

DIGGING INTO THE PAIN

(SUPPORTING HEALING IN NATIVE COMMUNITIES)

CONTEXT

The continuous oppression and racism against native communities is a burden that is often unspoken in mainstream society.

Yet for members of this community it's often a place of overwhelming emotion when thinking of the current and historical context.

Recently in the news, this pain was touched when a young white man was captured smirking in front of native elder as he played songs of consciousness and healing – honoring those that were murdered in the 70s.

What could have been a beautiful homage to those who lost their lives became a mockery. It turned into a reminder of the historical pain that has been inflicted upon the native community for generations. For many in our community it touched upon our trauma and has opened up a mix of emotions.



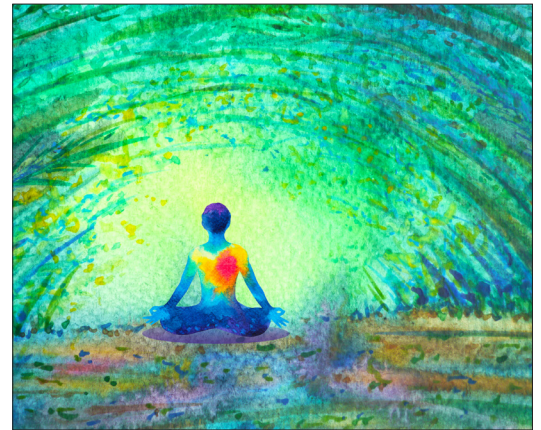
“My stomach turned inside out. So many feelings came up and I became literally sick to my stomach. I could feel the anger; and it brought up a different dynamic.”

“The trauma that’s been triggered is in our blood memories. It’s in our DNA. It didn’t happen in our lifetime but it’s not healed.”

“I reacted physically. When I thought about the layers [historical context] and how primitive the contact between our cultures (white culture and the indigenous people) has been one of the emotions I feel is anger – right off the back.”

“This wound will take a long time to heal. We have to keep cleaning it, dressing it and sanitizing it.”

Through our complicated past, we have learned from our ancestors and elders that one of the greatest ways to support healing is to acknowledge it and dig into the pain, hearing its infinite wisdom and discovering what we need to heal.



To encourage this healing, NYLA has created the following guide to support the members of our community to get curious about the impact of recent & historical trauma while supporting healing.

Two of the ways that we are doing this is through self-care and coaching. This guide will support our community:

- To initiate an intentional process of unpacking our current level of consciousness.
- To dig into the pain. To “open up the wound” we must maintain an awareness of feelings and the important/guiding/insightful messages they carry.
- To expand our potential, capacity, & possibility for individual healing from personal, interpersonal, institutional, systemic & blood trauma and/or attacks.



Self-Care Skill



Breathing heals on many levels; its life sustaining presence supports both our mental and physical well-being.

When we are stressed or experience uncomfortable feelings such as anger or pain, our breath becomes shallow and our muscle tissues contract. Deep breathing helps to release this.

Deep breathing activates the parasympathetic nervous system, bringing us into a relaxed state. It functions in the opposite way to the sympathetic nervous system, which stimulates activities associated with the fight-or-flight response.

The quality of our breath helps to relax the mind and enhance the ability to learn, focus, concentrate and memorize. It also relieves stress, anxiety, depression and negative thought patterns.

Coaching Skill

Acknowledgment in native communities means taking time to share with each other what we see, hear and how we feel. It reminds us that our complex history requires that we pause and dig into what is alive for us in the moment. It also helps us to figure out what we need for support and determine how we can begin individually and collectively healing.

Coaching Questions

1. What's alive for you? What is happening for you right now? (This is an opportunity to purge whatever you are holding.)
2. How do you feel? What emotions are coming up from you? (An opportunity to tap into emotions.)
3. How are your emotions impacting you? How do they show up in your daily life? (*Name the impact.)
4. What does this moment bring up? (Share our [blood] stories, truths/untruths and experiences.)
5. What are the stories you've been told? What/Where are the gaps? What's missing? (Find the unmet need.)
6. We know that history is often recorded incorrectly. What is your viewpoint about truth in this moment? What is your truth? (Explore beliefs and viewpoints.)
7. What do you need right now in this moment? (Promote awareness & practice of self-care.)
8. What do you need [or need to know] right now to begin healing?
9. What does this native community need to being healing? (Identify emergent/budding need(s).)

BOX BREATH - to reset our energy.

Directions:

Step 1: Slowly Exhale

Sitting upright, slowly exhale through your mouth, getting all the oxygen out of your lungs. Focus on this intention and be conscious of what you're doing.

Step 2: Slowly Inhale

Inhale slowly and deeply through your nose to the count of four. In this step, count to four very slowly in your head. Feel the air fill your lungs, one section at a time, until your lungs are completely full and the air moves into your abdomen.

Step 3: Hold Your Breath:

Hold your breath for another slow count of four.

Step 4: Exhale Again:

Exhale through your mouth for the same slow count of four, expelling the air from your lungs and abdomen. Be conscious of the feeling of the air leaving your lungs.

Step 5: Hold Your Breath Again:

Hold your breath for the same slow count of four before repeating this process.