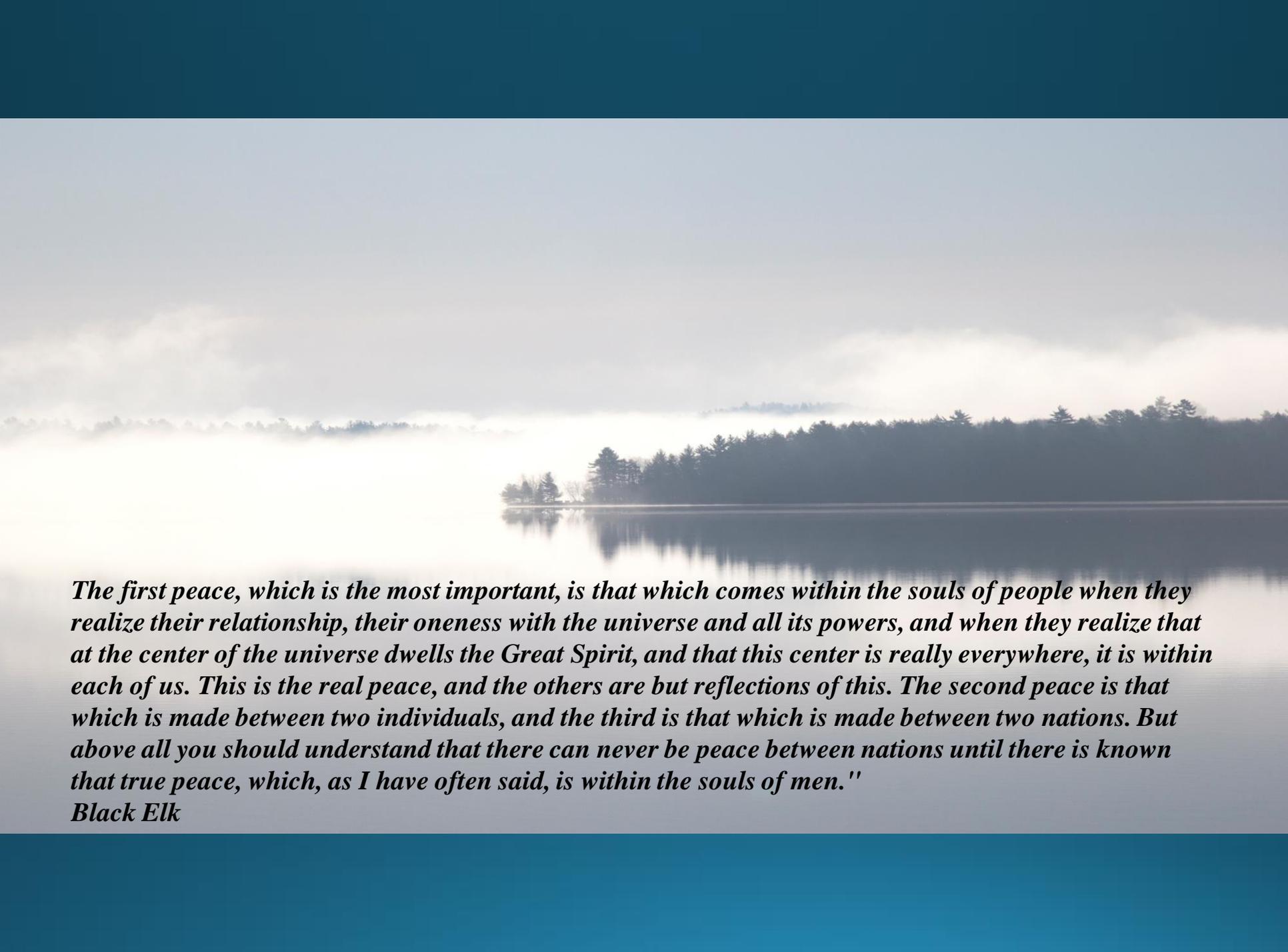




USING
TRAUMA-INFORMED
APPROACHES IN OUR WORK:
Vicarious Trauma
2019



The first peace, which is the most important, is that which comes within the souls of people when they realize their relationship, their oneness with the universe and all its powers, and when they realize that at the center of the universe dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center is really everywhere, it is within each of us. This is the real peace, and the others are but reflections of this. The second peace is that which is made between two individuals, and the third is that which is made between two nations. But above all you should understand that there can never be peace between nations until there is known that true peace, which, as I have often said, is within the souls of men.'

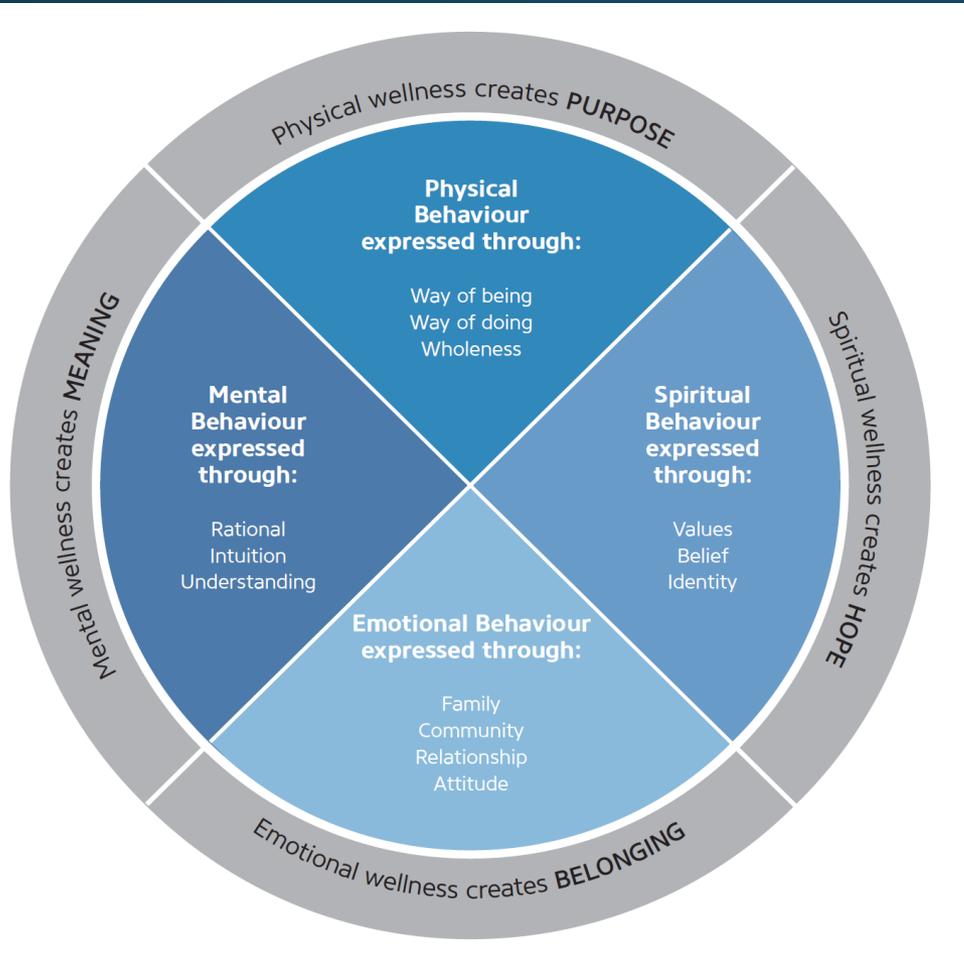
Black Elk

Thunderbird
Partnership
Foundation's

Core Focus



Indigenous Wellness Framework

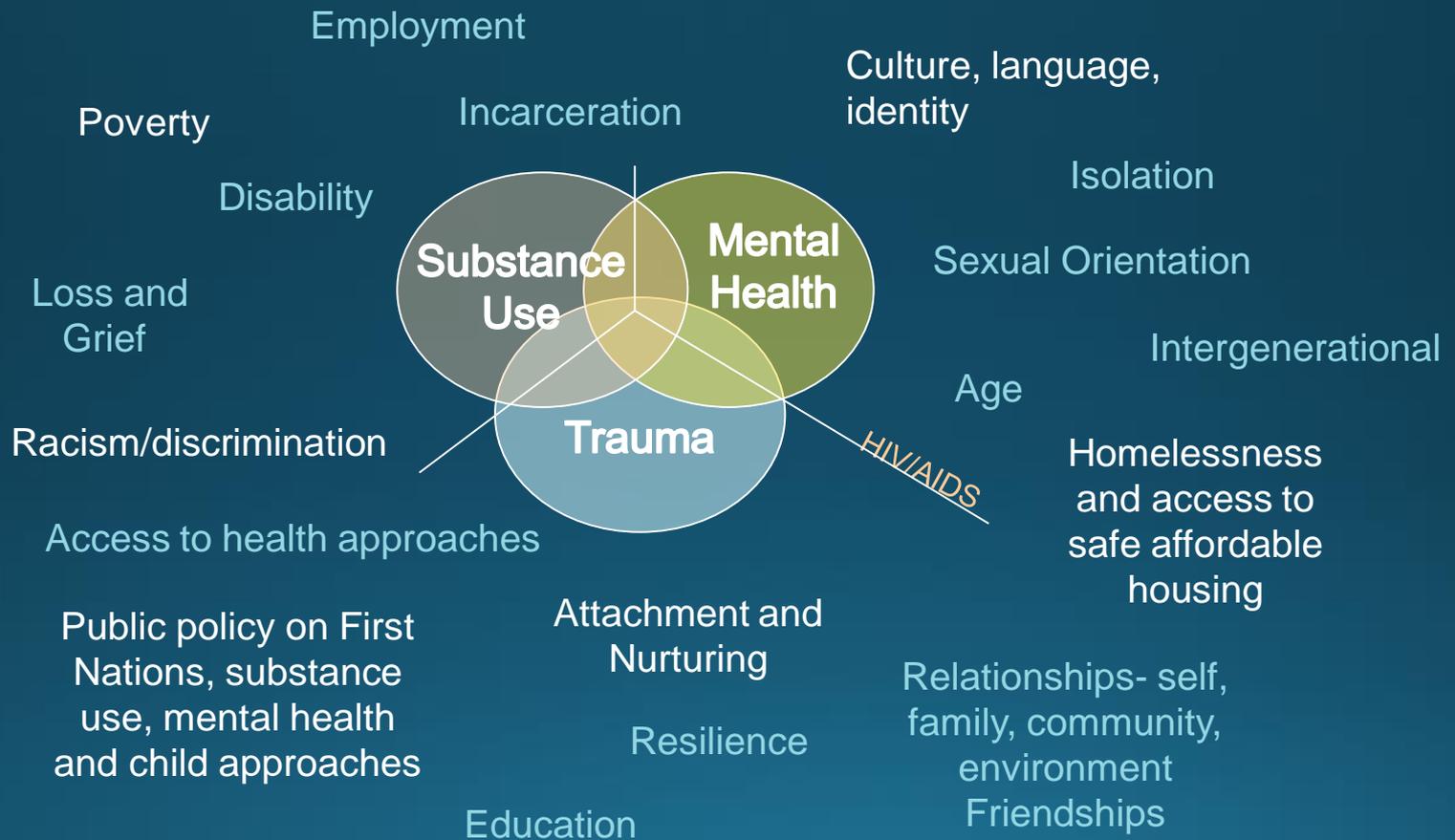


Wellness from an Indigenous perspective is a *whole and healthy person* expressed through a sense of balance of body, mind, emotion and spirit.

Central to wellness is belief in one's connection to language, land, beings of creation, and ancestry, supported by a caring family and environment

- Elder Jim Dumont

Making the Connections

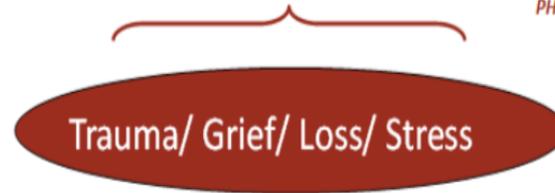




DRUGS
ALCOHOL
PAIN
GAMBLING
SEX

ADDICTION

EXERCISE
FOOD
WORK
CAFFIENE
PHONE/TECH



Fear & Shame
Isolation
Helplessness

Detachment
Loss of Identity
Loss of Rights

Poverty
Lack of Housing
Loss of Freedom



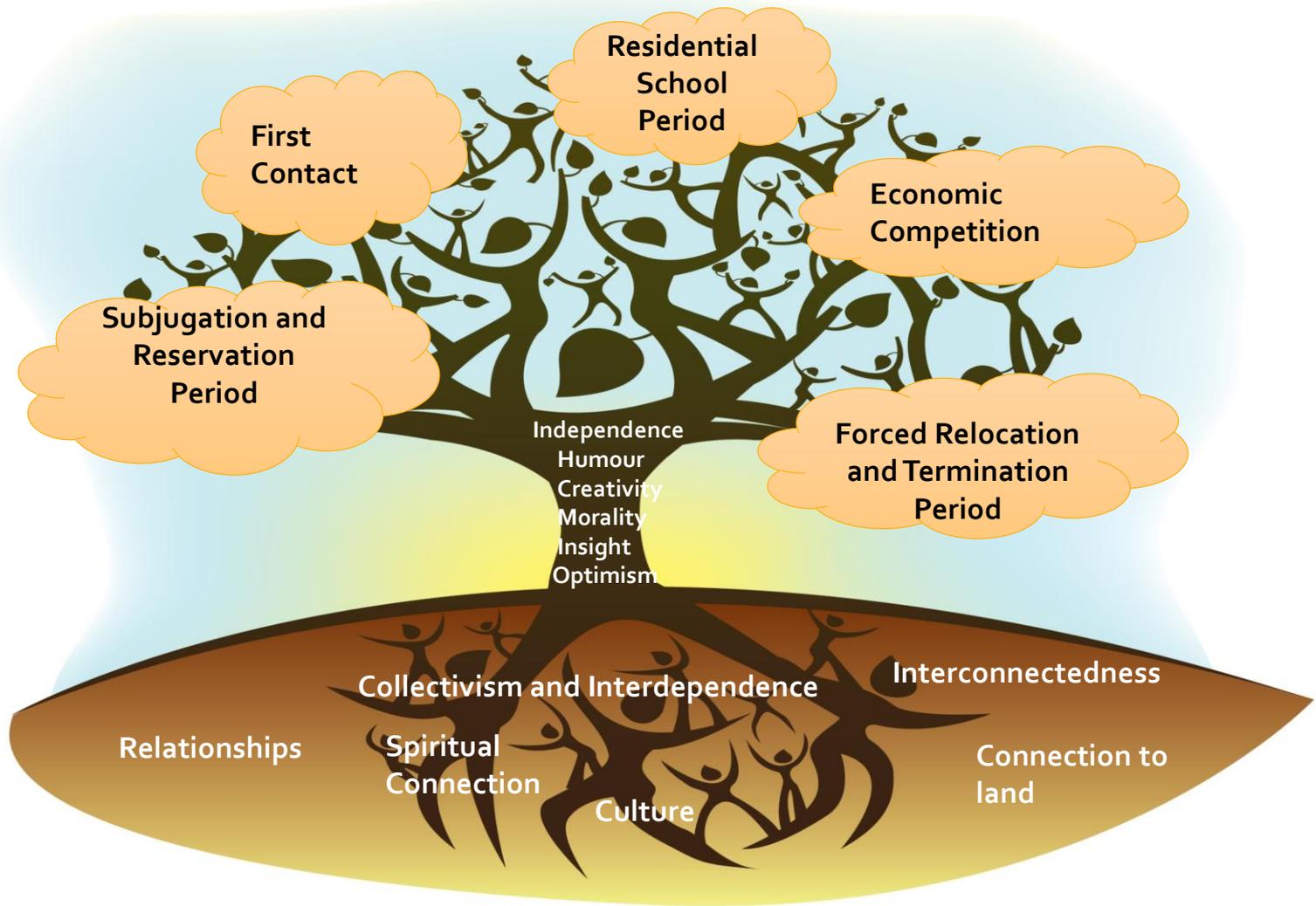
Residential
Schools

The 60's
Scoop

Land
Theft

Colonization

<http://www.fnha.ca/Documents/FNHA-MHW-Summit-2018-Presentation-Decolonizing-Addiction-and-Indigenous-Harm-Reduction.pdf>



“Culturally Informed Trauma Approaches are a way of thinking and doing that provides holistic approaches with understanding of the traumatic experience and its effects on the survivor, family, and community”



People **can and do recover** from the effects of trauma when they receive the right services and supports

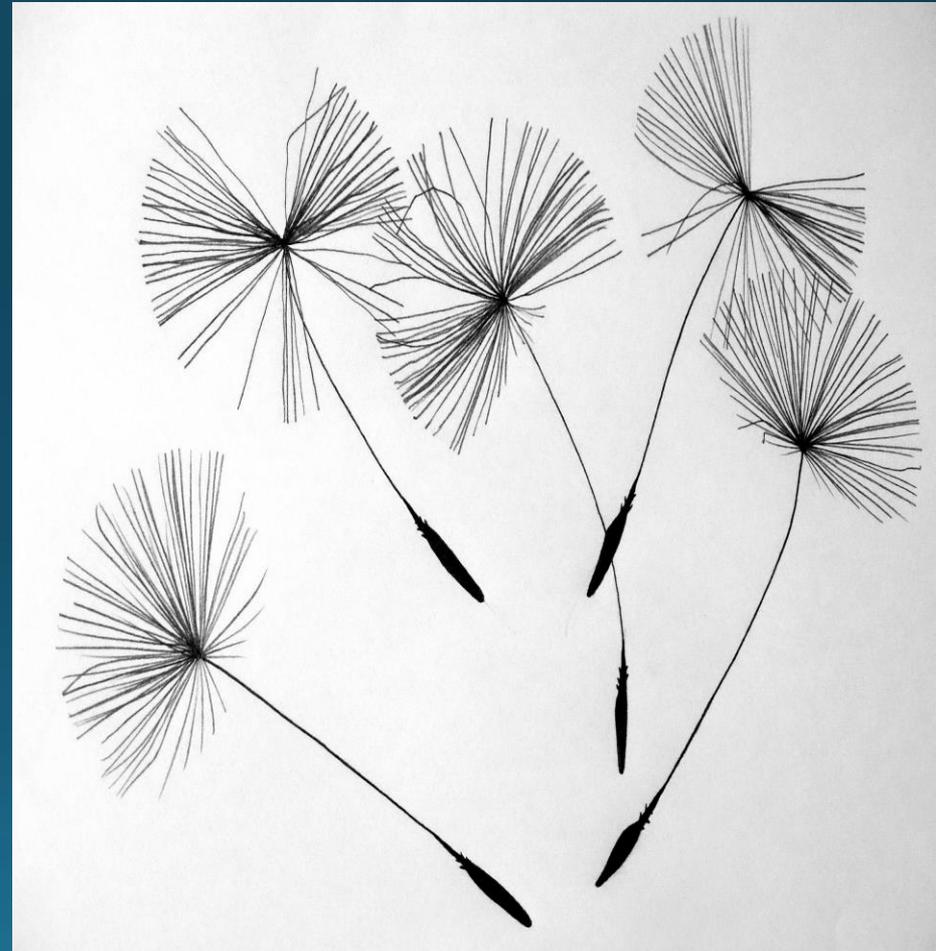
Reactions to Life Stories/Events:

- **Stress:** natural part of life that keeps us motivated, active and mobilizes our bodies and minds to react quickly in a situation
- **Traumatic stress:** is extreme stress that can happen after a traumatic event that affects both the survivor and the helper or can accumulate over time-
vicarious trauma
- **Vicarious Trauma** is a work challenge that comes from listening to individuals/families sharing their stories/events every day to you about the challenges they face in the lives of the children they are supporting

May begin to experience some symptoms that mirror post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) or depression symptoms experienced by individuals who were directly traumatized

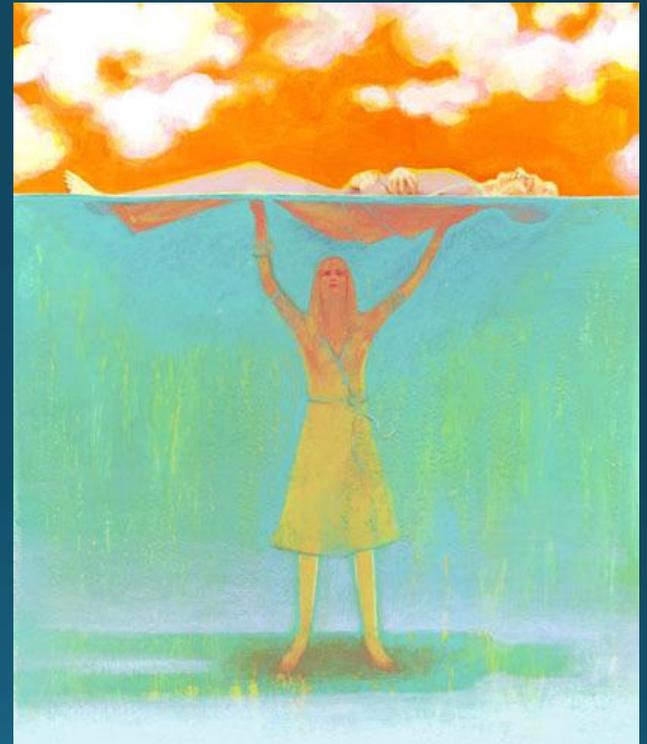
Care provider Exposure to Life Events and Coping

- **Single life events:** change normal daily routines and require adapt and develop new coping strategies
- **Traumatic events:** are extreme events that are outside of usual life experience, threaten life or personal wellbeing, cause feelings of intense fear, horror or helplessness
- Witnessing or listening to these events can have profound effects on you as care providers as trauma is contagious= world view



Exposure to Trauma

- Burnout
- Compassion Fatigue
- Transference
- Countertransference
- Vicarious Trauma (secondary trauma)



What is Vicarious Trauma?

- Not direct trauma
- Caused by second hand exposure
- Accrual of exposure to other people's trauma

TRAUMA CHANGES YOU

1. Neurological changes

- Increased autonomic responses- **shaky, sweaty, heart palpitations, trouble breathing**
- Compromised immune system
- Affect dysregulation- over, under
- Emotional instability

2. Physiological changes

- Increased body responses to fear triggers
- Sleep abnormalities
- Hypervigilance
- Self harm

3. Spiritual

- Disconnection from spirit/culture/traditions
- Shame
- Dissociation

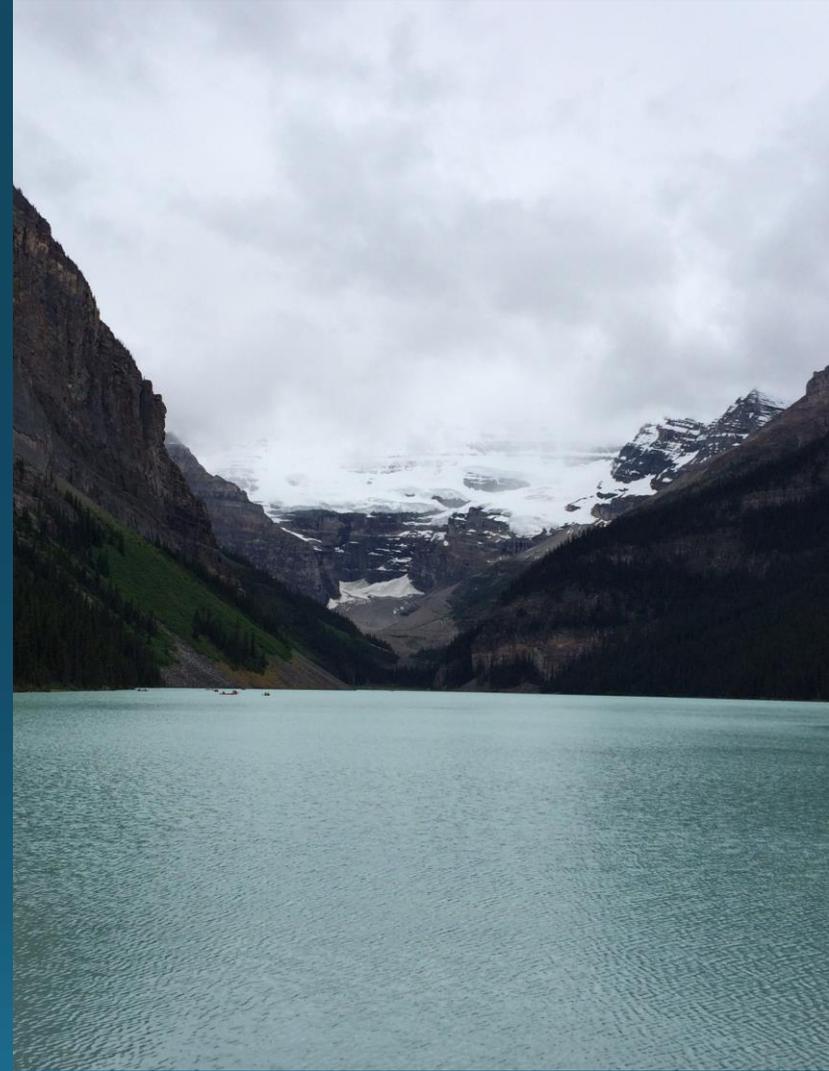
4. Cognitive changes

- Memory impairments- making decisions, poor concentration
- Poor social acuity- reading social cues and faces
- Impaired learning
- Chronically activated stress hormones- impairs ability to learn new things and remember
- Addictive behaviors



Effects of VT

- Short-term reactions or longer-term effects that continue long after the work has finished
- Can persist for months and sometimes even years after work with traumatized individuals **without** effective intervention
- Does not in any way suggest weakness or fault on the part of the care provider, but is often inherent in the work undertaken by the helper (Ross & Halpern, 2009).



Risk Factors

- Past history of personal trauma
- Lack of effective and supportive process to discuss traumatic content of work
- Lack of preparation, orientation, training and supervision on the job
- Constant exposure to trauma with little or no variation in work
- Overwork
- Socially isolating self: both on and off work
- Ignoring healthy boundaries
- Difficulty expressing emotions and needs
- Tendency to avoid feelings, withdraw, or blame others for stress situations
- Taking on too much
- Lack of experience
- Too much experience (being in the job for many years)
- Working with large numbers of traumatized children, especially sexually abused children
- Working with large numbers of individuals who suffer with dissociative disorders
- Having too many negative clinical outcomes (Bloom, 2003)



Traumatic events may trigger reactions



Feeling so
overwhelmed
(emotionally shut down)

Interference

ability to continue
to help (stirs up past
memories or traumas in
own life)

Over identification
with individual
(getting too close)

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

Failure to critically critique self- values, bias, assumptions that come from:

1. One's own encounters with First Nations people in relation to their cultural/sociopolitical context

2. May provide risks or perpetuate a continued legacy of:

- colonialism
- negative stereotyping
- further alienating First Nations individuals and families from health care services

(Browne, 1995; Browne, 2005; Browne & Fiske, 2001).



Own trauma or life experiences with different agencies affects how we operate in the helping field

Everything Links Back to Creation

Creator endowed everyone with resources, strengths, abilities and skills to deal with these difficult situations and challenges

- promote resilience and strength
- use cultural practices and healing



Protective Factors: Seven Grandfathers

To cherish knowledge is to know **wisdom**;

To know **love** is to know peace

To honour all of Creation is to have **respect**;

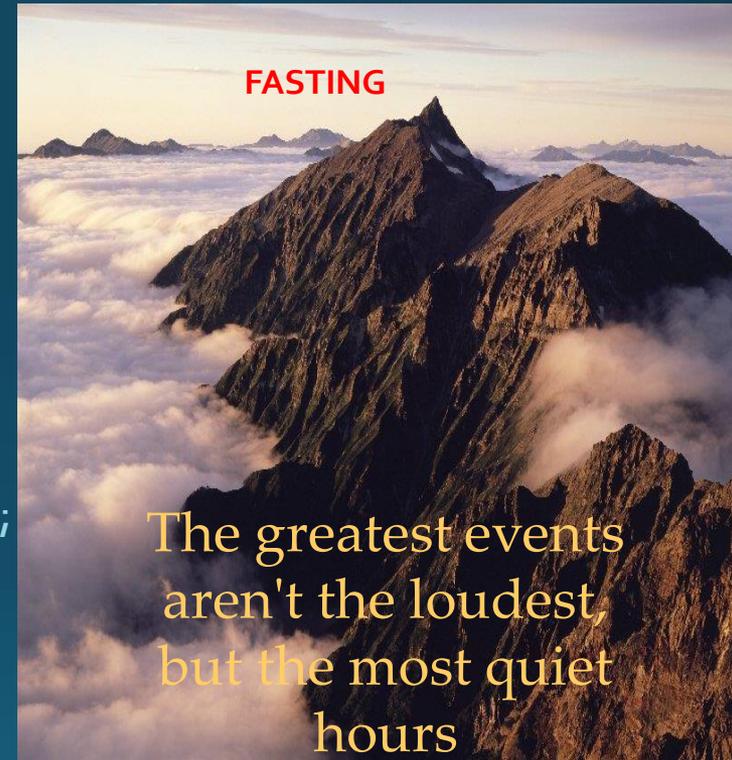
Bravery is to face the foe with integrity;

Honesty in facing a situation is to be brave;

Humility is to know yourself as a sacred part of Creation;

Truth is to know all of these things.

"Mishomis Book: Voice of the Ojibway"

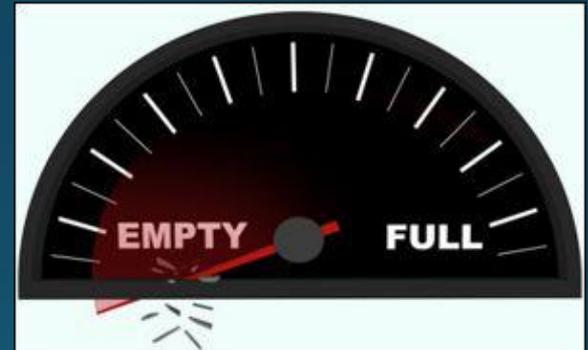


*Fasting is about going without to receive
from the Spirit*

Fasting is about looking at the truth of self

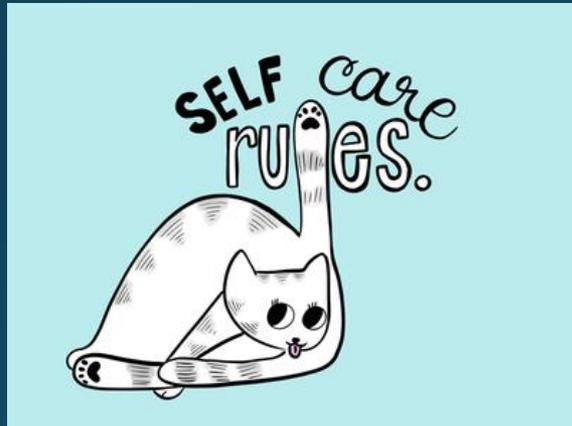
Know When Life is Out of Balance

- Emotions
- Thoughts
- Physical symptoms
- Behaviour at work
- Behaviour at home



Get help early before the problem grows too big

Self Care Planning



Exercise: Stress Audit



How Balanced is Your Life

Review the four aspects of your life to see where you are heading:

Spiritual

- diminished life vision/purpose
- disconnection from a higher power
- reduced participation in ceremony (prayer, sweats, smudging)
- unclear dreams
- doubts
- focussed on negative aspects of life

Emotional

- frustration/rage, passive/aggressive behaviour
- lack of trust, no humour, feeling unsafe
- sadness, depression
- lack of honesty
- moodiness
- self critical
- irritable, cynical
- paranoia
- fear of reprisal
- feeling besieged

Mental

- bored, frustrated,
- lack of confidence, negative thoughts
- confusion, anxiety, denial
- sleeplessness
- feeling of failure,
- hopelessness
- negative impulse behaviours,
- co-dependency,
- deadened feelings
- rationalization, insanity
- dehumanizing, lack of patience
- suicidal

Physical

- illness, increased sick time
- body pains, poor nutrition
- low energy/fatigue
- overeating
- poor self image
- nervousness
- isolation
- self mutilation
- self medicating
- drug, alcohol, gambling abuse

Keep in mind that balance in your life is your own responsibility

Self Awareness

Self-awareness and understanding of **vicarious trauma** are critical components of your work

Essential that workers know themselves well and recognize what they bring to the interaction:

- **Your strengths based story**
- **Culture**
- **Beliefs about healing and wellness**
- **Triggers**
- **Vulnerabilities**



Effects on Care Providers

Care Providers are vulnerable because of their empathic openness, which is a necessary and essential part of the helping process.

A transformation in a helper's inner experience:

- **Shift in reference**- identity, spirituality, worldview
- **Diminished self capacity**- maintain connection with self and others
- **Alterations in Experiences**- **individual/family** memories become yours
- **Psychological needs disrupted**- safety, trust, intimacy, control
- **Internal resources**- set and maintain boundaries, personal growth

Care providers must be mindful of the balance between empathy and the impact of the exposure to the individual's trauma.

EMPATHY:

capacity to understand or feel what another person is experiencing from within the other person's frame of reference or the capacity to place oneself in another's position

Vicarious Traumatization

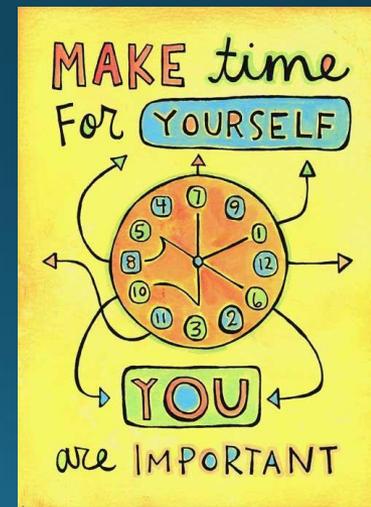
Ask of oneself:

- How aware am I of my feelings, impulses, and thoughts regarding this individual/family?
- Is what I am thinking and feeling in keeping with this individual's story or needs?
- Is my intended intervention appropriate to this individual's needs or more for my own needs or the organization?
- Am I behaving, feeling, thinking, experiencing differently with this individual? What is different?

Personally Responding to VT

Professionally, it makes a profound impact simply by acknowledging vicarious traumatization

- **Awareness** to make responsible choices towards creating balance in your work/personal life
- **Balance** with the various tasks by working out a schedule with your supervisor that allows for a break in your day/vacations/holidays and then make sure that you take it
- **Connection** is about nurturing relationships-creation, community, family, self and having an opportunity to share your state of mind, to talk about your challenges and frustrations creates balance and harmony



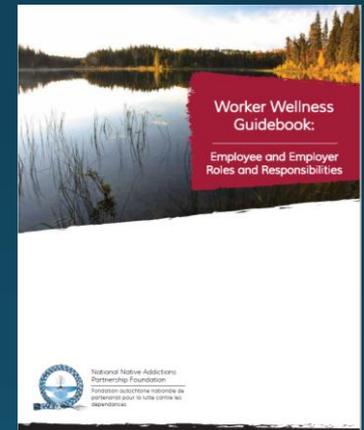
How can Coworkers Help?

- Encourage to attend to basics – eating, sleeping, exercise, social connections with family, community, creation and culture; emotional /spiritual needs
- Being a team player to support peer through process
- Reaching out and talking about impact of work
- Encourage to discuss experience with supervisor

Organizational Shift on VT

The professional culture and practice of helping services must also **shift to recognize staff safety needs that mitigate burnout and vicarious trauma**, including:

- Supervision
- Education
- Self care opportunities
- Team-based structures and practices that embody trauma informed approaches



Organizational Response to VT

An effective organization will recognize that working with trauma survivors places extraordinary demands on employee/volunteers and prioritizes approaches for staff:

- Staff sweats
- Debriefing
- Foot soaks
- Social activities
- Employee gifts (employee births, bereavement)
- Staff satisfaction survey
- Cultural/sick time leave



Role of Supervisors

- Provide regular supervision from a strengths based and culturally trauma informed lens
- Allowing flexible work schedules
- Recognize need for and protecting down time
- Tuning in to staff who may be withdrawing or isolating
- Creating a open and safe space for employees to debrief
- Referring to cultural or professional assistance programs
- Discussing vicarious trauma as part of supervision
- Provide opportunities to learn and grow spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically within the organization

Process to Debriefing

1. Schedule a regular time and place (each day or week)
2. Set up a Trauma Informed (TI) environment- safety, trust
3. Examine strategies that support Trauma Informed Approaches
 - ❖ Case – transferring knowledge to skills, balanced workload
 - ❖ Worker – assessing resiliency & vulnerabilities, managing stress & self-care, ensure strong alliances with trust
 - ❖ Organization – determining caseload and implementation of TI policy
4. Highlight learning and change practices

Managers Promoting Resiliency

- Clear policies and procedures regarding helping people who have experienced trauma and vicarious trauma
- Skill development on reporting trauma, trauma informed care, trauma focused treatment, etc.
- Regular opportunities to discuss working with trauma survivors as a team or individually- team meetings, case conference, supervision
- Clear process on who, what kind and how access to support is provided
- Workload balance and ensuring appropriate supports

Managers Promoting Trauma Informed Environment

- Welcoming and safe
- Ensure a strong supervisory work alliance with trust, boundaries, expectations, listening without judgement, reflection and non-critical feedback
- Choice – creating a collaborative relationship on the type of intervention used
- Empowerment – focusing on strengths and using this to strengthen areas of growth
- Supportive supervision associated with low levels of vicarious trauma

Managers Analyze the Current Status of the Organization

- What is the current status of wellness training within this organization?
- How do my staff understand the severity of stress/trauma amongst each other?
- How do we educate new staff on Stress? Trauma? Wellbeing ? as part of orientation? Intergenerational trauma? cultural wellbeing? benefits of rest, exercise, sleep and nutrition? effective interpersonal communication?

Asking staff:

- How has work affected your relationships, emotional responsiveness, cultural identity or spirituality?
- Does your work lead to feelings of frustration or hopelessness? OR joy and accomplishment?
- What EA Programs are in place to assist with your challenges?

Looking Ahead: Self Care Planning

Exercise: Complete a Holistic Health Performance Assessment

Who are those organizations, groups, natural helpers, traditional healers or societies within and outside of the community that will help you in your self approaches?



Empathy: Caregivers Caring

Your WELLNESS

Consider what you will do for personal wellness tonight after this session

What are you going to commit to doing with the new information you learned today?

Tomorrow

***Creator gave us
Tomorrow to
Make a
Difference....
If tomorrow
Cannot be any
Different than
Today...then
What do we
Need tomorrow
For?***

Closing Thought:

Think about tomorrow and who you wish to continue the dialogue with to effectively move toward wellness for all First Nations Peoples...

How will you collaborate with Leaders/Elders/community to better serve the needs and challenges of individuals and families in your community?

QUESTIONS????

MIIGWETCH!!! Thank you

For more information on our work, please visit

www.thunderbirdpf.org

www.nnapf.com

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