

Peer Support in Indian Country: Indigenizing Peer Support Part 1



National American Indian & Alaska Native

ATTC

Addiction Technology Transfer Center Network
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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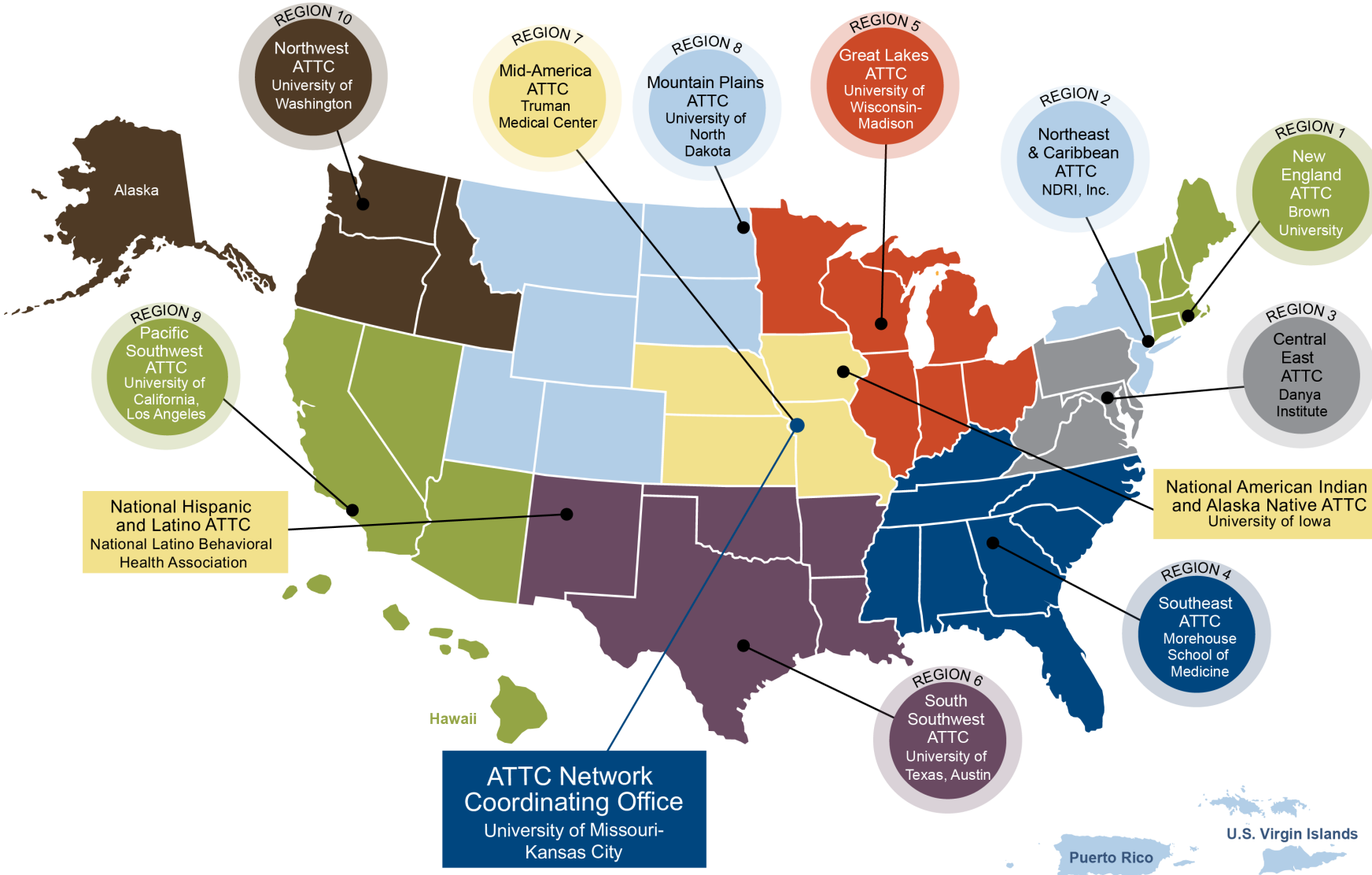


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U.S.-based ATTC Network

American Indian & Alaska Native Addiction Technology Transfer Center



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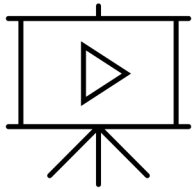
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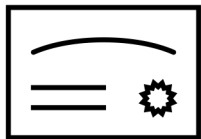


Follow-up

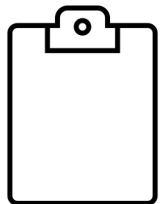
Following today's event, you will receive a follow up email, which will include:



Links to the presentation slides and recording, if applicable



Information about how to request and receive CEUs



Link to our evaluation survey (GPRA)



Land Acknowledgement

We would like to take this time to acknowledge the land and pay respect to the Indigenous Nations whose homelands were forcibly taken over and inhabited. Past and present, we want to honor the land itself and the people who have stewarded it throughout the generations.

This calls us to commit to forever learn how to be better stewards of these lands through action, advocacy, support, and education.

We acknowledge the painful history of genocide and forced occupation of Native American territories, and we respect the many diverse indigenous people connected to this land on which we gather from time immemorial.

While injustices are still being committed against Indigenous people on Turtle Island, today we say thank you to those that stand with Indigenous peoples and acknowledge that land reparations must be made to allow healing for our Indigenous peoples and to mother earth, herself.





Today's Speakers

Jessica has a Master's Degree in Counseling Psychology from the Graduate Center of Education and Counseling at Lewis & Clark College in Portland Oregon and a Bachelor's Degree in psychology from Portland State University. Jessica has dedicated the last decade of her professional life to advancing Peer Services. She is currently a Program Manager at the State of Oregon where she administers programs and implements systems change utilizing her lens of lived experience.



Today's Speakers

I am from The Wolf Clan of The Seneca-Cayuga Nation of Oklahoma.
Currently residing in Salem OR working as lead Peer Supporter for a tribal organization.

"Protect your spirit because you are in the place where spirits get eaten."
~John Trudell

Peer Support in Indian Country

Indigenizing Peer Support

Jim Wikel, PWS, CRM II, PSS Seneca-Cayuga Nation of Oklahoma

- Nyawehgowah (Big Thank You) to Jill Amos and The Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services for allowing me to adapt and use parts of their Peer Recovery Support Specialist training manual and to The Southern Plains Tribal Health Board for allowing me to use portions of their Native American Peer Support Specialist training manual in the development of this handbook.

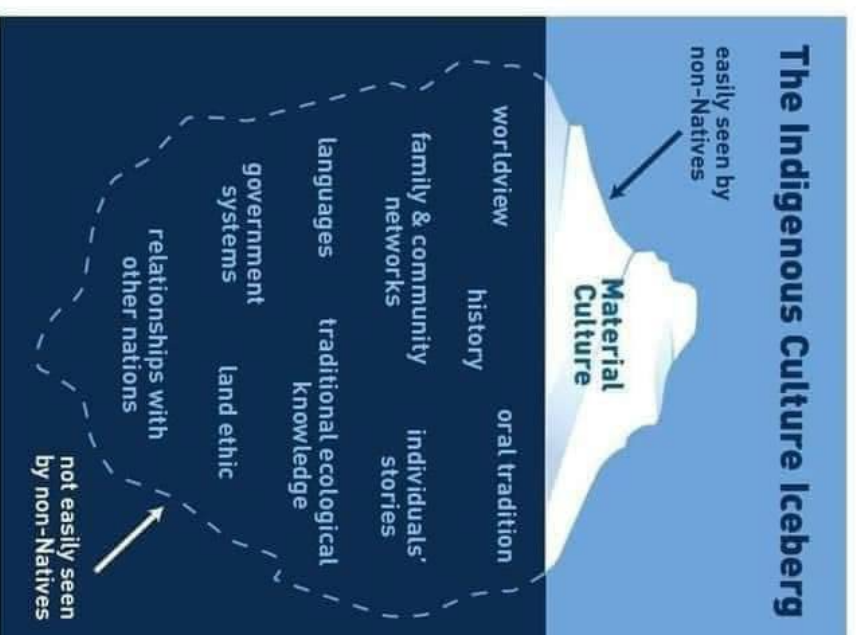


Culturally Relevant Peer Services

- What does it mean to provide culturally relevant peer support services? It is helpful to look at the role of the peer support specialist and the values that drive peer support. Peer support is person driven, meaning the individual peer is the authority and expert on his or her own life and recovery. A peer supporter meets the peer where they are at and supports them in the path they choose. While a peer supporter can present information, he or she does not give mandates or advice. A peer supporter shares their story and what worked or didn't work for them. Peer support is consistent with Indigenous values.

The Indigenous Culture Iceberg

- When people think of Native culture what usually comes to mind is pow wows, fry bread, and maybe sage or smudging. However, to integrate cultural healing into our work we need to go far deeper than stereotypical images . Superficial practice brings superficial healing.



The Indigenous Culture Iceberg

"Above the surface" are those things that can be seen, or the material culture created by a group of people, including architecture and functional objects. "Below the surface" are the components of a culture that are less visible, including human relationships, history, and knowledge, that are necessary to contextualize material culture.

Peer Support Is Consistent With Indigenous Values

- Individual liberty was highly valued in most indigenous societies on Turtle Island (North America). A person was free to believe, think, and act as they chose so long as their actions did not harm the community. At the same time, the community would support the individual if they fell on hard times or became unable to support themselves. The core values of peer support are culturally relevant. We'll begin by looking best practices for peer support specialists

What is Peer Support? (From The ODMHSAS PRSS Training Manual)

- Peer Support Specialist role definition: Under supportive supervision, the Peer Support Specialist (PSS) provides peer support services from the perspective of lived experience with a substance use disorder(s) and/or a mental health challenge. The PRSS serves as a catalyst to fully engage peers with treatment services, brokering information and resources, and assisting peers with the recovery process through supportive interactions with clinical staff and a variety of community stakeholders.

Education and Experience:

- High school diploma or GED.
- Lived experience with substance use and/or have received mental health services in the past.
- Demonstrated participation in and personal knowledge of recovery.
- Be willing to self-disclose regarding one's personal and wellness journey.
- Be stabilized in recovery and practice ongoing self-care.
- Be able to serve as an example to others of what recovery and wellness look like.
- Agree to abide by any code of ethical practices.
- Complete the required training for certification in your state and maintain certification requirements.

Continuing Education

- While the requirements vary from state to state, all states require peer supporters to maintain their certification through continuing education (CEU's). Consult your state's certifying board or agency to find out the required number of CEU's needed to maintain certification. We will look more in depth at continuing education and ethics for peer supporters in the second part of this series.

Examples Of Work Performed:

- Role model recovery and wellness by being the living example that recovery is possible for everyone.
- Outreach and engage peers by orienting them to services and assisting with the completion of screenings, surveys, and other recovery-oriented documentation.
- Coach on effective coping techniques and self-help strategies.
- Assist peers in articulating personal recovery goals and brainstorming the objectives needed to reach them.
- Empower peers by promoting autonomy, self-direction, and self-advocacy.
- Facilitate education-based, self-help, and other types of mutual support groups.
- Assist with the development of WRAP, recovery, or wellness plans.
- Support peers in developing recovery capital by identifying meaningful roles, building social skills, and integrating into community support systems.
- Be part of the treatment team by promoting the use of self-directed recovery tools.
- Share knowledge about resources for various behavioral health settings, ancillary services such as Social Security, housing, supporting employment, and advocacy organizations.
- Maintain a working knowledge of trends in the substance abuse and behavioral health fields through networking and ongoing continuing education.

What Does It Mean to Be a Peer Supporter?

- “Peer support is the process of giving and receiving non-clinical assistance to achieve long term recovery from severe psychiatric, traumatic, or addiction challenges. This support is provided by peer supporters, people who have lived experience and have been trained to help others navigate life and meaningful recovery as defined by the peer.”

-SAMHSA

Culturally Relevant Peer Services

- The phrase “culture is prevention” is heard across Indian Country. In that sense, culture is treatment. Culture is peer support because culture involves mutuality and shared visions. Culture is relapse prevention. Culture is healing. This is an encouragement to learn and participate in your Nation’s culture. Learn your language. If the only word you can say in your language is “thank you,” that is prayer. The roles of peer support specialists vary from setting to setting. We will look at some common activities that are typically engaged in. Tribal facilities often modify or expand these activities to reflect their cultural beliefs, values, and traditions. It is important to remain humble and teachable, especially if you are working for a tribe other than your own. Never presume to teach your culture. Share it but don’t teach it. Ask to learn about the local culture. Bring in elders as consultants/advisors and work with the tribe’s cultural preservation department.

Supporting Recovery

Let's take a look at the roles that peer supporters will play in relationships with peers:

- Mutuality not hierarchy.
- Advocacy
- Strategic Storytelling
- Motivate and Mentor

Mutuality Not Hierarchy

- The relationship between the peer supporter and the peer is one of mutuality. The PSS is not the expert nor the authority. No directives are given nor are punitive measures used. Services are not based on the compliance of the peer and the peer engages as much or as little as they please.
- “Nothing About Us Without Us.”
- No decisions are made for the peer. The peer plays an active role in their own recovery

ADVOCACY

- Peer advocacy is a steppingstone to recovery. The role of the advocate is to listen, to understand the peer's wishes and worldview, and to support them to speak for themselves or, with their permission, to speak on their behalf. Advocacy supports self-determination and personal autonomy.
- It is important that peer supporters working in tribal communities advocate for cultural and traditional approaches to recovery. Integrating these methods ensures that Native peers receive holistic services that weave threads of their cultural identity into their recovery. This is important because, through the boarding schools and other forms of forced assimilation, these identities were taken, and a major component of recovery is regaining identities as Native People.

Strategic Storytelling

Storytelling and oral history are living, breathing traditions among Indigenous Peoples. Not only do we have our creation and origin stories, but we also have our family and tribal histories and our own personal stories. Strategic storytelling means knowing when and where to share our stories and how much of our stories to tell. A good cultural example is among many Native societies, certain stories are only told during the wintertime when there is snow on the ground.

Why encourage storytelling? As peer supporters, it is our lived experience that qualifies us to do the work that we do. Sharing our recovery journey with a peer is a way of letting them know that we are not different than they are. Sharing our story empowers and encourages a peer by establishing a connection and letting them know that recovery is possible. Strategic storytelling is the ability for the peer supporter to know when and how much of their story to disclose. It requires vulnerability and transparency while keeping the individual's needs at the center. It is recommended that peer supporters maintain a healthy lifestyle so that they may share their story in a safe and healthy manner. Storytelling also helps to reduce stigma

Motivate

- I do not care for the word mentor when used in the context of peer support as it implies hierarchy. Rather the peer supporter serves as an example to the peer. Due to their lived experience in recovery, peer supporters can emphatically connect with their peers in a very powerful way. peer supporter establishes and maintains healthy roles and expectations for the peer-to-peer relationship (ODAPCA & SPTHB, 2020). Peer supporters draw upon their similar experiences and circumstances to provide effective role modeling to their peers, which motivates them to reach long-term recovery. They motivate individuals and support their desired behavior and lifestyle changes. Peer supporters demonstrate a “bold faith” in an individual’s and family’s capacity to change (ODMHSAS, 2018). It is essential for peers to have peer supporters who believe in their abilities and validate their recovery journey.
- The peer supporter’s role as a motivator and mentor aligns with Native traditions. A Muscogee story tells us about a girl who lost her sight, and as a result felt useless. Her grandma then taught her about balance in the world. The girl then began to show a “second sight,” in which she began to see people’s hearts and souls. She became a healer; people came to her for knowledge and for guidance on her problems. The grandmother had taught the girl that those who show seemingly great weakness are often given great strengths to balance out the world. The peer supporter draws upon their own unique strengths to mentor and motivate those who seek their help. A peer supporter does not pressure a peer to follow the peer supporter’s exact path of recovery. Instead, they honor “the voice of choice” and encourage and support the peer on his or her chosen path. As a mentor, a peer supporter assists in building the peer’s confidence and problem-solving skills, provides concrete and practical knowledge gained from lived experience, and empowers peers to continue their own unique recovery journey.

COMMUNITY

- A healthy community is also a major component of recovery. We can begin to heal the community by healing ourselves and breaking the cycles of trauma, addiction, and abuse. Peer supporters can be a bridge between the peer and the community and between the behavioral/SUD treatment department and the community. Bridges are built through community outreach and participation in the community.
- “Culture is the therapy. Community is the therapist.”
- -Don Coyhis., n.d.
- Erica Brown states “I seek to advocate for integrating culture-based programming wherever traditional western techniques fall short of providing holistic, culturally responsive services for Indigenous Peoples.” (Kelley et al., 2017).
- The recovery process for Native populations is unique. Recovery often involves the family and community as opposed to the individual. Family support and culture are key factors in supporting long-term recovery. Participation in cultural activities is protective against relapse.

PEER SUPPORT IN THE COMMUNITY

- What Peer Supporters Can Do in The Community:
 - Are members of the community.
 - Able to promote culture while getting around ethical barriers.
 - Fishing
 - Hiking
 - Gardening
 - Prayer
 - Food preparation
 - Gathering medicines
 - Cultural crafts
 - Hide tanning
 - Attending ceremonies
 - Help to reduce stigma, guilt, and shame.
 - Get accurate information.
 - Make sure things are done the right way.
 - Many traditional cultural/practices are community based.
 - Crafting partnerships in the community builds trust.
 - Helps the community understand the connection between culture and wellness/healing.
 - Partnerships allow us to maximize resources.
- (Jason Butler, B.A., M.A., Ute Tribe of Fort Duchesne, Utah Recovery Service Coordinator for The Four Directions Treatment Center, Shoshone Bannock Tribes, 2020)

Healing From Historical and Intergenerational Trauma

- Historical trauma is the product of long-term policies, attitudes, and beliefs of the dominant society towards Indigenous Peoples. Marie Yellow Horse Brave Heart defines historical trauma as “...cumulative emotional and psychological over the lifespan and across generations emanating from massive group trauma.” Eduardo Duran refers to this as a “soul wound” (2006). These symptoms are interconnected and each one affects the other to varying degrees. Historical trauma “can often produce complex and profound individual and collective bio-psycho-social-cultural-spiritual responses.” (Beltran and Begun, 2014) related to significant health disparities. The negative impact of broad social factors that have been influenced by racism, acculturation, poverty, and so forth, get translated into the everyday physical and emotional distress of Native Peoples (Brown, 2019, Duran and Duran, 1995).

Boarding Schools, The Dawes Act, Relocation, & Termination

- Among Native Nations across Indian Country, there is a shared tragedy-colonization and forced assimilation. One of the most tragic and horrific efforts to dismantle Native societies was the implementation of the boarding school system. In 1860, The Bureau of Indian Affairs, then under The Department of War rather than The Department of The Interior, established the first Indian boarding school in Yakima, Washington Territory. By the 1880's, nearly 60 were established with nearly 6,200 "students." The curriculum consisted of forced conversion to western religion and the imprinting of the Puritan work ethic through the teaching of western industrial skills, which were and are diametrically opposed to Native cultural values and ways of life.
- This forced assimilation can be called genocide as the final aim of the boarding school system was the eradication of a people through eliminating languages and lifeways by absorbing them into the dominant society. The root word of colonization is colon, "to digest, to absorb." Children were taken from their homes, often forcibly. Their hair was cut. Their given names were taken, and Euro-American names were assigned to them. Traditional gender roles were dismantled. They were forbidden to speak their languages or practice their ancestral ways. If they did so, they were severely punished through physical, emotional, and mental torture. Sexual abuse was rampant. Missionaries and school officials abided by the admonition to "Kill the Indian and save the man" (Carlisle Indian School historical marker, 2018). To accomplish this, they knew that the ties between the children and the elders must be severed. Those ties consisted of traditions, history, and language. While the boarding school era may have passed, its impact on The People is lasting and continues to this day. The emotional and spiritual scars have not gone away and have been passed down through the generations. This is called intergenerational trauma. We can see the results of this trauma when we look at the mental health statistics for Native People:

Historical Trauma Responses

- Survivor guilt
 - Depression
 - Sometimes PTSD symptoms
 - Psychic numbing
 - Fixation to trauma
 - Somatic (physical) problems
 - Low self-esteem
 - Victim Identity
 - Anger
 - Self-destructive behavior, including substance use
 - Suicidal ideation
 - Hypervigilance
 - Intense fear
 - Dissociation
 - Compensatory fantasies
 - Poor affect (emotion) tolerance) (Brave Heart, 2014)
- **Other Manifestations of Historical Trauma**
 - Poor health outcomes (Diabetes, hypertension, obesity, heart disease)
 - Domestic violence
 - Violence in the community
 - Poverty
 - Lateral violence

Acts of Healing

- Remember, we are a resilient Peoples. We have survived colonization, genocide, forced assimilation, epidemics, and pandemics in the past. Our cultures, our ceremonies, our languages and being in community have helped us to survive. We still have those resources available to draw on, they are alive in us, in our genetic memories, in our Elders. We are DNA-Descendant Now Ancestor. Now we move from surviving to thriving.
- Well-being comes from connection and meaning. Contemplative practices like meditation, prayer, and ceremony, are healing and can help prevent depression and anxiety. Awakening instinctual and innate knowing and insight helps us to find our way, to connect with a felt sense of connection to ourselves, to others, and the larger universe-to all things. Art as healing-creating is medicine. Beadwork, making moccasins, carving, connects us to who we are as Ojibwe:oweh (The Original Beings).



- On Turtle Island (North America), we use tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass, sage, peyote, and many other medicines that our Mother Earth has given us. Beyond their medicinal benefits, many Indigenous plants were a staple of our diet. Today, Indigenous plants and other traditionally harvested foods such as salmon, elk, venison, and bison are central to efforts to decolonize our diets in an effort to return to health of body, mind, and spirit for our current generations. In this very real sense, wild foods and traditionally farmed crops are medicine. For many of us, water is our first medicine. It was our first environment and carries other medicines to us through teas and through our blood. There is an entire Indigenous science around this.

Remember Our Medicines

Participate In Ceremony As Much As You Can

- Ceremony not only strengthens the spirit, but it also builds community. Make a sacred space in your home or on the land. Pray and meditate in your own way. Sing your songs and say your prayers. Many Nations have language resources and hold language classes. Remember the words of your ancestors and wisdom keepers. The spirits of the land you live on do not understand the language of the settlers. They speak the languages of The People who have always lived on them. If the only word you can say in your language is thank you, that is prayer. Language connects us to who we are.
- Practice being grateful. Many ceremonies are gatherings or celebrations of giving thanks. Make a gratitude list every day. Practice gratitude by helping others and by being kind. Learn the word for thank you in your language.

Balance, Harmony, & Peace

- Use humor, laugh, smile, make pleasant thoughts in your mind and in your conversation with others. Whenever Native Peoples gather, there is much laughter. Laughter is medicine.
- Get plenty of exercise. Get outdoors, put your feet on The Earth, walk, run, breathe in the fresh air, and absorb the healing rays of the sun. These are restorative and can be helpful in coping with depression.
- Sing your songs and say your prayers. Many Nations have language resources and hold language classes. Remember the words of your ancestors and wisdom keepers. The spirits of the land you live on do not understand the language of the settlers. They speak the languages of the people who have always lived on them. If the only word you can say in your language is thank you, that is prayer. Language connects us to who we are.
- Every Indigenous language has a word or a phrase for being at peace, being in balance, or being in harmony. Learn those words, speak them and learn how they apply in nature and in your life.

Start a Community Garden

- A community garden is a great way to build community. Get the elders and the youth involved. Gardening can be community service for peers involved in tribal court systems. Beyond learning to be food sovereign, gardening is proven to be therapeutic for the body, the mind, and the spirit. Create and nurture a relationship with the earth you live upon, the sky and the stars above you, the plants, waters, and animals around you. They all have things to teach those who listen. Develop and connection, a sense of place. It is a grounding element in times of unrest.

By Healing Ourselves We Heal The Community

- Historical trauma needs to be part of the conversation when talking about recovery, mental health, and healing in tribal communities. One of the barriers to recovery for Native Peoples is the lack of culturally competent providers. Peer supporters should be mindful of historical trauma, intergenerational trauma, and coping mechanisms. Recognizing these traumas are the beginning of healing and the reclaiming of identity and traditional cultural practices.
- Kazu Haga once said “If we carry intergenerational trauma (and we do), we also carry intergenerational wisdom. It’s in our genes and DNA.” John Trudell said that we are Descendant Now Ancestor, that we “Struggle to remember the old ways when all we must do is remember.” Although we try to break intergenerational trauma, we must also remember the power of intergenerational wisdom and resiliency that is also passed on from generation to generation. Power and wisdom is embedded within us, let us honor our ancestors as we heal and move forward. “
- “At least I’ve had to come to in my life, to realize that this stuff called failure, this stuff, this debris of historical trauma, family trauma, you know the stuff that can kill your spirit, is actually raw material to make things with and to build a bridge. You can use this material to build a bridge over that which would destroy you.”
- -Joy Harjo, Mvskoke (Creek), Native American Poet Laureate

Indian Country Peer ECHO

The Indian Country Peer Recovery Specialist ECHO program is held the 2nd and 4th Wednesday of every month at 2pm CST, starting on April 8th, 2020. The program provides comprehensive information for Peer Recovery Specialists to effectively share best practices, troubleshoot complex questions, and continue to ensure that our people are receiving the care they need, when they need it, and in their own community. The teleECHO sessions include case presentations, recommendations from an interprofessional team of specialists and an opportunity to obtain Continuing Education credit following participation in a didactic presentation.

<https://www.spthb.org/events/indian-country-peer-recovery-specialist-echo-program/>