

Indigenous Trauma Healing: A Modern Model

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Although Australian professional counselling services are well-established, a unified vision of what defines professional counselling identity in Australia remains elusively absent. Self-regulation within the Australian counselling profession contributes greatly to the strong development of professional training, ethics, and practice principles, yet a clear understanding of what constitutes professional counselling identity remains undefined. This paper proposes that, in order to develop awareness of what comprises professional counselling identity in Australia, the views of Australian counselling professionals are necessary. This paper offers a preliminary investigation of Australian professional counsellors' views of what defines professional counselling identity.

Keywords: *trauma, healing, indigenous, community social work, spirituality*

Decolonisation in social research and professional practice is a means to "redress the constructs used by academics and governments" (Sherwood 2010, p. 121). Within a decolonisation framework lies indigenous theory, the word "indigenous" is used to describe specific people whose beliefs, traditions and ways of living originate within a cultural group and place, or more broadly as a view of the world as a web of life that is inherently inter-connected and operates in cycles (Cervantes & McNeill, 2008). Indigenous theory is a philosophy of an innate wholeness in nature and an understanding that humans need to live in respectful relationship with all beings, and is reflected in numerous indigenous cultures around the world. In this paper, the term "Western" refers to a culture principally based on Judeo-Christian and scientific thinking that is mainstream in the Australia today.

The Medicine Wheel

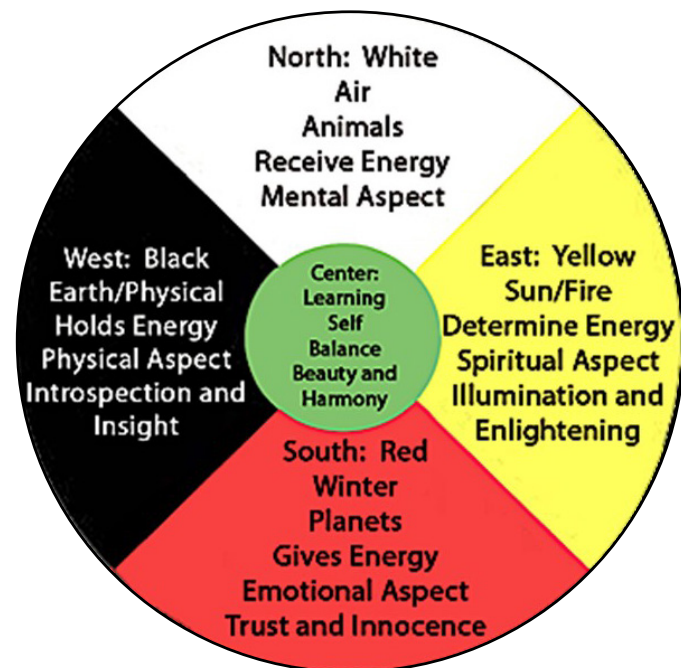
The medicine wheel is the "essential metaphor for all that is" (Rael, 1998, p. 35). Walking the medicine wheel is a life path, and the medicine wheel in a physical form is a tool for humans to learn, grow and maintain life balance (Dapice, 2006). There is no "right" or "wrong" way of using a medicine wheel (Bell, 2014). The practice of a talking circle, where people sit openly

with no physical object between them and take turns listening and speaking, is a metaphorical representation of the medicine wheel, the circle of life. A two-dimensional representation of a medicine wheel tends to be symbolised by a circle divided into four parts. There are numerous metaphorical perspectives on the four parts of the circle, including: the four directions of north, east, south and west; the four seasons of winter, spring, summer and fall; the four times of day of morning, afternoon, evening and night; the four stages of life of infant, child, adult and elder; the four elements of earth, air, water and fire; and four aspects of being of physical, spiritual, emotional and mental (See e.g. Bell, 2014; Charbonneau-Dahlen, 2015; Dapice, 2006; Rael, 2015). To see the wheel in three dimensions, consider a central point below the ground, a point in the center representing the heart that unites all beings, and a point above the ground. The portion of the medicine wheel above the ground, commonly referred to as Father Sky, represents the visible aspects of life, and the lower half of the medicine wheel, commonly referred to as Mother Earth, represents the invisible aspects of life below the ground. The invisible world below the ground is experienced through feeling, intuition and mystery, a metaphor for the darkness of Mother Earth's womb that sustains and nourishes the world we see and experience in physical form. The medicine wheel is a symbolic embodiment of our spherical planet Earth. All directions need to be in balance to live in wellness and be centered in our hearts. An example from the Hopi tribe of North America is shown in Figure 1 (Medicine Wheel, n.d.).

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Figure 1. Hopi Medicine Wheel (Medicine Wheel, n.d.)



What is outside the boundary of the circle is undefined, space without form, the unknown or shadow. Inside the circle are known aspects of a culture or individual's world (Rael, 1998). Energy is constantly cycling in and out of the medicine wheel. In the Hopi medicine wheel in Figure 1, an aspect of the unknown enters in the North, the mental, and gives us an idea. Then it moves into the East, the spiritual, where we give meaning to the idea. Next it moves to the South, the emotional, generating feelings inside of us. Those feelings spur us into taking some sort of physical action in the West, and by expressing the energy physically, we move to the center of the circle, the Heart. It is in our hearts that we reconcile unknown energy, experiencing it in three dimensions by connecting the Earth below and the Sky above through our bodies like human lightning rods. This idea of a human as a three-dimensional sphere is expressed in Leonardo da Vinci's famous drawing of the Vitruvian man (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Leonardo da Vinci's Vitruvian Man



Causes of trauma

Disease and trauma are caused by natural and supernatural forces, where natural forces include causes such as cold air, germs or impurities in food and water, and supernatural forces include upset social relations between people, upset relations with ancestors, or upset relations with other beings, such as spirits of a particular land or place (Sussman, 2004). One scholar has connected the Western perspective of unconscious or subconscious drives with indigenous concepts of spiritual forces with independent will and behavior (Holliday, 2008). Western systems tend to use a Father Sky, visible world-based "seeing is believing" hypothesis-testing approach, whereas indigenous systems use a Mother Earth, invisible world-based trusting "feeling is believing" approach. Since we are rooted in the Earth, the indigenous perspective is that we ought to focus the majority of our energy on cultivating a healthy invisible foundation based on values of acceptance, compassion and empathy. When our collective invisible soil is healthy and fertile, identities and behaviors that emerge will benefit all life forms.

Indigenous scholars see colonialism as "a violation of the psychological womb, a great rupture with the Mother [Earth], and a spiritual depression and moral suicide resulting in a systematic repetition of historical and generational failure" (Cervantes & McNeill, 2008). Still today, indigenous people experience trauma in Western healing systems. In many indigenous African cultures to talk directly about a trauma is opening oneself up to re-traumatization and re-victimization by negative forces that already caused a person harm (Green & Honwana, 2001). Similarly, an indigenous Ecuadorian healer reported that a client did not have PTSD symptoms until she began psychotherapy and was asked to talk about her past. Another cited the Western approach of "saving" people as a further perpetuation of colonialism. Holistic healing is needed, because "due to wounding, colonialization, marginalization, oppression [we] have spent inordinate amounts of time from a CBT standpoint in our heads, locked in our heads...and what is a very valuable gift from the creator becomes a prison" (p. 108). Lakota social worker Maria Yellow Brave-Heart describes the following effects of trauma on indigenous communities: (1) identifying with the dead (an aspect of cultural or historic trauma), (2) depression, (3) psychic numbing, (4) hypervigilance, (5) trauma fixation, (6) suicidality, (7) somatic symptoms, (8) grief and rage, (9) loyalty to ancestors through present-day suffering (an aspect of cultural or historic trauma), (10) low self-esteem, (11) victim identity, (12) re-victimization by authority figures, (13) mental illness, triggers and flashbacks, (14) fears of authority and intimacy, (15) domestic and sexual violence, (16) inability to assess risk and set boundaries, and (17) abuse re-enactment (2003).

Connection between Body and Land

Where in Judeo-Christian culture the Earth is traditionally portrayed less as a home and more as a place to endure, indigenous thinking sees the Earth as the *source* of life, not a *resource* to be used for a period of time. The Earth's health is intimately connected with and reflective of human health. To refer to a walk in a forest as "being in nature" is indicative of a Western alienation with our environment. Whether in a city or forest, indigenous thinking says that nature is everywhere, because it is a fundamental reality (Gustafson, 1997). Because our bodies are made of earth, healing trauma requires connecting with the land (Kopacz & Rael, 2016). An ethnobotanist researcher of

the Potawatami Nation calls our modern culture “species poor,” citing how few Americans can name or discuss uses of plants in our environment (Kimmerer, 2016). Many indigenous people consider rocks, trees, animals and other beings as ancestors who can teach us how to live well, since they have survived on Earth much longer than we have.

Indigenous knowledge is experienced directly through the body, either in relationship to land and place or during ritual and ceremony (Gonzalez, 2012). Thus, expressive art and ceremony on land of traditional cultural significance are vital to healing, because land holds trauma and violent memory and reflects that energy into people’s bodies and psyches. In Australian aboriginal languages, “land” may be translated as “everlasting spirit” or “source of life” (Atkinson, 2002). “The land under each tribe’s feet is the [spiritual] source of its culture,” a place of reciprocal responsibilities (Kimmerer, 2016). During colonialization, violence took place on the land, shattering aboriginal ways of being, and colonial leaders forbid the performance of traditional ceremonies (Atkinson, 2002; Quinn, 2007). This resulted in abandonment and trauma to their core identity, creating immense inner crisis and disorientation still today.

Connecting with land in city environments is challenging, in part because it is so highly cultivated and lacks wilderness space. Research on the struggles of trees planted for commercial gain has found that such trees do not communicate with each other as well nor grow as healthily as trees in wild forests (Wohlleben, 2016). People in cities are similarly seen to be spiritually disoriented or lost in some way, because it is hard to feel a depth of connection and nourishment in manufactured environments (Reeves, 2013). City-dwellers tend to spend a lot of time in enclosed spaces such as cars or trains, and in desks and chairs indoors in rooms shaped like rectangles. While we create refuges and sanctuaries for other animals negatively impacted by city life, we struggle to connect with the Earth to nourish wild and mysterious aspects of ourselves (Estes, 1992).

Spiritual wounding

Colonialization and the beliefs that led to it have spiritual roots in our ideas about the meaning of life, our innate nature and place in the world. Many religions and cultures in the Western world have traditionally held an idea of a Creator represented as an elderly, white-skinned Father Sky. Indigenous creation stories tend to focus on Mother Earth. Thus, indigenous people describe healing from trauma as a spiritual task of healing “soul wounds” (See e.g. Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek & Najavits, 2015; Beltran and Begun, 2014). According to indigenous thinking, colonizers previously experienced some kind of trauma disconnecting them from an intimate, reciprocal relationship with their land and place of origin. Conquering and privatizing land resulted in trauma re-enactment around the world (Smith, 2005). Some cultures describe a psycho-spiritual virus as the root of this trauma. Among the Anishinaabe in Canada the *Windingo* is a hungry, destructive force that consumes without end and even eats its own kind (Kimmerer, 2016). The Canadian Ojibway refer to *Wetiko*, “a cannibalistic spirit who embodies greed and excess,” acting like “an autoimmune disease of the psyche... [in which] the immune system of the organism perversely attacks the very life it is trying to protect” (Levy, 2014). The *Zar* spiritual disease in

northern Africa is similar (Monteiro & Wall, 2011). Among indigenous cultures in Asia, a poison in the mind makes us forget who we are, manifesting as anger, desire and ignorance (Kakar, 1982). The understanding is that we humans naturally carry destructive energy that needs to be regularly purged through individual and communal cleansing so that it does not grow out of control and destroy the people and the Earth. When this energy penetrates our spiritual beliefs, we act as if we are disconnected from each other and other life forms and engage in destructive behavior.

Where Western medicine seeks a cure for a disease and a treatment for a trauma, indigenous people view trauma and disease as potential gifts of healing that can offer important insights about how to live well and bring new leadership into a community (Reeves, 2013). Where Western psychology views the personality or ego as the center of being, an indigenous healer views a person’s eternal spirit as the center of being. To try to make trauma go away is seen as denying necessary spiritual initiation (Kopacz & Rael, 2016). Many indigenous cultures have a concept of a “shaman’s illness.” A shaman’s illness is simultaneously a traumatic death and initiation. Trauma destroys life as a person knows it, placing into a person a spiritual force of energy that shatters his or her previous identity. The gift of trauma is this spiritual offering of a huge amount of energy that can be redirected from harmful into harmonious states of being through healing and creation of a new identity, like a phoenix arising from ashes of a fire (Pendleton, 2014).

All traumatic experiences that propel a person into a state of terror and dissociation are seen as “soul loss,” meaning that the person is no longer fully present in ordinary reality, because parts of his or her spirit have split off, fled, or gotten lost. “Soul” is synonymous with consciousness (Nuñez, 2008). These soul parts are understood to be frozen in a person’s unresolved past, resulting in a loss of life force and disorientation in the present (Bright, 2009; Cervantes & McNeill, 2008). Negative emotions such as anger, bitterness, envy, fear, greed, hate, intolerance, pride, rage, resentment and vanity are poison the soul and cause soul loss (Nuñez, 2009). People who experience soul loss tend to feel weak, anxious, depressed, and exhibit signs of mental or emotional illness. Lost soul parts of a person are banished by internalized punishment or hidden away until the person is in a safe situation and supported to heal. A medicine man of the Ifá tradition of Africa and the Caribbean suggests that many patients in Western psych wards are uninitiated healers, and that unacceptable behaviors will calm down as people learn to effectively use their spiritual gifts (Ojelade, McCray, Meyers & Ashby, 2014). To heal, a person integrates fears and unknowns outside a culture’s current knowledge into a meaningful understanding of everyday reality, expanding the culture’s collective understanding of life and boundaries of the medicine wheel (Bright, 2009).

Healing as a Community

One scholar of Cree origin describes indigenous knowledge and healing as utilizing a lens of community mind and thought (Robbins & Dewar, 2011). Firm individual ego boundaries encouraged by Western culture have been found to be “maladaptive and neurotic” for Indians and Japanese, where identity is socially constructed and health seen to be in relation to others rather than an autonomous self (Jaipal, 2004). Because emotional exchange is primarily social, if one person is exhibiting signs of traumatic illness, an entire family or community may be in need of ceremonial healing. Childhood trauma is less damaging

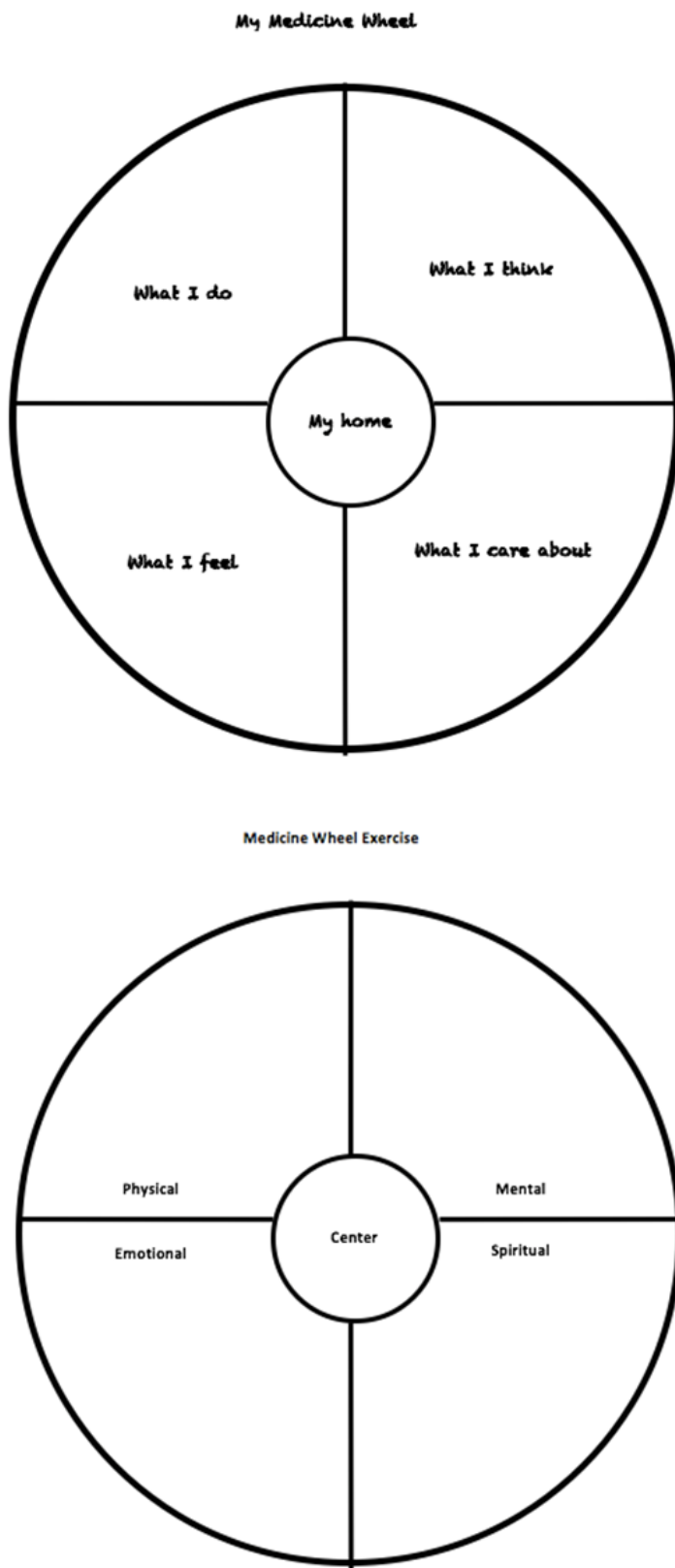
when a loving community of people holds a child after a violation and expresses “the universal truth that life wants the child to exist and that the universe can be a safe place” (Gustafson, 1997). Healing rituals as a community create cohesion, solidify family bonds and honor elders who carry cultural teachings about ethics and community responsibilities (Green & Honwana, 2001; Marsh, Coholic, Cote-Meek & Najavits, 2015). In many indigenous cultures angry spirits of the dead, either within a person’s ancestry and community or connected to a place, cause problems for modern people. In many indigenous African and Asian cultures if a person is not properly buried, their spirit causes “social pollution” and contaminates people with illness until honored (Green & Honwana, 2001; Tick, 2014). In indigenous cosmologies a person’s spirit exists eternally regardless of physical presence. Thus, soldiers returning from war must be supported by indigenous healers to engage in cleansing rituals and be purified of trauma before they return to their families (Green & Honwana, 2001; Kopacz & Rael, 2016). One described PTSD as an incomplete sense of identity after a traumatic experience requiring a person to restore a sense of meaning and enlarge his or her sense of identity, replenish soul and spirit in community, rectify moral wrongs, and heal rifts between a civilian and warrior sense of self (Tick, 2014). An Anishinaabe scholar healing from sexual trauma described attending a pow-wow as waking up and knowing she had finally come home (Desjarlais, 2012).

Healing Trauma

Use the Medicine Wheel

Transforming trauma requires a fundamental shift and a willingness to challenge basic beliefs (Levine, 1997). Since indigenous thinking places the heart at the center of the medicine wheel, a starting point for healing trauma is determining where our life is out of balance. One method is a medicine wheel exercise developed by the author to discern balances and imbalances in life, by adults and children, in Figure 3 below. The adult version has four quadrants for physical, mental, emotional, spiritual (what gives our life meaning) aspects of life, as well as a center (what is closest to our heart). The child version changes that language to be more age-appropriate. There is no wrong way to do this exercise; some people put activities like “meditation” in the center, others put people and places like “my wife” and “church,” and some put beliefs such as “acceptance.” The “in” and “out” in the adult version of the exercise are helpful for some people. If they are used, the “in” refers to what a person is receiving, and the “out” to what that person is giving. Through the “in” and “out” part of the exercise, a mother may realize that she is receiving a lot requests for emotional support from her family and is giving them support, but is not receiving enough emotional support herself, and needs to seek that out.

Figure 3. Medicine Wheel Exercises



Alter Consciousness

An important tool for trauma healing is altering consciousness. According to indigenous thinking, a person who is suffering from trauma has lost soul parts that are not accessible in everyday reality. A person is able to regain access to these soul parts through techniques that alter consciousness, such as prayer or meditation, breath work, trance dance, sweat lodge, fasting, drumming, chanting, isolation in nature, or use

of ayahuasca and other psychotropic plants (See e.g. Monteiro & Wall, 2011; Cervantes & McNeill, 2008). The aim of these practices is to break out of everyday patterns of thinking and being so we can access subconscious or unconscious aspects of ourselves. The human body is designed to survive at all costs, no matter our spiritual state. We can re-member ourselves by moving through layers of pain, being with and expressing chaotic, pre-conscious and unconscious mental and biological processes such as images, sensations, kinesthetics, and dream-like states of consciousness outside the Western paradigm of psychology (Culbertson, 1995; Mann & Culbertson, 2006). Healing is a process of allowing emotion to flow out and cannot be forced. Altering consciousness may be “the single most widespread psycho-therapeutic technique in the world” (Kakar, 1982, p. 105). When done in groups, people may experience empathic exchange and an opportunity to connect with ancestors by acting out rituals embedded in a place or culture (Atkinson, 2002; Monteiro & Wall, 2011). Dance, visual art and other non-lingual communication may allow a person to express emotion in a less constricted way than words, including emotion that is not socially sanctioned. Sensory stimulation different to everyday reality such as fasting and sleeping outdoors may trigger an unaccessed depth of emotion that allows for more profound healing (Rael, 1998). To heal from soul loss, a person can also receive a soul retrieval from a shamanic practitioner (Ingerman, 1991).

Honor the Earth

The land symbolizes the vast self, the big oneness connecting all beings, and tells stories through our sounds and movements. Sioux Elder Ohiyesa wrote in 1911 that children need to spend time in wilderness to become conscious of their relationship to all of life. Fundamental to an indigenous education is engendering in a person a love of the “Great Mystery” or the unknown and unexplored aspects of life, a love of nature, people and community (2001). For the majority of human evolution, connecting with the natural world was a crucial component of child development and a normal part of education. Children planted seeds and saw plants grow, picked fruits, killed animals and roasted them over fires for food, helped build shelters, and participated in other basic survival skills of their community. We can learn to identify plants and animals in our environments, along with basic tools of wilderness survival to help us connect with the place we live and with the wisdom of our ancestors. We can go camping, or take classes at a wilderness school. We can learn about ancestors of the land where we live, the land where we were born, and the land(s) our ancestors are from. For example, if our ancestors lived by the sea, we could honor our heritage by hanging a painting of the ocean in our home. We can also walk barefoot outdoors, swim in seawater or a lake, and spend time in wilderness listening to insects and animals. A common practice is creating a “sit spot” to regularly observe and be part of our natural environment. In a city, we can listen to a recording of a waterfall and chirping birds (many of which are free online), and soak our feet in saltwater if we live far from an ocean. We can honor the Earth’s cycles through food and ceremony, such as eating seasonally, acknowledging the gift of harvest at Thanksgiving, observing changes in the moon, and slowing down in winter.

To heal trauma, indigenous thinking suggests that we purify ourselves of negative energies through ritual and intention. Indigenous purification rituals often use smoke, or smudging. An herb may be burned to symbolize the purification of a space

for healing and to remind us of the sacredness of life. North American tribes tend to smudge with tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass or sage (Guédon, 2000). Scientific studies suggest that smudging may cleanse bacteria from the air (See e.g. Nautiyal, Chauhan, & Nene, 2007; Mohagheghzadeh, Faridi, Shams-Ardakani & Ghasemi, 2006). We purify our homes with intentional burning of an herb, aromatherapy or incense. We purify our bodies with smudging, or through a mindful bathing or cleansing ritual, such as a sweat or herbal bath. Finally, we can honor our innate wild, creative energy by “flowing”, allowing ourselves to be and do what arises naturally. Flowing can be learned or deepened through the guided process outlined in the self-help book *The Artist’s Way* (Cameron, 2016).

Heal in context

We are each part of culture, family, place, and time, and understand our lives in this context. We may not think of a morning ritual of waking up to an alarm clock and hurrying out of the door as a daily ritual, but it is a modern one infused with meaning, an embodiment of a rushed, fast-paced lifestyle. Altering such a ritual can help us be more centered. A practice indigenous cultures value is not only daily ritual, but meaningful ceremony, as individuals, families and communities. What is meaningful varies by person and culture. Life is understood to be unsatisfying when we do not do enough ceremony, and ceremonies are most powerful when done regularly and intentionally in a community (Rael, 1998). People healing from trauma often find it helpful to engage in simple ceremonies, such as writing down fears and burning them in a small fire or flushing them down the toilet, or burying an object in the Earth that symbolizes a painful experience. Practices often referred to as restorative justice, peace circles or talking circles are common ceremonies in indigenous cultures for communal bonding, and preventing and addressing conflict. They are based on a physical embodiment of the medicine wheel with people sitting in a circle with no table between them, often with a medicine wheel in the center on the floor. The centerpiece symbolizes that which a community values, and the power of a talking circle is empathic listening and storytelling. A talking circle is an embodiment of respect, acceptance and inclusivity, and is an act of love. Part of the utility of such a circle is that we know our own experience with the reflection of another, allowing us to see how collective experiences shape our behaviors within families and communities (Atkinson, 2002). By engaging only in individual therapy, trauma healing is stifled. Professionals can gain much information about a client by observing interactions with their family and friends. In addition, survivors of trauma often feel more comfortable talking to family and friends than professionals. Where trauma has destroyed bonds, storytelling and empathic listening creates opportunities for collective healing (Herman, 1992). “Searching for meaning, sharing experiences, and trusting each other are unique healing experiences and are increasingly rare” (Kinzie, 2007). Creating opportunities for collective healing, such as facilitating a talking circle within a family or community can support an entire group of people to heal from trauma.

In addition to listening to living people, it is also important to heal ancestral trauma, often referred to as cultural or historical trauma. Indigenous thinking suggests that we look at ancestry in three ways: our blood lineage, our individual experiences and evolving sense of identity, and the ancestry of the place where we now live, the place we were born, places we have lived, and where our blood ancestors lived. A simple way to start healing

ancestral trauma is to create and tend an ancestral shrine. A benefit of this practice is that it creates a physical space outside of our bodies for ancestral trauma to exist so that we do not need to carry it internally (Pratt, 2007). Over time as the ancestral trauma is healed, the shrine becomes a celebration of our ancestry. An explanation of how to create an ancestral shrine is included as Figure 4, and is something anyone can do.

Figure 4. Building an Ancestral Shrine

1 Create space for your ancestors
<p><i>By creating a shrine for your ancestors, you are symbolically making space for ancestral trauma to live outside of your own body and mind, and to heal yourself and your ancestors through cultivating ancestral wisdom.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may put the shrine outside in your garden, inside on a display shelf, or keep it private in a small box you take out from time to time.
2 Cultivate your ancestral shrine
<p><i>By placing items in the space, you acknowledge and honour your ancestors.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider honouring three types of ancestors: your family lineage, ancestors of a place you live or have a connection with, and past versions of you. Add items that remind you of a 'past self' that was wounded, such as poker chip for a gambling addiction, or a crayon for an abused child. Add items that remind you of deceased family and friends, such as a bracelet that belonged to your grandmother. Add items that remind you of a specific time or place, such as a seashell for a childhood home by the ocean. Add offerings of beauty, such as a crystal, a flower or a candle. Add a drawing of your family tree. Add photographs or names written on paper to commemorate specific people, places or events. Add items that reflect your cultural heritage, like a flag of your home country. Add items that feel right to include, even if you're unsure what they mean.
3 Connect with your ancestral shrine
<p><i>By connecting with your ancestral shrine, you make space in your heart and give time and energy to cultivating ancestral wisdom and healing trauma.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look at and engage with your ancestral shrine. Allow yourself to feel what comes up and express the emotion. Move, add, or remove items as feels right. Leave offerings for your ancestors, like a flower, chocolate, glass of water, a candle, glass of wine, or some other offering of thanks to your ancestors. These are symbolic and are disposed of later and not consumed if edible. Pray or meditate by your shrine for insight, strength and healing. Ask your ancestors questions, and see if you intuitively get any answers.

Conclusion

Trauma causes us to be unable to fully feel our connection with the Earth, our own body, family and community, and makes it easier for us to destroy or ignore aspects of our being (Levine, 1997). To heal individual and collective trauma, we need to reconnect to the Earth, our bodies, the land, and our ancestors. Indigenous thinking asks us to look at material

reality as a metaphor instead of looking for scientific truth or legalistic fact (Rael, 1998). The medicine wheel suggests that the masculine is represented by the visible sunlit world above the ground, and the feminine by dark, rich fertile soil below Earth. Our modern Western cultural creation story is based on an understanding of God as only the sunlit world above the ground, and a de-valuing of the Earth below us and a hellish nightmare underground in our roots. Indigenous thinking suggests that this is a fundamental trauma affecting our identities and our ability to experience that we are interconnected with all beings and able to live in balance. Many of our ancestors were forced to adopt religious practices and beliefs and to abandon their homelands, and still today we are carrying and re-enacting these traumatic experiences deep in our roots. Perhaps as one indigenous writer suggests, we created the "artificial life of civilization" in order to seek help from a virus that overwhelmed our collective psyches and resulted in "great spiritual and moral loss" long ago (Ohiyesa, 2001, p. 53).

An indigenous approach to healing trauma suggests a need to experience empathy within our human family, living and ancestral, with other beings such as plants and animals, and to build a reverence for Mother Earth, our source of life. Through learning where we are out of balance on the medicine wheel, we are empowered to engage in healing practices based on indigenous wisdom. Through individual and collective efforts we can more deeply connect with the Earth, heal ourselves and our communities, and collectively experience a sense of belonging and placement where we are now living. We are increasingly interested in deeply listening in modern Western culture, with many people drawn to meditation, yoga, mindfulness and talk therapy. Perhaps the conditions are right for us to remember a deeper sense of awe and reverence for life, to measure wellness by strength of spirit, with spirit understood as a sense of wholeness (Feathers, 2014). On a medicine wheel each person and each being on Earth is an integral part of a whole, diverse, beautiful expression of life. Perhaps the greatest gift of our separation and colonial past is that through healing trauma, we can ultimately bring into being a holistic connection between humans, the Earth, and all beings. We can live simply, watching and waiting for beauty to appear (Rael, 2015).

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