Connectedness, Reconciliation and Self Determination

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Local Decision Making: Partnership and Collaboration Conference
November 15, 2016
Hunter Valley, New South Whales
Native Counselling Services of Alberta

• Established in 1970
• Began as a **Courtworker Program** and Expanded in the areas of:
  • Restorative Justice
  • Child Welfare
  • Corrections (Section 81 Facilities)
  • Public Legal Education
  • Research-Based Video Production
  • Research-Based Training

We’ve learned that all current issues are related to historic trauma.
Healing and Reconciliation from an Interconnected Worldview
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- Spirit World
- Environment
- Nation
- Community
- Family
- Individual
Healing and Reconciliation from an Interconnected Worldview

Spirit World
Environment
Nation
Community
Family
Individual
Healing and Reconciliation from an Interconnected Worldview

Kindness
Humility
Honesty
Harmony
Caring
Respect
Sharing
Freedom

Spirit World
Environment
Nation
Community
Family
Individual

RULES
Colonial policies have damaged the interconnectedness of the Aboriginal family.

Colonial Policies: have caused damage to the relationships in Aboriginal societies & deemed the Indigenous identity as inferior.
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The transmission of the RULES was interrupted. Many Aboriginal families and communities have been left in chaos as a result.
Historic Trauma is:

• Traumatic experiences that are cumulative over the lifespan of individuals and across generations.
• Places the long-term, intergenerational impacts of residential school and other COLONIAL POLICIES into a larger context.

• **Historic Trauma informed behaviour can be demonstrated by:**
  • Residential school survivors;
  • Generations of children who survived abuse and neglect in families and the child welfare system; and
  • Aboriginal people who have carried the trauma of loss, assimilation and ethnocide.

Historic Trauma is the intergenerational transmission of hopeless, helpless and powerless.
We believe that Indigenous individuals, families and communities are affected in these ways:

1. Legislation has eroded the capacity of Aboriginal individuals, families and communities to be in control of their own lives and determine their own identity.

2. This legislation is also directly related to the breakdown of family relationships and the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the family justice and child welfare systems.

3. Some Aboriginal people carry a deep sense of shame of their Aboriginal identity and the lack of meaningful connection to Canadian society and law.
We believe that Indigenous individuals, families and communities are affected in these ways:

4. Aboriginal people have experienced systemic discrimination in government systems and thus have a long-standing distrust of these systems and struggle to understand their complexity.

5. Aboriginal people experience considerable difficulty in navigating these systems.

6. Many Aboriginal people feel hopeless, helpless and powerless when they interact with these systems.
The Cost of Over-Representation is Significant

• 43% of all ABORIGINAL men incarcerated across Canada have an **average of 2.8 children in government care**.
• The cost per child to the government is $136,000 per year.
• The cost of keeping the Aboriginal man in jail is $118,000 per year.
• The average time those MEN will spend in jail is 3.5 years.
• The total cost to our society is **$1.4 million dollars**.

It must be a **priority concern for all departments and organizations** that have a shared responsibility in addressing this issue.
Building family resilience, reconciliation, public safety, and healing from historic trauma ARE ALL the same process.

Reclaim our *Interconnectedness*
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Reclaim our *Interconnectedness*

Reconciliation of Relationships
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Reclaim our *Interconnectedness*

Reconciliation of Relationships

Self-Determined Solutions
CASE STUDY 1: The Buffalo Sage Wellness House

NCSA opened Canada’s first (and only) Section 81 Facility for Aboriginal Women Offenders.

- Reclaiming our **interconnectedness** means we had to work in **transparent** ways with each other.
- **Reconciliation** of the **respectful relationship** between the Correctional Service of Canada (government) and NCSA (Indigenous People).
- While NCSA follows and is **accountable** to the laws of Canada, we **self-determine** our own policies that are accountable to our model of resilience.
CASE STUDY 2: Water: The Sacred Relationship

NCSA partnered with the Alberta Environmental Monitoring, Evaluation and Research Agency (AEMERA).

• Reclaiming our interconnectedness means we had to acknowledge that we could find common ground: to protect watersheds in Alberta.

• Reconciliation of the relationship between Indigenous and Western Science, as a way to create trust between Indigenous people and Water scientists.

• NCSA assisted with the development of an self-determining Indigenous Science panel, whose knowledge and expertise helped to shape the scientific research plan.
CASE STUDY 3:

The Community Solution to Gang Violence

NCSA led a community-based social justice strategy in Edmonton.

• Reclaiming our **interconnectedness** means engaging 60+ agencies and 300+ people to co-create the strategy.

• **Reconciliation** of the relationship between the Edmonton Police Service and community-based organizations, as a way to raise awareness on gang recruitment and activity.

• Every agency took what they learned and **self-determined** new strategies and partnerships to decrease the recruitment of young people into gangs.
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