

Uniting Worldviews to Advance Research in Indigenous Communities

Native Children's Research Exchange
September 13, 2019
Denver, Colorado



NICWA

National Indian Child Welfare Association
Protecting Our Children • Preserving Our Culture

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September 12, 2019**

Objective

“This presentation will examine how NICWA has used the intersection between the linear worldview of Western research and the relational worldview of Indigenous populations to advance the interests of Indigenous children and families.”



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Every Day, Indian Children Need Us

- 1 in 25 Indian children are abused and/or neglected each year
- 1 in 5 are part of the child welfare system
- 1 in 10 suffer from untreated emotional problems
- 50,000 are placed away from their families



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NICWA's Mission

NICWA is dedicated to the well-being of American Indian/Alaskan Native children and families



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NICWA's Vision

Every Indian child must have access to **community-based, culturally appropriate** services that help them grow up **safe, healthy, and spiritually strong** –

free from abuse, neglect, sexual exploitation, and the damaging effects of substance abuse.



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Who is NICWA?

- 1,350+ members
- 21-member all Native board of directors, Board President Gil Vigil (*Tesuque Pueblo*)
- 25 NICWA staff and consultants



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What is NICWA?

- A private, nonprofit, membership organization based in Portland, Oregon
- A tireless advocate for the proper implementation of the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)
- The nation's leading American Indian resource for improving child welfare:
 - Community Development
 - Training and Events
 - Research and Information
 - Government Affairs and Advocacy



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Community Development

- Consults with tribal programs on-site, supporting:
 - child welfare programs
 - children’s mental health programs
 - tribal community organizations
- Assists with
 - community assessment
 - program development
 - advocacy and facilitation
 - community-based training and technical assistance



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Trainings and Events

- Holds preeminent Indian child welfare annual conference and regular training institutes
- Creates and facilitates workshops and curricula
 - Positive Indian Parenting
 - Understanding ICWA
 - Qualified Expert Witness
 - Tribal Customary Adoption
 - Working with Substance-Abusing Families
 - In-Home Services



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Research and Information

- Partners with universities, foundations, and scholars to research topics significant to Indian communities and child welfare
- Produces and disseminates research papers and study results
- Keeps library housing over 4,000 books, monographs, and other documents relating to Indian child welfare
- Provides vital resources and information through NICWA's website



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Government Affairs and Advocacy

- Advocates for Indian children at all levels of government
- Plays the role of watchdog over AI/AN children's issues in the U.S. Congress
- Provides policy analysis, testimony, and position papers on key issues
- Collaborates with elected tribal leaders, Indian and non-Indian advocacy groups
- Publishes research documents that influence public policy and promote effective services



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NICWA Accomplishments

Advocacy and Tribal Services Funding

- Child Care and Dev Block Grants
- Tribal TANF
- Child Support Enforcement
- Title IV-B, Subpart 1
- Promoting Safe and Stable Families
- Mentoring Children of Prisoners
- Mental Health: Circles of Care/
System of Care
- Title IV-E Foster Care
- Tribal Home Visiting (MIECHV)



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NICWA Accomplishments

Through relentless advocacy, NICWA has brought in more than \$3 billion in new funding to tribal child welfare and family services over the last 20 years.



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For Colonialism to Succeed

- Take territory – land
- Take natural resources – energy/food
- Take sovereignty – disrupt leadership and governance
- Take away the legitimacy of thought – worldview, language, spirituality, healing
- Take the children



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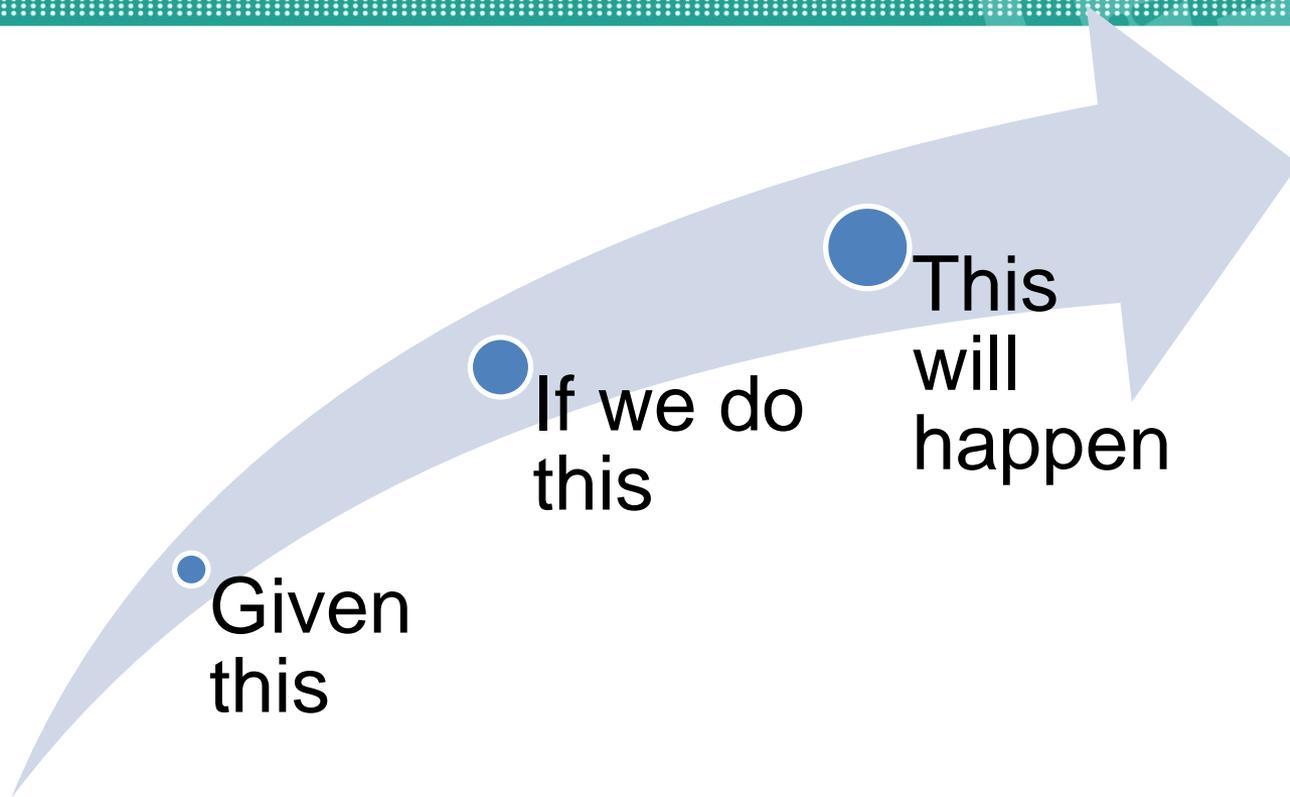
Linear Worldview

Western European/American thought



Cause → Effect → New Cause → New Effect

Linear Theory of Change



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Linear Model Values

Facts

Measuring

Knowledge (New)

Timelines

Scientific Method

Materialism, Wealth

Authority, Hierarchy

Independence

Individuality

Direct Communication

Written Language

Steps and Stages

Work to Make a Living

Compartmentalizing,
Reductionist

Credentials

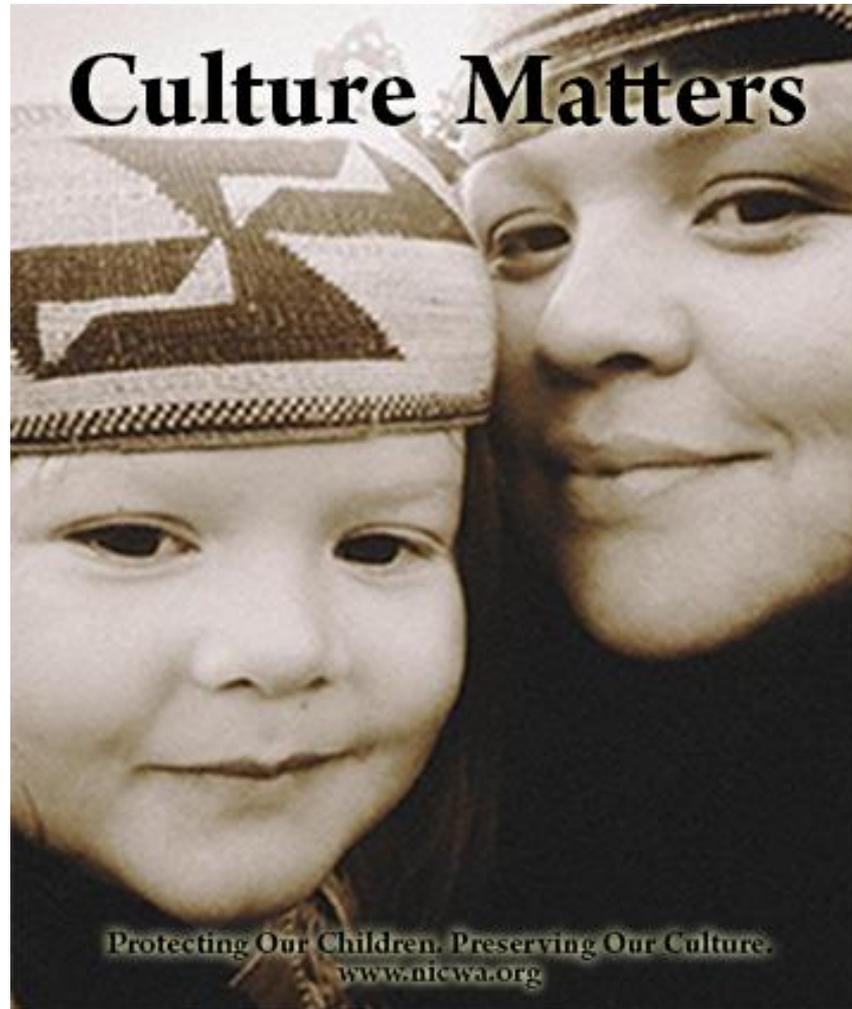


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NICWA (c) 2013

Culture Matters

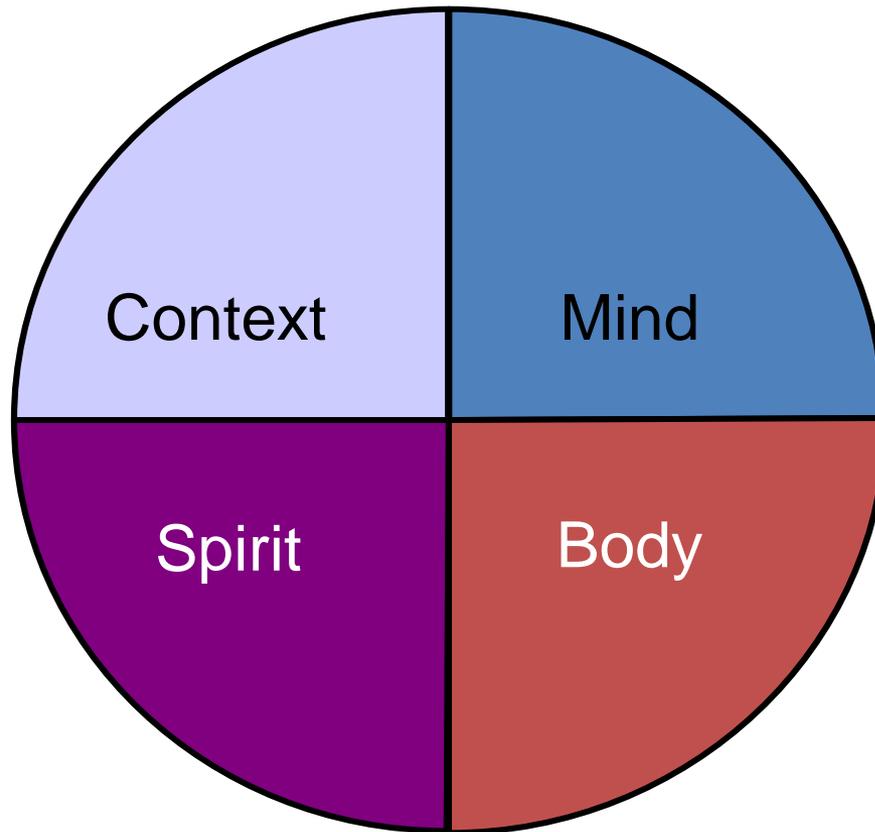


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Relational Worldview

Native and Tribal Thought



BALANCE

Relational Worldview Native and Tribal Thought

- Fluid, cyclical view of time
- Each aspect of life is related
- Services aim to restore balance
- Interventions may not be directed at “symptoms”
- Underlying question is “how?”

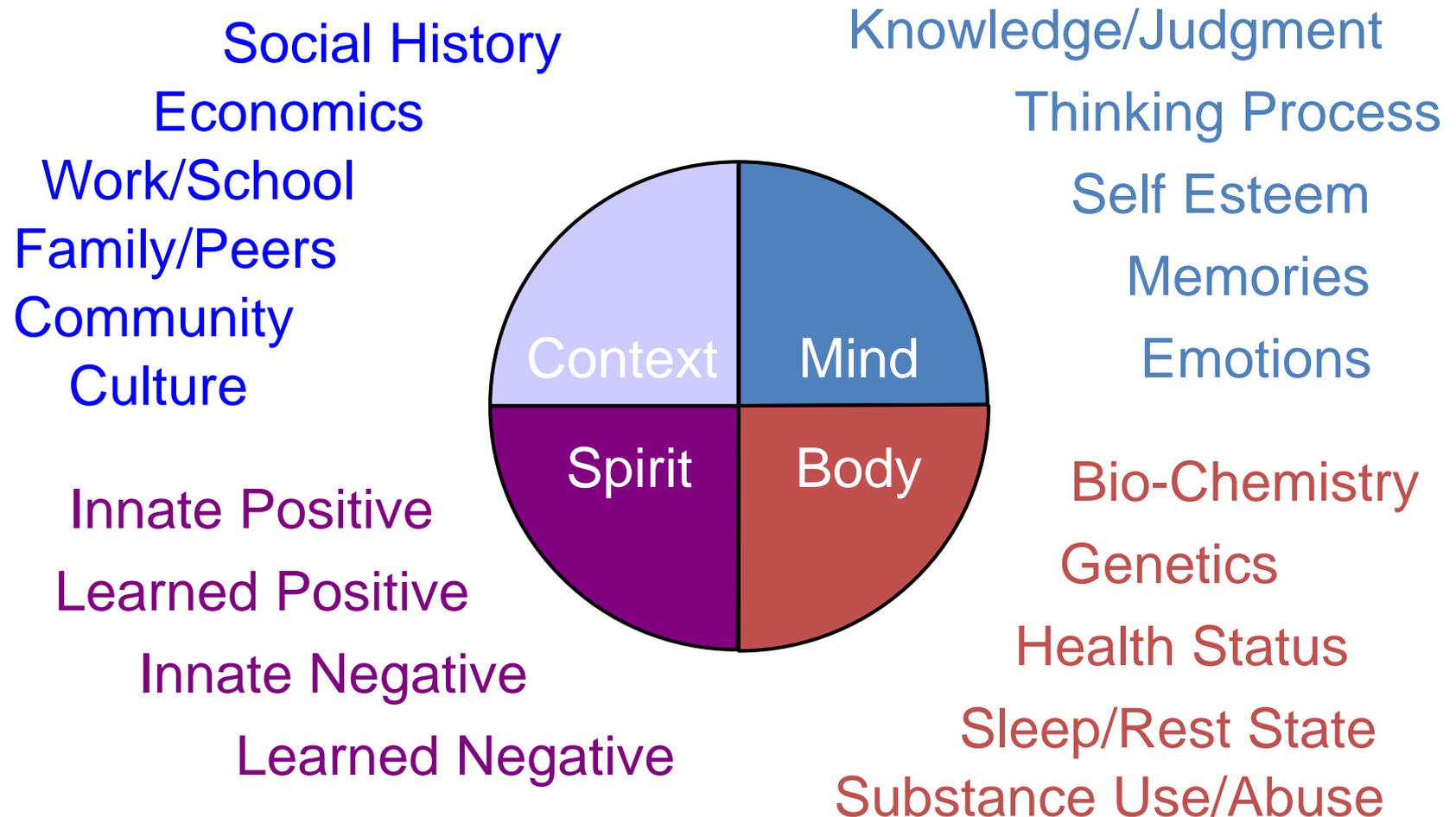


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Relational Worldview

Individual and Family Level



Relational Model Values

Principles, Values

Patterns

Wisdom

Things in their own
time

Observation

Generosity, gifting

Interdependence

Collectivism

Autonomy

Indirect Communication

Oral Tradition

Cycles and Phases

Work to Live

Holistic thinking

Experience

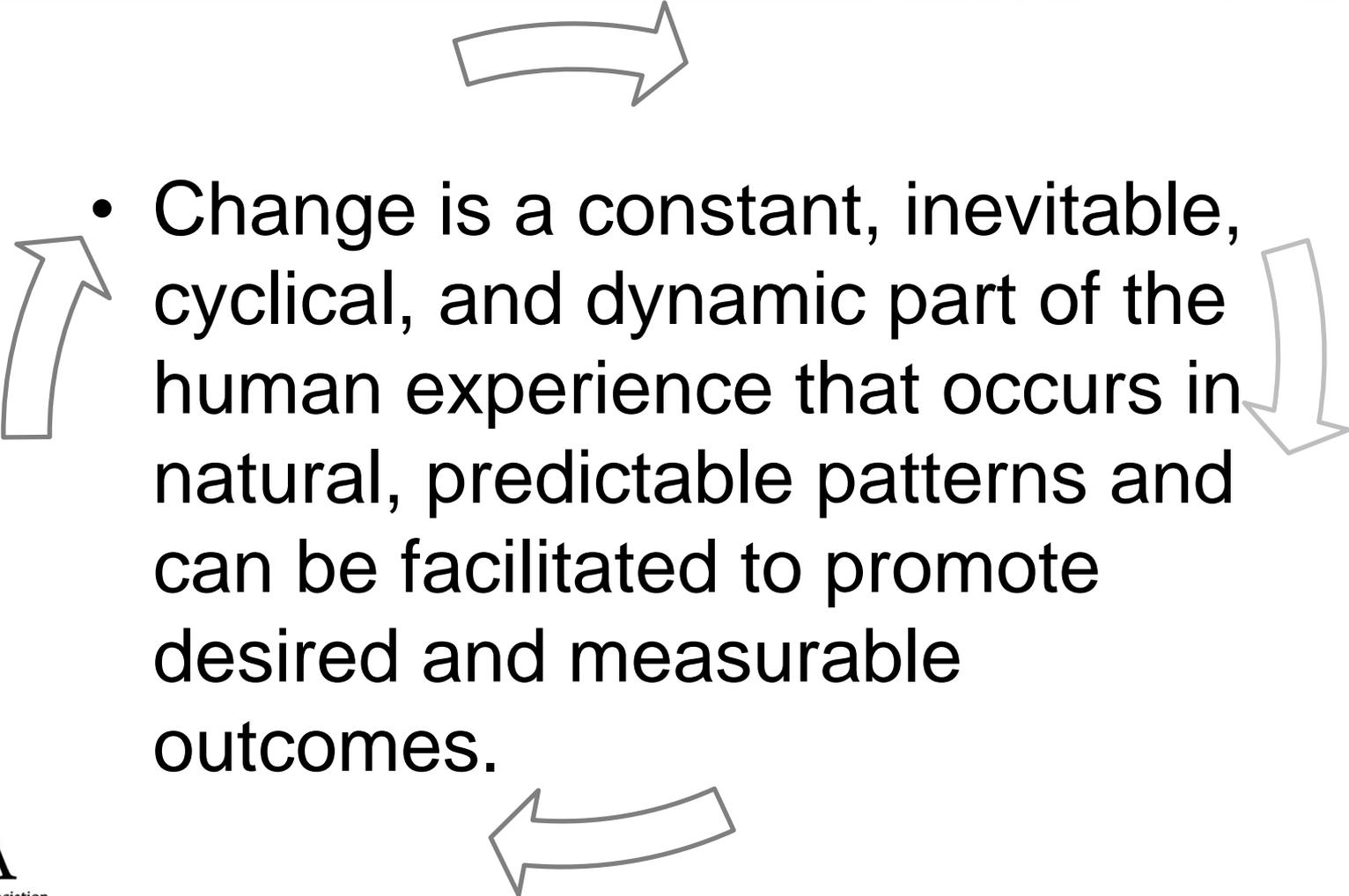


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Relational Worldview Theory of Change

- 
- Change is a constant, inevitable, cyclical, and dynamic part of the human experience that occurs in natural, predictable patterns and can be facilitated to promote desired and measurable outcomes.



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Desired Outcomes

- Balance = an adjustment pattern that represents the best, most basic attempt to incorporate stimuli and response.
- Harmony = various aspects of life are in a complementary relationship and taken together produce wellness, beauty, growth, success, the capacity for joy, and the ability to thrive.



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The Colonial Privilege of the Linear Model

Human Behavior is at least as complex as the weather. Current Western linear approaches are inadequate to the task of understanding this complexity.

Evidence Based Practice is the latest wave of colonial oppression to sweep across Native America.



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RWV-Based Research

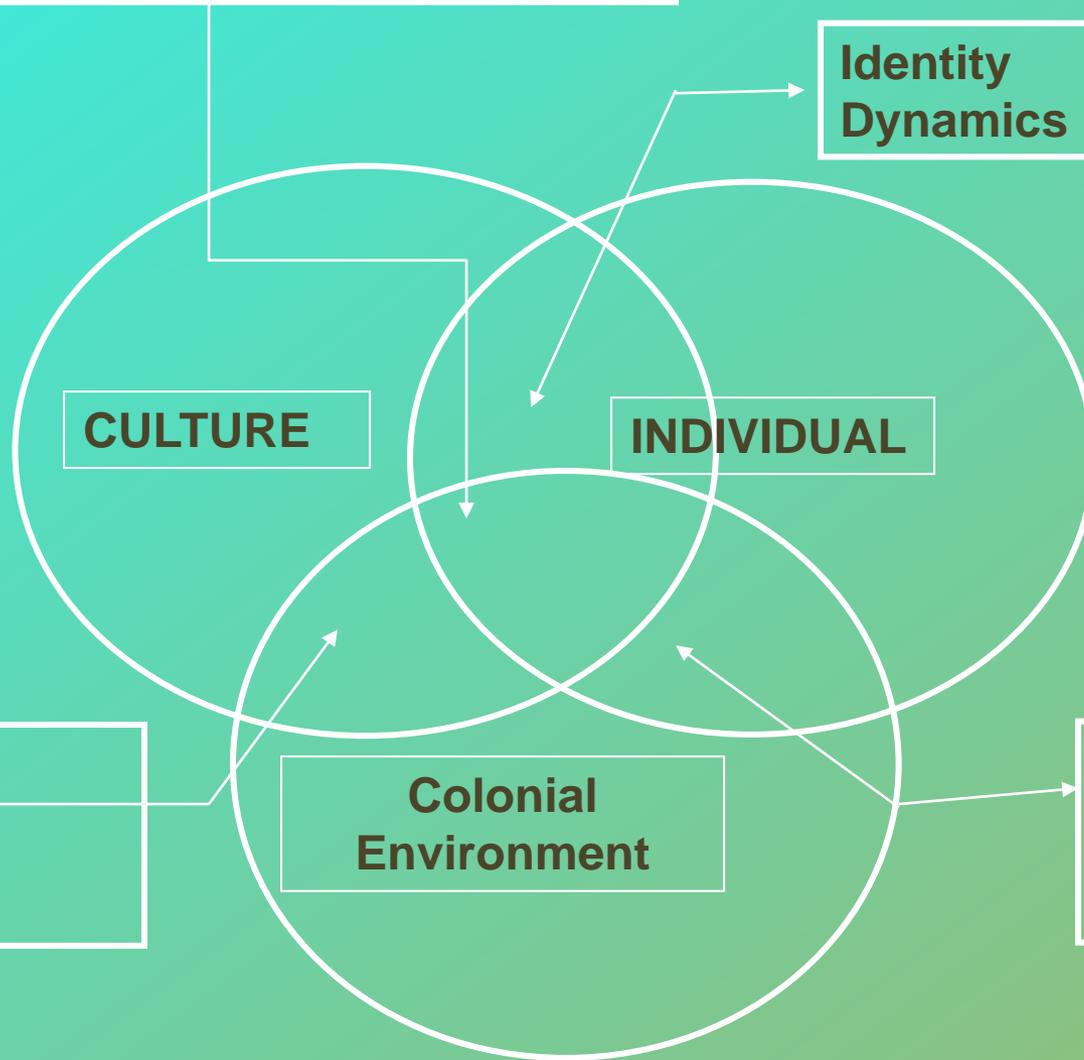
- An observer enters the flow of the natural forces, and with purposeful intent, examines the patterns among the quadrants to examine the state of the balance and degree of harmony.
- The unit of study are the relationships, patterns, and cycles and their impact on balance and harmony. Methods are designed to examine multiple quadrants.
- Change can be measured by observing key indicators of balance and harmony and by documenting change across time in relationships and patterns that result in observable outcomes.



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Embracing Complexity



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Conflicts?

“Civilized” is a Social Construction

“As Indigenous peoples, we believe that our ancestors were mostly right. The western world seems to believe their ancestors were mostly wrong. As a result they seem to think we are inferior. They don’t seem to realize that we know what they think of us. It is their privilege to believe we should be more like them. It is ours to not.”



Cindy Blackstock. 2014

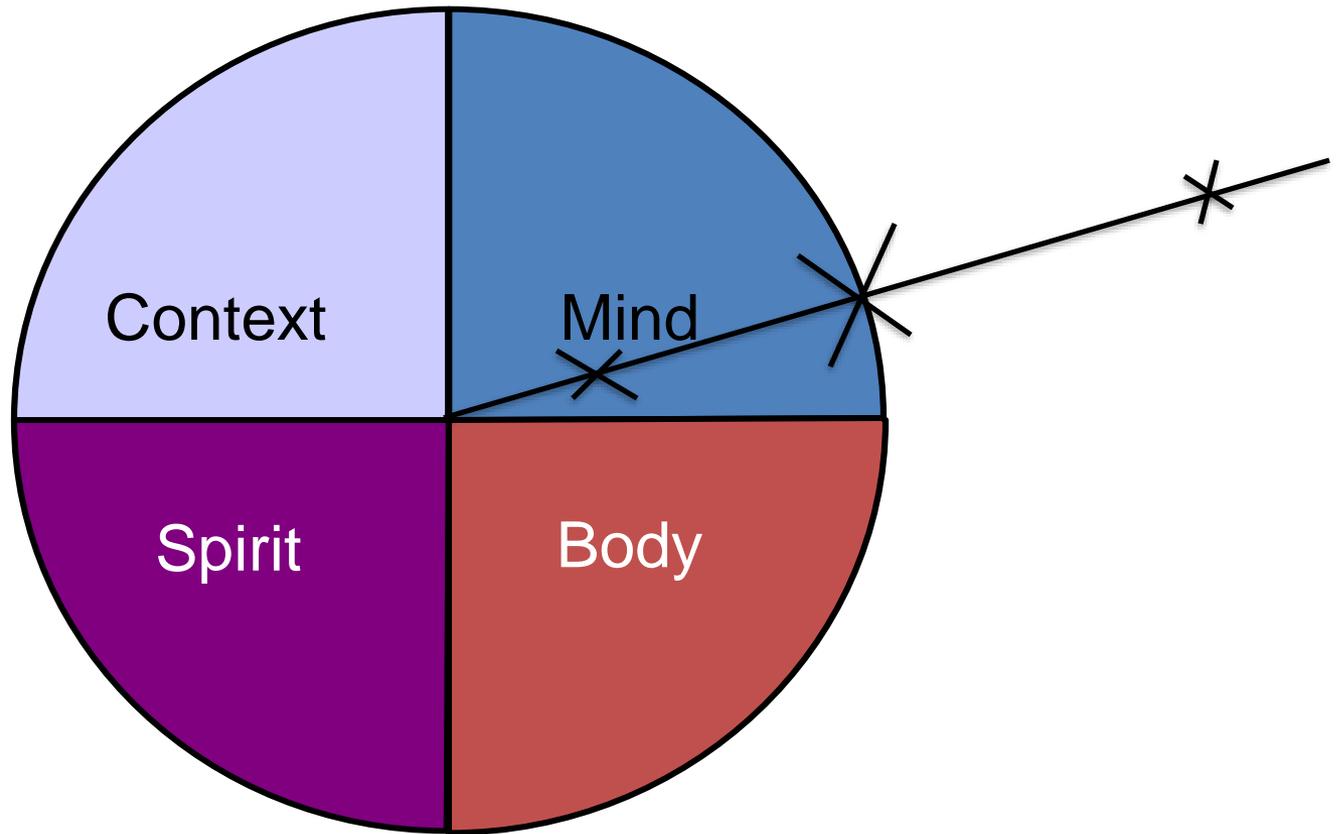
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Relational Worldview

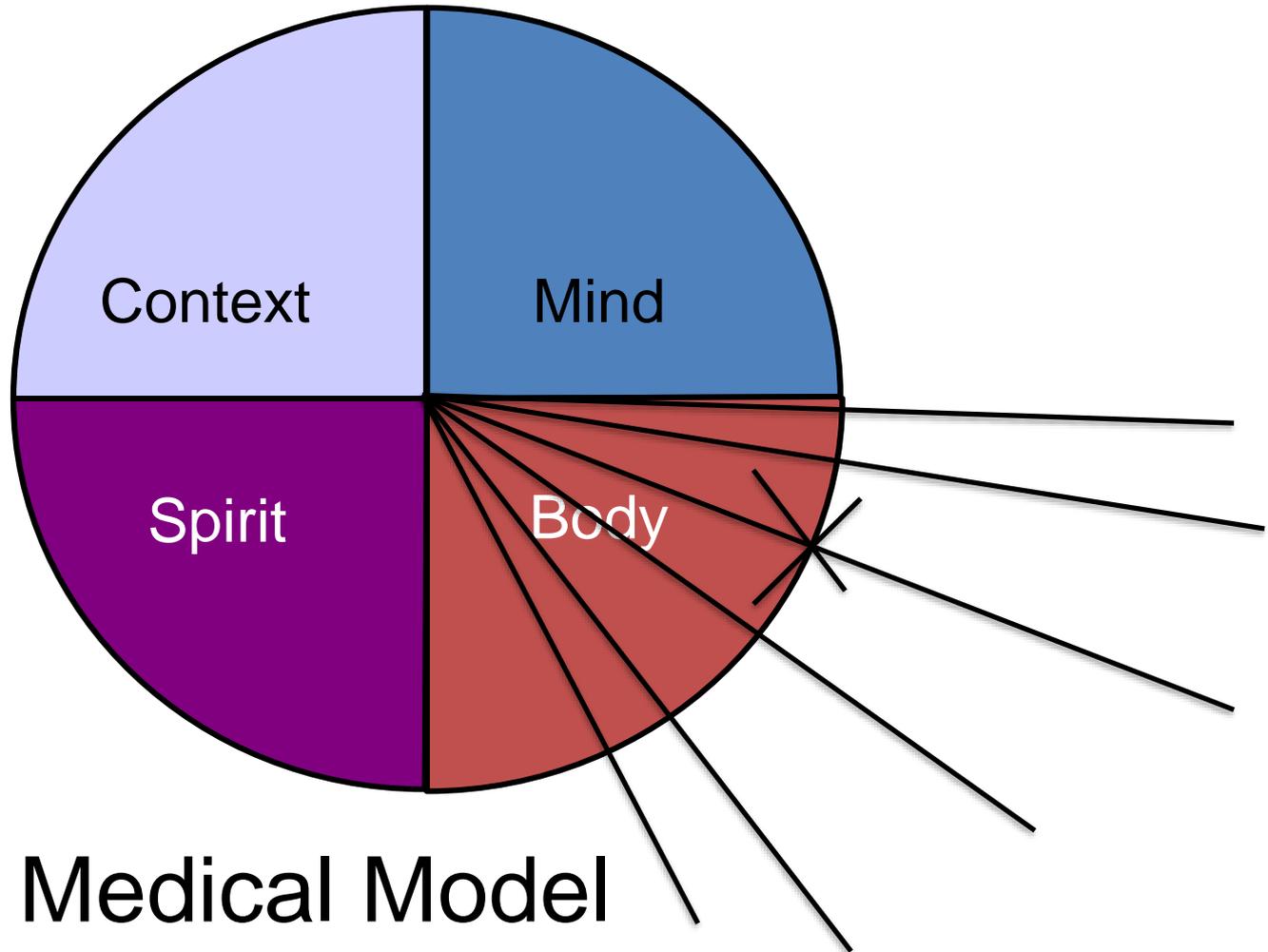
Native and Tribal Thought



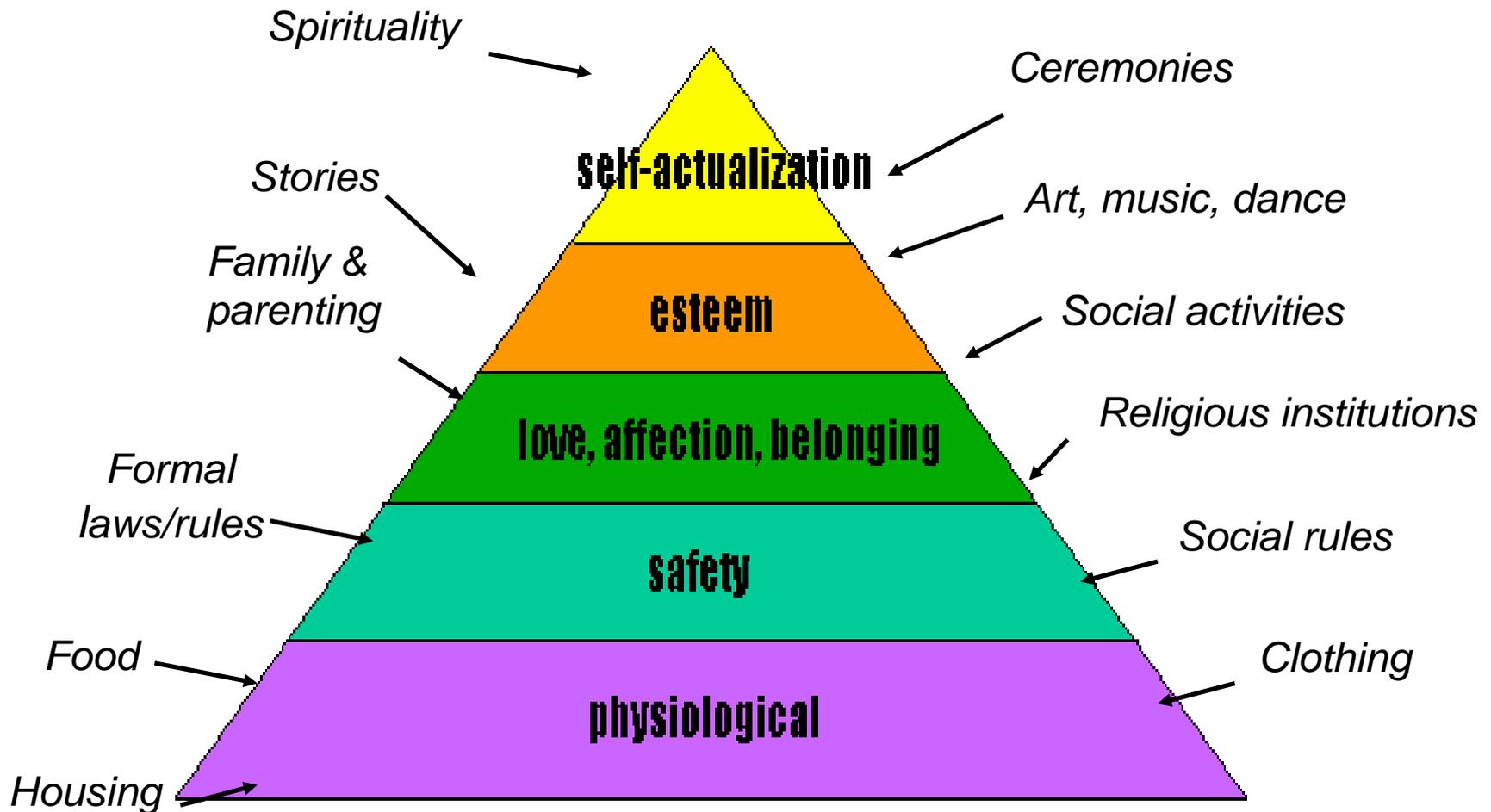
Point of Intersection is the Place for Dialogue

Relational Worldview

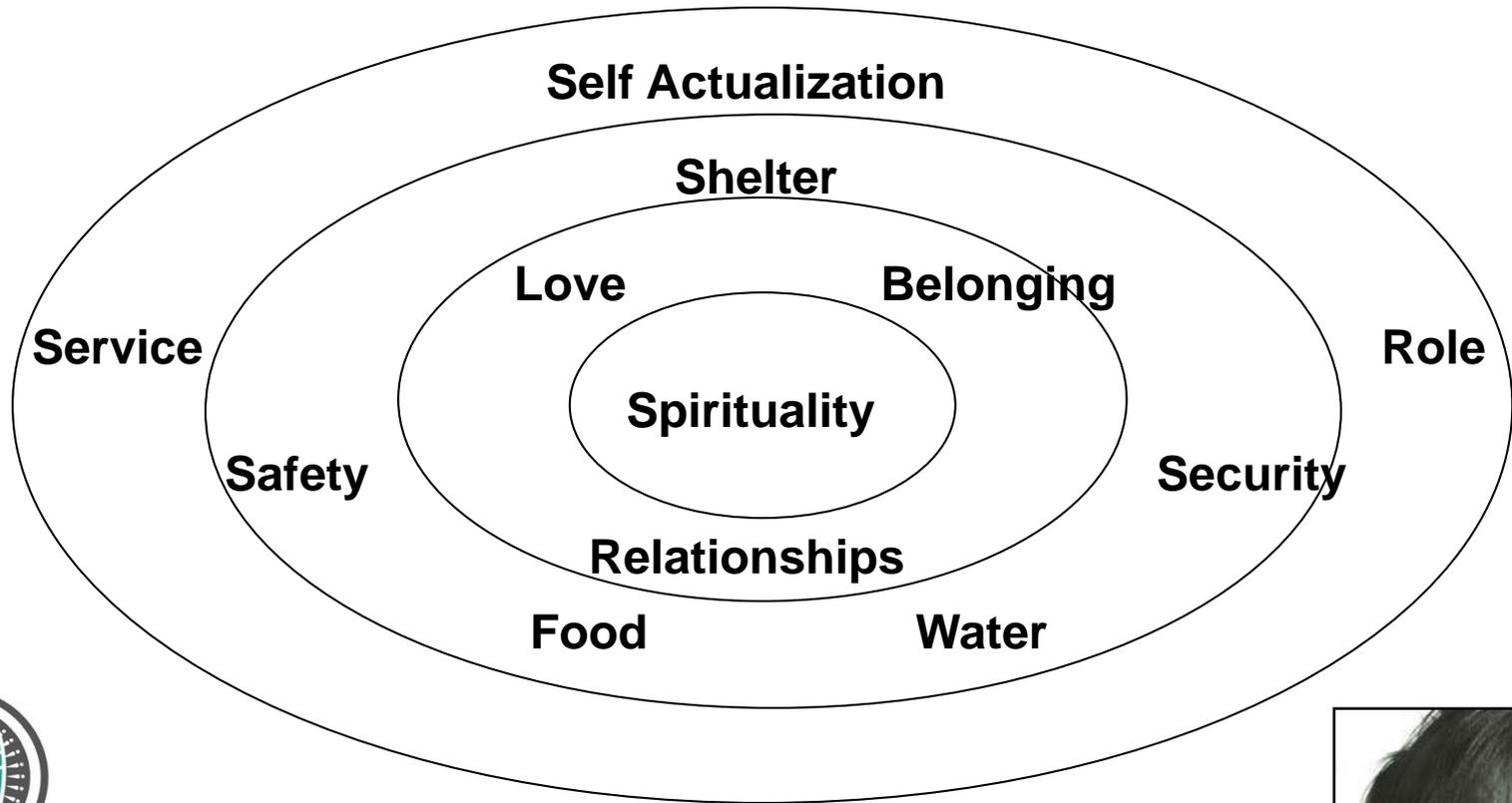
Native and Tribal Thought



Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs



Maslow: Through Indigenous Eyes

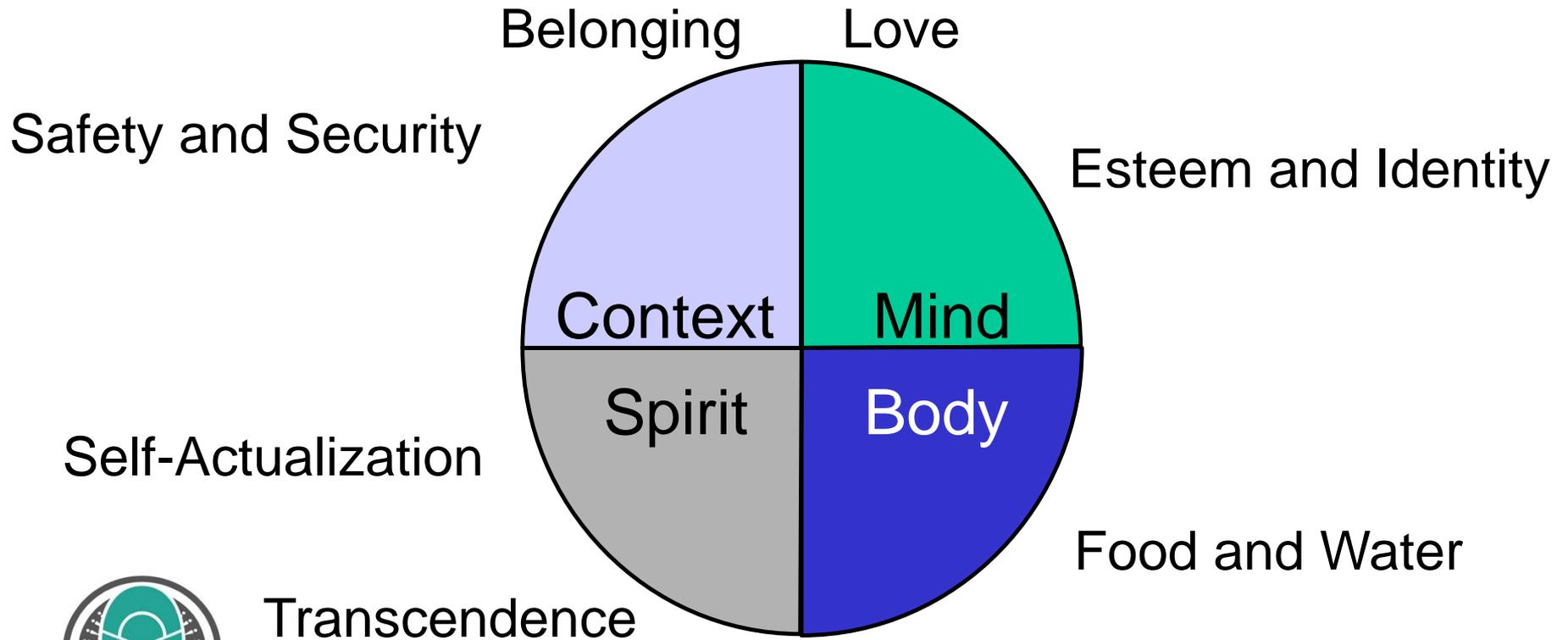


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Plotting Maslow



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Decolonization

“Colonization dismembered our culture,
our people, and our families.

Our job is Re-membering.”

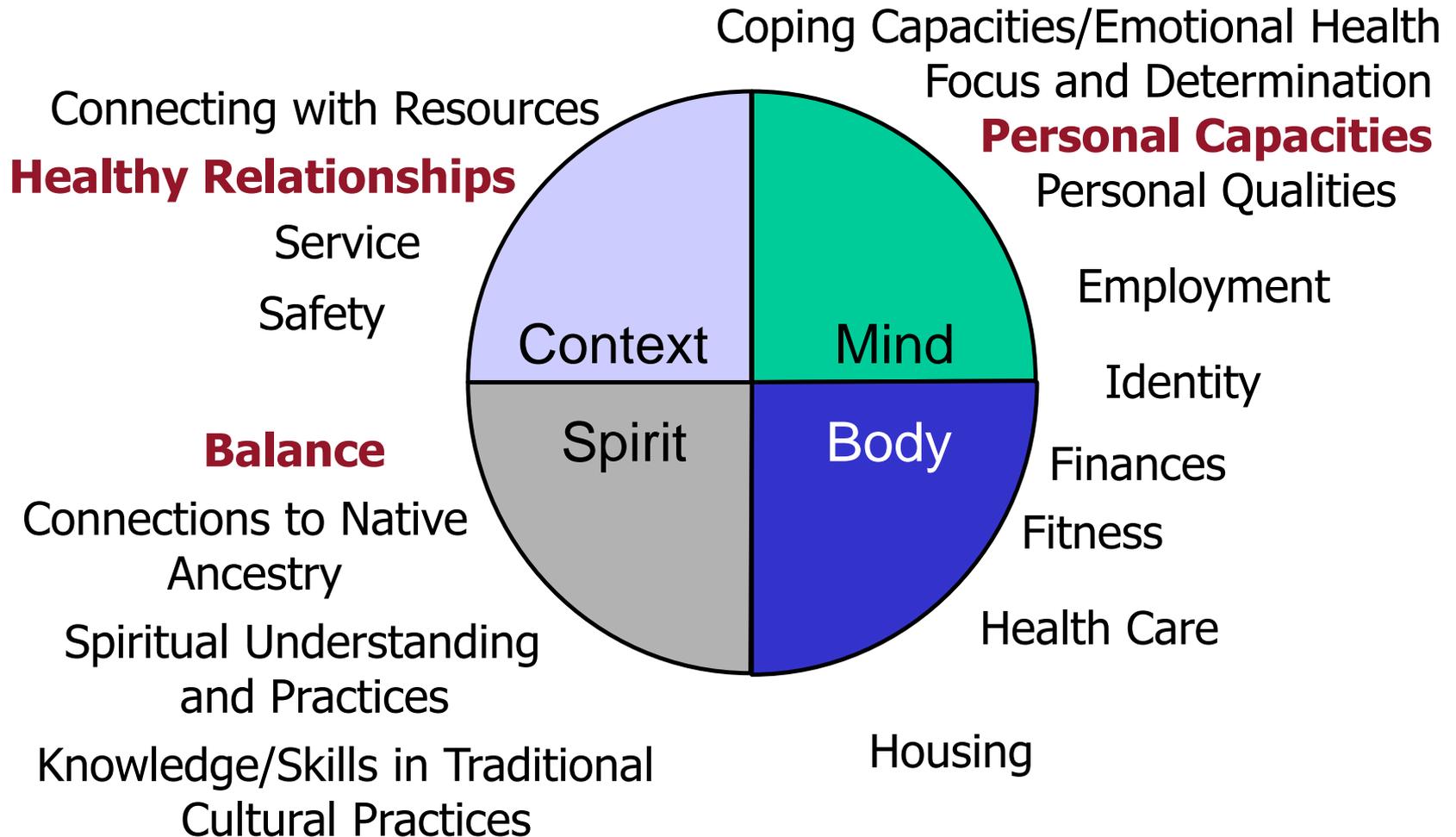
Theda Newbreast
Blackfeet



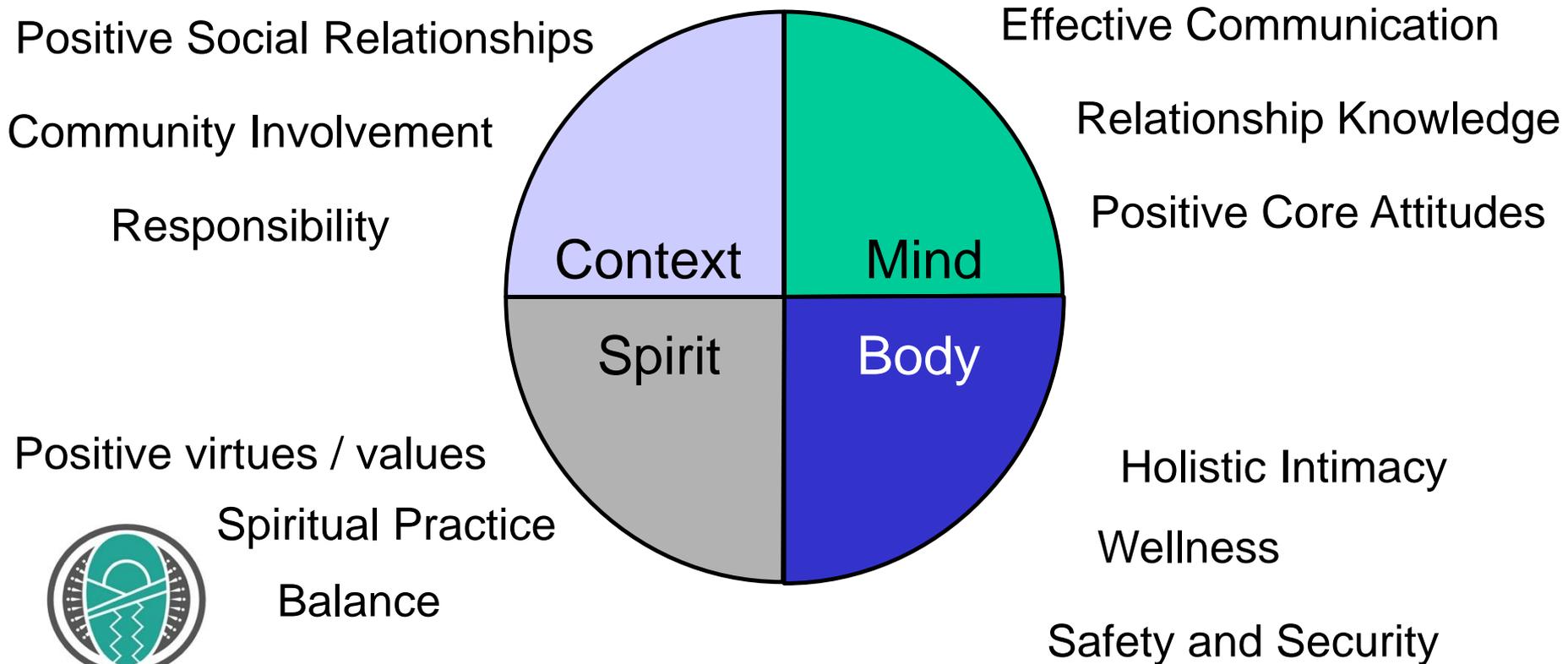
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Community-Defined Success: Youth



“What a successful couple looks like”



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Relational Worldview

Child Development

Social Development

Poverty

Historic Trauma

Relationships + -

Community Safety

Discrimination

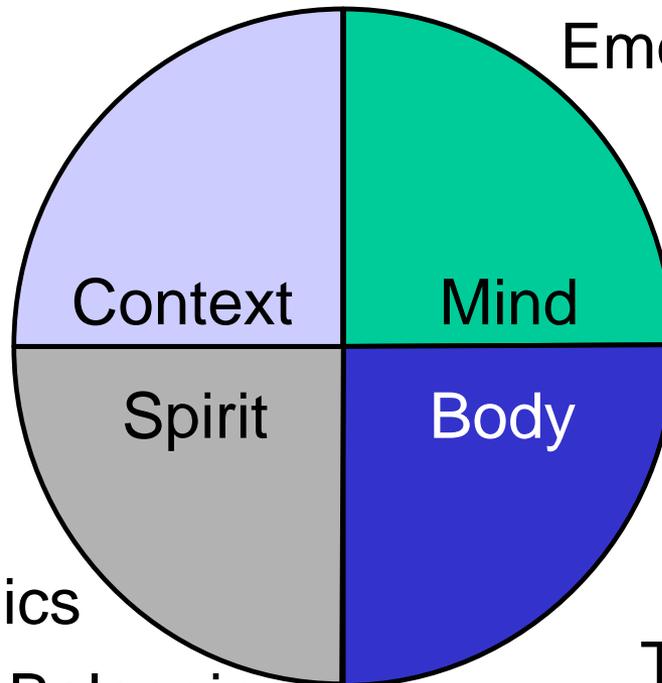
Cognitive Development

Emotional Development

Language

Memories + -

Self Efficacy



Context

Mind

Spirit

Body

Nutrition

Epigenetics

Talents and Gifts

Physical, Motor Development,
Brain Development

Spiritual Development

Values and Ethics

Identity and Belonging

Hope, Purpose, Future



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Reclaiming Our Truth

“He who defines reality
holds power.” Unknown



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Messages of Colonialism

- Indigenous people can't be trusted to know or do what's best for them
- Indigenous people are not significant enough to count
- Services can only be done by Indigenous people if provided as prescribed by the colonial power
- Colonial power policies are the "right" way and can't be modified even when they do harm
- Indigenous research is not rigorous



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Decolonization as Healing

- Colonization happened to us
- It does not define us
- Profound, complex, inter-generational, continuing trauma
- There is nothing wrong with us
- We are vital human beings to whom terrible things happened
- Trauma can be healed
- We know how to heal



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We are Worthy!



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Theda Newbreast
Blackfeet



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Decolonization

“Reject the colonial lie.”

Terry Cross
Seneca Nation

“Jettison the false hierarchy
of human value based on
race”

Gail Christopher



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RISK FACTORS

What is an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE)?

The experience of “significant abuse or household dysfunction during childhood”

Specific indicators:

- Recurrent physical abuse
- Recurrent emotional abuse
- Contact sexual abuse
- An alcohol and/or drug abuser in the household
- An incarcerated household member
- Someone who is chronically depressed, mentally ill, institutionalized, or suicidal in the household
- Mother is treated violently
- One or no parents
- Emotional or physical neglect



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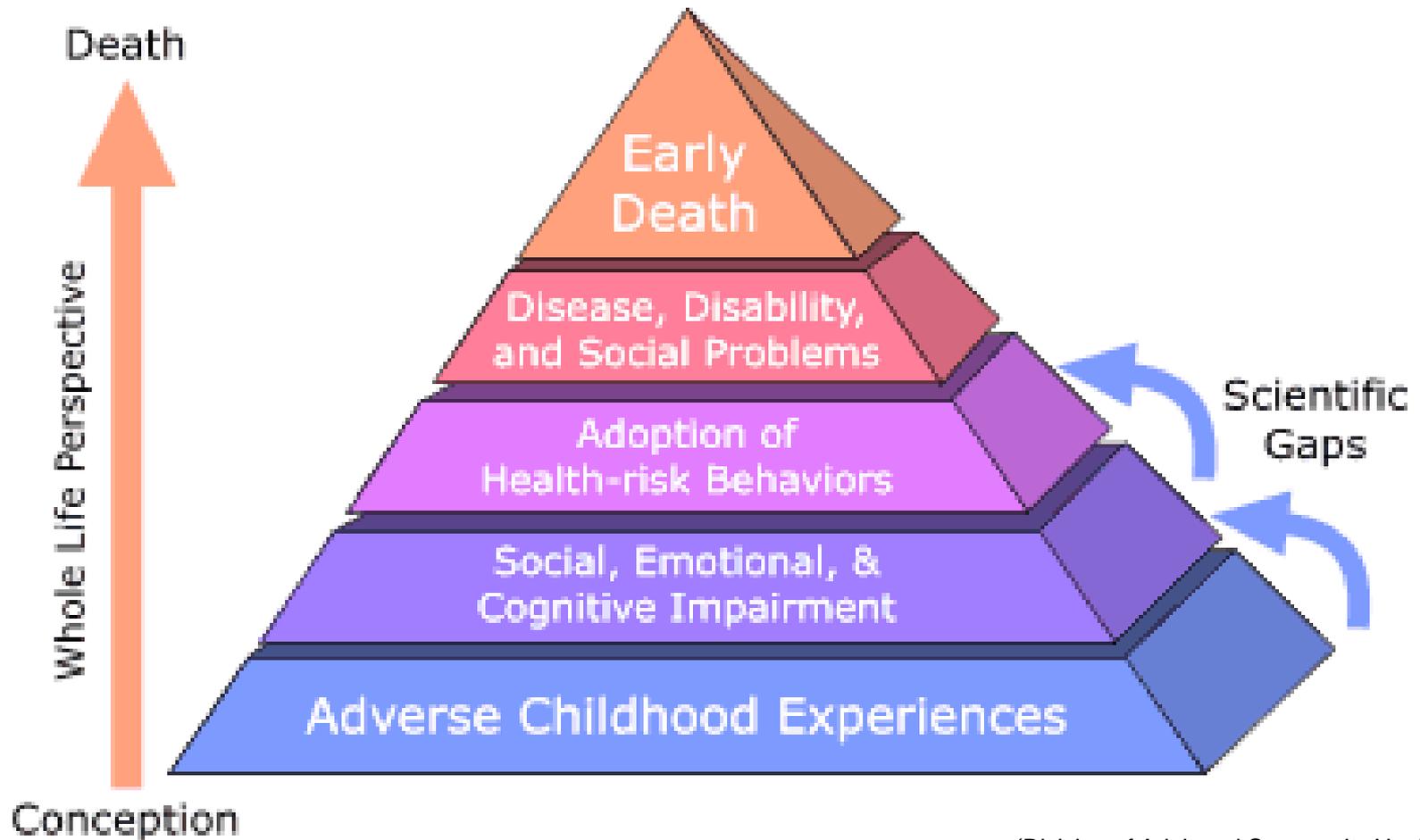
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(Division of Adult and Community Health,
National Center for Chronic Disease
Prevention and Health Promotion, CDC, 2010)

The ACE Study

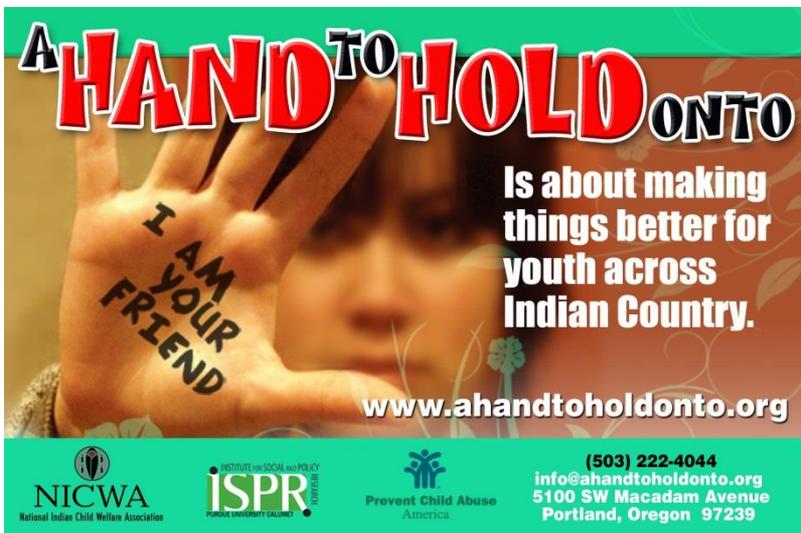
- The ACE Score is a count of the total number of ACE indicators for an individual.
- The score ranges from 1 (low trauma) to 9 (high trauma).
- In the mainstream population, as an ACE score increases, the risk for numerous health problems increases.

ACE Study Model



American Indian Youth Victimization and Delinquency Outcomes Study (AIYVDOS)

- Used a participatory research model:
 - Culturally sensitive and scientifically sound
 - Involving community members as partners and owners throughout the research process



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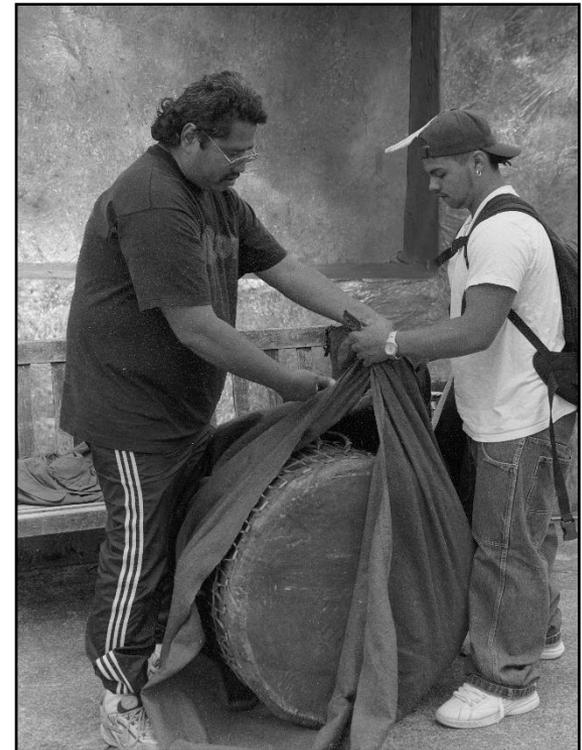
Final Sample

- 110 young adults, aged 18–25
- 82% Enrolled Tribal Members
- 58% Female, 42% Male
- Grew up:
 - On the reservation: 46%
 - Rural: 5%
 - Small town: 21%
 - Suburbs: 10%
 - Urban: 18%



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AIYVDOS and ACEs

# of ACEs	% of AIYVDOS Participants	% ACEs study (CDC, 2010)
0	30%	36%
4+	25%	13%

The percent of youth in our study with four or more ACEs is almost TWICE the rate in the mainstream population.

In mainstream culture, adults who had experienced four or more ACEs compared to those who had experienced none had at least four times higher risk of

- Alcoholism/drug use
- Depression
- Suicide attempts



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The good news...

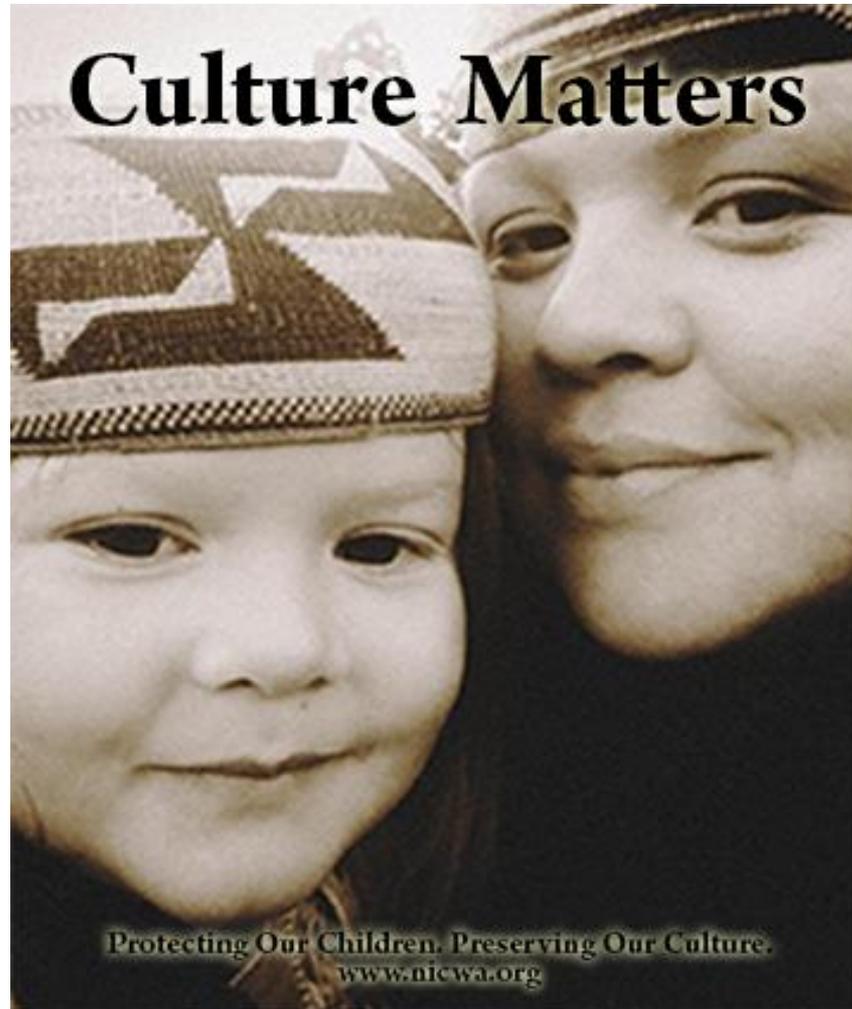


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PROTECTIVE FACTORS

What is a Protective Childhood Experience (PCE)?

Positive relationships and experiences while growing up that protect young people from negative influences and behaviors.

Specific Indicators:

- Supportive adults
- Positive peer groups
- School activities
- Family resources
- Spiritual/Religious Connection
- Connection with Tribal elders, learning a Tribal language
- Safe and strong community



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Grandmas Matter

grandmas matter

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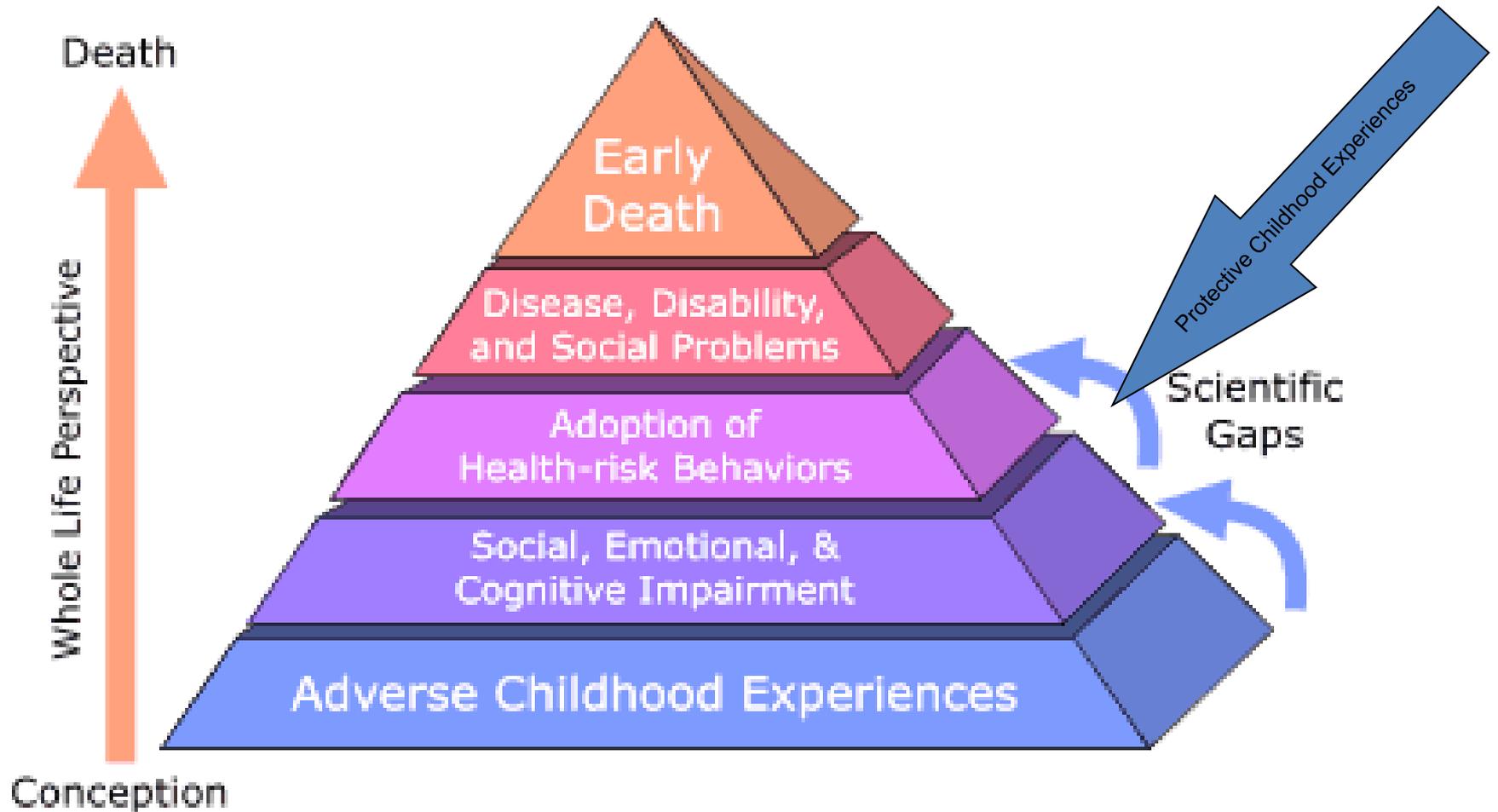
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ACE Study Model



ACE scores, PCE scores, and Juvenile Delinquency

We examined how ACEs and PCEs relate to delinquency by grouping people according to both ACEs and PCEs

- The group with **low** ACEs and **high** PCEs had the lowest delinquency (14%)
- The group with **high** ACEs and **low** PCEs had the highest delinquency (67%)
- Even when ACEs were high, the group with high PCEs had lower delinquency (39%) than the group with low ACEs and low PCEs (46%)



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Love Matters



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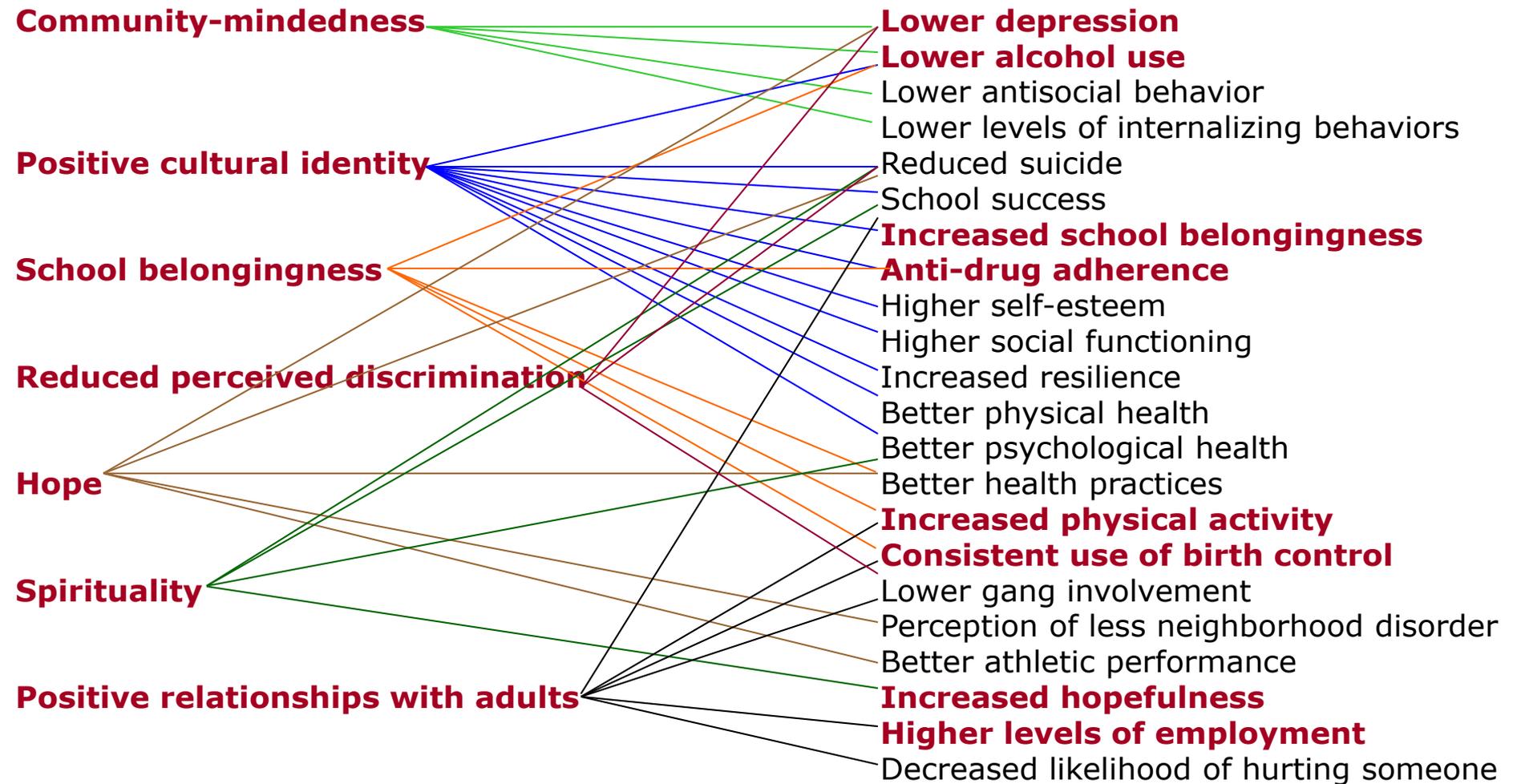
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grandmas matter

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Relationship of NAYA-identified outcomes to existing evidence



Outcomes in red are NAYA-identified outcomes; all items in right column are outcomes from the research literature.

Culture Matters



No Face
and her
black
and
white
neckless.



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Research Matters

- NICWA's legislative and policy accomplishments have their roots in research.
- Every submitted testimony cited data produced by Indigenous researchers
- Every meeting with Congressional representatives includes research findings.



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Thank you!



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