



**tokwimas**

YOU ARE STRONG

# Kwakwaka'wakw Youth Suicide Prevention Workbook



Nalaga  
Consulting

vancouver  
foundation



**N'alaga Consulting**

N'alaga / Kaaw Kuuna- Avis O'Brien (she/her)

avis@nalagaconsulting.com

**www.nalagaconsulting.com**

604.839.8853

# Table of Contents

## SUICIDE PREVENTION RESOURCES

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</b>	<b>1</b>
Contributors	1
Youth Contributors	1
Photography	1
Thank You To Our Team	2
<b>PART 1: ROOTS OF tok<sup>w</sup>imas</b>	<b>3</b>
Welcome - Gilakas'la	3
The Birth of This Initiative: Words from Avis O'Brien	4
Introduction to the Work	5
<b>Why This Work is Needed</b>	<b>6</b>
Reality & Urgency	6
Culture as a Protective Factor for Suicide	6
Ceremony Within Culture	7
<b>Ancestral Languages Reclamation as a Protective Factor for Suicide Prevention</b>	<b>8</b>
Language And Our Health	8
Language and Suicide	9
Program Goals	9
Options for Program	10
Parents Program	10
Overview Of 11 Week Cohort Modules	11
References	12
<b>PART 2: DELIVERING THE WORK</b>	<b>13</b>
Creating Your Team	13
Facilitator Team	13
Youth Program	14
Parents Program	14
Powerful Beginnings	14
Imagination Practices (Methodology)	16
Agreements	16
Participant Check In	18
References	20

**MODULE 1: CREATING A CULTURE OF BELONGING & CEDAR BRUSHING CEREMONY 21**

Unconditional Positive Regard	22
Compassionate Witnessing	22
Culture of Belonging Exercises	23
Healing Powers of Cedar & Cedar Brushing Ceremony	23
References	25

**MODULE 2: SUICIDALITY AS A NORMAL HUMAN RESPONSE TO CARRYING THE BURDENS OF 500 YEARS OF ATTEMPTED AND ONGOING COLONIAL GENOCIDE 26**

The Problems With The Language Of Suicide	26
Suicidality As A Symptom Of Attempted & Ongoing Colonial Genocide (Dupius-Rossi,2021)	27
Externalizing The Burdens Of Colonization	28
Group Work Exercise: Burdens we are carrying	28
Ceremony: Giving our Burdens back to the land carrying	29
Centring Indigenous Wisdom	30
Collective Brainstorm: Center your Indigenous wisdom	30
References	30

**MODULE 3: IMPACTS OF TRAUMA & HOW YOGA CAN ASSIST IN TRAUMA HEALING 31**

Trauma and Indigenous Peoples	31
Understanding The Autonomic Nervous System	32
What Happens When We Experience A Traumatic Event?	32
Symptoms of PTSD	32
Suicide And Dysregulation	32
Partner Sharing Exercise	33
Honouring the Roots of Yoga	33
How Yoga Can Help To Heal From Trauma	33
What Does Trauma-Informed Yoga Mean?	35
References	36

**MODULE 4: CREATING SAFETY IN RELATIONSHIPS - POLYVAGAL THEORY 37**

Polyvagal Theory	37
Universal Danger Responses	38
Partner Sharing Exercise	39
Vagus Nerve	39
Co-Regulation	39
Polyvagal Ladder	39
Small group Exercise - Safety in Relationships	40
Things We Can Do To Support Being In The Ventral Vagal State (Vagal Health)	40
References	42

<b>MODULE 5: NEURODECOLONIZATION &amp; TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA PRACTICE</b>	<b>43</b>
What is Neurodecolonization	43
Neuroplasticity	44
The Brain on Ceremony	44
Singing to the Land	45
Journal Reflection Exercises	45
Journal Reflection Exercise: Replacing old networks with positive brain networks	46
Land-based Healing	46
Forest Bathing	47
The Effect of Forest Bathing on Physical and Mental Health	47
References	47
<b>MODULE 6: IDENTIFYING OUR ACTIVATORS &amp; TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA PRACTICE</b>	<b>49</b>
Identifying our Activators	49
Reflection Exercise: Groups of 3 sharing	50
References	50
<b>MODULE 7: DEVELOPING OUR SOLIDARITY TEAM &amp; WEAVING OUR WELLNESS BASKET</b>	<b>51</b>
Developing our Solidarity Team	51
Signs we need to reach out to our solidarity team	52
Attributes for solidarity team members	52
Statements to stay away from	52
Journal Prompt	52
Weaving for our Wellness	53
Processing Cedar	54
References	54
<b>MODULE 8: NEW STRATEGIES IN PLACE OF SELF HARM &amp; WEAVING OUR WELLNESS BASKET</b>	<b>55</b>
Developing new strategies in place of self harm	55
Practices for self regulation other than substances & self harm	56
Journal Prompt or Group Brainstorm	56
References	56
<b>MODULE 9: DRUMMING, SINGING &amp; DANCING AS MEDICINE &amp; WEAVING OUR WELLNESS BASKET</b>	<b>57</b>
Teachings on Bakwam Dancing	57
Neuroscience of Dancing	60
Teachings on Drumming & Singing	60
Neuroscience of Drumming & Singing	60
References	62

	<b>MODULE 10: COLD WATER CLEANSE</b>	<b>63</b>
	Teachings on Cold Water Cleansing	63
	Neuroscience of Cold Water Submersion	64
	Instructions for Cleansing Ceremony	64
	References	65
	<b>MODULE 11: BLANKETING CEREMONY &amp; TRAUMA INFORMED YOGA PRACTICE1</b>	<b>66</b>
	Teachings on the Blanket Ceremony	66
	Guided Meditation for our last session together	68
	<b>PART 3: KWAKWALA LANGUAGE RECLAMATION</b>	<b>70</b>
	Kwakwala Terms & Phrases	71
	Yoga Forms & Kwakwala Translations	76
	Kwakwala Reflection Questions	90
	<b>PART 4: TOOLS &amp; ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>91</b>
	Why guide youth back to their bodies?	91
<b>Grounding &amp; Self Regulating Techniques To Open Each Session &amp; To Use Throughout the Program</b>		<b>93</b>
	Grounding 1: Written by Ivy Richardson	93
	Grounding 2 : Written by Ivy Richardson	93
	Grounding 3 : Written by Ivy Richardson	94
	Grounding 4 : - Witnessing the breath : Written by Jamie Hunt	95
	Grounding 5 : Lengthen the Exhale - Developed by Yoga Outreach	95
	Grounding 6: Belly Breath - Developed by Yoga Outreach	95
	Creative Icebreakers & Imagination Name Games to Build Rapport	96
	Name Game - Walk into the middle	96
	Name Game - Creatively describe yourself	96
	Milling - group exercise to strengthen our connection to each other	96
	Emotional Freedom Technique	98
	Energy Medicine Routine	98
	References	99

# Suicide Prevention Resources

**Call Crisis Service Canada** @ 1.833.456.4566, or text us at 45645 between 4 PM-12 AM ET.

**1-800-suicide**

**Vancouver Island Crisis Line** @ 1888-494-3888

310-mental health @ 250-310-6789

**Aboriginal Child & Family Services - MCFD**

assessment and mental health support & therapy  
250-952-4073

**24-Hour Kuu-us Crisis Line** @ 1-800-588-8717

**Native Youth Crisis Hotline** @ 1-877-209-1266 (24 hours)

**Tsow-tun-lelum Helping House** @ 1-888-403-3123

# Acknowledgements

This suicide prevention initiative is in partnership between Nalaga Consulting and the Comox Valley Transition Society. The Indigenous Priorities Granting Program at The Vancouver Foundation generously provided funding.

<https://www.nalagaconsulting.com/>

<https://www.vancouverfoundation.ca/>

<https://cvts.ca/>

We want to honor the work of Riel Dupuis Rossi and Vikki Reynolds for leading the way in taking a social justice approach to suicidality. Their published works guided the development of our curriculum.

## CONTRIBUTORS

Avis O'Brien

Erika Doehring

Riel Dupuis-Rossi

Kirsten Dobler

Yola Willie

Ivy Richardson

James Quatell

Jaime Hunt

Maxine Matilpi

Nicole Marcia

Olivander Day

Leslie Wilkin

Vina Brown

Gail Peekeboot

Lia Hart

Darlus Jonsson

Shannon Alfred

Sara Keshavarz-Moqadam

Liam Grigg

## YOUTH CONTRIBUTORS

Danielle Bilozaze-Lewis

Jessie Everson

Morgan Dawson

Somaya Sawyer

Nick Sheerbrook

## PHOTOGRAPHY

Bluetree Photography

Kimberley Kufas Photography

Melanie Orr Photography

Kameko Walker Photography



**We want to say Gilkas'la to the folks who financially contributed to the program before our funding.**

Copper Legacy, Kate Tossey, Yoga Outreach, Here to Be Lululemon, Carolyn Saunders, Jennifer & Josh Hiebert, Jennifer Yager, Delanie Dyck, Elizabeth Hudson, Evelyn Giron Graphics, Ecko Alec (Sacred Matriarch Creative), Bluetree Photography (Nycky-Jay Vanjecek),

## **THANK YOU TO OUR TEAM**

### **Kwakwaka'wakw Youth Suicide Prevention Team**

**Team Lead / Facilitator** - K'áw kuuna / N'alaga, Avis O'Brien

**Clinical Therapist / Wellness Support** - Yola Willie, Kia Everson

**Trauma Informed Yoga Teachers** - Ivy Richardson, Maxine Matilpi, Jessica Barudin

**Language Teacher / Language Consultant** - Kirsten Dobler, Keisha Everson

**Elders** - James Quatell, Annie Joseph, Verna Flanders, Verna Wallace

**Clinical Curriculum Development Consultant** - Riel Dupuis Rossi

### **Kwakwaka'wakw Parents / Caregivers Support Circle**

**Facilitator** - Erika Doehring

**Clinical Therapist** - Noelle Hanuse & Maggie Sedgemore

**PART 1:**

# Roots of łok<sup>w</sup>imas

## **WELCOME - GILAKAS'LA**

Gilakasdaḡw'la for your dedication to the collective healing of all Indigenous youth. Together we can shift the narrative of suicidality amongst youth in our communities. We want to support young People to thrive, heal, reclaim their ancestral cultural identity, and awaken their spirit to the beauty they carry within. This curriculum weaves together trauma theory, neuroscience, and ancient wisdom of our Kwakwaka'wakw culture and languages to address the epidemic of suicidality by providing land-based, culturally rooted tools to resist the spirit of suicide. We are building safety and trust while holding space for youth to heal from trauma in community. The program aims to support youth in rediscovering and reclaiming the parts of themselves that colonization stole.

I express my deepest gratitude to the four brave youths participating in this initiative's pilot. It

is through the courage of these young People that this work was able to be delivered. They showed up every week, were vulnerable, and engaged fully in the program. My hands go up to the incredible young People leading the way.

This workbook gives folks the confidence, tools, and resources to bring suicide prevention from an Indigenous lens into their respective Indigenous community. Any Indigenous community can adopt this framework. The invitation is to use the framework but insert your Nation's Elders, language, land-based teachings, and culture into the curriculum to bring this work to life.

This workbook is written from the perspective of Avis O'Brien and the team that supported the program. There are references to support the work and the evolution of the program. They are also included to support your program.



**THE BIRTH OF THIS INITIATIVE:  
WORDS FROM AVIS O'BRIEN**

The seed for this program was planted in the Spring of 2021 when we lost one of our Namgis Youth, Tamika Mountain. She passed away to suicide at 18 and is now one of our fallen warriors. Her passing awoke a fire in me. I decided to no longer live in isolation with my own experience of living with the spirit of suicide, propelling me from the shame and silence of living with it. I have found my voice to be able to speak from a place of power about my experiences. By talking openly in safe spaces, we decrease the stigma surrounding suicidality. Our communities heal through authentic sharing

about ourselves and our experiences without fear of judgement.

I have lived with the spirit of suicide since I was ten years old. It is something that continues to come and go in my life. Our team developed this curriculum from lived experience, rooted in tools and teachings that have kept me alive for the last 30 years. This program compiles everything I wished I had access to as a young person. It also draws on the inner work I have done to understand the function of suicidality in my life: to hold my deepest wounds rooted in residential schools and colonization: shame, and abandonment.

I want to acknowledge a few programs that supported deep inner healing and transformation in my life. These programs provided me access to learning and healing that have helped shape this work. First, I acknowledge *IndigenEYEZ* for giving me access to the Creative Facilitation Training I completed. I learned all of the games and icebreakers that we use in this work through *IndigenEYEZ*. In 2019 I was connected to *Yoga Outreach*, and I learned about trauma theory for the first time through that connection. This learning helped me to understand how and why I was showing up in the world. I realized I was not a bad person; I was responding to trauma. I want to thank Nicole Marcia, Director of Teacher Training and Mentorship for *Yoga Outreach*, for mentoring me in facilitating workshops around trauma.

*The First Nations Women's Yoga Initiative (FNWYI)*, a trauma-informed yoga training for Indigenous women that has evolved into a grassroots initiative led by Indigenous and South Asian yoga teachers, called the Indigenous Yoga Collective, accepted me. The FNWYI was a partnership between Kwakwaka'wakw doctoral researcher Jessica Barudin and the *Yoga Outreach Society*. The FNWYI empowered me to understand how and why culture is so healing through the work of Dr. Michael Yellowbird, Neurodecolonization. It connected me to a healthy network of empowered Indigenous women doing the healing work for themselves and their community. Finally, *Roots To Thrive*, a 12-week outpatient treatment program for folks struggling with PTSD, taught me about unconditional positive regard and compassionate witnessing and supported me in healing in community. It was a place where I felt seen, heard, and supported in my mental health struggles. The healthiest I have been in my life was when I was engaged in *Roots to Thrive*.

The healing and connections made through those three organizations deeply inspired this curriculum. I want to thank *IndigenEYEZ*, *Yoga Outreach*, and the team at *Roots to Thrive* for leading

the way to wellness for our People. Your work has helped to save my life. Your work has helped me to understand suicidality, and helped me to cultivate the courage to develop this program. *Gilakas'la* for leading the way for our People.

Please note, when reading this document, when you read "I," that refers to myself, Avis O'Brien. When you read we or us, that refers to our suicide prevention team.

## **INTRODUCTION TO THE WORK**

In the spirit of honouring the life of Tamika Mountain and the youth in Kwakwaka'wakw territory that we have lost, we honour their lives by developing this program to help other young People navigate the spirit of suicide. Providing youth with tools and resources to utilize during times of crisis, or in the words of Dr. Vikki Reynolds, our "howling at the moon moments" are aptly demonstrated through the program.

Most suicide prevention work focuses on 'how to talk to someone who is suicidal' rather than 'how to resist giving into the spirit of suicide within ourselves.' Our program works toward resisting the spirit of suicide within Indigenous youth.

In this initiative, suicidality is a normal human response to carrying the burdens of 500+ years of attempted and ongoing colonial genocide (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021). Colonial pathologies are often internalized. In colonial approaches, individuals are pathologized, meaning that the cause and effect of disease and mental health originate within the person experiencing it. The causes are not acknowledged as being related to ongoing oppressions and intergenerational trauma.

We externalize the trauma by moving suicidality outside of the person experiencing it. By externalizing the trauma, Indigenous People can center the resiliency, wisdom, and connection to land and culture that was there before contact.

This resiliency remains within the Indigenous community. This anecdote aptly conveys the current repercussions Indigenous People face. In moving away from programming that looks at suicidality as an individual problem, one founded on individualized responsibility versus institutional responsibility, we aim to address Indigenous trauma as a societally collective problem.

## Why This Work is Needed

### REALITY & URGENCY

There is a present epidemic of suicidality for Indigenous youth in Canada. Understanding the roots and causes of suicidality in Indigenous communities is imperative in understanding how to address it moving forward. The root of suicidality for Indigenous folks is colonial genocide. Residential Schools took our language and cultures, severed our connection to land, tore apart our family system, and brought shame into us through assimilation policies. In this program, we provide an opportunity for youth to reclaim the parts of their identity that were stolen during the process of colonization as a protective factor to resist the spirit of suicide. (Wexler & Gone, 2015).

Suicide is the leading cause of death of Indigenous People between the ages of 11 - 44 (Talaga, 2018). This devastating epidemic has negatively impacted and felt throughout our families and communities. A 2019 report revealed that suicide rates in Canada are three times higher than the national average among the First Nations, twice the national average for Métis, and nine times higher for Inuit. The study, conducted between 2011 to 2016, further revealed that the rates of suicide were higher in males than females. An often overlooked

and important consideration for our communities is the impact on non-binary and two-spirit People. This was not evaluated in the study. Additionally, rates were highest among young People aged 15 to 24 (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019).

### CULTURE AS A PROTECTIVE FACTOR FOR SUICIDE

Suicidality directly connects to the impacts of colonial genocide, including the intentional mandates and legislation to remove culture and language (Kumar & Tjepkema, 2019). As Chandler and Lalonde (2008) stated, cultural Indigenous continuity significantly reduces suicidal rates in Indigenous youth. **Indigenous youth are required to not only keep up with the standard requirements of growth and development but also try to form a sense of self and identity within a way of life that the government has largely overthrown.** This leads to “disillusionment, lassitude, substance abuse, self-injury and self-appointed death at an early age” (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008; p. 70).

Culture is the primary “treatment” utilized in addressing suicidality (Barker, 2017). A cultural framework addresses the Indigenous youth suicide crisis and improves their well-being (Gone, 2013; Green, 2010). The framework recognizes Indigenous youth suicide as a community crisis that requires social change via cultural reclamation. To this, the framework highlights the importance of interconnectedness in healing. The main focus was on revitalizing traditional values such as family, meaningful roles, spirituality, Etc. (Durie et al., 2009; Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). Suppose suicidality is a response to our culture being stolen. In that case, we give youth back their culture as a protective factor to carry with them on their path forward.

The continuous use of Indigenous culture shapes a significant connection to our history. This connection increases the sense of belonging, positively contributing to preventing suicide



attempts (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). As Chandler & Lalonde (2008) stated, cultural continuity helps the natural process of identity formation.

Regarding the results revealed by researchers, those communities with several positive cultural markers, including self-governance, language, settled land claims, education, health care, cultural facilities, and infrastructure, experienced lower suicide rates than those without these cultural markers (Chandler & Lalonde, 2008). Precise analyses of these communities showed that where about half of the members spoke the Indigenous language, the suicide rate dropped to zero (Hallett et al., 2007).

## **CEREMONY WITHIN CULTURE**

*Culture* is how we exist as Indigenous People. Engaging in Culture allows for the space to understand the ceremony as a way to connect to our ways of knowing and being from the teachings of our ancestors. The ceremony is the practice that connects us to all parts of our being - body, heart, mind, and spirit. They are gifts that our ancestors have given us. Through ancestral knowledge and intent, we can use ceremony to support our human balance (Iseke, 2010). Language and culture are not separate entities but are the same. Language is culture, and culture is language. The two are inextricably connected and rely on one another for survival. When languages die, our cultures will soon follow (Blair et al., 2002, & Norris & Jantzen, 2002).



## Ancestral Languages Reclamation as a Protective Factor for Suicide Prevention

### LANGUAGE AND OUR HEALTH

Language connects us to our history, Indigenous ways of knowing, values, and world views (Danto & Walsh, 2017). Language is one of the most meaningful symbols of Indigenous

culture and identity (Blair et al., 2002) and a means for transferring culture (Norris & Jantzen, 2002). Learning Indigenous languages at any level, from basic to professional, brings our culture to life and can provide learners with a deep insight into core values, beliefs, and traditions (McIvor et al., 2009).

According to McIvor et al. (2009), Indigenous language has significant health benefits and can prevent health-related risks. In Indigenous communities, language and culture make us unique and alive in the face of more than 150 years of colonial rule (McIvor et al., 2009). Evidence suggests that urban migrants face reduced access to traditional activities, identity, and land and are more susceptible to experiencing psychological and emotional health problems (Wilson & Rosenberg, 2002).

## LANGUAGE AND SUICIDE

According to Battiste (1998), increasing the rate of using Indigenous languages can result in clarity and success in making meaning to life. **Hallett et al. (2007) reported that in some communities where at least fifty percent of members used knowledge of their Indigenous language, the rate of youth suicidal attempts declined to zero.** Reclaiming and utilizing our Indigenous languages is considered a mark of cultural persistence, a significant predictor of health and well-being in Indigenous communities (Hallett et al., 2007). The following graph highlights these findings:

Regarding Hallett et al. (2007), “youth suicide rates effectively **dropped to zero** in those few communities in which at least half the band members reported a conversational knowledge of their own “Native” language.”

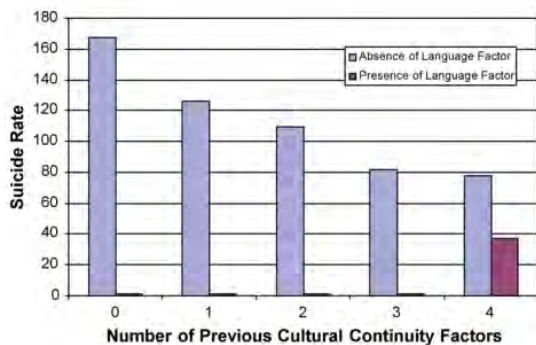


Fig. 1. Suicide rates for those bands with and without the language factor.

## PROGRAM GOALS

The program goals are bolded, and the notes underneath are talking points. Please feel free to add your personal story and relationship to the goal if it supports the program.

**Decrease stigma surrounding the epidemic of suicidality for Indigenous Youth by creating a safe space for folks to share authentically.**

Suicide is the leading cause of death of

Indigenous youth in Canada. This fact tells us that many of us must live with the spirit of suicide, but because of the stigma surrounding it, few feel safe sharing their experiences. The main goal we work towards in this program is eliminating the stigma surrounding suicide and creating safe spaces where youth can share authentically about their experience living with the spirit of suicide. The one thing that has kept me alive since I started living with this spirit at ten is that I let someone in my solidarity circle know every time that spirit visits me. That is why the first goal is to decrease the stigma surrounding it.

**Educationally empower ourselves on the impacts of trauma on our minds, bodies, and spirits.**

Suicidality shows up when our nervous system is dysregulated, which is a result of trauma. Trauma leads to showing up in the world in ways that are not authentic to our true selves. It also leads us to turn to many things to try and regulate: drugs, alcohol, rage outbursts, self-harm, staying too busy, over-exercising, Etc. I lived with the impacts of trauma for my entire life but was unaware of its impacts. Learning and understanding the somatic impacts of trauma is one of the ways we empower youth to heal.

**Develop our abilities to utilize our Kwakwaka'wakw land-based healing practices, breath, and bodies as acts of resistance and self-regulation as an antidote to suicidality.**

The spirit of suicide shows up when our nervous system is dysregulated. Our culture and land-based healing practices support us in moving into a regulated state where healing from trauma occurs. Cold water cleansing, cedar, drumming, singing, and dancing are healing practices we offer youth to utilize in place of self-harm and to resist the spirit of suicide. These practices have kept our ancestors healthy and balanced in body, mind and



spirit since time immemorial, which is why they were stolen from us. The government attempted to break our spirits, but it did not work. We are still here, and we will continue to do the work to reclaim all the parts of ourselves that make us healthy as a People.

**Create a culture of belonging and safety for Indigenous People.**

Suicide needs to get us alone to kill us (Reynolds, 2021). For many of us, feeling alone or lacking in belonging is a significant risk factor. Feeling supported, loved, and belonging to a community that understands suicidality is a protective factor. Belonging is an antidote to the systemic separation that our People live with due to the federal government's laws separating us from everything that made us strong. We support youth to know that they belong to the land, the creator, their families, their languages and cultures. We aim to create a culture of belonging for youth to feel seen, heard, and supported.

**Utilize K<sup>w</sup>ak<sup>w</sup>ala language as a foundational part of our wellness towards reclaiming our identity.**

Language is one of the most powerful protective factors against suicidality and is an integral part of our identity. Knowing who we are and where we come from is wellness. Our work is to reclaim all those parts of our identity taken during colonization, including our Indigenous languages. Communities with higher numbers of language speakers have lower rates of suicide and vice versa. We must move forward with the healing and wellness of our People, with language being an integral part of everything we do. Language offers a glimpse into how our ancestors viewed the world. Our ancestors are in the spirit world with so much joy when we learn and practice our language.

**OPTIONS FOR PROGRAM**

The original vision of this work was to develop an 11-week cohort. In developing the cohort, we lost youth to suicide in Kwakwaka'wakw territory. We took the foundational suicide prevention strategies and condensed the 11-week initiative into a one-day program that is more accessible to communities. The one-day program also includes a support group for parents and caregivers of youth who live with the spirit of suicide.

**1-Day Program      or      11-Week Cohort**

**PARENTS PROGRAM**

This 6-hour program offers support to the parents, caregivers or family members of bak<sup>w</sup>am (Indigenous) youth who live with the spirit of suicide. Not only have our youth been silenced from the stigma of suicide in community and internationally, and so have the parents. When we began offering a one-day program to young People, many community members reached out with the desire to learn more about the language and tools. Many parents and caregivers have lost someone and want to understand and support others.

In this session, parents and caregivers will learn the language we use when working with the spirit of suicide. Additionally, we will share the tools that we provide to youth in place of self-harm for self-regulation. We aim to equip loved ones with the tools and resources to support youth during times of crisis. We support parents to show up for their youth in a way that makes the young person turn to them during their "howling at the moon" moments.

## **OVERVIEW OF 11 WEEK COHORT MODULES**

**Week 1** - Creating A Culture Of Belonging & Cedar Brushing Ceremony

**Week 2** - Suicidality As A Symptom Of Attempted & Ongoing Colonial Genocide

**Week 3** - Impacts Of Trauma & How Yoga Can Assist In Trauma Recovery

**Week 4** - Creating Safety In Relationships (Polyvagal Theory)

**Week 5** - Neuro Decolonization & Trauma-informed Yoga Practice

**Week 6** - Identifying Our Activators & Trauma-informed Yoga Practice

**Week 7** - Developing Our Solidarity Team & Weaving Our Wellness Basket

**Week 8** - Developing New Strategies In Place Of Self Harm & Weaving Our Wellness Basket

**Week 9** - Drumming, Singing & Dancing As Medicine & Weaving Our Wellness Basket

**Week 10** - Cold Water Cleanse Ceremony

**Week 11** - Blanketing Ceremony & Trauma-informed Yoga Practice

**REFERENCES**

- Barker, B., Goodman, A., & DeBeck, K. (2017). Reclaiming Indigenous identities: Culture as strength against suicide among Indigenous youth in Canada. *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 108*(2), e208-e210.
- Battiste, M. (1998). Enabling the autumn seed: Toward a decolonized approach to Aboriginal knowledge, language, and education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 22*(1).
- Blair, H., Rice, S., Wood, V., & Janvier, J. (2002). Daghida: Cold Lake First Nation Works towards Dene Language Revitalization.
- Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. (2008). Cultural continuity as a protective factor against suicide in First Nations youth. *Horizons, 10*(1), 68-72.
- Danto, D., & Walsh, R. (2017). Mental health perceptions and practices of a Cree community in Northern Ontario: A qualitative study. *International journal of mental health and addiction, 15*(4), 725-737.
- Dupuis-Rossi, R. (2021). The violence of colonization and the importance of decolonizing therapeutic relationship: The role of helper in centring Indigenous wisdom. *International Journal of Indigenous Health, 16*(1).
- Durie, M., Milroy, H., & Hunter, E. (2009). Mental health and the Indigenous Peoples of Australia and New Zealand. In *Healing traditions: The mental health of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada* (pp. 36-55). UBC Press.
- Gone, J. P. (2013). Redressing First Nations historical trauma: Theorizing mechanisms for Indigenous culture as a mental health treatment. *Transcultural psychiatry, 50*(5), 683-706.
- Green, B. L. (2010). Culture is treatment: Considering pedagogy in the care of Aboriginal People. *Journal of psychosocial nursing and mental health services, 48*(7), 27-34.
- Hallett, D., Chandler, M. J., & Lalonde, C. E. (2007). Aboriginal language knowledge and youth suicide. *Cognitive development, 22*(3), 392-399.
- Iseke, J. M. (2010). Importance of Métis ways of knowing in healing communities. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 33*(1).
- Kumar, M. B., & Tjepkema, M. (2019). Suicide among First Nations People, Métis and Inuit (2011-2016): Findings from the 2011 Canadian census health and environment cohort (CanCHEC).
- Norris, M. J., & Jantzen, L. (2002). Poster and PowerPoint Presentation "From Generation to Generation: Survival and Maintenance of Canada's Aboriginal Languages within Families. *Communities and Cities.*" *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Canadian Heritage.*
- McIvor, O., Napoleon, A., & Dickie, K. M. (2009). Language and culture as protective factors for at-risk communities. *International Journal of Indigenous Health, 5*(1), 6-25.
- Suicide "n" Stuff. (2021, February 10). Suicide "n" Stuff: Episode 38 with Vikki Reynolds! YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5qD3DbxGgl>
- Talaga, T. (2018). *All our relations: Finding the path forward*. CNIB.
- Wexler, L. M., & Gone, J. P. (2015). Exploring possibilities for Indigenous suicide prevention. *Critical suicidology: Transforming suicide research and prevention for the 21st century, 56-70*.
- Wilson, K., & Rosenberg, M. W. (2002). Exploring the determinants of health for First Nations Peoples in Canada: can existing frameworks accommodate traditional activities? *Social science & medicine, 55*(11), 2017-2031.

**PART 2:**

# Delivering the work

## **CREATING YOUR TEAM**

The most important thing to look for when creating your suicide prevention team is folks who have done their healing work and can speak from a lived experience perspective of navigating the spirit of suicide, mental health struggles, or loving someone who lives with the spirit. This process is how we reduce the stigma surrounding suicidality: we model for young People in that we, as leaders, can openly talk about it in a way that feels safe.

For this work to be successful, there must be a connection to culture and community. Thus, a team rooted in the community needs to be developed with folks with ancestry in the territory. If you are planning to bring this to your community, we ask that you hire local Indigenous People to run

the cultural elements. The more folks we can have from the nation, the better. Indigenous ancestry is essential for this work.

## **FACILITATOR TEAM**

Facilitation often looks easy, like a duck coasting on water. We do not see the ducks pedalling feet under the water, working tirelessly to keep moving. The reality is that there is a lot of preparation and self-regulation that facilitators have to practice. Asking folks to have lived experience for the work to be successful also means that triggers and past trauma will be present in work. We ask that facilitators cultivate their care regimens to protect themselves and the group in this work. This care includes but is not limited to

mindfulness, ceremony, community, and anything more that will support them in being present to the group with support set up outside of the space to care for them.

It is natural in discomfort and dysregulation for facilitators to default to presenters or teachers. The models that inform this work are about experiential learning. The group experiences the teaching rather than listening to a lecture. Experiential learning keeps the knowledge in the hands of the learners rather than focusing it all on the facilitator. Facilitators must be mindful of how much space they are taking up in the room.

There is a magical sweet spot of sharing from lived experiences but also taking up only a little space in the group, which takes away from the time the youth could be sharing.

## **YOUTH PROGRAM**

**Lead Facilitator for Youth Program** - A necessity when choosing a lead facilitator is that they have lived experience with the spirit of suicide and are comfortable speaking from that lived experience. We also encourage that they have some form of facilitation training and are confident in holding space for conversations about genocide, suicide and trauma.

**Language Teacher** - A solid foundational knowledge of the Indigenous language of the land of the territory where they will deliver the program will be essential. Being open to sharing about their mental health/suicidality struggles is also crucial.

**Therapist** - Has a degree in counselling psychology but is open to supporting the work from an Indigenous social justice lens rather than a clinical lens. Sharing lived experiences of their mental health struggles helps the youth feel safe. Western clinical therapy does not support this approach; finding someone open to this may take time.

**Elder** - Someone who is open to sharing from a lived experience perspective of living with the spirit of suicide or supporting those who live with the spirit of suicide.

**Yoga Teacher** - Trauma-informed yoga teacher training is mandatory, and someone who is open about their mental health struggles.

## **PARENTS PROGRAM**

**Lead Facilitator for Parents Program** - A requirement for choosing a lead facilitator for the parents' circle is someone who either lives with the spirit of suicide or has loved or lost someone to suicide.

**Therapist for Parents Program** - Has a degree in counselling psychology but is open to supporting the work from an Indigenous social justice lens rather than a clinical lens.

Someone who is open to sharing from a lived experience perspective of losing someone to suicide or being close to someone who lives with the spirit of suicide.

**Yoga Teacher for parents program** - Trauma-informed yoga teacher training is mandatory.

## **POWERFUL BEGINNINGS**

Powerful beginnings and closings are vital to the success of the program. These set the tone for how we will walk in a good way together throughout the program and ensures that the container is closed at the end of the day for the safest possible exit.

We start our work in the best way we know how, with an acknowledgment of the Unceded Territories in which our work takes place and by turning it over to our Elder to open us up with a prayer. We light a candle at the beginning of each session to bring in the spirit of our fallen warriors, those we have lost to suicide. We also recognize



through this candle lighting that the light surrounds us as a group in this work and that our ancestors are present for each of us.

Youth can check in on their feelings by using their imagination and creativity. We then move into our first trauma-informed breath and embodiment practice as a group, providing the space for youth to practice interoception, noticing what is happening in their bodies. We then move into a sharing circle. Name games and icebreakers are opportunities for youth to engage their imagination. Below is a

framework for opening up groups in a powerful way that creates safety.

- Land Acknowledgement
- Elder to say Prayer
- Light candle for our fallen warriors
- Invite folks to shift our awareness into our bodies for a trauma-informed breathing and grounding practice
- Check-in circle
- Curriculum

## **IMAGINATION PRACTICES (METHODOLOGY)**

Our work supports youth in opportunities to engage their imagination. Check-in circles, name games, and icebreakers have opportunities to engage our creativity and imagination. These facets help in healing trauma. Imagination is vital in dreaming of a new way of being. The learned systems and lessons need fixing, and we do not see a new way modelled for each of us. This is where imagination comes in. How can we bring our culture back, what does it mean for us, and what is possible in the future? Imagination is vital for change and growth.

Additionally, imagination activates the hippocampus, which is a part of the limbic system. The hippocampus is responsible for recalling memories, visual sense perception, and processing memory and emotion (Zeidman & Maguire, 2016). Increased limbic system activity is essential as this is the part of the brain impacted in the wake of a traumatic experience (Zeidman & Maguire, 2016). As Levy-Gigi et al. (2013) revealed, increased activity in the hippocampus positively correlates with healing from PTSD. We will dive deeper into learning about the limbic system in Module 9.

The default mode network (DMN) is a term to describe several brain areas that work together (Jung et al., 2016). The DMN is like our autopilot: what our brain does when we are not asking it to do anything. What happens for folks who do not come from trauma backgrounds when we are not task-oriented is feelings of joy, creativity, rest, and rejuvenation. However, when we come from complex trauma, the voice of the DMN is self-deprecation, shame, blame, and little explosions of horror (Andrea Samadi, 2020). With this internal voice of shame, many People seek to numb, hide, and disassociate. As Jungle et al. (2016) stated, The DMN is responsible for the following:

- Remembering The Past
- Visualizing The Future
- Mentalization Of The Thoughts And Perspectives Of Other People

When we experience trauma, connectivity in the DMN decreases between the different regions (Lokshina et al., 2021). This is problematic as we need these other brain regions to work together. Engaging our imagination results in increased activity in the DMN, which supports trauma recovery (Jung et al., 2016).

Creativity can protect against trauma by improving resilience as a coping mechanism (Metzl & Morrell, 2008). The name games, ice breakers, and check-in prompts in this curriculum include opportunities for youth to use their imagination. When youth engage their imagination, it increases creativity. Engaging our creativity helps to connect the DMN and increases hippocampal volume, assisting youth on their path to trauma recovery (Rubinstein & Lahad, 2022).

## **AGREEMENTS**

The agreements are the vessel in which we will achieve the goals/learning objectives for the initiative. These agreements help to create the container for learning and to establish group norms. Many of us have different needs for how we feel safe to learn and step out of our comfort zones. We use agreements as a way to talk about these needs.

Safety needs to be created for youth to feel comfortable opening up and sharing their authentic selves with the group. Agreements are the parameters we put in place to create a container of safety for this work. Similar to the goals, the agreements are listed here with talking points. Please feel free to adjust these to be in alignment with your voice.

**Example Agreements:**

**What Is Shared Here Stays Here**

Confidentiality is the most binding agreement in creating a safe space. What is shared by youth in the space needs to stay in the space. We ask that anyone taking notes not write any details of someone else's stories and only share their learnings. Additionally, if there are any workers in the space that have a duty to report, they must communicate this explicitly and clearly.

**Be Open To Trying New Things**

Some of the things youth will be engaging in through the program will be new to them. Being open to trying new things is essential, as you never know when you may find a new gift that brings you joy or helps you feel more relaxed in your body.

**Take Good Care Of Ourselves**

We encourage youth to care for themselves in whatever feels best for them. This program is challenging work. Sometimes the conversation can become overwhelming. Taking a break when needed, stepping outside, or anything else.

**Offer Unconditional**

**Positive Regard To Each Other**

Invitation to view everyone in our group as they are showing up as best they can with the tools they have. We do not withdraw our positive regard if someone says something we disagree with or shows up in a way that irritates us.

**Compassionately Witness Each Other**

One of the ways we can achieve unconditional positive regard is through compassionate witnessing. We witness what is shared by listening less with our ears and more with our bodies and hearts. Paying attention to what resonates in our





bodies when someone is sharing is a powerful reflection to be communicated back to the person.

### Take Space And Leave Space

Some of us are comfortable speaking up in a group, and some are less inclined to have our voices heard. We want to hear from everyone. This agreement is an invitation to be mindful of how much space we are taking up in the group and make sure we make room for others to share.

### Take What You Like And Leave The Rest

Some things will resonate with you, and others won't. We invite youth to take what works for them and leave the rest.

### If You Are At Risk Of Harming Yourself Or Others, You Will Let Someone On Our Team Or Your Primary Support Person Know

To ensure the safety of all youth, we ask that youth agree to let us know if they feel like harming

themselves or someone else so we can support them in utilizing other tools in place of self-harm.

### Refrain From Dating

We invite youth to utilize this space for their wellness and try to keep friendly, not romantic, relationships. Dating can bring up attachment wounds, making engaging in this work challenging and changing the group dynamic. This agreement is not to say feelings will not still arise, but keeping romantic dynamics outside the group space is one way to keep the space safe for everyone.

## PARTICIPANT CHECK IN

Every group is a facilitated circle. The circle is important as it lets us know that we are all equal in space. **The facilitator and support staff are equal to the youth. We are all in this together and working together as one for the greater good.**



At the beginning of each group, youth have the check-in option. We encourage using a feather, fan, or another sacred item as a talking stick to pass around the circle. Whoever has the feather is whom we are giving our attention. Below are some ideas for check-in circle prompts that you can utilize:

- Share your name
- Pronouns
- Indigenous Ancestry
- Come up with an adjective that starts with the first letter of your first name and a hand motion to go with it: Please have the group mirror this back. Mirroring shows acceptance to join the actor in their silliness and builds trust.
- What in your life called you on this journey? (session 1 only)
- Mime something that brings you joy.
- What is your hope or intention in moving forward with this work?
- What is one thing that spoke to your head and one thing that spoke to your heart so far in the program? (this is great for session 5, the halfway mark)
- If you were to describe how you feel using a weather system, what system would you be and why?
- If you were to describe how you feel by using an animal, what animal would you be and why?
- What is one place that you go to that sings to your spirit?
- Invitation to share 1 or 2 emotions that are present for you right now
- Invitation to share 1 or 2 body sensations that are present for you right now
- Share a place that you go to that brings you joy (the beach, the forest)

### A note on pronouns:

We encourage folks to share their **pronouns**: Pronouns are an important part of our identities—they are the basics of **how we want others to address us**. We are in the practice of **normalizing** pronouns. Gender is a **social construct**, and some folks don't identify with the sex/gender they were **assigned at birth**; we desire to make this space **safer** for everyone; this is a **small** way that we can **acknowledge & welcome gender-diverse identities**.

**\*\*We are not mandating pronouns.** This clarification is necessary because some People are not in places where they feel safe to share. We force folks to share pronouns they don't identify with if we mandate them. We invite People to share their names and include their pronouns if they feel comfortable doing so.

## REFERENCES

- Andrea Samadi. (2020, October 24). *Neuroscience Educator Sarah Peyton on "Brain Network Theory, Default Mode Network, and Emotions"* [Video]. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=c8e-F0LGBUc>
- Jung, R. E., Flores, R. A., & Hunter, D. (2016). A new measure of imagination ability: Anatomical brain imaging correlates. *Frontiers in psychology, 7*, 496.
- Levy-Gigi, E., Szabó, C., Kelemen, O., & Kéri, S. (2013). Association among clinical response, hippocampal volume, and FKBP5 gene expression in individuals with posttraumatic stress disorder receiving cognitive behavioral therapy. *Biological psychiatry, 74*(11), 793-800.
- Lokshina, Y., Sheynin, J., & Liberzon, I. (2021). Post-trauma brain: A commentary on functional brain alterations after trauma and implications to posttraumatic stress disorder. *Current Research in Psychiatry, 1*(3), 44-47.
- Metzl, E. S., & Morrell, M. A. (2008). The role of creativity in models of resilience: Theoretical exploration and practical applications. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health, 3*(3), 303-318.
- Reynolds, D. K. (2021). Notes on *Constructive Living*. In *Constructive Living* (pp. 59-80). University of Hawaii Press.
- Rubinstein, D., & Lahad, M. (2022). Fantastic reality: The role of imagination, playfulness, and creativity in healing trauma. *Traumatology*.
- Zeidman, P., & Maguire, E. A. (2016). Anterior hippocampus: the anatomy of perception, imagination and episodic memory. *Nature Reviews Neuroscience, 17*(3), 173-182.

## MODULE 1:

# Creating a Culture of Belonging & Cedar Brushing Ceremony

*This 3-hour session creates a culture of belonging. Colonization systemically separated our People from everything that made us strong as a People: the land, our culture, our families, our bodies, and our languages. We know that suicide needs to get us alone to kill us. An antidote to this separation is creating a culture of belonging and connection. We all deserve to be seen, heard and supported in our struggle. We offer youth the opportunity to participate in a cedar brushing ceremony to close our session. Brushing is our first introduction to the healing powers of cedar.*

Week one is about creating a safe container for this work. Through a series of check-in questions and icebreakers that engage our imagination and set goals and agreements, we aim to create a relational container for youth to be seen and heard in their current struggles navigating the spirit of suicide. We strive to create a space rooted in unconditional positive and compassionate witnessing for each other.

Suicide needs to get us alone to kill us (Reynolds, 2021). So a large part of suicide prevention is creating a culture of belonging (Reynolds, 2021). Colonization systematically separated Indigenous People from each other. The colonial government enacted legislation, such as the Indian Act, to

remove the things that make Indigenous Peoples strong. The Indian Act is a genocidal erasure tool meant to eradicate Indigenous People.

This systemic separation separated us from our families through residential schools, from our sacred connection to the land through the reservation system and our languages and traditional forms of wellness and healing through assimilation policies. We were separated from our sense of self and safety within our bodies through the violence and abuse we endured in residential schools. That trauma experienced has passed through to the next generations. Our People were systematically separated, so part of staying alive is connecting and creating a culture of belonging.

**Let's talk about what belonging means:**

**Show of hands:** How many People felt alone in a room full of People?

**Show of hands:** How many People felt belonging while alone?

**Invitation, one or two People share:** Belonging feels like: \_\_\_\_\_

**UNCONDITIONAL POSITIVE REGARD**

A foundational part of creating safety and a culture of belonging is to bring in the teachings of Unconditional Positive Regard. Unconditional Positive Regard is a concept coined by Psychologist Carl Rogers in 1959. It is a skill utilized in therapeutic settings, allowing folks to experience their feelings safely (Rogers, 1979).

The main focus of unconditional positive regard is warm acceptance of the individual precisely as they are (Ludeking, 2022). It is an essential part of wellness and improving mental health as it helps folks to see their value and accept who they are, reducing the gap between the ideal and the actual self. The most important outcome of unconditional positive regard is a sense of self-worth and psychological well-being. Individuals with a great sense of self-worth are more confident and motivated to follow their goals and work toward self-actualization because they believe they can accomplish them (Why Therapists Use Unconditional Positive Regard With Their Patients, 2020).

In this work, we accept everyone for who they are. Positive regard is not withdrawn if the person makes a mistake, says something that we disagree with, or if they show up in a way that is irritating to us. We see each and every person in the space as we are all doing the best we can with the tools we have.

One way to practice unconditional positive regard with each other is through something called compassionate witnessing.

**COMPASSIONATE WITNESSING**

Compassionate witnessing can lead to relief and comfort for folks who have experienced trauma. It can support us in experiencing those hard-to-feel emotions like sadness and hurt with compassion instead of neglecting or denying the hurt (Germer & Neff, 2015).

Compassionate witnessing implies suffering is a normal part of life, and no one can escape it. This interpretation can release some of the pain we may be carrying. It helps us to see that many People suffer similarly and that we are not alone.

Regarding traumatic stress, validating the events as traumatic and the following stress responses as normal human responses will support the survivor in making meaning to the confusing symptoms induced by the trauma. In this process, survivors can validate their traumatic experiences, build safe boundaries, and practice self-care instead of experiencing shame or fear (Penttinen, 2016).

In this work, we invite youth and facilitators/supporters to listen to what People share with our bodies and emotions instead of our minds. We are used to listening with our minds, often preparing something clever to respond with, bringing in a similar experience or offering advice.

Compassionate witnessing can support us in utilizing our bodies as a resource to recognize what is alive inside of us. It is an invitation to notice what is happening in our hearts and bodies when someone shares and reflects their strength to them. Being compassionately witnessed helps us to feel seen and heard in our struggles.

In the group setting, when someone shares, we invite 1 or 2 People to witness the person who shared compassionately. This practice helps folks to feel seen, heard, supported, and connected in their struggle. **Here are a few ways we can respond when someone shares, as learned through the Roots to Thrive Program:**

“I see you”

“I am with you”

“you matter”

“I heard”

“I felt ... sensation/emotion”

“I sense that ..... is deeply important to you”

“I see how that impacted you”

“I see how you felt”

“You were so strong”

## **CULTURE OF BELONGING EXERCISES**

To help youth to connect to the People and places that create feelings of belonging and connection, we break into groups of 3 (ideally three youths with one facilitator) and answer the following questions :

**Who are the People and/or places that give you a sense of belonging?**

**What about that person gives you a sense of belonging and connection?**

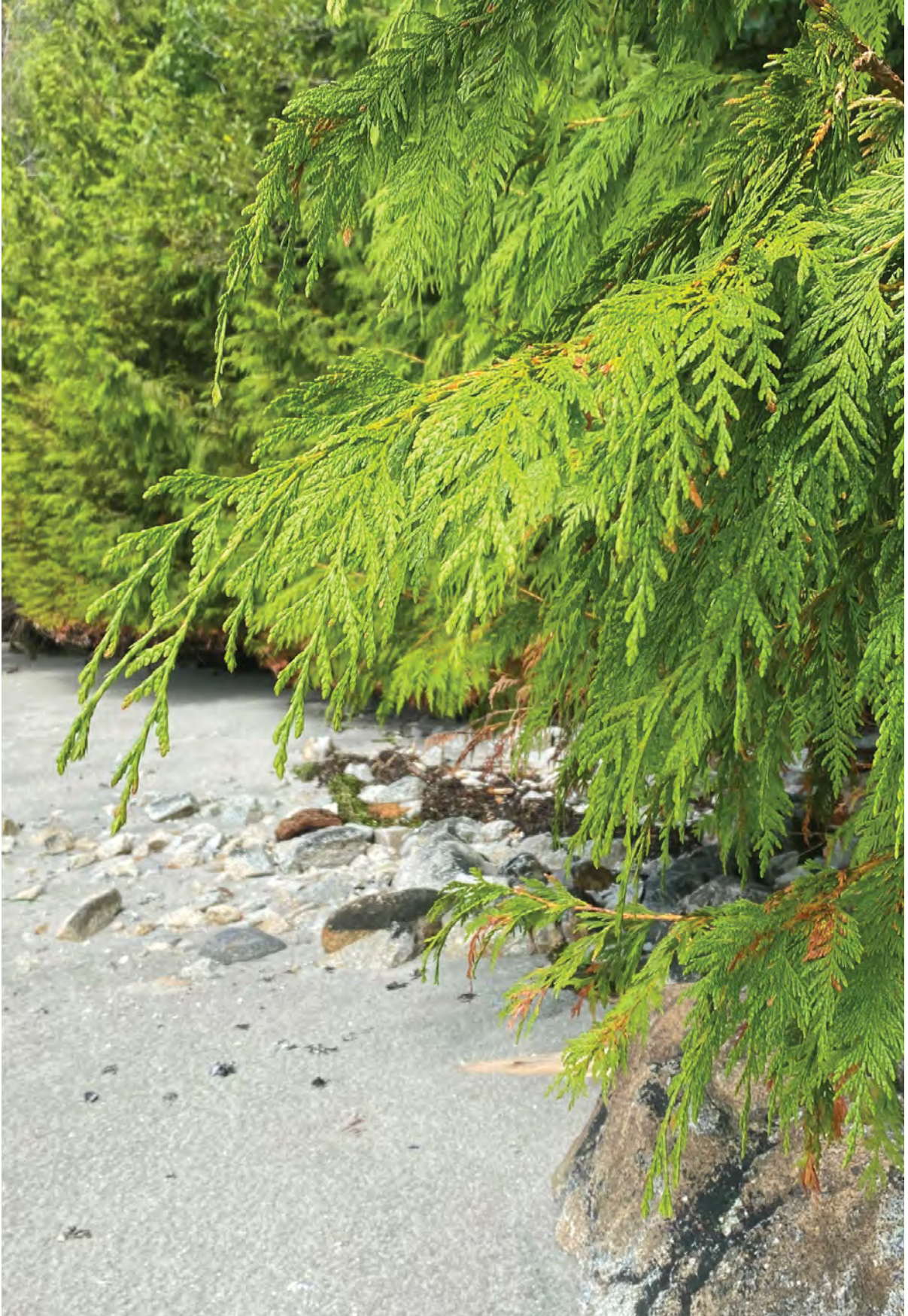
We encourage youth to focus less on the person and more on what it is about the person that creates that sense of belonging and connection (words, expressions, how they show up for you, body language, Etc).

## **HEALING POWERS OF CEDAR & CEDAR BRUSHING CEREMONY**

Cedar is referred to as the tree of life in our culture because the survival of our People depended on this medicine. We refer to her in the female sense, as a grandmother or big sister, because of all the teachings she has to share with us. Cedar was and continues to be an integral part of our lives from birth to death. When a baby came from the spirit world (our mother's womb) and was born, the baby was born onto a cedar woven mat. Cedar was the first medicine the baby touched coming from the spirit world. When a person died and returned to the spirit world, they returned to the spirit world in a cedar box. Everything from housing, clothing, transportation, food harvesting and storage, ceremony, spiritual cleansing, and telling the stories of our lineage through carving totem poles, rattles, masks and regalia came from the cedar tree.

In Liḡ<sup>w</sup>itda<sup>w</sup> territory, one of my Ancestral home territories, cedar is an integral part of our creation story and how we survived the great flood. Our People knew that the flood was coming. My Ancestors spent four years making a cedar rope and tied it to the top of the mountain, and our canoes held the other end. When the flood came, our Ancestors got in their canoes and floated to the top of the mountain. The cedar rope is how we survived the great flood. This medicine is so necessary to our People, physically, emotionally, spiritually, and for survival. There is much more depth, mythology and complexity to my People's origin story, but I am offering a condensed version here.

Cedar is a medicine that absorbs our emotional, spiritual, and mental energy. The thoughts we think and emotions we feel all become imbued into medicine. Like other avenues of land-based practices, cedar can take from us all that is not serving us emotionally and energetically. She can release traumatic memories that our bodies have stored. I know this to be true from my experience



and witnessing others working with this medicine.

Because of her incredible healing properties, we can interact with her in a way that assists us on our healing path—hugging her, burning the boughs for spiritual cleansing and as a conduit to communicate with the creator. Our ancestors used to say that if you were struggling mentally or emotionally, to go and nap under a cedar tree. When you woke up, you will feel better. We can

communicate and talk to this medicine and ask for help with what we need. She is here to teach, guide, and help us heal.

To close the first session, we offer participants to experience the powerful healing properties of cedar by offering a cedar brushing ceremony. This work needs to be done by an equipped Elder with knowledge of how to conduct the ceremony.

---

#### REFERENCES

- Germer, C. K., & Neff, K. D. (2015). Cultivating self-compassion in trauma survivors. *Mindfulness-oriented interventions for trauma: Integrating contemplative practices*, 43-58.
- Ludeking, A. (2022). The Use of Drama Therapeutic Play and Unconditional Positive Regard in Fostering Self-Actualization in Unhoused Individuals.
- Penttinen, E. (2016). Compassionate witnessing of trauma as a potential practice for security studies scholarship. *Critical Studies on Security*, 4(1), 129-132.
- Reynolds, D. K. (2021). Notes on *Constructive Living*. In *Constructive Living* (pp. 59-80). University of Hawaii Press.
- Rogers, C. R. (1979). The foundations of the person-centered approach. *Education*, 100(2), 98-107.
- Why Therapists Use Unconditional Positive Regard With Their Patients*. (2020, May 10). Very well Mind. <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-unconditional-positive-regard-2796005>



## MODULE 2:

# Suicidality As A Normal Human Response To Carrying The Burdens Of 500 Years Of Attempted And Ongoing Colonial Genocide (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021)

*In this 3-hour session, we look at the root cause of suicidality: genocide. Suicidality is a normal human response to carrying the burdens of 500+ years of attempted and ongoing colonial genocide. Together we will unpack the problems with the language of suicide and learn about how the mental health system pathologizes us. We explore the idea of externalizing burdens of colonialism we may be carrying and, in turn, create space to center our Indigenous wisdom, all the beauty and strength we inherited from our ancestors.*

### **THE PROBLEMS WITH THE LANGUAGE OF SUICIDE**

Suicide is the leading cause of death of Indigenous folks aged 11-44 (Talaga, 2018). When we use the language of suicide, it disappears the political context of the violence we experience as Indigenous People (Reynolds, 2021). **This genocide and violence are attempted and ongoing (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021).** Colonization is not something that happened in the past and is now over.

Here is an invitation to see what it would be like to change our language surrounding suicidality.

Instead of saying the leading cause of death of our People is suicide, what if we say the leading cause of death of our People is genocide? People do not just kill themselves. Hate kills them (Reynolds, 2021). Colonial legislation and policies place hatred on us. Legislation that systematically tried to erase Bakwam (Indigenous) People from this planet. Now we are left with wounds and burdens. The unspeakable cruelty, dehumanization, tragedy, and oppression of what we have been through and continuously are faced with kills our People, not suicide (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021).



We also need to eliminate the word “commit” from the conversation. It is not a crime to die by suicide, but it used to be illegal. This law changed in the 1970s. We commit crimes, not suicide. Using this language adds to the stigma surrounding suicidality (Reynolds, 2021).

### **SUICIDALITY AS A SYMPTOM OF ATTEMPTED & ONGOING COLONIAL GENOCIDE (DUPIUS-ROSSI,2021)**

The first step in working with suicidality within our communities is to name colonization and genocide as the root cause. The burdens we carry will show up differently for each of us. However, we must locate the root of the problem where it belongs, genocide enacted and enforced by the federal government. Colonial genocide is our People’s leading cause of death, not suicide (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021).

We must look back at the history of colonial genocide to understand this. The folks who colonized our territories saw our land as a way

to profit and get rich. We, as a People, interfered with that. They wanted the trees, the oil, the minerals, and the fish. They wanted the wealth of our territories. Many economies still practice this model today: wealth extraction and accumulation through over-development and harm to People and land. Canadian wealth does not include the poverty and health of Indigenous Peoples. This redaction furthers the agenda of genocide for economic gain and invisibilizes the reality of Indigenous excellence (Indigenomics).

For colonization to be successful, they attempted to break our spirits. They did this by:

- Tearing Our Families Apart
- Attempting To Break Down Our Way Of Life/ Ceremony/Potlatch Ban
- Inflicting Trauma And Genocide On Our Children In Residential Schools
- Systemic Separation From Land With Reservations
- Disempowering & Marginalizing Our Women

From Our Highly Esteemed Place In Society As Life-Givers

- Breeding Shame Into Our People Through Assimilation Policies And Residential Schools

Colonization is not a thing of the past. It is attempted and ongoing. The goal has always been to eradicate our People. Genocide continues with the Indian Act, MMIWG, overdose epidemic, racism in healthcare and judicial systems and high rates of incarceration and child apprehension.

**There is nothing wrong with us. We are not broken People. What is broken is the invisible interlocking systems of oppression that drive our world.** Staying alive and living a good life is an act of resistance to the impacts of colonialism. Suicidality is a normal human response to carrying the burdens of 500+ years of colonial genocide (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021).

### **EXTERNALIZING THE BURDENS OF COLONIZATION**

Once we have named the root cause of suicidality, we can start to acknowledge how the burdens of colonization are internalized. Not only do we internalize the violence, but we also internalize the disowned collective shame of colonization. There is a spirit to violence. Violence is out of sync with the human spirit. When our human rights are violated, and the sacredness of human life is violated, our souls react with shame. Shame is often at the root of suicidality, not depression (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021).

We can also externalize the pathologies placed on us by the mental health system. PTSD, depression, anxiety, bipolar disorder, and personality disorder are all rooted in trauma associated with colonial genocide. We can externalize these pathologies to create space to center what was there prior to contact (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021).

Diagnoses are helpful because we can use

them to treat our symptoms, but it becomes very problematic when we start to feel like our diagnoses are who we are as People when they become part of our identity.

Some burdens of colonization we may be living with and want to externalize:

- Poverty
- Loss Of Connection To Identity, Culture, Language & Spirituality
- Mental Health Struggles (Ptd, Anxiety, Depression)
- Poor Physical Health
- Struggles In Relationships
- Broken Family Systems
- Family Dysfunction
- Shame
- Abuse
- Racism

The group needs to see that these are the results of assimilation tactics. Indigenous poverty is directly related to Canadian wealth (Hilton, 2021). Loss of connection to language, identity, and culture results from ongoing harm, schools, and propaganda to separate and isolate Indigenous People from their families and communities. Physical health struggles have direct links to harm caused by colonization (Marya & Patel, 2021). These are not internal flaws - they are the results of policies of racism within the colonial governments.

### **GROUP WORK EXERCISE: BURDENS WE ARE CARRYING**

As a group, we invite participants to collectively brainstorm what burdens of colonization and residential schools we, as Indigenous People, have been carrying. One of our support People will write down all the ideas the group comes up with, so we can see them on paper.



Some examples that come up are: addiction, mental health struggles, poverty, domestic violence, loss of connection to identity, loss of connection to land, tearing apart of the family system, sexual abuse, and shame are a few ideas to get started with if Youth get stuck.

### **CEREMONY: GIVING OUR BURDENS BACK TO THE LAND CARRYING**

**Now that we have discussed these collective burdens let's give them back.**

#### **Activity to give this back :**

Invitation to go outside, find a rock and bring

it to the land. With love, whisper your burdens to the rock and ask it to hold them and give it to the land with tobacco. Ask the land to take it back and help you carry it. Tobacco is a sacred medicine we can use to communicate with the creator. It is also a way to practice reciprocity. When we take from the land, it is essential to give something back to say thank you. Tobacco is an offering we can give back to the land. When we do this we can imagine we are giving these burdens back to the government and churches, as this is where they originate.

Invite the Youth to stomp as they go on the land - stomping keeps our energy moving, so it does not get stuck.

Feel into our bodies. Where are these burdens located?

**You can ask the Youth:**

**What does it feel like when I say, this is not your fault? There is nothing wrong with you. You are everything your ancestors dreamed.**

### **CENTRING INDIGENOUS WISDOM**

When we externalize these pathologies, we create space for the Indigenous wisdom that existed before colonization and is still there (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021). In the same way, intergenerational trauma gets passed down, and so does intergenerational wisdom. We carry all of our ancestors' beauty, wisdom and strength (Dupuis-Rossi, 2021). The burdens we have carried are not who we are as People. Centring our Indigenous wisdom is a way to connect to our authentic selves .

What was there prior to contact in your ancestral lineage?

- Strong Family Systems
- Knowing How To Work Together In A Community
- Cultures Alive And Strong
- Feelings Of Safety And Connection Within Our

Bodies & Other People

- Spoke Languages From The Land
- Seeing Ourselves As An Extension Of The Land
- Survived Genocide And Kept Ceremonies Intact (Potlatching)

### **COLLECTIVE BRAINSTORM: CENTER YOUR INDIGENOUS WISDOM**

**Invitation to share your Indigenous Wisdom:**

Write on poster paper so all youth can see and brainstorm together.

*Are there parts of you or your identity that you want to reclaim? What was there prior to the process of colonization that you wish to center?*

*What wisdom do you have within you, or passed down from your ancestors, that you want to center in your life?*

Once we brainstorm our Indigenous Wisdom, we give youth something sacred from the land to keep and continually remind them of their authentic true selves, inner Wisdom, and brilliance.

**A few ideas are:** a piece of tanned hide, cedar bough, sage, sweet grass.

---

### **REFERENCES**

- Dupuis-Rossi, R. (2021). The violence of colonization and the importance of decolonizing therapeutic relationship: the role of helper in centering Indigenous wisdom. *International Journal of Indigenous Health*. 16(1). <https://doi.org/10.32799/ijih.v16i1.33223>
- Dupuis-Rossi, R., & Reynolds, V. (2018). Indigenizing and decolonizing therapeutic responses to trauma-related dissociation. *Counselling in cultural contexts: Identities and social justice*, 293-315.
- Hilton, C. A. (2021). *Indigenomics: Taking a seat at the economic table*. new society publishers.
- Talaga, T. (2018). *All our relations: Finding the path forward*. House of Anansi.
- Hate kills: A social justice response to "suicide"* - wordpress.com. (n.d.). Retrieved May 24, 2022, from [https://vikkiireynoldsdotca.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/hate\\_kills\\_socialjusticesuicide\\_reynolds\\_white2012.pdf](https://vikkiireynoldsdotca.files.wordpress.com/2017/12/hate_kills_socialjusticesuicide_reynolds_white2012.pdf).
- YouTube. (2021, April 5). *Solidarity talks: Riel Dupuis-Rossi, Donny Riki, Vikki Reynolds*. YouTube. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ye2wtD5BbjE>
- YouTube. (2021, February 10). *Suicide 'n' stuff: Episode 38 with Vikki Reynolds!* YouTube. Retrieved May 23, 2022, from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5qD3D3bxGgI>

### MODULE 3:

# Impacts Of Trauma & How Yoga Can Assist In Trauma Healing

*This 3-hour session offers youth education on the impacts of trauma on our bodies, minds & spirits. We will learn about the autonomic nervous system, the symptoms of PTSD, and how we can utilize our breath, bodies, culture & land for healing from trauma. This is important as we know that suicidality occurs when our nervous system is dysregulated. Also explored is how qwi'nak'wgs (the land) can be a place we turn to to help release traumatic memory stored in our bodies. Facilitators will offer a 1-hour trauma-informed yoga class to guide youth back to their bodies safely.*

## **TRAUMA AND INDIGENOUS PEOPLES**

In this work, we learn about the somatic (bodily) impacts of trauma. Importantly, as we discuss trauma for Indigenous People, we continue to face daily political implications of trauma.

Colonization is not something that happened in the past and is now over. It is attempted and ongoing (Dupuis-Rossi, 2020). Genocidal tools of oppression like The Indian Act still exist and profoundly affect the lives of all Indigenous People. For example, there are three times more Indigenous children in the foster care system than at the height

of the residential school era (Blackstock, 2004). The rates of Indigenous women, girls, and two-spirit folks missing and murdered are so high that it is classified as genocide (Library of Congress, 2019). Indigenous women are 16 times more likely to go missing or be murdered than non-Indigenous women in Canada (Library of Congress, 2019). Indigenous folks are also over-represented in the opioid epidemic and are five times more likely to overdose than non-Indigenous People (First Nations Health Authority, 2020). These are some of the modern faces of colonialism we face every day.

Our People are survivors and thrivers. Institutions like governments, churches and Indian Residential “Schools” deliberately attempted to eliminate what civil servant Duncan Campbell Scott called “the Indian problem.” He said, “Our objective is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic and there is no Indian question, and no Indian Department”(Scott,1920).

The “Indian problem” was getting us out of the way so they could get our lands and waters. However, our People are strong, and we are still connected to and protecting our territories.

### **UNDERSTANDING THE AUTONOMIC NERVOUS SYSTEM**

The curriculum around trauma theory was learned through The Yoga Outreach Society. Parasympathetic is often referred to as a “hypo” response because of the slowing down. One Elder described these responses as fawn and forfeit. Sometimes we give in and stop fighting when the parasympathetic is activated. Suicidality can show up in both of these responses.

### **WHAT HAPPENS WHEN WE EXPERIENCE A TRAUMATIC EVENT?**

The part of our brain that is responsible for integrating and making sense of the traumatic experience is called the hippocampus, which is part of the limbic system. When we experience trauma, the hippocampus becomes overwhelmed. As a result of this overwhelm, the emotions and thoughts associated with the trauma do not get processed as they usually would. That lack of processing can result in symptoms of PTSD (dysregulated nervous system) (Emerson & Hopper, 2012).

Trauma is not cognitive; it lives in the nervous system. Contrary to what our medical system tells us, the mind and the body are not separate but inextricably connected. Our thoughts and

emotions are affected, but trauma lives in the body. It is essential to highlight the relationship between mind and body and how trauma implicates them. A traumatic event overwhelms our physical system, which leaves us unable to process emotions and psychological aspects (Emerson & Hopper, 2012). I am thankful to Yoga Outreach and Nicole Marcia for teaching me trauma theory so I can share these teachings through this initiative.

### **SYMPTOMS OF PTSD**

These are all incredibly uncomfortable symptoms. These symptoms cause us to reach for substances, self-harm, stay too busy, over-exercise or other destructive behaviours to find relief, all in an attempt to regulate the nervous system (American Psychiatric Association, 2022).

**DISSOCIATION** - emotional & physical numbing out

**HYPERAROUSAL** - Inability to relax, anger/rage outbursts, difficulty sleeping

**HYPERVIGILANCE** - Waiting for the next bad thing to happen, feeling like everything is a threat (People feel threatened)

**INTRUSION** - flashbacks, nightmares, trouble sleeping

### **SUICIDE AND DYSREGULATION**

The spirit of suicide shows up in our life as a direct result of complex trauma during childhood. Chronic stress activates the Autonomic Nervous System, resulting in the hyperarousal of the Sympathetic & Parasympathetic Nervous System (SNS & PNS). These activations trigger defensive survival responses such as fight, flight, and freeze (Van der Kolk, 1996a, 1996b). Spiritually, when we experience trauma as children, the spirit of suicide attaches itself to a person. It attached itself to me when I was four years old and experiencing childhood sexual abuse at the hands of a family

member. Childhood sexual abuse is an epidemic in our communities because of residential schools. For me, suicidality and sexual abuse go hand in hand.

When we have experienced trauma, we become sensitive to stimuli directly or indirectly related to traumatic events. Therefore, objective or subjective threatening results in the activation of cognitive, emotional, and physiological symptoms, including emotions of fear, shame, rage, numbing of feelings, overactivity of the stress response system, and negative beliefs about the self (Corrigan et al., 2011).

Moreover, rapid switching between high and low arousal states is expected in those with a history of severe trauma. High arousal states can be modulated by suicide planning, starvation, abuse of alcohol and cannabis, bathing, grooming, compulsive cleaning, and self-harm. Low arousal states can be modified by compulsive activities involving grooming and cleaning, suicide planning, risk-taking (such as driving too fast), self-harm, and abuse of alcohol, amphetamine, ecstasy, or cocaine. Treatment approaches must involve patient education about these states and their role in symptom perpetuation (Corrigan et al., 2011). This is why we educate youth on the impacts of trauma, to empower them to know that suicidality is a normal response to what has happened to us.

### **PARTNER SHARING EXERCISE**

***Can you relate to living with some of these symptoms in your own life?***

***Can you see the correlation between living with these symptoms and reaching for substances, self-harm or other harmful behaviours to feel better (regulated)?***

It is essential to acknowledge the strength you carry to have survived all you have to get here today. You are so strong!

### **HONOURING THE ROOTS OF YOGA**

Yoga is a 5000-year-old Sacred Spiritual Practice belonging to the People of India. It is an Indigenous practice taken from its original form and turned into something different. It is vital to acknowledge whom these practices belong to and where they originate as part of our commitment to decolonizing.

The Sacred Practice of Yoga has experienced generations of colonization and appropriation. Important to acknowledge in this work the deep gratitude we have as an organization to utilize these teachings to assist in the collective healing of Indigenous Peoples. Furthermore, I must acknowledge how deeply I have benefited in terms of my wellness and healing from these sacred practices belonging to the People of India.

### **HOW YOGA CAN HELP TO HEAL FROM TRAUMA**



If we have experienced trauma, a very adaptive survival strategy we engage in is disconnecting or abdicating from our bodies. Some trauma



survivors see their bodies as enemies (Emerson & Hopper, 2012). Yoga— especially trauma-sensitive Yoga— can help us heal from trauma because it helps us develop a more positive relationship with our bodies.

Yoga can help us to reconnect to our bodies. It provides an avenue for safely returning to our bodies after being disconnected after the traumatic experience. It allows us to befriend our bodies and utilize them as a resource for calming and grounding. Through mindfulness, breathing, and gentle yoga practices, we can develop a positive relationship and become friends with our bodies. Trauma-informed Yoga can be “an opportunity to create conditions for pain-free experiences within the body (Barudin, 2022).

Yoga can help us to bring our awareness to the present moment and notice and tolerate our inner experiences, which can have a “ripple effect on emotional and mental health, on relationships, and on our experience of living in the world” (Emerson & Hopper, 2012).

Breathwork, or pranayama in Sanskrit, the language of Yoga, is a significant part of the practice. Our breath is a resource for us. A tool for self-regulation that we have with us at all times. Like any skill, it takes practice to get comfortable with. Our breath can help bring us back to baseline arousal levels after being in a state of fight or flight or to refrain from entering that state altogether.





### **WHAT DOES TRAUMA-INFORMED YOGA MEAN?**

When we say our work is trauma-informed, we mean that everything we do is invitational. Youth have choices in everything that they do together. They do not have to do something that does not feel right for them. We use the language of invitation and inquiry in a trauma-informed class. This is meant to give participants a sense of agency.

In a regular yoga class, teachers will often assist (touch), which can be activating for folks. In a trauma-informed practice, no one will be touching you. No one will be standing over you telling you what to do with your body or where you should feel it (Rice, 2022). We recommend that the yoga teachers involved in this work undergo trauma-informed training.

**REFERENCES**

American Psychiatric Association. (2022). Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Text Revision Dsm-5-tr (5th ed.). Amer Psychiatric Pub Inc.

Barudin, J. (2022, June 29). *First Nations Women's Yoga Initiative*. Yoga Outreach. <https://yogaoutreach.com/start-a-program/fnwyi/>

Blackstock, C., Trocmé, N., & Bennett, M. (2004). Child Maltreatment Investigations Among Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Families in Canada. *Violence Against Women*, 10(8), 901–916. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077801204266312>

Corrigan, F. M., Fisher, J. J., & Nutt, D. J. (2011). Autonomic dysregulation and the window of tolerance model of the effects of complex emotional trauma. *Journal of psychopharmacology*, 25(1), 17-25.

Dupuis-Rossi, R. (2020). Resisting the “attachment disruption” of colonization through decolonising therapeutic praxis: Finding our way back to the Homelands Within. *Psychotherapy and Counseling Journal of Australia*, 8(2).

Emerson, D., & Hopper, E. (2012). *Overcoming trauma through yoga: Reclaiming your body*. North Atlantic Books.

First Nations Health Authority (2020, December). *First Nations In BC and the Toxic Drug Crisis*. [Infographic]. <https://www.fnha.ca/AboutSite/NewsAndEventsSite/NewsSite/Documents/FNHA-First-Nations-in-BC-and-the-Toxic-Drug-Crisis-January-December-2020-Infographic.pdf>

Marya, R., & Patel, R. (2021). *Inflamed: Deep Medicine and the Anatomy of Injustice*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.

*Reclaiming Power and Place: the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls*. (n.d.). The Library of Congress. <https://www.loc.gov/item/lcwaN0028038/>

Rice, A. (2022, January 4). *Trauma-Informed Yoga: A Guide*. Psych Central. <https://psychcentral.com/health/what-is-trauma-informed-yoga>

Scott, D. C. (1920). The Indian problem. *National Archives of Canada*, Record Group, 10, 55-63.

*The Indian Act*. (n.d.). [https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the\\_indian\\_act/](https://indigenousfoundations.arts.ubc.ca/the_indian_act/)

Van der Kolk, B. A. (1996a) The complexity of adaptation to trauma: self-regulation, stimulus discrimination, and characterological development. *Traumatic Stress: the Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*. New York: Guilford Press, 182–213.

Van der Kolk, B. A. (1996b). The body keeps the score: approaches to the psychobiology of posttraumatic stress disorder. In van der Kolk BA, McFarlane AC, Weisaeth L (eds), *Traumatic Stress: The Effects of Overwhelming Experience on Mind, Body, and Society*. New York: The Guilford Press.

**MODULE 4:**

# Creating Safety In Relationships - Polyvagal Theory

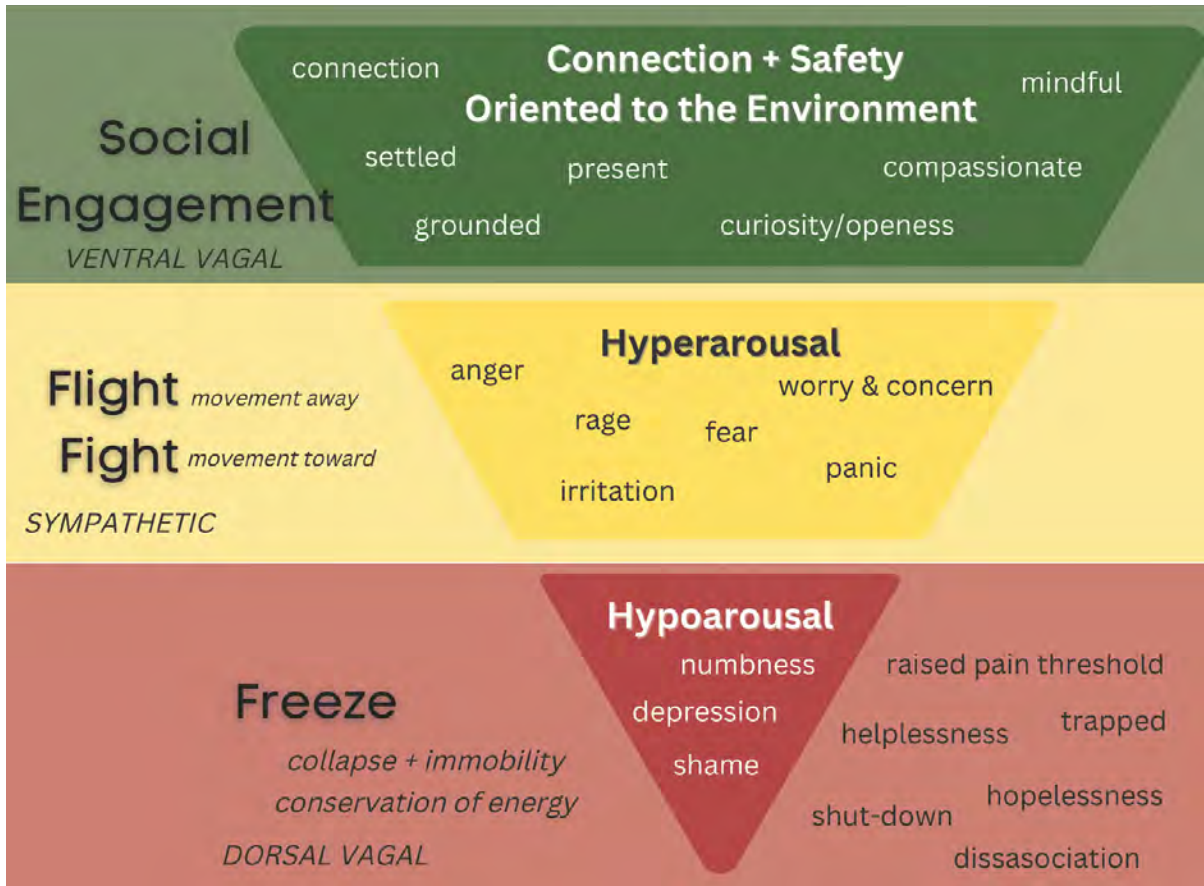
*We heal in the context of relationships. When trauma impedes our ability to be in safe relationships with People, it makes it very difficult to heal in the context of relationships. This 3-hour session will use the Polyvagal theory to help us understand why relationships can feel so threatening when we come from complex traumatic backgrounds, which is a direct result of the residential school system. We will also learn about the vagus nerve and how stimulating this nerve can affect positive health outcomes and counteract our fight/flight response.*

## **POLYVAGAL THEORY**

Why is Polyvagal theory critical? When we have experienced trauma like we as Indigenous People have (historical, intergenerational and lived experience), one of the ways we have been impacted is through our sense of safety and ability to engage in safe relationships. This can be problematic because we do not heal from trauma in isolation. We heal from trauma in the context of relationships. If you have difficulty being in a relationship, it is

tough for that healing to occur.

This theory helps us understand why we feel unsafe in relationships, feel threatened and misread people's cues. This information makes us curious about how we respond to real or imagined relationship threats. We can then start to explore what it would be like to allow more people into our lives who give us signals of safety and connection (make us feel safe and connected).



Our nervous system is an upside-down triangle at the base of our brain stem. In a safe, regulated state, we can access higher brain functions (the prefrontal cortex is where our rational thinking lives). These systems turn off when we are in danger states, making us defensive (PsychAlive, 2018).

When we are in a constant state of danger (dangerous environments/abusive situations), our nervous system finds it difficult to detect safety. If it cannot see security, it is in a state of fight/flight and has a low threshold to react. Moreover, when in this state, we misread other people’s cues. So more likely to see neutral faces as aggressive and fearful faces as angry. This causes difficulty in relationships because we cannot utilize people to regulate if we feel threatened by them (PsychAlive, 2018).

All of these responses are not voluntary. Our nervous system picks up information in the environment and evaluates that information on a subconscious level. This is called neuroception

when we scan our environment every 4-6 seconds for danger (PsychAlive, 2018). We will dive deeper into neuroception further into this chapter.

### UNIVERSAL DANGER RESPONSES

According to this theory, there are three ways that we can respond to threats or danger. Whether that threat is a real threat, or a perceived threat (imagined)

- **Social Engagement** (most recent, most sophisticated, separates us from other mammals)
- **Fight or Flight** (oldest reptilian branch, primitive response) SNS
- **Freeze Behaviours/Collapsed Immobility** (oldest, reptilian, primitive)

These responses are all turned on by our autonomic nervous system (Slavich, 2020).

## PARTNER SHARING EXERCISE

*Is there one of these ways of responding to threats (real or imagined) that you engage in more regularly?*

*How do you envision your authentic self responding to real or imagined threats instead of reacting from a trauma state (fight-flight / shut down)?*

*How can you have compassion for yourself when you respond with fight, flight or dissociation?*

## VAGUS NERVE

The PNS has something running through it called the vagus nerve. This nerve is vital for healing from trauma. It is the largest nerve in our body, starting in our brain stem. Understanding this nerve and its function can help us move positively toward healing.

The vagus nerve has two branches:

### 1. Freeze & Immobilization Behaviours

(reptilian) - starts lower down in our spine

### 2. Social Engagement Behaviours (primitive)

- lives above the diaphragm, innervating the muscles in our face. It creates a face, heart, and breath connection. It is responsible for social engagement behaviours in the face of a threat (O'Malley, 2018).

## CO-REGULATION

Every human being, traumatized or not, scans their environment every 4-7 seconds for danger. This is called neuroception. On a fundamental level, we read these signals as if someone is safe or not safe to be around. We do this by looking at their faces, listening to their voices, and paying attention to their body language (Space Between Counseling Services (SBCS), 2022).

In a group setting, neuroception and how we respond to threats can be demonstrated by asking

someone (preferably another facilitator) to give you a facial expression they would make when upset with you. "Sally, please give me a look you would give me when you are hurt and mad at me." Sally will then give me a mean-looking face. This is the vagus nerve that controls these facial expressions.

"Because I am a reasonably well-regulated person, because Sally is upset with me, I am not going to move into a fight response with her. Chances are also good that I will not move into a flight response and start fighting. Also highly likely because I am reasonably well regulated, I will not lose consciousness because Sally is upset with me.

I can read the situation. Chances are, if Sally is upset with me, I will use my face, my voice and my body to signal that I am safe to be around, and she will pick up on those signals. When she picks up on the signs, they will start to down-regulate her nervous system, and she will send those signals of safety and connection back to me. I will send them back to her. It is called co-regulation and is a powerful tool for helping folks to feel safe, connected and supported.

However, when we have experienced trauma and haven't had the opportunity to metabolize it, integrate it, or work to heal from it, that level of engagement, that ability to co-regulate, can be impeded. When we say someone is dysregulated, we are talking about their social engagement system not operating optimally, which creates difficulty in relationships. If we constantly feel threatened by People, a response to that threat is to stay away from them." (Marcia, 2021)

## POLYVAGAL LADDER

The polyvagal ladder offers three different ways that we can respond to threats. At the top of the ladder, when we feel regulated, secure and safe, our brain operates from our Parasympathetic Nervous System, and we are in Ventral Vagal. Here we can rest, digest, socialize, and relax. As we move

down the ladder, our brain enters the sympathetic system, where our fight-flight response becomes activated to protect us. Moreover, our last line of defence is the dorsal vagal (Bailey et al., 2020).

**Depending on where we are on the ladder will determine how we respond to situations:**

You get a new haircut, and you go to work. You are still determining how you feel about it. Your co-worker says, “Hey, nice haircut.”

**In the ventral vagal, we respond:** “Hey, thanks.”

**When we are in Sympathetic activation, we respond:** “ya, I do not know if I like it, but thanks, I guess.”

**When we are in dorsal vagal, we respond:** “omg, why would they even say that to me? Now everyone is looking at me. This is so stupid. I shouldn’t have changed anything. I wish I were not at work anymore.”

This is an example of a very benign (gentle and kind) social situation, with three very different ways we can respond depending on where our nervous system is at. The state of our nervous system, where we are on the polyvagal ladder, determines how safe people are.

Our work ensures that we get enough of the proper relationship. Because if we are only getting People who respond to us in a threatening way and only tiny snippets of safety and regulation, that is a big load to carry. That is an uphill push. We want People in our lives who can co-regulate with us. That is what we strive for in suicide prevention work.

**SMALL GROUP EXERCISE - SAFETY IN RELATIONSHIPS**

*Who are the people in your life who send you signals of connection and safety? What is it about these people (words they say, facial expressions, body language, Etc.) that send you signals of safety and connection*

Invitation to share with your small groups which those people are.

**THINGS WE CAN DO TO SUPPORT BEING IN THE VENTRAL VAGAL STATE (VAGAL HEALTH)**

The vagus nerve connects the brain with all of our organs. Stimulating the vagus nerve can reduce the intensity of our fight-flight response (Sympathetic activation). Relationships feel more threatening when we are in Sympathetic activation (fight or flight). When we are in a more regulated state, the actions and behaviours of other people will not feel as threatening (Porges, 1997). This is assuming the people we are around are safe people.

**Drumming** (Geller, 2018)

**Singing** (vibrates the larynx) (El Tahry et al., 2011)

**Yoga** (The Art of Living, 2022)

**Slow Deep Breaths** (belly breathing) (The Art of Living, 2022)

**Laughing** (The Art of Living, 2022)

**Meditation** (The Art of Living, 2022)

**Humming** (vibrates the larynx) (El Tahry et al., 2011)

**Cold Water Immersion** (The Art of Living, 2022)

**Prayer** (Muñoz & Chaplain, 2015)

**Inversions** (any time we bring our heart above our head) (McWilliam, 1889)

**Sleeping or Lying on Your Right Side** (Yuen, 2017).





**REFERENCES**

Bailey, R., Dana, D., Bailey, E., & Davis, F. (2020). The application of the polyvagal theory to high conflict co-parenting cases. *Family Court Review*, 58(2), 525-543.

El Tahry, R., Mollet, L., Raedt, R., Delbeke, J., De Herdt, V., Wyckhuys, T., ... & Boon, P. (2011). Repeated assessment of larynx compound muscle action potentials using a self-sizing cuff electrode around the vagus nerve in experimental rats. *Journal of neuroscience methods*, 198(2), 287-293.

Geller, S. M. (2018). Therapeutic presence and polyvagal theory: Principles and practices for cultivating effective therapeutic relationships. *Clinical applications of the polyvagal theory: The emergence of polyvagal-informed therapies*, 106-126.

McWilliam, J. A. (1889). Electrical stimulation of the heart in man. *British medical journal*, 1(1468), 348.

Muñoz, F. V., & Chaplain, P. C. (2015). Prayer and patient well-being.

O'Malley, A. G. (2018). *The art of Bart: Bilateral affective reprocessing of Thoughts as a dynamic model for psychotherapy*. Routledge.

Porges, S. W. (1997). Emotion: An evolutionary by-product of the neural regulation of the autonomic nervous system. *The integrative neurobiology of affiliation*, 807, 62-67.

PsychAlive. (2018, April 23). *Dr. Stephen Porges: What is the Polyvagal Theory*. YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ec3AUMDjtKQ>

Slavich, G. M. (2020). Social safety theory: a biologically based evolutionary perspective on life stress, health, and behavior. *Annual review of clinical psychology*, 16, 265.

Space Between Counseling Services (SBCS). (2022, July 25). *What is Neuroception? Detecting Threats, Risks, and Safety*. Space Between Counseling Services. <https://www.spacebetweencounselingservices.com/new-blog/neuroceptio>

The Art of Living. (2022, March 24). *7 Ways to Stimulate the Vagus Nerve | Health tips*. Art of Living (India). <https://www.artofliving.org/in-en/lifestyle/happiness/7-natural-ways-to-strengthen-and-stimulate-your-vagus-nerve-today>

Yuen, A. W., & Sander, J. W. (2017). Can natural ways to stimulate the vagus nerve improve seizure control?. *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 67, 105-110.

Marcia, N. (2021, January). Using Yoga in Your Work. Yoga outreach society.

**MODULE 5:**

# Neurodecolonization & Trauma-Informed Yoga Practice

*In this 3-hour workshop, we explore the concept of Neurodecolonization, which is the work of Dr. Michael Yellowbird. We will learn how to heal from the impacts of trauma through Indigenous land-based healing practices. Engaging in Ceremonial, land, and culture-based practices serves as solid foundations for the health and wellness of Indigenous Peoples and are the ways we can move toward the collective healing of our People. We will also engage in a 45 minute trauma informed yoga practice.*



## **WHAT IS NEURODECOLONIZATION**

Neurodecolonization is the work of Dr. Michael Yellow Bird, Dean of Social Work at the University of Manitoba. His life's work has been to study what

happens in our brains and bodies when we are engaged in Indigenous contemplative practices, which we are involved in when we participate in all aspects of our culture. Engaging in these ceremonial & cultural practices helps us to maintain balance and wellness. These elements strengthened us as a people and supported a positive connection to our Indigenous identity. These parts of us were targeted during colonization as an attempt to break our spirits so colonization could be successful. Many of our People have lost access to these teachings, but everything is still there. Our culture and languages are part of our genetic makeup. They live in our being. These teachings inside us are asleep and ready to awaken when we reclaim them.

**Neuro:** specialized cells in the nervous system, brain and spinal cord that send and receive electrical impulses throughout the body (Yellowbird, 2014).

**Decolonization:** activities that weaken the effects of colonialism, facilitate resistance and create opportunities to promote traditional practices in present-day settings (Yellowbird, 2014).

**Neurodecolonization:** combining mindfulness with sacred, Indigenous contemplative practices to replace negative patterns of thought, emotion, and behaviour with healthy, productive ones (Yellowbird, 2014).

Neurodecolonization seeks to understand how the stresses of colonization and genocide shape the mind and brain function. Some stressors include racism, hate crimes, loss of territories, culture and pride; high mortality levels, poverty, poor mental and physical health; and disregard for Indigenous Peoples' sovereignty and rights. Many Indigenous contemplative practices (drumming, singing, dancing, prayer, ceremony, Etc.) incorporate the same principles and processes as mindfulness approaches and are essential components of physical, emotional, behavioural, and spiritual well-being (Yellowbird, 2014).

Neurodecolonization also aims to build new empowered neural (brain) networks by deactivating old, ineffective brain networks that support destructive thoughts, emotions, memories and behaviours, particularly past and contemporary oppressions associated with colonialism. For example, past colonialism that might have created negativity, grief and rage – and activated our brain's networks of feelings of victimization – might be our memories of our ancestors' horrific abuses in residential schools or dealing with modern-day hate, racism and discrimination (Yellowbird, 2014).

## NEUROPLASTICITY

Neuroplasticity is the brain's ability to change. Creative, healthy, decolonized thinking, actions, and feelings positively shape and empower essential neural circuits in the brain, providing the resources, strengths, and abilities needed to overcome colonialism (Yellowbird, 2014). Our brains can rewire, re-learn, and strengthen meaningful neural connections (Yellowbird, 2014). For decolonization to be successful, it must begin in the mind.

Unconstructive or negative thinking, feelings, and behaviours dampen and short-circuit the brain's creativity and optimism networks. They can also increase our susceptibility to stress, failure, complacency, and fear (Yellowbird, 2014). Neurodecolonization aims to delete the neural networks of colonialism and replace them with new ones associated with positive attributes and behaviours (Yellowbird, 2014).

## THE BRAIN ON CEREMONY

Brain scans show that when People are sitting in prayer or ceremony, the brain's right hemisphere becomes activated, which supports a sense of well-being, positive mood, and the release of serotonin and dopamine (feel-good chemicals). The more a person engages in prayer, ceremony, or mindfulness, the stronger the brain's right hemisphere becomes (Yellowbird, 2014).

Interoception is the perception of sensations from inside the body, which is one of the things that gets impacted by trauma. The more we can practice interoception, the better. Sitting in meditation, mindfulness, and prayer changes the brain structures associated with memory, sense of self, and empathy. These practices can also decrease stress, support empathy towards other humans and the natural world, and increase interoception (Yellowbird, 2014).

## SINGING TO THE LAND

Singing is a form of mindfulness. Singing to the land activates the parietal lobe, the part of our brain responsible for spatial reasoning. The part of our brain that tells us that we are separate from things in our external environment. When we sing to the land, the parietal lobe quiets down, and we see ourselves not as distinct from the land but as an extension of it. The more we sing to the land, the stronger that connection becomes. We can empathize, connect and communicate with the land (Yellowbird, 2014). This helps to contextualize why Indigenous People were such great stewards of the land. We did not see it as something to profit from but as an extension of ourselves. We know the land as our relations.

## JOURNAL REFLECTION EXERCISES

If we want to decolonize our minds, first, we have to look at how our minds have been affected by colonization. Then we can replace that programming of self-hatred in which we have been indoctrinated.

**What old, ineffective brain networks that support destructive thoughts, emotions, memories and behaviours, particularly oppressions associated with colonialism, do we want to deactivate in our brains?**

For example, an old ineffective brain network that supports destructive thoughts, emotions and memories rooted in oppression that I would like to deactivate is my fear of being hurt or abandoned in



relationships. I have a neuroception of danger and am afraid of people. My nervous system responds to this fear by attempting to protect myself - running away or pushing people away.

My fear of abandonment is rooted in the emotional abandonment of my childhood. Being emotionally and, at times, physically abandoned. This is not something I blame my parents for. This is rooted in the oppression my family experienced from the residential school system and our families being torn apart and abused. My family did the best they could with the tools they had.

**THOUGHTS:** everyone will abandon me or not show up, so I have to protect myself and run away before that happens.

**EMOTIONS:** shame, rage, sadness.

**MEMORIES:** all the memories of People not showing up in relationships start to flood in, reinforcing the belief that I will permanently be abandoned and continue to be hurt.

### **JOURNAL REFLECTION EXERCISE: REPLACING OLD NETWORKS WITH POSITIVE BRAIN NETWORKS**

Once we have started to reject these old destructive brain networks that create negative thoughts, feelings and behaviours in our life, we can begin to look at what we want to replace those with:

What personal resources, strengths, and abilities do we want to reactivate in our brains?

Example: "I want to reactivate my ability to speak my ancestral language."

OR

"I want to learn to trust and lean into my feelings underneath the trigger instead of cutting and running."

**THOUGHTS:** I am capable of learning my ancestral language. It is part of my genetic makeup, waiting to be awakened.

OR

I can heal my attachment wounds to have a healthy relationship and family.

**EMOTIONS:** awakening, joy, excitement

OR

happy, fulfilled, grateful

**MEMORIES:** The time when my desire to learn our ancestral language was awakened in my being. The moment that fire within was lit, it outweighed the shame I carried for not knowing my language.

The times that I have been in a healthy relationship and family and how nourishing, fulfilling and happy it made me. Being in a healthy family is the ultimate act of resistance to the impacts of colonialism, and I will continue to work for that.

### **LAND-BASED HEALING**

*"When we take the time to connect with Mother Earth, we realize that we were never separate. We ground ourselves in the inherent ancestral wisdom that we are coming home, and we are being received in return. We then realize that an act as simple as taking your shoes off and walking barefoot on Earth is medicine and that we are, in fact, part of that medicine. There is no separation, only interconnection. We become the medicine."*

- Vina Brown (łáqvas g'waqs ) Haítzaqv & Nuu-Chah-Nulth Yoga Teacher

Indigenous Peoples across Turtle Island have relied on land-based practices for wellness, balance, and healing since time immemorial. Everything in our lives came from the land: our cultures, languages, food, clothing, ceremony, transportation and telling the stories of our mythological beginnings. Trauma is not cognitive. It lives in the body and the nervous system. Land-based cultural practices can release traumatic memories stored in our bodies in the same way that yoga-based practices do. Healing through the land and our culture will affect the next seven generations and support healing for generations

that did not have the privilege to heal. When we walk the Red Road, we become conduits for our ancestors to heal trauma and pain they never had the opportunity to heal.

These Indigenous land-based practices can either stimulate the vagus nerve or connect the regions of the Default Mode Network of the brain, which is helpful for trauma recovery. These practices also connect us with the spirit world. Some practices that have kept Indigenous Peoples balanced in body, mind and spirit since time immemorial include:

- Cold Water Cleansing (activates vagus nerve)
- Drumming & Singing (activates bilateral brain stimulation - singing activates vagus nerve)
- Fasting Ceremonies (prayer activates vagus nerve)
- Sweat Lodge Ceremonies (prayer activates vagus nerve)
- Smudging (prayer activates vagus nerve)
- Prayer (prayer activates vagus nerve)
- Cedar Brushing (prayer activates vagus nerve, release traumatic memory to the cedar)
- Pipe Ceremonies (prayer activates vagus nerve)
- Dancing (activates bilateral brain stimulation)

## **FOREST BATHING**

We, as Indigenous People, spent a lot of our time in the forests here on the Northwest Coast. Everything of importance to our People came from forests and the ocean. Our People would sit and listen to the land where our language and culture originate. Moving forward with the healing and wellness of our People, we encourage spending time on the land in the same ways our Ancestors did, sitting and listening. Our People also spent a lot of time on the land and in the forest, foraging and harvesting. Our intention for sharing teachings on forest bathing is to inspire Indigenous youth to spend more time in the forest as part of our wellness

and maintaining balance in body, mind and spirit.

Forest Bathing is simply being in nature, connecting through our sense of sight, hearing, taste, smell and touch. It is a new medical science highlighting how visiting forests can help us to be more active, relaxed, healthier, and happier. Forest Medicine is an evidence-based preventive medicine. Regular forest bathing diminishes the risk of psychosocial stress-related disorders (Morita et al., 2007). According to Li et al. (2008), forest bathing



trips reduced adrenaline concentrations in both males and females. Being in the forest activates the Parasympathetic nervous system; our bodies' built in a calming response (Li, 2010)

In the forest, we breathe in a substance released from trees called phytoncides, essential wood oils. These substances contain antimicrobial organic compounds. Combining forest bathing trips with a good lifestyle was suggested in 1982 by the Forest Agency of Japan for the first time and is now identified as a relaxation or stress-reducing treatment. Spending time in the forest can notably reduce anxiety, depression, and aggression (Li, 2010).

## THE EFFECT OF FOREST BATHING ON PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH

According to Li (2019), forest bathing can increase both physical and mental health by reducing stress in the following ways:

1. Preventive effect on cancers.
2. Decreases stress hormones, such as adrenaline, noradrenaline, and cortisol, resulting in positive stress management.
3. Reduces blood pressure and heart rate, which can prevent hypertension.
4. Promotes activation of the PNS and reduces SNS resulting in the sense of relaxation
5. Decrease the symptoms of anxiety, depression, aggression, fatigue, and confusion while increasing vigour, resulting in a preventive effect on depression.
6. Increase our quality of sleep
7. People living in areas with higher forest coverage notably have lower mortality rates of cancers than those with lower forest coverage.
8. Phytoncides released from trees significantly increased human intracellular levels of anti-cancer proteins such as perforin, granzymes, and granulysin.

---

### REFERENCES

- Yellowbird, M. (2014, February 18). *Decolonizing the Mind*. [Video]. Vimeo. <https://vimeo.com/86995336>
- Yellowbird, M. (2014). Indigenous knowledge in social work. [video file]. *University of Manitoba*. Retrieved from. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=At72EOwtf5M>
- Li, Q. (2010). Effect of forest bathing trips on human immune function. *Environmental health and preventive medicine*, 15(1), 9-17.
- Morita, E., Fukuda, S., Nagano, J., Hamajima, N., Yamamoto, H., Iwai, Y., ... & Shirakawa, T. J. P. H. (2007). Psychological effects of forest environments on healthy adults: Shinrin-yoku (forest-air bathing, walking) as a possible method of stress reduction. *Public health*, 121(1), 54-63.
- Li, Q., Morimoto, K., Kobayashi, M., Inagaki, H., Katsumata, M., Hirata, Y., ... & Miyazaki, Y. (2008). A forest bathing trip increases human natural killer activity and expression of anti-cancer proteins in female subjects. *J Biol Regul Homeost Agents*, 22(1), 45-55.
- Li, Q. (2019). Forest medicine: the secret power of shinrin-yoku. The Art and science of Japanese forest bathing. *Вестник Международной академии наук. Русская секция*, (1), 82-84.

## MODULE 6:

# Identifying Our Activators & Trauma-Informed Yoga Practice

*In this 3-hour workshop, youth will be supported to identify their activators, the situations and/or People that send us into our howling at the moon moments. This is the first step in developing safety plans to stay alive while the spirit of suicide visits us. We also offer a trauma-informed yoga class to help integrate and regulate our nervous system. Kwakwala is offered during the yoga session to support the somatic experience of being embodied while hearing our language.*

### **IDENTIFYING OUR ACTIVATORS**

We do not harm ourselves or take our lives when our nervous system is regulated (top of the triangle - ventral vagal). Dr. Vikki Reynolds, a woman leading the way in suicide prevention from a social justice lens, calls these moments of dysregulation our “howling at the moon” moments (Vikki Reynolds Ph.D., 2021).

The first step in supporting youth to develop a suicide prevention safety plan is to determine what specific People, situations and feelings send us into our “howling at the moon” moments, making us feel like ending our life. Identifying our hardest-to-feel emotions and most activating or challenging situations will be integral in staying alive, which is an act of resistance to the impacts of colonialism.



## REFLECTION EXERCISE: GROUPS OF 3 SHARING

Invitation to share with your small group about the situations that are most activating for you (option to journal instead)

For me, the brokenness of my family as a result of colonialism, experiencing lateral violence, not being included, bullying, feelings of rejection, abandonment or shame and physical health

struggles are what send me into my howling-at-the-moon moments.

*What thoughts, feelings, People, situations or burdens cause you to feel the spirit of suicide in your life?*

After youth have shared in small groups and journaled about their activators, we collectively write all of our activators on paper so we can see the common threads in our struggles.

---

### REFERENCES

Suicide "n" Stuff. (2021, February 10). *Suicide "n" Stuff: Episode 38 with Vikki Reynolds!* YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5qD3DbxGgI>

## MODULE 7:

# Developing Our Solidarity Team & Weaving Our Wellness Basket

*In this 3-hour workshop, we continue our suicide prevention safety plans by developing our solidarity circle. Our solidarity circle is composed of the People we can go to during our howling at the moon moments. We also begin weaving our wellness basket to support balance in body, mind and spirit through working with cedar medicine.*

### **DEVELOPING OUR SOLIDARITY TEAM**

What are the signs to look for to know when you need to ask for help from our solidarity team? What tools are there to get you through times of crisis, and whom can you call on? Howl at the moon moments is when we are dysregulated and in our most profound spiritual and emotional pain and suffering. These are times when we feel like dying

when we plan to die and start withdrawing from people (Reynolds, 2021).

These are the times we need mutual aid, & solidarity teams (Reynolds, 2021). We support youth to develop their solidarity team and make agreements with these folks ahead of time for our howl-at-the-moon moments to support and help us stay alive through these moments of dysregulation.

What are the signs to look for to know when you need to ask for help from our solidarity team? What tools are there to get you through times of crisis, and whom can you call on? Howl at the moon moments is when we are dysregulated and in our most profound spiritual and emotional pain and suffering. These are times when we feel like dying when we plan to die and start withdrawing from people (Reynolds, 2021).

### **SIGNS WE NEED TO REACH OUT TO OUR SOLIDARITY TEAM**

- Feelings Of Hopelessness
- Severe Sadness Or Moodiness
- Dangerous Or Self-Harming Behaviour (Substance Use)
- Looking For Ways To Take Your Life / Feeling Suicidal
- Major Life Crisis
- Withdrawal From People
- Changes In Appearance Or Personality
- Planning Your Suicide

### **ATTRIBUTES FOR SOLIDARITY TEAM MEMBERS**

- Non-Judgemental
- Understands Suicide
- Meet Us With Unconditional Positive Regard
- Hold Empathetic Space For Us
- Bear Witness To Our Suffering With Love & Compassion
- Help Us Not To Feel So Alone
- Support us to feel grounded again through co-regulation

### **STATEMENTS TO STAY AWAY FROM**

We want to encourage youth to avoid reaching out to folks who respond to us when we are in our

most profound spiritual suffering by responding in the following ways. These responses tend to make things worse and compound our struggle:

#### **“It is not that bad.”**

This invalidates a person’s feelings and minimizes what they are going through

#### **“I know how you feel.”**

This is making the conversation about you. There is no way for us to know how someone feels when feeling suicidal.

#### **“You have so much to live for.”**

When we are dysregulated, we are not in a place to be counting our blessings. That part of the brain is offline and inaccessible in these moments.

#### **“Other People have it much worse. You are being selfish.”**

Comparing a person’s suffering to others is not helpful. Again that part of the brain is not accessible to us in these moments. We need to feel seen, heard and unconditionally supported.

### **JOURNAL PROMPT**

Once we develop our solidarity team, we are responsible for making agreements with these folks ahead of time for our howling-at-the-moon moments. We ask them if they are willing to be there for us when the spirit of suicide visits us. We ask for support to help us stay alive through these moments of dysregulation.

***Invite youth to get into groups of 3 (try to have one facilitator present in each small group) and share about the People in their solidarity team. Then invite youth to write down in their journals which they will reach out to when the spirit of suicide visits them.***



## **WEAVING FOR OUR WELLNESS**

The invitation is for youth to weave a “Wellness Basket” for themselves. A basket that, when they look at it, they are reminded of their innate wisdom, beauty and Ancestral Strength, a basket that holds their hopes, dreams and goals for the future. Cedar can awaken our spirit and connect us to our Identity and Ancestors. The practice of weaving is also an essential part of wellness, as it brings us into something called a flow state. Csikszentmihalyi and Getzels (1970) introduced the concept of a flow state as a healing state. Folks living with the impacts of trauma can return to everyday life if they

regularly engage in activities that bring them into a state of flow (Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1970). The flow state occurs when we are fully absorbed in activities, losing track of time and forgetting about our thoughts and egos. Flow state is very similar to meditation. In both flow state and meditation, activity in the prefrontal cortex decreases and activity in the limbic system increases. The result of reduced activity in the prefrontal cortex and increased activity in the limbic system is an emotional experience of creativity and a healthier brain (Neubert, 2020).

The practitioner's appropriate balance of task difficulty and skill level, in this case, the weaver, is the main point to achieving the flow state (Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi & Getzels, 1970). For example, as Csikszentmihalyi and Getzels (1970) illustrated, in challenging activities, the practitioner may experience frustration; however, specific and super easy activities may make participants bored. Both states cause loss of flow.

According to evidence reported by Neubert (2020), weaving appears to have this suitable balance. Therefore, it can be considered an appropriate task for the experience of flow state, but it should be applied regularly. When the practitioner increases the time of weaving each day, they can meaningfully experience positive changes in their thought patterns resulting in more calm and joyfulness.

It is crucial to consider no objective goals and accomplishments for weaving. It is recommended that the weaver take a deep breath, then start weaving to experience peace and integration with

the body. Reviewing these thoughts can help our brains shape new neural pathways relating to ways of being. Supplementary to this, it is suggested to work in silence or listen to meditative music for at least half an hour during weaving (Neubert, 2020).

## PROCESSING CEDAR

As youth work with this medicine, remind them that this is a mindfulness practice. What we are thinking and feeling becomes imbued into medicine. Invitation to think about what wellness means and put all that love and good energy into their basket. This basket will hold all the positive thoughts, prayers and intentions for what they want for their life and wellness as they move through the world.

When youth look at their basket, it will remind them of who they are and where they come from and inspire them to keep doing all the things they need to thrive and be balanced in body, mind and spirit.

---

### REFERENCES

- Csikszentmihalyi, M., & Getzels, J. W. (1970). Concern for discovery: An attitudinal component of creative production. *Journal of Personality*.
- Neubert, S. (2020, April 9). *Woven Flow: Weaving as Meditation*. Handwoven. <https://handwovenmagazine.com/woven-flow-weaving-as-meditation/>
- Suicide "n" Stuff. (2021, February 10). *Suicide "n" Stuff: Episode 38 with Vikki Reynolds!* YouTube. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=T5qD3DbxGgI>

**MODULE 8:**

# New Strategies In Place Of Self Harm & Weaving Our Wellness Basket

*In this 3-hour workshop, we will continue our suicide prevention safety plans by exploring other ways of regulating our nervous system other than self-harm. We will look at how we can use the land, our culture, our breath and our bodies as tools for calming and grounding us during our howling at the moon moments. We will also be learning about the healing properties of cedar and beginning the process of weaving our wellness basket.*

## **DEVELOPING NEW STRATEGIES IN PLACE OF SELF HARM**

Self-harm is an attempt at self regulation. Through self-harm, we attempt to achieve regulation (relief or bringing our nervous system back down to baseline arousal levels). It releases our overwhelmed nervous system (Corrigan et al., 2011). But then we are often left with shame and isolation after self-harm, which is a dysregulating experience. We will explore new tools that will regulate our nervous system, help us to heal from

trauma, and not cause any harm to ourselves. We can utilize our breath, bodies, land, and culture and support nervous system regulation instead of harming ourselves. We will be offering land-based, culturally-rooted tools to utilize in place of self-harm.

It is a journey. Often a few steps forward and a few steps backward. It is essential to be gentle and empathic with ourselves if we fall. What is important is to keep getting back up and trying again.

### **PRACTICES FOR SELF REGULATION OTHER THAN SUBSTANCES & SELF HARM**

- Cold Water Immersion (spirit bath, cold water cleanse)
- Reaching out to someone in your solidarity circle to share what is upsetting you and receive connection and support
- Holding ice cubes in your hands
- Screaming into a pillow / Howling at the moon(or somewhere that will not scare anyone)
- Yoga
- Drumming or Singing
- Dancing

- Smudging / Prayer / Cedar Brushing / Eagle feather Brushing
- Running / Vigorous Exercise
- Meditation / Deep Belly Breathing
- Learning language

### **JOURNAL PROMPT OR GROUP BRAINSTORM**

Brainstorm other things we can do with the group on chart paper in place of self-harm, or an alternative option is for youth to write down the things they will do instead of self-harm in their journal.

---

#### **REFERENCES**

Corrigan, F. M., Fisher, J. J., & Nutt, D. J. (2011). Autonomic dysregulation and the window of tolerance model of the effects of complex emotional trauma. *Journal of psychopharmacology*, 25(1), 17-25.

**MODULE 9:**

# Drumming, Singing & Dancing As Medicine & Weaving Our Wellness Basket

*In week nine, we explore how we can utilize our culture, specifically drumming, singing and dancing, as tools for self-regulation, healing and support on our path of neuro-decolonization. Together, we learn communal songs and dances, celebrating who we are as Indigenous People through our culture. We then spend the last part of the session weaving our wellness baskets.*

## **TEACHINGS ON BAKWAM DANCING**

We Dance for our Hi'helus (ancestors). For the generations that were not able to. To lead the way for future generations to follow. We dance to maintain balance in body, mind and spirit. Dancing is a powerful form of wellness for our People. We turn to the right to ensure we always follow our heart. We move our feet to the drum beat, a grounding form of mindfulness and a beautiful way to develop a healthy relationship with our bodies.

Practicing the ladies' dance is a time when

my body comes alive. It is a time to connect with the spirit world, the space in which our ancestors live and watch us with joy in their hearts that we are keeping our culture alive. Dancing is a way to reclaim empowered states of embodiment. It can be used as an act of resistance to what has been done to our People. Healthy connections to body, spirit and mind are acts of resistance. Feeling safe within our bodies is resistance. Experiencing joy is resistance. We give thanks to our ancestors for the beautiful way of life they left for us to breathe life back into.







## NEUROSCIENCE OF DANCING

Indigenous Dancing is incredibly beneficial for trauma recovery as we have to simultaneously use both the right and left sides of our brain, activating bilateral stimulation (Basso et al., 2021). Dancing has been proven effective in treating depression (Karkou et al., 2019). For youth navigating the spirit of suicide, depression is almost always present, so treating depression is a helpful suicide prevention strategy. Dancing integrates our emotional, spiritual and cognitive (thinking) selves. Neuroscience literature highlights how dancing engages a dynamic network of brain regions responsible for cognitive, social, emotional, rhythmic, and creative functioning, which positively affect emotion regulation (Basso et al., 2021). Emotion regulation is significant for trauma recovery as it gives us a sense of agency to help ourselves during times of stress.

Weare (2020) declared that dancing in a group setting can help to:

- socially engage with People and integrate into the community (activate social engagement system)
- nonverbal expression of our emotional and creative selves
- build self-esteem and awareness of our body
- release tension, build muscle coordination and expand our ability to move
- find enjoyment through relaxation

## TEACHINGS ON DRUMMING & SINGING

The drum is a representation of the heartbeat of our People. Our drums are highly sacred and spiritual instruments that must be treated with Respect. Drums carry the spirit of the animal and plants they were made from. The federal government of Canada enforced laws that made it illegal for our ancestors to sing our songs, and we were imprisoned if we were caught speaking

our language or singing our songs. Those laws are no longer in place, but we are still living with the impacts of those policies being in place for over 100 years.

Today, we hasalala daxalax (sing loud) the songs that our ancestors left for us because our children in residential schools were forbidden from singing our songs or speaking their ancestral languages. Our ancestors are in the spirit world and are happy, seeing us keeping our culture, songs and our languages alive. We are carrying on the excellent work that was left for us. The work that our ancestors died for us to carry on.

We encourage our young People to try to sing even if they feel insecure about their singing voice. Singing has many health and wellness benefits other than sounding good. Singing is integral to maintaining wellness and balance. We sing to keep our languages alive, to bring joy to our ancestors, and to keep ourselves healthy and strong in body, mind and spirit.

Traditionally in Kwakwaka'wakw culture, we would use a log drum carved from a cedar tree. The log drum is a great metaphor that can model the community we need surrounding us and the responsibilities we share as points of connection with each other. Hide drums were introduced through trade with other Nations. Indigenous Peoples across turtle island built relationships with other Nations for trade.

## NEUROSCIENCE OF DRUMMING & SINGING

Drumming and singing can be utilized as a tool for self-regulation, as it moves us into the part of our nervous system where healing and feelings of safety and connection occur, which is in the ventral vagal (Schwartz, 2019). Singing vibrates the larynx, which activates our vagus nerve (Berthoud & Neuhuber, 2000; Jotz et al., 2011). Activating this nerve is important because it turns on our parasympathetic nervous system, our body's

natural calming response, and acts as an antidote to being in dorsal vagal or sympathetic activation. Sympathetic activation (fight/flight) is a chronic nervous system trauma response due to the trauma associated with ongoing colonial genocide.

According to Van der Kolk (2002), drumming can put trauma survivors in rhythm with others, which can help them to overcome the frozen sense of separation. Drumming is a well-known instrument used to gather People, facilitate communication, and transport them to a spiritual field to calm anxiety. Drumming, as creative therapy, can result in therapeutic attunement through an embodied awareness of rhythmic flow and the mutual connection occurring during the intense process of deep listening, kinesthetic awareness, and deep attention to what is happening in the moment (Kossak, 2008).

Neuroscience has shown us that rhythmic music can positively affect the limbic system, including the amygdala, hippocampus, hypothalamus, and brain stem, which are involved in processing and treating trauma. Drumming can decrease hypersensitivity, impulsivity, and anxiety-related problems by influencing the brainstem. In other words, drumming can help to realign brain stem activity, resulting in less anxiety and improved emotional regulation. For example, in People who struggle with emotion regulation, which is most of us trauma survivors, the limbic system becomes over-sensitized to perceptions of threat. The limbic system is formed in utero, under the sensory stimulus of the mother's heartbeat and can be stabilized by exposure to rhythms at the same tempo, which is 80 to 100 bpm (Perry, 2006). This

explains why drumming or listening to drumming usually creates a sense of calm for folks.

One of the main struggles of People who have experienced trauma is difficulties in making personal relationships. Porges (2007) stated how trauma could negatively affect the nervous system by increasing threat perceptions and reducing social engagement. However, group drumming can provide a sense of connection and belonging and offer a safe platform for examining and practicing other skills needed to develop healthy and supportive relationships.

Group Drumming can lead to improved social and health outcomes in several possible ways:

- It has a calming influence on participants (Winkelman, 2003)
- Reducing stress levels (Friedman, 2000)
- Induce positive feelings in individuals, helping them feel they “fit in” without tolerating the stigma of more overt therapy (Ho et al., 2011).
- Provide participants with a sense of group identity and group cohesion (Longhofer & Floersch, 1993)
- Positive socialization (Kalani, 2005)
- Experiences of accomplishment (Longhofer & Floersch, 1993)
- Drumming-based interventions in school can significantly reduce internalizing problems, withdrawal/depression, attention problems, anxiety problems, attention deficit/hyperactivity problems, oppositional defiant problems, and post-traumatic stress problems (Ho et al., 2011)

**REFERENCES**

Basso, J. C., Satyal, M. K., & Rugh, R. (2021). Dance on the brain: enhancing intra-and inter-brain synchrony. *Frontiers in Human Neuroscience*, 14, 584312.

Berthoud, H. R., & Neuhuber, W. L. (2000). Functional and chemical anatomy of the afferent vagal system. *Autonomic Neuroscience*, 85(1-3), 1-17.

Friedman, R.L. (2000). *The Healing Power of the Drum*. White Cliffs Media, Reno, NV.

Ho, P., Tsao, J. C., Bloch, L., & Zeltzer, L. K. (2011). The impact of group drumming on social-emotional behavior in low-income children. *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine*, 2011.

Jotz, G. P., de Campos, D., Rodrigues, M. F., & Xavier, L. L. (2011). Histological asymmetry of the human recurrent laryngeal nerve. *Journal of Voice*, 25(1), 8-14.

Kalani. (2005). *The Amazing Jamnasium: A Playful Companion to Together in Rhythm*. Alfred Music Publishing.

Karkou, V., Aithal, S., Zubala, A., & Meekums, B. (2019). Effectiveness of dance movement therapy in the treatment of adults with depression: a systematic review with meta-analyses. *Frontiers in psychology*, 936.

Kossak, M. S. (2008). *Attunement: Embodied transcendent experience explored through sound and rhythmic improvisation*. Union Institute and University.

Longhofer, J. and Floersch, J. (1993). "African drumming and psychiatric rehabilitation". *Psychosocial Rehabilitation Journal*, Vol. 16 No. 4, pp. 3-8.

Perry, B. D. (2006). Applying principles of neurodevelopment to clinical work with maltreated and traumatized children: The neurosequential model of therapeutics.

Porges, S. W. (2007). The polyvagal perspective. *Biological psychology*, 74(2), 116-143.

Schwartz, A. (2019, November 13). *The Vagus Nerve in Trauma Recovery | Dr. Arielle Schwartz*. Arielle Schwartz, PhD. <https://drarielleschwartz.com/the-vagus-nerve-in-trauma-recovery-dr-arielle-schwartz/>

Van der Kolk, B. A. (2002). In terror's grip: Healing the ravages of trauma. *Cerebrum*, 4(1), 34-50.

Weare, S. (2020). Rhythm and Safety of Social Engagement: Polyvagal Theory Informed Dance/Movement Therapy.

Winkelman, M. (2003). Complementary therapy for addiction: "drumming out drugs". *American journal of public health*, 93(4), 647-651.

**MODULE 10 :**

# Cold Water Cleanse

*In week 10, we awaken our spirits on the Land by engaging in a k<sup>w</sup>esa (cold water cleanse ceremony). Cold water bathing can be done in a river, ocean, lake or even in your shower if you can not access a natural body of water. For this initiative, we encourage facilitators to find a body of water that is relatively private, a place where the youth can connect to one another and the Land in a way that feels safe.*

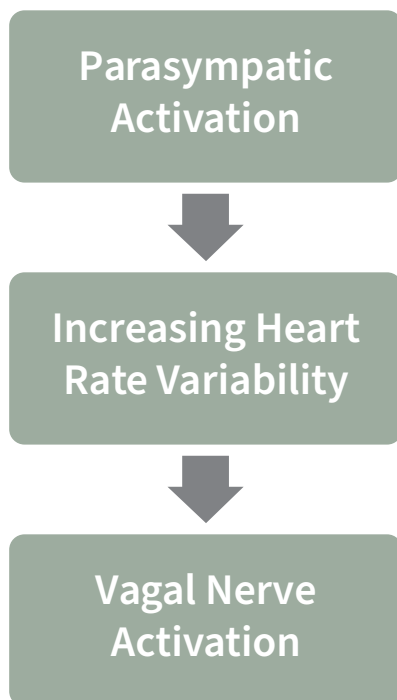
## **TEACHINGS ON COLD WATER CLEANSING**

Spirit Bathing or Cold Water Cleanse Ceremonies are how we, as Indigenous People, have maintained balance in body, mind and spirit since time immemorial. Every Nation has its own teachings and sacred ways of practicing these ceremonies. This is a time of prayer to connect with ourselves, our body, heart, mind, spirit and the Land. We can bring anything we are struggling with to the river, lake or ocean. Water is our first medicine. It has a spirit and is alive. She can hear us and feel us.

We utilize cold water for healing. We talk to the water and ask for help with what we need help with. When we are willing to let go, the spirit of the water will take care of us. If we ask to receive from the creator, we face our bodies towards the current to receive, and when we intend to let go, we face our backs to the current and allow the water to release all that is holding us back. We dunk four times in each direction, honouring the 4 sacred directions. Whenever we take from the Land, we practice reciprocity by giving back. You can offer a song to the Land or offer medicine as a way to practice reciprocity.

## NEUROSCIENCE OF COLD WATER SUBMERSION

Submerging ourselves into cold water activates the parasympathetic nervous system (Yuen & Sander, 2017) and increases heart rate variability, an indicator of vagus nerve stimulation (Mäkinen et al., 2008). In other words, decreased HRV is caused by the poor vagal parasympathetic tone, and it will lead to a wide range of psychological conditions, such as depression and anxiety (McLaughlin et al., 2015), which are associated with the risk of suicidal attempts (American Psychiatric Association, 2022). Therefore, to prevent suicide attempts, one of the best solutions is activating the vagal nerve through cold water cleansing. The following graph illustrates the effect of cold water on the central nervous system and the activation of the vagal nerve as a consequence.



Submerging ourselves in cold water also decreases cortisol (stress hormone), increases serotonin and dopamine (feel-good chemicals) and increases our stress tolerance (He et al., 2012).

## PROTOCOL FOR CLEANSING CEREMONY

Teachings shared by Shannon Alfred

### Water Cleansing Ceremony

1. Before going in the water, stand at the edge, take a few deep breaths to clear your mind and when ready, **Introduce yourself** to the spirit of the water, either by your traditional name or English name and then...
2. **State your intention** for the water cleansing ceremony (it is to release negativity, ask for cleansing of your spirit, ask for blessings, etc.). When you are ready, do a complete turn to the left before entering the water.
3. Stand in the direction when first entering the water to **give thanks** to the Creator for this day and for your well-being. Depending on how far you go in, either emerge into the water, cup water into your hands to wash your face, or raise your hands in prayer & Gratitude
4. Quarter turn to the left. In this direction, ask for the **release** of all things that no longer serves a purpose that you have been carrying in your body, to release all negativity, negative intrusions, stress, hurts, pains, tears, fear, anger and so forth. **Note:** do not turn until you feel you have released all that needs to be released, especially if you are releasing tears. And again, depending on how far you go in, either emerge into the water, cup water into your hands to wash your face, or raise your hands in prayer and Gratitude.
5. Quarter turn to the left again (**facing land**): This is where you **offer all your prayers to loved ones** living on land that requires prayers. And again, depending on how far you go in, either emerge into the water, cup water into your hands to wash your face, or raise your hands in prayer and Gratitude.

6. Quarter turn to the left again: This is where you ask the spirit of the water to **re-energize your spirit** so that you may continue to walk forward in this life with the gifts you carry. Ask in prayer for all positive things, such as strength, courage, confidence, and so forth. And again, depending on how far you go in, either emerge into the water, cup water into your hands to wash your face, or raise your hands in prayer and Gratitude.
7. Quarter turn to the direction you started when you first entered the water. Take a moment to tune in to how you are feeling and to **express your Gratitude and appreciation from your heart** for what has been gifted to you through the water ceremony. Turn to the left and exit the water.

Sometimes, depending on your spirit, you may feel you want to stay in the water a little longer. Go with that because something else may be given or shared with you from the spirit of the water or the ancestors. Or it could be that you appreciate the experience and want to embrace the feeling a bit longer.

---

## REFERENCES

- American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Text Revision Dsm-5-tr* (5th ed.). Amer Psychiatric Pub Inc.
- He, S. B., Tang, W. G., Tang, W. J., Kao, X. L., Zhang, C. G., & Wong, X. T. (2012). Exercise intervention may prevent depression. *International journal of sports medicine*, 33(07), 525-530.
- Mäkinen, T. M., Mäntysaari, M., Pääkkönen, T., Jokelainen, J., Palinkas, L. A., Hassi, J., ... & Rintamäki, H. (2008). Autonomic nervous function during whole-body cold exposure before and after cold acclimation. *Aviation, space, and environmental medicine*, 79(9), 875-882.
- McLaughlin, K. A., Rith-Najarian, L., Dirks, M. A., & Sheridan, M. A. (2015). Low vagal tone magnifies the association between psychosocial stress exposure and internalizing psychopathology in adolescents. *Journal of Clinical Child & Adolescent Psychology*, 44(2), 314-328.
- Yuen, A. W., & Sander, J. W. (2017). Can natural ways stimulate the vagus nerve to improve seizure control? *Epilepsy & Behavior*, 67, 105-110.



**MODULE 11:**

# Blanketing Ceremony & Trauma Informed Yoga Practice

*For the final session of the 11-week program, we honour the youth with a blanketing ceremony, wrapping them in protection and love for their wellness journey ahead. This final session celebrates the youth for their courage, dedication and commitment to completing the 11-week cohort. We also engage in our final Kwakwaka'wakw trauma-informed yoga practice.*

## **TEACHINGS ON THE BLANKET CEREMONY**

A blanketing ceremony is a way of honoring someone for their accomplishments or important life transitions. In Kwakwaka'wakw culture, blankets are wrapped around our babies during a Hilugwila ceremony, adoption, and the coming of age ceremony. Wrapping someone in a blanket shows our respect for those who have made an important contribution to our community.

Each of the youth completing this cohort has significantly contributed to the wellness of young People in our community. They are courageously

leading the way. The bravery, courage, authenticity, and vulnerability we witnessed in each of the youth is a blessing and gives us hope for the future of our young People. The youth are making their ancestors proud.

Youth can be drummed in and invited to stand on a sacred item (Bear hide, cedar boughs, etc.) to connect to the power of their culture and connection to their Ancestors. Each youth is blanketed and gifted unique gifts to help them on their journey forward. All facilitators can share words about the gifts and strengths that are seen in them. Youth also have a chance to share words about how the ceremony felt for them.



## GUIDED MEDITATION FOR OUR LAST SESSION TOGETHER

Written by: Gail Peekeboot,  
adapted by Avis O'Brien

As our time in this circle comes to a close, we are going to take a few minutes to do a guided meditation to honour our time together.

I invite you to close your eyes and take four deep nourishing breaths. Connecting to our sacred breath of life that carries us on our path. Remembering our breath is a resource that can help to bring calmness and grounding.

Invitation to see yourself standing on a gentle grassy slope. Feel the sun and breeze on your face. Hear the sound of birds and quietly flowing water from a nearby river. Invitation to Keep breathing deeply. Smell the grass and earth and flowers.

Looking down, you see 11 stone steps. One for each week of our group.

1. Step down onto the first stone. Feel its warmth. Know it will hold you safely. Hast'ax'id (breathe in)... Hast'axo (breath out)...
2. Remember that you can soothe yourself anytime by tapping, breathing, being on the land or engaging in your culture. Hast'ax'id ... Hast'axo...
3. Become more aware of being in your body and noticing your feelings. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo.....
4. As you step onto this stone you become more aware of the strength of others in our group. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo.....
5. Notice how it feels to speak from your heart, your Inner Being, your true self, instead of your mind or story. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo.....
6. Remember how it feels to listen to others with your heart, your Inner Being. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo.....
7. Savor the feeling of having others listen to you with their hearts and tune in to what it was like to be in this group and feel seen, heard and supported through your struggle. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo.....
8. Remember you have the choice to reach out to your solidarity circle when the spirit of suicide is visiting you. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo.....
9. Experience deepening compassion for the others in the group. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo...
10. Be aware of a growing self-compassion. Hast'ax'id .... Hast'axo...
11. With your eyes still closed, look around and see everyone in the group standing together. We have all come to this place along our paths. Look up and see how far we have come together. As this group is coming to a close ... Hast'ax'id ... Hast'axo...

### RAIN

Recognize any feelings you are holding.

Allow those feelings in.

Investigate those feelings with gentle kindness.

Nurture: How will you care for yourself and your feelings which are beautiful messengers?



**PART 3:**

# Kwakwala Language Reclamation

By Kirsten Dobler

It is essential to understand how our language was stolen as we begin to reclaim it. There can be much shame in not knowing or speaking our languages. It is important to emphasize that this shame was put onto us, our parents, our grandparents, and all of our ancestors impacted by colonization. Sometimes our feelings towards language loss can be directed at our families. The language loss that we are faced with is a result of colonization. If your family has lost their language, it was a measure of protection - to protect themselves and their family members from many kinds of abuse. When we come from families with very little or no language knowledge, they have done what they could to protect us. Now we are entering a space where we can take up the responsibility of learning for future generations.

It is crucial to know that we all belong, and you have always belonged. In the history of colonization, language loss was a tool to rip us apart from our relatives. When our ancestors were stolen from their families and forced to learn English, the government and churches shamed

them for speaking our language. This made it so the young People could not speak with the older adults, which took away from our teachings. However, there is so much knowledge woven into our language that the church and the government did not succeed in many ways. As we become more fluent as second-language K<sup>w</sup>ak<sup>w</sup>ala speakers, we will be able to understand beyond the direct English translation and better understand how our ancestors understood the world. This will take time, but we must step into the responsibility of learning the language.

Also, learning the language is something that we are meant to do. As K<sup>w</sup>ak<sup>w</sup>akə<sup>w</sup>ak<sup>w</sup> People, it is something that is within us. Although our most recent relatives may not have spoken about it, it is still something we carry, and I promise that it will fill you with all good feelings. It is not always easy, and there is a lot to learn but even being able to greet our relatives in the language is an act of joy and resistance. You belong here - we belong here together.

## KWAKWALA TERMS & PHRASES

By Kirsten Dobler

### 10 WEEK COHORT

WEEK 1	Creating A Culture Of Belonging & Cedar Brushing	
LIKWALA	KWAWALA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
Gaxənoŋ laxa ʔəwiŋag <sup>w</sup> is sa K'omoxs	Gaxənoŋ laxa 'əwiŋagwis sa K'omoxs	We are on K'omoxs land
łayuǰ <sup>w</sup> əlis	tlayuǰwəlis	It's our turn to be on earth
ǰilakasła	ǰilakasla	thank you
weʔ	we'	okay

WEEK 2	Suicidality As A Symptom Of Attempted & Ongoing Colonial Genocide	
LIKWALA	KWAWALA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
maxća	maxtsa	Feeling ashamed
łixsala	tlixsala	teachings
ʔiʔənis	i'ənis	Aunties
q <sup>w</sup> iǰ <sup>w</sup> əli	k <sup>w</sup> ik <sup>w</sup> əli	Uncles
gayutłan lax _____	gayutłan lax _____	I come from _____

WEEK 3	Impacts Of Trauma & How Yoga Can Help Us To Heal From Trauma	
LIKWALA	KWAWALA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
hase	hase'	Breath of life
ʔixgəhək <sup>w</sup> əla	igə'nakwəla	Getting better / healing
wiłasle?	witlasle?	Where are you going?
hułila	hutlila	listen
mula	mula	grateful
Mulən noqē	mulən noqe	I am feeling grateful
mayaxəla	mayaxəla	Respect

<b>WEEK 4</b>	<b>Creating Safety In Relationships / Polyvagal Theory</b>	
<b>LIKWALA</b>	<b>KWAWALA</b>	<b>MEANING / TRANSLATION</b>
Nəmwayut	nəmwayut	we are all one
ᑎᑦᑭᑖᑖᑖᑖ	nᑦᑭᑖᑖᑖᑖ	Working Together as one
gəlgəlis	gəlgəlis	ancestors -

<b>WEEK 5</b>	<b>Impacts Of Trauma &amp; How Yoga Can Help Us To Heal From Trauma</b>	
<b>LIKWALA</b>	<b>KWAWALA</b>	<b>MEANING / TRANSLATION</b>
ᑎᑦᑭ	nᑦᑭ	one
ᑭᑖᑖ	ᑭᑖᑖ	two
yudəx <sup>w</sup>	yudəx <sup>w</sup>	three
ᑭᑖ	ᑭᑖ	four
hawaᑭᑖᑖ	hawaᑭᑖᑖ	prayer
ᑭᑖᑖᑖ	ᑭᑖᑖᑖ	cold water cleanse
ᑕᑖᑦᑭᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	ᑕᑖᑦᑭᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	the land
dəmsxi	dəmsxi	the ocean
Wixsus noᑕᑖ?	Wixsus noᑕᑖ?	How does your spirit feel?
Wixsus ᑕᑖᑦᑭᑖᑖᑖᑖ?	Wixsus 'ukᑖᑖᑖᑖ?	How does your body feel?
Wixsus ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖ?	Wixsus ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖ?	How does your brain feel?

<b>WEEK 6</b>	<b>Identifying Our Activators &amp; Trauma Informed Yoga Class</b>	
<b>LIKWALA</b>	<b>KWAWALA</b>	<b>MEANING / TRANSLATION</b>
ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	Fighting amongst each other (lateral violence)
ᑕᑖᑖᑖ	ᑕᑖᑖᑖ	stick
ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	rock
ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	breath in
ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	ᑕᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖᑖ	breathe out

WEEK 7	Developing Our Solidarity Team & Weaving Our Wellness Basket	
LIKWALA	KWAWALA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
hułila	hutiilalaxən	listen
hułilən	hutiilən	I am listening
hułilałən	hutiilatłən	I will listen
łax <sup>w</sup> əla	łaxwəla	love
yəpa	yəpa	Weaving
łagək <sup>w</sup>	łagək <sup>w</sup>	red cedar bark
dənas	danas	Inner bark of red cedar
wəlkw	wəlkw	Cedar Tree
ćapałxi	ts'ap'axi	Cedar Branch
ćapałmənix <sup>w</sup>	ts'ap'axmənix <sup>w</sup>	Needles of Cedar
kadzək <sup>w</sup>	Kadzakw	Cedar Bark Softened
kubałx <sup>w</sup>	Kubaxw	Cedar Blanket
łiwe	łi'we	Cedar Mat

WEEK 8	Solidarity Team & Weaving Our Wellness Basket	
LIKWALA	KWAWALA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
yəpa dida łi?ayasu	Yapa dida i'aya'su	Weaving Hands
sənka	Sanka	To strip cedar
səngas	Sangas	Place where you go to strip cedar
paća	Pałsa	Splitting cedar bark apart
lałxe	łtabad	cedar basket

WEEK 9	Drumming, Singing, Dancing As Medicine & Weaving Our Wellness Basket	
LIKWALA	KWAWALA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
Mənaći lu yəx <sup>w</sup> a	mənatsi dlu yəxwa	Drum & Dance
yəłən	yəłwən	I am dancing
yəł <sup>w</sup> ənoł	yəłwənoł	we are dancing
yəł <sup>w</sup> ənc	yəłwənc	we are all dancing
gigug <sup>w</sup> əyu	gugagwə'yu	Feet



LIK'WALA - IPA	KWAKWALA - UMISTA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
łəɫqʷała	tłəłkwala	Ladies Dance
q'wəq'wəlaəkənʔid	k'wak'wəlaəkən'ɪd	My body comes alive
dadənʃa	dadənʃ'a	try to sing
qəmdəm	qəmdəm	Song
dənʃəla	dənʃəla	Sing
məninuʃ	ma'ninux	Drummer
mənəci	manaʃsiya	Drum
k'wiʃəla	kwiʃəla	Drumming

WEEK 10	Cold Water Cleanse Ceremony & Trauma Informed Yoga Class	
LIK'WALA - IPA	KWAKWALA - UMISTA	MEANING / TRANSLATION
k'wesa	kwesa	Cold Water Cleansing
gilaga laʃa dəmsxi luwən	gilaga laʃa dəmsxi dlw'n	Come to the ocean with me
ʔəʃʔəʃstamas k'wəsa?	əʃ'əʃstamas kwesa?	Do you want to bathe?
wədalux da wəp	wədalux da 'wəp	The water is cold
kisuʃ dała yaksəmuʃ da noqē	kisuʃ dała yaksəmuʃ da noqe	Do not hold onto your bad feelings
g'ilakasla łaʃən gəlgəlis	g'ilakas ʃən tłaʃən wi'ump	I give thanks to my ancestors
hawaʃala	hawaxala	Prayer



## YOGA FORMS & KWAKWALA TRANSLATIONS

Developed by Ivy Richardson and Yola Willie

WEEK 5		Trauma Informed Yoga Class   45 Min Class
YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Standing Shoulder Movement	dłaxw'i ~ stand uxsá'yape' ~ shoulder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Standing with feet together in Mountain pose, stretch the arms upwards, inhaling.</li> <li>B. Exhaling brings arms to shoulder level.</li> <li>C. Inhale while there, and as you exhale, bring the arms down and back to Mountain.</li> <li>D. Repeat this for about 1 minute. Stretch and open the arms wide and feel the stretch to the tips of the fingers.</li> </ul>
Palm Tree Form	sal'idana ~ fern kwax ~ tree	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Bring arms above your head while standing in Palm tree form as you inhale.</li> <li>B. Interlocked hands while the palms face upwards.</li> <li>C. Stay for 30 seconds here and then release, exhaling, bringing the arms down.</li> <li>D. Repeat this 2 times.</li> </ul>
Palm Tree Form Side Bend	sal'idana ~ fern kwax ~ tree unu'dze' ~ side	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. From Palm Tree form, bring the stretched interlocked arms towards the side, in a side bend.</li> <li>B. Exhale as you stretch towards one side, coming back to the center and then going towards the other side.</li> <li>C. Feel the stretch at the lower back sides close to the hips and the diaphragm.</li> <li>D. Repeat on both sides 2 times each.</li> </ul>
Hands Bound Rising Locust Form	i'a'ya'su ~ hands iki'sta ~ to go up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Releasing from palm tree form, continue with the stretch. While interlocking the hands behind, exhale and stretch the arms pulling downwards while expanding the chest and throwing the neck down behind.</li> <li>B. Here in hands-bound rising locust form, stretch down entirely from the upper back, shoulders, arms and neck.</li> <li>C. Exhale and use breathing to go deeper in the stretch.</li> <li>D. Release and repeat 2 times.</li> </ul>

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Standing Hip Circles	<p>łatłagwanu'dze' ~ stand with hands on hips</p> <p>xłpa ~ turn in circles</p>	<p>A. Release from hands-bound rising locust form.</p> <p>B. Stand with feet apart and do the Pelvic Circles, rotating from right to left 4 times and then left to right 4 times.</p> <p>C. This stretch helps to release the stiff lower back while also working on opening the hamstrings.</p> <p>D. Exhale as you take the hips backwards and inhale, coming towards the front. Let the movement be slow and full.</p>
Standing Wind Release Form	<p>łaxw'i ~ stand</p> <p>yola ~ wind</p>	<p>A. Standing back in Mountain form, raise one leg and press the knee towards the chest.</p> <p>B. Exhale and press the thighs as much as possible towards the chest and the tummy to open the gluteus maximus and the hamstrings.</p> <p>C. Stay for 15 seconds on each leg.</p>
Standing Quad Stretch Form	<p>łaxw'i ~ stand</p> <p>gugwa'yū ~ leg, foot</p>	<p>A. Reverse the movement of the leg and, this time, take the feet behind you, pressing the soles and the toes in standing quad stretch form.</p> <p>B. Again, this yoga form opens the quads, the ankles, the feet and the toes.</p> <p>C. Stay for 15 seconds on each leg and repeat 2 times.</p> <p>D. Exhale and press deeper towards your hips.</p>
Standing Squat Form Hands Crossed In Front	<p>łaxw'i ~ stand</p> <p>kwamx'id ~ to bend down or over</p>	<p>A. Moving from the upper and lower body to the hips now.</p> <p>B. Here, in standing squat form, hands crossed in front, use the movement of the hips efficiently. Exhale and go down carefully.</p> <p>C. Feel the stretch at the knees, and do not put pressure beyond the required physical strength. Squat keeps the hips at the center and brings focus to the movement of the hip joints.</p> <p>D. Stay for 30 seconds.</p>
Standing Side Lunge Form Hands On Hips	<p>łatłagwanu'dze' ~ stand with hands in hips</p> <p>gugwa'yū ~ leg, foot</p> <p>kwamx'id ~ to bend down or over</p>	<p>A. From the squat form, release and exhale to stretch the right leg while placing it outwards to be in standing side lunge form.</p> <p>B. Going the dynamic way here from right to center and left to center works on the hips and the knees and slowly opens the energy points in the body.</p> <p>C. Go in a flow left-center-right-center-left-center-right-center.</p> <p>D. Do this for 30 seconds.</p>

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Half Forward Fold Hands On Back	gwānx'id ~ to bend over i'ā'ya'su ~ hands āwige' ~ back	A. Starting in Mountain form, hinge at the hips with hands on the lower back. B. Go as far as your body needs to feel a deep stretch in your hamstrings and gluteus maximus muscles. C. So while you connect here, remain in this posture for 30 seconds, release and go again. D. Exhale and go in the forward bend, inhaling to come up.
Easy Form Neck Rotation	hułamala ~ easy (to do) kuku'na ~ neck xālpā ~ turn in circles	A. Sitting comfortably in the easy form, do the neck rotations. B. Go slow and deep without letting go of the control of the movement. Flexing the neck releases tensions around the upper back and the cervical and helps to reduce dizziness and heaviness in the head. C. 2 rounds each way- clockwise and counterclockwise.
Easy Form Variation Side Bend	hułamala ~ easy (to do) unu'dze' ~ side	A. Extend the arms above while placing the other towards the side on the floor in easy form variation side bend. B. This stretch also helps to increase breathing at the diaphragm. C. Stretch exhaling and twist the neck and the upper chest for 15 seconds on each side and repeat 2 rounds.
Seated Torso Circles	kwax'i ~ to sit down ukwine' ~ body xālpā ~ turn in circles	A. Moving in circles in Seated Torso Circles, going clockwise and counterclockwise for 30 seconds in each direction. B. Exhaling going and pressing down and inhaling, taking the torso behind and sideways.
Cosmic Egg	iki ~ sky or above tsigwānu ~ eggs kapa ~ to hug upige' ~ knee	A. From a seated position, bring the knees towards the chest and wrap the arms around the knees. B. Hold this form for 30 seconds, keep the breathing smooth to help you hold your balance.
Seated Cat Cow	kwax'i ~ to sit down busi ~ cat musmus ~ cow	A. Inhale stretch inwards with the lower back and outwards to the chest. Exhale and curl outwards at the lower back and inwards at the chest. B. A simple yet effective practice to bring awareness and open the entire back. C. Do this for 1 minute, rest and repeat again for 1 more minute.

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Firelog Form Variation	<p>ləkwa ~ firewood                      upige' - knee                      tix'i ~ bounce or skip                      xaxagānukwsidze' ~ ankle                      xalpa ~ turn in circles</p>	<p>A. Release and sit with your legs stretched out in front of you.                      B. Bend one leg and place the foot over the other knee to sit in firelog form variation.                      C. While seated here, gently push the knees towards the floor while bouncing them. This will help to open the hips and the hamstrings.                      D. Also rotate the ankles with the folded leg moving it both clockwise and counterclockwise.                      E. Do this for 15 seconds with each foot and knee and repeat.</p>
Cradle Form Straight Leg	<p>xā'āpi ~ cradle                      gugwā'yu ~ leg/foot                      u'bo'yi ~ chest</p>	<p>A. While the leg is folded, lift it and press the thighs and the shins towards your chest while holding the leg in your arms, in cradle form straight leg form                      B. Pressing the thigh towards your chest while exhaling opens the hamstrings and the gluteus maximus.                      C. Hold for 30 seconds.</p>
Revolved Staff Form	<p>zixw'id ~ legs out (from bent position) to stretch                      galṭaxst ~ tall                      k'alpa ~ to twist</p>	<p>A. Extend the legs fully out and come into a tall seat. Place one hand on an opposite leg and twist in the direction of that leg. Your other arm will follow the twist extending out.                      B. Hold for 15 seconds on each side.</p>
Child Form	<p>gāngānāṃ ~ children                      ṭsasi'd ~ to stretch or something gets stretched</p>	<p>A. Coming on the shins and the knees, place the hips on the heels.                      B. Placing the hands on the heels, exhale to stretch, moving forward to go in child form.                      C. Go gentle and slow with the stretch and as you exhale.                      D. Stay for 30 seconds.</p>
Thread The Needle Form	<p>kān'yu ~ thread                      kānayu ~ sewing needle                      a'ya'su ~ hand                      axabud ~ put under something</p>	<p>A. From child form, move the body a little ahead on the floor.                      B. Bring the left arm from the floor towards the right side, twisting the chest and the shoulders.                      C. Stretch taking the left arm in threading the needle form, and keep the right palm on the floor while twisting the neck to look towards the right.                      D. Stay here for about 15 seconds, and release to repeat the other side. The stretch opens the shoulders and the chest to help maximize oxygen intake.</p>

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Striking Cobra Form	ma <sup>x</sup> an ~ i drum/i strike si <sup>l</sup> am ~ snake ga <sup>n</sup> ga <sup>n</sup> ana <sup>m</sup> ~ children	A. Releasing from the flow above, stretch the body in prone completely, placing the face down on the mat. B. Bending one leg at the knee, hold the ankles to go into one-legged bow form prep. Exhale and press the foot closer, flexing the hips and the leg. C. Stretches the quads, hamstrings and the gluteus. D. Remain for 15 seconds with each leg. Release to repeat with both legs again.
One Legged Bow Form Preparation	a <sup>k</sup> wis ~ bow ku <sup>s</sup> 'id ~ to bend knee xa <sup>x</sup> aga <sup>n</sup> uk <sup>w</sup> si <sup>d</sup> ze' ~ ankle	A. Releasing from the flow above, stretch the body in prone completely, placing the face down on the mat. B. Bending one leg at the knee, hold the ankles to go into one-legged bow form prep. Exhale and press the foot closer, flexing the hips and the leg. C. Stretches the quads, hamstrings and the gluteus. D. Remain for 15 seconds with each leg. Release to repeat with both legs again.
Half Wind Release Form	yola ~ wind 'ma <sup>x</sup> 'id ~ to let go of something you were holding	A. While supine, stretch the legs out and relax, taking deep rounds of breathing. B. Inhale and bend the left leg and press the left knee towards the chest in half wind release form. C. Exhale and press the thighs towards the chest and the abdomen to feel the deep stretch in the upper quads and the abdomen. D. Stay for 15 seconds with each leg.
Happy Baby Form	i <sup>k</sup> i <sup>k</sup> ala ~ feeling good/ happy ix <sup>k</sup> asa <sup>l</sup> a ~ happy wi'yug <sup>w</sup> ama <sup>l</sup> a ~ baby	A. From half wind release form, bring both legs to bend at the knee. B. Inhale and lift the legs, and as you exhale, press the thighs close to the chest while holding the toes in happy baby form. C. A great pose to feel the hamstring and open the hips. D. Exhale and press deeper towards you. Stay for 30 seconds, close your eyes, release, and repeat for 30 seconds.
Supine Windshield Wiper Twist Form	ti <sup>g</sup> adzo'li <sup>t</sup> ~ lying on your back on a flat surface inside a house ti <sup>k</sup> as ~ lying on your back on ground ka <sup>l</sup> pa ~ to twist gu <sup>g</sup> ag <sup>w</sup> a'y <sup>u</sup> ~ feet (legs)	A. Releasing from raised legs form, place the feet on the floor and relax. B. Exhale and place the knees on the floor towards your right side, slightly twisting the hips and the thighs in a supine windshield wiper twist form. C. Stay on each side for 15 seconds and repeat.

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Wind Release Form Exhale Inhale Form	yola ~ wind 'māx'id ~ to let go of something you were holding hasdax̄gla ~ breathing hasdax'id ~ start breathing	A. Ending it with the practice of wind release form in a flow. B. Inhale bring the thighs away from the body-exhale bring the thighs towards the chest-inhale bring the thighs away from the chest-exhale bring the thighs towards the chest. C. Repeat this 6 times for up to 2 minutes.

WEEK 6	Trauma Informed Yoga Class   45 Min Class
--------	---

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Revolved Bound Angle Form	k̄alpa ~ to twist sinuk̄wa ~ oblique (i.e. at an angle)	A. Seated with the soles of your feet together, take a few breaths and bring awareness of the body, keeping the spine straight. B. Inhale, raise the entire body upwards and turn towards the left, placing the right hand on the left knee and the left hand on the floor behind you. C. Exhale completely here and look behind you while you turn. D. With every exhalation, take the shoulders and neck backwards, feeling the tension at the neck and upper back. Remain here for about 6 breaths. Repeat on the opposite side.
Easy Form Neck Rotations	hułamala ~ easy (to do) k̄uku'na ~ neck x̄alpa ~ turn in circles	A. Sitting comfortably in the easy form, do the neck rotations. B. Go slow and deep without letting go of the control of the movement. Flexing the neck releases tensions around the upper back and the cervical and helps to reduce dizziness and heaviness in the head. C. 2 rounds each way- clockwise and counterclockwise.
Seated Shoulder Rolls	k̄wax'i ~ to sit down uxs̄a'yape' ~ shoulder x̄alpa ~ turn in circles	A. Raise the spine and rotate the shoulders clockwise, taking the stretch deep upwards and deep downwards. Watch the movement of the shoulder blades as you do this, and try and bring them together when the shoulders contract. B. Take the shoulder rotation for about two rounds in the clockwise direction for 4 breaths. Inhale as you go up and exhale as the shoulders contract. C. Release and bring the movement anti-clockwise for about two rounds for 4 breaths.

*continued on next page ►*



YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Seated Shoulder Rolls	k'wax'i ~ to sit down uxsā'yape' ~ shoulder xalpa ~ turn in circles	D. Make sure the head is straight, and so is the spine. E. Release the rotation and move the head sideways to the left and sideways to the right to remove further stiffness around the shoulders and neck.
Seated Cat Cow Form	k'wax'i ~ to sit down busi ~ cat cow ~ musmus	A. Inhale stretch inwards with the lower back and outwards to the chest. Exhale and curl outwards at the lower back and inwards at the chest. B. A simple yet effective practice to bring awareness and open the entire back. C. Do this for 1 minute, rest and repeat again for 1 more minute.
Easy Form Variation Side Bend	hułamala ~ easy (to do) unu'dze' ~ side paḡ'id ~ bend	A. Extend the arms above while placing the other towards the side on the floor in easy form variation side bend. B. This stretch also helps to increase breathing at the diaphragm. C. Stretch exhaling and twist the neck and the upper chest for 15 seconds on each side and repeat 2 rounds.
Easy Form Raised Arms	hułamala ~ easy (to do) iki'sta ~ to go up i'ḡ'ya'su ~ hands	A. Seated in the easy form, keep the back straight and chin and jaw at 90 degrees to the chest. B. Inhale and raise the arms above your head upwards, bring the interlocked fingers, and stretch the elbows and shoulder with exhalation. C. Feel the stretch at the neck and shoulders, and as you exhale, take the arms higher upwards and keep the hip and spine straight. D. Stay at this stretch for about 8 breaths.
Easy Form Side Bend	hułamala ~ easy (to do) unu'dze' ~ side paḡ'id ~ bend	A. With arms raised in easy form raised arms, take the interlocked palms and bend the hip towards the left as you exhale and stretch the upper body towards the left. B. Place the glutes firmly on the floor, only take the upper body sideways along with the arms, and feel the stretch. C. With every exhalation, take the stretch deeper and remain here for about 8 breaths. D. Release and come to the center, expand the spine, and relax the shoulders. E. Repeat on the other side.

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Twisted Form	<p>k<sub>l</sub>alpa ~ to twist                      ʔsas'id ~ to stretch</p>	<p>A. Stretch the legs out from easy form, bring the body to staff form and keep the back straight; breathe a few times.</p> <p>B. Now, as you inhale, bend the right leg at the knee, bring the right foot, and place it on the floor close to the outside of the left knee.</p> <p>C. Inhale again and place the left elbow around the outside of the right knee and try and hold the right foot bringing a twist to the hip towards the right and place the right palm on the floor behind you close to the buttocks. Exhale completely as you twist.</p> <p>D. If the left elbow is not flexible enough, place it around the right knee and grab it into your elbow, pressing the knee and the thigh close to your chest.</p> <p>E. With every exhalation, the stretch goes deeper with the shoulders and head turned back towards the right, twisting at the hip.</p> <p>F. Repeat on the other side.</p>
Head To Knee Form	<p>xum's ~ head                      u<sub>p</sub>ige' ~ knee                      ʔsas'id ~ to stretch</p>	<p>A. Bring the body into staff form and stretch both the legs out and spine straight and upwards.</p> <p>B. Folding the right leg at the knee, bring the right foot and place it inside your thigh. With arms raised above the shoulders, inhale and stretch the spine and bring the upper body downwards, bending at the hip and reaching with the arms for the left foot. Exhale completely, push the tummy in, bring the chest close to the thighs, and place the forehead on the knee.</p> <p>C. Take the body forward while remaining comfortable and feel the stretch at the shoulders, neck, arms and left leg.</p> <p>D. Try and remain here for about 6 breaths if possible.</p> <p>E. With every exhalation, take the spine forward and stretch the arms.</p> <p>F. Release the form and repeat on the other side.</p>
Thread The Needle Form	<p>k<sub>l</sub>an'yu ~ thread                      k<sub>l</sub>anayu ~ sewing needle                      a'ya'su - hand                      a<sub>x</sub>abud ~ put under something</p>	<p>A. Find your tabletop form to start.</p> <p>B. Inhale and raise the left palm from the floor and bring the arm, twisting the shoulders towards the right and placing it on the floor, palms facing upwards towards the right side, taking it from below the left arm. Exhale completely here and place the left cheek on the floor, feeling the twist at the neck and the shoulders.</p>

*continued on next page ►*

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
<p>Thread The Needle Form</p>	<p>kān'yū ~ thread kānayu ~ sewing needle a'ya'su - hand axabud ~ put under something</p>	<p>C. Feel the stretch at the neck and take the arms stretched out further towards the right making sure the left palm is firm on the floor. D. Here, the hips, too, would be twisted, ensuring the stretch is felt at the entire back, thus working towards a flexible back and strong neck. E. Remain here for about 6 breaths and ensure the left cheek is comfortable on the floor. F. Release the pose and bring the arms back by placing the left palm on the floor and looking up. Repeat on the other side.</p>
<p>Crocodile Form On Elbows</p>	<p>'walas ~ big/large gwalas ~ lizard salamander - newt łakwani ~ elbow</p>	<p>A. From the table top form, lengthen the body and come in a complete prone position. B. Exhale out completely, take a few rounds of breath, and relax the neck and shoulders. C. From here, inhale, lift the head and chest off the floor, and placing the elbows on the floor, rest the chin on the inner palms. D. Supporting the chin, connect to the stretch at the front neck, and the feel the breath as the chest expands. E. With each breath, connect to how the shoulders and neck feel in this supported neck stretch pose while in prone. F. Remain here for about 3-6 breaths, based on your body comfort.</p>
<p>Downward Facing Dog Form Knees On Floor</p>	<p>bā'ni'sta ~ coming / going/ moving down, going below 'wałsi ~ dog upige' ~ knee āwi'nagwił ~ floor</p>	<p>A. Release from Crocodile form on elbows, exhale to lengthen the arms on the floor. B. Stretching the arms in front of you on the floor, look down and as you inhale lift the chest and hips up. C. Come in the variation of downward facing dog form. The lengthening of the arms and the pushing of the face to the floor can be a great way to ease out the shoulder and neck stiffness. D. Remain here without putting too much pressure on the neck. E. The lengthening of the back will also be a great way to ease out any stress or tensions in the shoulders. F. Remain for about 4-6 breaths, as you watch how the upper back stretches with each breath.</p>

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Extended Child Form Variation Head Up	'wadzu ~ wide ganganangam ~ children xitid ~ to raise head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Release to sit down on the knees in extended child form variation head up.</li> <li>B. Look up, sitting comfortably to just connect to the breath, as the shoulders and neck feel at ease.</li> <li>C. Stay here for about 3-6 breaths, acting both as a counter pose for the previous pose and a prep pose for the next pose.</li> <li>D. Ground the palms on the floor as you gently lengthen the neck to look up.</li> </ul>
Extended Child Form Variation Hands On Head	'wadzu ~ wide ganganangam ~ children i'q'ya'su ~ hands xum's ~ head	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Then, moving ahead, gently drop the head on the floor.</li> <li>B. Come to extended child form variation hands on head.</li> <li>C. Supporting the head with the cupping of the hands, stay here to feel the gentle pressure at the neck and shoulders.</li> <li>D. Surrender into the pose and remain for about 4-6 breaths. If there is any discomfort (request your students) to release from the pose and sit back into the earlier pose.</li> </ul>
Reverse Corpse Form	hąkwala ~ lying face down xusala ~ to be at rest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Release from extended child form variation hands on head, and lengthen your body to flat on the floor in a prone position.</li> <li>B. Lie on your belly in reverse corpse form with arms stretched out at the shoulder level.</li> <li>C. Relax the body by connecting the breath and feeling it at the tip of the nostrils and continue this for about 12 breaths.</li> </ul>
Reclined Bound Angle Cactus Arms	tigadzo'lit ~ lying on your back on a flat surface inside of house tikas ~ lying on your back on the ground sinukwa ~ oblique (i.e. at an angle)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Moving into an extended supine position. Place the soles of your feet together and cactus the arms.</li> <li>B. Remain here for about 1 minute connecting with your breath.</li> </ul>

WEEK 11		Trauma Informed Yoga Class   45 Min Class
YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Mountain Form Palms Facing Forward	nage ~ mountain u'dzuxwtsane' ~ palm of hand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Begin standing, feet a few inches apart, place the feet firmly on the floor and extend the spine while taking the shoulders behind.</li> <li>B. Take a few breaths and slowly breathe deep.</li> <li>C. Stretch the arm to your sides, opening the palms and fingers. Tuck the belly in and focus on doing this throughout.</li> <li>D. Stay here for about 6 breaths.</li> </ul>
Standing Wind Release Form Prayer Hands	dłaxw'i ~ to stand up yola ~ wind 'māx'id ~ let go of something you were holding hawa'x'āla ~ praying, to pray	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Bring the palms together, placing them at the chest as you inhale.</li> <li>B. Lift the right leg bending at the knees, and hold the right thigh parallel to the floor.</li> <li>C. Point the toes down and stay in balance.</li> <li>D. Exhale completely and brings the body's weight towards the left side of the hips and the left foot.</li> <li>E. Release the right leg and repeat on the other side.</li> </ul>
Standing Wind Release Form Arms Raised	dłaxw'i ~ to stand up yola ~ wind 'māx'id ~ let go of something you were holding iki'sta ~ to go up i'ā'ya'su ~ hands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Inhale and raise the hands up, taking care of the balance.</li> <li>B. Stretch the shoulders and arms while pressing the right thigh towards you, holding in balance.</li> <li>C. Keep the body light while here, ensuring better balance.</li> <li>D. Release the right leg and repeat on the other side.</li> </ul>
Warrior III Squat Form	wina (winalagalis) ~ warrior (of the world) kwamx'id ~ to bend down or over	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. In a flow, exhale and bend the torso forward while bending the left knee and stretching the right leg behind you.</li> <li>B. Stretch the back leg, and once you get your balance, stretch the arms in front, extending the spine.</li> <li>C. Keep the body calm using core muscle strength.</li> <li>D. Keep in balance using the support of the left foot.</li> </ul>
Twisted Lizard Form	kālpā ~ to twist gwalas ~ lizard salamander, newt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Exhale, place the hands on the floor along with the right foot on the floor and bring the torso down, pressing the left knee and thigh outwards.</li> <li>B. Place the hands firmly on the floor and twist the face looking towards the left side. While doing this, the chest, shoulders and hips come parallel to the floor, flexing the left hips and left foot.</li> <li>C. Press as you exhale, and go as close as possible to the floor, feeling the stretch at the inner thighs and shoulders.</li> <li>D. Stay here for 6 breaths.</li> </ul>

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
Nectar Of The Moon Form II	sapsabit ~ moon/sun shining on floor makwala ~ moon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Inhale and lift the torso, pressing the right hand towards the floor.</li> <li>B. In a flow as you inhale, take the left arm outwards as you twist the shoulders and the chest, taking it far behind.</li> <li>C. While in this movement, open the heart and the chest.</li> <li>D. Exhale and open the hips along with the chest and take the gaze behind you in this complete twist.</li> <li>E. E. Press the outer feet firmly on the floor and maintain balance.</li> </ul>
Mountain Form Palms Facing Forward	nage ~ mountain u'dzuxwtsane' ~ palm of hand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Begin standing, feet a few inches apart, place the feet firmly on the floor and extend the spine while taking the shoulders behind.</li> <li>B. Take a few breaths and slowly breathe deep.</li> <li>C. Stretch the arm to your sides, opening the palms and fingers. Tuck the belly in and focus on doing this throughout.</li> <li>D. Stay here for about 6 breaths.</li> </ul>
*Repeat Warrior III - Nectar Of The Moon Form II on other side*	sapsabit ~ moon/sun shining on floor makwala ~ moon	*Repeat Warrior III - Nectar Of The Moon Form II on other side*
Downward Facing Dog Form	ba'ni'sta ~ coming / going/ moving down, going below, 'watsi ~ dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Inhale to release and bring the left foot behind and place it close to the right foot.</li> <li>B. Placing both feet behind, exhale and stretch the torso inwards, taking the chest and shoulders in a deep stretch.</li> <li>C. Exhale and press the hands firmly on the floor.</li> </ul>
Three Legged Downward Facing Dog Form	yudaxw ~ 3 gugwa'yu ~ leg/foot ba'ni'sta - coming/ going/moving down, going below, 'watsi ~ dog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Inhale, raise the left leg, taking the left side of the hips in a deep stretch.</li> <li>B. Open the hips outward and upward as you take the leg up while pressing the hands, shoulders and chest towards the floor.</li> <li>C. Do not twist the hips or the shoulders while raising the leg.</li> </ul>
High Lunge Form	ikala ~ something high/ high above something kus'id ~ to bend your knee	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Exhale, bring the left foot in front and come to stand raising the hands and the torso up.</li> <li>B. Bending the left knee, press the back foot firm on the floor and extend the arms up.</li> </ul>

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
*Repeat Downward Facing Dog Form - High Lunge Form*	yudaxw ~ 3 gugwa'yu ~ leg/foot ba'ni'sta - coming/going/ moving down, going below, 'watsi ~ dog	*Repeat Downward Facing Dog Form - High Lunge Form*
Five Pointed Star Form	saka ~ five tu' ~ star	A. In a flow as you inhale, turn, taking the torso to go in transition facing the other short end of the mat. B. Exhale as you turn around while extending your arms outward at shoulder height.
High Lunge Form	ikala ~ something high/ high above something kus'id ~ to bend your knee	A. Exhale and turn towards the other side, placing the right foot forward. B. Inhale and, in a flow, extend the arms up while bending the right knee.
Twisted Lizard Form	kalpa ~ to twist gwalas ~ lizard salamander, newt	A. Exhale completely, taking the torso towards the floor to press the shoulders, arms, chest and face. B. Twist taking the gaze towards the right side while using the core muscles to remain in balance. C. Exhale and come parallel to the floor, engaging the back leg and the front thigh.
Nectar Of The Moon Form II	sapsabil ~ moon/sun shining on floor 'makwala ~ moon	A. Inhale, raise the torso up, pressing the left hand on the floor. B. Twist the torso, shoulders, chest, and hips taking the right arm behind you, gazing behind. C. Open the heart and use the core and the hips to stay balanced.
Downward Facing Dog Form	ba'ni'sta ~ coming/ going/ moving down, going below 'watsi ~ dog	A. Exhale and release to bring the right foot behind close to the left foot and press the hands, shoulders and torso inwards. B. Press and exhale completely
*Repeat High Lunge Form to Downward Facing Dog Form*	ikala ~ something high/ high above something kus'id ~ to bend your knee	*Repeat High Lunge Form to Downward Facing Dog Form*
Extended Child Form	'wadzu ~ wide gangananam ~ children	A. Release knees to floor and bring knees about mat width apart. Sit back on your heels and walk your hands forward. Release your head on the mat once you are as far extended as possible. B. Stay here for about 1 minute.

YOGA FORM	KWAKWALA TRANSLATION	POINTS ON HOW TO DO THE FORM
<p>Half Boat Form</p>	<p>ya'yatsi ~ something you travel around in (boat, canoe etc.) kwax'i ~ to sit down</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Make your way into a seated position with your knees bent and your feet flat on the floor.</li> <li>B. Lift your feet off the floor. Keep your knees bent. Bring your shins parallel to the floor</li> <li>C. Allow your torso to fall back but do not let the spine round.</li> <li>D. Stay for around 6 breaths.</li> <li>E. Slowly release the legs to the floor and then slowly release into a fully reclined supine position.</li> </ul>
<p>Supine Spinal Twist Form</p>	<p>tigadzo'lit ~ lying on your back on flat surface inside your house xagige' ~ spine kalpa ~ to twist</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. From your lying position, bring your arms out to the side with the palms facing down in a T position. Bend the right knee and place the right foot on the left knee.</li> <li>B. Exhale and drop the right knee to the left side of your body, twisting the spine and low back. Look at the right fingertips.</li> <li>C. Keep the shoulders flat on the floor, close the eyes, and relax into the form. Let gravity pull the knee down, so you do not have to use any pressure.</li> <li>D. Hold for about 6 breaths.</li> <li>E. Release coming back to a neutral lying down position and repeat on the other side.</li> </ul>
<p>Wind Release Form Aka Self Hug</p>	<p>yola ~ wind 'max'id ~ let go of something you were holding kapa ~ to hug</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. Lying down in a supine position, press the knees towards the chest, holding them within your arms.</li> <li>B. Stay here in wind release form for about 12 breaths.</li> </ul>





### **KWAKWALA REFLECTION QUESTIONS**

Below are reflection questions to engage youth around feelings they have thinking about their language learning journey. Invitation to replace Kwawala with your traditional Indigenous language :

- **What feelings do you have arising in you thinking about learning Kwakwala?**
- **How does it feel in your body when you hear kwakwala spoken?**
- **What inspires you to want to learn your ancestral language?**
- **Have you had a healing experience through language learning that you want to share with the group?**
- **How does it feel to be connected to your body through yoga and hear your ancestral language?**

**PART 4:**

# Tools & Activities

## **WHY GUIDE YOUTH BACK TO THEIR BODIES?**

*“Breath is one of the greatest gifts we have been given. Breathing gives us the opportunity to actively participate within our life, a connector of our Spirit, body, and mind. The quality of our breath has the power to calm and fuel, as well as nourish and cleanse. With mindful, conscious breathing we can invite in balance and healing. In witnessing our breath, we may notice connections that are within ourselves and also throughout Creation.”*

Jaime Hunt, Indigenous Yoga & Wellness Teacher

Our workshop sessions all begin by providing an opportunity for youth to connect to their body through trauma-informed breath and embodiment practices. We support youth to practice interoception, self-awareness, and mindfulness by utilizing their breath and bodies as tools for self-regulation. Healing trauma requires us to safely reclaim empowered states of being.

As mentioned in the modules, trauma is stored in the body. To process trauma in a holistic and Indigenous centered approach, connecting back to the body is fundamental. This includes connection to land, self, community, song, and movement.

Below are grounding techniques that can be utilized in your work with youth:



# Grounding & Self Regulating Techniques To Open Each Session & To Use Throughout the Program

## **GROUNDING 1: WRITTEN BY IVY RICHARDSON**

Invitation to start our grounding practice by getting into a comfortable seat. Once you are comfortable, an invitation to just notice the breath... not really doing anything to change it... just putting our attention towards our focus on the breath, noticing the natural inhale... and exhale... as your breath enters... and leaves the body.

I invite you to imagine invisible roots growing from your feet, reaching deep into the earth. Feel yourself rooted to the earth; the connection remains wherever your feet take you. Imagine heat rising from the earth, warming you and lighting you up inside.

I now invite you to take three slow, deep breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Alternatively, take as many breaths as you need to feel more aware of the energy transfer between your body and the earth.

Next, I invite you to imagine invisible roots growing from your feet, reaching deep into the earth's core in mere seconds. Feel yourself rooted to that center, even if your feet have to move across the ground. Wherever you go, now, the connection remains intact.

Imagine heat rising from the earth's core and filling your belly, warming you and lighting you up inside. Enjoy this sensation as you breathe in and out.

Continue breathing and drawing warmth and calm up into your body.

Imagine yourself exhaling some of that heat without exhausting the supply. The earth keeps you well supplied with its fire and energy, but now you can draw it further up and exhale it just as you can with any anxiety or agitation you feel. Inhaling warmth, a glowing inner peace. As you exhale, an invitation to let go of anything you feel ready to part with that is weighing on you. Invitation to repeat after me in your head or out loud: I feel strong, filled with light and warmth, unstoppable.

## **GROUNDING 2 : WRITTEN BY IVY RICHARDSON**

Invitation to start our grounding practice by getting into a comfortable seated position, and once you are comfortable, just notice the breath... not really doing anything to change it... just putting our attention, our focus on the breath. Noticing the natural inhale... and exhale... as your breath enters... and leaves the body.

Next, I invite you to allow any thoughts and tension of the day to disappear. Feel the muscles of your body relax as you let go of any physical tension. Especially the jaw and the eyes muscles, and any areas you notice are tenser than others. Feel each muscle relaxing as you let go of tension there.

Now focus on your breath as you breathe in and out, allowing it to flow smoothly, breathing in from infinity and out to infinity. Keeping your awareness on the breath As you become one with the flow of life, at one with your being as you breathe in from infinity and out to infinity. And as you do so, become aware of that place of peace within:

The place where you are most authentic self - the center of your being. This is the real you, Beyond the thoughts, dramas, and identifications of the mind. You are not your thoughts. You are not your emotions. You are not the roles you play. You are a center of pure awareness, A center of pure being. Journey to this center, And allow yourself to become more and more present there

As you breathe in from infinity and out to infinity. Keep your attention on the experience of being And being more deeply. Imagine that in this center, you are light. And allow that light to grow and expand with your being. As you become more and more present.

Breathing in from infinity and out to infinity. Become your infinite self. Feel the light and the peace of this being. Allow the light to flow through your entire body. Bathing every organ, every muscle, every cell, Aligning your body to its true identity. Allow the light to expand outwards around your body as if you are glowing. As you breathe in from infinity and out to infinity.

Feel the roots of your physical being going deep into the Earth, Touching all living things with your light, And knowing how connected you are with the Earth.

Give thanks for the life you have and the opportunity to be in physical form, Which teaches you the wisdom of authentic living. Celebrate your true self. Breathing in from infinity and out to infinity.

As you stay present in your center, Experience your light radiating outwards across the world, time, and space. Feel your connection with all things. You are an infinite self.

When you are ready for an invitation to come back to your physical body, In the present moment: Keeping your attention on your breath, Feeling yourself fully present in your body, and gently opening your eyes if they are closed, Feeling fully

grounded and centred and ready to greet the rest of the day, With more significant presence, Greater authenticity, Greater wisdom, Greater peace, and Greater compassion.

### **GROUNDING 3 : WRITTEN BY IVY RICHARDSON**

Invitation to start our grounding practice by getting into a comfortable seat, and once you are comfortable, just notice the breath... not really doing anything to change it... just putting our attention, our focus on the breath. Noticing the natural inhale... and exhale... as your breath enters... and leaves the body.

I invite you to imagine invisible roots growing from your feet, reaching deep into the earth. Feel yourself rooted to the earth; the connection remains wherever your feet take you. Imagine heat rising from the earth, warming you and lighting you up inside.

I now invite you to take three slow, deep breaths, in through the nose and out through the mouth. Or take as many breaths as you need to feel calmer and more aware of the energy transfer between your body and the earth.

Next, I invite you to imagine invisible roots growing from your feet, reaching deep into the earth's core in mere seconds. Feel yourself rooted to that center, even if your feet have to move across the ground. Wherever you go, now, the connection remains intact.

Imagine heat rising from the earth's core and filling your belly, warming you and lighting you up inside. Enjoy this sensation as you breathe in and out.

Continue breathing and drawing warmth and calm up into your body.

Imagine yourself exhaling some of that heat without exhausting the supply. The earth keeps you

well supplied with its fire and energy, but now you can draw it further up and exhale it just as you can with any anxiety or agitation you feel.

Inhaling warmth, a glowing inner peace. As you exhale, the invitation to let go of anything you feel ready to part with that is weighing on you. Invitation to repeat after me in your head or out loud: I feel strong, filled with light and warmth, unstoppable.

**GROUNDING 4:  
WITNESSING THE BREATH:  
WRITTEN BY JAMIE HUNT**

This can be practiced anytime thought-out the day, in any way you choose. Options could be standing, seated, lying down, or walking. It can be a great way to start your day from the moment you wake up. You can practice for as long as you like and as often as you choose.

The invitation is to bring your awareness to your breath. Without trying to change it, observe the current quality of your breath. You might notice:

- The speed and depth, the length of your inhale and the length of your exhale, as well as the pauses in between.
- The physical sensation you feel following your inhale, as your breath moves from your nose/ mouth to fill your lungs
- The physical sensation you feel as you exhale, following your breath as it moves from your lungs back out of your body.
- The energetic or emotional sensations that are present as you witness the flow of your entire breath.

As you feel ready, you can choose to change your breath. Notice how it feels if you:

- Make your breath longer, smoother and more fluid.
- Allow your breath to guide you through your body.

- Breathe into the center of yourself, connecting with your inner resource.
- Link your breath to a positive word, such as breathing in love.

When your practice feels complete to you, take a moment to reflect. You may notice:

- Any shifts within yourself from when you started to when you are finished.
- What felt comfortable and what was difficult
- How your day affects your breath and how your breathing affects your day

**GROUNDING 5:  
LENGTHEN THE EXHALE -  
DEVELOPED BY YOGA OUTREACH**

If you would like, begin by finding a comfortable seated position. In your own time, bring your awareness of your breath, noticing each inhale and exhale as they flow in and out.

THE READER TAKES 2-3 BREATHS

If you would like, gently lengthen your exhale, perhaps slowing down your breath with each cycle.

THE READER TAKES 2-3 BREATHS

It may be helpful to add a count to the breath in and a count to the breath out, making the out breaths a couple of counts longer than the in breaths. You're welcome to try that out if it's helpful for you, finding your rhythm, knowing that you can come back to your natural breath any time.

THE READER TAKES 2-3 BREATHS

When you're ready, if your eyes are closed, gently open them and notice how you feel.

**GROUNDING 6: BELLY BREATH -  
DEVELOPED BY YOGA OUTREACH**

Invitation to Find a comfortable seated position in your chair. Whatever that is for you today. If you

wish, you could come a little closer to the edge of the seat to maintain a tall comfortable spine without using the backrest. From here, you might position your feet about hip-width apart with your knees lined up above your ankles. Allow your shoulders to relax, and place your hands comfortably wherever you like. Your eyes could be open or closed.

In your own time, bring your awareness to your abdomen. You may place one or both hands on your abdomen if that supports your awareness. You might feel your abdomen expand on the inhale and fall on the exhale, allowing for the possibility that you might not feel much movement at all today, meeting your body and breath however they are today.

TAKE 2-3 BREATHS

If it feels helpful, you could try focusing on being with every inhale for its complete cycle and every exhale for its entire cycle, noticing the rhythm of your breath.

TAKE 2-3 BREATHS

You might notice that your mind wanders away from your breath often. This is normal, and it's part of the practice. If you like, you could explore gently returning your focus to your breath each time you notice your mind is elsewhere.

TAKE 2-3 BREATHS

When you're ready, if your eyes are closed, gently open them and notice how you feel.

### **CREATIVE ICEBREAKERS & IMAGINATION NAME GAMES TO BUILD RAPPORT**

These activities were learned through Indigeneyez . These ice breakers and name games help to learn each other's names, and build rapport by asking youth to take a small risk and engage their imagination. This builds trust within the group. Using our imagination is healing for the Default

Mode Network. These games also invite the spirit of our inner child to be silly and play.

#### **Name Game - Walk into the middle**

Invite youth to Form a circle. Everyone gets the chance to use their creativity and imagination to come up with their special walk. Walk into the middle, say, "hi i'm avis" and walk back.

Now everyone else in the group will copy your walk into the middle, turn to you and say, "hi avis, you are amazing!"

We then go around the circle, and everyone will have a chance to walk into the middle, introduce themselves, and have the group copy them and tell them they are awesome.

#### **Name Game - Creatively describe yourself**

Invitation to engage your imagination and come up with an adjective (descriptive word) that starts with the first letter of your First Name. Then come up with a hand motion to go with it. For example, Amazing Avis, Awesome Avis, and Aware Avis. Youth will say their name and hand motion, and we will mirror that back to them as a group.

#### **Milling - group exercise to strengthen our connection to each other**

Milling is an ice breaker that gets folks up and walking around, invites us to engage our creative spirit and imagination and provides an opportunity to build rapport with each other.

The invitation is to start walking around the room and filling the empty spaces without looking at anyone. Just take this time to connect with ourselves. Try not to bump into anyone or touch anyone. Simply walk into the empty spaces in the room. Checking in with ourselves, *How are we feeling in this new group? Excited? Nervous? Anxious? What sensations may we be feeling in our body that are connected to our feelings?*

As you walk, take some deep breaths and allow your energy to settle.

Now invitation to notice People as you pass them. Just peek at each other. Then maybe get a little bolder and let yourself greet People through a glance. Maybe nod your head to acknowledge folks as you pass them and make eye contact if that feels right for you.

Now invitation, freeze where you are standing, and go back to back with the person closest to you.

Once everyone has found a partner, turn to face your partner, and you will both have a chance to answer these questions:

- 1. What is your favourite season and why?**
- 2. What is one crucial thing to you that had to give up to attend this program (time with a loved one, work, school, etc.)**

Once you have both answered the question, turn back to back again and wait for the others to be done.

Now the invitation is to continue moving around the space, but pay close attention to your feet and the contact with the ground while you walk and fill the spaces in the room. Connect with the feeling of having your feet supported by the ground. And now, make eye contact with People as you pass by them, and maybe smile if you feel inclined as you make eye contact. Now without talking, find a new partner and stand back to back. Here are the two questions you will answer:

- 3. What is one thing you would change in your community if you could?**
- 4. Who is someone you love, and why do you love them?**

Now we will continue walking around the space and use our imagination and pretend that we are walking through thick mud, we are really trudging through the mud, and it is hard to walk ..... now imagine that you are a bear who is just waking up from a long winter's nap and is slowly moving around. This bear is starving and wants to find

some fish or berries to eat. Now Without talking, find a new partner and stand back to back. Once everyone has found a partner, turn to each other and each answer these questions:

- 5. When are you your most authentic self? (true self)**
- 6. Who is someone in your life that gives you a sense of belonging and connection? Or a place that gives you a sense of belonging?**

## **YES, AND**

This easy-to-play storytelling game ignites the imagination and teaches the first rule of theatre improvisation: "say yes". Ask participants to form circles of 3 or 4 people and decide who will go first (A).

- A begins by making up a story. It can be any story, past, present, or future. After setting the stage through three or four sentences, A stops at the end of a sentence.
- B picks up the story with the words, "Yes, and..." B then continues to tell the story in the same voice as A. This means, if the story was started in the first person, the story continues in first person. B adds three or four sentences and stops at the end of a sentence.
- C then picks up the story with, "Yes, and...", adds to the story and stops at the end of a sentence. The story continues around and around the circle with each person picking up with the words, "Yes, and..."
- Let the storytelling go for 7-10 minutes and then call "stop."

**Tips:** Make sure participants know they are to come to the end of a sentence before passing it on to the next person. Demonstrate what you mean by everyone in the circle using the same storytelling voice. Encourage participants to stand up while playing this game. People naturally add more gesture and energy to their stories when they are standing.



**ONLINE VERSION:**

It can be played online with the main large group with each person calling out the name of the person they want to go next or they can play it in breakout rooms – groups of 4 – 6. After, it’s fun to have them come up with a moral of the story they created and share it in the chat box.

**EMOTIONAL FREEDOM TECHNIQUE**

EFT, or the Emotional Freedom Technique, is a tool for treating Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (church et al., 2018). EFT, also known as “tapping,” works by stimulating a set of eight acupuncture points by tapping on them with the fingertips, which is a form of acupressure (Church & Feinstein, 2013). The success of EFT in treating PTSD suggests that it could also be effective with complex personality and relational difficulties rooted in childhood trauma (church et al., 2018). Tapping decreases cortisol, significantly reduces pain, anxiety, depression, and the symptoms of PTSD, and increases feelings of happiness and immune system function (Bach et al., 2019).

EFT can significantly reduce the risk of suicide in Youth by improving their physiological markers resulting in positive psychological outcomes. According to Patel and Pandey (2021), EFT effectively increases our energy system at a steady pace. We start feeling better, more relaxed, peaceful, and serene by initiating this rebalancing. All in all, Uncomfortable emotions, thoughts, feelings, and body responses change with continuous and prolonged use of EFT.

In the work of Indigenous youth suicide prevention, Tapping can be offered as a tool for grounding and self-regulation during our “Howling at the Moon Moments.” Prompting the Youth to say, “Even though I am feeling the spirit of suicide visiting me, I am strong and am resisting this spirit.” Youth can gently tap with two fingers on the eight or more acupoints, including:

- Top of the head
- Start of the eyebrow,
- Side of the eye,
- Under the eye,
- Under the nose,
- Under the lips (chin crease),
- An inch under the collarbone,
- Under the armpit.

**ENERGY MEDICINE ROUTINE**

Our bodies are made up of electric and magnetic currents that flow through the body. Disruptions in our energetic and magnetic fields may be an early warning sign of imbalances, which lead to illness (Tiller et al., 1995). Energy medicine is a holistic medicine rooted in the belief that healers can channel healing energy to patients and create positive outcomes (Evans, 2008). Healing from trauma, which is integral to staying alive if one lives with the spirit of suicide, requires us to understand the connection and interrelationship between our physical, emotional, spiritual and energetic selves.

Energy medicine practices can be helpful for trauma recovery as these techniques can deeply release held trauma and bring the mind, body, and spirit back to a state of balance. It encompasses a series of therapies based on the idea that energy disruption can cause imbalances within the physical and emotional bodies. Our thoughts, emotions, and physical responses are all expressions of energy. Therefore, to recover from trauma, we have to find the underlying causes affecting our energy, treat them, and restore our balance and flow (Taraborelli, 2021).

### Daily Energy Medicine Routine

**Calming** - It is straightforward, with one hand on the front of the forehead and the other on the back of the neck. Just focus on your breathing. You can have your elbows resting on a table, or you can do this lying down. This calms the fight/flight response by bringing blood flow back to your frontal cortex

**Heart Hug** - (arms crossed over the chest, hands under armpits). It is an energy medicine exercise that can bring you back to yourself if you have had some emotional intensity.

**Cross-over shoulder pull** - Start with your left hand on your right shoulder and spread it across the opposite hip with a flat palm. Same thing on the other side. Repeat. This gives us energy if we need it.

**Cross Crawl** - Raise your left knee and simultaneously slap your left thigh with your right hand. Repeat the same thing on the right knee. You can do this by walking, sitting or standing. Clears the mind, helps the left and right brain connect, and helps with coordination.

**Wayne Cook** - Both Hands out in front of you, arms straight and back of palms touching, then cross hands over, so your fingers clasp, and tuck them into your body, and cross your legs.

Breathe in and lengthen up through the spine, exhale soften the spine rounding the spine slightly forward. Inhale lift and lengthen through the spine

Switch the direction of your hands, tuck into the body, switch legs, and do the same thing on the other side, repeating as many times as you like

To finish the Wayne cook, unclasp the hands and legs, bring your hands into the shape of a temple (triangle), thumbs and index fingers come to touch, bring your thumbs to the forehead at your third eye, and just stay here for a few breaths and feel the calm come to your body. Relaxing the neck, shoulders and the forehead

**Crown Pull** - press your fingers of both hands into the centre of your forehead and slide apart a couple of inches - move your hands up to the top of your forehead, press the fingers in and slide them apart - repeat this, pressing in and sliding out all down the centre of your head, in addition to the back of the neck - when you get to the base of the neck, squeeze the shoulder muscles and let your hands drag down and off.

---

### REFERENCES

- Tiller, W. A., Dibble Jr, W. E., & Krebs, C. (1995). Subtle energies in energy medicine. *Frontier Perspectives*, 4(2), 17-21.
- Evans, J. (2008). Spiritual healing on the NHS. *London: The Times*.
- Taraborelli, B. D. A. (2023, January 6). *Energy Medicine: Releasing Frozen Trauma to Restore Balance*. The Sanctuary at Sedona. <https://www.sanctuary.net/blog/energy-medicine-releasing-frozen-trauma-to-restore-balance/>
- Bach, D., Groesbeck, G., Stapleton, P., Sims, R., Blickheuser, K., & Church, D. (2019). Clinical EFT (Emotional Freedom Techniques) improves multiple physiological markers of health. *Journal of evidence-based integrative medicine*, 24, 2515690X18823691.
- Church, D., Yount, G., Rachlin, K., Fox, L., & Nelms, J. (2018). Epigenetic effects of PTSD remediation in veterans using clinical emotional freedom techniques: a randomized controlled pilot study. *American Journal of Health Promotion*, 32(1), 112-122.
- Church, D., & Feinstein, D. (2013). Energy psychology in the treatment of PTSD: Psychobiology and clinical principles. *Psychology of trauma*, 211-224.
- Patel, V., & Pandey, N. (2021). Effectiveness of EFT on Suicidal Ideation among Young Adults.

