



# A TRAUMA INFORMED SESSION; HOW TO SUPPORT INDIGENOUS NURSING STUDENTS

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DALHOUSIE  
UNIVERSITY

# 42 MI'KMAW COMMUNITIES IN NOVA SCOTIA

- A. ACADIA
- B. ANNAPOLIS VALLEY
- C. BEAR RIVER
- D. ESKASONI
- E. GLOOSCAP
- F. S4PEKNE'KATIK
- G. MEMBERTOU
- H. MILLBROOK
- I. PAQTNKEK
- J. PICTOU LANDING
- K. POTLOTEK
- L. WAGMATCOOK
- M. WAYCOBAH



## 13 Governance Communities

Primary community where Chief & Councils are located



## 29 Satellite Affiliates

Area administered by one of the 13 governance communities



- |                              |                             |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Bear River 6A - Greywood  | 16. Paqtnkek-Niktuek        |
| 2. Bear River 6 B - Lequille | 17. Pennal 19               |
| 3. Beaver Lake 17            | 18. Ponhook Lake 10         |
| 4. Boat Harbour West 37      | 19. Sheet Harbour 36        |
| 5. Caribou Marsh 29          | 20. Shubenacadie Grand Lake |
| 6. Cole Harbour 30           | 21. Indian Brook            |
| 7. Eskasoni 3A               | 22. St. Croix 34            |
| 8. Fisher's Grant 24G        | 23. Welnek                  |
| 9. Fisher's Grant IR 24      | 24. Sydney 28A              |
| 10. Franklin Manor 22        | 25. Truro 27A               |
| 11. Gold River 21            | 26. Truro 27 B              |
| 12. Malagawatch 4            | 27. Truro 27 C              |
| 13. Margaree 25              | 28. Wallace Hill 14A        |
| 14. Merigomish Harbour 31    | 29. Wildcat 12              |
| 15. New Ross 20              |                             |



# Today's Session



- Introduce the principles of trauma informed care that can be used in clinical and university settings.
- Review Indigenous values and worldviews
- Discuss how to acknowledge/support students who may be experiencing distress and/or adversity such as in the case of ongoing Residential schools investigations.
- Review supports and resources for Indigenous Nursing students.
- Questions, Reflections & Answers





We are All Learners



# What is Trauma-Informed Practice?





# Trauma Informed Principles

- SAFETY
- TRUSTWORTHINESS
- CHOICE
- COLLABORATION
- EMPOWERMENT



Community Connections

Creating Cultures of Trauma-Informed Care (CCTIC):  
A Self-Assessment and Planning Protocol

Roger D. Fallot, Ph.D. and Maxine Harris, Ph.D.

November, 2011

Over the past fifteen years, there has been growing acknowledgement of several interrelated facts concerning the prevalence and impact of trauma in the lives of people in contact with various human service systems. We advocate for trauma-informed service approaches for a number of reasons.

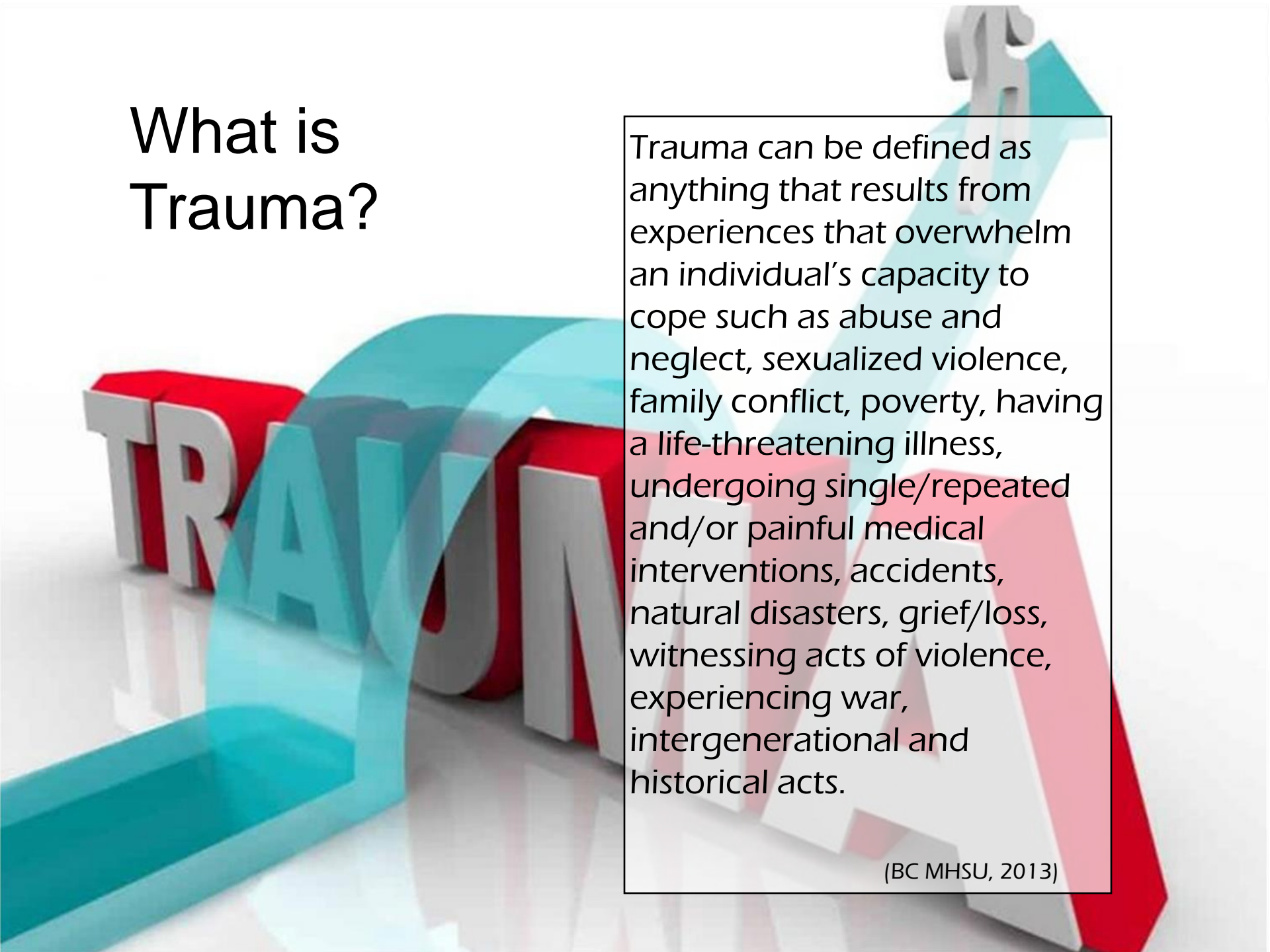
•**Trauma is pervasive.** National community-based surveys find that between 55 and 90% of us have experienced at least one traumatic event. And individuals report, on average, that they have experienced nearly five traumatic events in their lifetimes. The experience of trauma is not the rare exception we once considered it. It is part and parcel of our social reality.

•**The impact of trauma is very broad and touches many life domains.** Trauma exposure increases the risk of a tremendous range of vulnerabilities: mental health problems like posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, excessive hostility, and generalized anxiety; substance abuse; physical health problems; interpersonal struggles; eating disorders; and suicidality, among many others. Trauma thus touches many areas of life not obviously or readily connected with the experience of trauma itself. This broad impact makes it particularly important to understand the less evident links between trauma and its sequelae.

•**The impact of trauma is often deep and life-shaping.** Trauma can be fundamentally life-altering, especially for those individuals who have faced repeated and prolonged abuse and especially when the violence is perpetrated by those who were supposed to be caretakers. Physical, sexual, and emotional violence become central realities around which profound neurobiological and psychosocial adaptations occur. Survivors may come to see themselves as fundamentally flawed and to perceive the world as a pervasively dangerous place. Trauma may shape a person's way of being in the world; it can deflate the spirit and trample the soul.

•**Violent trauma is often self-perpetuating.** Individuals who are victims of violence are at increased risk of becoming perpetrators themselves. The intergenerational transmission of violence is well documented. Community violence is often built around cycles of retaliation.

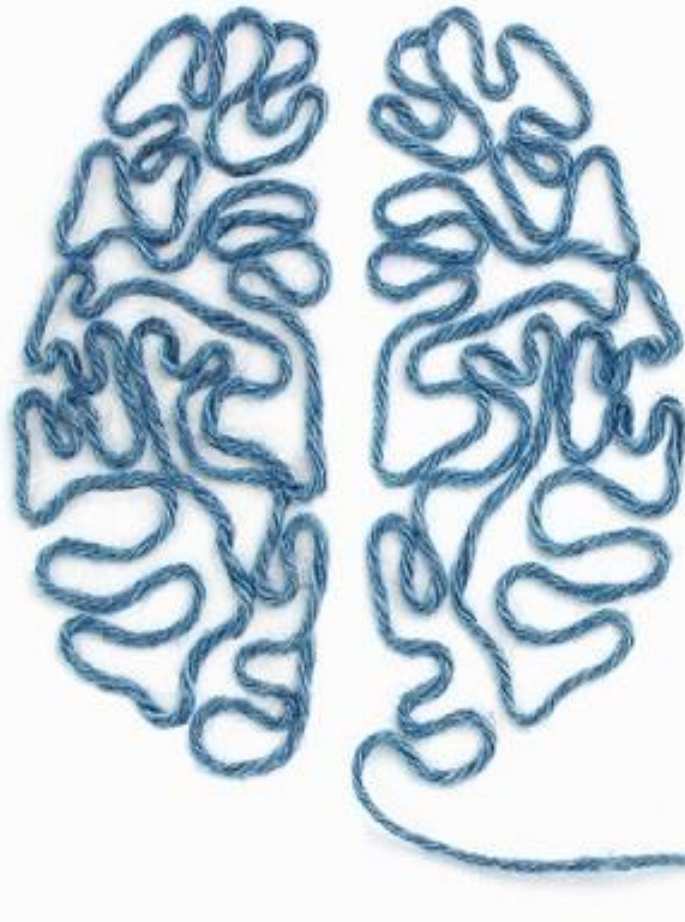
# What is Trauma?



Trauma can be defined as anything that results from experiences that overwhelm an individual's capacity to cope such as abuse and neglect, sexualized violence, family conflict, poverty, having a life-threatening illness, undergoing single/repeated and/or painful medical interventions, accidents, natural disasters, grief/loss, witnessing acts of violence, experiencing war, intergenerational and historical acts.

(BC MHSU, 2013)

# Some Common Types of Trauma



- **Acute trauma**
- **Repetitive trauma**
- **Complex trauma**
- **Complex Developmental trauma**
- **Vicarious trauma**
- **Cultural, Collective and Historical trauma**
- **Intergenerational trauma**



Trauma may happen at the personal, social, and collective/cultural level.

(Smye, 2014, Varcoe, 2014)



# Historical Trauma

- In the 1990's Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart began to examine the impacts of colonization on the Lakota peoples coining the term “historical trauma” which explored unresolved historical grief.
- Historical trauma: it is the “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences”
- Dr. Yellow Horse Brave Heart explored unresolved historical grief and the effects of the separation of families and forced assimilation of residential schools.



Dr. Maria Yellow  
Horse Brave Heart  
Historical Trauma

(Webster & Dunn, 2005, Wiechelt et al, 2020)

## The Three E's of Trauma



### EVENT

An event or series of events that overwhelms a person.

### EXPERIENCE

The person's reaction to that event determines if it is traumatic.

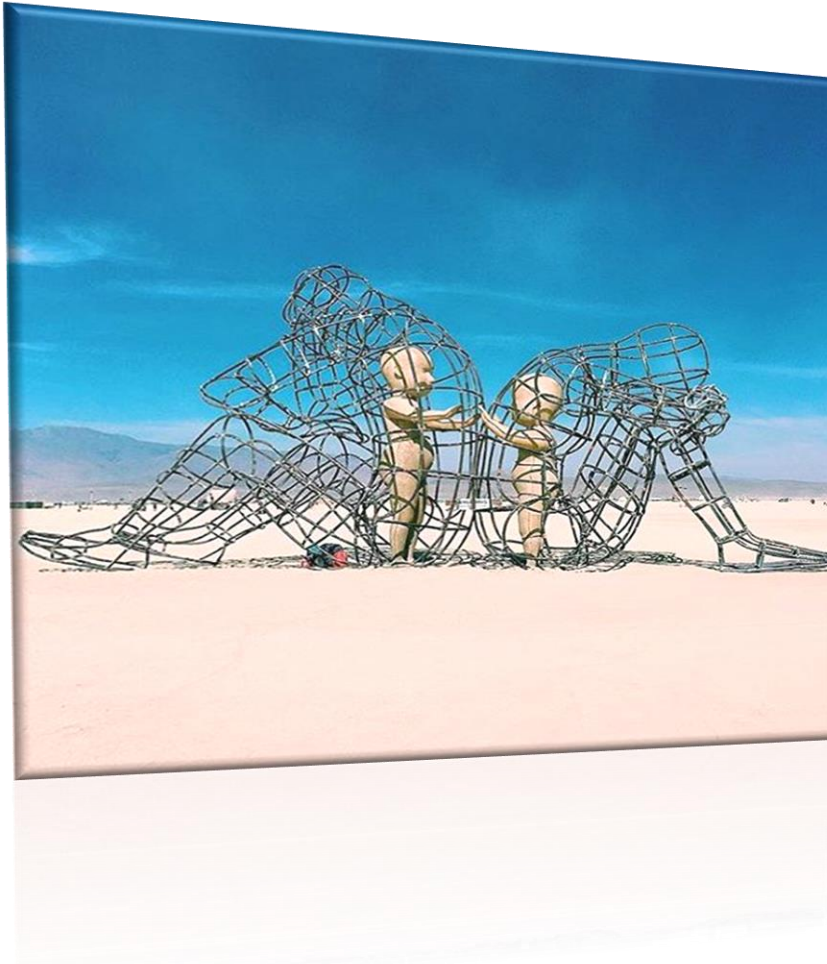
### EFFECTS

When we experience an event as traumatic there are a range of effects that happen on a broad array of the human experience. The effects are not necessarily linear. In other words, we cannot draw a straight line from the event to one specific effect



Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of **events**, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse **effects** on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.

# What are the Common Effects of Trauma?



## **Behavioural**

Self harm such as cutting, substance abuse, alcohol abuse, self destructive behaviours, isolation, choosing friends that may be unhealthy, suicide attempts, hyper vigilance

## **Interpersonal**

Frequent conflicts in relationships. Lack of trust. Difficulty establishing and maintaining relationships.

Revictimization.  
Boundaries



# What are the Common Effects of Trauma?



## Physical

Eating and sleeping disturbances, pain, low energy, headaches, panic and anxiety

## Spiritual

Guilt, Shame, Self blame, Self hatred, feeling damaged, feeling like a “bad” person , questioning one’s own purpose

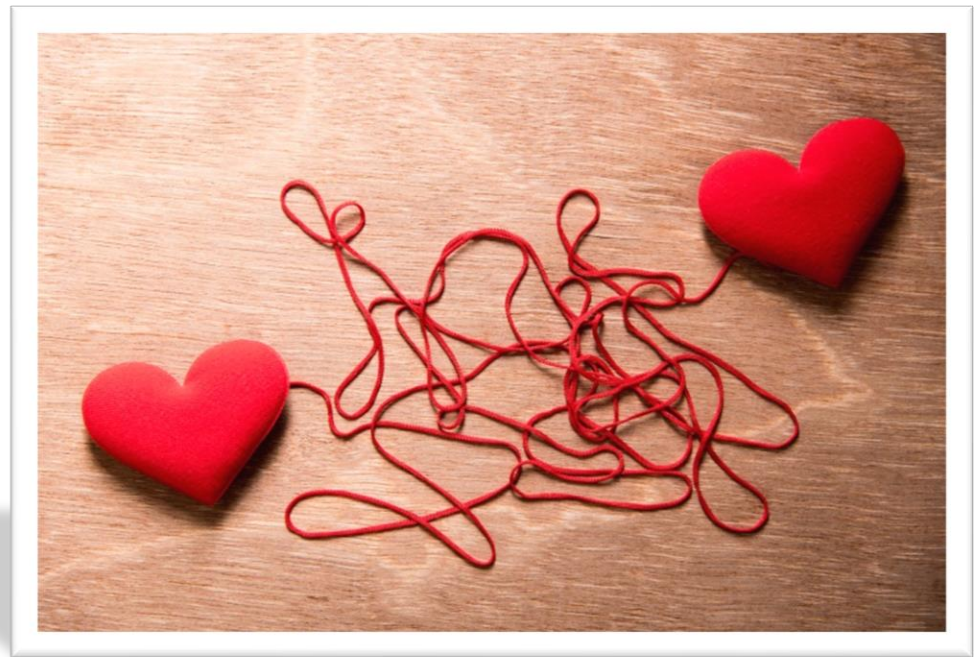
# What are the Common Effects of Trauma?

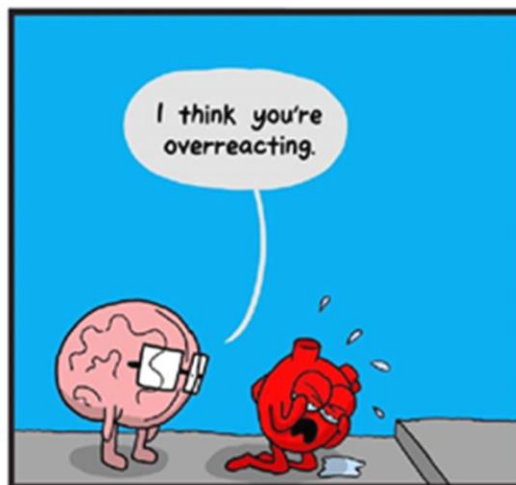
## Emotional

Depression,  
crying, anxiety,  
extreme  
vulnerability,  
panic attacks,  
fearfulness,  
anger, irritability,  
emotional  
numbness,  
difficulties in  
relationships

## Cognitive

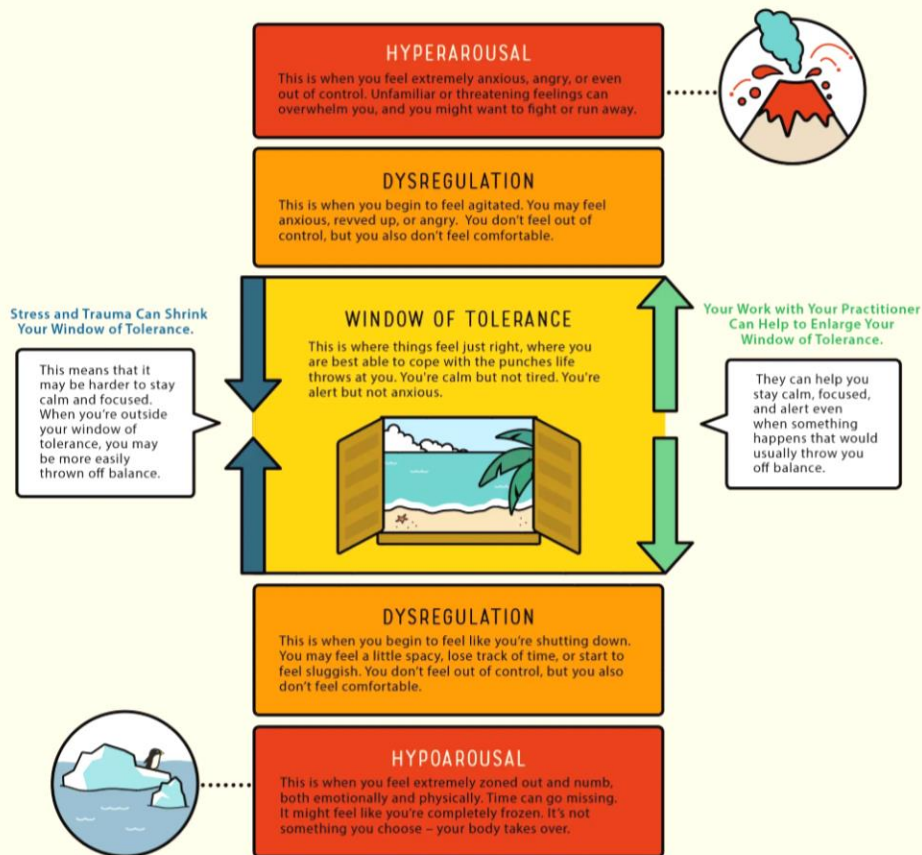
Memory lapses,  
loss of time,  
being flooded  
with  
recollections of  
trauma,  
difficulty making  
decisions,  
decreased ability  
to concentrate,  
thoughts of  
suicide







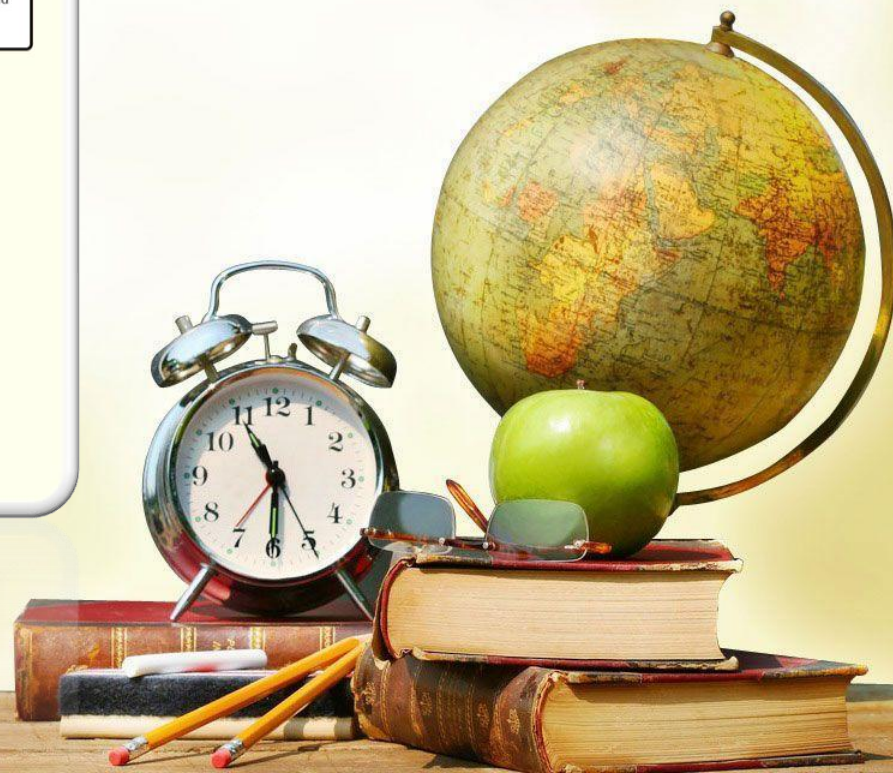
# How Trauma Can Affect Your Window of Tolerance



nicabm

www.nicabm.com

© 2017 The National Institute for the Clinical Application of Behavioral Medicine





# Trauma Informed

A shift from asking ....

“ What ‘s wrong with you” to

“What **happened** to you”

- Considers the individual’s experience of trauma on the personal, interpersonal and societal levels
- Shift to acknowledging personal and collective strengths

Trauma Informed  
Practice Principles:

Safety  
Trustworthiness  
Choice  
Collaboration  
Empowerment



Trauma Informed Care is a universal, systematic, strengths-based service delivery approach that is rooted in an understanding of and responsiveness to the impact of trauma, that emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety for both providers and clients.



(Hopper, Bassuk, & Olivet, 2010)

“After a traumatic experience, the human system of self-preservation seems to go onto permanent alert, as if the danger might return at any moment“



FLEE

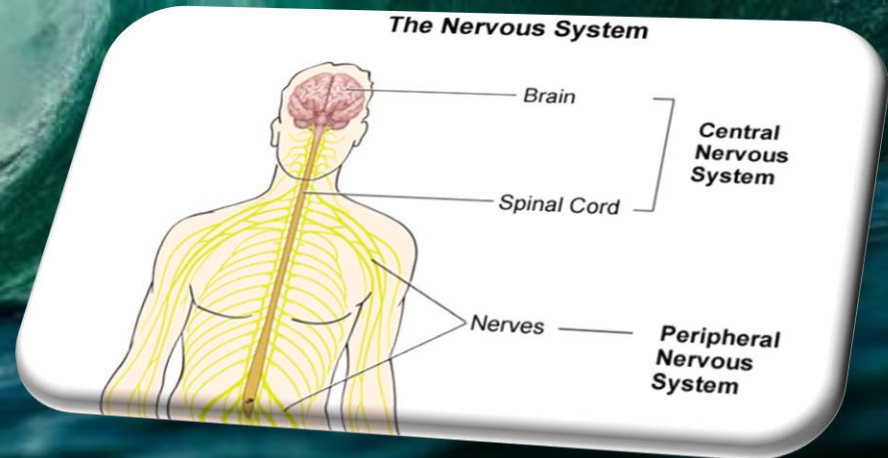


FREEZE



FIGHT

- Judith Lewis Herman





# The Four Rs of Trauma-Informed Care



**Realize**

**Realize** the widespread impact of trauma and understand potential paths for recovery

**Recognize**

**Recognize** the signs and symptoms of trauma in clients, families, staff, and others involved with the system

**Respond**

**Respond** by fully integrating knowledge about trauma into policies, procedures, and practices

**Resist Re-traumatization**

**Resist** re-traumatization of children, as well as the adults who care for them

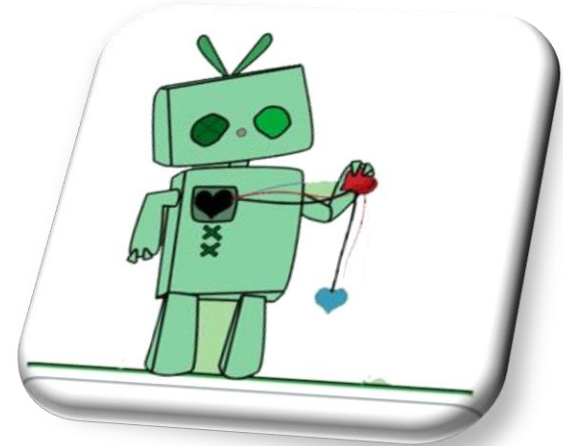
This figure is adapted from: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and Guidance for a trauma-informed approach. HHS publication no. (SMA) 14-4884. Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.



# What is “Re-traumatization”

- A situation, attitude, interaction or environment that replicates the events or dynamics of the original trauma and triggers the overwhelming feelings and reactions associated with them
  - Can be obvious or not so obvious
  - It is usually unintentional
  - It is always harmful – often exacerbating the very symptoms that people are seeking help for

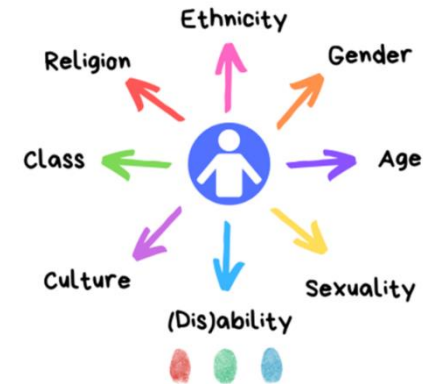
**REMINDER**



# Trauma Informed Practice Adaptive

- Adapts environments to be more physically, emotionally and culturally safer.
- Considers that symptoms or behaviours are not merely problems but adaptations to traumatic events.
- Encourages systems to adapt to people instead of expecting people to adapt to systems.
- Works towards changing and adapting to meet the changing needs of community members.
- Incorporates person centered care, diversity and inclusion and intersectionality.

(Harris & Fallot, 2001), (Grant, 2019)



# Trauma Informed Work



Trauma Informed  
Practice Principles:

Safety  
Trustworthiness  
Choice  
Collaboration  
Empowerment

*strength*

EVERYBODY  
& EVERYONE



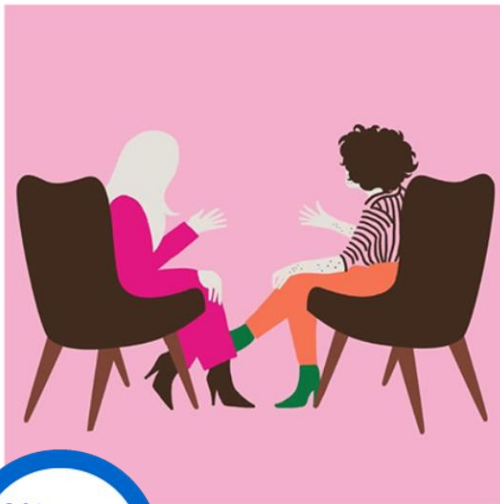
# Trauma Specific Work

Assessment

STRENGTHS

DO **NO** HARM

Individual, Family, Group Therapy, Assessment



Safety  
Trustworthiness  
Choice  
Collaboration  
Empowerment



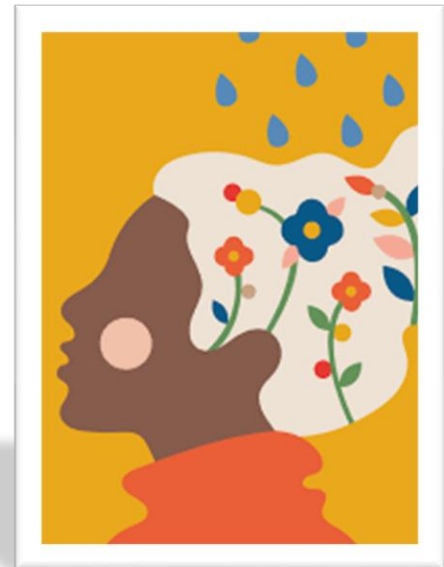
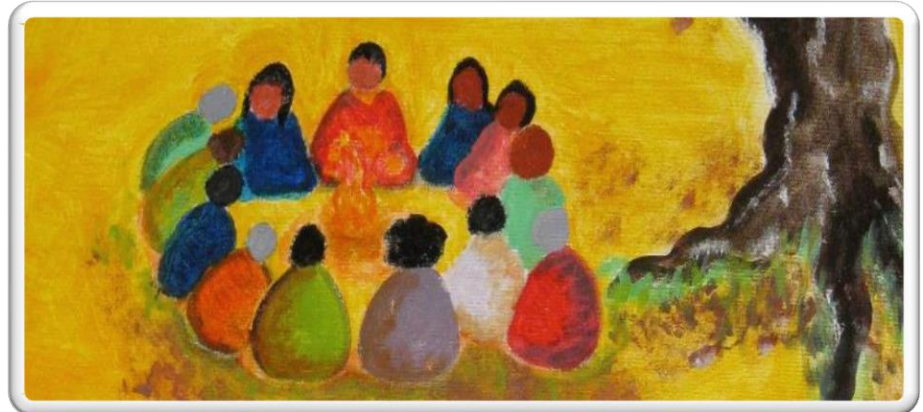


# Resiliency

- People who have experienced trauma in their lives are very resilient to adapting to adversity and stress.
- Research indicates that it is not the objective severity of an event that makes it traumatic, but rather the person's perception of the severity of the event: "Events are not traumatic until we experience them as traumatic".



([resilienceresearch.org](http://resilienceresearch.org), 2018)



# Social Resiliency

**resilience**  
COLLECTIVE

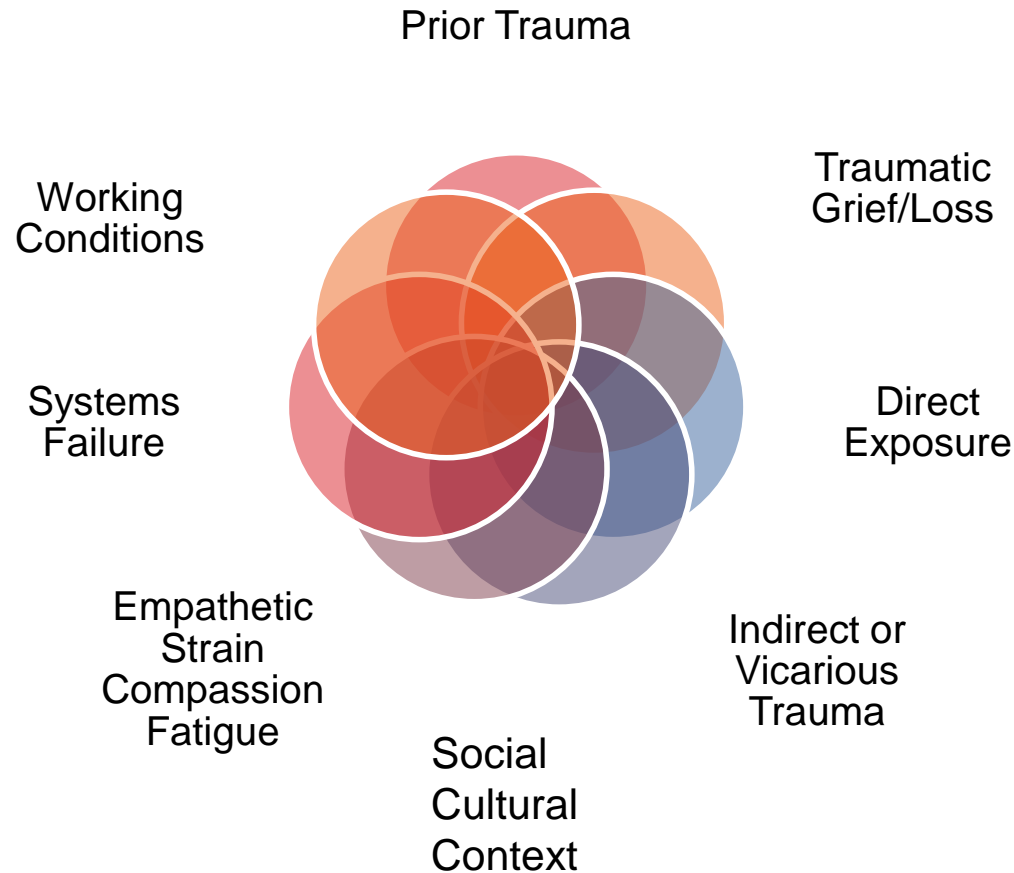
*Better*  
TOGETHER



Recovery can only take  
place within the context of  
relationships; it cannot  
occur in isolation

Judith Lewis Herman

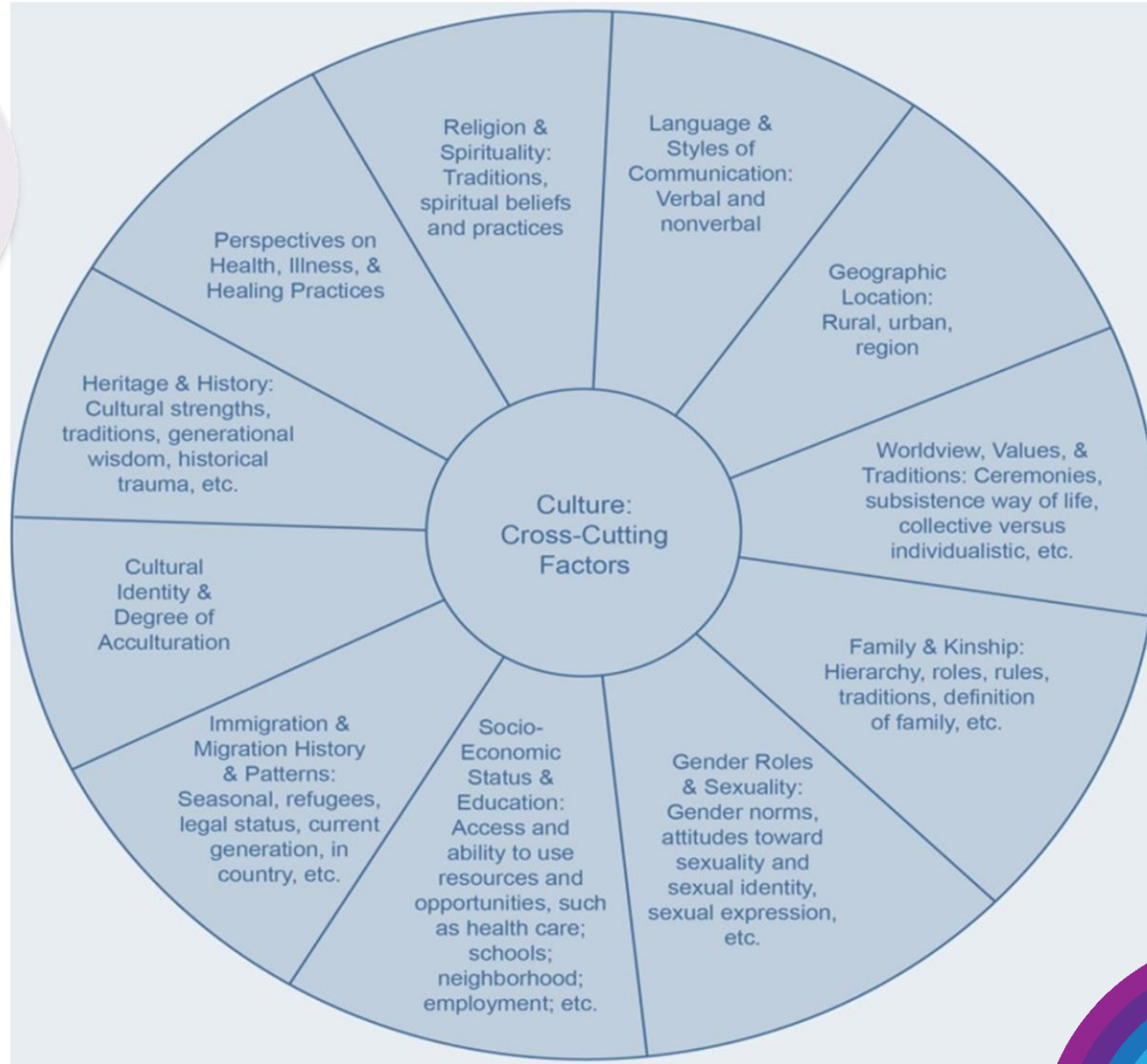
# Acknowledge the Reality of Caring Work



# Culture; Cross-Cutting Factors

## Trauma Informed Practice Principles:

Safety  
Trustworthiness  
Choice  
Collaboration  
Empowerment





# How Colonialism shows up and maintains in Indigenous Communities?

- Invasion and Settling
- Broken Treaties
- “Indian” Act of 1876 (First Nations)
- Cultural Genocide
- Hardship and death
- The Reserve System
- Residential Schools (First Nations)
- Restricted access and autonomy
- Restricted livelihood
- Family Break up
- Loss of livelihood
- Loss of healing practices
- Loss of cultural practices
- Loss of connections to land
- Loss of community
- Loss of language
- Loss of identity
- Restricted or no voting until 1960
- “The Sixties Scoop”
- “The Millennial Scoop”
- Barriers to Self Government
- Barriers to equal health care, employment and education.
- Overrepresentation in the Justice and child welfare systems
- Poverty
- Racism and Oppression. Societal and Institutional
- Propaganda
- Historical and Intergenerational Trauma
- Increased suicide, mental health and substance use
- Increased violence for Indigenous women (Murdered and Missing Indigenous Women)
- Environmental racism





# Indigenous Values

- Permissiveness
- Extended family
- Interdependence
- Cooperation
- Humility
- Respect for elders
- Non-interference
- Children are gifts
- Communal living
- Emphasis on group/clan
- Emphasis on sharing
- Harmony with nature



(Ives, 2015)

### H: NNAPF's Diversity Table

Diversity between traditional Aboriginal cultures and mainstream Western culture

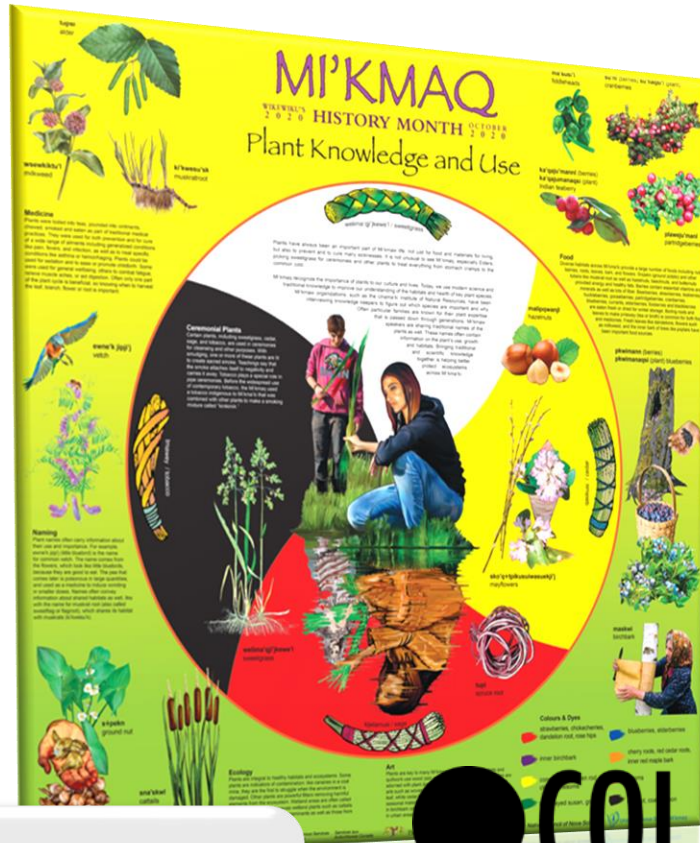
TRADITIONAL CULTURE	MAINSTREAM WESTERN CULTURE
Community is the foremost of all values	Individualism is the foremost value
The future tense is dominant	Tradition of printing and literacy
The world is understood mythically	The present is the dominant tense
Goals are met with patience	The world is understood scientifically
Ownership is often communal	Goals are met with aggressive effort
Gifts are regarded as social glue	Ownership is reward for hard work
Work is often motivated by group need	Gifts are regarded as holiday issues
Aging is a source of wisdom	Work is motivated by ambition
Eye contact is thought over-assertive	Aging is decay and loss
Silences are acceptable anywhere	Eye contact is part of conversation
Assertiveness is non-communal	Silences are a waste of time
Listening skills are prized	Assertiveness is a basic social skill
Soft spoken words carry farthest	Communication skills are prized
Nodding signifies understanding	Emphasis carries the day
Handshake is soft, signaling no threat	Nodding signifies agreement
Collective decisions are consensual	Handshake is firm, assertive
A faith in harmony with nature	Collective decisions are put to a vote
Family is extended family	A faith in scientific control of nature
Responds to praise of the group	Family is nuclear family
	Responds to praise of the individual



## Diversity Between Indigenous and Western Culture



# Indigenous Healing



“Mental wellness is supported by culture, language, Elders, families, and creation and is necessary for healthy individual, community, and family life.”

– First Nations Mental Wellness Continuum Framework



NATURE

COLLECTIVE

# Co—Creating a Trauma Informed Class Environment

- Safety: Increasing physical, emotional and cultural safer spaces
- Trustworthiness: Maximizing trustworthiness, making tasks clear, and maintaining appropriate boundaries
- Choice: Prioritizing choice and control
- Collaboration: Maximizing collaboration and sharing of power with students
- Empowerment : Prioritizing empowerment and skill-building





# Acknowledgments



- Land acknowledgement in class and on emails.
- Acknowledge adverse world/provincial/local events and/or ongoing oppressions at the beginning of school year or class.
- Acknowledge stress, distress, and trauma reminders/content for classes with difficult subject matter.

Acknowledgement

- 
- The background of the slide is a photograph of several frosted glass bottles filled with ice water, garnished with fresh mint leaves. The bottles are placed on a dark, textured surface, possibly a slate or stone, which is resting on a light-colored wooden table. The lighting is bright, creating a refreshing and clean aesthetic.
- Take a break
  - Movement
  - Stay Hydrated
  - Deep Breathing
  - Grounding
  - Do what works for you

## Distress and Trauma Reminders

# Supporting Disclosures with Students

- Believe and fully support people who share that they have experienced trauma.
- Hold space and listen intently.
- Environment. Consider the needs of the person in that environment. Be aware that some environments can cause trauma reminders. Is there privacy?
- Relationships. Be clear about your role and responsibility. Be clear on duty to report and on the limits of confidentiality. Be open, let them know exactly what information gets passed on and to who.

believe





# Supporting Disclosures with Students

- Never force disclosures. Someone sharing a traumatic experience that has happened to them is not the same as discussing this experience in detail. The person always leads the conversation and level of detail.
- What is the context of the conversation? How much time do you have now? Are you able to follow up with them in the future if appropriate? What is your role?
- How safe is the home/school environment? What supports do they have? Facilitate a conversation about safety, and supports as appropriate.





# Responses to Disclosures:

- "Thank you for trusting me enough to share such a personal and difficult story"
- "I appreciate the courage it took to share that with me."
- "I want you to know that what happened wasn't your fault. You did whatever you had to do to survive." (**use only if person is blaming themselves**).
- "I am so sorry that you were hurt/mistreated/harmed."
- "You've just taken the first step. It would be my privilege to help you take the next one."
- "I believe you", "I'm sorry that happened to you"
- "Let's work together on a plan to support you with this"
- "Is there anything/anyone you need right now?" and/or "Is there someone you would like to share this with who could support you?" (Be aware of duty to report)

- Genuine
- Listen Empathetically
- Non judgmental
- Compassionate
- Supportive



# Trauma Informed Classroom

- Increase Cultural awareness. Be mindful of your own and Indigenous people's personal and collective experiences.
- Support Indigenous identity, values, and self/community determination. Respect collective strength.
- Support and value traditional ceremonies and diverse healing modalities (smudging, healing lodges, healing circles and medicine wheels etc.)
- Advocate for resources and changes at the policy level.





**WHAT?**  
CAN WE DO



- Understand the ongoing impacts of colonialism. Help to educate and share the truth. Acknowledge intergenerational trauma.
- Participate in reconciliation and do not appropriate culture.
- Question universal truths and explore multiple stories, perspectives and multiple worldviews. Be open to two eyed seeing projects or teaching.
- Trauma is often seen though a medical model, individual and pathology lens. Advocate for alternative meanings and alternative healing/recovery opportunities

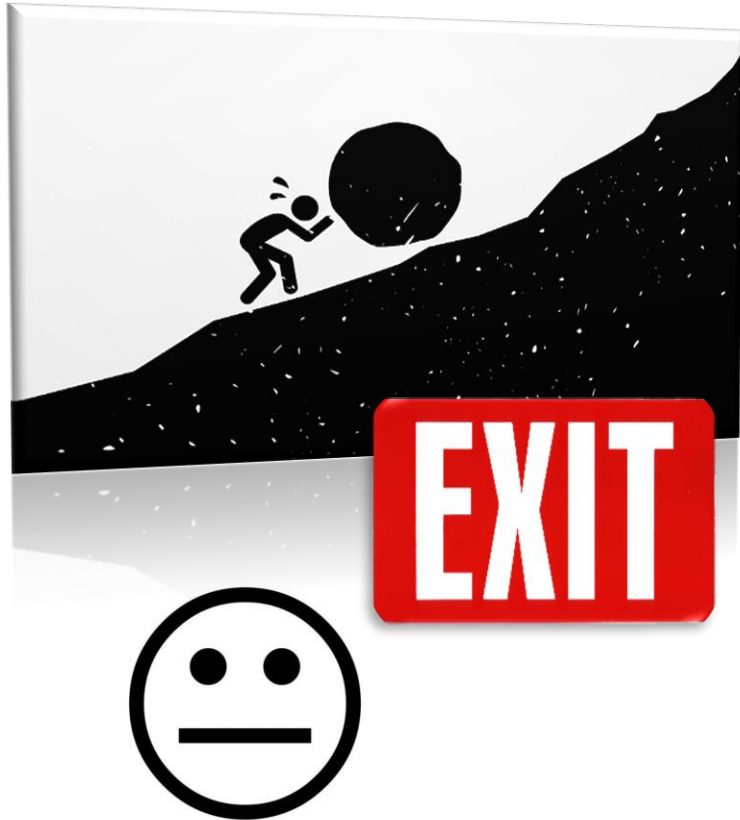
- Please do not single out Indigenous students to speak on culture related topics.
- Be aware that Indigenous students may have different awareness and knowledge of family/community/ cultural adversity or traumas.
- Be mindful that hearing about class topics such as residential schools may cause distress, trauma or re-traumatization.
- Be aware that Indigenous students participating in lectures on their culture from non-indigenous professors with non-indigenous class mates could cause stress, distress, mixed emotions and trauma.
- Consider collaborating with Elders in residence, academic Indigenous staff and Indigenous guest lecturers.
- Consider working with students on creating accommodation plans.

**WHAT?**  
CAN WE DO



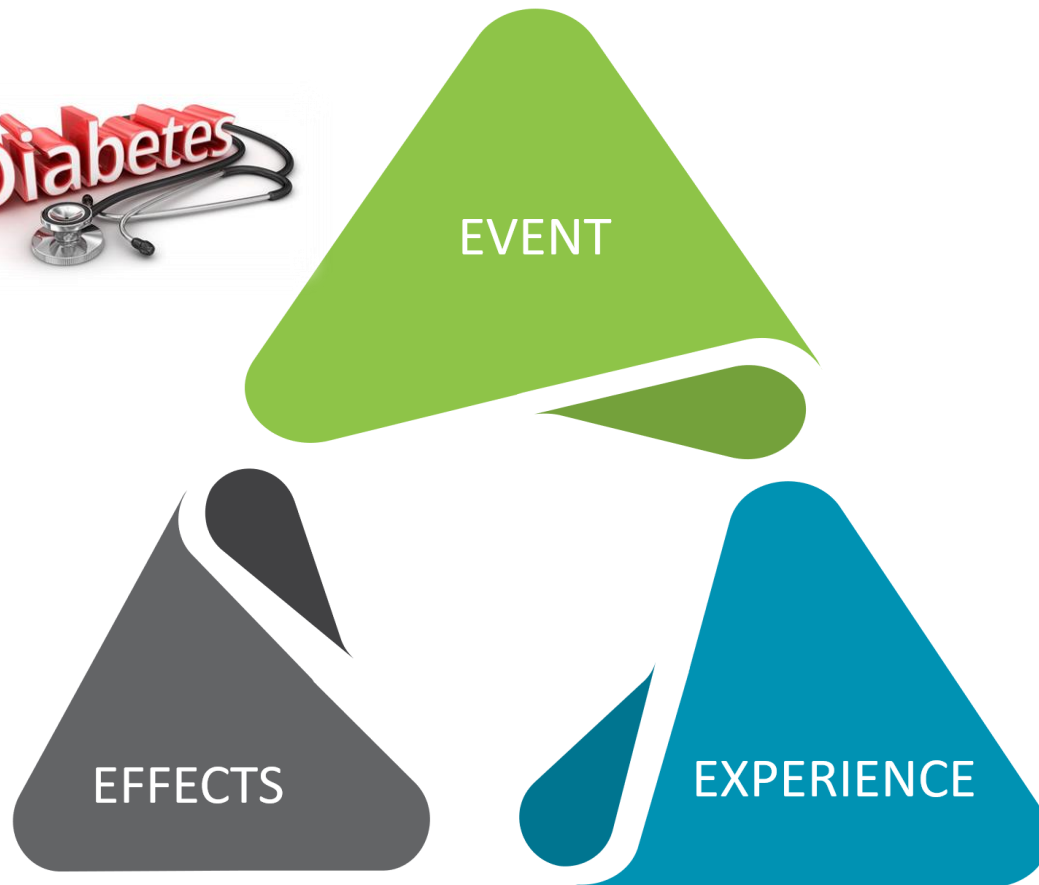


# Possible Signs of Struggle



- Suddenly absent
- Person is overwhelmed and not reaching out for help or shutting down (maybe interpreted as apathy or disinterest).
- Stoic expression. Pain or happiness may not be seen on the face or reaction
- Looks unwell
- Emotional outburst
- Always alone

## The Three E's of Trauma



### EVENT

An event or series of events that overwhelms a person.

### EXPERIENCE

The person's reaction to that event determines if it is traumatic.

### EFFECTS

When we experience an event as traumatic there are a range of effects that happen on a broad array of the human experience. The effects are not necessarily linear. In other words, we cannot draw a straight line from the event to one specific effect

# How Indigenous Students may reach out

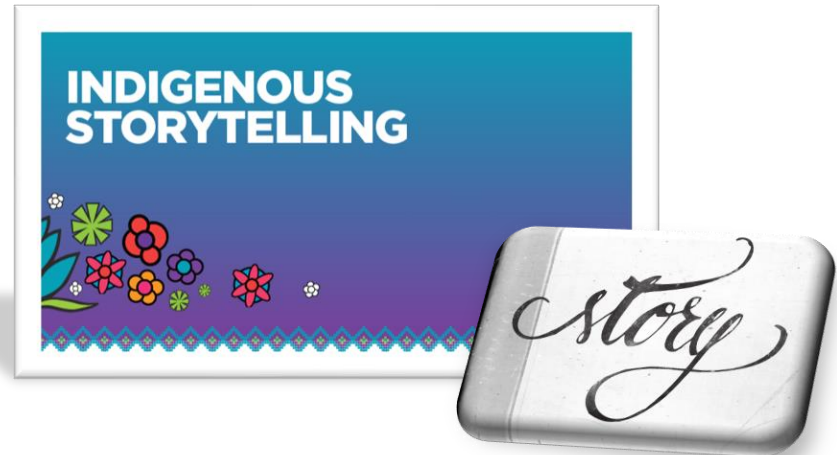


- Variation. Students have shared values in addition to our own story and experiences .
- Students may go to people they know for support.
- Students may ask for support people to help them speak to others.
- Students may ask you to clarify words they are not familiar with. They may need more context not just the definition of a word.
- People to people. Meaningful conversations. Sharing to find common ground.
- Authority figures and hierarchies can be intimidating. In home communities' people are more equal.



# Indigenous Students Consideration

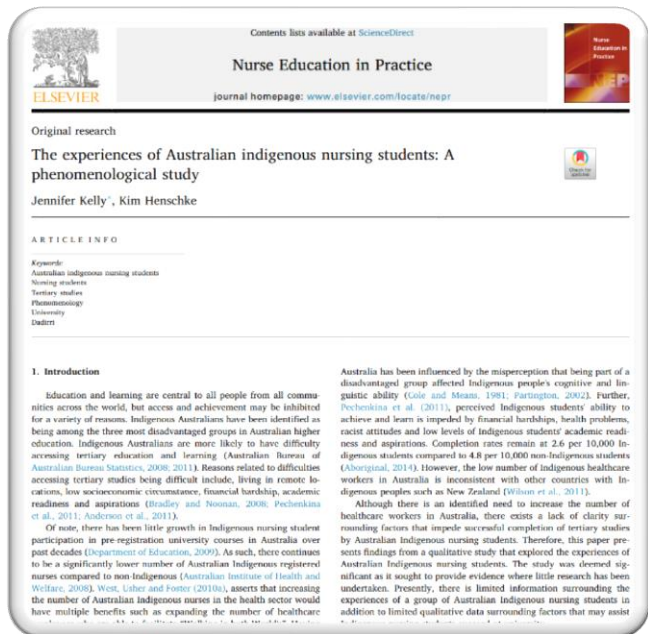
- Stories and story telling are very important. The whole story is important to share.
- Leaving home for the first time (excitement but there could also be anxiety, uncertainty or loneliness). Adjustment to new culture.
- If the home community experiences a life event or challenge (i.e., birth, death, dying stage tragedy, celebrations, illness etc.) the student is expected to return to the community. The community support is priority. Heart and mind are back home.
- Students may connect and group together. We find the common connections both within and outside of culture.



Home  
is where the  
Heart is



# Literature Review and Study

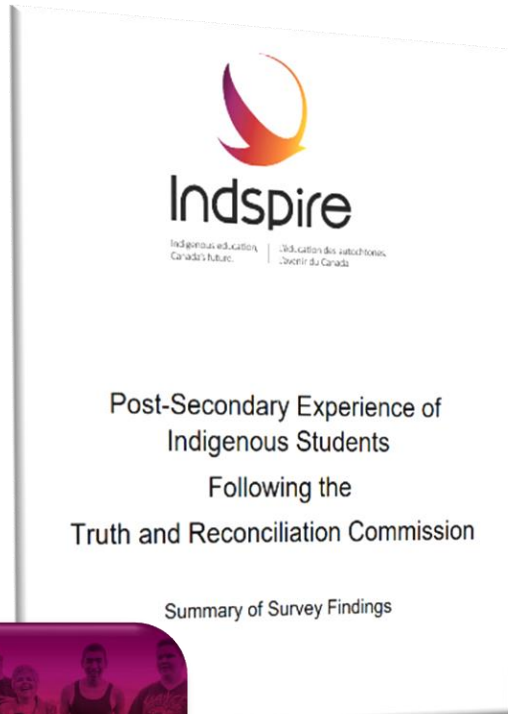


- Decreased knowledge in university preparedness similar to other students.
- Flexible to adapting to learning styles/ needs. The Australian Indigenous students did not learn differently to non-Indigenous students.
- Family support is a key factor affecting retention and attrition of Indigenous students.
- Tutoring, counseling, mentoring, support for at risk students and culturally appropriate accommodation are important. **HOWEVER** the study found that stigma caused lack of engagement with Indigenous support services because people did not want to be seen as different or being perceived that Indigenous peoples "get everything".
- Indigenous lecturers, teaching support and academic staff is important.
- Stigma and stereotyping of Indigenous people in classroom settings is a barrier.
- Feeling different. Not relating to the university environment and/or not wanting to be singled out or perceived as different.
- Students did not want to disclose their identity or it was difficult being questioned about identity.
- Feeling pressure from community to succeed as an Indigenous Nurse.
- Decreased peer supports and relationships in the university setting.
- Difficult balance of academic and family/community responsibilities.

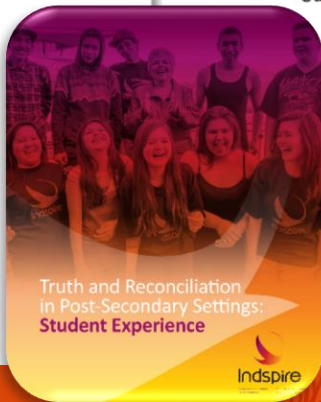
THINGS TO CONSIDER

(Kelly & Henschke, 2019)

# Three Critical Recommendations



1. More funding for Indigenous students and Indigenous campus resources.
2. The ongoing monitoring and evaluation of implementation of the TRC Calls to Action in post-secondary spaces.
3. The strengthening of Indigenous Culture, Identity and Belonging through Mentorship on campus and beyond.



TRUTH AND RECONCILIATION

# Resources for Indigenous Students

- Dalhousie Indigenous Student Centre
- Elders in Residence
- Dalhousie University - Mental Health Resources
- Truth and Reconciliation - Calls to Action  
<https://www.dal.ca/faculty/law/about/truth-reconciliation>
- Class Accommodations
- Dalhousie Student Accessibility Centre
- Dalhousie Student Writing Centre



**Dawn GooGoo** | BScN RN | CD

L'nu Nursing Initiative, NS Chair in Indigenous Health Nursing  
MN student

Dalhousie University

Email; [dawngoo goo@dal.ca](mailto:dawngoo goo@dal.ca)

Follow: L'nu Nursing Twitter or Mi'kmaq Nurses on Facebook



# MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS

Research shows social connections and supports protect and promote good mental health. This can feel limited with Public Health asking us to stay at a distance. Below is a list of some supports and numbers to call if you need to talk.

## INDIGENOUS-SPECIFIC SUPPORTS

### CRISIS LINES

**Indian Residential Resolution Health Support Program**  
24/7 crisis and support line  
Phone: 1-866-925-4419

**Hope for Wellness Help Line**  
24/7 crisis and support line  
Phone: 1-855-242-3310

**Family, Friends, & Communities Impacted by MMIWG**  
24/7 crisis and support line  
Phone: 1-844-413-6649

### PRIVATE COUNSELLORS

*(note: below are two known Indigenous providers, but there may be others)*

**Alsusuti Aboriginal Crisis & Counselling Services**  
Phone: 1-844-694-1382

**Circle Works Counselling**  
Phone: 902-889-7469

### FIRST NATION & INUIT HEALTH BRANCH (FNIHB)

FNIHB has mental health provisions for Status & Inuit and IRS Health Support funds for Status. Anyone identifying as Indigenous can access MMIWG funds with FNIHB but the provider has to be listed with them.  
[sac-isc.gc.ca](http://sac-isc.gc.ca)

## DALHOUSIE CAMPUS SUPPORTS

**Dalhousie's Student Health & Wellness**  
Appointments are available with counsellors, doctors, nurses and the Dal social worker. Many online and mobile resources are also available to support students from home, including Ask A Nurse, Therapy Assistance Online, COVID Connections, and Support Through Brightspace.  
Phone: 902-494-2171 (Halifax) or 902-893-6369 (Truro)

**Chaplains in the Multifaith Centre**  
George Bedwell, Mixed, Mi'kmaw Pipe Carrier  
Phone: 902-471-3487  
Email: [georgedoylebedwell@gmail.com](mailto:georgedoylebedwell@gmail.com)

**Elders in Residence**  
Phone: . | Email: [Elders@dal.ca](mailto:Elders@dal.ca)

**Indigenous Student Advisor-Michele Graveline**  
Phone: 902-494-8863 | Email: [mgraveline@dal.ca](mailto:mgraveline@dal.ca)

## OFF-CAMPUS SUPPORTS

**24-Hour Provincial Mental Health Crisis Line**  
Phone: 1-888-429-8167 (toll free within Nova Scotia) or 902-429-8167 (Halifax area)

**Kids Help Phone**  
Phone: 1-800-668-6868 | Text: 686868

**Good 2 Talk**  
Phone: 1-833-292-3698 | Text: 686868

**Trans Lifeline**  
Toll free (Canada): 1-877-330-6366  
Toll free (USA): 1-877-565-8860



A scenic landscape featuring a calm, turquoise lake in the foreground, reflecting the surrounding environment. The lake is bordered by dense evergreen forests on the left and right. In the background, majestic mountains with patches of snow rise against a sky filled with soft, pink and orange clouds, suggesting a sunrise or sunset. The overall mood is peaceful and awe-inspiring.

**Wela'lioq  
Thank you**

*Questions or Reflections*