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## La Cultura Cura/Culture Heals

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La Cultura Cura- Culture Heals

Vanessa Magdaleno Morga

A Capstone project for the Bachelor of Arts in Human Development and Family Studies

## **Introduction**

Some Native American individuals have disconnected from Native American roots and traditions and therefore are missing out on the benefits of the healthy and supportive characteristics of those cultures. Additionally, many Native and Non-Native individuals may benefit from connecting with those roots and traditions as U.S. societal demands can become stressful and unmanageable for some individuals throughout their lifespan. Individuals can obtain traditional Native American knowledge that can assist Native and Non-Native American individuals in coping with life stressors in a healthy and resilient manner. Therefore, I created a Powerpoint presentation on Native American roots and traditions for students enrolled in HDEV 353: Cross-Cultural Human Development at California State University of Monterey Bay.

## **Needs Statement**

Native and Non-Native American individuals living within the U.S. experience many different types of life stressing events or transitions throughout their lives. Stressful experiences can become difficult to manage if individuals have little time to reflect and work through their stresses. This can become detrimental to their mental health and well being in the long-run if individuals are unable to cope with stressors. Stress is an inevitable experience that we all encounter at some point in our lives. It's our reactions to the stresses that can affect our well being in the future. For example, an adolescent individual transitioning to the college lifestyle may develop mental health disparities if they are unable to cope with the transitions appropriately due to the environmental, interpersonal, biological, or psychological factors surrounding their being. According to a survey conducted by an Associated Press, "40 % of college students throughout the United States reported that they frequently felt stressed and 10% reported suicidal thoughts. Not to mention, the college students' stressors were associated with

financial problems, personal health, interpersonal relationship conflicts, and academic pressure. (Jin & Collins 2020). Life can become stressful due to many different social and interpersonal interactions through one's daily interactions. Having diverse tools and strategies in coping with life stressors can be beneficial in assisting individuals from diverse ethnic backgrounds in coping with life stressors. Therefore, "incorporating Native American ideologies into Western society can help construct the foundation of cultural integration of traditional healing practices to reclaim the strengths in traditional practices and beliefs in order to live in balance and harmony" (Bennet & Hong, 2018). Connecting to Native American cultural traditions value interconnectedness, balance, respect with nature, life, self, and deep connection to spirituality; all of which foster resilience to coping with stress. Given that college students have difficulties with coping with the many life transitions that occur during the brink of adulthood, I intend on providing information on values and practices Native American cultures value and utilize throughout their lives to assist them in coping and staying in balance with their individuals selves all living things. Additionally, college students from diverse backgrounds will benefit from incorporating indigenous cultural traditions throughout their lives in order to assist them through life stressors in order to help keep them in balance interpersonally, socially, mentally, physically, and spiritually.

### **Theory**

Lev Vygotsky social constructivist theory brings importance to knowledge being constructed through social interactions and is taught through teacher oriented interactions such as undergrad and graduate classroom settings. Individuals who don't understand how to effectively cope with life stressors in a manageable manner may not have effective tools to incorporate throughout their daily life to cope effectively. Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of social

interaction playing a fundamental role in the process of cognitive development. In a cultural theory Van der Veer (2020) notes, every human being needs to learn to use 'identity' as a cognitive tool, as it can only function adequately if they become integrated into a person's identity. Learners typically reshape their perceptions, ideas, values, and identity through social collaboration, which will then build new foundations of understanding as individuals actively engage in social interactions that'll typically assist in the formation of identity. Through Native American traditional practices and values taught to individuals, can assist them in connecting to traditional values that they can benefit from for their well being and assist them in coping with life stressors.

Additionally, Vygotsky believed that an individual at the intrapersonal level who then interacts within the interpersonal level may influence their behaviors, which in turn can affect and influence their perceptions of personal and cultural identity. Everything that we do on a daily basis that involves learning, happens at the social level. We typically observe, imitate, and try to incorporate what we've learned into our lives when appropriate. Individuals will learn new skills and strategies to help cope with life stressors through the observation of Native American practices and values that're incorporated throughout their daily lives that guides individuals through their daily activities through support and mentorship by a teacher using the Zone of Proximal Development.

Because participants are learning about Native American culture and practices, they are also developing their own multicultural identity to help them deal with life stressors. Participants are taught different Native American traditional practices and values that'll help individuals cope with stressors through a powerpoint presentation that tests individuals capacity in understanding effective and beneficial Native indigenous strategies to help cope with stressors. Furthermore,

connecting and incorporating Native American cultural traditions emphasizes how Native American values consist of interconnectedness, balance, respect with nature, life, self, and deep connection to spirituality; all of which foster resilience to coping with many life stressors.

### **Consideration of Diversity**

My project will be delivered in Cross-cultural Human Development at California State University, Monterey Bay. According to CSUMB's enrollment overview, Spring 2018 CSUMB enrollment facts incorporate several key students statistics one should take in consideration of diversity. There's a total percentage of 23% of adult students, 53% first generation students, underrepresented minorities by 50%, and low income students by 36%. Ages include 28% aged 18-20, 49% 21-24, 16% 25-30, 7% 31 and over. Additionally, the region these students originate from is as follows, 16% Northern California, 18% Central California, and 21% Southern California. 63% of CSUMB students are female while 37% is male. The student level percentage is as follows, 13% freshman, 11% sophomore, 26% junior, 39% senior, and 9% grad. Additionally, only 2% of the CSUMB population is majoring in Human Development and Family Studies (HDFS) compared to the rest of the CSUMB population which is predominantly majoring in psychology (11%), Kinesiology (9%), Human Communications (7%), Business Administration (13%), Biology (8%), among others. Students from all diverse backgrounds should be able to manage life stressors in effective and manageable manners in order to maintain one's health and well-being.

### **Learning Outcomes**

I plan to provide a powerpoint presentation to college students enrolled in Human Development and Immigrant Families courses at California State University of Monterey Bay.

By the end of this project, participants will:

1. identify two values and practices of indigenous cultures
2. identify two benefits of holding onto indigenous cultural traditions
3. indicate one Native American practice that will be incorporated into their lives when coping with life stressors

### **Method**

#### **30 minute powerpoint presentation**

First I created a powerpoint presentation focusing on how Native American practices and values strengthen coping with life stressors. I first listed the three learning outcomes that my participants should have an understanding of what they should expect to learn from this presentation (see appendix A). Then I went ahead and discussed the background cultural stressful events that individuals encounter throughout their lives through the powerpoint slide. Then I showed a six minute video that states the issues of accumulated stress without effective coping strategies and how stress affects our health and well being. Then I introduced a Native American practice such as utilizing natural medicines to help cope with physical, mental, and spiritual disturbances that affect individuals ability to cope effectively (see appendix B). Then I introduced a Native American value and its importance in understanding its purpose and meaning in life. Then I introduce a four minute brief video of a common traditional Native American practice that Native community members incorporate in their familial activities that builds resilience to the community and individuals participating in the ceremonial practice (See Appendix C). Then I briefly introduced another Native American Value that's purpose is to assist individuals in understanding the importance of maintaining a balanced life (mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually) in order to live a balanced interconnected life. (See Appendix D). Then I introduced a short three minute video of a Native American practice (storytelling) that is often utilized to assist individuals in making life decisions that can either

harm or cause distress to their lives. It is shown to highlight the importance of using storytelling strategies to help individuals make positive decisions in their life that can assist them in coping with the many stressors individuals may encounter throughout their lives. Then I introduced the benefits of incorporating or holding onto indigenous cultural traditions (See Appendix E). Then I provided a link google survey link for participants to complete at the end of the presentation to assess if participants met the learning outcomes. There were three multiple choice questions targeting Native American practices, values, and benefits of Native American beliefs being utilized in one's life when coping with life stressors. Then, participants completed a short summary survey question in which they must indicate a Native American practice or value that they find they can implement and utilize in their life when experiencing life stressors and why. Then, I thanked participants for participating in my powerpoint presentation (See Appendix F).

### **Results**

Learning outcome 1 was that participants would be able to identify two values and two practices that Native American cultures incorporate in their culture and ways of living. This would include living in balance mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually in order to cope with life stressors. This learning outcome was partially met because they were able to identify Native American practices and values that were presented on the powerpoint presentation through a google form survey. This was provided towards the end of the powerpoint presentation. There were a total of 13 participants. Out of the 13, only 9 participants were able to identify two Native American values which resulted in 69% of participants being able to meet the first portion of the learning outcome. However, 100% of participants were able to identify Native American practices presented in the powerpoint presentation, which meets the second portion of learning outcome 1. See Table 1 for chart.



Learning outcome 2 was that participants would be able to identify two benefits of holding onto or incorporating Indigenous cultural traditions. This learning outcome was met because 10 (76.9%) participants out of 13 were able to distinguish the full correct answer. Although 3 (23.1%) of the participants' responses differ slightly from the other participants, the answers chosen were not incorrect as there were several correct answers. See Table chart 2 for table chart.

Learning outcome 3 was that participants would indicate one Native American practice or value that they will use to help cope with life stressors. This learning outcome was partially met because only 11 participants out of 13 completed the google survey question and explained why they feel they should implement and utilize an indigenous practice or value when encountering life stressors. One participant didn't complete the short summary survey question. Additionally, another participant's response was irrelevant to the question and was therefore removed from this portion of the results. See table 3 for participants' summary reflection responses.

### **Discussion**

I believe this project was unsuccessful. Participants weren't able to confirm if Lev Vygotsky's social constructivism theory correlates with my participants' needs. Vygotsky's social constructivism theory primarily focuses on individuals' ability to understand and work through challenging events based on building skills and tools to help them maneuver themselves through stressful times through others teaching them how to cope with stresses. My participants weren't able to meet the zone of proximal development in multicultural indigenous Native American practices and values that can effectively assist participants in coping with life stressors. In terms of diversity, I think my project was aimed to include everyone, except I

presumed that every participant that would be included in my project would be only of Mexican descent.

However, I had a diverse population of Mexican, White, Black, and Asian participants. I also assumed I would have both male and female participants but only ended up having all female participants. I think if I had to do this over again, I would've invested more time in developing a zoom call with interested participants in order to have a virtual face to face interactive conversation that could've given me better results. Not to mention, had I created a zoom presentation, I would've been able to have participants break up into different rooms for discussion opportunities to get them to interact and utilize the information being taught to them in action. Nonetheless, I feel that participants did learn some effective Native American practices and values that they feel they could incorporate in their lives when coping with life stressors. However, I wish I had been able to gain a clearer and better understanding on how my participants could've met all the learning outcomes.

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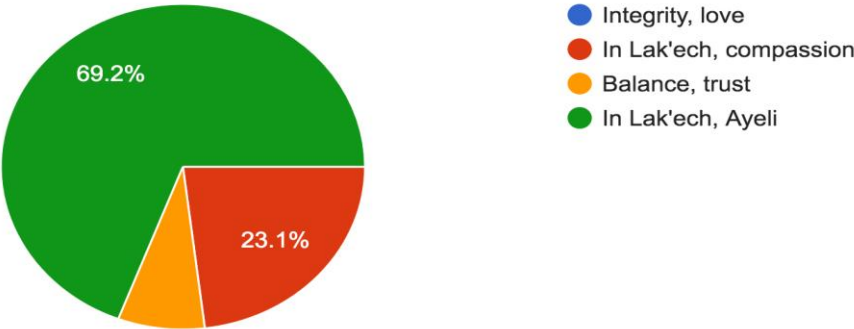
Meets Learning Outcome 1

**Table Chart 1**

Charts of responses on participants identifying two Native American values and three practices presented

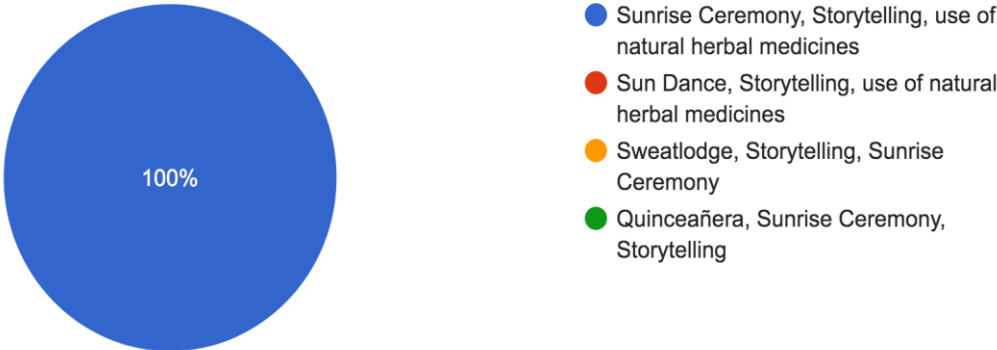
Identify two Native American values that were presented in the PowerPoint

13 responses



Identify three Native American practices discussed in the PowerPoint

13 responses



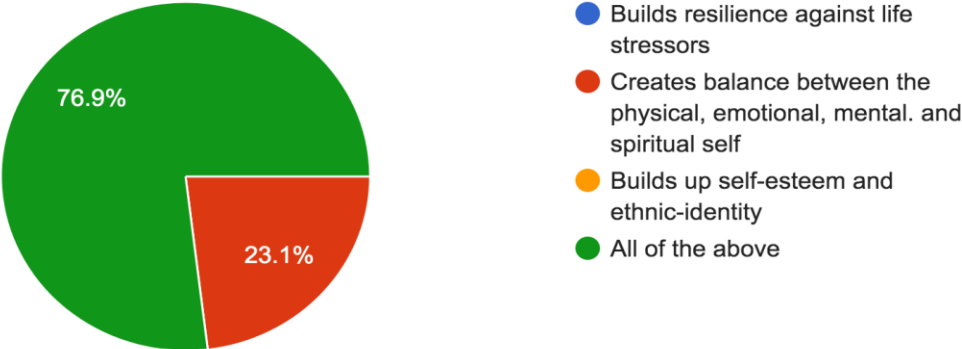
Meets Learning Outcome 2

**Table Chart 2**

Chart of participants identification of the benefits of Native American values and practices throughout life

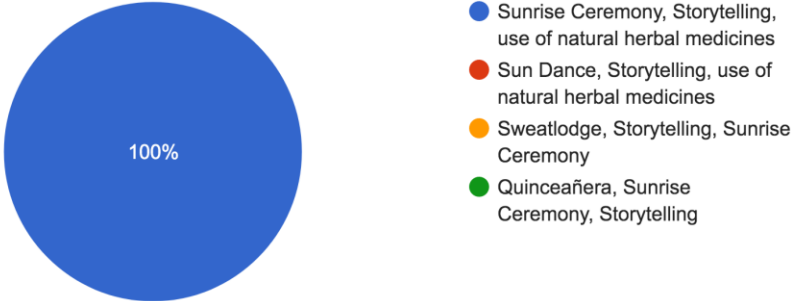
Identify the benefits of incorporating Native American practices and values into one's life

13 responses



Identify three Native American practices discussed in the PowerPoint

13 responses



Meets Learning Outcome 3

**Table 3**

Summary reflection of participants responses indicating one Native American practice or value they find they can incorporate in their life to cope with and reduce life stressors and why

Qualitative Result

13 participants but only 12 responded. 1 of the participants' responses was eliminated due to their answer being irrelevant from the powerpoint presentation.

1. Using lavender as holistic medicine is something I would use for my life stressors because I currently use it. I use lavender oils, candles, and lotions. The oils I use for anxiety and headaches. They work well.
2. Holistic Medicine.
3. I love the smell of Lavender and knowing I can even use it for my acne relieves stress for me because I am self conscious about my acne
4. The practice I believe can implement and I can utilize in my life when experiencing life stressors would be story telling.I say storytelling because that way I can hear others story and compare them to my stressor event right now and see what they did to overcome that event and what I can do to overcome it too.
5. Using of special medicines to keep healthy
6. I could use natural medicine such as cedar to utilize life stressors
7. Lak'ech and Ayeli value- because everything is interconnected and it helps to keep things in focus and balanced.
8. Aromatherapy
9. I have actually used Palo Santo multiple times before in my life. My cousin is big into holistic practices and we use it to cleanse our houses and our grandparents' houses.
10. I would use Native American medicine such as SAGE, to help me sleep better and remove negative energies.
11. One Native American practice or value that I can Implement and utilize in my life when experiencing life stressors is the sage. It can help boost my energy levels, improve quality of sleep, soothe stress, anxiety, improves mood, helps eliminate negative energies and help purify the air from impurities.



**Table 4**

Native American Practice and Values		
Practice or value	Name:	How many times was it mentioned
Practice	Traditional Holistic Medicine:	
	Sage	2
	Lavender	2
	Cedar	1
	Palo Santo	1
	Not specified: "Holistic medicine"	3
Value	In Lak' ech & Ayeli	1
	Storytelling	1
		Total: 11 participants

**Table 5**

Explanations for why participants plan to incorporate Native American holistic medicinal practices when coping with life stressors:

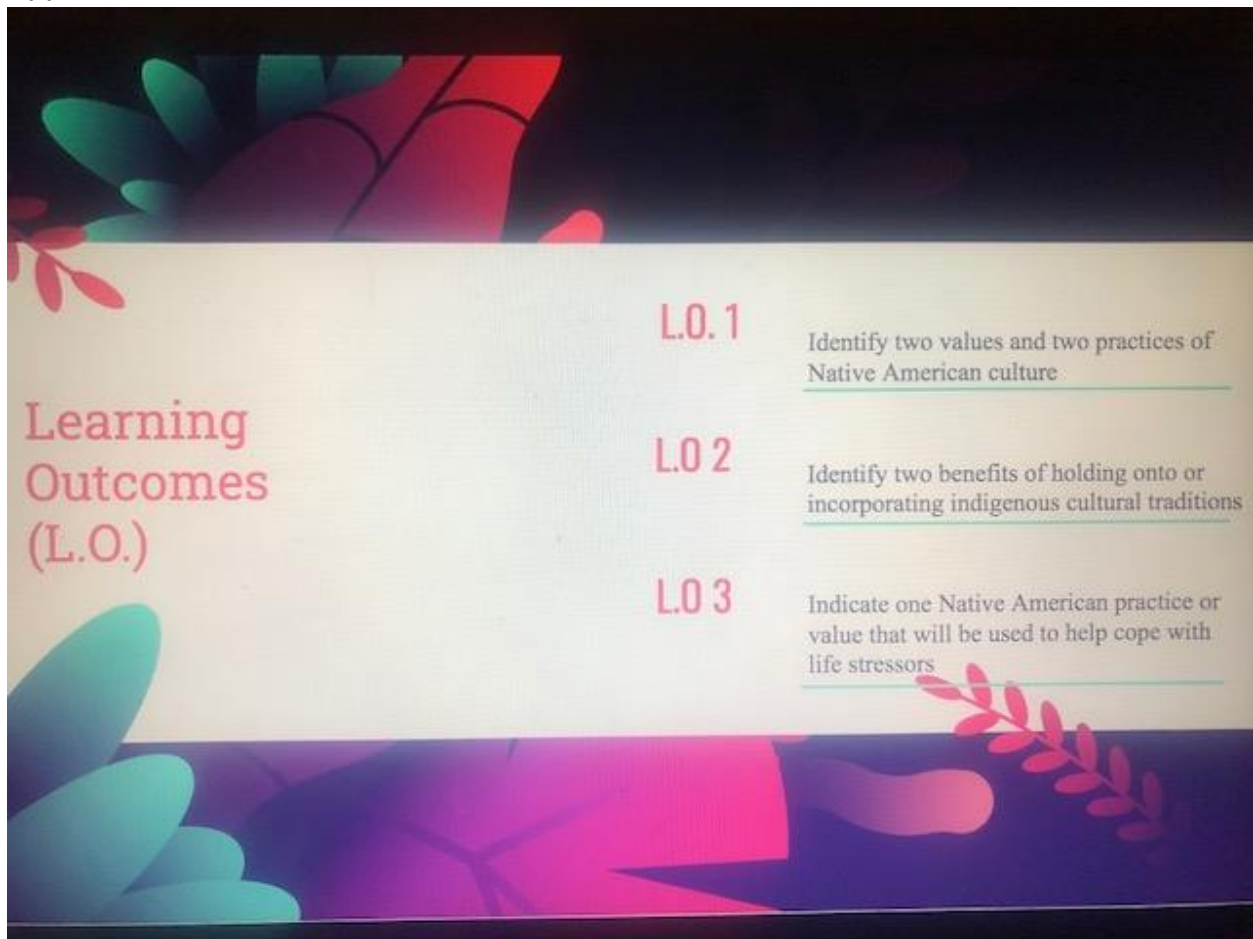
- Boost energy levels

- Improve mood
- Relieve stress, anxiety
- Purify air from impurities (negative energies)
- Relieve headaches
- Compare and contrast people's life stories to gain insight on how others have coped with life stressors in order to assist them through their own hardships.

Explanations for why participants plan to incorporate the In Lak'ech and Ayala value:

- Balance
- Interconnectedness
- Focus

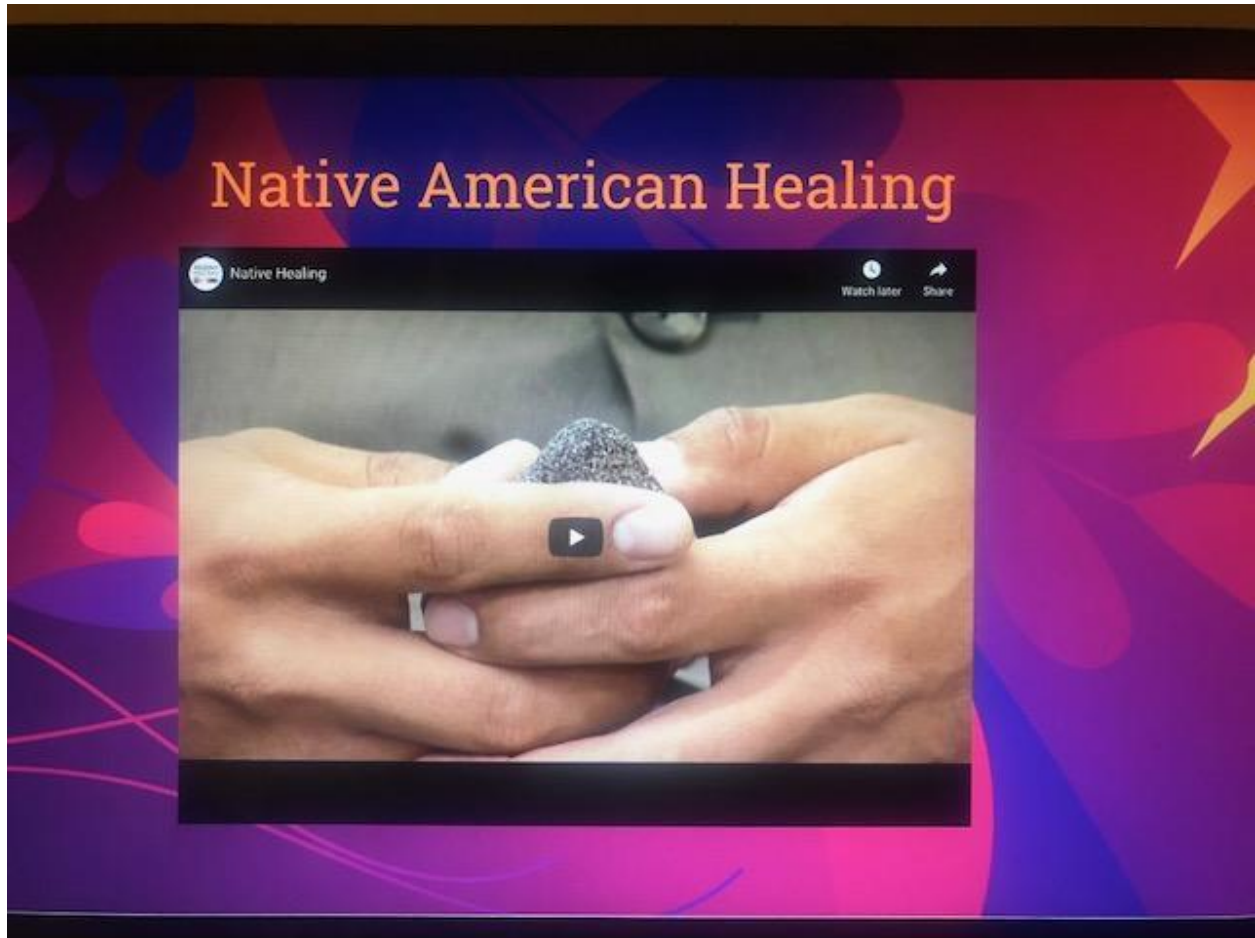
Appendix A



**Learning Outcomes (L.O.)**

- L.O. 1** Identify two values and two practices of Native American culture
- L.O. 2** Identify two benefits of holding onto or incorporating indigenous cultural traditions
- L.O. 3** Indicate one Native American practice or value that will be used to help cope with life stressors

Appendix B





## Practice: Holistic Medicine

Native Americans used natural medicines to heal, prevent, and cure physical, mental, spiritual, and emotional illnesses. These were incorporated in everyday life.

## Native American Practice: Holistic Medicine



### Palo Santo

- Detoxifier and Immune Enhancer
- De-stressor and Relaxant
- Headache Treatment
- Cold or flu Treatment
- Joint and Muscle Pain Reducer
- Allergy Reducer
- Household Cleaner (reduces odors, bacteria, and viruses; Prevents illnesses such as contamination and "bad" energy.)



### Cedar

- Attracts good energies
- Eliminates negative energies
- Protection
- Calmness
- Soothes
- Brings confidence

## Holistic Medicine Continued



### Sage

- Helps boost energy levels
- May help boost cognition
- Improve quality of sleep
- Soothe stress, anxiety
- Improves mood
- Helps eliminate negative energies
- Purifies the air from impurities



### Lavender

- Relieves Anxiety and tension
- Pain Relief
- Reduces headaches, migraines
- Assists with menstrual cramps
- Dry skin, Deodorant, burns. Acne, dandruff
- Muscle aches and pains

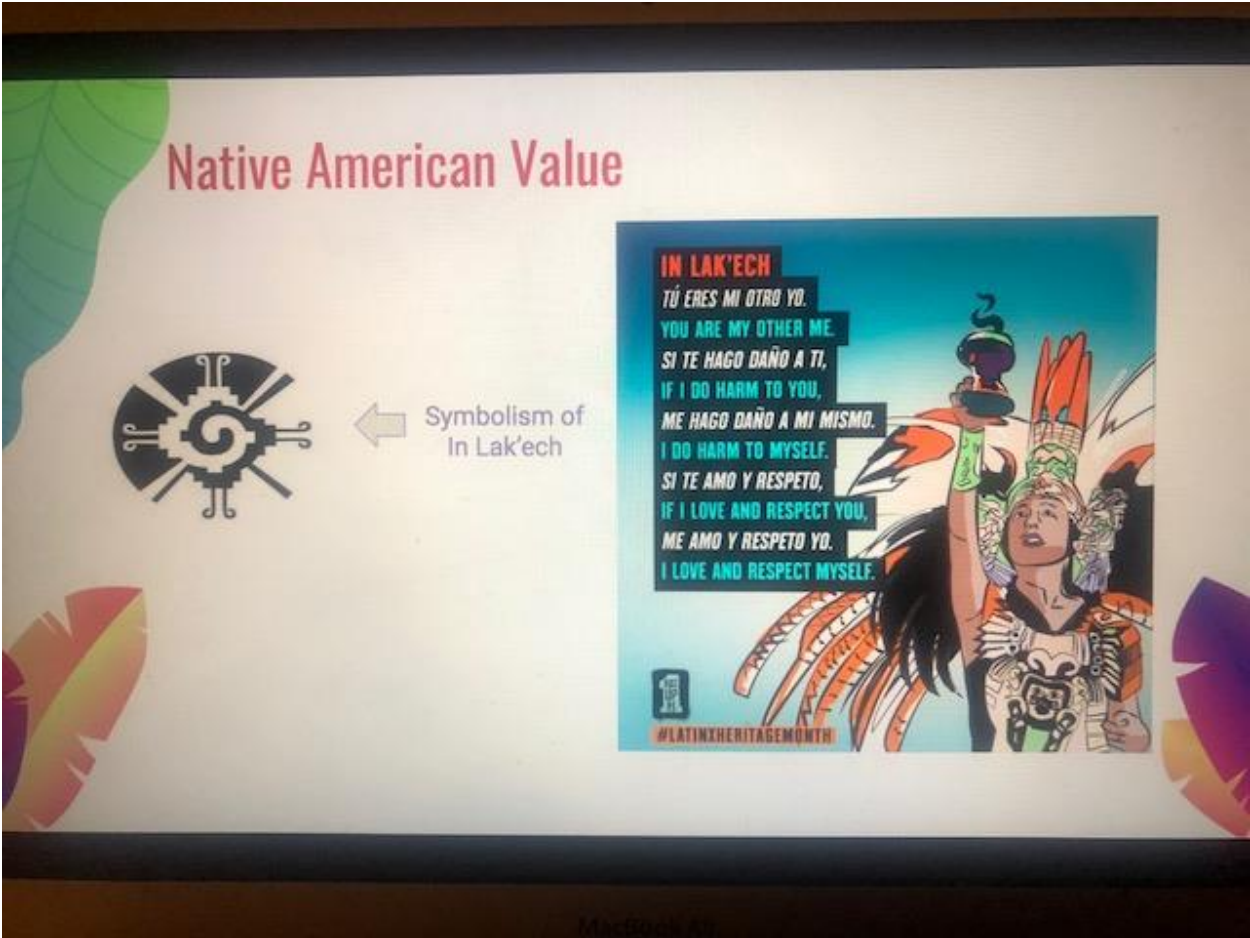


### Copal

- Raises energy vibrations
- Feelings of happiness
- Healing
- Grounding
- Creativity
- Blessings
- Spiritual Growth

Appendix C

# Native American Value



← Symbolism of In Lak'ech

**IN LAK'ECH**  
TÚ ERES MI OTRO YO.  
YOU ARE MY OTHER ME.  
SI TE HAGO DAÑO A TI,  
IF I DO HARM TO YOU,  
ME HAGO DAÑO A MI MISMO.  
I DO HARM TO MYSELF.  
SI TE AMO Y RESPETO,  
IF I LOVE AND RESPECT YOU,  
ME AMO Y RESPETO YO.  
I LOVE AND RESPECT MYSELF.

#LATINHERITAGEMONTH





## Native American Values

### Cherokee Concept

- "Ayeli" : Cherokee word (coming to center)

- Purpose is to assist individuals in identifying where they are in their life, where they want to be (goals), and how they can get there.

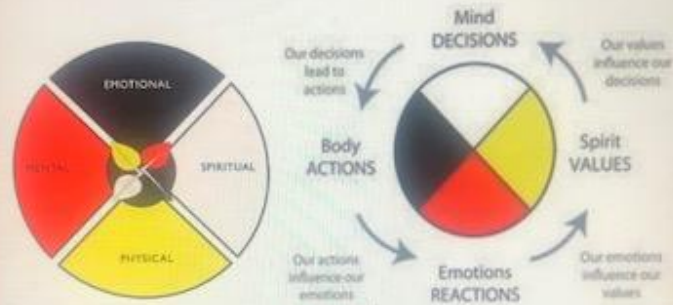
- Ayeli is intended to be a physically, mentally, and spiritually symbolic activity that focuses on choice.

- Ayeli is an example of respect that seeks to bridge a gap of interpersonal, intrapersonal, and environmental disharmony.

- It's a way of transforming "disconnection" to "connection" of self and community through both Native and non-Native individuals alike.

- This concept allows individuals to make good choices for themselves toward harmony and balance of physical, mental, spiritual, and natural dimensions.

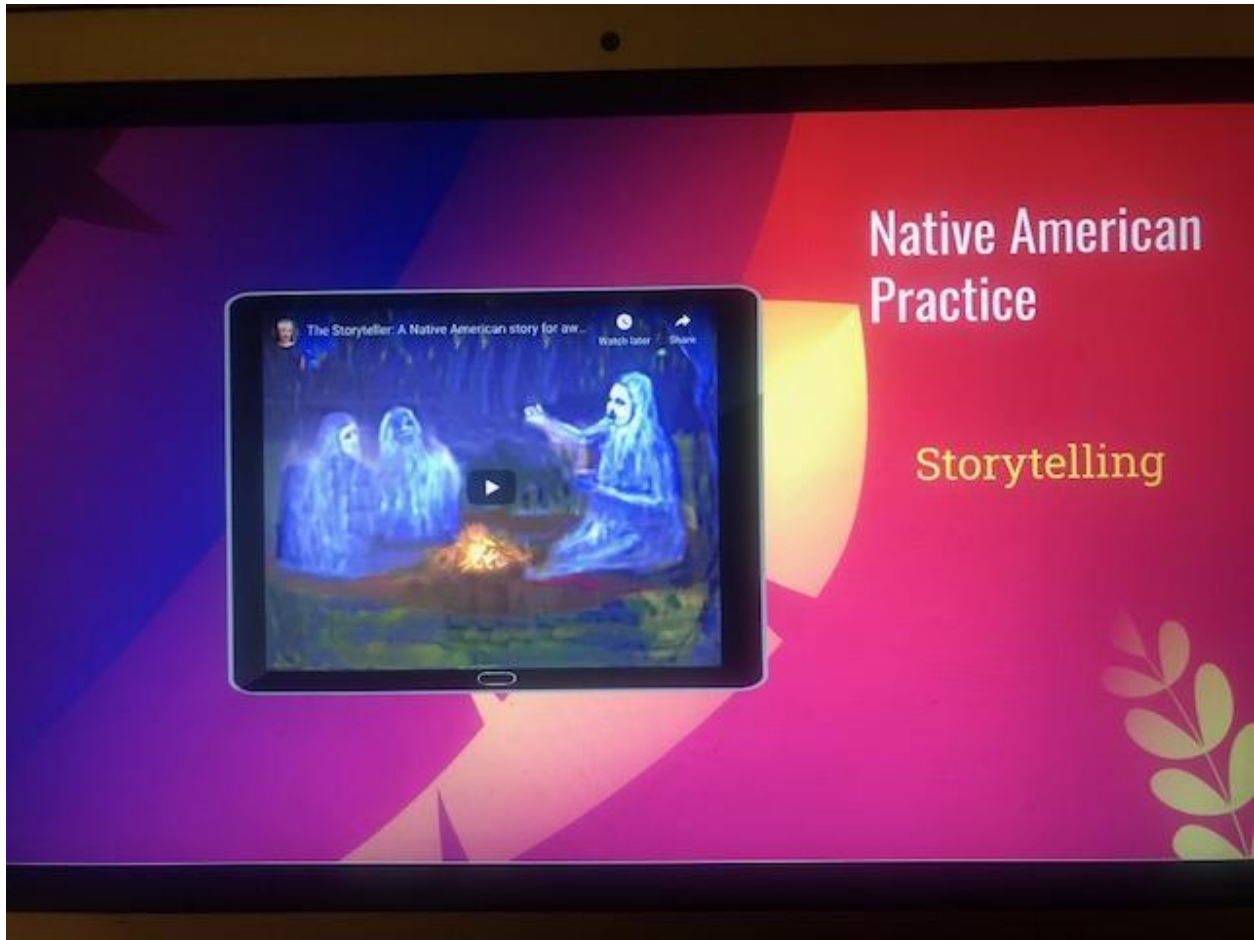
## Native American Values Continued

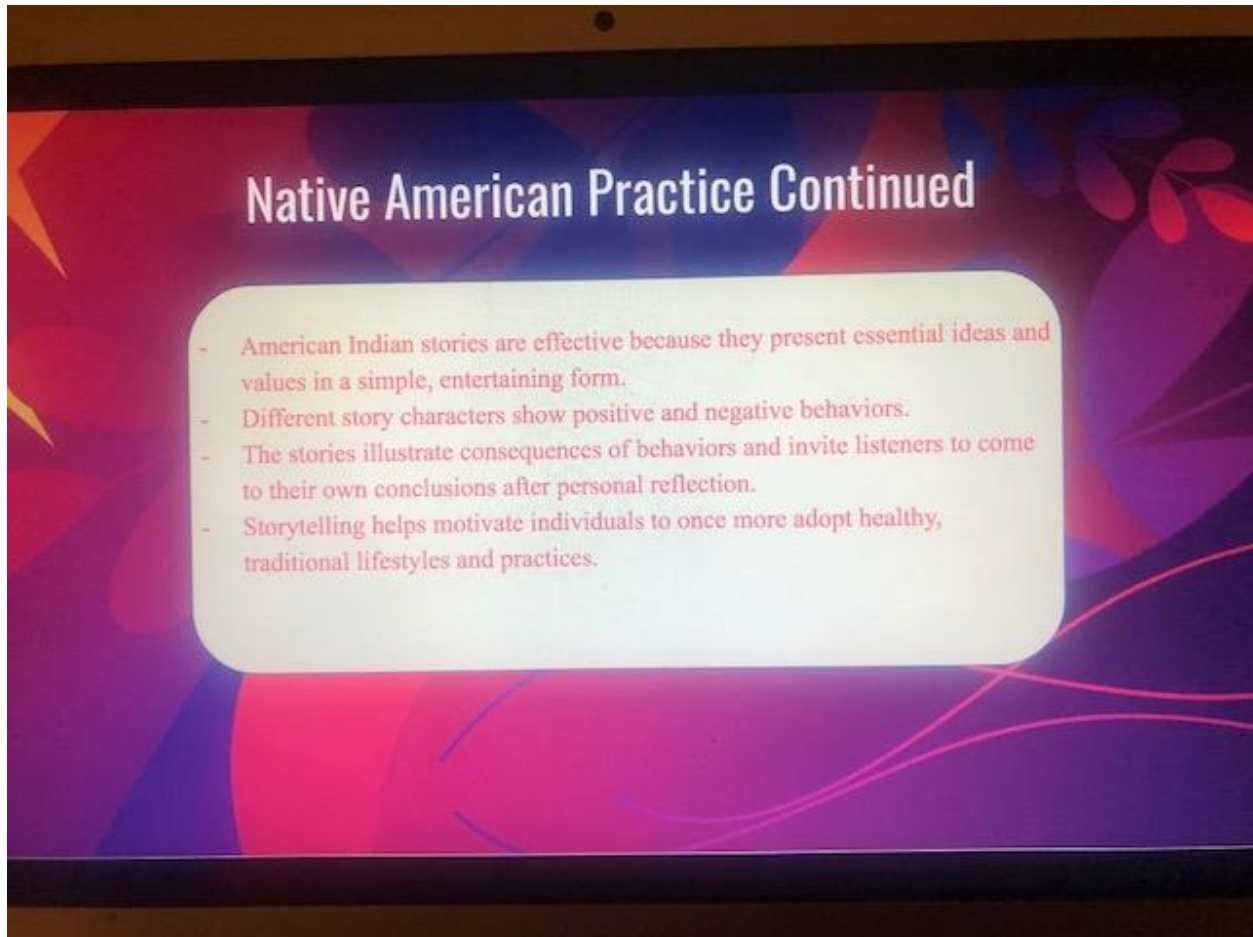


In order to maintain balance (emotionally, spiritually, mentally, and physically), one must keep in mind of the In Lak'ech and Ayeli concept when making life choices and when trying to cope with life stressors as it is a tool that can assist in keeping one grounded (centered/balanced) to self, family, and community.

This teaches us that all aspects of self are interconnected, if something happens, positive or negative, to your physical self, it also affects your emotional, physical, and spiritual self.

Appendix D





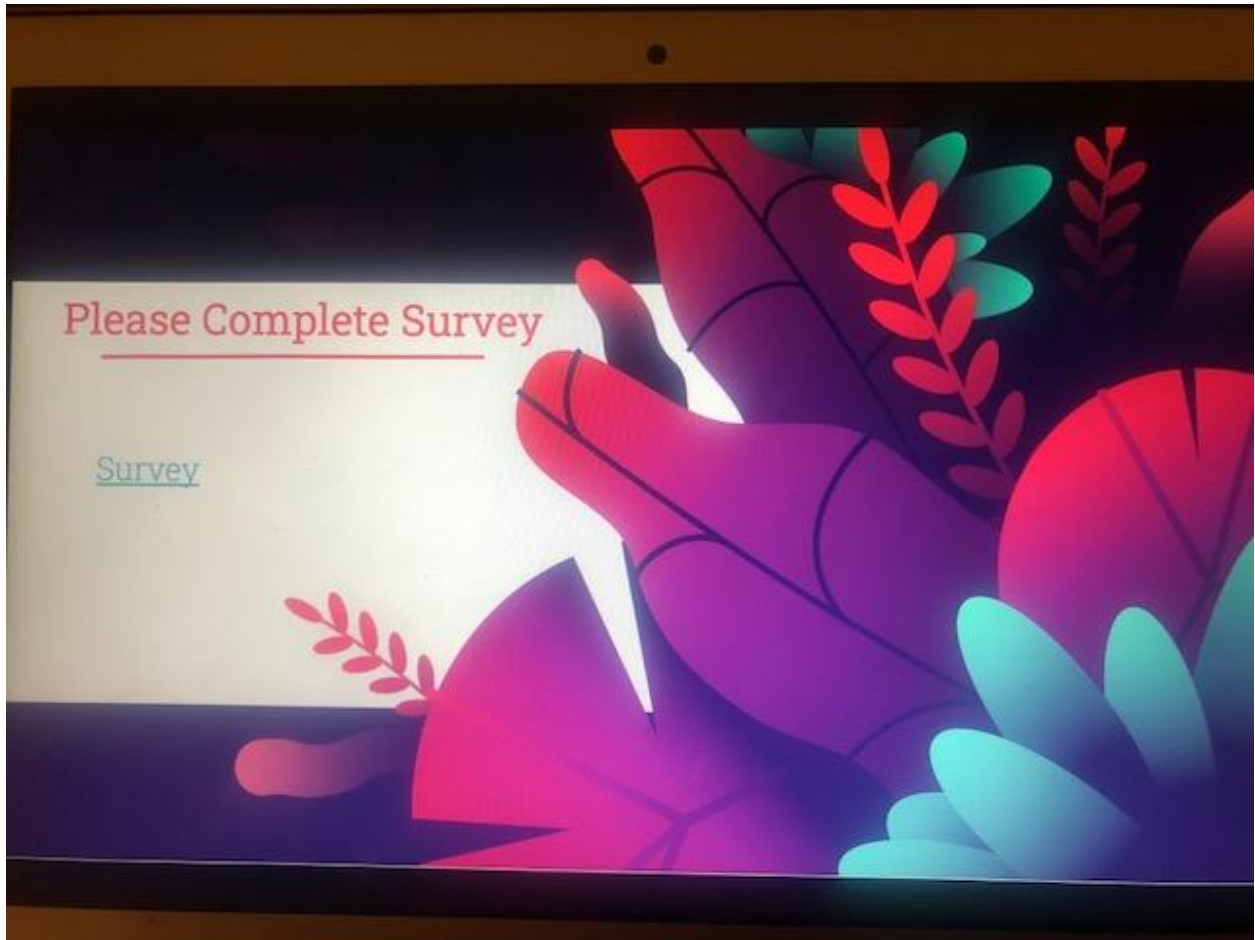
Appendix E

## Benefits of holding onto Indigenous Cultural Traditions

- Increased self-confidence and purpose in life.
- Reconnecting to our ethnic identity positively measure psychological well-being: Coping ability, self esteem, and optimism.

- Native American people are regularly reminded of their responsibilities to the land by stories and ceremonies.
- They remain close to the land, not only in the way they live, but in their hearts and in the way they view the world.

Appendix F



docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfyo1tejO3rCGxG\_x... ☆

## Indigenous Traditions and Roots Survey

Indicate one Native American practice or value that you find you can implement and utilize in your life when experiencing life stressors. Why?

Your answer

---

Identify two Native American values that were presented in the PowerPoint

- Integrity, love
- In Lak'ech, compassion
- Balance, trust
- In Lak'ech, Ayeli
- Other:

---

Identify three Native American practices discussed in the PowerPoint

- Sunrise Ceremony, Storytelling, use of natural herbal medicines
- Sun Dance, Storytelling, use of natural herbal medicines
- Sweatlodge, Storytelling, Sunrise Ceremony
- Quinceañera, Sunrise Ceremony, Storytelling
- Other:



Identify the benefits of incorporating Native American practices and values into one's life

- Builds resilience against life stressors
- Creates balance between the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual self
- Builds up self-esteem and ethnic-identity
- All of the above
- Other: \_\_\_\_\_

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