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Turtle Island: Working with Indigenous Grandparents and their Grandchildren in Group Counseling

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Turtle Island: Working with Indigenous Grandparents and their Grandchildren in Group Counseling

Indigenous youth, often living in a larger society whose values and customs are at odds with those in their Indigenous communities, struggle to hold their tribal identity (Markstrom, 2011). LaFromboise (2011) suggested many psycho-educational skills programs provided to Indigenous youth are not culturally congruent with traditional Indigenous perspectives. These programs have subsequently been unsuccessful because of resistance many Indigenous people may exhibit toward such forms of outside influences. Turtle Island Group Counseling for Native American Grandchildren and their Grandparents is based both on Indigenous values (as offered to the authors of this paper by Indigenous elders) and a curriculum developed by Indigenous psychologists and counselors who are versed in developmental theories.

The general goals of the program are to create an environment of trust and openness where personal reflections and group discussion foster evaluation of one's feelings, beliefs, and attitudes related to Indigenous cultures; enhancing grandparent and grandchildren relationships; and our relationship to the ecosystem. The program specifically targets the relations human beings share with Nature, grandparent/grandchild communication and bonding, and simultaneously focuses on tribal knowledge.

Tribal/Cultural Identities and the Environment

Turtle Island is based on Indigenous wisdom that teaches all things, both human and non-human, are intricately interwoven into a web of existence (Deloria, 1999) and psychological health is intricately related to one's relationship to the land and the beings that inhabit it. For counseling to have a positive impact on Indigenous people, it must address both personal and tribal/cultural identities in the context of history and an appreciation of the environment.

Personal and Interpersonal

While we as Indigenous people know we are constituted with a practical individual identity, we also view our characters as highly porous. For instance, we are never free from our connections. As subjects, we are relational, historical, and part of nature. However, this does not mean we cannot take a self-conscious part in interpretation, acquisition, learning, and change. Fixico (2003) stated, “Indian thinking is inquiry into relationships and community, and it reminds us that community extends beyond human relationships” (p. 7). Fixico (2003) argues Western thinking is extremely limited and dangerous to Nature and often lacks consideration of the complexity of broader relationships.

Tribal Knowledge and Stories

The Turtle Island Program combines traditional Indigenous communication styles with contemporary psychological treatment. Battiste and Semegani (2002) argued it is our task as Indigenous scholars to activate the holistic paradigm of Indigenous knowledge to reveal the richness of Indigenous languages, worldviews, teachings, and experiences. As Native Americans, much of our cultural teachings and worldviews are bound up and communicated through stories. Some of the stories are timeless traditional stories about Deer woman or Little people, while others are personal stories voiced to children to protect and help them navigate sexual relations or challenging situations. Indigenous world views are acquired through hearing these traditional and personal stories. Amid stories, notions about what it means to be Kiowa, Lakota, Cherokee, etc. materialize as a child grows older. Indigenous youth learn how to resist White ways, become courageous, know when to fight, laugh, and leave, as well as when to engage. For healing to occur, elders, grandparents, parents, siblings, and friends must help other tribal community members to see when negative stories have unobtrusively replaced tribal

stories. Furthermore, stories have the potential to provide meanings to heal individual emotional and mental stressors, as well as community disruptions. Cajete (1994) described Indian “thought” as a process of “tracking” that blends with the “mythological, aesthetic, intuitive, and visual perspectives of nature with scientific, rational, and verbal perspectives” (p. 123).

In the Pause of the Moment

White Bear taught healing occurs during what he called a *pause* (Robbins et al., 2012). He teaches that our minds tend to usurp control at the expense of our emotions and intuitions, thus occluding wholistic experience of our immediate surround. He further asserts it is crucial that we pause our ruminations and future planning, collect ourselves into a *no time/no space*, cease becoming and simply be. Only when we pause, when we become still and alert, are we able to become aware of the sacredness of the moment. White Bear teaches that within these *pauses*, we become realigned with the wholeness of life. This *pause* describes how Indigenous people are to enter ritual situations in a *good way*. Indigenous societies are based on the awareness of *harmonic resonance*, which allows for different ways of knowing than the material of science cognitive constructs (Robbins et al., 2012).

This *pause* is an intrinsic part of the Turtle Island Program. Indigenous meetings in general often begin ceremonially to create a sacred social environment. The persons leading the Turtle Island meetings may burn cedar, smudge (cleanse participants with smoke), drum, pray, or sing. These rituals help participants to enter “the pause” or into a reflective, receptive, and gentle state of awareness. We have found this ceremonial way of beginning group settings to have a powerful effect on both grandparents and their grandchildren. We believe it promotes greater receptivity in addition to traditional values such as respect for Nature, one another, the unseen world of spirits, and greater cooperation.

The Earth and Place

Native American people often speak of Nature as sacred. Reverence, which Indigenous people speak of, is an attitude that honors all of life. The perception of reverence allows us to see the interdependency of different species from a more comprehensive and compassionate perspective. Reverence is somewhat a vision that does not beam through the chink of one's self-interested personality. Instead, it is the soul's view of the holiness of all things. Grayshield (2010) wrote if one were to begin in an Indigenous paradigm, "counseling psychology would naturally promote engagement in activities that increase one's awareness of Nature as a basic and fundamental construct of health and well-being" (p. 5). As counselors, we should not merely consider the curative effects of positive human interaction, but also our connections with air, water, land, animals, indeed all living things. Chief Seattle said, "This we know, that all things are connected like the blood that unites us. We did not weave the web of life. We are merely a strand in it...whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves" (Casaletto, 2015, *The Ashes*, para. 1). Cajete (1994) believed Indigenous paradigms involve creative perceptions to emphasize holistic knowledge at deep intellectual and spiritual levels. The Indigenous paradigms are a holistic imaginative form of understanding that perceives interrelatedness. Our individual and group evolution is interconnected to the ecological environment. He further argued the difference between Western European ways and tribal ways is the importance placed on our relationships with the natural world and our responsibility to care for future generations (Cajete, 1994).

Indigenous elders teach us illness stems from our mistaken perception that humans and other creatures are not relatives. Many psychologists think of their clients as limited time-bound selves, and they may not consider they may be restricted in their isolation from a healthy relationship with Nature. At the same time, traditional Native Americans view the self as

connected to Nature. The earth itself has regenerative powers. For instance, Indigenous people will often revisit where they came from to connect with something they need on a spiritual level. Many traumatized Indigenous persons need to reconnect to the regenerative powers of mother earth. A sacred place can help a person experience wholeness, that is, experience themselves as part of the land (Robbins et al., 2017). Lame Deer and Erdoes (1976) alleged it has become increasingly difficult for persons to relate to Nature. He expresses the best way to begin a relationship with Nature is to start communicating with it. The holy air (*Woniya waken*), the rivers, lakes, trees, and rocks are our relations. Indigenous people often speak of our ancestors as the dust beneath us (Bad Hand, 2002). The body returns to the ground to feed the plants, which in turn becomes our source of breath. Isolation from Nature causes people to feel alienated not only from Nature but from a part of themselves. Indigenous people encourage the regeneration of the soil when growing corn with beans and squash as well as engaging in rituals of gratitude toward the earth to reinforce behaviors of reciprocity. The philosophy that undergirds Turtle Island Program assumes transformation takes place reciprocally between human beings and Nature. This view of reciprocity recognizes both our biological and psychological dependence on the environment. Lame Deer and Erdoes (1976) further declares we can begin a relationship by listening, smelling, tasting, and feeling these objects of nature. Everything, even inanimate objects, has an indwelling spirit. If we think of the things around us only in mental abstractions, we do not get a sense of the aliveness of the universe anymore. Turtle Island Program activities encourage participants to interact with Nature in a personal way to achieve this important sense of aliveness.

Impact of Nature on Mental Health

Maller et al. (2006) compared individuals who worked with plants and animals, such as

farmers and landscapers, with those who are not exposed to natural environments in their work. These individuals who worked in natural environments had better mental health than those who did not. Findings in another study on effects of nature on vitality, revealed that participants who a) took weekly walks in Nature, b) had photographic scenes of Nature placed on their walls and/or c) kept diaries about experiences in Nature reported better moods and increased vitality than those who did not (Ryan et al., 2010). Indigenous people consider themselves as part of Nature rather than separate from and superior to it. Focusing on Nature for healing is consistent with tribal beliefs that it is only through one's reintegration with Nature that holistic healing can occur (Cajete, 1994; Robbins et al., 2017).

Grandparenting in Indian Country

Indigenous grandparents pass on knowledge of customs and language to their grandchildren, which is essential to their tribe's cultural survival. Grandchildren learn about morality, history, values, tribal languages, and the interconnection to Nature when their grandparents tell them stories (Day, 2007). The close ties between grandparents and their grandchildren contribute to a more meaningful life and relationships. When Indigenous children were forced into boarding schools due to government relocation acts, they were denied the caretaking and cultural learning of their grandparents. Consequently, many customs, values, and practices were lost.

Today, Indigenous grandparents are frequently used as safety nets for parents who move to cities to seek employment, leaving children in the care of other family members. Additionally, because of the high rate of Indigenous substance abusers and incarcerations, grandparents often take on the responsibilities of caretaking for their grandchildren. (Mutchler et al., 2007). In these inconsistent conditions spawned by generations of oppression, Indigenous youth now have

higher rates of mental health disorders than their peers. Specifically, they have high rates of anxiety disorders, substance abuse disorders, and oppositional defiant disorders (BigFoot et al., 2008). Furthermore, the suicide rate of Indigenous youth is as much as 8 times higher than other youth populations (Sarche & Spicer, 2008).

Robbins et al. (2005) examined the roles of 20 Native American grandparents in the lives of their grandchildren to uncover the specific ways and means in which they engaged in acculturative responsibilities. The most frequently mentioned strategy of cultural preservation was storytelling by grandparents. Other strategies included supporting grandchildren in their participation in tribal ceremonies, teaching tribal language or at least some words, and direct teaching of tribal values. These values included: respect for nature, showing appreciation, courage, unselfishness, generosity, and bringing the family together. They described their relations with grandchildren as being more egalitarian and less structured than parent/child interactions. Weibel-Orlando (1999), in another qualitative study including 28 Native American grandparents, classified five basic types of grandparenting regarding interaction with grandchildren: cultural conservator; a model for ceremonial behavior; custodial (full childcare responsibilities); distanced, lack of contact with grandchildren; and fictive (nurturing, "non-biological" grandchildren). Having grandparents who can show them consistent love and a sense of family can contribute to more mentally healthy children. Further, if Indigenous grandparents are allowed the space to teach their tribal cultures, their grandchildren can grow up knowing more about who they are as Indigenous persons. The Turtle Island Program attempts to honor Indigenous grandparents, create a space for Indigenous youth and grandparents to interact together, pass on their wisdom to their grandchildren, while exploring their individual and tribal identities in the context of activities in Nature.

The Turtle Island Group

Participants and Procedures

Group facilitators prepare application packets which include brochures, letters, consent forms, and application forms for Turtle Island project participation (see Appendix A). We recommend two group facilitators (one male and one female is preferable for modeling purposes) oversee the operations for the program. Facilitators should be tribally sensitive and trained in group work facilitation. We then send the application packets to tribal agencies and middle schools with Indigenous populations. Counselors, principals, and tribal leaders at each of these venues are asked to nominate sixth, seventh, and eighth-grade Indigenous students whom they feel could benefit from the Turtle Island program. Consent forms are included and required. Although acceptance to the program does not include rigid cutoff criteria, applicants (to be accepted) are required to demonstrate a firm commitment to participate for the entirety of the program.

Phases

The first phase consists of one session during which participants will get acquainted and expectations for participation are clearly articulated. Participants, as a group, agree and choose the 5 activities from the possible 8 in which they will participate. Agreement on the choice of activities is essential because each session focuses on one of the selected activities in which all participate. Phase two extends over a month and a half. Each week, participants and facilitators meet for one and half hours at the agreed-upon time. Each grandparent/grandchild pair will carry out Nature assignments between sessions and later participate in the larger group discussions during the weekly group meetings. In phase three, participants cook and meet for a *traditional meal*, during which group facilitators will award participants with special recognitions and

giveaways. This is the last of the 7 total meetings.

Activities

All activity assignments involve offering tobacco to thank Mother Earth for her bounty. Consequently, every participant will carry a pouch of tobacco with them on their excursions. The following is a description and briefing for the activities. Activity goals and processing questions can be found in Appendix A.

A Walk in Nature

First, decide on a place where you and your partner can take a leisurely stroll in Nature. It should be a place where you can feel comfortable about stopping along the way to tarry, ponder, and write in your journal. We recommend any natural place that is safe and reasonably uncrowded, such as a park or around a lake. Next, schedule a time to carry out this assignment. We recommend you choose a relaxed time wherein you do not feel overly rushed or hurried. Once you get to the place where you will take your leisurely hike, pause for a few minutes to center yourself. You may do this in your vehicle or at the beginning of the trail. Take your journal and pen and begin the journey deliberately, clearing your mind of other distractions. Next, open all your senses to receive what Nature has to offer you. Having walked for a while through Nature, find a place where you both feel comfortable, sit down, and open your journal to write down the date and location. Stop conversing with each other as you begin the writing process, in doing so you should begin to describe the messages from the environment that have and are stimulating your ears, eyes, nose, tongue, and skin. When you tire of writing, continue your walk. We suggest you stop at least two times to write during this walk. Next, at the end of the day read the journal entry regarding the above walk. Then beneath it, write the title, "Dominant Impressions". This time take about 45 minutes to allude to the most memorable moments but concentrate first

on the feelings you have related to during the experience, and secondly, discuss what meanings you ascribe to the experience. Lastly, write about how it felt to have this experience with your grandparent.

We too are Animals

Have your pen and journal in hand as you begin this safari. You should plan on stopping at least three times to describe in detail the most interesting animals you encounter. Describe the ways they look, sound, behave, smell, and respond to what is going on around them. Also, discuss your likes and dislikes about them. At the end of the day, take 45 minutes to: first, think about and record your thoughts concerning how you are like or unlike some of the animals you observed, and secondly, discuss any qualities about one animal you would like to express in your own life. This will require that you think about your feelings of inadequacies as well as strengths you associate with the animals. Consider how and in what situations the animal expresses the qualities you admire.

The Sky

Over the next week, you are to spend 30 minutes sky gazing. You may watch the sun come up or go down or you may gaze at the stars above. You may need to jot down what you see just after sky gazing so you can remember the sights and your feelings. Later, give yourself 20 minutes to journal. Note the time of the experience, describe it in detail.

Gifts of the Earth

You are to explore a natural place in your community. Take between 45 minutes to an hour to explore. With your partner, collect natural, light in weight, objects to bring home to create a collage. You are to go about his task in a deliberate manner. Before collecting any object be sure to offer tobacco as a gift to the object. For instance, you may collect from a tree, such as

bark, a leaf, cedar, etc. But before collecting it, you are to consider all the trees in the area and consider from which tree you will collect. Consider why it is you have chosen “the fruit” of that specific tree instead of the others. Observe the similarities and differences of the trees, whether they are male or female, if you know the difference. Be sure that each of your choices is a deliberate choice, whether it be leaves, pods, grass, seeds, or petals. Discuss each choice with your partner. Phase two of this activity involves gluing the natural materials onto a poster board. Carefully choose the spot on the poster board onto which you would glue your materials. You may arrange them according to the significance or for its attractiveness, either way make your arrangement meaningful. Bring your collage to the counseling session to discuss.

Seeing Yourself as Immersed in Nature

Facilitators must be sensitive about certain tribal beliefs that might prohibit engagement in this activity. For example, there may be some tribal groups that believe having their photograph taken may damage their health. Together with your partner, schedule an hour to take pictures of each other in natural surroundings. Consider a park or a neighborhood or a lake where you feel both you and your partner might feel a connection. As you take the pictures, think about why one background is preferable over another. Consider what the images you take may mean about the person's personality. Upon finishing, take about 30 minutes to talk to your partner on how they felt about the experience generally, about the locations of the picture takings, and the meanings of the pictures. Be sure to get the pictures printed so you bring them to the next group counseling session. Lastly, plan a time when you both can look at the pictures together. At the end of that day, spend 30 minutes to record your feelings and ideas in your journal.

Living in Beauty

To begin, you and your partner should walk in your or your partner's house, noting the

living plants. Then consider how putting more plants and flowers in various places in the house might impact its appearance and feel. Consider what the best colors and kinds of plants and flowers you would like in your house. Where should they be placed? What should they be put in (a vase or other receptacle)? Next, go outside to a place you think may have wildflowers you might pick. Be sure to bring tobacco to scatter on the ground where you select the flower, showing thankfulness. Share what this offering means to each of you. Before going into the house, make a tobacco offering outside the residence, thanking mother earth and the flowers. Then inside the house, carefully place them where you wish. Tarry with the sights of the flowers and their settings. Later, take 30 minutes to write in your journal a letter to your partner, considering what was positive and negative about this experience.

Healing Rocks

Together, go to hills, mountains, or a rocky area where each of you will find an “ugly” rock and a beautiful rock to represent important events in your life. Before setting out to find the rocks, sit down together and think of one of the most painful experiences in your life. When you have considered that experience nod to your partner that you have completed its identification. Do not discuss it. Then one partner seeks to find an “ugly” rock to represent that painful experience. At this time, the other partner’s task is to accompany and provide support. Then the seeking is reversed. Partners are to hug each other and then tell each other they may or may not choose to talk about the painful experience during the group session. Next, repeat the assignment but with the goal of finding a beautiful rock to represent a joyful experience in your life. Before the end of the day, spend 30 minutes to journal about the experience.

Tree Wisdom

Go to a park together and look for a tree which you are both drawn to. Look at it from a

distance, up close, and touch it, then lay tobacco around it. Next, sit at opposite sides of the tree and begin to write about what things you think the tree might have witnessed through the years. Who might have planted it, watered, and tendered it? Who might have used its shade? How long were the stretches when it was not noticed? Who played under it? What ice and windstorms has it survived? Experts say trees communicate about such things as being cut down. What do you think the tree thinks when you paying attention to it? Spend about 30 minutes writing about it in your journals.

Project Evaluation

Throughout the program, facilitators provide opportunities for participants to share how the sessions are helpful or unproductive to them. At the end of the program, individual interviews are held with each participant and they are asked the following questions: a) How did this program impact your relationship with your grandchild or grandparent? b) What did you learn about your partner that you did not know before you began this program? c) How do you feel differently about your relationship with Nature having completed this program? d) To Grandparents: How has this program impacted your perspective about what grandparents might offer of themselves to their grandchildren? e) To Grandchildren: What is special or unique that you feel your grandparent partner in this program has to offer you? f) What was your favorite activity in this program? Why? g) What was your least favorite activity in this program? Why? h) What do you feel could make this program better? i) What did you find both positive and negative about the work your facilitators did with you? j) How has this program impacted your identification with your tribal ways?

Results

Although the Turtle Island Program effectiveness has not been formally researched using

statistical significance measures, the third author has conducted the program several times and has used several of its activities in different group counseling settings. Therefore, we offer practical findings and observations from the programs delivered for clinical significance.

Participants contend that the Turtle Island Program emphasis on grandparent/grandchildren relationships addresses dire needs in Indigenous communities. The intention of the program is to address the contemporary pressing concerns of global warming and relationship to the land, the gradual loss of traditional tribal knowledge among Indigenous/Native American youth, and the loss and appreciation for our grandparents/elders. The program and activities were facilitated as part of family therapy to strengthen the relationship between generations.

Many participants stated they were delighted that the counseling they received in this program was less claustrophobically limited to a small counseling room. They appreciated the Indigenous perspective that human beings are the land, or at least closely related to Nature. Different groups have had varied favorite activities and discussions. The *Healing Rocks* activity has consistently resulted in the most emotionally profound experiences and discussions. Grandparents expressed gratitude and noted the intimate interactions to strengthen their connection with grandchildren. The *Living in Beauty* activity seems to be the best bonding experience for grandparents and grandchildren as it appears to help them to understand each other's values better and offers an opportunity for intimate interaction. Prior to the program, they reported that they felt they have had a difficult time communicating and connecting with their grandchildren. The activities provided them with a space to talk about important environment and tribal concerns as it relates to their cultural values. For instance, the respect and care for the land and being seen as one with the environment. This allowed participants to share meaningful stories as it relates to their Indigenous history and beliefs. Grandchildren reported an increased

perception of grandparent engagement, where grandparents were able to speak with them about traditional tribal knowledge and claimed to feel an increased sense of pride in being Indigenous/Native American.

In general, it was perceived that Native Americans and their allies, have the most poignant voices to address environmental and tribal concerns. Therefore, elders and grandparents are in the position to facilitate Native American leadership in their community spaces. Upon conclusion of the programs, we have received more requests and feedback from school counselors using the *Tree Wisdom* activity than any other. We have also presented this program at a couple of conferences. A Japanese participant reported she had used the *Tree Wisdom* activity with Japanese participants, and it inspired their group members to talk about ecological issues.

Discussion

The Turtle Island Program appears to be a conducive and supportive modality for facilitating connection through conversation between different generations. Specifically, providing the family members opportunities to discuss important topics concerning their traditional beliefs and tribal values. It is based upon these experiences that we provide the activity descriptions as a resource and tool for Indigenous communities and practitioners working with Indigenous populations. We recommend further exploration of these activities and the overall program to assess the potential therapeutic outcomes as described by participants. Based upon participants responses, research might explore the development of cultural identity, engagement, and cohesion among family members, and change in perceived relationship to the environment, and spiritual connection to the land. These recommendations must consider the positionality of the practitioner and researcher and how the information and outcomes will be

used to positively impact the community and support tribal values through continuous practice. Further, consideration needs to be given for the use of evaluative measures and appropriateness of the instrument as it relates to Indigenous culture and populations. For example, when assessing one's connection to the land, a researcher might consider the Reese EcoWellness Inventory (REI, Reese et al., 2015). The REI accounts for the impacts of nature and how participants uniquely experience and perceive the human-nature connection across three domains, *access*, *environmental identity*, and *transcendence* (Reese et al., 2022). *Access* refers to the physical and sensory access participants perceive to engage with nature. *Environmental identity* refers to participants perceived relationship to nature through connection of experiences, emotions, and beliefs influencing one's sense of protection and preservation of the land. Lastly, *transcendence* refers to one's sense of spirituality and greater connectedness to the community.

Obstacles and Considerations

Time is an essential consideration, as this modality does not fall within current Western methods of therapy (e.g. 50-minute talk therapy sessions). Group leaders should expect for the discussion of this activity to last longer than the others and the facilitators may inform participants that they may extend the session to 2 hours. When working with Indigenous groups there have been some obstacles we have encountered. It is vital to consult with elders in the tribe about whether you may be violating tribally specific taboos. For instance, there are certain trees or animals that are taboo, while others see them as sacred. Transportation to the group counseling site was a problem during the first Turtle Island Group Counseling Program. Many Indigenous people do not have fully functioning vehicles. Because the groups were closed, the loss of even two people impacted the group dynamic. A commitment to stay through the program is vital. Consequently, for the second Turtle Island group, transportation was secured through the

tribe for all the participants.

Conclusion

Indigenous people believe everything is connected and can never be separate from the sacred circle that contains all. The Lakota begin their sweat ceremonies with the words *mitakuye oyasin*, which means we are all relatives, which includes inanimate objects, animals, and plants, everything. The more alienated we become from Nature the more likely we are to destroy our own life's support systems. If we are to survive, we must develop a connection to the earth and demonstrate our appreciation. Our elders, the grandparents of our youth, with their deeper connections to Nature may hold the key to the Earth's future. Therefore, it is vital we hear their voices. The field of psychology has not integrated the healing component of an appreciation of the Earth as have American and Alaskan Native traditions (Cohen, 2018; Duran, 2012; Portman & Garrett, 2006). Central to our healing today, is the spiritual question of whether we will treat the earth as sacred or whether we will persist in our attempts to dominate it. We think it is crucial to develop a sense of belonging to Nature, seek the balance it teaches, and see individual healing as related to the whole. Helping people to consider the sacredness of Nature can occur in group counseling sessions such as the Turtle Island Project.

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Appendix A

Activity: A Walk in Nature Time: 2.25 hrs (1.5 hrs + 45 min journal processing) Materials: Tobacco, walking shoes, journal, and pen	
Goals	Group Processing
<p>Physical: Burn calories; relieve tension</p> <p>Mental: Become aware of Nature's splendor and interconnection</p> <p>Behavioral: Extend interaction with Nature</p> <p>Emotional: Reduce stress level; experience a sense of serenity within Nature</p> <p>Spiritual: Explore deeper meanings of self and interrelatedness to</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe what it was like to have this experience with your grandparent/grandchild. • What was the most beautiful thing that you witnessed during your walk? Describe it in detail. • What was the most challenging part of the assignment? • What was the most irritating part of your experience, and what made it so irritating? • Describe what the experience was like for you physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually. • If you were to imagine that Nature was trying to say something to you about your life, what would it be? • How was your life like anything you witnessed during the walk? • Discuss the level of connectedness you felt with Nature? In other words, was it uncomfortable? To what extent were you able to settle in and be there rather than somewhere else in your head? • How much did you like or dislike this experience? • In what ways was this experience helpful or unhelpful to your psychological well-being?

Nature	
<p style="text-align: center;">Activity: We too are Animals</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Time: 3 hrs (2 hrs + 1 hr journal processing)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Materials: Tobacco, walking shoes, journal, and pen</p>	
<p>Physical: Burn calories: reduce tension</p> <p>Mental: Expansion of knowledge about animals</p> <p>Behavioral: Greater awareness of relatedness to animals</p> <p>Emotional: Patience to tarry and observe</p> <p>Spiritual: Greater meaningfulness in relation to Nature</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has been your relationship with animals in general? • What do you think are the benefits of having relationships with animals? • What do you think are some similarities and differences between humans and animals? • When you think of zoo animals, which ones have made the biggest impressions on you through your years of growing up? Why? • Which animals were most memorable on this trip? Why? • What about your trip to the zoo was most disturbing or uncomfortable? • What was the most enjoyable moment of the experience? • Which of the animals are you most alike? Explain. • Think about one aspect of your personality that is lacking, in need of growth, or out of balance. Name it. Now think of an animal that you believe symbolizes the quality that you would like to see stronger in yourself. Name it.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk about how the animal manifests that quality and how it serves them. Then recall a time when you may have exhibited that quality even if it was in a limited sense, and then share that story.
<p style="text-align: center;">Activity: The Sky</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Time: 1.25 hrs (30 min + 45 min journal processing)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Materials: tobacco, a blanket or a fold-down lawn chair, journal, and pen</p>	
<p>Physical: Relaxation</p> <p>Mental: symbolic thinking; stopping inner rumination; learn from partner</p> <p>Behavioral: being alright to do nothing; embrace stillness</p> <p>Emotional: tranquility; appreciation of partner</p> <p>Spiritual: awe</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tell me about how you and your partner came to choose the dawn, dusk, daytime, or night for the activity? As far as the view is concerned, do you prefer one over the other? Why? • How was this sky gazing experience different for you and your partner? • How often and how meaningful has sky gazing been in your life before this experience? • Would you describe any symbolic associations you may have for the things you saw in the sky? Relate how they may symbolically relate to anything that has happened in your life recently. • If you were to sing a song that your tribe may have about the dawn, dusk, clouds, or sky, what would it be and sound like? • Looking into the sky, one sees several layers. For instance, there are the birds and leaves in the wind above, clouds at different altitudes, and the deep blue sky. If you were to investigate three different layers of your soul, what would you see?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The wind and the atmospheric pressure cause the sky to change quickly at times. What are some of the ways that your moods change during the day? Are there regularities, or does it always depend upon circumstances? • What are the positives and negatives of emotional and mood alterations? How might you handle these alterations better? • How did you feel under the sky? Describe what its immensity stimulated in you. • Many people have written about the sky's impact upon their pride. What thoughts do you have regarding your feelings of importance when you look at the sky?
<p>Activity: Gifts of the Earth</p> <p>Time: 1.75 hrs (1 hr + 45 min collage)</p> <p>Materials: Tobacco, natural objects, poster board, magic marker, and glue</p>	
<p>Physical: Walking exercise; burn calories</p> <p>Mental: symbolic and meta-cognitive thinking</p> <p>Behavioral: Intentional activity</p> <p>Emotional:</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did you and your partner choose the place you traveled to for this nature hunt? • Describe the weather on the day you went out on the hunt? • What were some of the things you were expecting when you prepared for this activity? What were some surprises you encountered? • What were the most challenging aspects of this activity? • Explain how you decided from which tree or plant to take your items?

<p>Resolution</p> <p>Spiritual:</p> <p>Aesthetic Awareness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do you feel about doing this activity with your partner? • What meanings do the specific items have for you? • Why did you arrange them the way you did? What does this say about you? • Recall what trees and/or plants have meant to you in the past? Would you share a story about one of them? • Looking at the collage, if it could talk, what would it say to you?
<p>Activity: Seeing Yourself As Immersed in Nature</p> <p>Time: 2 hrs</p> <p>Materials: Tobacco, camera</p>	
<p>Physical:</p> <p>Walking exercise</p> <p>Mental:</p> <p>Consideration of the disconnect that modern people have from nature</p> <p>Behavioral:</p> <p>Intentional activity</p> <p>Emotional:</p> <p>Connection with another person</p> <p>Spiritual:</p> <p>Seeing oneself as a part</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the process of deciding upon the person who you would share this experience with. What is special about the person? • What was it about the setting that compelled you to choose it for the photo shoot? • Talk about the problems of carrying out this project? • Discuss in general how you felt about the way the project went? • Describe the most beautiful scene you remember from the photoshoot? How did the photo capture or not capture it? • How did you feel about sharing this experience in nature with another person? Did it distract or add to the experience? • How did the use of technology distract or add to the experience? • After this experience, what ways are you able to view your partner

<p>of the natural surroundings</p>	<p>as a part of nature or alienated from it? How did it bond or alienate you from him/her?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discuss each photograph, reflecting on feelings and thoughts at the time of taking it. • How would you do this project differently if you were to do it again?
<p style="text-align: center;">Activity: Living in Beauty</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Time: 2.5 hrs (2 hrs collecting + 30 min journaling)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Materials: Tobacco, flowers, vessels for flowers (drinking glasses or vases), water for flowers, pen, and journal</p>	
<p>Physical: Change: re-designing</p> <p>Mental: Discrimination; decision-making</p> <p>Behavioral: Cooperation</p> <p>Emotional: Meeting aesthetic and affiliative needs</p> <p>Spiritual: Acknowledging interconnections; developing meaning</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe the experience and discussions you and your partner had looking around the house as you considered where you would place the flowers. • What did you learn about your partner's taste and preferences when considering which flowers to select? • Describe your feelings when you made the offering to mother earth and for the flowers' sacrifice. • Having put the flowers in place, how did you feel the flowers impacted the look of the house? • What went into your choices of where to place the flowers? • How would you describe your interactions with your partner? Who had more to say about the decisions you made? How do you feel about it? • How did the experience with your partner impact how you feel about

	<p>him or her?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think about your relationship with flowers. How important are they in this world? • How has this experience impacted your appreciation of flowers? • How important do you feel it is to appreciate the beauty of Nature?
<p style="text-align: center;">Activity: Healing Rocks</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Time: 2 hrs (1.5 hrs rock search + 30 min journaling)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Materials: Transportation, tobacco, rocks, pen, and journal</p>	
<p>Physical: outside experience; exercise</p> <p>Mental: Insight about meanings</p> <p>Behavioral: Patience, intentionality</p> <p>Emotional: Ventilation of suppressed feelings; empathy</p> <p>Spiritual: Awareness of shared suffering</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would you be willing to describe the uses of rocks in your tribe(s) sweat ceremonies? • Describe your decision-making process for where to go to find the rocks? • How difficult was it to think of a challenging experience in your life? How hard was it to find a rock to reflect that experience? • How important was it to you that you searched out the “ugly” rock together? • What were you thinking and feeling when you hugged each other after finding them? • Those willing to share their difficult experiences are given the opportunity. Empathetic listening is encouraged. A pot full of dirt water is placed in the center of the circle, where those who feel they wish deposit the “ugly” rock, can. • How different was the experience of searching for the beautiful

	<p>rock?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How helpful or unhelpful was it to choose rocks to represent your experiences? • How has this experience with your partner impacted your feelings for them? • How important is it for you to think about yourself as a part of the web of life?
<p>Activity: Tree Wisdom</p> <p>Time: 1.25 hrs</p> <p>Materials: Tobacco, pen, journal</p>	
<p>Physical: Walking</p> <p>Mental: Thinking through questions concerning the tree</p> <p>Behavioral: Changing one's relationship with Nature</p> <p>Emotional: Interaction with a partner; connection with a tree</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describe your interaction with your partner in deciding on which tree to interact with. • In what ways was doing this activity with your partner meaningful to you? • Describe the tree you chose. • Read your journal entry about the tree. • What were some of the themes you have written about? How are they themes that run through your life? • How might interacting with a tree as you did impact your appreciation for nature? • How do trees influence our lives? • How might our appreciation or lack of appreciation of trees impact Nature and life on our planet?

<p>Spiritual: See oneself in the web of life</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do you believe we should be stewards of our environments? Why or why not?• What can we do to help our planet survive?
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