

# The Spirit of Healing

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Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

**MHTTC**

Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network  
Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

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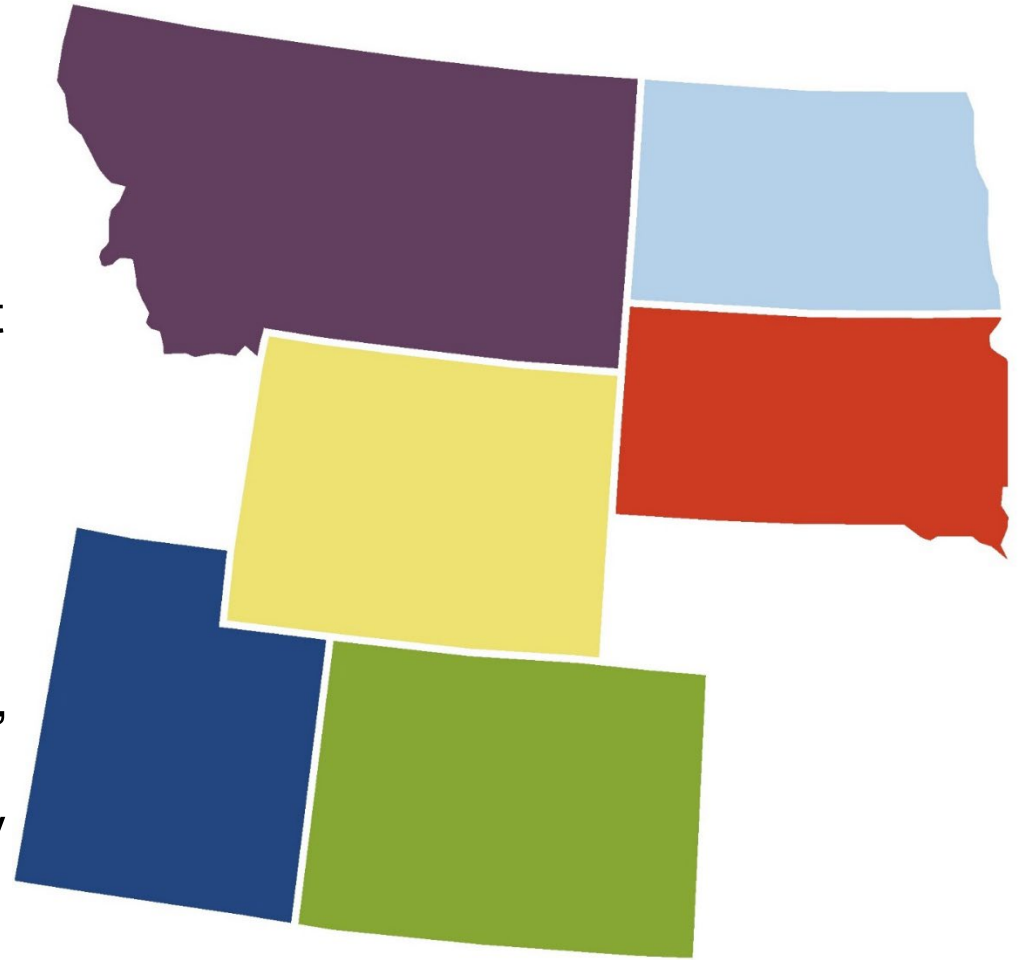
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# The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

The Mountain Plains Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (Mountain Plains MHTTC) provides training and technical assistance to individuals who serve persons with mental health concerns throughout Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah and Wyoming).

We belong to the Technology Transfer Center (TTC) Network, a national network of training and technical assistance centers serving the needs of mental health, substance use and prevention providers. The work of the TTC Network is under a cooperative agreement by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration (SAMHSA).



# Land Acknowledgement Statement

Today, the University of North Dakota rests on the ancestral lands of the Pembina and Red Lake Bands of Ojibwe and the Dakota Oyate - presently existing as composite parts of the Red Lake, Turtle Mountain, White Earth Bands, and the Dakota Tribes of Minnesota and North Dakota. We acknowledge the people who resided here for generations and recognize that the spirit of the Ojibwe and Oyate people permeates this land. As a university community, we will continue to build upon our relations with the First Nations of the State of North Dakota - the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate Nation, Spirit Lake Nation, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, and Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Indians.



The MHTTC Network uses affirming, respectful and recovery-oriented language in all activities. That language is:

STRENGTHS-BASED  
AND HOPEFUL

INCLUSIVE AND  
ACCEPTING OF  
DIVERSE CULTURES,  
GENDERS,  
PERSPECTIVES,  
AND EXPERIENCES

HEALING-CENTERED AND  
TRAUMA-RESPONSIVE

INVITING TO INDIVIDUALS  
PARTICIPATING IN THEIR  
OWN JOURNEYS

PERSON-FIRST AND  
FREE OF LABELS

NON-JUDGMENTAL AND  
AVOIDING ASSUMPTIONS

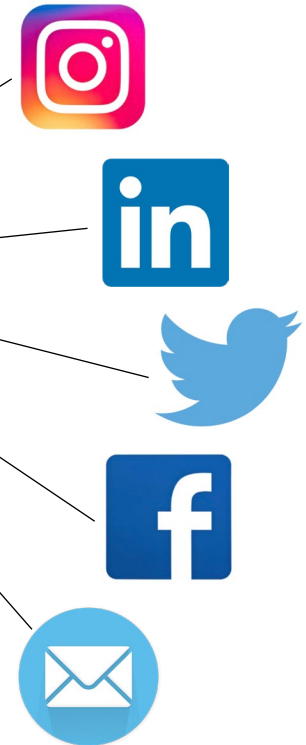
RESPECTFUL, CLEAR  
AND UNDERSTANDABLE

CONSISTENT WITH  
OUR ACTIONS,  
POLICIES, AND PRODUCTS

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## Mountain Plains - Mental Health Technology Transfer Center

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# The Spirit of Healing

- LaVonne Fox, PhD, OTR
  - VP of Academic Affairs at Turtle Mountain Community College
  - Trainer, Mountain Plains MHTTC







# Today's Objectives

- For this presentation we will focus on
  - The need for focus on spirituality in connection to homelessness.
  - Exploring what is the spirituality of healing
  - Ways to build and honor the spirituality of the youth and
  - Ways to help them honor their spirit as well



# Indigenous Homelessness

- Indigenous people face various forms of homelessness when they are unable to connect or reconnect with their Indigeneity and relationships.
- Individuals, families, and communities who are separated from land, water, location, family, kin, social networks, language, and culture can be recognized as experiencing homelessness.
- On a cultural, spiritual, emotional, and physical level, Indigenous people facing various forms of homelessness are unable to reconnect with their Indigeneity and lost relationships.

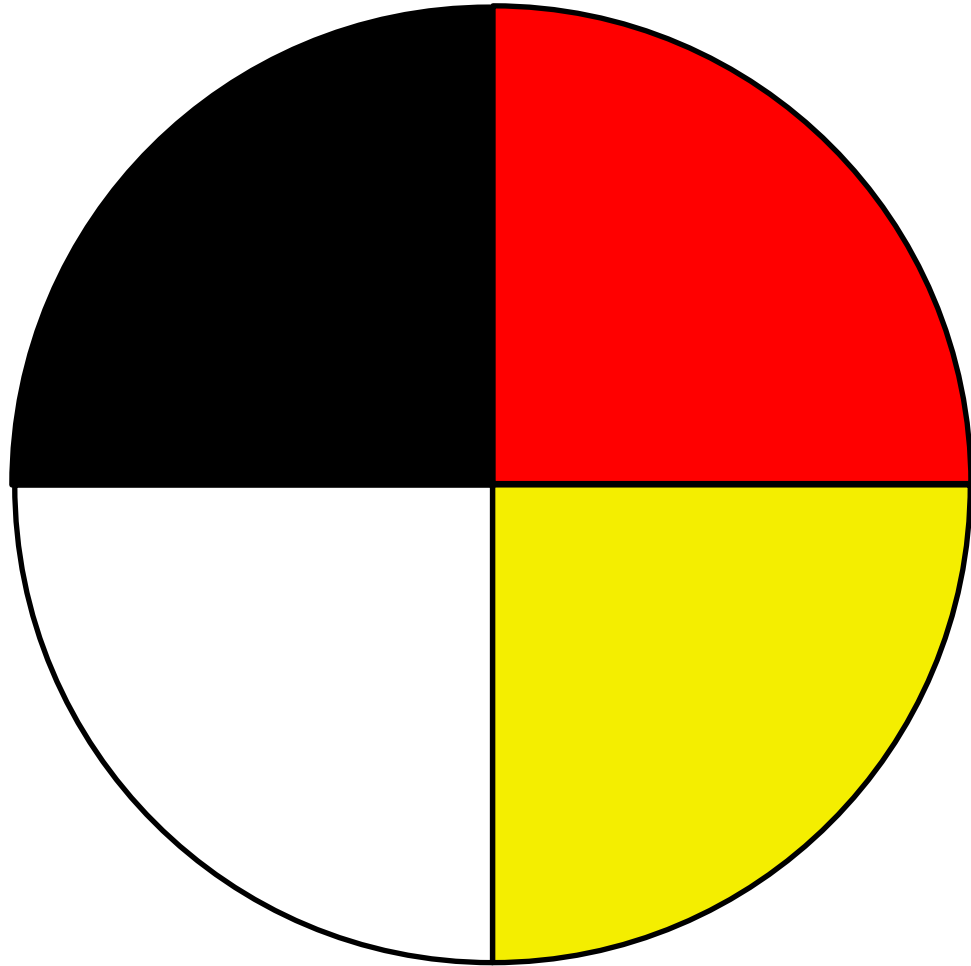
Thistle, 2017, pgs. 14-16



# Spiritual Disconnection Homelessness

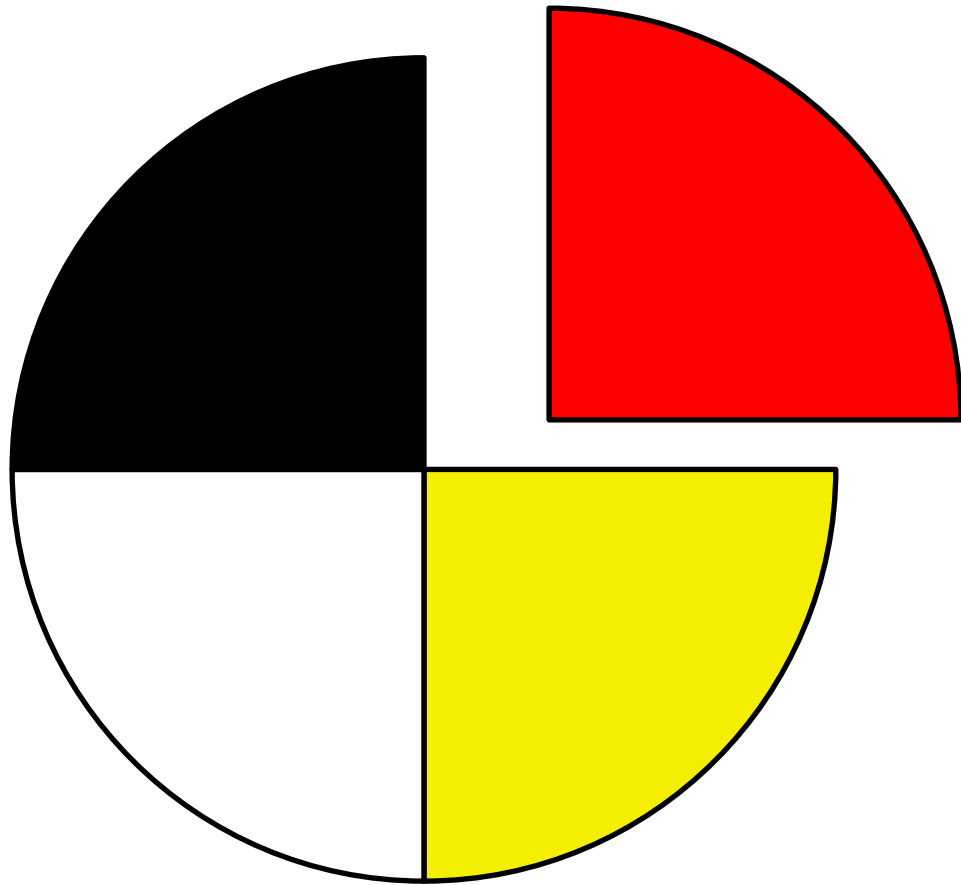
- Concept developed by Jess Thistle. He defined it as, an Indigenous individual's or community's separation from Indigenous worldview or connection the creator or equivalent deity.
- For Indigenous people, our concept of home is our connection and relationships with humans, animals, plants, spirits and elements. Additionally our traditional stories, songs, teachings, names and ancestors. If these are not there, we are rootless, unanchored or homeless.

Thistle, 2017, pgs. 14-16



The Sacred Hoop / Medicine Wheel has strong spiritual and holistic healing when it is balanced and united.

When the circle is intact, we have the courage to care for others and make good decisions.



If the circle is broken, we become discouraged, and it affects how we treat others and make decisions.

Many marginalized youth and adults have broken circles and the fault line usually began with damaged relationships.

Brokenleg (1998). Native Wisdom on Belonging.



# Spirituality vs Religion

- Has no rules – rather it encourages you to listen to your intuition and to do what is right for yourself and others around you.
  - Based on love, not fear, making choices from a good place.
  - Self discovery - Personal quest for understanding answers about the meaning and relationship of your life in connection with everything else around you- having and giving a sense of belonging and acceptance.
  - Meaning and purpose in the things we value.
  - Being present in the moment.
  - An experience of living and having hope even during painful or difficult times.
- Based on pre-established practices, beliefs, rituals, dogma
  - Designed to facilitate closeness to a higher power.
  - Tells you what is true/false, good/evil.
  - Often comes with pressure to be good so God likes you.
  - Often interconnected with punishment



- According to Dr. Thomas Joiner's Interpersonal Theory of Suicidality, lethal and near-lethal suicide attempts take place at the intersection of three risk factors:
  - Thwarted Belongingness (I am alone),
  - Perceived Burdensomeness (I have no purpose/my existence burdens others) and
  - The acquired capability to kill (I am not afraid to die).

Can focusing on spirituality help address these areas



# When the spirit of belonging is struggling you may see:

- Distrust
- Exclusion
- Detachment
- Rejection
- Antagonism
- Overly dependent
- Craves acceptance
- Craves affection





# Latimer, Sylliboy, MacLeod et.al. (2018)


- The following excerpts from their student highlight the way many Indigenous youth deal with challenges:
  - “I have a really hard time describing, it’s not that I don’t know how to describe my pain, it’s just I don’t want to. I feel embarrassed or wimpy if I do. I feel like I could deal with it on my own if I just let it go ... I know that’s how I feel towards my parents. Like if they ever see me get hurt, and I want to cry really bad, I won’t. I can’t cry in front of them (pg.4).”
  - That’s something that I don’t like, is whenever I’m sick or if I get hurt and if I keep thinking about it, then I put it in my head and I’m alright but it’s there in my head. Like, I don’t like babying myself. It’s like as soon as I feel better, even the littlest bit, though I am hurt, I try to keep going. Just living like every day normally like how I normally would.”



# Latimer, Sylliboy, MacLeod et.al. (2018)

- Example of artwork

## Examples of paintings depicting overlapping dimensions of pain

Dimension	Narrative	Painting
<p><b>Emotional</b> <i>"The emotional pain that she has"</i> <b>Mental</b> <i>"White kind of atmosphere ... separates it from her pain"</i></p>	<p>My painting is about pain and the black represents how she feels inside. But she has like this, white kind of atmosphere and it separates it from her pain, because we can't see their pain like through our eyes. So this is just her, and this is how we see her, but when we look outside of it, which is you know, her perspective, there is the pain and cracks ... represent her pain through her heart. It's like, when you're hurt, but then you get better, there is always going to be that you know what happened, and you're always going to know that how you felt. So it's there even though it's gone, it's still there. So yeah, and the cloud—it represents her emotional, it's like the inside, the bubble inside her head. The emotional pain that she has. (P1)</p>	

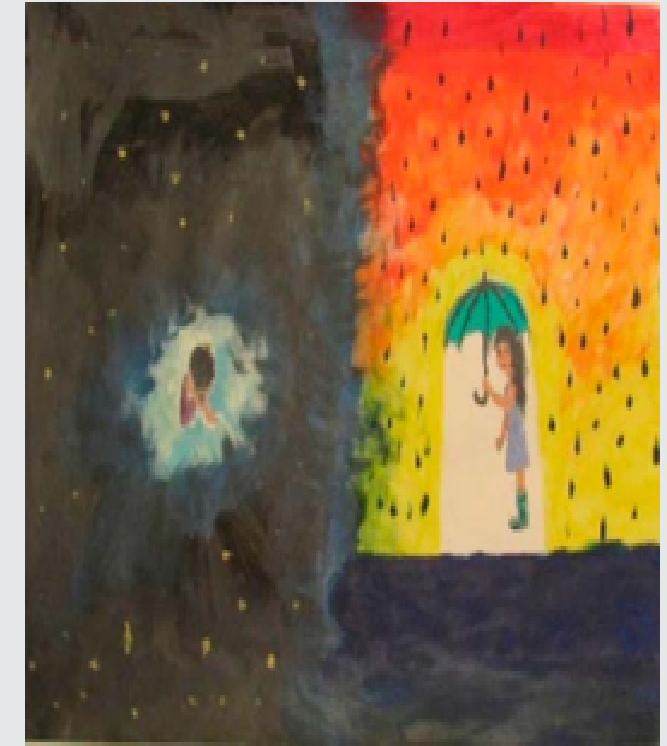


# Latimer, Sylliboy, MacLeod et.al. (2018)

**Emotional** *"alone in the dark"*

**Mental** *"pretend to laugh, and have a fake smile"*

I drew 2 sides of one story, it's like about emotional pain. They can put on like a smile throughout the day and pretend to laugh, and have a fake smile, but really on the inside they feel so lost and alone in the dark. And, they're just trying to avoid being that way. But they can't help it. (P5)





# What is the Spirit of Healing?



Artist: Frankie Morin 2008

- Begins here - within





# Spirit of Healing

- It is the idea of achieving well-being and wholeness
- It represents the intrinsic human need and ability to recover from physical & emotional wounds caused by traumas and illness.
- Working toward a state of balance.
- It requires accepting past experiences & forgiving oneself and others. Extending grace.
- Letting go of grudges and resentments is an important part of healing.
- It requires time & patience.



# Indigenous Spiritual Worldview



- Everything and everyone is related and interconnected. Whatever one does will impact everything and everyone around them, directly or indirectly.





# Indigenous Spirituality

- Closely bound to culture and ways of living/knowing.
- Living in harmony is a core philosophy
- Means walking the Red Road for those who use the sacred principles to overcome great adversity in their life such as homelessness, abuse, mental health challenges, battling moral injury and/or make a decision to live a life of sobriety.
- “In a good way” is an Indigenous expression that means you are living in a way that honors tradition and spirit. One example can be the Seven Grandfather Teachings: wisdom, love, respect, bravery, honesty, humility and truth. It means our daily actions and behaviors align with these teachings, morals and virtues.



# Facilitate Spiritual Awakening

- Inner change where you begin to question the old beliefs you have, look at the interconnectedness of everything and search for a deeper sense of purpose that is holistic – balanced.







# Discussion could include:

- How much do you know about your Indigenous (or Native American) culture?
- Do you see yourself as being Indigenous (or Native American)?
- Is being Indigenous (or Native American) an important part of who you are?
- Are you proud to be Indigenous (or Native American)?
- Do you participate in traditional spiritual activities? If so, how often?
- What are important spiritual activities for you?
- How interested are you in learning more? Any specific area?

Fleming & Ledogar (2008).



# A healthy sense of spiritual belonging can be seen in life skills of:

- Nurturing relationships
- Social skills
- Communication
- Cooperation
- Personal safety
- Conflict resolution
- Accepting differences
- Teamwork





# Spirituality is Resilience

- It is the ability to bounce back from adversity, setbacks, or challenges.
- To find inner strength and resources to overcome difficulties.
- Resilience is positive adaptation despite adversity (Fleming & Ledogar, 2018)



## To strengthen the spirit of belonging:

- Develop an environment that provides a sense of security and inclusion.
- Build on mutual trust and respect.
- Give positive encouragement.
- Focus on the strengths not the deficits.
- Greet everyday with reminders they are valued.
- Continuous acts of kindness despite difficult behavior.
- Listen.



# How can we honor their spirituality

- Respect Indigenous Traditions and Beliefs
- Cultural Education for both the Indigenous youth and you
- Support Indigenous Elders and Knowledge Keepers
- Ceremonial Participation
- Community Involvement
- Cultural Resources
- Support Self-Expression
- Respect Privacy and Boundaries
- Advocate for Cultural Sensitivity
- Provide Mentorship and Guidance
- Be aware of the unique mental health challenges related to historical trauma and cultural disconnection
- Advocate for Indigenous rights
- Listen and learn



# Resources

- [Life Promotion Toolkit](#)
- [We Matter Toolkit for Youth](#)
- [Strengthening Resilience: Promoting Positive School Mental Health Among Indigenous Youth](#)
- [Zero Suicide Toolkit](#)
- [SAMHSA Native Connections](#)
- [SAMHSA Tribal Training and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network Region 8](#)



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# Homework

- Ask yourself some thought-provoking questions about spirituality:
  - What does spirituality mean to you?
  - What beliefs or values are important to your spiritual journey?
  - Have there been any significant spiritual experiences or moments in your life?
  - How do you connect with my inner self or higher power, if applicable?
  - Are there any spiritual practices or rituals you engage in regularly?
  - What role does mindfulness or meditation play in your spiritual growth?
  - How do your beliefs and values influence your daily life and decisions?
  - Do I feel a sense of purpose or meaning in my life through my spirituality?