

PEACE  
JOY  
WISDOM



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

# Intervention

- WORKBOOK -

Liberatory Healing Focused Advocacy Response



**Washington State Native American Coalition  
Against Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault**

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526 N. 5th Avenue, Sequim, WA 98382  
(360) 681-3701 | [WomenSpirit.net](http://WomenSpirit.net)

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# WHO WE ARE



**WomenSpirit** envisions a nation where Native women are treated with honor and respect, where she is protected under the law and her personal sovereignty is never compromised.

**WomenSpirit** is the official Department of Justice and Office on Violence Against Women Tribal Coalition. We serve the needs of tribal programs and provide direct services to those victims that tribal programs do not/cannot serve through its program areas.

**WomenSpirit** is the subject matter expert on matters related to ending violence against AI/AN women and their families. We provide assessment and evaluation of Tribes/Tribal programs relating to domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, dating violence, and sex trafficking.

Our **Sayu ? X Wey Family Safety Center** provides compassionate and confidential legal advocacy services to survivors of domestic violence living in the service areas of Elwha Klallam, Port Gamble Klallam, Jamestown Klallam, Hoh, Quileute, Makah and Suquamish Tribes, both on and off reservation.

*Reach Out to Us*

WomenSpirit Coalition  
526 N. 5th Avenue  
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# SAYU'? WƏY



**sayu'? wəy** is the breath that moves you forward in life.

When you are a victim, and you are worn down and tired and want to give up . . .

When you are not getting your needs met . . .

**sayu'? wəy** comes into your life and gives you the strength to move forward and make a change.



Dee Koester, M.S.  
Founder & Executive Director

# THE BREATH THAT MOVES US FORWARD

## REVERED AND RESPECTED

Domestic and sexual violence was uncommon in traditional Native communities because it conflicted with the role of Native women.

In most Native communities, there was a strong emphasis on respecting and recognizing women's contributions to their families, clans, and communities.

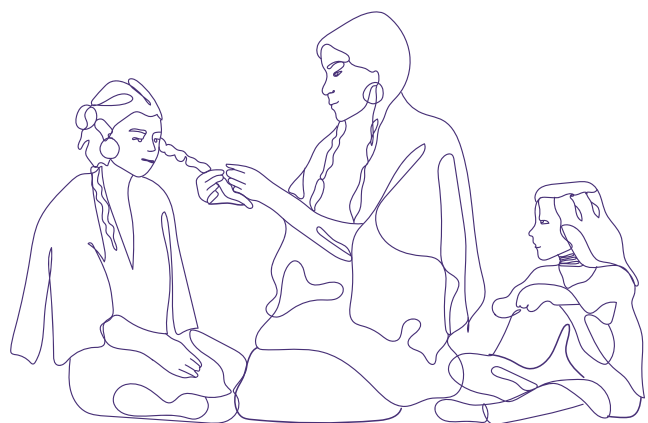
Many Native societies were matrilineal, giving women rights to leadership roles, land stewardship, and custody and care of children. In some Native communities, women were also responsible for passing on wealth, power, and inheritance.

Even in patriarchal societies, instances of domestic and sexual abuse against women were uncommon and viewed as unacceptable behavior. Historical records of tribal justice reflect the validation of women's

grievances, often resulting in severe repercussions such as corporal punishment, exile, and communal rebuke for perpetrators.

Additionally, Native women were revered for their vital role in childbearing and were highly respected for their pivotal contribution to preserving religious ceremonies and artifacts, as well as providing for their communities through hunting, farming, and gathering food.

Violence Against Native Women:  
A Practitioner's Guide, 2006.



# Reflective Journal



Imagine your ancestor talking with you. What would they be saying? Write about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences living in pre-contact times.



# THE BREATH THAT MOVES US FORWARD

## CONTEMPORARY IMPACT

Physical and sexual violence against Native women has increased exponentially throughout history since contact with European Westerners. Some tactics of violence included:

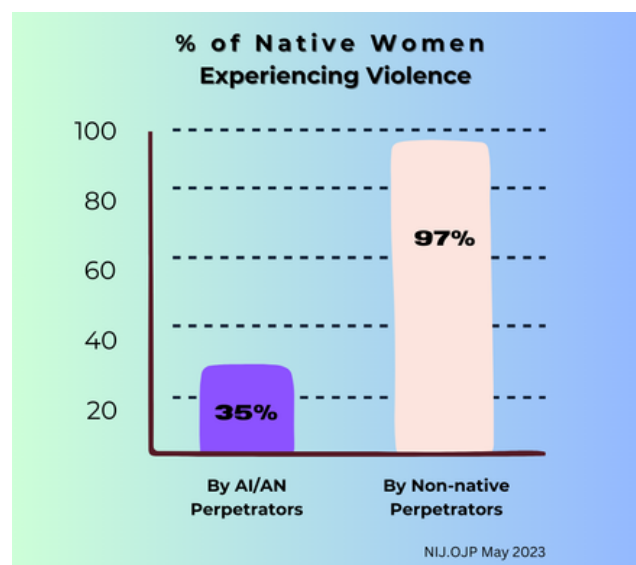
- ethnic cleansing
- deliberate spread of disease
- targeted violence against women and children
- destruction of Indian culture

Today, most American Indian and Alaska Native (AI/AN) adults (almost 3 million) have experienced psychological aggression or physical abuse by intimate partners, sexual violence, or stalking. That's more than 1.5 million Native women (84.3%) and more than 1.4 million Native men (81.6%) who have experienced violence in their lifetimes.

While their experience with psychological and physical

aggression is similar, Native women experience significantly higher levels of violence (56.1%) and stalking (48.8%) than men. This lifetime victimization rate is 1.2 times higher for Native women than for White women.

Most AI/AN victims experience higher rates of violence by an interracial perpetrator. 97% of Native women experienced at least one act of violence by a non-Indian perpetrator; 35% experienced at least one act of violence by an AI/AN perpetrator.

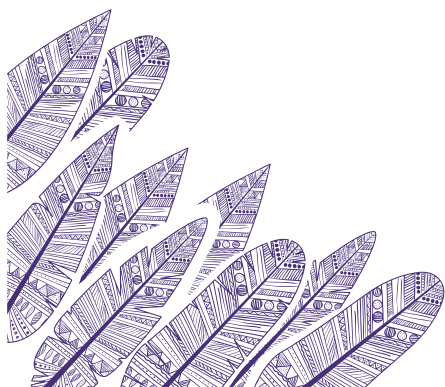




# Reflective Journal



Imagine your ancestor sharing wisdom with you. What are they sharing? Write about their thoughts, feelings, and experiences surviving the impact of violence and abuse of colonization. What are the ceremonies, songs, or other practices passed on?



# THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF VIOLENCE

## POWER AND CONTROL

The **Power and Control Wheel**, developed by the Domestic Abuse Project in Duluth, Minnesota, vividly illustrates the dynamics of intimate partner violence, crafted in close consultation with both victims and batterers.

The outer rim shows the intermittent behaviors of physical and sexual violence that keep the victim caught in the relationship.

The inner parts of the wheel

represent the constant, daily behaviors used to control the victim.

In Western society, the Power and Control wheel is used to describe domestic violence as a pattern of increasingly severe physical, sexual, verbal, emotional, spiritual, and economic abuse by one intimate partner against another in order to obtain power and control.



Adapted from The Deluth Model

In the Indigenous perspective, domestic violence is seen as an energy or **consciousness of violence**, emphasizing the importance of addressing unresolved, suppressed, or repressed energies of soul wounding to harmonize actions.

Recognizing the influence of language on perception is crucial to the healing process. The ability to perceive from multiple perspectives is integral to the decolonization process.

# Harmonizing Energy

The **Love and Harmony Wheel** illustrates a path of harmonizing personal energy. It is one path of many on the journey of healing. The outer circle represents the peace and joy that comes from living with wisdom. The inner parts of the circle represent the values and steps to develop the positive energy of harmony and natural order. Survivors can use this wheel to focus their mind and energy on creating safe spaces inside and outside of themselves.

What value(s) need harmonizing and what steps will you take to develop positive energy?



Adapted from The Red Road to Wellbriety

# THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF VIOLENCE

## CYCLE OF VIOLENCE

The cycle of violence consists of three stages: tension building, battering incident, reconciliation or 'honeymoon' phase

During the **tension-building stage**, abusers harm their partners in response to stressors such as fatigue, illness, trouble at work, or family issues. Partners are hyper-alert, feeling anxious or afraid, and sensing the harm about to happen.

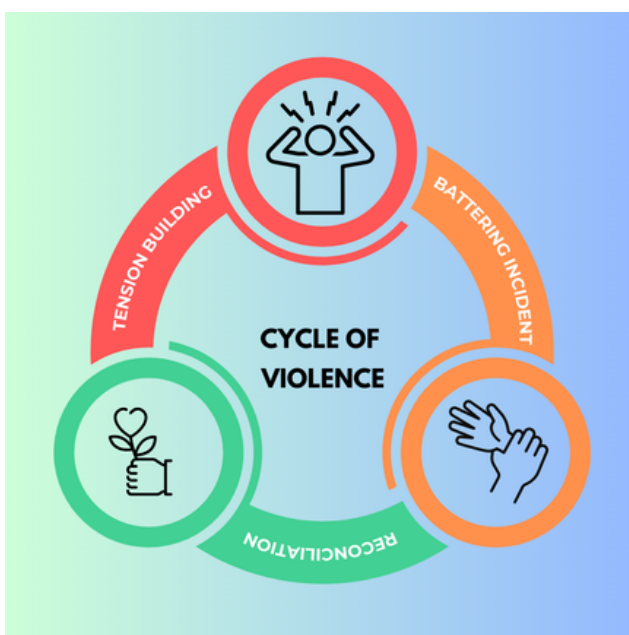
In the **battering incident stage**, abusers attempt to control their partner's behavior using various

tactics depicted in *The Power and Control wheel*. The partner may rationalize the behavior as relationship problems.

In the **reconciliation (honeymoon) stage**, the abuser gives gifts and shows of kindness after the abuse has occurred. The partner's brain typically releases oxytocin and dopamine in response. As a result, the two may feel more bonded and hopeful that the relationship will work.

The Indigenous worldview emphasizes the interconnectedness of all elements in the universe. It suggests that our actions can unconsciously restore balance through manifestations of symptoms or elevate our human consciousness when understood through psycho-spiritual models.

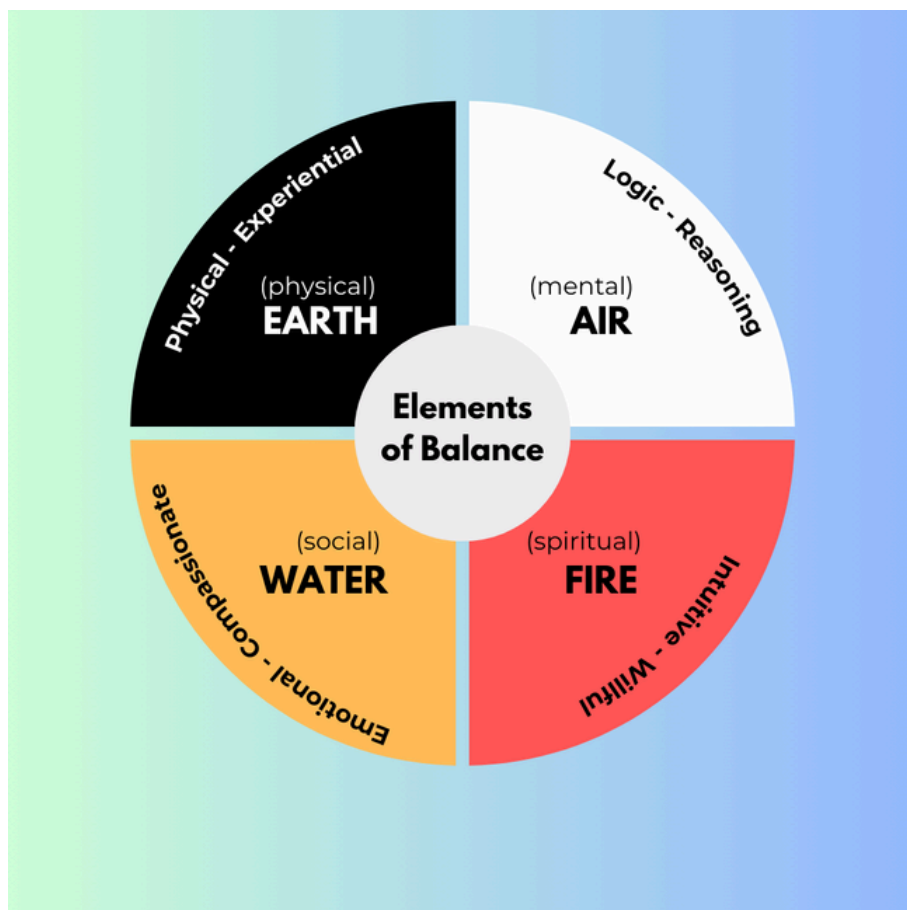
Embracing the idea that two concepts of consciousness can coexist without hierarchy is crucial to the liberation and healing process of decolonization.



# Restoring Balance

The **Elements of Balance Wheel** illustrates a path of balancing personal consciousness. It is one path of many on the journey of healing. The four centers of human experience (mental, spiritual, social, and physical) are represented in the circle by an element: air, fire, water, and earth. We can think of the energy of each element as parts that make up your consciousness or personhood. Survivors can use this wheel to increase their awareness for taking actions that create balance.

What element(s) of your consciousness/personhood is imbalanced?



Adapted from The Ancient Art of Conflict Resolution: Northwest Coast Native Traditions.

# THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF VIOLENCE

## VICTIMIZATION

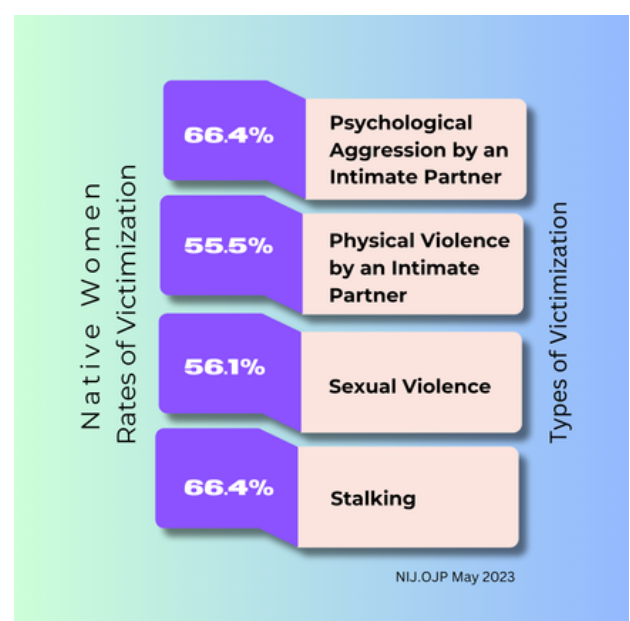
In cases of domestic violence, the abuser seeks power and control above all else. They utilize physical and sexual violence as their most potent tactics to instill fear. As a result, victim-survivors can never be sure of the extent to which the abuser will exert control over them.

These tactics are not haphazard or random; they are deliberate and tactical. The abuser firmly believes that they are entitled to control the behaviors of their intimate partner. The different types of abuse and varied behaviors all serve as tactics of control.

**Physical Violence** is victimization that is classified as *Adult Physical Assault* which are assaults where no injury resulted to the victim (intimidation, coercion, threats) and assaults accompanied with the use of a weapon or by means to produce death and

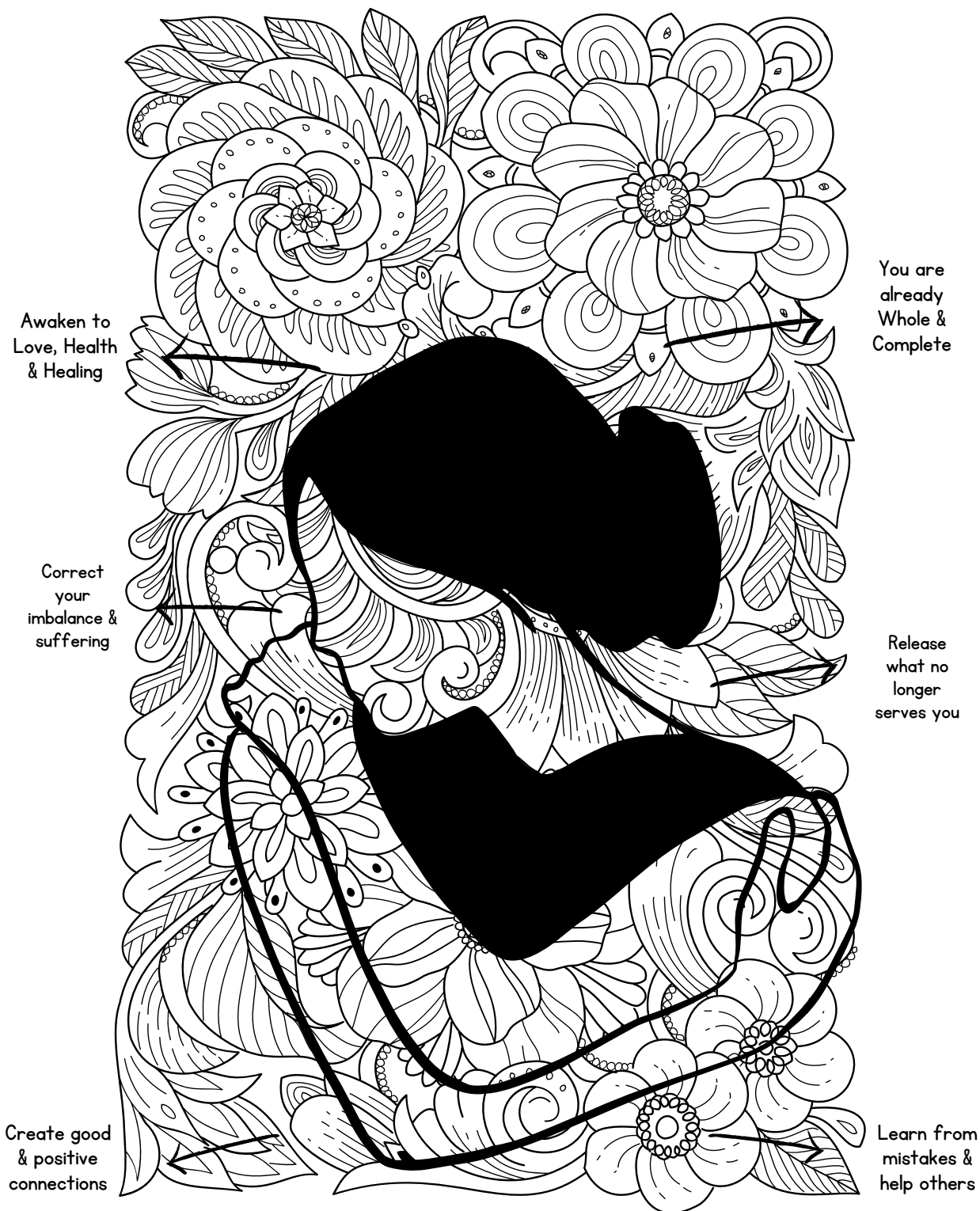
great bodily harm. It includes battery, attempted homicide, attempted murder, and strangulation.

**Sexual Violence** encompasses victimization classified as *Adult Sexual Assault*, consisting of attacks or attempted attacks of unwanted sexual contact between the victim and the offender that may or may not involve force (such as grabbing, fondling, and verbal threats). Sexual violence also includes rape.



# Practicing Mindfulness

Survivors can use this adult coloring activity to help realign mind, body, and spirit with the calming and soothing practice of focusing attention, improving concentration, and increasing physical and mental health.



# THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF VIOLENCE

## STRANGULATION

The act of using pressure around the neck or throat with enough force to affect the victim's breathing is strangulation. It is one of the most serious forms of physical abuse.

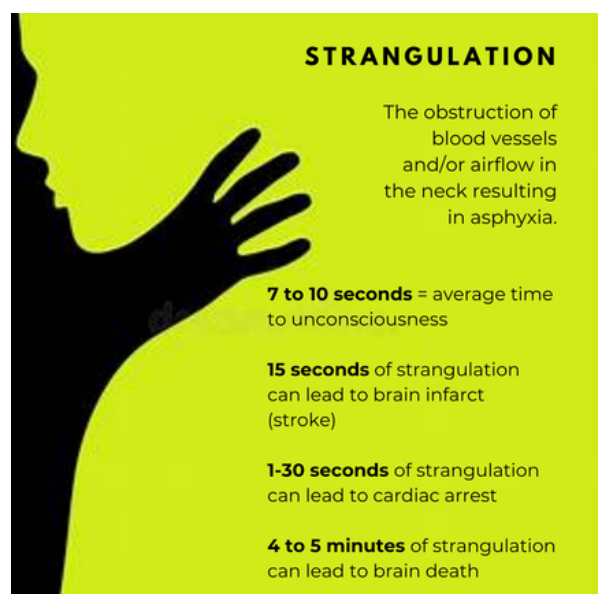
Some victim-survivors may say they were 'choked,' however, strangulation differs from choking. Choking is an internal obstruction in the upper airway that affects breathing. Strangulation involves using one's hands around the other person's neck or throat.

Victim-survivors who are strangled by their partner are at a higher risk of being killed by their abuser. Unconsciousness may occur within seconds and death within minutes. Strangulation is one of the most lethal tactics of the abuser and is a significant predictor of future lethal violence.

If a victim-survivor has been strangled, a visit to the doctor is

recommended. Symptoms of strangulation may not appear right away but show up days later. Survivors should not be left alone 48-72 hours after the assault. Some symptoms include:

- difficulty breathing
- sore throat
- drooling
- difficulty swallowing
- neck pain
- hoarseness
- ringing in the ears
- bloodshot eyes
- dizziness
- memory loss
- nausea or vomiting



Adapted from CSVANW, 2024



# Safety Planning

Victims of non-fatal strangulation are at higher risk of being re-assaulted by their abuser/perpetrator and **750% more likely of being killed** by their abuser. It is critical to monitor and journal your story because it could save your life. Use the template below to track signs, symptoms, and other sensations before, during, and after strangulation.

## Monitor & Journal

(include date/time)

<p><b>SIGNS</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p><b>SYMPTOMS</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p><b>SENSATIONS</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>	<p><b>CALL</b></p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>

# THE JOURNEY OF HEALING

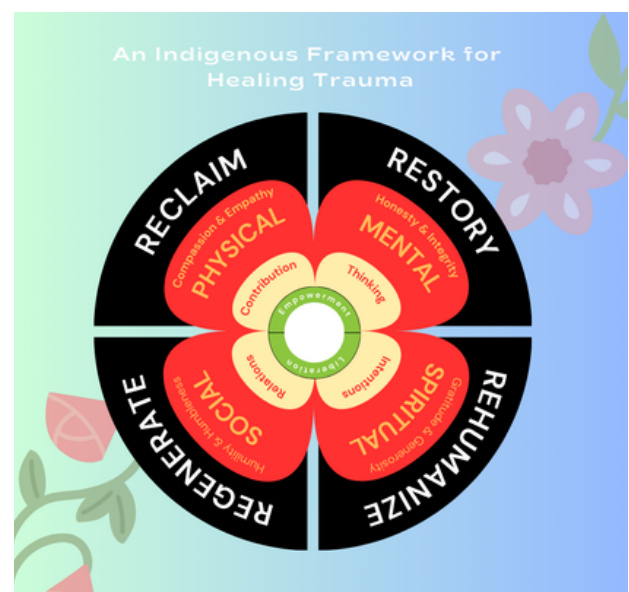
## PERSONAL TRAUMA

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a highly damaging consequence of domestic abuse and intimate partner violence. Seeking safety from a controlling and violent partner marks the beginning of the healing journey. Even after the immediate danger has passed, the lingering impact of trauma can persist.

Our brain's fundamental task is to ensure our safety. During an abusive attack, our brain's defenses are activated, leading to responses such as 'fight, flight, freeze, flop, or fawn.' The three parts of the brain affected are:

- **Reptilian brain** -survival instincts, manages autonomic body processes, like heart rate, breathing, hunger, and thirst.
- **Mammalian brain** - contains the limbic system (fear center) also involved in memory, learning, and processing emotion.
- **Neomammalian brain** - responsible for sensory processing, learning, memory, decision-making, and complex problem-solving.

PTSD is a brain injury that can heal. It involves the challenging process of changing how your brain works, creating new pathways, and strengthening new connections. Survivors can regain their rationality and control, memory function, and regulation of emotions through learning and education. They can re-story, rehumanize, regenerate, and reclaim their lives.



# Positivity Triggers

Survivors can trigger positive feelings by listening to uplifting songs, watching inspiring or funny movies, visiting favorite eateries or ancestral lands, and by attending a ceremony or remembering good times with family and friends. List positivity triggers in their categories below.



## SONGS

## MOVIES

## PLACES

## PEOPLE

# THE JOURNEY OF HEALING

## FAMILY TRAUMA

Exposure to domestic violence/ threat of violence and abuse increases children and youths' risk of psychological, social, emotional, and behavioral problems. Exposure not only includes directly witnessing violence but also the harms associated with an awareness of violence.

Native youth experience PTSD at the same rate as combat veterans (22%). This alarming rate is due to being 'polyvictimized' - experiencing several forms of violence at a time, severely compromising their ability to thrive. These forms of violence include:

- sexual abuse
- physical abuse
- domestic abuse
- child maltreatment
- community violence

Children exposed to DV believe the abuse is their fault, develop negative core beliefs about themselves and others, and see the world as a dangerous and unpredictable place.



## Forgive Yourself



For Raising Your Children through Your Unresolved Trauma.

For Bringing them Into Your Struggles, Worries, Pain, and Fears.



For the Emotional, Mental, Social, Physical Instability in their Lives.

For Not Having the Capacity to Help them Before You Helped Yourself.



# Regenerating Joy

The impact from the loss of human life, ancestral lands, and cultural and spiritual identity robs Native women of joy. Healing the energetic traumas of colonization and modern life will reveal the joy that is inherent in our traditional ways of living. Use the calendar to harmonize trauma and regenerate joy in your life with traditional and cultural practices and ceremonies.

**MONTH OF** \_\_\_\_\_ ♥ \_\_\_\_\_

S	M	T	W	T	F	S
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥
♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥	♥

# THE JOURNEY OF HEALING

## COMMUNITY TRAUMA

As a result of colonization and Westernization, Native communities lost their traditions regarding spiritual identity, culture, healing, and maintaining social, political, and economic health. Without traditions, surviving the holocaust of violence perpetrated on them is unimaginable.

Reclaiming and revitalizing spirituality is so important because Native communities have internalized the violence and collective wounding of the past.

"Manifestation of the internalized soul wound is found in many facets of life, such as domestic violence, suicide, family dysfunction, community dysfunction and violence, institutional dysfunction and violence, tribal/political infighting and violence, spiritual abuse and violence, and epistemic violence (Duran, 2019)."

Domestic violence is one of the more obvious manifestations of how the internalized oppressor prevails against Native women, their children, and communities.

Without ceremonies to acknowledge the interrelatedness of spirit, the Creator, and the Universe; gatherings to provide restoration and renewal; traditional healers and storytellers to instill a sense of hope and belonging through the use of prayer, drumming, dance, songs, and sacred objects, the journey of healing is more difficult.

Still, each survivor and her family can take responsibility to rewrite a new story, one that could contribute to a joyful ending for all.



# Rewriting the Story

What story have you been living? What are you doing to change your story? What ending to your story do you want for yourself, your children, and community? Write it down. Start with this blank page.

