


Effective Behavioral and Mental Health Services for Kids and Families

Braiding the Sweetgrass: Integrating Brain Development with Cultural Practice in an Urban Indigenous Community

**Promoting Healthy Relationships for Youth Conference
February 17, 2017**

Kathleen Hagan & Casey Eagle Speaker

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Intergenerational Trauma

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Intergenerational trauma is a “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma experiences.

M. Yellow Horse Braveheart, 2003

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Historic Events - Trauma

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1876 Indian Act
Revised 1892,
1907, 1951, &
1985

1850s-1996
Indian Residential
Schools


1960s-80s
60's Scoop &
Child Welfare
policies

Based in part on A. Bombay, K. Matheson, H. Anisman (2009)

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Hull **Cultural Loss and Assimilation**

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Thomas Moore before and after his entrance into the Hopewell Indian Residential School in Saskatchewan in 1874.
Library and Archives Canada / NL-022674

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Hull **Program Design and Evolution**

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Developmental Evaluation – an approach suited to assist social innovation, facilitating real-time feedback and a continuous development loop.

Michael Quinn Patton (2010)

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Hull **Urban Context**



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Respecting Culture

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Respect for Indigenous diversity

- Elders and staff
- Participants – culturally, individually

Intentional cross-cultural program

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Framework for Understanding Trauma and Healing

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Adapted from Figure 1 in Volume III, *Promising Healing Practices in Aboriginal Communities*, Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2006).

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Theoretical/Practice Foundations

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- Culturally Relevant Perspectives on Trauma;
- Resiliency;
- Legacy Education;
- Traditional Healing and Teachings - ‘Culture is good medicine’;
- Creating/Sustaining Hope;
- Strength based practice; and
- The Neurosequential Model (NM)

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CULTURE — COMMUNITY — RECONNECTION

STRENGTH

BRAIDING THE
SWEETGRASS

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Mission Statement

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Braiding the Sweetgrass guides Indigenous families through the effects of Intergenerational Trauma (IGT) to a place of well being. Families experience culture, community and reconnection on their journey of healing.

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Who We Serve

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Hull **Program Components**

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- Groups
- Home Support
- Cultural Ceremonies
- Elder Support
- Resourcing and referrals
- Social gatherings and cultural trips

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Hull **Program Content**

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Hull **Groups and Ceremony**

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Hull Home Support and Resourcing

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- Individualized
- Integrating group content
- Referrals and resourcing
- Low intensity, not designed for crisis response, yet responsive to need

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Hull Use of Elders

Hull Participant Voice

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"I found a true impact in the access to Elders – listening to their stories." ... "When I look at Elders I see wise, respected, honoured ones you go to for advice. I was empowered to see, hear their barriers – to see them vulnerable. There are times I feel vulnerable...The Elders had their own challenges. It gives me a sense of pride. If they can, I can. I can have respect..."One time (an Elder) was talking about residential school. I felt her story. I couldn't stop crying. I got strength in watching her be strong. It helped me get strength back listening to her story"

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Trauma Informed Lens

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Application of concepts from Dr. Bruce Perry's Neurosequential Model, www.childtrauma.org

- Group content
- Group structure and process
- Staff Training

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Integrating Content - Parents



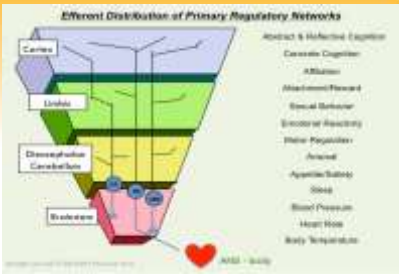
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Brain Development

NMT
child,university

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Abstract & Holistic Cognition

Cerebral Cognition

Attention

Mediation/Reason

Recall Behavior

Executive Functioning

Motor Regulation

Arousal

Appetite/Satiety

Sleep

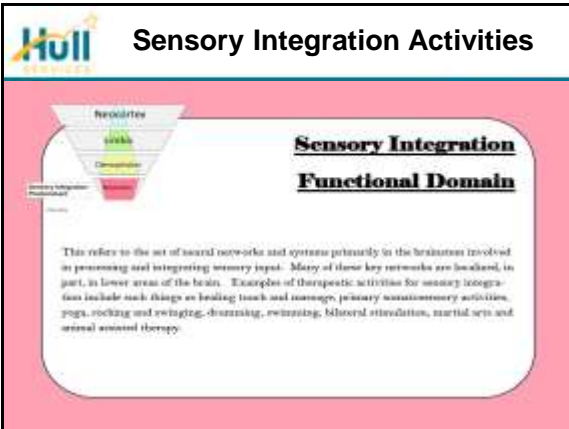
Stress Response

Heart Rate

Body Temperature

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Self-Regulation Activities



Self-Regulation Functional Domain

This refers to the set of neural networks and systems involved in the stress response functions and the three forms of self-regulation: somatosensory, dissociative and cortical modulation. Examples of lower brain (i.e. diencephalon and cerebellum) self-regulatory activities incorporate a variety of activities such as occupational therapy directed activities (cognitive, proprioceptive, tactile movements) and fine motor skills, sleep hygiene, rest and movement, walking, running, aerobic, breathing exercises, guided imagery, creative arts, gardening, relationally regulatory times and animal assisted therapy.

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Song as Validation of Learning

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Promising Healing Practices

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From Volume III, *Promising Healing Practices in Aboriginal Communities*, Aboriginal Healing Foundation (2006).

Necessary Elements:

- Indigenous World View
- Personal and Cultural Safety
- **Capacity to Heal**
 - Braiding the Sweetgrass
 - Local Community of Practice
 - <http://eyaa-keen.org/services/indigenous-employee-assistance-program/>

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Hull **Lessons Learned and Yet to Learn**

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- Elders are key to all phases of program
- Impact -- measurement and/or meaning
- Blending approaches – not always distinct
- Staff wellness – parallel blending of ways
- Healing as a journey – next steps of development
- Whom we best serve -- family composition?
- Youth engagement in family-based program?
- Culture – traditional and contemporary?

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Hull **Questions?**