Michelle Obama – Tribal Youth Gathering

- Long before the United States was even an idea, your ancestors were harvesting the crops that would feed the world for centuries to come.
- Your healing techniques have spurred great medical advances and saved countless lives.
- Your customs, your values, your discoveries are at the heart of the American story.
And yet, as we all know, America hasn’t always treated your people and your heritage with dignity and respect. Tragically, it’s been just the opposite.

Your traditions were systematically targeted for destruction. Your people were forced to relocate far from the lands they’d lived on for generations.

Young people just like you were sent to boarding schools designed to strip them of their language, culture, and history. And your religions and ceremonies were outlawed by so-called “civilization regulations” — regulations that literally made your cultures illegal.
And while that kind of blatant discrimination is thankfully far behind us, you all are still seeing the consequences of those actions every single day in your Nations.

You see it in the families who are barely getting by. You see it in the classmates who never finish school, in communities struggling with violence and despair.
What is Historical Trauma?

[T]he intergenerational collective experience of complex trauma that was inflicted on a group of people who share a specific group identity or affiliation such as a nationality, religious affiliation or ethnicity.

1. Community-wide experience
2. High levels of collective distress in contemporary communities
3. Perpetrated by outsiders with destructive intent

Historical Trauma Model

- Small Pox Epidemic of 1837
- Reservation Era
- Catholicism & Garrison Dam
- Boarding School
- Discrimination
- Discrimination

- Cedar Woman
- Good Medicine Woman
- Good Land Woman
- Blue Lake Woman
- Cedar Woman
- Brown Bear Girl
Indian Health Service Sterilizations


36 women under age 21 had been forcibly sterilized during this period despite a court-ordered moratorium on sterilizations of women younger than 21.

“Contract” physicians were not required to comply with any federal regulations (including informed consent).

Healthcare professionals coercive tactics included the threat of withdrawing future healthcare provisions or custody of Native American children already born—if consent for sterilization was withheld.

Full-blooded Indian women were primary targets of sterilization procedures.
Havasupai DNA Case

Tribal members had given DNA samples to ASU researchers hoping for genetic clues to the tribe’s high rate of diabetes. Members later learned that their blood samples had been used to study mental illness and other aspects of Havasupai biology, sociology, and history that were not included on the informed consent documents.

Photos courtesy of the New York Times
How Does Historical Trauma Inform Research in Indian Country?

Used as both a description of trauma responses among a particular group of individuals as well as a potential causative factor for long-term distress among communities.

How is Historical Trauma Measured?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Yearly or at special times</th>
<th>Monthly</th>
<th>Weekly</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>Several times a Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loss of our land</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>10.4%</td>
<td>6.7%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of our language</td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>35.7%</td>
<td>13.4%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>9.7%</td>
<td>7.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing our traditional spiritual ways</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
<td>15.5%</td>
<td>12.2%</td>
<td>8.5%</td>
<td>8.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The loss of our family ties because of boarding schools</td>
<td>49.8%</td>
<td>20.4%</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The loss of families from the reservation to government relocation</td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
<td>5.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The loss of self respect from poor treatment by government officials</td>
<td>30.9%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>7.4%</td>
<td>9.3%</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The loss of trust in whites from broken treaties</td>
<td>33.1%</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>16.5%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>7.9%</td>
<td>7.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Losing our culture</td>
<td>23.9%</td>
<td>25.4%</td>
<td>20.8%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>11.4%</td>
<td>8.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The losses from the effects of alcoholism on our people</td>
<td>20.0%</td>
<td>28.0%</td>
<td>18.5%</td>
<td>12.7%</td>
<td>11.3%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of respect by our children and grandchildren for elders</td>
<td>18.7%</td>
<td>19.8%</td>
<td>20.1%</td>
<td>13.2%</td>
<td>16.1%</td>
<td>12.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of our people through early death</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>14.5%</td>
<td>9.8%</td>
<td>10.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss of respect by our children for our traditional ways</td>
<td>19.0%</td>
<td>24.8%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>15.0%</td>
<td>9.9%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Abbreviations: %-percentage

### Historical Trauma Effects


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Any Anxiety or Mood Disorder</th>
<th>Any Substance Dependence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diagnosis</td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Multivariate analyses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Historical Loss Scale</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Step 1 (demographics, Native American heritage, other diagnoses)</td>
<td>0.09</td>
<td>1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Step 1 (demographics, Native American heritage, other diagnoses)</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>1.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Univariate analyses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Historical Loss Scale</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Step 1 (demographics, Native American heritage, other diagnoses)</td>
<td>-0.08</td>
<td>1.30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Step 2 (Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale)</td>
<td>-0.13</td>
<td>2.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale</em></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Step 1 (demographics, Native American heritage, other diagnoses)</td>
<td>0.12</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After Step 2 (Historical Loss Associated Symptoms Scale)</td>
<td>0.15</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: Step 1 variables included age, gender, marital status, annual income above $20,000, high school graduate, Native American heritage, and historical trauma.*
What Serves to Buffer Historical Trauma?

- Having deep emotional attachments with others
- Holding traditional values
- Helping others
- Focusing on future generations.
- Developing an identity as a helper and healer; serving as a conduit for transforming the community trauma

Traditional cultural practices serve to buffer the effects of other lifetime assaults on Lakota elders.

How Is Historical Trauma Expressed Across Communities?

- Schools
- Tribal Programs
- IHS / BIA
- Leaders
- Parents
Activity: Mapping Historical Trauma

- Schools
- Tribal Programs
- IHS / BIA
- Leaders
- Parents
How Should Historical Trauma be Addressed in Research?

- Establish whether addressing historical trauma is appropriate (i.e., expert consultation with elders, health workers)
- Identify ways to include (i.e., historical trauma measures)
- Training as needed
  - For researchers on culture?
  - For community members conducting research (i.e., data collection) on historical trauma?
Could Addressing Historical Trauma Harm Participants or Bias Results?

- Check in on controversial issues
- Make sure stakeholders are involved appropriately / at key decision making points
- Report progress /findings
- Review process regularly
- Establish data safety and monitoring plan
Address Historical Trauma from Both Positive and Ecological Perspectives

• Include a strengths-based approach
• Ensure culture is a part of the decision making process
• Discuss ways the findings will be applied at all levels
Optional Topic – Historical Trauma

Historical Trauma

Government policies, like requiring American Indian and Alaska Native (AIAN) families to send their children to boarding schools, reducing traditional lands, and prohibiting Native languages and spirituality, are types of historical trauma that continue to impact AIAN families today. In addition, historically, AIAN communities experienced devastating diseases that they had never seen before, such as smallpox.

Discrimination and Microaggressions

Even with the elimination of the Federal assimilation policies, Indian people today still face barriers to achieving educational and professional goals, and living a healthy, balanced life. Discriminatory practices still occur in many areas like the school system, the legal system, and social services.

Poor treatment based on race, and the stereotypes that are perpetuated about AIAN are called “microaggressions.” It is helpful to understand that these hurtful and frustrating experiences mean less about us and our communities, than it does about the person using these types of practices to demean and undermine our children and family members.

These events harmed generations of AIAN, and contribute in many ways to stress in our communities. In particular, the Federal assimilation policies caused major family disruption, due to the loss of language, loss of spirituality and other traditional ways of coping with loss and stressors, and the deliberate and systematic break-up of familial-relationships as children were required to attend boarding schools.

AIAN Strength and Healing

Our communities have survived over 500 years of historical trauma. We are still here, and that speaks to our strength, resilience and the ability of our families and communities to not only survive, but to heal and prosper.

Sometimes we face challenges, and reaching our goals of education, building a career, and moving our family forward can feel difficult. At these times, it is important to remember all of the possibilities that exist in life for both you and your child. Keeping goals in mind can help us weather any difficulty.

Your home visitor can help you find community-based resources that will help address many of these issues. By seeking out support from our families and communities, we can build our resiliency and better handle stressors.
No action is too small. Every voice matters. And while you might not see the change you want in your lifetime, maybe your children will see that change.

Maybe your grandchildren or great-grandchildren will see that change. And see, decades from now, maybe those kids, your kids, your offspring will look back at all of you and say that you were the generation who started it all -- Gen-I. You were the generation that dug deep. You were the generation that drew strength from your history and wrote a new story of Indian Country and of America.
Contact Information

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