

Native Youth Perspectives on Mental Health and Healing

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As a Native Youth in today's world so much comes to mind when I hear "Mental Health" there are many disparities that the Indigenous people of these lands face that have harmful effects on their mental health, Intergenerational Trauma, being at the forefront of these many issues. A psychological term which asserts that trauma can be transferred in between generations- is the definition that appears when searching the very term on the internet. As a California Native American trauma that generations, not so far ahead of my own, have faced being forced assimilation- more specifically to my own tribal people, Bishop Paiute (Nuumu), the land we inhabit is rich in many natural resources that settlers sought to deem their own, said settlers lured the Nuumu to Fort Independence, CA on the 4th of July for a "celebration" where the Paiute people were then marched at gunpoint over 200 miles to Fort Tejon, south of what is known today as Bakersfield, CA with temperatures that reach over 100 degrees. 200 plus Paiute's lost their lives in that march and as a result of the March. This story is my tribes own, although, sadly many other tribes have similar traumas that were brought upon their people as well. Something many of the tribal people of the United States sadly share in common relating to Intergenerational Trauma is, Boarding Schools, the United States Government used this tactic, removing children from their parents, culture, and traditional language, to strip these children of their roots and further more assimilate them. Indigenous Children were ripped away from their families and way of life, violently mistreated for speaking their only known language and worse if caught doing so in these Boarding Schools. Today, when we speak of the effects these majorly misfortunate events have on our people we speak about how it impacts not only

those who suffered from first hand but also those generations that follow. Substance Use Disorders, Suicide rates are 1.6 times higher than the U.S. all-races rate, higher domestic violence rates, and a variety of other Mental Health issues. These are all the issues that I believe is the product of these specific traumas resulting in intergenerational trauma. In terms of today's traumas intertwining with intergenerational trauma, today the Novel Corona Virus that plaguing many of our tribal communities at highly alarming rates, all points back to when Indigenous peoples were exposed to infectious diseases when coming in contact with European Settlers , as a Prevention Worker in a behavioral health clinic I knew I had to do my part in making sure our youth aren't impacted as severely as their ancestors were, although there still is trauma relating back to the experiences that our ancestors faced almost so similarly. Although, having to convert to remote and virtual sessions we often times use culture as prevention, relying on teachings of our tradition values to aid our mental health.

https://www.ihs.gov/sites/newsroom/themes/responsive2017/display_objects/documents/factsheets/BehavioralHealth.pdf

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK44242/>