

REPORT BACK FROM AMERICAN INDIAN COMMUNITY/DHS WORLD CAFÉ

Meeting brings members of the American Indian community and government together to talk about cultural historical and current trauma

In June 2016, Department of Human Services Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division staff, led by Cecil White-Hat and with support from administration leadership, invited members of the American Indian community for a day of engagement focused on cultural historical and current trauma and its relational impact with DHS and American Indian Urban Communities and Tribes.

The purpose of this event was to allow American Indians to share such stories with each other, and with key DHS decision makers. American Indians who have experienced oppression have stories to tell of historic and current trauma and how that impacts current relations with other cultures and governmental agencies such as DHS. Through the sharing of stories, the meeting sought to help address stereotypes, mistrust, identity issues, and misunderstanding that still exist between cultures and state agencies such as DHS. The hope was to open the door to an opportunity to heal from trauma and oppression, and inform and improve DHS's future approach to relationship building with these communities.

The event

The discussion was in the form of a "World Café," as well as Peer Spirit Circle Process. The World Café approach is designed to create a safe and inclusive space to have an honest and open dialogue, learn together, harvest insights and share discoveries.

The full day event included four segments:

- **Peer Circle:** Cecil White Hat, the Bush cohort participant and primary facilitator of the event welcomed everyone to the circle. Richard Wright, an elder in the Ojibwe tribe, offered a traditional blessing including the burning of sage. Community Supports Assistant Commissioner Claire Wilson also welcomed the group, thanked everyone for their attendance, and expressed the desire to continue to engage in similar events moving forward. The full group shared their name, who they represent, and their reason for attending.
- **Background Presentation:** Cecil White Hat gave a brief presentation in order to set the context so that participants had a common understanding of the historical and current trauma experienced by American Indian communities.

- **World Café Discussion:** Participants divided into small groups, consisting of native and non-native participants, to discuss three questions:
 1. What has been the historical role of the federal government in your life?
 2. How have governmental relations between your community and the federal government affected trauma in your community over the past generations? How has that impacted your ability to trust government?
 3. How do you think past experiences affect your comfort level in working with people from other cultures? How has historical and current trauma affected your community from one generation to another?
- **Harvest:** Participants returned to the circle in order to ‘harvest’ learnings from the small group discussions. Discussion focused on:
 1. What were highlights of the discussions you had?
 2. What surprised you?
 3. What important topic did you learn about this issue that you did not know before? Why is it important?
 4. How will you use what you discovered today in the work you do with American Indians?

The questions were addressed in small groups. Between each question, the participants switched tables, with a table “host” staying behind to impart learning from the previous discussion to the new group occupying the table. Each table took notes in order to capture their discussion.

Results: World Café discussion

Question 1: What has been the historical role of the federal government in your life?

- was in foster care until they aged out of the system
- The systems that government controls created obstacles and barriers for my life
- Feel like American Indians are treated as obligation rather than a priority
- Commodities – unhealthy!
- Lack of education about the true American Indian history in general society
- Loss of languages and ceremonies
- Mathematical genocide through blood quantum and lateral violence as a result
- Government is detached and desensitized
- Devastation
- Lack of social accountability
- Services such as food, housing, caretaker
- Rule making, policy making, and voting
- Education
- Tribe sued for federal recognition to get tribal status, then sued federal government for land over a price discrepancy
- State barely recognizes us and Federal government won’t recognize us at all
- First Nation grandmother denied her tribal status due to government when she entered the US
- Grandparents and relatives grew up in boarding school. Boarding school stipend was \$200. Graduated illiterate.

- Any descendent can go to Morris State University
- Medical has a lot of negative – no testing and push pills
- Inequality of healthcare on vs off the reservation
- Graduate school funds
- Education (boarding school)
- Giving rights to African American people
- Slave trade
- Taxes and Control Over Life
- American Indians and African Americans blended
- Bureau of Indian Affairs Relocation program
- Lack of presence of American Indian history in education
- Fear
- Obstacles and Barriers
- Foundation for change (legal perspective, activism for accountability)
- Lack of Trust
- Elephants in the room that are not being addressed
- Ignorance
- Intolerance
- Dehumanization
- Controlling
- Setting us up to fail
- Classification
- 2nd Class Citizens
- Isolation

Question 2: How have governmental relations between your community and the federal government affected trauma in your community over the past generations? How has this impacted your ability to trust government?

- Mistrust is first instinct
- PTSD exposure from war induced media
- How can you heal when people (collectively) have not even begun to recognize history?
- Perpetual manipulation of ongoing lies masking the true history through exposure to news, media, and education. World views are not reliable.
- Affected by lack of knowledge and inability to open mind
- Instilled fear and anxiety
- Fear of child protection ability to take my kids
- Intimidation
- Felt bullied by the county. They put words in my mouth. Always accusatory.
- Being Profiled
- Assimilation
- Perpetrates trauma and creates a cycle

- Addiction
- Homelessness
- Incarceration
- Abuse
- Disruption of:
 - Culture, Community, Gender Roles, Language, Spirituality, Government
 - Replaced with alcohol, abuse, commodity food
 - Effort to reclaim cultural traditions
 - Frustration/ inability to trust
 - Loss of idealism
 - Legal system (discrimination, discrepancy of legal charges)
 - We don't trust the government
 - Relocation policy caused disenfranchisement
 - Assimilation policies
 - Went to services because no one would employ American Indians
 - Misappropriation of BIA in educational system
 - Relocation → Inter-racial marriage → Less Blood Quantum → Can't be enrolled member
 - Need to hold card to prove American Indian roots
 - Some places won't accept Tribal ID
 - Difference between practice and law
 - Disconnected
 - Denial of self
 - Casinos per capita
 - Impacts work ethic
 - Lack of available resources
 - Lack of basic necessities
 - Passive-aggressive control
 - Oppressive
 - Creates fear
 - Stole Identity
 - There is no trust
 - They aren't for us
 - Created a dependence on the system

Question 3: How do you think past experiences affect your comfort level in working with people from other cultures? Historical and current trauma affected your community from one generation to another?

- More informed
- Living in two worlds
- Leadership needs to be more representative of whom serving
- Have to be better or we don't succeed
- The way you perceive status
- Earned vs. Owed
- Value placed on our elders
- Humility is huge
- Value system is very different
- Factors:
 - Language, culture, values, family, resiliency, inherent values
 - Personal experience of trauma has led to compassion for others who have experienced culture trauma
 - Lack of education/ understanding
 - Loss of ownership we know what's right
 - Choices have been taken away
 - Lack of communication between policy makers and tribes
 - Rebirth of culture for those who haven't experienced previously through the resilience of culture
 - Prejudice
 - Disconnected. Loss of understanding
 - Empathy
 - Jealous, envy, hate
 - Shamed – with a glimmer of pride
 - Identity crisis and confusion
 - Loss of culture, have to build new one
 - Intentional to make change
 - Decide not to hold on to anger
 - Can make your own family
 - Loss of direction
 - Humility
 - Lost culture – who can teach us?
 - Working with dominant skin color always looking toward credentials

- Offensive assumptions/ stereotypes coming from random, ignorant white people
- Cultural bias – hierarchical – capitalism
- Constantly feeling incompetent
- White word established: “Assimilation”
- Resilience- struggles have allowed this due to our ancestors
- Life experience effects how effective the work that we do
- Indians gave lost their belief in self. We look for instant gratification (chemicals, other. Looking to feel better
- Similarities with Hmong cultures – loss of language and land
- I see us more as the same. Humans
- Derogatory Name

Results: World Café Harvest

After the small group discussions, the full group reconvened in a circle to share insights or other results from the small group discussions.

What did you learn?

- Still have a lot to learn
- Learned about trial state training offered by DHS – focused on federal laws such as the major crime act
- Learned about trainings available that would be great place to network and continue to share perspectives. Ex. Minnesota training on addiction disorders
- Met new people and built relationships which will be beneficial professionally

Using what we learned

- Retaining American Indians who receive our services through better understanding of cultural background
- Hopeful that people within system are willing to learn
- Encouraging to attend events
- Transition from learning to acting with guidance from elders
- Important to recognize sovereignty and allow for community ownership
- DHS need to do things differently, but shouldn't stop at process. They should reach out to change agents, legislators, tribal chiefs.
- Urgency surrounding existing chronic illness
- Asking for resources because land and resources were taken away
- There are answers within the community and sovereignty allows for unique demonstration
- Indians not viewed as urgent priority
- American Indian Advisory Council is an important resource
- Need to trust the assessment; counties should not change post-hoc

What surprised you about today's event?

- Shared love for karaoke discovered
- Met long lost relatives
- How much the historical trauma is overlooked in school and American history (only some covered in school)
- Unsure who was going to show up
- Good food
- Sad that non-Natives that should be present are not

Goal Setting

After the discussion concluded, Each participant identified a personal goal related to cultural and historical trauma to work on over the next year:

Goal	Action Steps
Work to create greater access to substance abuse disorder treatment programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk with legislators • Write to president • Write to commissioners and Gov.
Grow my understanding of own culture, what I want to be, and learn more about other cultures and how I can be culturally responsive	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop reading list • Be more intentional about where I shop, and who I interact with • Don't be afraid to ask questions
Make Bright Beginnings Program Successful – Women reunited with kids, sober, strong, cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unsure
Reach out and learn about my own native history and attend one event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research Cree • Find individuals who are willing to talk • Locate an event to attend and learn the meaning of the ceremonies • Participate!
Be well – physically and emotionally	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introspective thought • Self analysis • Exercise • Become more spiritual
Actively reach out and learn something new	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask more questions • Listen more carefully • Reach out and seek to understand • Acknowledging and admitting that not knowing is okay and learning is a lifelong process
Address disparities in planning meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respectfully challenge/ support cultural issues in meetings • Continue to listen, learn, etc.

Learn how to introduce myself in my language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get translation book • Look into class options • Search online for starter words • Seek out fluent speaker willing to guide me
Become an instructor at the YMCA in my spare time	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stay active • Challenge self, more physically • Try new workouts • Continue to set the bar higher for physical activity
Become more spiritual and reconnect with my church family	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Try yoga at least 4 times • Attend pre-marriage counseling with Pastor • Pray daily • Attend church at least once every month
Use my voice at work and be a resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share my contact info • Speak up more
Attend further training to enhance my learning. Open my eyes, ears, mind, and heart to learn about the experiences of others and their culture.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Start conversations with my tribal family members • Put myself into situations that allow me to learn about other cultures • Be a part of the change. Be a voice and an advocate. • Be an active participant in trainings
Provide support to and collaborate more with my relatives in the Native American section of ADAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Share my experience from today with my supervisor and team • Reach out to Don, Cecil, and Shawnee for guidance • Attend more events such as the one today • Promote cultural diversity, and inclusion in all aspects

Event Feedback

Participants were asked to rate the event across a variety of aspects.

- Respondents generally rated the event very highly. All respondents felt that the event either “very much so” or “completely”:
 - Engaged them in a meaningful way.
 - Was on a topic that is relevant to their own lived experiences, the lived experiences of the people or a community that they care about or the work in which they are involved.
 - Nearly all respondents (92%) felt that the event either “very much so” or “completely”:
 - Was held at an appropriate venue.
 - Made them feel that their ideas and experiences were valued by the DHS facilitators and staff who participated in the event.
- Not all participants felt completely comfortable sharing their opinions at the event. Participants were also less likely to believe that the event organizers described how they will be kept informed of how DHS will act as a result of the event. Participants were also not completely confident that the event will lead to better outcomes for their community.
- Participant trust in DHS prior to the event varied from “slightly” to “very much so.” As shown in figure 2 below, as a result of the event, all respondents felt that as a result of the event, their

level of trust in interacting with DHS had at least slightly improved. A majority of participants (54%) felt it had only slightly improved, with a portion reporting moderate (31%) and significant (15%) improvement.

- All respondents were at least moderately likely to attend future events like this one held by DHS. Most respondents were either very likely (54%) or completely likely (39%).
- Respondents were also asked a series of open-ended questions. Due to the small number of responses, the individual comments are listed below rather than a summary of the comments.
- In what ways has this event given you a better understanding of Tribal Sovereignty and how that affects relationship building?
 - I think having these conversations are important and need to continue
 - I thought that it gave a brief history of key federal policies between American Indians and the United States, but did not touch too much on what sovereignty is and why tribes/Al's are unique.
 - It sounds to me like the Tribes would like to be in control of how they handle issues within their own communities without having to adhere to the law of the land outside of the Tribal communities.
 - Listening to other perspectives from various walks of life helps build a relationship founded on respect, empathy, and trust for one another.
 - This I knew.
- What new knowledge of American Indians was gained to help with future interactions with American Indian Programs and Tribes?
 - I am happy to see interest in the areas of legal representation thorough the ICWA Law Center and the vast amount of higher education being pursued by individuals within the American Indian community.
 - Interacting with other natives helps me learn about parts of my culture that have been suppressed or hidden.
 - It was good to hear some of the non-Indian's speak their personal experiences.
 - It was not much gained for me, but I was able to share my experiences and worldviews as an American Indian. I think it was good to see some Al's and non-Natives there learning together.
 - That there are more workshops to attend.
- What suggestion(s) do you have that would improve future relationship building between Tribes and DHS?
 - Continue having cafe style trainings and continue to have new discussions.
 - Continued joint meetings and initiatives to take forward collectively.
 - Hire more Native professionals. Train staff on Native issues current and past.
 - More meetings, community events etc. should be held by DHS as a way to interact with community members. Meetings such as "Cultural, Historical and Current Trauma -- It's Relational Impact with DHS and American Indian Urban Programs and Tribes" is a great way for professionals to interact with DHS, but more community-wide occurrences would be valuable too. Perhaps tribal leaders, tribal community members,

- governmental figures/politicians, and more DHS figureheads could be present at these meetings as well?
- More time coming together. Find an issue to work on together. Neighborhood House was a good spot to meet, but maybe meet at the Minneapolis American Indian Center or somewhere in the AI community.
 - More trainings that are mandated for the non-Indigenous staff who work with American Indian people.
 - Provide more resources
 - well like any relationship it takes time
 - Do you have an event idea for follow up to this event?
 - Continue these events and expand on the discussions that have been taking place at these events. Use the events to put more events and meetings in place.
 - Find an issue to work on together. In some ways I like the history piece, because we have to know where we came from to know where we are going.
 - I do not at this present time
 - Meet once or twice more this year.
 - Poverty, oppression, depression, how they interact.
 - To expand and continue to tackle the same topic because it is broad, the ability is available.
 - We have agreed to several future meetings mirrored to this event.
 - What would have made this event better or more effective?
 - Attendance from more change agents.
 - I thought it was good as it was however, I am always of the thought that the more the better so, increased participation could lead to more effective outcomes.
 - More attendees. More that are informed the better.
 - Room was cold
 - Well it was a very good start.
 - Please provide any additional comments about the event here:
 - Favorite DHS training thus far.
 - I appreciate opening up with prayer and smudging.
 - I feel fortunate to be involved.
 - It was very warming and embracing. Good and comfortable.
 - keep providing healthy food and openings

Next Steps

At the conclusion of the event, those in attendance agreed that the event was a positive experience, but acknowledged that there is a lot of work to do to address cultural and historical trauma in American Indian communities. The group agreed to meet four additional times to engage around cultural and historical trauma, initially discussed as the next quarters changed to the next four seasons.