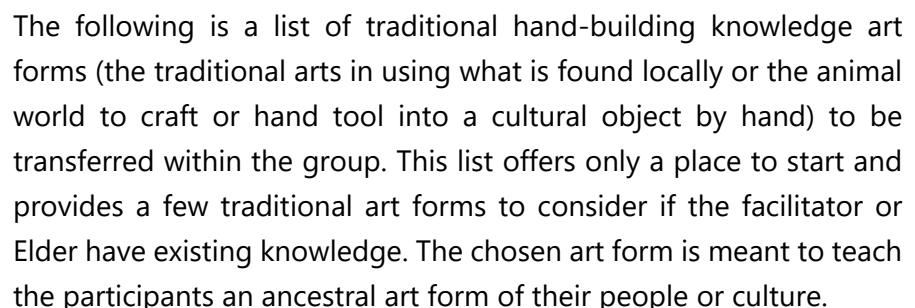
<sup>2</sup> Union of Ontario Indians. The Soul Wounds of the Anishinabek People: The Psychological and Intergenerational Impacts of the Indian Residential School System. North Bay, On, 2013: Union of Ontario Indians.





The physical portion of ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing*** is based on creating and making ancestral art forms. Along with their personal journey of learning and healing, the women will create a group art project. The purpose of this cultural arts intervention is to assist women in their journey of self-discovery; the art forms of the nation, language group, or area are encouraged. Each facilitator is singularly gifted and has their own life experience. Not everyone carries the same traditional arts familiarity. Facilitators are encouraged to pass on their individual knowledge. As women join a nato' we ho win Sharing Circle group, the experience is shaped by the people attending and place where it is being held.

- ❖ Participants are asked which traditional knowledge system they want to learn.
- ❖ Each nato' we ho win group will create a data bank of the people in the community who are the knowledge keepers, the Elders, and those who are the gifted ones. Gifted ones keep ancestral art forms alive and are a spiritual guiding force.
- ❖ Participants are introduced to the idea of reciprocity; of being responsible or showing responsibility **to nato' we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing** to finish, not give up, but face the challenge of the art form or activity.



- ◆ **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.**



Ideally, women work on the same project and assist each other. Using the teachings of this art form further instills the importance of learning ancestral knowledge systems.

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





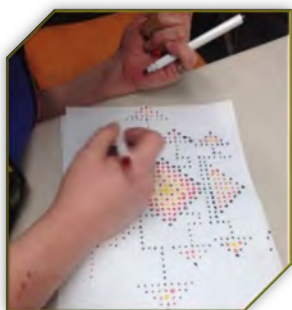


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## Program Format

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- ❖ 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 activities take place during Week 2 to 11.
- ❖ Week 12 focuses on completing the chosen 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.

Participating in weekly creative writing and journaling is encouraged to create understanding and 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.

At each session:

- ❖ the Facilitator and Elder welcome the participants followed by an Opening Prayer and Smudge performed by the Elder.
- ❖ Participant seating is placed in a physical circle to reinforce the Sharing Circle protocol.
- ❖ Traditional steeped tea is served each week in keeping with the custom of the Indigenous Grandmothers serving guests on their arrival.
  - ❖ The tea also serves as a consistent reminder of the importance of self-care during the program.



# na'to' we ho win

## Code of Conduct

We do not gossip

We help each other  
and are helpful

We always acknowledge  
each other respectfully

We smudge

We are open to the teachings  
that come when we smudge,  
and we cleanse any heaviness  
we may carry

### Smudging

Smudging will help dispel any negativity women may be carrying with them into the circle. In a way, the smudge lifts the heaviness of life, cleanses the mind, body and spirit. We smudge to cleanse our spirit and soul. The Elder and facilitator will set the guidelines based on the cultural norms and protocols of the participants.

### Guidelines for a Safe Sharing Circle:

Only one person speaks at a time.

- ◆ Only the person holding the feather or talking stick may speak.
- ◆ Dialogues are not part of the circle, as they can become confrontational.

Introduce yourself

- ◆ It is polite to introduce yourself when it is your first round.
- ◆ Use your spirit name if you have one, or your given name.

Speak from the heart

- ◆ Address the circle authentically and honestly.
- ◆ Speak as long as needed, while being mindful of other participant's time and needs.

Listen with respect

- ◆ All participants must listen attentively to give support to the speaker.
- ◆ Listening with your heart allows you to hear the true intent of the speakers' words.
- ◆ Listen in the way you expect others to hear you.

What is said in the circle, stays in the circle

- ◆ The Sharing Circle is a safe place
- ◆ Never repeat anything that is said within the circle, unless you have absolute permission from the original speaker.



1 tablespoon  
of chopped fresh nettle

½ tablespoon  
of chopped fresh mint

4 cups of boiling water

Steep for (at least)  
5 minutes

Add honey if desired

Enjoy!

Along with having traditional herbal tea served at each session, other forms of self-care are discussed and practiced throughout ***nato' we ho win: The art of Healing.***

- ◆ In many ways, practicing self-care is a return to our grandparents' self-reliance, where they tended to their own health needs by applying medicinal knowledge in its many forms.
- ◆ 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.
- ◆ Self-care is a learning support that illustrates Indigenous ways of knowing and ancestral practices.
- ◆ Examples of self-care during sessions include:
  - Learning to make lotion, salve, hair wash, skin wash, and foot soak from easily accessible ingredients
  - Hot stone therapy for pain and stress relief
  - Herbal tea

A person will embrace their own healing journey when they are ready. A primary focus of nato' we ho win is to honour the rawness and the courage it takes to feel the pain and lean into it; to begin to understand how to fill the gaps; to develop a willingness to fill the void left from trauma with love for self.



Learning medicinal plant knowledge is an ancestral art form. Robin Wall Kimmerer reminds us in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass* that "In some Native languages the term for 'plants' translates to 'those who take care of us'."

Mint (*Mentha*) and Stinging nettle, (*Urtica dioica*) are two common and versatile plants that can be used in multiple ways for your health and home. Many self-care suggestions use them separately and combined for their healing properties. Look into how to grow, harvest, and use these and other native plants by finding information at a local health food store, library, or Google.



Nettles have long been of use to humans for food, fibre and medicines.

- ◆ Nettle extracts have long been used to ease inflammation, can help with rheumatism and arthritis pain, can be a mild diuretic, and as a wash to help clear dandruff.
- ◆ They have a fairly neutral taste and the young, nutritious tops can be added to many dishes without affecting the flavour.
- ◆ They prefer moist, fertile soil that is rich in phosphates. Nettles are good to add to compost.

The Mint family of plants have long been used for medicinal properties whether ingested or used for topical treatments. Mint can:

- ◆ Aid digestion and relieve bloating.
- ◆ Helps a sore throat.
- ◆ Anti-inflammatory properties.
- ◆ Freshens breath.
- ◆ Mild stimulant without caffeine.
- ◆ Wash and tincture are slightly antiseptic and cooling in summer or when feverish.





# Roles and Protocol

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## Facilitator

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The Facilitator sets the tone for the group and must acknowledge her teachers. She knows of where her knowledge arises and is aware of the protocols in accessing Elders.

The facilitator must be able to draw upon their oral history and the knowledge it contains. This knowledge informs the Facilitator of their role and responsibility for the world and how it works around us.

Within the collective Circle of ***nato' we ho win: The Art of Healing***, the Facilitator weaves together a knowledge system of Indigenous culture and practice to bring her own experience and knowledge to the group.

A fluent connection to language is a major asset and helps those present embrace their indigeneity. 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(s) protect and keep for all women in the Sharing Circle.

Facilitators use ancestral practices lay out  
a foundation for change to happen  
at a spiritual and emotional level  
for the participants.



# nato' we ho win

## Facilitator Checklist

- ◆ Ensure that the Elder and the rest of the support team 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 session's 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.



### Elder Responsibilities

- ◇ Open each session with a prayer.
- ◇ Lead the smudge; she may designate a helper, be ready to assist the Elder.
- ◇ Provide cultural support and assist in the cultural transference of nato' we ho win.
- ◇ Fulfill the role of mentor and guide to those seeking and searching for greater understanding of Indigenous thoughts and practice philosophies.
- ◇ Share, and give meaning by sharing aspects and experiences of her life-long learning journey.
- ◇ Include healing ceremonies of their community or language group.
- ◇ Create an understanding of the whole system and our interconnection and relationship to this sacred life cycle.
- ◇ End each session with a closing prayer or song.



## Community Support Person (CSP)

The Community Support Person (CSP) can be a Domestic Violence Advocate or a Community Health Worker. They will be a woman whose experience includes providing support to survivors of Intimate Partner Violence.

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

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 will also be the point of contact for all group participants regarding attendance and childcare prior to the group's beginning and in between sessions.



### CSP Responsibilities

- ◇ Connect with all participants prior to the start of the group to confirm eligibility, childcare, and transportation needs as required and/or approved.
- ◇ Accessible to answer any questions the participants may have.
- ◇ Additional support to Facilitator and Elder.
- ◇ Connect with participants in between group sessions regarding transportation and childcare needs, then communicate these appropriately to the pre-arranged transportation company and the Childminding Organizer.
- ◇ Find out what options are available within the space you are using for smudging, and have the Elder lead this portion of the session. If this is an issue due to the space you are using, you may have to go outside.

It is important participants of the Sharing Circle smudge before each session.

## Participant

V d V r V n d



Each woman participating in **nato'we ho win: The Art of Self-Healing** is ready to begin their healing journey, and you all come each week filled with the intention of actualizing your inherent role as a Knowledge Carrier.

For the 13 sessions of the program, the nato' we ho win team (Facilitator, Elder, CSP) is there to assist you as you personally explore aspects of knowledge systems, and continue your personal dialogue about the impacts accumulated grief and loss over many generations has had within your lineage.

The healing inquiry process within each of the participants will be unique, and you all will uncover many areas of intersectionality from colonization disruption. Indigenous peoples encounter many forms of systemic racism, which often intensifies the existing effects of intergenerational trauma. This intergenerational trauma is then wrapped in layers of any trauma you have experienced in your life. To heal the present, you must know the past.

**nato'we ho win: The Art of Healing** is meant to be a safe place to learn, grow and heal. You are invited to make it your own, and refer back to this manual and your memories of the sessions as you continue on your lifelong healing journey.

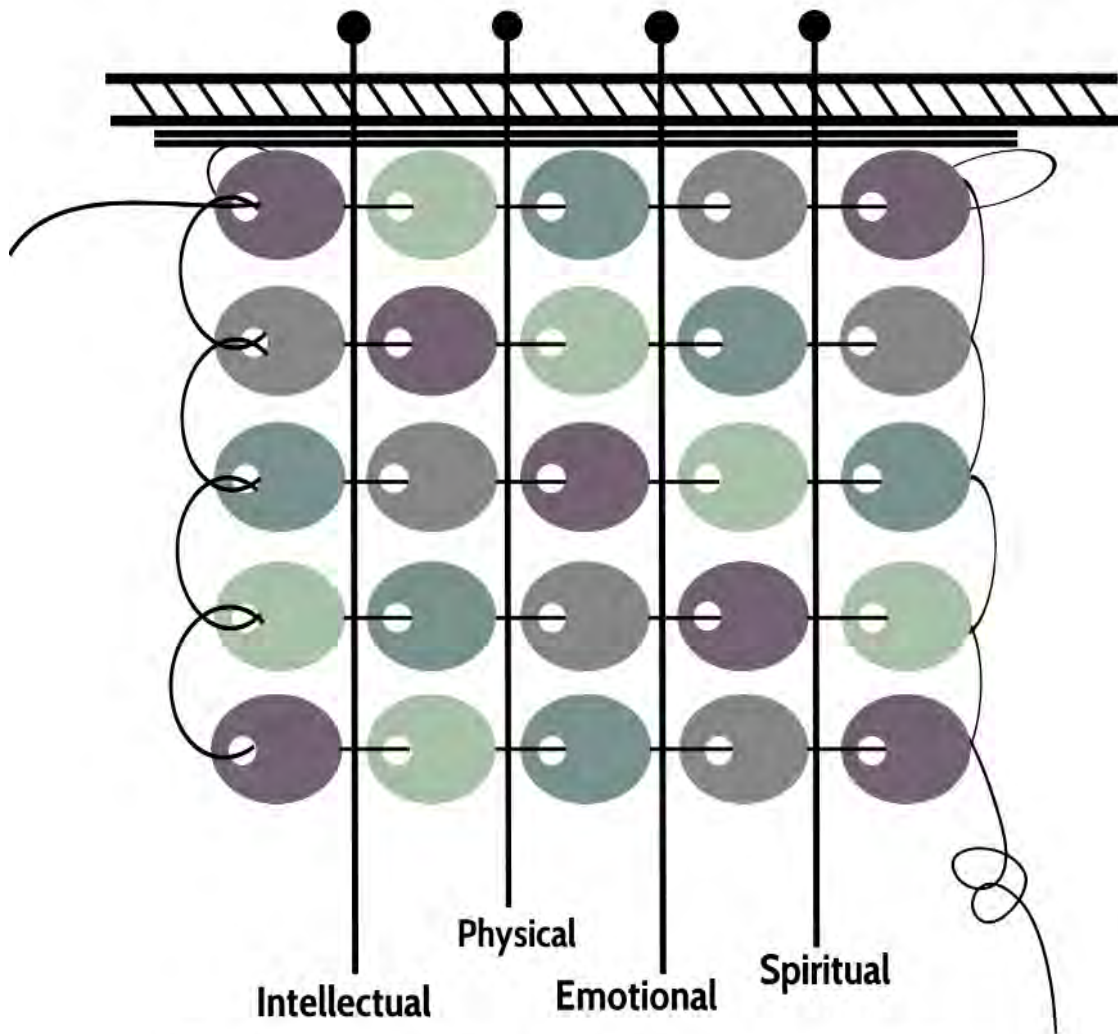


## Participant Responsibilities

- ◇ Commit to the challenge of learning a new knowledge system.
- ◇ Be accountable by arriving on time or phone your contact person if unable to make it. Make sure you cancel the taxi or ride, too.
- ◇ Follow the nato' we ho win Code of Conduct.
- ◇ Acknowledge each person respectfully. Shake hands as you enter the room, as in the custom of the ancestors. \*Proper social-distance measures may apply.
- ◇ You will be asked to give back in your own way and to assist before and after the program. Whenever possible, please volunteer 30 minutes of your time to help the nato' we ho win team in set up and take-down of the space.
- ◇ Ensure your children are with the child-care team.
- ◇ You are called to help others whenever possible.
- ◇ Reflect, and journal or draw each week.
- ◇ Conduct yourself in alignment to the teachings of the grandmothers, and by following the concept of having good relationships with self, peers, and the nato'we ho win team of Facilitator, Elder, and CSP.
  - ◇ This learning space is theirs to protect and keep for all women in the Sharing Circle.



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.

*nato' we ho win*