Native American Community Services of Erie & Niagara Counties, Inc. (NACS)

“Healing Our People through Empowerment”
Seven Generations…

- You (1),
- Children (2),
- Grandchildren (3),
- Great-grandchildren (4),
- Great-great-grandchildren (5),
- Great-great-great-grandchildren (6),
- Great-great-great-great-grandchildren (7)
Seven Generations…

- Great-grandparents (4),
- Grandparents (3),
- Parents (2)
- You (1),
- Children (5),
- Grandchildren (6),
- Great-grandchildren (7)

“Healing Our People through Empowerment”
Alcohol abuse, addictions, diabetes, domestic violence, obesity, asthma, cancer, STIs/STDs, suicide, deaths from drunk driving accidents, HIV, elder abuse, child abuse, gang involvement, incarceration, homelessness, teenage pregnancies, poverty, negative self-images, stereotypes, heart disease, mental health issues…

In providing services for Native Americans, the NACS Health and Wellness Component utilizes the

**Socio-Cultural Model of HIV Prevention**

*As developed by the New York State HIV Prevention Planning Group (PPG), c. 1999*
**Socio-Cultural Model of HIV Prevention**

- **Historical Underpinnings** = events that happened previously & that continue to impact the community in some way(s)

- **External Factors** = dynamics, influences, or effects on the community that are outside of the control and/or origin of the community

- **Cultural Norms** = how the community members treat each other & non-members

And, these issues must be identified & interpreted by members of the community
Historical & External Factors

Community Dynamics & Challenges
How can we help put the pieces back together?

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**Expand focus of work to greater awareness of health & wellness**
(Not just HIV/AIDS, but also alcohol, inter-generational dynamics, impact of historical trauma, etc.)

**Modify how we address the issue**
(“Healing In Volumes,” not HIV program.
“Achieving Our Dreams” instead of Alcohol & Other Drugs.
“Healthy Generations” instead of parenting classes)

**Incorporate Native cultural teachings & wisdom**
(“Stages of Life Empowerment” Program)

**Provide opportunities for Healing**
(Gathering of Native Americans; Talking Circles to watch “Unseen Tears,” “Journey to Forgiveness” and “Honour of All—The Story of Alkali Lake”)

**Precautions for Healing Efforts**


**Healing from Historical Trauma…**

- Some community members may not be ready or prepared, as this can be very personal

- Some people may not be aware of the full impact of these traumas in their lives today

- Healing may result in resurfacing of some long-standing, deep wounds

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**If staff are peers and/or from the community, dynamics of the community need to be understood (on personal, family, & community levels)**

As staff, we may have same or similar issues as the people we’re trying to help

We cannot promote the health & wellness of others if we’re not healthy & well
NACS’ Common Themes

Empowerment & Healing

How can the community deal with challenges by norms, cultural strengths, historical & related factors?
Life Cycle of Plants…

- Pits From Fruit Fall to Ground & Become Seeds
- Mature Tree With Fruit that Contain Seeds
- Seed
- Seed With Leaves
- Growing Tree
- Seedling
- Small Tree
The Unhealthy Forest  - - to - -> The Healthy Forest
Nyah-Weh!!

Clearing the path for the next seven generations!