

Restoring Balance: Moving Full Circle from Trauma to Celebration “A Wellness Journey”

The following modules provide the learner with excellent wholistically based teachings for the life- long wellness journey.

Family of Origin

Using the 3 - 4 generation family genogram as a primary resource, participants gain an awareness of their present level of family functioning and how this level of functioning is connected with the family history of both spouses. Areas that are explored through the genogram data include the following: impact of loss on the family life cycle, patterns of functioning across generations (e.g. replication of the emotional atmosphere), anniversary reactions, parenting styles, relational patterns (e.g. triangles and fused relationships), gender roles and expectations, values and beliefs, and the nature of Indigenous kinship systems. Additionally, due to the trauma of the residential school experience spanning six generations, participants gain insight into the nature of intergenerational trauma, the transmission process, the impact of trauma on child development, and the personality characteristics of adult survivors (characteristics that have been transmitted from one generation to the next).

Colonization/Decolonization

This workshop provides survivors and their descendants with information on residential school history (i.e. in northeast Alberta, a focus on Blue Quills Residential School and the Roman Catholic Church), and the Federal government’s role along with an examination of the impact on the following areas:

- ★ Collective and individual experiences
- ★ Effects of colonization (stereotypes, racism, inferiorities)
- ★ Language and culture
- ★ Family, community, economics
- ★ Relationship to addictive processes
- ★ Dehumanization
- ★ Social problems (psychic numbing, voicelessness)
- ★ Decolonization (giving voice, dialogue, empowerment, debriefing tools)
- ★ Re-claiming spiritual, cultural, political, social and economic control

Communication

This course requires participants to examine their own style of communication and distinguish between healthy and unhealthy styles of interaction. A strong emphasis is placed on practicing and mastering alternative approaches to communication that promote a supportive relationship environment as opposed to a judgmental and critical relationship environment. Other areas covered include constructive conflict resolution, the healthy expression of anger, and the process of reconstructing boundaries in relationships.

Cultural Camp

The cultural camp module helps participants embrace what they lost as children when they were stripped of the traditional extended family lifestyle. Participants reconnect to the land spirituality and physically. They experience relationships within a natural setting along with traditional activities that can include fishing, hunting, food preparation, crafts, storytelling, teaching circles, sweetgrass, sweat ceremonies and pipe ceremonies as healing ways. Indigenous scientific knowledge and teachings and astronomy lessons will also be incorporated.

Aboriginal Parenting/Enhancing Family Self-Esteem

Drawing heavily on teachings derived from traditional native parenting and contemporary literature on child guidance, this workshop is designed to teach parents a proactive problem solving process to the task of raising children. Areas that are covered include

- ★ Learning about and participating in traditional coming of age ceremonies such as rites of passage -reclaiming our traditional approach to parenting such as storytelling to teach values
- ★ Learning and practicing age appropriate child guidance strategies, and
- ★ Learning and applying supportive communication skills in day-to-day family interactions.

Healing through Loss (8 to 10 participants)

This workshop is designed for adults who have experienced a traumatic childhood such as an alcoholic family environment. These adults have lost their childhood due to the “perpetual state of crisis” they experienced as children in an alcoholic family environment. With the help of traditional healing rituals, sacred songs, and a nurturing environment, survivors journey into the realm of their past, revisit their childhood memories of trauma (emotional, physical, sexual, etc.) and give voice to their painful legacy of shame and trauma. Through the discovery of their own voice, as well as a common voice, participants move from a state of isolation (brought about through self-shame) to a feeling of connection to others and a sense of belonging, and in doing so rediscover their humanity and their personal capacity to heal.

Re-Parenting the Self (8 to 10 participants)

Participants are expected to have completed the “Healing through Loss” workshop before they participate in this workshop. In the first half of the workshop, through the use of guided imagery, participants revisit their “hurt child” and are guided through the experience of nurturing this hurt child. Additionally, they also re-experience feelings associated with a particular childhood memories such as being scolded or beaten by a parental figure. The guided imagery allows for participants to reach out and comfort this “hurt child.” The second half of the workshop provides participants with tools to help them engage in the reparenting process in their day-to-day interactions. Participants are expected to utilize these tools immediately and share their experience with each other. As participants learn to reparent the self “mainly through the process of nurturing their “hurt child,” they will learn to connect as parents to their own children on a more meaningful level. Having learnt to hear, accept and love their “inner child,” they will in turn learn to hear, accept and love their own children. (This workshop is sometimes referred to as Inner Child therapy.)

Couple Intimacy (8 to 10 participants)

All couples participating in this workshop are expected to have completed the workshops “Healing through Loss” and “Re-Parenting the Self.” Through the medium of drawing, writing, and collages, couples explore the mental, spiritual, sexual and emotional dimensions of their relationships. In a safe and supportive environment, couples are encouraged to share the pain of their journey and let go of the past, while celebrating the joy that has kept them together despite their pain. Additionally, through role play, couples will learn to differentiate between healthy and unhealthy relationship patterns, learn to handle disagreements constructively rather than destructively, and learn the process of rebuilding healthy boundaries in their relationship with each other and their extended family. As participants explore the different dimensions of their relationships, they gain a deeper appreciation of the true nature of healthy intimacy: intimacy that allows people to come together and meet their needs spiritually, emotionally, mentally and sexually without sacrificing the self in the relationship.

Community Wellness Leadership and Facilitation

This workshop helps participants learn leadership skills for facilitating wellness workshops. Participants learn how to help others choose wellness, how to organize community wellness activities, learn how to fund-raise, and prepare promotions and participate in public relation campaigns related to wellness themes.

Choosing Healthy Lifestyles

Using the wholistic model of the medicine circle (addressing the mental, emotional, spiritual and physical elements) this workshop engages the participants in learning about traditional medicine, nutrition, wholistic therapies including aromatherapy, message, reflexology, guided imagery, and meditation. Participants learn about the importance of physical exercise/activity in the development of self-care plans. Choices and consequences with reference to physical health, diabetes, heart disease, smoking, and weight will be examined with the intent of teaching health restoration.

Celebrating Ourselves

This workshop allows participants to celebrate wholeness, utilizing healing ceremonies, and other ways of caring for self including: the medicine wheel of wholistic self care, the arts (learning about your creative self), filling the soul with beautiful things, inner child play, team building, being human, learning to laugh and play. In these activities participants will engage in physical play, role-play, drama, arts and crafts, etc.

Looking at the Wellness Wheel - Focusing on Physical Wellness

Taking a closer look at the composition and function of the physical body can bring about remarkable changes in the way we live. This module exposes five components of physical wellness: cardio respiratory endurance, joint flexibility, muscular endurance, muscular strength and body composition. You learn about the health status of your body, how much energy your body uses in a day, the amounts of physical activity recommended for physical health, and the skills and insight into why we read food labels. This module also explores the active living lifestyles of our ancestors, and how we incorporated physical wellness into daily living.