ABSTRACT

THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA ON NATIVE AMERICANS

Native Americans have been impacted by historical trauma for several generations. There are significant health disparities and a disproportionate number of Native American children are still being removed from their families and tribal communities 37 years after the Indian Child Welfare Act was enacted. From first contact with early explorers and colonizers, Native Americans have been forced into indentured servitude, forcefully removed from ancestral and sacred lands, murdered, deceived, forbidden by law to practice their spirituality and ceremonies, and their children were kidnapped and forced to assimilate. The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of historical trauma on Native Americans, and to develop a guidebook for social work practitioners. It is important for social work practitioners to know and understand this history and how it impacts contemporary Native Americans in order to respectfully engage and provide the most appropriate and effective services to the Native American community.

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THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA ON NATIVE AMERICANS

by

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CHAPTER 1: THE IMPACT OF HISTORICAL TRAUMA ON NATIVE AMERICANS

Prior to contact with European explorers, there were an estimated 30 to 50 million Indigenous people living throughout the North and South American continents. In what is now the USA, there were an estimated 12-15 million Indigenous people. By 1890, only 250,000 remained, 98% were gone due to disease, war, forced removal, forced assimilation, broken treaties, and outright homicide. Whatever the exact numbers, the mortality was unprecedented and overwhelming (Jones, 2006). Native Americans continue to suffer from lack of political representation, economic deprivation, significant and enduring health disparities, and the on-going struggle for preservation of identity and cultural history.

These disparities have continued to impact parenting skills, academic achievement, employability, and overall wellness for Native American people. Moreover, there are significant barriers to the delivery of culturally relevant and effective services for Native American people. These include but are not limited to a lack of cultural competency by service providers and organizations, little or no community outreach or engagement of Native American community members or leaders in the development of programs, services, and projects, or in the guidance of organizations that serve Native Americans. Accordingly, cultural competence is a skill that social work practitioners must develop and work at consistently due to the diversity of Native American tribal cultures, languages, and traditions. According to Nicolai and Saus (2012), a poor understanding of Native American cultural values and historical trauma by providing agencies, lack of funding, preventative services and Native American service providers, under-reporting and under-prosecuting crimes against Native American children and women, and a
tendency of agencies to ignore strengths of Native American clients and families has created systems mistrust for contemporary Native Americans, that reinforces the historical mistrust of federal government agencies and representatives.

Brave Heart, Chase, Elkins, and Altschul (2011) define historical trauma as cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma. Native Americans have, for over 500 years, endured physical, emotional, social, and spiritual genocide from European and American colonialist policy. Contemporary Native American life has adapted such that, many are healthy and economically self-sufficient. Yet a significant proportion of Native people are not faring as well.

Indigenous people of North America have been referred to as Indians, American Indians, Native Americans, First Nations, and Indigenous. In this chapter, I will use the terms as they were found in the literature. It is important to ask individuals, families, and communities how they would like to be addressed when it comes to these terms. Christopher Columbus, who set out for the East Indies, but reached North America, a continent previously unknown to Europeans, called the inhabitants of the lands he visited Indios, Spanish for Indians, and continued to do so even after it was established that he did not navigate to his original destination. He became more consumed with exploiting the Indigenous inhabitants for their resources in spite of their kindness and willingness to help in any way they were able to. This exploitation and genocide continued for hundreds of years.

Colonization includes the control of the land and the production by Indigenous peoples through war or threat of war (Tamburro, 2013). According to Wendt and Gone (2012), colonization refers to the exploitation and subjugation of Indigenous people, lands, and resources, and the maintenance or expansion of the
dominant culture’s power via its behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies. Through war and disease, European conquerors took Indigenous slaves and natural resources to a distant continent and created economic dependence in the colonies and multi-layered relationships between the conqueror and the conquered, decimating Indigenous ways of living, by creating the reservation/reserve systems in North America (Tamburro, 2013).

After military defeat, American Indians experienced one of the most systematic and successful programs of ethnic cleansing the world has ever seen (Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004). They were relocated to what amounted to penal colonies, starved, neglected, and forbidden to practice their religious beliefs (Whitbeck et al., 2004). There was no safe place to return to or immigrate as all were force-marched or loaded on trains and relocated to completely foreign areas of the continent.

**Genocide**

The International Convention of the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide on December 9, 1948 set the United Nations definition of genocide:

**General Assembly Resolution 260A (III) Article 2**

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- Killing members of the group;
- Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. (U.N. Resolution 260 (III), 1948)

Eventually genocide was replaced by cultural genocide. Bureaucratic forms of genocide coupled the rational pursuit of order and efficiency with emotionally charged ideas about the threats represented by the racialized ‘other’ portrayed as savage, uncivilized, or degenerate (Kirmayer, Gone, & Moses, 2014). The consequences of colonization are similar for peoples all over the world including, for example, the Maoris of New Zealand, the Aboriginal Peoples of Australia, First Nations Peoples of Canada, and Indigenous Peoples of Africa and Latin America (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005). This was accomplished through forced removal from their ancestral lands that required them to adopt completely new and often foreign ways of life, for example, a tribe that hunts forcibly removed from land where wild game was plentiful, into an area with little to no game, driving them to become gatherers and/or farm the land.

Forced assimilation came next during the boarding school era. The federal government promoted boarding schools, and the removal of large numbers of Indian children from reservations, tribes, clans, and families as a key element of assimilation policy (Crofoot & Harris, 2012). Children were legally taken from parents and placed in boarding schools that broke up extended family systems and outlawed traditional languages (Whitbeck et al., 2004). While boarding school suggests a classroom experience, the education of Indian students was primarily to be unskilled or semiskilled labor (Crofoot & Harris, 2012). While in boarding schools, their children were reeducated so that their language, culture, and kinship patterns were lost to them (Whitbeck et al., 2004). This separated a few generations of children and adults from their families, languages, and cultures.
Research by Crofoot and Harris (2012) shows that boarding schools were also a place of death and disease. Lack of sanitation and inadequately ventilated dormitories caused epidemics of tuberculosis, trachoma, measles, pneumonia, mumps, and influenza (Crofoot & Harris, 2012). According to Crofoot and Harris, the death rate is unknown because records were not kept, and because students who became seriously ill were sent home.

**Problem Statement**

Historical trauma has had a profoundly negative effect on individuals, families, and communities. The Indigenous inhabitants of North America endured losses by outright violence, foreign disease epidemics, forced relocation, and forced assimilation through the removal of children and termination of federal recognition of tribal sovereignty. Sovereignty is a nation's power to self-govern, to determine its own way of life, and to live that life—to whatever extent possible—free from interference (Cobb, 2005). This has negatively impacted parenting skills, academic achievement, employment, and wellness of Native Americans for generations.

The enduring prevalence of physical and mental health disparities for Native Americans, as well as the disproportionate number of Native American children being removed from their families and placed in foster care is significant. American Indian and Alaska Native children constitute approximately 1% of the child population and represent approximately 2% of the child welfare system (Crofoot & Harris, 2012). This has major impact on the future of Native American tribes and communities.

Native Americans define wellness as a balance of spirituality, physical, emotional, and mental health. Social work practitioners who are not informed or
familiar with Native American culture or historical trauma may actually cause harm to individuals and families they are working with. One example of this is the use of a deficits approach rather than a strength based approach that utilizes cultural resources and spirituality to address the presenting issues as an imbalance. Addressing the imbalance as the issue rather than the person facilitates a partnership of equals correcting an imbalance, empowering the individual to tap into cultural strengths to find their balance. A deficits approach is further demonstration of government agencies colonial perspective of Indigenous people being inherently bad or wrong that Indigenous people have come to expect and distrust.

It is imperative that child welfare workers be mindful of their own value systems, how their value systems may differ from those affirmed by Native clients, and how their value systems can affect their ability to work with Native people in a manner that respects client’s autonomy (Limb, Hodge, & Panos, 2008). Having a solid understanding and knowledge of historical trauma and how it impacts Native American clients that social workers work with will better inform their practice and increase effectiveness, individualization, relevance, and appropriateness of services delivered. An understanding and respect for sovereignty grounded in Native American culture allows child welfare workers the opportunity to utilize cultural and spiritual elements in their practice with Native American clients and shifts attention away from family deficit models in favor of models of cultural strength (Limb et al., 2008).

Lidot (2014) has proposed that tribal cultures had mechanisms that taught youth the responsibilities of becoming adults, parents, and active members of one’s community. Young men and young women were taught values that governed child-rearing and community responsibility. During the boarding school
era many of the teachings were lost and the ability of tribal people to raise and maintain successful families diminished. The losses are ever present, represented by the economic condition of reservation life, discrimination, and a sense of cultural loss (Whitbeck et al., 2004). These challenges are often observed through the need for parenting classes, and through the need for youth to find culturally appropriate mentors and role models who successfully navigate contemporary culture while maintaining a tribal identity.

Without a demonstrable knowledge and understanding of historical trauma, social work practitioners will continue to provide non-culturally specific and ineffective services. This could potentially offend and cause distrust in their relationship with Native American individuals and families. This could damage or affect the ability to develop a working relationship and lead to complete disengagement and refusal by Indigenous individuals to comply with irrelevant services. This would perpetuate the distrust and complete disdain for government agencies.

**Purpose of Study**

The purpose of this study is to develop a guidebook for social work practitioners to utilize in their practice with Native Americans for the purpose of improving the effectiveness of services, building awareness of historical trauma and local cultural resources, and developing partnerships with Tribes, urban Native American resource programs, and cultural specialists. Building an awareness of the historical trauma endured by Native Americans, as well as the contemporary perspective of these events is crucial for non-Native social workers. This awareness will guide practice, and improve effectiveness of services by
working in partnership with tribal resources, urban Native American programs, and cultural specialists.

The guidebook is based on a review of the conceptual and empirical literature, and interviews with local tribal community members and elders. The literature review focused on historical trauma, the impact of historical trauma, and responses to historical trauma. Historical trauma was defined in several studies, and the definitions were all very similar. Though all tribes suffered significant and traumatic losses that were similar in many ways, each tribe and region had a unique experience and perspective of historical trauma. This also led to some similarities in the response to historical trauma, such as revitalization of language, cultural practices, and ceremonies, as well as some responses unique in each region or tribe.

The interviews gathered data on local perspectives of historical trauma, local tribal responses to historical trauma, local tribal resources, and expectations for non-Native social work practitioners working with Native American individuals, families, and communities. Participants discussed their tribal history, and how they negotiate living in dominant culture and in their tribal communities. Tribal resources, cultural specialists, and local Native American resource agencies were also revealed through the interview process. Data analysis of the interviews explored themes based on empowerment and grounded theories. Each interview concluded with a discussion of what participants felt non-Native social work practitioners should bring to their work with Native Americans.

The aim of the guidebook is to provide education on historical trauma and how it continues to impact the parenting skills, academic achievement, employment, and wellness of Native Americans. Knowledge of historical trauma and cultural resources in the Central Valley will create or improve awareness for
non-Native social work practitioners and other service providers about the historical context. This awareness will guide understanding of the various ways historical trauma is ever present for individuals, families, and communities. The information provided in the handbook will also increase the ability of social work practitioners to ensure proper assessment, inquiry, noticing, and active efforts in their ICWA cases by providing information about local and national Native American resource programs and agencies. Non-Native social work practitioners will understand culturally-centered social work practice, and how respecting Native American history, culture, values, traditions, and relationships promotes positive outcomes for Native American individuals, families, and communities by improving or enhancing intervention planning, and addressing target problems.

**Conceptual/Theoretical Framework**

The empowerment theoretical framework provides social work practitioners with a valuable tool for working with Native American individuals, families, communities, and organizations. According to Whiteside, Tsey, and Cadet-James (2011), empowerment theory acknowledges the challenges of Indigenous peoples history and the social environment, acknowledges and builds on existing strengths, promotes autonomy and individual responsibility, and seeks to facilitate community development or change. The process of empowerment occurs on the individual, interpersonal, and institutional levels, where the person develops a sense of personal power, an ability to affect others, and an ability to work with others to change social institutions (Gutierrez, 1990). An understanding and respect for sovereignty grounded in Native American culture allows child welfare workers the opportunity to utilize cultural and spiritual elements in their practice
with Native American clients and shifts attention away from family deficit models in favor of models of cultural strength (Limb et al., 2008).

Empowerment is the process of working in partnership to assist individuals, families and communities in discovering the strengths, resources, and tools within and around them and utilizing them to overcome their challenges. Each tribe has inherent strengths in their unique ceremonies and religious beliefs that keep them grounded and remind them how to live as healthy Native American people. This approach potentially provides a useful tool for social workers engaging with Native Americans whether through policy, planning, research, or practice. Traditional practices and ceremonies have been effective since time immemorial, but federal policies at different times have prohibited them, disregarded them, perpetuated questions about their credibility and validity, and resulted in their loss across generations in some communities (Goodkind et al., 2011). More effective social services can be developed when social workers understand and are committed to developing methods that support Indigenous communities in their cultural recovery and self-determination efforts (Tamburro, 2013). The experience of oppression, discrimination, injustice, and powerlessness for Native Americans are the very circumstances that call for the application of empowerment-based social work practice.

Methodology

The methodology includes three parts: 1) a literature review, 2) individual interviews with local Native American adults, elders, and spiritual leaders, and 3) construction of a guidebook for non-Native social work practitioners. The empirical work is based on a community assessment with members of the local Native American community with whom the researcher has established trust.
Participants are respected members and informal leaders of the community that may provide the names and contact information for other key members that may provide additional, valuable knowledge.

**Research Question**

The question this study addresses is *What knowledge do Native American community members perceive that professional social workers need regarding historical trauma in order to work effectively with Native Americans?*

It does not seem possible for social work practitioners to be prepared to effectively engage Native American clients without first decolonizing their thinking and practice by considering the inherent strengths in Native culture, language, and ceremony. For this to be possible, decolonization of accredited social work curriculum is crucial and necessary. The central goal of decolonizing methodology is to uncover detrimental effects of European American colonialism and to assist historically colonized groups with preserving and reclaiming their distinctive cultural legacies, strengths, and institutions (Wendt & Gone, 2012). Seminars and guest speakers on topics of historical trauma, decolonization, and the Indian Child Welfare Act are helpful and promising practices at this point in time, but not enough. This is just the beginning phase of opening one’s mind to mostly new information that contradicts what education that has been received through in the K-12 experience, as well as media portrayals of stereotypical Native Americans, and a lack of any contemporary portrayals and references.

**Delimitations**

Delimitations of study apply to the interviews conducted in that a convenience sample was utilized. There is no reliability in the instrument. The instrument is not standardized, therefore not empirical. There is face validity in
that the questions are directly related to the overall research question. The goal of my research is to create a social work practitioner’s handbook for working with the Native American population. This guide will contain significant cultural and historical information that will begin the process of decolonizing thought and practice for social work practitioners new or experienced in the field. It will also contain resource information for social work practitioners to establish and build on their existing relationships with local, regional, and national Native American agencies and cultural specialists. This will enhance practice with Native American individuals, families, and communities by enabling social work practitioners to more effectively address issues and concerns in the realms of parenting skills, academic achievement, employment services, and wellness.

Implications for Social Work Practice

On a micro level, this study will provide social work practitioners with a better understanding and awareness of what Brave Heart et al. (2011) describe as the collective emotional and psychological injury both over the life span and across generations, resulting from a cataclysmic history of genocide experienced by individual Native Americans. This perspective and awareness is crucial for culturally appropriate and effective practice with Native American clients. Non-Native social work practitioners will better understand and value the significance of establishing and maintaining rapport and trust with Native American individuals. Improved awareness and partnerships with appropriate Native American resource agencies and cultural specialists will enhance practice to better address the needs of these individual clients.

On a mezzo level, this study will educate social work practitioners and help them develop an understanding of the origins and legacies of historic distrust and
trauma for Native Americans. This awareness will guide social work practitioners to more effectively collaborate with Native American families as well as appropriate Native American resource organizations, increasing their chances of staying intact and improving their quality of life by actively engaging them in a culturally appropriate manner, through each step of the process. Once established as a best practice, cultural humility will become an official agency policy and procedure.

On a macro level, this study will guide social work policy and program development in the decolonization of social work policy, and practice, as well as the decolonization of any training curriculum or programs. Being cognizant of Native American history and the impact of historical trauma will promote a sense of urgency that calls on the social work commitment to social justice. Part of this action requires continued education of self and others, to bring awareness to the issues and problems faced by a marginalized and highly vulnerable population. This ongoing education will bring to light the micro aggressions Native Americans are faced with on a daily basis, from racism in caricatured portrayal as team mascots, depiction of American presidents responsible for federal policies that caused great harm to Native Americans on US currency, lack of factual history in K-12 and higher education curriculum, and ongoing reference as a population from the past with little to no reference or representation in curriculum, or media as a modern or contemporary people. This will require advocacy for policy changes at the agency, local, state, and federal levels.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This project explores the historical and current impact of historical trauma on Native American people. This project will produce a guidebook for social work practitioners working with Native American individuals, families and communities. The production of the guidebook will be based on sources in a literature review and interviews with local community members that are either enrolled members or descendants of local tribes. The information in this guidebook will address national and local resources for education, employment, parenting, and wellness, including Native American agencies and organizations, spiritual leaders, and cultural specialists. The guidebook will address genocidal policies and acts including the mission era, forced removal, forced assimilation, the boarding school era, termination of federal recognition, and well as the Indian Child Welfare Act and the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978.

This chapter will present a literature review that provides a foundation/basis for the development of the handbook as well as address relevant empirical and conceptual work that has preceded this project. This chapter will discuss the literature on colonization, historical trauma, boarding schools, termination policy, health disparities, mental health, and implications for decolonization of social work education and practice. The following terms will be used to refer to Native American people throughout the text: Indians, American Indians, First Nations, and Indigenous people. Indigenous is the preferred term, though most of the recent research uses Native Americans, while the older research uses American Indian or Indian. The writing will reflect the term the original authors chose to use.
**Historical Trauma**

Historical trauma is conceptualized as a collective complex trauma inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation, such as ethnicity, nationality, and religious affiliation (Brave Heart & DuBruyn, 1998). Brave Heart and DuBruyn state that historical trauma is the legacy of numerous traumatic events a community experiences over generations, and encompasses the psychological and social responses to such events. Proposed symptoms of historical trauma include somatic, psychological, physical, and spiritual problems relating to the unresolved grief caused by colonization and presenting as high rates of depression, anxiety, suicidal behavior, substance abuse, disrupted relationships, diagnosable disorders and various other symptoms (Nicolai & Saus, 2012).

Scholars have suggested that the effects of these historically traumatic events are transmitted intergenerationally, as descendants continue to identify emotionally with ancestral suffering (Lajimodiere, 2012). According to Kirmayer et al. (2014), the means of such transgenerational transmission are varied and can have intergenerational effects such as impaired parenting or distressing narratives such as physical and sexual abuse, substance abuse, loss of language and culture, and emotional attachment with family and tribal community and are sometimes proposed to include unrecognized mechanisms beyond more ordinary or commonly accepted notions such as “cycle of abuse” theories (i.e., the idea that abused children will grow up to be abusive parents, who will subsequently traumatize their own children). This overdetermined transmission of risk is conjectured to accumulate across generations such that the second and third generations will also suffer from mental health problems that can be attributed to colonial violence inflicted on their ancestors (Kirmayer et al., 2014).
As stated by Ramirez and Hammack (2014), California Indigenous people have endured an especially brutal legacy of colonialism. It is estimated that the California Indigenous population numbered over 300,000 prior to contact. During the mission era under Spanish rule, it is estimated that the California Indigenous population fell by around 100,000 due to disease, physical abuse, and sometimes outright murder. California was under both Spanish (1769-1823) and Mexican colonial rule (1823-1848) before becoming part of the United States (Ramirez & Hammack, 2014). The California Gold Rush (1848-1852) brought individuals seeking fortunes from all over the world who held little to no regard for the Indigenous people who resided in this area. According to Heizer (1993), during this time, there was a governor’s executive order that authorized bounties for Indian scalps, as well as provided resources for mobilizing, paying and supplying militias for extended expeditions to remove any Indigenous people they came across. Furthermore, the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians facilitated removing California Indigenous people from their traditional lands, separating at least a generation of children and adults from their families, languages, and cultures (1850-1865). During this time, the California Indigenous population was decimated and reduced to about 30,000.

**Boarding Schools**

The boarding school era began with the founding of Carlisle in Pennsylvania and Chemawa in Oregon in 1879 (Lajimodiere, 2012). Mission schools, established as early as the late 1700s for some American Indian students, and Bureau of Indian Affairs boarding schools like Carlisle were intended to teach American Indian children dominant cultural values, language and style of dress (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Although children were to be sent voluntarily at
first, the policy did not work as thoroughly as the government hoped. Consequently, by 1890, attendance was enforced through cessation of rations and supplies and incarceration (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Children as young as 4 years old were forcefully removed and many were kidnapped from their families and taken to boarding school by wagon or train taking up to 3 days to reach their destination. Many became sick and died along the way, while those that made it would not see their families or return home for several years, if they survived and returned at all.

The destructive and shaming messages inherent in the boarding school system, regardless whether they were Bureau of Indian Affairs or mission schools, were that American Indian families are not capable of raising their own children and that American Indians are culturally and racially inferior (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Following Pratt’s model, “kill the Indian, save the man,” the military atmosphere of schools was reinforced by a strict discipline policy—corporal punishment was incorporated along with a court of older students to maintain adherence to the rules (Lajimodiere, 2012). Once they arrived, they were separated, deloused, and given haircuts, and wool uniforms to wear. They were taught to march and marched everywhere they went. Strict military discipline was used to enforce all rules, which included not speaking their Native languages. Schools were not given enough funds, so students were exploited to work large fields, gardens, barns, and build and maintain the buildings (Lajimodiere, 2012). Stripped of their culture, language, and family, they were subsequently raised, in essence, without culturally normative role models or parents (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). According to Brave Heart and DeBruyn, “boarding schools had devastating consequences for Native American families and communities; abusive behavior, meaning physical, sexual, and emotional, were experienced and learned
by Native American children raised in these settings” (p. 63). Once learned, abused children were at risk of transmitting learned behaviors as adults to their children.

The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 (P.L. 93-638) gave authority to federally recognized tribes to contract with the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the operation of Bureau-funded schools and to determine education programs suitable for their children (U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs, n.d.). The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1975 brought funding to tribes so they could choose to develop community schools where youth could learn their tribal language and culture in addition to academics. Further, the Bureau of Indian Education is to manifest consideration of the whole person by taking into account the spiritual, mental, physical, and cultural aspects of the individual within his or her family and tribal or village context (U.S. Department of the Interior, Indian Affairs, n.d.). This is a far cry from the boarding schools of the past.

**Termination Policy**

Assimilationist policies continued to plague Native Americans. The Dawes Act of 1887 divided tribal land into allotments for individual tribal members, and in the end dispossessed tribes of land by selling what the federal government deemed as excess allotments to non-Native Americans. The termination policy of the 1950’s ended the special relationship between tribes and the federal government. Termination of tribal sovereignty meant the federal government no longer recognized the terminated tribe’s cultural distinction. United States Congress passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 to effectively terminate federal trust protection of American Indian reservation lands (Daly, 2009). One hundred
and nine tribes experienced the termination of a special federal trustee relationship. They lost not only their federally recognized tribal affiliation, but hundreds of thousands of acres of trust land were removed from protected status. Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs William Zimmerman Jr. established guidelines for determining federal withdrawal based on the amount of mixed blood, literacy, acceptance of white institutions, and local non-Indian support to determine levels of acculturation, the ability of tribes to make a decent standard of living, tribal consent, and the willingness of states to assume responsibilities for their Indian citizens (Daly, 2009). According to Daly, tribes scheduled for termination were given the choice of selling their reservations, dividing communal lands into individual allotments, or forming a private management corporation to administer tribal property. Many tribes have been able to reverse termination to regain their tribal status, but to this day, many tribes are still in the process of reestablishing their federal recognition.

The Indian Relocation Act of 1956 was part of the termination policy. It is one reason for an over-representation of Native American people as recipients of urban social services (Tamburro, 2013). According to Brave Heart et al. (2011), more than 100,000 Native American men were relocated to urban areas to live and work as assimilated citizens, but once there they faced racism and discrimination in employment and housing, creating additional stress for these individuals and the families they left behind on the reservation. Currently, about two-thirds of all Native Americans now live in urban, suburban, or non-reservation rural areas (American Psychiatric Association [APA] Office of Minority and National Affairs, 2010). There is a high likelihood of non-Native American social work practitioners and other service providers working with Native American clients in urban settings.
Health Disparities

Native Americans rank higher in health disparities than any other racial or ethnic group in the United States (Brave Heart et al., 2011). During the past 50 years, The Indian Health Service has improved health conditions dramatically, but disparities persist. Native Americans continue to experience some of the worst health conditions in the United States (Jones, 2006). According to the APA Office of Minority and National Affairs (2010), relative to the United States as a whole, Native Americans die at significantly higher rates from tuberculosis, diabetes, and unintentional injuries and die from alcohol-related causes 6 times more often than the national average. According to the Indian Health Service (2015) fact sheet on disparities, Native Americans are 2.8 times more likely to die from diabetes (62.3 per 100,000 compared to 22.5 for all other races), and 2.4 times more likely to die from unintentional injuries than all other races (95.3 per 100,000 compared to 40.0 for all other races). BigFoot and Schmidt (2010) state that Native American children are more likely to (a) receive treatment through the juvenile justice system and inpatient facilities than non-Native American children, (b) encounter a system understaffed by specialized children’s mental health professionals, and (c) encounter systems with consistent lack of attention to established standards of care for the population. Indian Health Service (2015) (IHS) data from 2007 showed higher mortality rates among Native Americans compared with the general population for most leading causes of mortality: heart disease (1.2 times), accidents (2.8 times), diabetes (4.2 times), alcohol (7.7 times), suicide (1.9 times), and tuberculosis (7.5 times) (Jones, 2006). According to Jones, a recent IHS report stated “Lower life expectancy and the disproportionate disease burden exist perhaps because of inadequate education, disproportionate poverty, discrimination in the delivery of health services, and cultural differences.”
Some focal causes for behavioral health disparities and ineffective behavioral health care for Native Americans are high levels of violence and trauma exposure, historical trauma and institutional racism, underfunded systems of care, disregard for effective traditional practices, overreliance on evidence-based practices, lack of cultural competence among systems of care and providers, and barriers to care (Goodkind et al., 2011). Jones (2006) stated that although this persistence is striking, it is even more striking that the disparities have existed not for 50 years but for 500 years. Jones broadens the concept of disparities to a chronic state of discrepancy between identified need and level of access to services. Historical trauma provides a perspective that explains the dynamics for continuing inequities in health and well-being and a focus for social, cultural, and psychological interventions.

Historically, government and social service organization utilization of non-adapted or poorly adapted mental health treatments with diverse populations has led to widespread distrust and reluctance in such populations to seek mental health services (BigFoot & Schmidt, 2010). According to BigFoot and Schmidt, service providers, and possibly families themselves may not value traditions or fail to recognize traditional Native American practices that are instrumental to healing and wellness. Traditional Native American mourning practices and cultural protective factors were impaired due to the federal prohibition around 1883 against the practice of traditional ceremonies, which lasted until the 1978 American Indian Religious Freedom Act (Brave Heart et al., 2011). Goodkind et al. (2011) stated that for beneficial mental health treatment to occur, we have to recognize the power of the cultural practices and beliefs within Native families and communities that contribute to their survival, recovery, and resiliency over thousands of years.
Mental Health

It is also important to understand that the concept of mental illness and beliefs about why and how it develops has many different meanings and interpretations among Native American people (APA Office of Minority and National Affairs, 2010). The various forms of psychological oppression that continue to be perpetuated by many well-meaning and good-hearted counselors, psychologists, and social workers are by-products of broader economic, political, religious, and social mechanisms that have historically been used to colonize persons from diverse groups and backgrounds in the United States (Duran, Firehammer, & Gonzalez, 2008). According to Duran et al., operating from culturally biased views of mental health and what are considered to be appropriate intervention strategies, helping professionals perpetuate various forms of injustice and institutional racism by imposing helping paradigms that are often incongruent with the worldviews, values, beliefs, and traditional practices that have been used to promote the psychological well-being of Native Americans.

Nicolai and Saus (2012) have strongly recommended that agencies treating Native American clients provide education to staff members on tribal values, strengths, and histories, as well as on the general concepts of historical trauma and resilience. Resilience is defined as the capacity to withstand stress and catastrophe, and to recover from it. Evans-Campbell (2008) stated that “It could be argued that in Indigenous communities, a history of historical trauma has enhanced community ties and underscored the importance of retaining culture and tradition” (p. 334). Furthermore, increased collaboration between non-Native American agencies and tribes might enhance the ability of non-Native American agencies to meet the needs of their Native American clients and address aspects of historical trauma in therapy (Nicolai & Saus, 2012).
Implications for Decolonization of Social Work Education & Practice

According to Brave Heart et al. (2011), historical trauma theory frames lifespan trauma in the collective, historical context, which empowers Native American survivors of both communal and individual trauma by reducing the sense of stigma and isolation. The stigma that traditional ways are wrong or ineffective, and should no longer be practiced. A long term goal of historical trauma intervention practice is to reduce emotional suffering among Native American people by developing culturally responsive interventions driven by the community to improve behavioral health (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Nicolai and Saus (2012) state that social service providers working with Native American children should not only accept the concepts presented by historical trauma theory, but actively acknowledge historical trauma theory in therapy, research, and advocacy, and work to provide treatment drawing from the client’s tribal background and values system.

According to Tamburro (2013), social workers need to understand the history and current issues created by colonization to work effectively with people who have been colonized. Although the United States Government acknowledges the sovereign status of federally recognized Native American tribes with their own social services, child welfare systems, and Indian Health Service, the Council on Social Work Education does not require social work programs to educate students about the unique circumstances of Native American people (Council on Social Work Education [CSWE], 2008).

From the perspective of Native American people, the use of ethnocentric practices in social work education programs and social work practices inadvertently results in the wounding of the souls of many racially and culturally different clients. Members of the social work profession who have not acquired
the psychological liberation of cultural competence that would enable them to work respectfully, effectively, and ethically with Native American people can contribute to the wounding of clients and may also be wounded themselves in the process (Duran et al., 2008). With 565 federally recognized tribes and another 27 state recognized tribes that each represent a different culture, language, tribal traditions, and history, the need for Native American content is justified. In the Central Valley of California, there are seven federally recognized tribes as well as seven tribes seeking federal recognition. Social work practitioners should be familiar with the history and culture of these local tribes. Social workers are most likely to work with Indigenous people in urban areas (Tamburro, 2013).

Colonization

Colonization refers to the formal and informal methods, (i.e., behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005). Not only has colonization resulted in the loss of major rights such as land and self-determination, but most of our contemporary daily struggles (poverty, family violence, chemical dependency, suicide, and the deterioration of health) are also direct consequences of colonization (Wilson & Yellow Bird, 2005). According to Tamburro (2013), many colonizers still believe they are spiritually, culturally, intellectually, and technically superior and attempt to force and convince those who they colonize to believe marginalized and colonized people are inferior. The United States attempt to colonize Iraq and Afghanistan is a perfect contemporary example. The government and media have attempted to portray the Indigenous people of these two countries as barbaric and savage, while promoting the United States as saviors capturing the hearts and minds of these
Indigenous people through humanitarian assistance provided by the military. This hegemonic process contributes to poor self-esteem, creating a context where Native American people struggle with themselves, and other Native American people (Tamburro, 2013).

Social work researchers who are open to alternative research methods, such as qualitative research models that have emerged in the past decade, are better positioned to help liberate themselves and the profession from the narrow and culturally biased information that is typically generated from quantitative methods of inquiry (Duran et al., 2008). Researchers in the field are limited to quantitative research, as qualitative studies are typically disregarded in favor of evidence based practice. According to Duran et al., qualitative approaches are much more congruent with Native American ways of knowing than the quantitative research strategies that continue to permeate the fields of social work, counseling, and psychology. From a decolonization standpoint, one of the many strengths of qualitative research is its flexibility in enabling community members to serve as research partners (Wendt & Gone, 2012).

Direct interaction and involvement with Native American communities facilitates a deeper understanding of Native American cultural identity and healing practices (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009). According to Gone (2009) such partnerships are likely to enable researchers to understand what is most important to a given Native American community and thus may serve as a buffer against the colonial tradition of research that is too often exploitative of the Native American groups it studies. Increased understanding of a people will increase recognition of unique cultural strengths that can then be utilized by social work practitioners in partnership with individual Native American clients, families, and communities. It is incumbent upon social workers to learn of such differing perspectives in order
to better understand Native American views, build a background from which to appropriately work with Native American persons, and in general develop multicultural flexibility in their social work practice (Ryback & Decker-Fitts, 2009).

There is a staggering amount of information in the literature about the impact the historical trauma experience has on Native Americans. It is noteworthy that the majority of this information is not included in social work education and practice curriculum. The absence of this information in spite of the special political status of federally recognized tribal citizens, and a federal law, the Indian Child Welfare Act, that governs jurisdiction over the removal of Native American children from their families, is a major oversight that needs to be addressed on local and national levels. The absence in social work education and practice curriculum of both the historical trauma experience and the rich culture and traditions of Native Americans is an injustice that continues unabated.

The National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) should address and correct this on a national level, while county departments of social services and individual community organizers should address and correct this on local levels. Until corrected, significant numbers of Native Americans will continue to suffer from health disparities and more will experience the traumatic removal of their children at disproportionate rates.
CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

The intergenerational transmission of Historical Trauma has had long lasting effects on Native American individuals, families, and communities. Parenting skills, academic achievement, and overall wellness continue to be negatively impacted to this day. These consequences lead to further issues and barriers to employability and often results in poverty and dependence on government assistance. In order to work more effectively with the Native American population social work practitioners need to have a clear understanding of historical factors such as trauma, its effects on culture and the role culture plays as a foundation for healing and decolonization. Unfortunately, social work practice continues to subjugate Native Americans to colonization interactions through services and programs that are not culturally relevant or appropriate. Schools of social work do little to prepare social work students to work with the Native American population upon completion of BSW or MSW programs. It is necessary to decolonize social work by incorporating Indigenous worldviews into social work curriculum including knowledge, skills, and values necessary to provide effective social services. Until decolonization of curriculum occurs, non-Native social work practitioners will be ill prepared to work effectively with the Native American population.

The purpose of this thesis is to utilize a literature review and interviews as a basis for the development of a Guidebook. The literature review will identify empirical and conceptual work on the impact of historical trauma on Native Americans. The interviews with local Native American community members will focus on their experiences and feelings related to their life experiences in regard to historical trauma. The literature review and interviews will be used to develop a
guide book for non-Native social work practitioners to utilize in their work with Native Americans. The following discusses the three stages of this work.

Stage 1 examines scholarly writing and themes identified in the literature review and interviews relating to cultural preservation, to create education, parenting, employment, and wellness modules in the guide book and to identify the lack of culturally relevant and appropriate resources that are needed in the local community. This information can guide future studies, and work in the community to address the identified lack of resources. Stage 2 examines perspectives of the community leaders. Stage 3 is production of the guidebook.

Stage 1

The first stage of this project is a review of the empirical and conceptual literature. There will be a summary and synthesis of the various themes that develop during the review. Information gathered under these specific themes will be reviewed to determine what gaps exist if any, and what direction further research should go to address gaps and strengthen what exists. Themes identified will be included in the social work practitioner’s guidebook that is being constructed in the third stage.

Stage 2

The second stage of this project includes conducting interviews and data analysis. The interviews will be with local Native American elders, and individuals respected in the Central Valley of California’s Native American community. There are seven federally recognized tribes in the Central Valley of California. They are the North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians, Big Sandy Rancheria Band of Western Mono Indians; Cold Springs Tribe; Table Mountain Rancheria; Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians; Tule River Tribe, and
the Tachi-Yokut Tribe. There are also many Native Americans representing tribes from other regions that are living in local rancherias, reservations, and urban areas throughout the Central Valley of California. Some of these are from other California tribes, as well as tribes from many other states. Many families and individuals migrated during the Great Depression or were relocated from other regions after the Indian Relocation Act of 1956, and continue to migrate to California.

Participants

Criteria for inclusion required that participants are respected and recommended by local community leaders and stakeholders, and tied to a local tribe that is either federally or non-federally recognized. Each participant is connected by either enrollment or as a descendent. Exclusion criteria will include individuals who do not have local tribal affiliation either by enrollment or as a descendent.

Instrument

In the second stage of the study, approximately 5 participants will be interviewed. Participants will be recruited from local Native American community utilizing convenience sample technique.

Procedure

The prospective participants will be approached to participate utilizing convenience sampling procedure. The researcher will begin with two local spiritual leaders he is familiar with. The researcher developed the qualitative interview instrument to elicit information about participant background,
connection to culture, trusted resources for education, parenting, employment, and wellness.

The hour long interviews will be scheduled by phone calls and take place on week days between 10am and 2pm. Interviews will take place in the participants dwelling, a Native American resource agency, or another neutral site chosen by the participant that is within close proximity, and most convenient and comfortable for them. With the participants’ permission, the interviews will be audio recorded utilizing a cassette tape recorder. The cassette tape of interviews will be kept locked in a safe provided by the researcher, Julian G. Garza. Audio recordings will be destroyed once they are reviewed and transcribed.

Data Analysis

The interview data will be analyzed by applying grounded theory, inductive analysis for the purpose of identifying themes in the participants’ responses. This data will be used to identify themes as well as local and national resources for Native American education, parenting, employment, and wellness to be included in the social work practitioner’s guidebook.

Protection of Human Subjects

Individuals that may become distressed recalling an event or historical trauma will be provided with referral information to Sarah Voight, LCSW with Central Valley Indian Health Behavioral Health Services Office. Information collected in interviews that are recorded with permission will be kept confidential in a locked safe that Julian G. Garza has sole control and access to until the interviews are transcribed and the audio is deleted. Participant information obtained in connection with this study and can be identified will remain
confidential and will be disclosed only with participant permission or as required by the law.

**Stage 3**

The third stage of this project involves constructing the social work practitioner’s guidebook based on the literature review and interview themes. Themes that develop in interviews will help guide the historical content, as well as what local and national programs are included in the resource section for Native American education, parenting, employment, and wellness programs and services. The review of the literature will help to identify the most recent research on historical trauma that is included in the guidebook.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of this thesis is to utilize a literature review and interviews as a basis for the development of a social work practitioner’s guidebook. The interviews with local Native American community members will focus on their experiences and feelings related to their life experiences in regard to historical trauma. There will be a discussion of the themes that were derived from data collected in interviews with study participants. A total of five interviews were conducted with members of the local Native American community. A guidebook for social work practitioners that will be updated annually and may expand to include resource information and historical trauma experience unique to other regions will be developed (see Appendix).

Methodology

There are two methods being utilized in this section of the study. Part I presents a theme analysis of the five participant interviews for this study. The researcher audio recorded and transcribed the interviews. The researcher identified themes that emerged from each question of the interview and compared these with the themes that emerged from the other participant interviews question by question.

Part II consists of the development of a guidebook intended for use by social work practitioners in their work with Native American individuals, families, and communities. Findings and information from both the literature review, and the participant interviews were used in the guidebook development. This guidebook contains sections on historical trauma, Native American resource agencies located in the Central Valley, and best practices for engaging and working with Native Americans.
Demographics

This researcher identified and contacted several well-known and respected members of the local Native American community to participate in this study. Of the six that were contacted, five agreed to participate. There were two female participants, and three male participants. All are employed and reside in the Central Valley. Two of the interview participants are enrolled members of local tribes. Of the other three, one is from a northern California tribe seeking federal recognition, and two are members of federally recognized tribes from other states. All are active participants in local cultural and community events and activities.

Theme Analysis

A total of five interviews were conducted over a 2-week period. The interviews lasted 45 to 90 min each and were held in a different location with each interviewee. The first interview took place in a small office space at Fresno American Indian Health Project. The second interview took place at the interviewee’s place of employment. The third was held in the library at Fresno State. The fourth and fifth interviews were held in two different local coffee shops. The following presents the interview questions and the themes that were identified in relation to the specific question.

Can you tell me how you are able to live in and navigate between two worlds: in your tribal community and dominant culture? In response to question 1, three themes emerged in each of the interviews with the five participants: balance, coping, and awareness. Each participant described the need to find and maintain balance due to the significant impact that dominant culture has in their lives. Each experienced prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination that appeared to motivate the individuals to either share or withhold their cultural practices and beliefs from
non-Natives in an attempt to be able to function and eventually thrive in a culture that was so foreign to them. Traditional practices, participation in ceremonies, and spirituality were key coping mechanisms and components of balance in their lives. Awareness of dominant culture, prejudice, and discrimination informed each individual how to proceed in their daily lives within their culture and when immersed in dominant culture.

A subtheme of coping and awareness, *political distance*, also emerged. Individuals described how participation in dominant culture could be held against them in various ways within their tribal community. This required that they carefully balance and at times be able to explain their participation in dominant culture so as not to appear too assimilated. Holding back traditional beliefs and practices when participating in dominant culture settings were also described as necessary in order to avoid being identified and stereotyped as a radical or an agitator.

**Why is it important to you to preserve your culture?** There were five main themes that were identified in each of the interviews: *tradition, social identity, strength, validation, and healing*. Each participant described how and why they felt it was important to preserve their culture. Culture was experienced as a source of strength, healing, and validation that they could always go back to at any point in their life when they needed it. All made statements that their tribal culture is their social identity. Each participant remarked that the tradition of their culture has persevered from the beginning of time, as each tribe has creation stories and oral traditions that, in spite of the experience of historical trauma, have continued to be shared through generations.
In what ways are you contributing to the preservation of your culture?

Three major themes emerged: guidance, participation, and organizing. Each individual discussed how they regularly participate in traditional practices and ceremonies. All participants were involved in the transmission of cultural knowledge in different ways, guiding their children, family, and community members in cultural practices. Two of the participants described ways in which they organize events and activities centered around the transmission of cultural knowledge in the community. The other three are regular participants and often facilitators at cultural gatherings, events, and activities in the Central Valley.

Can you tell me about your tribe’s history? Five themes emerged: violence, displacement, isolation, militarization of land, and imposition. Each participant spoke of violent acts, massacres, and wars waged against their ancestors from initial contact with European colonists that continued on through the establishment of the federal government. This continued for several generations. Participants addressed how each wave of colonists and settlers displaced tribal people from the land they knew well and lived in harmony with. In the Central region and in many other regions of California and in other states, much of the land was taken over and used for military outposts and training grounds. Native people were isolated on remote, dry, sparsely vegetated reservations, and forced to adapt to new lifestyles as they were forbidden by law from leaving their reservations to hunt and gather as they had always done so. Attempts to farm arid land were futile, and soon the people had to rely on government agencies for sustenance. The practice of traditional beliefs, spirituality, and holding ceremonial rituals was forbidden by law.
Imbalance emerged as a subtheme. Participants each described imbalance as a significant contributor of the lasting effects that continue to impact the lives of Native Americans. Two participants discussed how the introduction to alcohol caused immediate and lasting damage to health and families. One participant shared how the French fur traders and other early settlers traded with alcohol often and took advantage of tribal people during trade when they were inebriated. Reliance on the federal government for commodity food items increased risk of obesity and diet related chronic conditions. According to Chino, Dodge-Francis, and Haff (2009), commodity foods are canned and packaged meals that are high in fat and calories and low in fiber. These and other impositions on their traditional lifestyle created an imbalance that has been transmitted intergenerationally.

How do you believe the history of your tribe has affected your life? Your community? Five major themes emerged: historical trauma, termination/loss of sovereignty, consequences of assimilation, sense of urgency to restore balance, and the promotion of cultural practices to preserve and heal. Participants spoke of violent acts against their tribal people, including violent conflicts and battles with early settlers, military massacres by federal troops, forced relocation, and forced removal of children. Two discussed their tribe’s federal recognition and termination of sovereignty, loss of ancestral land, and the unsuccessful struggle to restore it over several decades. According to Cobb (2005), sovereignty is a nation’s power to self-govern, to determine its own way of life, and to live that life—to whatever extent possible—free from interference. Participants spoke of past federal policies that significantly limited self-determination.

Participants described how most early federal policies promoted the eradication of Indigenous people, followed in time by relocation, and termination
policies meant to assimilate by stripping them of their Native ways and forcing them to adopt American ways. Each participant explained that loss of language, ceremonies, spiritual practices, and traditional ways of life were the consequences of assimilation. Participants described feeling a sense of urgency to restore balance through the promotion of cultural practices to preserve tribal language, ceremonies, traditional ways, and to heal historical trauma in their tribal community. Each participant believed culture to be a source of strength for Native American individuals, families, and communities.

What do you perceive as the source of your inner strength? The following three themes emerged: spirituality, family, and culture. All participants emphatically stated that spirituality was the source of their inner strength. Two participants additionally identified family and culture, while two others also identified culture as a source of inner strength.

Who would you seek assistance from or refer a family member to for assistance acquiring information on the following: education, employment, parenting, and wellness? Four major themes were identified: education, employment, parenting, and wellness. When were asked who they would refer others to or seek assistance from in these four realms, the themes that emerged were: Native American organizations, Native American individuals, tribal resources, and no experts, just guides. Three of the participants identified various Native American organizations, or individuals they knew of or had worked with in the Central Valley. Participants spoke of Native American individuals that had achieved success in education and employment, and were able to provide their families. Elders and spiritual leaders were often used to address wellness and parenting skills. One participant stated they would utilize or refer others to tribal
resources on the reservation. The final participant stated that there are no experts other than the individuals themselves, and that they only need guidance from those with knowledge. Individuals’ judgments need to be acknowledged regarding their unique needs.

What do you believe is most important for a non-native social worker to know and understand when working with Native American individuals, families, and communities? In the final question the following five themes emerged: consistency, immersion, rapport, research, and cultural humility. Each participant emphasized the importance of feeling understood by non-Native social workers. To accomplish this, participants stated that non-Native social workers must have cultural humility. This requires immersion and research on the part of the social work practitioner. Non-Native social work practitioners do not yet have experience in Native American communities or education on historical trauma. One participant felt that non-Native social work practitioners should be required to intern on a reservation or Rancheria for 6 months, and take a course on Native American Historical Trauma, as well as California Indian History. Increased awareness and understanding improves the ability to build rapport with Native American people.

One participant expressed a simple, yet powerful idea about building rapport with Native American people.

A smile goes a long way. Make that person feel comfortable if possible because fear is already there. Walk in as a human being.
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

In this final chapter I discuss the research outcomes, address the insight gained from the interviews, and how each influenced the development of the first draft of *A Social Work Practitioner’s Guidebook for Engaging with Native Americans in the Central Valley of California*. It became apparent early on that there was a vast amount of information available in the literature about Native American history, and historical trauma that I was never exposed to in K-12 or my higher education experience. What I remember learning during my K-12 years did not match what I learned in my research for this study. What I remembered learning seemed like blatant lies or devoid of the more significant factual accounts of interaction first between European colonists, then followed by the federal government and Native Americans.

During research it became clear that the historical trauma experience, while similar in some ways for many tribes, in many regions, each tribe had a unique experience, perspective, and response to historical trauma. For example, in California, coastal tribes were impacted by the Spaniards and the mission system from 1769 to 1823. California tribes further inland had very little contact with colonists or settlers until westward expansion and the discovery of gold in the mid-1800s. The Spanish brought foreign disease that decimated the coastal tribal population. Those that were spared death by disease were forced to convert from their traditional beliefs to Catholicism, and become indentured to the Spanish. Strenuous conditions, forced labor and malnutrition killed scores of others.

Of the 21 missions that were established by the Spanish in California, 19 have museums, and 17 of those are owned and operated, at least partially, by the local Catholic diocese (Dart-Newton, 2011). According to Dart-Newton (2011),
these mission museums are used to supplement K-12 curricula about Native American history. In my experience visiting California missions as a young K-12 student, as well as an adult, these sites offered a slanted view of history and a distorted version of Native life in the missions with little or no reference to Native Americans today. Nonadmission of genocidal practices and policies appears to be acceptable standard practice as the federal government has yet to acknowledge or take responsibility for the Native American holocaust.

Interviews

Interviews were conducted with Native American individuals identified as well-respected and active in the local Native American community. Without my years of experience and connections in the local Native American community, I may not have been able to gain access to these individuals. These individuals are busy and do not make a lot of cold contacts or share personal information with people they do not know. Even if an individual worked with a gatekeeper of the Native American community to gain access to these individuals, they may not have gained the same information or data from these individuals. It has taken me several years to build trust with these individuals and develop these relationships.

During the interviews, participants discussed their personal experience and their tribe’s unique experience of historical trauma and colonization. All expressed loss of ancestral land, language, traditional cultural practices, ceremonies, and spirituality through genocide and forced assimilation. Though these losses brought their tribes to near extinction, all expressed hope for the future. Each participant discussed how important it is for the future of their people to actively contribute to the preservation and revitalization of language, traditional cultural practices, ceremonies, and spirituality.
Each participant had a definite and mostly unspoken lack of trust or faith in government agencies and even Native American resource agencies here in the Central Valley. This was not a surprise to me. In my experience working in and with Native American resource agencies in the Central Valley, they were surprisingly similar to government agencies in structure and service delivery. The only difference was the occasional offering of various pan-Indian cultural activities like beading, drumming, and hand games. The only established cultural program is local tribal language classes that tend to be poorly attended due to inconvenient time and location of classes, or lack of child care. Most staff are non-Native, and have minimal if any knowledge of local tribes or historical trauma.

Native resource programs in the Central Valley do not have cultural curriculum, cultural components for service delivery or engagement strategies that make any reference to a client or community member’s cultural beliefs. Staff is not trained to identify and build on cultural beliefs as strengths. The service delivery approach tends to be deficit focused and punitive in nature. This is a real problem and source of disconnect for the Native American community.

**Implications for Social Work Practice**

During my research, it struck me that I was the lone Native American social work student and practitioner with direct practice experience with Native Americans in my graduate school cohort. What my fellow students and colleagues were learning in class about the Native American experience in this country was limited to the knowledge and perspective I shared in class, as the readings and lectures rarely included anything substantive or relevant to contemporary Native Americans. The classroom became a microcosm of the modern day Native American experience. Native Americans were not often discussed or considered in
the present, but more often discussed as a people of the past, the lone exception being a brief reference to the Indian Child Welfare Act.

Local institutes of education should commit to recruitment and retention of more Native students and faculty. Institutes of higher education should also partner with local K-12 school districts to identify, monitor, and address the academic needs of Native American students so larger numbers are able to successfully navigate from K-12 into institutes of higher education. Once on campus, students must feel comfortable and establish connections. Native American faculty and a Native American student resource center on campus will provide this needed connection. School of social work faculty should spearhead a partnership with local school districts, tribes, and urban Native American community members to engage in this process, and also begin the decolonization of social work curriculum.

As a social work practitioner, I was able to overcome the lack of exposure to invaluable learning experiences due to a lifelong involvement in my culture and community, and the development of critical thinking. I found and read numerous journal articles and studies that concluded that non-Native social work students and practitioners need to learn the local historical trauma experience and Native American cultures in their professional education and training. Direct experience and interchange of knowledge with Native American community members can increase awareness of each unique Native American culture, and improve practice skills needed to better serve the population. The ability to positively engage the Native American community in partnership to achieve wellness and balance is vital to the future generations of Native Americans and to the standard of the profession of social work.
There is irrefutable, factual evidence and accounts of the genocidal policies and practices of the federal government in relation to Native Americans. The time to acknowledge these atrocities and heal is now. Native American communities have begun the healing process with the revitalization of cultural practices and preservation of language. Social work practitioners must begin to decolonize their personal thoughts and practices. Once this process begins, decolonization of social work education, practice, and policies regarding the Native American population can and should be achieved in partnership with the local Native American community.

**Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research should include a much larger sample size of interview participants, and include all ages in the voice and experience of historical trauma. To be more inclusive, the sample should also include LGBT youth and adults, as well as unemployed or underemployed participants. To compare and contrast the historical trauma experience and response of tribes in every region of the United States would be a large and impactful undertaking.

Topics that should be researched more closely include effectiveness of Indian education programs and resources, employment resources, and other Native American resource programs and social services. At the very least, research should show whether these programs and agencies have measurement instruments and performance goals to show the effectiveness of services offered. Native American based agencies/programs and County departments of social services should also be evaluated for cultural humility in service delivery and engagement techniques with Native American clients. A partnership between college and university staff, faculty, and students and local tribes should be established for curriculum
development. This curriculum should include K-12, higher education, and professional social work.

The experience of reviewing the available literature and interviewing well respected members of the local Native American community far exceeded my expectations. I gained invaluable insight and knowledge that influenced what was included in the guidebook. Creating A Social Work Practitioner’s Guidebook for Engaging with Native Americans in the Central Valley initially felt like a process that would take much longer than it did to create the first draft. It feels like with annual revisions and updates, this guidebook will be a labor of love for the rest of my career in social work, and my work with my people.

"Live your life that the fear of death can never enter your heart.

Trouble no one about his religion.

Respect others in their views and demand that they respect yours.

Love your life, perfect your life, beautify all things in your life.

Seek to make your life long and of service to your people.

Prepare a noble death song for the day when you go over the great divide.

Always give a word or sign of salute when meeting or passing a friend, or even a stranger, if in a lonely place.

Show respect to all people, but grovel to none.

When you rise in the morning, give thanks for the light, for your life, for your strength.

Give thanks for your food and for the joy of living.

If you see no reason to give thanks, the fault lies in yourself.
Abuse no one and no thing, for abuse turns the wise ones to fools

and robs the spirit of its vision.

When your time comes to die,

be not like those whose hearts are filled with fear of death,

so that when their time comes they weep and pray for a little more time

to live their lives over again in a different way.

Sing your death song, and die like a hero going home."

Tecumseh, Shawnee Chief (1768 – 1813)
REFERENCES
REFERENCES


Lidot, T. (2014). *Let the spirit lead...In the best interest of the Indian child.* San Diego, CA: Tribal STAR.


UN Resolution 260 (III) (1948) Article II 9 December 1948


APPENDIX: A SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONER’S GUIDEBOOK FOR ENGAGING WITH NATIVE AMERICANS IN THE CENTRAL VALLEY OF CALIFORNIA
A Social Work Practitioner’s Guidebook for Engaging with Native Americans in the Central Valley of California

by Julian G. Garza
# GUIDEBOOK FOR SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS

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I. INTRODUCTION

The idea for this guidebook began late in 2008 when I relocated to Fresno from Arizona and began working for the Owens Valley Career Development Center (OVCDC) Tribal TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families). In my experience with OVCDC, it became apparent right away that most non-Native Americans in the social work field and even many Native American community members were not aware of the Native American resource agencies that existed and were available to them here in the Central Valley. To my surprise, Native American resource agencies were often unaware of other Native American resource agencies, their eligibility requirements, or what services they provided. This was a cause for concern as competition for participant numbers in relation to grant funding often prevented these agencies from communicating and working together to improve services, share costs, and empower the local Native American community. When agencies do not have knowledge of eligibility criteria, the result is duplication of services, and insufficient outreach efforts. Moreover, a significant number of urban Native Americans receive services from non-Native agencies and staff that do not always recognize or utilize cultural strengths in their work with the Native American population. This is due to a lack of cultural knowledge, history, and the impact of historical trauma.

This guidebook represents years of research and networking with Native American resource agencies, and discussions with respected members, elders, and spiritual leaders of the local Native American community in the Central Valley of California. It was developed with the intention to stimulate further curiosity and knowledge that represents the reader’s beginning of lifelong learning and relationship
with the Native American population. It will be a living document that will be updated annually, and may expand to include other regions. It is not sufficient to use this guidebook alone without further research and immersion to truly experience and feel the beauty, healing power, and strength of Native American people and their culture. In the following section of this guidebook you will learn what historical trauma is, and how it has impacted Indigenous people in what is now the United States from initial contact with European colonists, to the experience of contemporary Native Americans.

II. HISTORICAL TRAUMA

There are 565 federally recognized tribes in the United States at this time. Although some similarities exist, each tribe represents a different language, culture, history, and has different traditions and ceremonies. They also have a unique experience of historical trauma. Dr. Maria Yellow Horse Braveheart (2011) defines historical trauma as cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma.

In what is now the USA, there were an estimated 12 – 15 million Indigenous people prior to contact with colonizers. By 1890, only 250,000 remained; 98% were gone due to disease, war, forced removal, forced assimilation, broken treaties, and outright homicide. Whatever the exact numbers, the mortality was unprecedented and overwhelming (Jones, 2006).

In 1769, the Spanish began their process of colonization by setting up the mission system in California. A total of twenty-one missions were established and built along the Pacific coast from San Diego to San Francisco and operated from 1769 - 1833. During this time, Native populations were decimated by what the Spanish brought and imposed
on them such as disease, forced labor, brutal treatment, harsh living environment, and malnutrition.

The California Gold Rush (1848-1852) brought individuals seeking fortunes from all over the world who held little to no regard for the Indigenous people who resided in this area. During this period, a governor’s executive order authorized bounties for Indian scalps, as well as mobilized militias were paid, and supplied for extended expeditions to remove any Indigenous people they encountered. Furthermore, the 1850 Act for the Government and Protection of Indians facilitated the removal of California Indigenous people from their traditional lands, separating at least a generation of children and adults from their families, languages, and cultures between 1850-1865. The California Indigenous population was decimated and reduced from about 300,000 pre-contact, to less than 30,000 in 1900.
The boarding school era began with the founding of Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania and Chemawa in Oregon in 1879 (Lajimodiere, 2012). The intent of the schools was to forcefully assimilate Native children to the values and ways of the dominant culture. Although children were to be sent voluntarily at first, the policy did not work as thoroughly as the government hoped. Consequently, by 1890, attendance was enforced through cessation of rations and supplies and incarceration (Brave Heart, 1998). Children as young as 4 years of age were forcefully removed, and many were kidnapped, from their families and taken to boarding school by wagon or train taking up to 3 days to reach their destination. Many became sick and died along the way, while those that made
it would not see their families or return home for several years, if they survived and returned at all.

The destructive and shaming messages inherent in the boarding school system, whether Bureau of Indian Affairs or mission schools, were that American Indian families are not capable of raising their own children and that American Indians are culturally and racially inferior (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998). Stripped of their culture, language, and family, children were subsequently raised, in essence, without culturally normative role models or parents (Brave Heart, 1998). According to Brave Heart (1998), “boarding schools had devastating consequences for Native American families and communities; abusive behaviors – physical, sexual, emotional – were experienced and learned by Native American children raised in these settings” (insert page#).
In spite of the negative impact of historical trauma across generations, there exists a positive outcome. Many tribes and organizations are helping their people discover or re-discover the healing power and strength of their language and culture. They are building resilience through the revitalization of languages, ceremonies, and traditional practices.

As a social work practitioner, it is important that you seek out opportunities to learn about and participate in the various activities, annual events, and workshops that are offered by tribes, Native American resource agencies, student organizations, and community members. Get to know who the gatekeepers of the Native American community are and use the proper protocol to get in touch with respected elders, spiritual leaders, and other influential community leaders. Social work practitioners should first communicate with Native American community gatekeepers to learn how to access specific elders and spiritual leaders. This will help you to gain knowledge of and access to community resources and events. The next section of this guidebook will give you a place to start.

III. Resources: Native American Tribes and Resource Agencies in the Central Valley:

**Big Sandy Rancheria**

37387 Auberry Mission Road
Auberry, CA 93602
P.O. Box 337 Auberry, CA 93602
(559) 855-4003
http://www.bigsandyrancheria.com/

In 1909, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) purchased 280 acres of land to be held in trust for the benefit of the San Joaquin or Big Sandy Band of Western Mono Indians. This land became known as the Big Sandy Rancheria of Auberry, and was purchased to provide the Band with a “secure land base on which to build homes, grow crops for food
and sale, graze cattle, cut wood for fuel and sale and to be free from depredations by non-
Indians.”

Cold Springs Rancheria

32861 Sycamore Road #300
Tollhouse, CA 93667
(559) 855-5043
http://www.coldspringsrancheria.com/

The Cold Springs tribe is composed of Western Mono Indians, whose traditional
homeland is in the southern Sierra Nevada foothills of California. The Cold Springs
Rancheria occupies 155 acres (0.63 km2) in Sycamore Valley.

North Fork Rancheria

33143 Road 222
North Fork, CA 93643
(559) 877-2461
http://www.northforkrancheria.com/

North Fork Rancheria of Mono Indians of California with nearly 1,800 tribal citizens --
one of the largest recognized tribes in California. The mailing address is P.O. Box 929
North Fork, CA 93643

Picayune Rancheria of the Chukchansi Indians

46575 Road 417 #A
Coarsegold, CA 93614
(559) 683-6633
http://www.chukchansi.net

The Chukchansi have inhabited the fringes of the San Joaquin Valley and the foothills of
the Sierra Nevada for more than 12,000 years. The Picayune Rancheria of the
Chukchansi Indians’ federal status was restored by the government in 1983 and we
became a Federally Recognized Tribe.
Santa Rosa Rancheria

16835 Alkali Drive
P.O. Box 8
Lemoore, CA 93245
(559) 925-1278
http://www.tachi-yokut-nsn.gov/

Santa Rosa Rancheria is the reservation of the Santa Rosa Indian Community of the Santa Rosa Rancheria Established in 1934 on about 40 acres. The Santa Rosa Rancheria belongs to the federally recognized Tachi-Yokut tribe. It is the site of the Tachi Palace hotel and casino. The population was 517 at the time of the 2000 United States Census.

Table Mountain Rancheria

23736 Sky Harbour Road
Friant, CA 93626
(559) 822-2587

The Table Mountain Rancheria is a federally recognized tribe of Native American people from the Chukchansi band of Yokuts and the Monache tribe Founded in 1916. The Table Mountain Rancheria is 61 acres large and located in Fresno County, near Friant, California. The reservation population is approximately eleven people, with 34 tribal members living in the general area.

Tule River Indian Tribe

340 N. Reservation Road
Porterville, CA 93257
(559) 781-4271
http://www.tulerivertribe-nsn.gov/home

Established in 1873, the Tule River Indian Reservation is estimated to cover almost 85 square miles of rugged foothill lands of the Sierra Nevada Mountains. The reservation is located in a remote rural area approximately 20 miles from the nearest town of
Porterville. The Tribe also owns 40 acres in the Porterville Airport Industrial Park and 79.9 acres in the foothill scenic development corridor along Highway 190.

American Indian Veterans Association

438 E Shaw Ave # 225
Fresno, California 93710
https://www.facebook.com/aiva1996

AIVA was established in 1996 in the Central California region as a non-profit American Indian Veterans Association. The mission of AIVA is to assist other veterans who have disabilities or other claims, and to actively help our young achieve their goals whatever they may be.

AIVA’s purpose is to promote education and awareness among Veterans and their families. AIVA encourages community involvement of its members in a drug and alcohol free environment.

We participate in local and regional American Indian and Veteran related events. We have a color guard that does presentation of colors at these events. We also host information booths that provide assistance to veterans and families of veterans. All monies from honorariums and donations go towards scholarships for the youth of our communities and to assist organizations that assist Native American Veterans and their families.

California Indian Legal Services

http://www.calindian.org/
Sacramento Office
117 J Street, Suite 300
Sacramento, CA 95814
Tel: (916) 978-0960; (800) 829-0284
Fax: (916) 400-4891
Counties Served:

California Indian Legal Services (CILS) is one of the oldest non-profit law firms devoted exclusively to the cause of Native American rights. Governed by a Board of Trustees selected by California tribes and tribal organizations, CILS has provided free and low-cost legal services to California tribes, tribal organizations and Native American individuals throughout the state for over four decades. Our mission is to protect and advance Indian rights, foster Indian self-determination, and facilitate tribal nation-building.

CILS maintains four offices throughout California. CILS is supported by grants, namely the Legal Services Corporation and the State Bar of California, private foundations, and individual and corporate contributors as well as contracts from a host of California's 109 federally recognized Indian Tribes.

California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc.

http://www.cimcinc.org/
Fresno Field Office
5108 East Clinton Way, Suite 127
Fresno, California 93727
(559) 456-9195
(559) 456-8330 – Fax

The California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc. was formally created in 1978 under the state law as a non-profit corporation for the purpose of working for the social welfare,
educational and economic advancement of its member tribes, groups, organizations and Indians and other Native Americans living in its service area.

The membership of the Consortium includes federally recognized American Indian tribes, reservations, rancherias, bands, colonies, terminated rancherias, American Indian groups, entities, and organizations (public or private non-profit) satisfying the requirements set forth in the By-Laws of the California Indian Manpower Consortium, Inc. and as agreed to in the Consortium Agreement formally approved by the membership.

The primary purpose of the Consortium is to offer training, employment, and other activities designed to meet the employment and training needs of the client population. The principal funding source is the federal Workforce Investment Act.

Other purposes of the Consortium are:

• To promote community self-help programs and provide direct services to assist the eligible American Indian population to become economically self-sufficient and to alleviate poverty in the rural, reservation, and urban areas through Community Services Block Grant funding.
• To provide professional economic development services to assist American Indian tribes and organizations in developing funding strategies and public-private partnerships that will lead to greater economic vitality.
• To promote and provide programs and activities designed to improve the educational attainment levels of Native American youth and adults.

California Rural Indian Health Board

4400 Auburn Blvd., 2nd Floor
The California Rural Indian Heath Board, Inc., (CRIHB) was formed in 1969 to enable the provision of health care to member Tribes in California. It is devoted to the needs and interests of the Indians of rural California and is a network of Tribal Health Programs which are controlled and sanctioned by Indian people and their Tribal Governments. CRIHB develops and delivers policies, plans, programs and services that elevate the health status and social conditions of our People; that develop capabilities within local programs; that communicate, educate, and advocate on our shared interests; and that organizes support for our common goals.

It does this through program development, legislation and advocacy, organization development, financial resources management, training and technical assistance, and networking and consensus-building.

**Fresno State First Nations Indigenous Student Organization**

5241 N Maple Ave, Fresno, CA 93740
(559) 278-4240

First Nations Student Organization at Fresno State is a group of Indigenous students who put on events designed to raise awareness of the Indigenous community both on and off campus. It is the successor organization to Tewoquache, which had been around since the 1970s. We put on the annual Fresno State Powwow every year, as well as anti-Columbus Day and other observances. Our mission is to provide a support group for Indigenous students on campus and to raise awareness of Indigenous issues.
Fresno American Indian Health Project

1551 E. Shaw Avenue, Suite 139
Fresno, CA 93710
(559) 320-0490
http://www.faihp.org/

Fresno American Indian Health Project strives to provide excellence in a wide variety of services for the American Indian Community in a respectful manner with a high regard for cultural, spiritual, personal values and tribal affiliation. FAIHP provides health services, behavioral health services, diabetes care, prevention services, and clubhouse youth program.

Fresno City College Native American Inter-Tribal Students Association

Fresno City College
1101 E University Ave, Fresno, CA 93741
(559) 442-4600
https://www.facebook.com/pages/FCC-Native-American-Inter-Tribal-Student-Association/350868568326040
naisaclubfcc@gmail.com

Native American Inter-Tribal Students Association (NAISA) is a Fresno City College student organization committed to the education of Native American Students. NAISA encourages its members to develop the skills necessary to pursue further studies in professional and vocational areas. We believe that education is the key to achievement of our success. Committed to both our cultural heritage and the future, we dedicate ourselves to excellence and service to the community.

Friendship House

(415) 865-0964 ext. 4004
56 Julian
San Francisco, CA 94103
http://www.friendshiphousesf.org/
Friendship House is to promote healing and wellness in the American Indian community by providing a continuum of substance abuse prevention, treatment, and recovery services that integrate traditional American Indian healing practices and evidence-based substance abuse treatment methods.

*Inter-Tribal Council of California*

http://www.itccinc.org/
Fresno Regional Service Center
433 E. Keats Ave., #3
Fresno, CA 93710
Phone (559) 224-7145
Fax (559) 224-7215

Established in 1968, Inter-Tribal Council of California, Inc. (ITCC) is a statewide association of 47 tribes in California. ITCC is governed by a General Council comprised of tribal representatives designated by resolutions of tribal councils. The General Council elects the members of the Board of Directors who are responsible for over-sight of ITCC.

Over the 45 year history, ITCC has successfully created programs and services impacting health, education, economic, social, cultural, environmental, legal and tribal governance development for tribal people throughout California. Inherent in all the work of ITCC is recognition of tribal governments as sovereign nations, capable of self-governance and economic sustainability supporting healthy individual tribal communities.

ITCC efforts of effective models of systems change include but not limited to public policy, advocacy, Tribal engagement, consortia development, cultural competency, and training and technical assistance. Head Start, Elderly Nutrition Centers, health programs, employment and training services, legal services, youth programs, education centers,
environmental protection, language preservation, cultural preservation are some of the programs developed and/or promoted by ITCC.

ITCC carries on a legacy of uniting tribal people in California standing together with respect for each other, caring for our families and communities, building for future generations, and by keeping our traditions and cultural practices alive and prospering.

*Owens Valley Career Development Center*

Fresno Tribal TANF  
5070 N. Sixth Street, Suite 110  
Fresno, CA 93710  
(559) 226-2880  
http://www.ovcdc.com/

We are a dedicated American Indian organization operating under a consortium of Sovereign Nations. OVCDC is providing the opportunity for improvement in the quality of life by focusing on education and self-sufficiency while protecting, preserving and promoting our cultures in the spirit of positive nation building for Native people of today and generations of tomorrow.

The Owens Valley Career Development Center (OVCDC) is a Tribal organization providing career education, family literacy, language and temporary assistance services in the five California Counties of Fresno, Inyo, Kern, Kings and Tulare. The OVCDC is governed by the seven member Owens Valley Board of Trustees (OVBT) consisting of the five member Bishop Paiute Tribal Council, one elected trustee representing the Big Pine Paiute Tribe and one elected trustee representing the Lone Pine Paiute tribe. Jenifer Philley, Site Manager ext.185, and David Falls, Deputy Director, ext.322.
Sierra Tribal Consortium, Inc.

Turtle Lodge
Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse Treatment and Prevention Program
610 West McKinley Avenue
Fresno, CA. 93728
Phone: 559.445.2691
Toll free: 1.888.56SOBER
Fax: 559.445.3125
E-mail: director@sierratribal.org

The primary purpose of the Sierra Tribal Consortium is to provide alcohol and other drug abuse treatment and recovery services to the American Indian population in its service area, in accordance with its scope of work. Sierra Tribal Consortium, Inc. also offers a certified batterer’s intervention program to individuals in need of this vital service, in order to assist them in their recovery from the destructive cycle of domestic violence.

Sierra Tribal Consortium, Inc. provides to the Native American community in both Fresno and Madera Counties: Community Outreach Counseling, Community Education, and Youth Substance Abuse Education.

Julian G. Garza, MSW candidate

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(559) 903-2882

Member of Pascua Yaqui Tribe of Arizona

Certified trainer of Indian Child Welfare Act through Tribal STAR

Native Family Education Gathering (NFEG) Coordinator at Fresno State
IV. Best Practices

TRIBAL STAR TIPS FOR FOLLOWING PROTOCOL WHEN WORKING WITH TRIBAL COMMUNITIES

These recommendations for following recommendations for considerations on protocol will focus on two aspects of protocol: *Protocol in the context of others* (engaging with Native American community members in a group setting), and *protocol to engage community leadership*. *Merriam-Webster defines protocol as a code prescribing strict adherence to correct etiquette and precedence.* The ability to follow and understand protocol when working with Tribal communities will assist one’s efforts to set a foundation for long-lasting and trusting relationships.

Because of a long history of broken treaties, attempted genocide\(^1\) and federal policies that broke apart Native families, Native communities are hesitant to collaborate with health departments, non-Tribal social service agencies, and academic institutions. In both the distant and recent past, the “words” spoken by non-Natives when forming agreements were not honored which today results in much of the distrust and anger held by Natives toward non-Natives. Additionally, with the recent success of Tribal enterprises (e.g., gaming, retail), many Tribal members expect that any effort to build relations include a hidden agenda to seek financial support.

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\(^1\) (California policy in 1848).
The use of protocol when engaging with Native community members can show Tribal gatekeepers that one has taken the time to learn the value of culture, tradition, and humility. Using protocol does not guarantee Tribal participation, it increases probability. The following recommendations are not based on the culture of any single tribe, but on the application of Tribal values to group and individual interaction.

Tribal protocol requires behavior that demonstrates humility, respect, the awareness that all things are connected, and that our individual and group behaviors can help and hurt current efforts to solve community problems. Tribal values emphasize family/clan/group/Tribe, not the self or individual as in contemporary mainstream society. When working with Tribal entities it is important to behave as if one is acting on behalf of the group’s greater good. Questions are best framed in a manner that conveys awareness that the “family” (or greater whole) may be affected, positively or negatively by the answer.

For example, when asking Tribal leaders to participate in an advisory capacity, or give input in a decision-making process, it best to ask for the “help and advice that will help impact the wellbeing and future of Tribal youth within the community”. When hosting an event, one should approach one’s role as though one were leading a large family reunion, making sure every individual is acknowledged, and that the group discussion and decision process is conducted in a respectful and harmonious manner, with an emphasis on ensuring the entire group benefits from each individual that is present.
Four cornerstones that help encourage trust among Tribal people:

1. Demonstrate respect for Elders, Tribal Leaders, elected Tribal Leaders, and Spiritual Leaders by acknowledging and appreciating their roles in the community and seeking their advice as experts of the community.

2. Schedule meetings and events around meals, and impart the sense of importance of eating together combined with community sharing. This is a good time to recognize individuals who are new to the community, and to praise an individual’s or organization’s recent success.

3. Always publicly acknowledge Tribal participation at meetings and make sure non-Tribal participants know who, is in attendance, is from one of the local reservations, and anyone who is a recognized leader.

4. Model a spirit of cross-cultural collaboration by including and recognizing the efforts of both Tribal and non-Tribal entities throughout your event.

Engaging Tribal Leadership:

1. Know your local Tribe(s); know where the reservations are located, and if you are in an urban area, know which Tribe(s) is acknowledged to have occupied the land where you or your training is located.

2. Attend a local community event (fiestas, gatherings, pow-wows, storytelling, and cultural events), identify the leadership at the event, and humbly and respectfully introduce yourself. When asking for support, frame your request in the context of how it will help Tribal Youth and the Community.
3. Be yourself, with sincerity and transparency, and follow through with each commitment you make verbally, or run the risk of being part of a continuous chain of broken promises and dishonor.

4. Remember to “honor your own words”.

**When Hosting Your Event:**

Ask representatives from the local Tribes to help officially welcome attendees.

When Elders and Tribal Leaders are present, make sure to recognize them formally in front of the group.

When a new Tribal representative arrives, especially to standing meetings, make sure to personally take the time to introduce them to everyone before the meeting starts, so they can begin building on face-to-face interaction.

Model cross-cultural collaboration by your own behavior, create the time and space for everyone’s participation and point of view.

**What Not To Do:**

Although it is important to know all you can about the history of Tribal people, be careful not to imply that you are an “expert” about a Tribe (especially when speaking to a member of the Tribe).

Remember that much of the published literature about Tribal people was written by non-Natives, so it is improper to correct any Tribal person when they are speaking about Tribal or cultural affairs.
At times, it is best to be silent. Don’t try to impress or flatter Tribal people by dressing as a Tribal member, it could be interpreted as trying too hard to “fit in”. For more information visit the Tribal STAR website at http://theacademy.sdsu.edu/TribalSTAR.

Tom Lidot, Tlingit, Karan Kolb-Williamson, Luiseno, 2005, Tribal STAR Program
Fresno State

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