

The Return to the Sacred Path: **Reflections on the Development of** **Historical Trauma Healing**

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Dedication

This presentation is dedicated to the Lala Tatanka Iyotake Sun Dance Tiospaye, to the Lala Wapaha Ska Sun Dance Tiospaye, and to the Tatanka Iyotake and Sitanka Wokiksuye Riders.

Wopila for all your love, prayers, inspiration, and support that help me to continue to fulfill my commitment to helping the Oyate to heal. We do this for the past, present, and future seven generations so that our people may live.

We are Takini!

Cante Ohitika Waste Win

Presentation Overview

- Review of Historical Trauma, Historical Unresolved Grief, and the Historical Trauma Response Definitions and Concepts
- Process of Developing Historical Trauma Theory & the Historical Trauma and Unresolved Grief Intervention (HTUG): A Tribal Best Practice
- Community Grief & Trauma Healing Example - *Tatanka Iyotake na Sitanka Wokiksuye*: Sitting Bull and Bigfoot Memorial Ride (DVD segment)
- The 1992 HTUG Experience/Formation of the Takini Network

Historical Trauma and Unresolved Grief

- ***Historical trauma*** is cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma (1985-88)
- ***Historical unresolved grief*** accompanies that trauma

(Brave Heart, 1998, 1999, 2000)

Historical Trauma Response

- The *historical trauma response* (HTR) is a constellation of features in reaction to massive group trauma
- This response is observed among Lakota and other Native populations, Jewish Holocaust survivors and descendants, Japanese American internment camp survivors and descendants.

(Brave Heart, 1998, 1999, 2000)

Historical Trauma Response Features

- **Survivor guilt**
- Depression
- Sometimes PTSD symptoms
- Psychic numbing
- Fixation to trauma
- Somatic (physical) symptoms
- Low self-esteem
- Victim Identity
- Anger
- Self-destructive behavior including substance abuse
- Suicidal ideation
- Hypervigilance
- Intense fear
- Dissociation
- **Compensatory fantasies**
- Poor affect (emotion) tolerance

Historical Trauma Response Features

- Death identity – fantasies of reunification with the deceased; cheated death
- Preoccupation with trauma, with death
- Dreams of massacres, historical trauma content
- **Loyalty to ancestral suffering & the deceased**
- **Internalization of ancestral suffering**
- **Vitality in own life seen as a betrayal to ancestors who suffered so much**

The Development of Historical Trauma Theory and Interventions

- Motivated by desire & commitment to reduce the suffering of Indigenous Peoples
- **Psychoanalytic training, practicing psychotherapist in 1970s**
- **Influenced by the importance of the past in shaping the present reality and the unconscious/preconscious; thinking of our Peoples living in reservation communities named after perpetrators of genocide or forts and massacre sites**
- **Experienced a powerful consciousness of carrying grief and trauma larger than self, own family, own tribal community which felt old**

The Development of Historical Trauma Theory and Interventions

- Learned about the Children of Holocaust Survivors and made conscious connection that American Indian trauma needed to be as widely recognized as that of the Jewish Holocaust and that we unfortunately shared some similar histories, e.g. massacres and mass graves
- Ceremonies and spiritual interpretations of dreams, prayers for ability to help our Peoples to heal in 1981-82
- Started talking about the “historical legacy” in presentations with colleagues Nadine Tafoya, MSW, LISW and Lemyra DeBruyn, PhD by the mid-1980s

The Development of Historical Trauma Theory and Interventions

- Continued integrating the historical trauma and unresolved grief consciousness in clinical work developing, workshops, presentations
- Historical legacy, intergenerational PTSD – our early terms
- Developed historical trauma and historical unresolved grief by mid-late 1980s
- Small group workshops on historical trauma; prototype one day workshop around Sioux Falls, SD in 1989
- 1990 – Supporter of the *Tatanka Iyotake na Sitanka Wokiksuye* – Sitting Bull and Bigfoot Memorial Ride and started doctoral program

The Development of Historical Trauma Theory and Interventions

- Doctoral dissertation included further development of the four-day intensive Historical Trauma & Unresolved Grief Intervention in the Black Hills, South Dakota
- Dissertation literature review included over 200 references – historical literature, oral histories, psychoanalytic, Holocaust literature, etc.
- Asked for prayers from the *Tatanka Iyotake Winwayang Wacipi* Sitting Bull Sun Dance Committee so that the work would be sacred and everything would be good for the people
- Included Sitanka Wokiksuye Bigfoot Memorial Riders

The Development of Historical Trauma Theory and Interventions

- Decided to hold the intervention at Sylvan Lake where Lala Tatanka Iyotake had vision of an eagle who turned into a man who then told him he was to protect the Lakota (he became the traditional leader for all of the Lakota and the protector of women and children; he was the consummate warrior and spiritual leader)
- Also near Harney Peak where Black Elk had visions
- *Paha Sapa* Black Hills – a sacred place and emotionally and spiritually soothing to our people, ideal for a trauma healing intervention

Preparation for the first HTUG

- **Four day training of facilitators – selected individuals primarily Lakota and Dakota clinicians, service providers/counselors, traditional spiritual healers, Sun Dance helpers/leaders, grassroots community natural helpers, clean and sober**
- **Invited Jewish Holocaust therapist/child of Holocaust survivors Dr. Eva Fogelman to join us for first 1.5 days at Pactola Lake in Black Hills**
- **Processed our own trauma and grief; prepared for the four day intervention workshop; piloted process and measures**
- ***Lowanpi* (ceremony) to pray for the protection of everyone and that our work would help the people**

The Return to the Sacred Path

- **Training of trainers model – trained male and female facilitators paired to work with smaller groups of 8-10 people**
- **Piloted 4 day intervention with facilitators**
- **Pre-test and Post-test measures, before and after the intervention, with retrospective self-report about grief affects (emotions) experienced before, during, and after the intervention; projective standardized measures, grief measure available at the time with cultural adaptation – also piloted with facilitators**

Preparation for the first HTUG, 1992

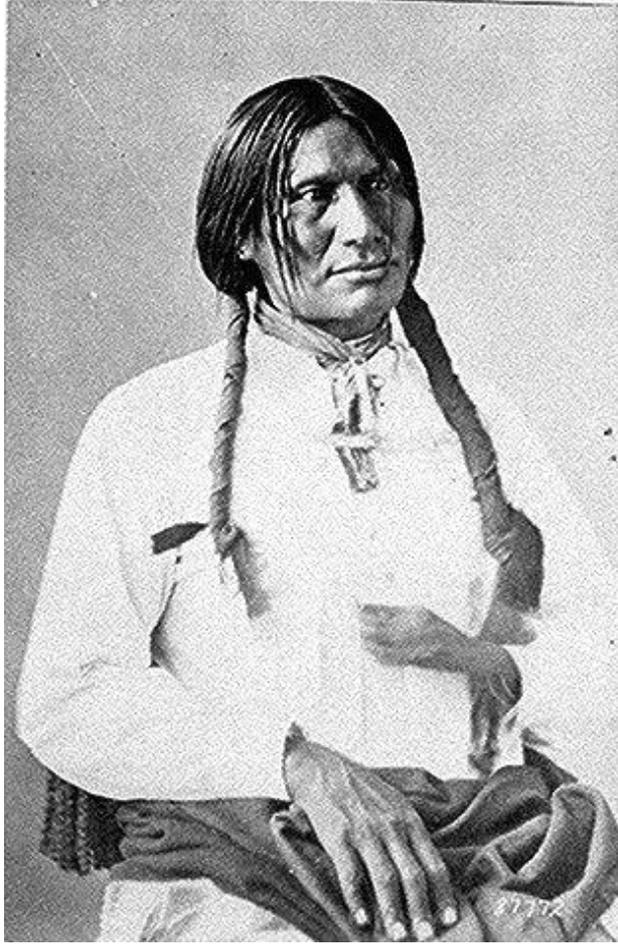
Founded the Takini Network



Tunkasila Tatanka Iyotake, Mother Her
Holy Door, Daughter, and Grandchild

The Takini Network*

We all practice our traditional spirituality; we periodically have ceremonies to pray that our work continues to help Native Peoples. We are grounded in our traditions. We embrace and try to live our lives according to the *Woope Sakowin*: Seven Laws and integrate that in our work, as our foundation and guide for our work and our lives. We are all survivors and no one is above another. We are all teachers and learners. * now called Takini Institute



Sitanka (Bigfoot)



Wounded Knee Survivors:
Tunkasila Wapaha Ska, Horn Cloud, &
Dewey Beard

Traditional Protective Factors: Woose Sakowin

(7 Laws of the Lakota)*

- Wacante Ognake - Generosity
- Wowausila – Compassion
- Wowayuonihan – Respect
- Wowacin Tanka - To Have a Great Mind
- Wowahwala – Humility, State of Silence,
To be humble
- Woohitike – Courage, Bravery, Principal,
Discipline
- Woksape – Wisdom, Understanding
- **Tiblo* B. Kills Straight (some versions differ slightly but core values similar)

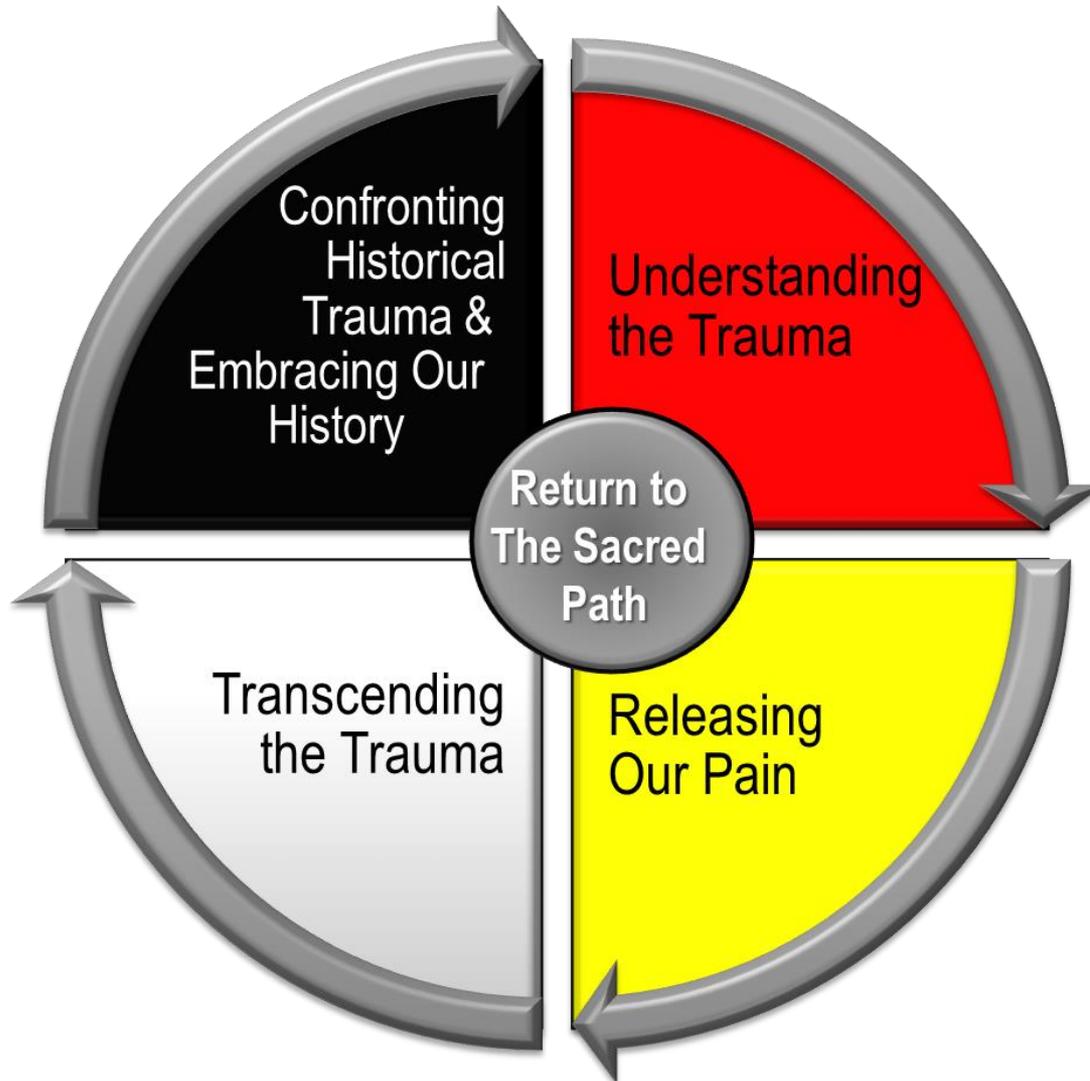
The First HT Intervention 1992: *The Return to the Sacred Path*

- Quasi-experimental study, 45 Lakota and Dakota, on effectiveness of group intervention on collective group trauma & grief
- Traditional culture & ceremonies throughout facilitated cathartic release of emotions
- Psychoeducation; narratives & trauma testimony
- Delivered over 4 days; random assignment to small process groups with the trained Native facilitators

Return to the Sacred Path Study

- Mean age of study population was 43
- 72.1% attended boarding school; mean age 8.9 years; 38.7% attended before 6 yrs, 48.4% before 7 yrs; mean distance from home 123.1 mi, mode 300 miles
- Physical abuse (58.1%) & sexual abuse (22.6%) by staff
- 90.7% reported parental boarding school attendance
- 50% reported death of a close relative in past year, 100% in the past two years
- Statistically significant differences on all scales of projective measures

Historical Trauma & Unresolved Grief Interventions: *Return to the Sacred Path*



HTUG Tribal Best Practice

- Traditional culture & ceremonies throughout facilitated release of emotions
- Psychoeducation; narratives & trauma testimony
- Delivered over 4 days; small process groups with the trained Native facilitators
- Focus on *returning to the sacred path* – the strengths in our traditional culture
- Ceremonies may help in the healing process, changing brain chemistry, calming traumatic brain

Historical Trauma Intervention Research & Evaluation (1992 - 2003)

- Reduction in sense of feeling responsible to undo painful historical past
- Less shame, stigma, anger, sadness
- Decrease in guilt
- Increase in joy
- Improved valuation of true self and of tribe
- Increased sense of personal power

Changes on the Lakota GEQ

[Statistical significance achieved for 7 items including these
(Brave Heart, 1995, 1998)]

| Concept | M (T1) | M (T2) | P | Significance |
|--|---------------|---------------|----------|---------------------|
| Shame | 3.21 | 2.67 | .004 | $p < .01$ |
| Stigma | 2.92 | 2.31 | .001 | $p < .01$ |
| Anger | 3.15 | 2.87 | .012 | $p < .05$ |
| Obsessive thoughts | 3.38 | 2.79 | .007 | $p < .01$ |
| Feeling responsible for undoing the pain of the past | 3.04 | 2.46 | .023 | $p < .05$ |

Semantic Differential Results: Changes Over Time

- Evaluation Scale
 - My True Self (P=.004, $p < .01$)
 - Anger (P=.032, $p < .05$)
 - The Past (P=.004, $p < .01$)
 - Wasicu (P=.001, $p < .01$)

Semantic Differential Results: Changes Over Time

- Potency Scale
 - My True Self ($P=.035$, $p<.05$)
 - Wasicu ($P=.002$, $p<.01$)
 - The American Indian Holocaust ($P=.000$,
 $p<.0001$)

Semantic Differential Results: Changes Over Time

- Activity Scale
 - The American Indian Holocaust
($P=.012$, $p<.05$)
 - The Past ($P=.001$, $p<.01$)
 - My People ($P=.006$, $p<.01$)

Table 11: Gender Differences for Affects Experienced Often Before, During and After the Intervention

| | Before | During | After |
|----------------|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| | Female/Male | Female/Male | Female/Male |
| Anger | 70.6% 73.3% | 41.2% 66.7% | 11.8% 26.7% |
| Sadness | 70.6% 66.7% | 100.0% 80.0% | 5.9% 33.3% |
| Guilt | 70.6% 53.3% | 29.4% 33.3% | 0.0% 13.3% |
| Shame | 64.7% 60.0% | 5.9% 40.0% | 0.0% 13.3% |
| Joy | 58.8% 33.3% | 64.7% 66.7% | 70.6% 86.7% |

Spontaneous Testimonies at the End of the Four Days Responses

- *Sitanka Wokiksuye Rider – I sacrificed to wipe the tears of the people but until today, no one had wiped my tears*
- Expressions of transformative experience
- We formed a kinship network
- Own experience – further solidified my commitment to this sacred path; asked by Lakota elders to lead the people in this historical trauma healing work and have maintained this commitment

The Development of Historical Trauma Theory and Interventions

- By 1992 – the first Native *historical trauma* intervention; founded the Takini Network; presentations across the US & Canada
- 1996 – 2004 - Designed the first Lakota/Native parenting curriculum incorporating *historical trauma*; number of SAMHSA grants including CMHS-funded Lakota Regional Community Action Grant on Historical Trauma
- 2009 – HTUG selected as a Tribal Best Practice by First Nations Behavioral Health Association, Pacific Substance Abuse & Mental Health Collaborating Council, and SAMHSA
- Since 1992, approximately 300 HT workshops/training across the US and Canada
- 2010 – present – Developing further research on HTUG effectiveness

Celebration of Survival

A Celebration of Survival: The Takini Network (supported by CSAT)

- includes historic boarding school slides
- summarizes historical trauma intervention theory and approach
- describes historic 2001 *Models for Healing Indigenous Survivors Conference*

Follow up conferences held in 2003 and 2004

Video presentation delivered in earlier training

1890 – Massive Trauma and Collective Grief

- Tatanka Iyotake & Sitanka Wokiksuye – Sitting Bull Memorial & Bigfoot Memorial Ride
- Importance of Lakota history and the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890 – symbolizes what has happened to Native Peoples
- *Wanagi Wacipi* – the Ghost Dance – manifested attempts at resolution of acute grief reactions – projections into the future, restoration of the old way of life, the return of the buffalo, and reunification with deceased relatives
- State of the Lakota at that time: massive starvation, deaths, imposed reservation systems, prisoners of war experience, prior policies of extermination

Assassination of Siting Bull and the Wounded Knee Massacre

- Tunkasila Tatanka Iyotake blamed for spread of the Wanagi Wacipi (although he never practiced this as it was not traditionally Lakota ceremony)
- Major James McLaughlin ordered arrest of Tatanka Iyotake; some historical oral testimonies of alcohol given to Indian police and orders to bring him in dead or alive
- Some Hunkpapa Lakota survivors escaped and fled to join Sitanka (Bigfoot) and went to Wounded Knee where they were massacred

Omniciye Woiyaksape: Sharing Wisdom Council Project

It is our way to mourn for one year when one of our relations enters the Spirit World. Tradition is to wear black while mourning our lost one, tradition is not to be happy, not to sing and dance and enjoy life's beauty during mourning time. Tradition is to suffer with the remembering of our lost one, and to give away much of what we own and to cut our hair short....Chief Sitting Bull was more than a relation....He represented an entire people: our freedom, our way of life -- all that we were. And for one hundred years we as a people have mourned our great leader.

Omniciye Woiyaksape

We have followed tradition in our mourning. We have not been happy, have not enjoyed life's beauty, have not danced or sung as a proud nation. We have suffered remembering our great Chief and have given away much of what was ours.... blackness has been around us for a hundred years. During this time the heartbeat of our people has been weak, and our life style has deteriorated to a devastating degree. Our people now suffer from the highest rates of unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, and suicide in the country.

Traditional Hunkpapa Lakota Elders Council (Blackcloud, 1990)

Sitanka Wokiksuye: Praying for future seven generations

- Video Clips from *Wiping the Tears of Seven Generations: The Bigfoot Memorial Ride* (Kifaru Productions, 1992)
- Important observations - the generosity of the riders in praying for the people, carrying the people in their hearts, many fasting during the ride, and the power of transcending the physical – to help the people to heal

Relevant Recent HT Publications

- Brave Heart, M.Y.H., Elkins, J., Tafoya, G., Bird, D., & Salvador (2012). *Wicasa Was'aka: Restoring the traditional strength of American Indian males. American Journal of Public Health, 102 (S2), 177-183.*
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- Brave Heart, M.Y.H., & De Bruyn, L. (1998). The American holocaust: Historical unresolved grief among native American Indians. *National Center for American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research Journal, 8(2), 56-78.*

Website

- www.historicaltrauma.com
- Developed by Raymond Daw (Dine')