Culturally appropriate trauma repair practices with Indigenous Peoples

Alanaise Onischin Ferguson

Registered Psychologist and Associate Professor Indigenous Studies

University of British Columbia Okanagan

Workshop Background and Context

- Speaker biography
- Indigenous healing movements
- Trauma repair and fields of practice
- Bridging the gaps

A little bit about me

- Born and raised in Stó:lō territory
- Attended Seabird Island Community School ~ proud product of the Indian Rights for Indian Education movement
- Ancestral homelands are in Treaty 1 territory, on the Sandy Bay Ojibway First Nation
- My sons are 23 and 18, my daughter is 10. They are my greatest accomplishments

Sandy Bay Indian Residential School

Assiniboia residential School

St. Boniface Catholic School

University of Manitoba

University of Manitoba, 1969

Indigenous Healing Movements

Indigenous Worldviews

- Relational healing paradigms

- Holism

- Spirituality

- Relationality

- Connection to natural world

- Non-dualistic thinking

- Individual wellness intimately tied to community wellness and the natural world

Western biomedical approaches

- Often ineffective, inappropriate, and underfunded

- Services are underused as a result, proliferating mental health challenges

- Rooted in theories and techniques that displace culture, promote assimilation, and compound trauma

Trauma Repair and Fields of Practice

- DSM-V
  - Type 1 Trauma
  - Type 2 Trauma
  - Historical, Collective or Intergenerational Trauma
  - Little t trauma

- National Child Traumatic Stress Network
  - Bullying
  - Community violence
  - Complex trauma
  - Disasters
  - Early Childhood trauma
  - Intimate partner violence
  - Medical trauma
  - Physical trauma
  - Refugee trauma
  - Sex Trafficking
  - Terrorism and violence
  - Traumatic grief

Historical Trauma (Brave Heart, 1998)

- A construct that was introduced in the mid 1990s to contextualize, describe, and explain disproportionately high rates of psychological distress and health disparities among Indigenous populations

- Synthesis of two concepts: historical oppression and psychological trauma

- Historical Loss, Residential School Ancestry, and Racial Trauma are identified as types of adversity

- Resilience is the ability to thrive despite experiences of adversity or trauma ~ can be conceptualized in collective as well as individual terms

At risk groups

- Child, adolescent, and adults who engage in problematic substance use
- Individuals, families, and communities experiencing poverty
- Military and veteran families
- Homeless people
- LGBTQI2S
- People with Intellectual and developmental disabilities
- Residential School and Day School and Child Welfare survivors and their children

Understanding the individual

- Embedded within a web of relationships of family, Clan, ancestors, animals, nature, and the spirit world

- Belonging in the overall cosmos including the social, natural, and spiritual worlds

- Spirituality create a sense of connection, calm, clarity, and purpose within the individual

- Relationship with land is marked by custodianship, attending to the needs of the land for the mutual benefit of people and all things that live and grow upon it

- Individuals with a strong sense of place in which connection to land has spiritual, ethical, aesthetic, and historical dimensions are considered resilient

- How does this translate into the Western biomedical context of care?

Indigenous Trauma Intervention Research

○ Citing the evidence* that describes culturally appropriate trauma interventions with Indigenous Peoples in Canada

*Evidence by Canadian Social Science standards means that research about Indigenous trauma interventions were (a) studied with a clear research methodology, (b) conducted within Canada, (c) conducted with indigenous individuals or communities, (d) included culturally relevant interventions, (e) focused on trauma or PTSD, (f) published in peer reviewed journals or dissertations, and (g) published in English.

The published evidence (2000-2019)

- 9 research articles and 2 dissertations
- Within these 11 documents, 8 interventions were identified

Characteristics of Interventions

- All studies described the integration of Indigenous and Western approaches to trauma interventions, and this integration varied widely

- Interventions included facilitation by traditional healers and Elders, alongside counsellors

- Traditional healer led ceremonies like the Sweat Lodge, Sharing Circles, Drumming, and other cultural activities

- Elders advised the development of trauma intervention

- Use of smudging and traditional medicines

- Psychoeducation related to trauma and addictions, colonization

- "talking cures" approach to verbally sharing personal traumatic experiences to a counsellor or group

- Holistic approaches to trauma repair

Outcomes of Indigenous Trauma Interventions

○ Strengthened Indigenous identity

○ Increased understanding of historical trauma

○ Improved sense of personal empowerment and self-determination

○ Connection to spirituality

○ Collective aspect of interventions help participants develop trust (eg. Healing circles, relationships with counsellors, traditional healers, and other clients)

○ Regaining trust in oneself and connection to others

○ Individual healing is embedded in community healing addressing interconnections with each other, all living things, and the land

Choosing Interventions based on culturally relevant theories and models

Parole Board of Canada

- Risk-Needs-Responsivity Model
- Crime Desistance Model
- Recidivism Model

Culturally informed models

- Historical Trauma Model
- Historical Loss
- Cultural Connectedness Models

Historical Trauma Model

- First written about by Maria Yellowhorse Braveheart
- Extensively written about in the Indigenous health literature
- Presented 4 main ways in which HT impacts Indigenous peoples:
    1. HT is the cause of disordered health and behaviours
    2. HT as an outcome of the colonial project
    3. HT as a mechanism for intergenerational transmission of problem behaviours
    4. HT related stressors

Historical Loss Scale

- Perceived Losses
  - Land loss
  - Language loss
  - Loss of traditional spiritual ways
  - Loss of family ties because of boarding schools
  - Loss of family members lost due to government relocation
  - Loss of self-respect from poor treatment by government officials
  - Loss of trust in whites from broken treaties
  - Loss of culture
  - Loss from the effects of alcoholism on our people
  - Loss of respect by our children and grandchildren for elders
  - Loss of people through early death
  - Loss of respect by our children for traditional ways

(Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004)

Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale

- Often feel sadness or depression
- Often feel anger
- Often anxiety or nervousness
- Uncomfortable around white people when you think of these losses
- Loss of concentration
- Feel isolated or distant from other people when you think of these losses
- Loss of sleep
- Rage
- Fearful or distrust the intentions of white people
- Feel like it is happening again
- Feel like avoiding places or people that remind you of these losses

(Whitbeck, Adams, Hoyt, & Chen, 2004)

Historical Loss Model

○ **References for Instruments**

○ **Historical Loss Scale & Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale**

○ Walls, M.L. and L.B. Whitbeck, *Distress among Indigenous North Americans: Generalized and culturally relevant stressors.* Society and Mental Health, 2011. **1**(2): p. 124-136.

○ Walls, M.L. and L.B. Whitbeck, *The intergenerational effects of relocation policies on Indigenous families.* Journal of Family Issues, 2012. **33**(9): p. 1272-1293.

○ Whitbeck, L.B., et al., *Conceptualizing and measuring historical trauma among American Indian people.* American Journal of Community Psychology, 2004. **33**(3/4): p. 119-130.

○ Whitbeck, L.B., et al., *Depressed affect and historical loss among North American Indigenous adolescents.* American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research, 2009. **16**(3): p. 16-41.

Cultural Connectedness Models

- Defined as knowledge of and engagement with Indigenous culture

- Research consensus regarding the importance of cultural connectedness for the mental health of Indigenous peoples (Bombay et al., 2010;, Whitbeck et al., 2004; Torres et al., 2006; McCormick, 1996; Howell 2014 & 2016; Goodwill, 2016; Goodwill & Ishiyama, 2016;

- Cultural connectedness has interaction effects with self esteem (Zimmerman et al., 1998), while others have not found this (Whitbeck et al., 2001), so the mechanism for cultural connection and mental wellbeing needs some articulation

Cultural Connectedness Scale – Short Version

- Identity (3 items)
  - I plan on trying to find out more about my Aboriginal/FNMI culture, such as its history, traditions, and customs
  - I have a strong sense of belonging to my Aboriginal/FNMI community or Nation
  - I feel a strong attachment towards my Aboriginal/FNMI community or Nation
- Traditions (3 items)
  - I use tobacco for guidance
  - I have a traditional person, Elder or Clan Mother who I talk to
  - How often does someone in your family or someone you are close with use sage, sweetgrass, or cedar in any way or form?
- Spirituality (3 items)
  - I know my cultural/spirit name
  - In certain situations, I believe things like animals and rocks have a spirit like Aboriginal/FNMI people
  - The eagle feather has a lot of meaning to me
    - Answers are in yes/no format, strongly disagree to strongly agree, or Never to every day response formats.   Snowshoe et al., 2015

Attending a cultural gathering
Participating in a cultural gathering
Spiritual experience

Experiencing positive representations of Aboriginal people
Participating in a group of Aboriginal people
Helping other Aboriginal people

Culture & spirituality

Community

Self

Family

Changing self-perception
Personal accomplishment
Verbalizing experiences as an Aboriginal person

Connecting with family
Getting support from parents
Being influenced by a grandparent

Goodwill & McCormick, 2012

Comparing Processes

RNR Model – assess needs

○ Build noncriminal alternative behaviour in risky situations

○ Build problem-solving skills, self-management skills, anger management and coping skills

○ Reduce antisocial cognition, recognize risky thinking and feeling, build up alternative less risky thinking and feeling, adopt a reform and/or anticriminal identity

○ Reduce association with criminal others, enhance association with anticriminal others

○ Reduce conflict, build positive relationships, enhance monitoring and supervision

○ Enhance performance, rewards, and satisfactions

○ Reduce substance use, reduce the personal and interpersonal supports for substance oriented behaviour, enhance alternatives to drug abuse

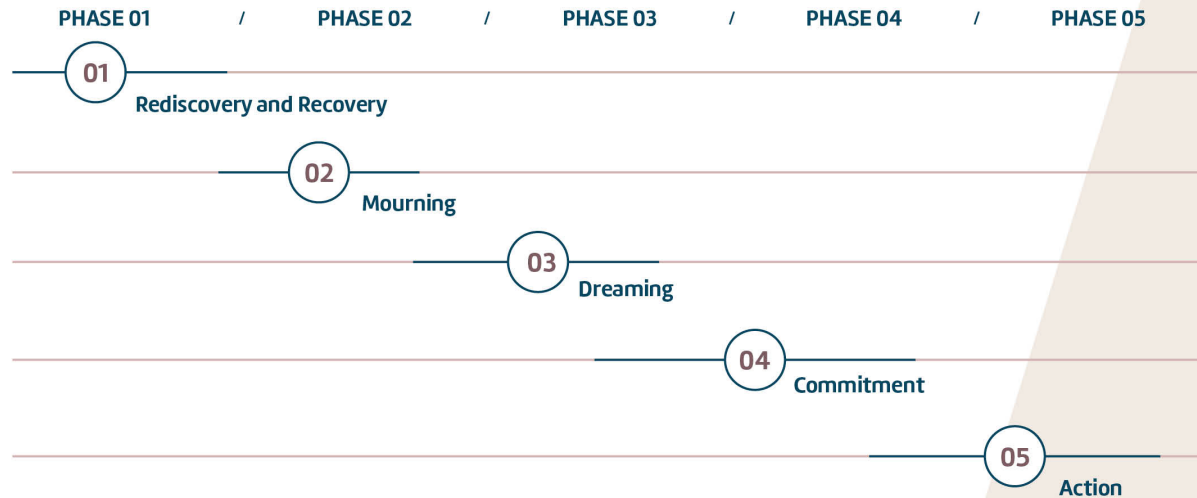## Indigenous Crime Desistance (Howell, 2014 & 2016)

Mitigating	Aggravating
Transformation of self (69%)	Self (33.3%)
Cultural and traditional experiences (60%)	Unhealthy relationships (41%)
Healthy Relationships (78.6%)	Substance use (41%)
Having routine and structure in daily living (55%)	Lack of opportunity (35.7%)
Freedom from prison (60%)	
Purpose and fulfillment in life (47.6%)	
Attempting to live alcohol and drug free (38%)	
Professional support and programming (28.6%)	
Learning to identify and express oneself (28.6%)	

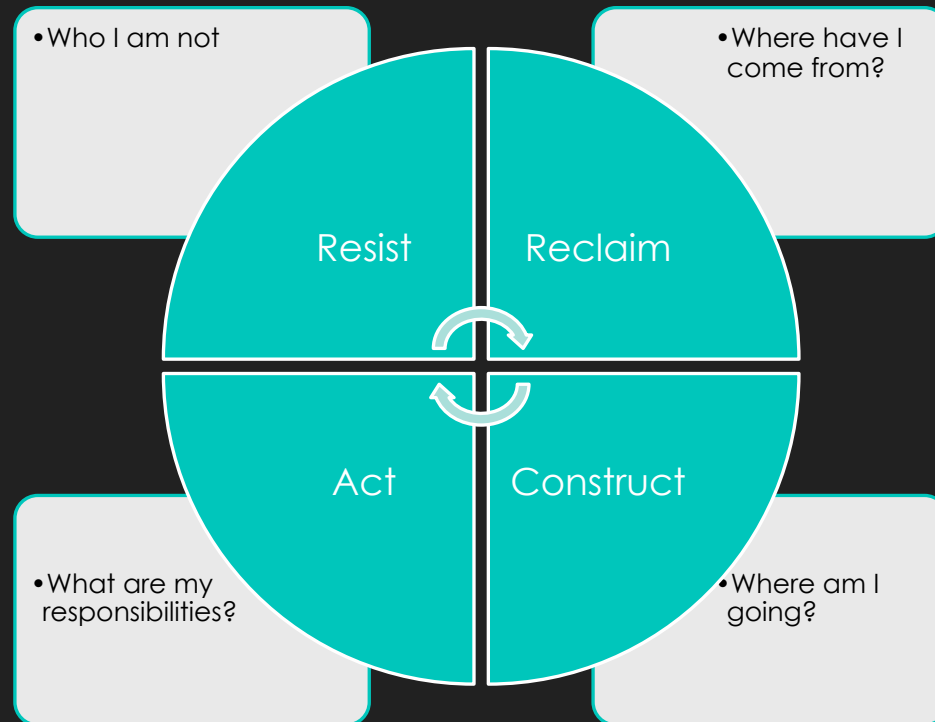# Generating good interview questions based on culturally relevant models

Model of Decolonization & Possible Interview Questions – Partner Practice

Processes of Decolonization
(POKA LAENUI, 2000)

PHASE 01 / PHASE 02 / PHASE 03 / PHASE 04 / PHASE 05

01 Rediscovery and Recovery

02 Mourning

03 Dreaming

04 Commitment

05 Action

Model of Identity Reconstruction & Interview Questions

- Who I am not
- Where have I come from?
- What are my responsibilities?
- Where am I going?

Resist | Reclaim | Act | Construct

Anderson, 2000

Final Questions and Workshop Closure

Gitchii Miigwetch (Big Thank You)

Dr. Alanaise Onizichin Ferguson, R.Psych. Associate Professor Indigenous Studies, University of British Columbia Okanagan

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