Building the National Movement to Prevent Trauma and Foster Resilience

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Land Acknowledgment

The land Whitney and Jesse presently occupy is the ancestral home of the **Nacotchtank (Anacostan), Piscataway, and Doeg Peoples**, who have persisted here in the Washington, DC Metro Area before recorded history to the present day.

Image: Skylar Arias

What You Can Expect

- **CTIPP: Who We Are & How We Got Here**

- **Conceptualizing Trauma**

- **How Trauma May Show Up**

- **What Hurts**

- **What Helps**

- **Trauma-Informed Action Steps**
  - ✳ **Organization-/Leadership-Level**
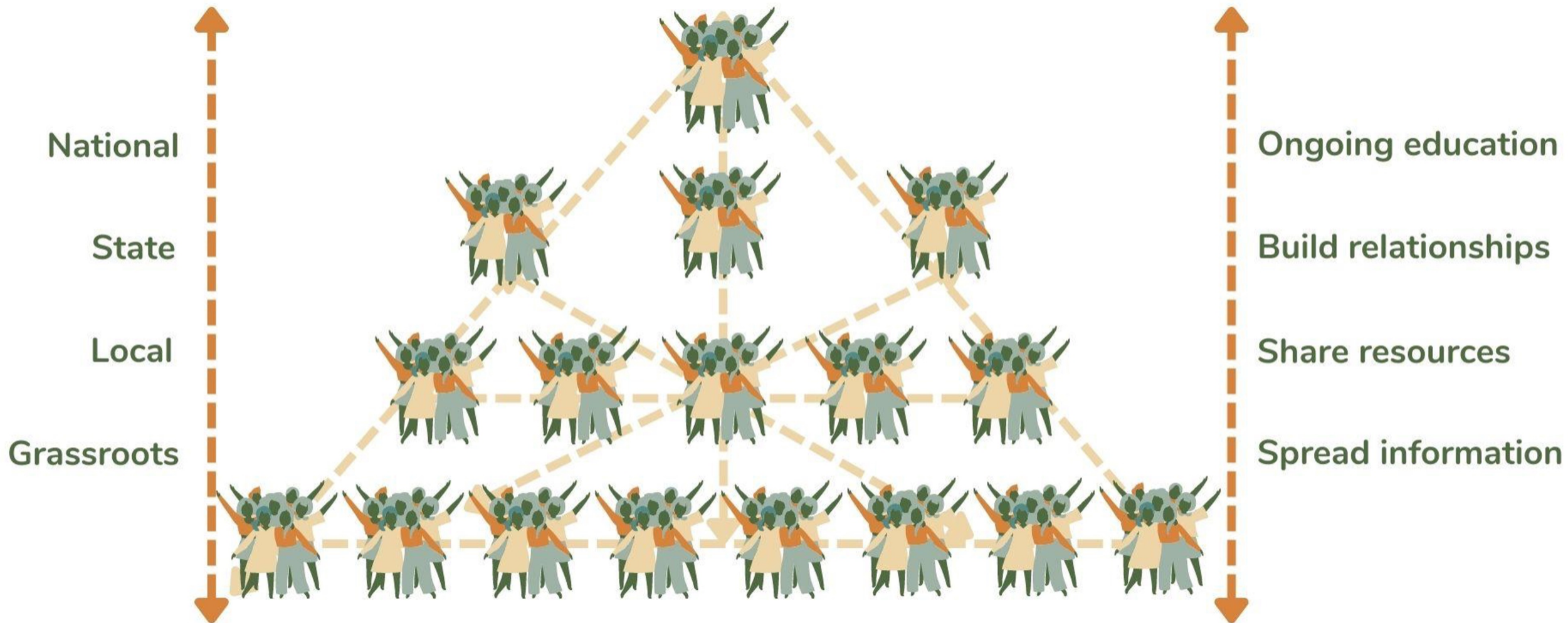 - ✳ **Public Policy**

Who We Are & How We Got Here

- **Dan Press** & Trauma-Informed Care

- Dan and other leaders created CTIPP to fill key needs:
  - ✳ A federal advocacy voice around trauma as a root cause driver of several negative health and social outcomes
  - ✳ A comprehensive vision of what a trauma-informed society could look like

- CTIPP History
  - ✳ Volunteer-led for first 5+ years of history
  - ✳ Launched CTIPP CAN and National Campaign prior to pandemic, then pivoted
  - ✳ Dan's passing → honoring his vision for PressOn

PressOn

National — Ongoing education

State — Build relationships

Local — Share resources

Grassroots — Spread information

CTIPP.org/PressOn

Conceptualizing Trauma

Individual trauma results from an **event**, series of events, or set of circumstances that is **experienced** by an individual as overwhelming or life-changing, and which has profound **effects** on the individual's psychological development or well-being, often involving a physiological, social, health, and/or spiritual impact.

Historical trauma describes the **cumulative** emotional and psychological wounding **across generations** including one's own lifespan.

Historical trauma is not just about what happened in the past; **it's about what's still happening.**

Unresolved Grief

Environmental Destruction

Internalized & Lateral Oppression

Complicated Government Relationships

Epigenetic & Neurobiological Changes

Persistence of Colonized Practices, Standards, & Norms

Historical Trauma Signs & Responses

- Anger
- Anxiety
- Numbing
- Depression
- Survivor's guilt
- Low self-esteem
- Fear and distrust
- Identity confusion
- Death-related/suicidal ideation
- Somatic symptoms/chronic pain
- Disturbing dreams & loss of sleep
- Internalization of ancestral suffering
- Health-harming/risk-taking behaviors
- Compulsion to compensate for genocidal legacy

Brave Heart; Duran et al.; Gillson et al.; Riley et al.; Walls & Whitbeck; *Image:* Leah Dorion

How Trauma May Show Up At Work

- Intrusive thoughts
- Distraction/challenges concentrating
- Disengagement from/avoidance of work
- Withdrawal from supportive relationships

- Feelings of alienation and marginality
  - ✳ Self-limiting beliefs
  - ✳ Persecutory thoughts
  - ✳ Discomfort around colleagues

Common Experiences That Hurt

- Misalignment of work environment and personal values
- Fear of standing out/pressure to assimilate
- Lack of AIAN colleagues/people in field
- Microaggressions/macroaggressions
- Lack of understanding of culture
- Systemic bias/discrimination

> "...none of it was built for people like me. I have to navigate between learning the rules of this context and losing myself.... if I don't internalize these views, these values, then I will be ejected from the system."
>
> - Anna (Choctaw)

COVID-19's Ongoing Impacts

- AIAN people more likely to work in service roles than the overall labor force
- April 2020 = record high jobless rate among AIAN people (26.8%)

National unemployment rate in January 2022: 4.4%
**AIAN Unemployment rate in January 2022: 11.1%.**

The age-adjusted mortality rate for COVID-19 is higher for AIAN people than for **any other group.**

What Helps

- Practicing cultural humility
- Opportunities to strengthen cultural identity & incorporate traditional practices
  - ✴ Note protective factors
- Recognition of cultural strengths & resiliency
- Remembering
- Representation

What Becomes More Possible

- More Indigenous joy
- More prosocial behaviors
- Greater sense of belonging
- Healthier, more active coping
- Greater sense of personal power
- Less guilt/responsibility for undoing history
- Increased cultural pride & valuation of self/tribe

Duran et al.; Gillson et al.; Haverkate; Marsh et al. Morven & Cunningham; *Image: Marsh et al.*
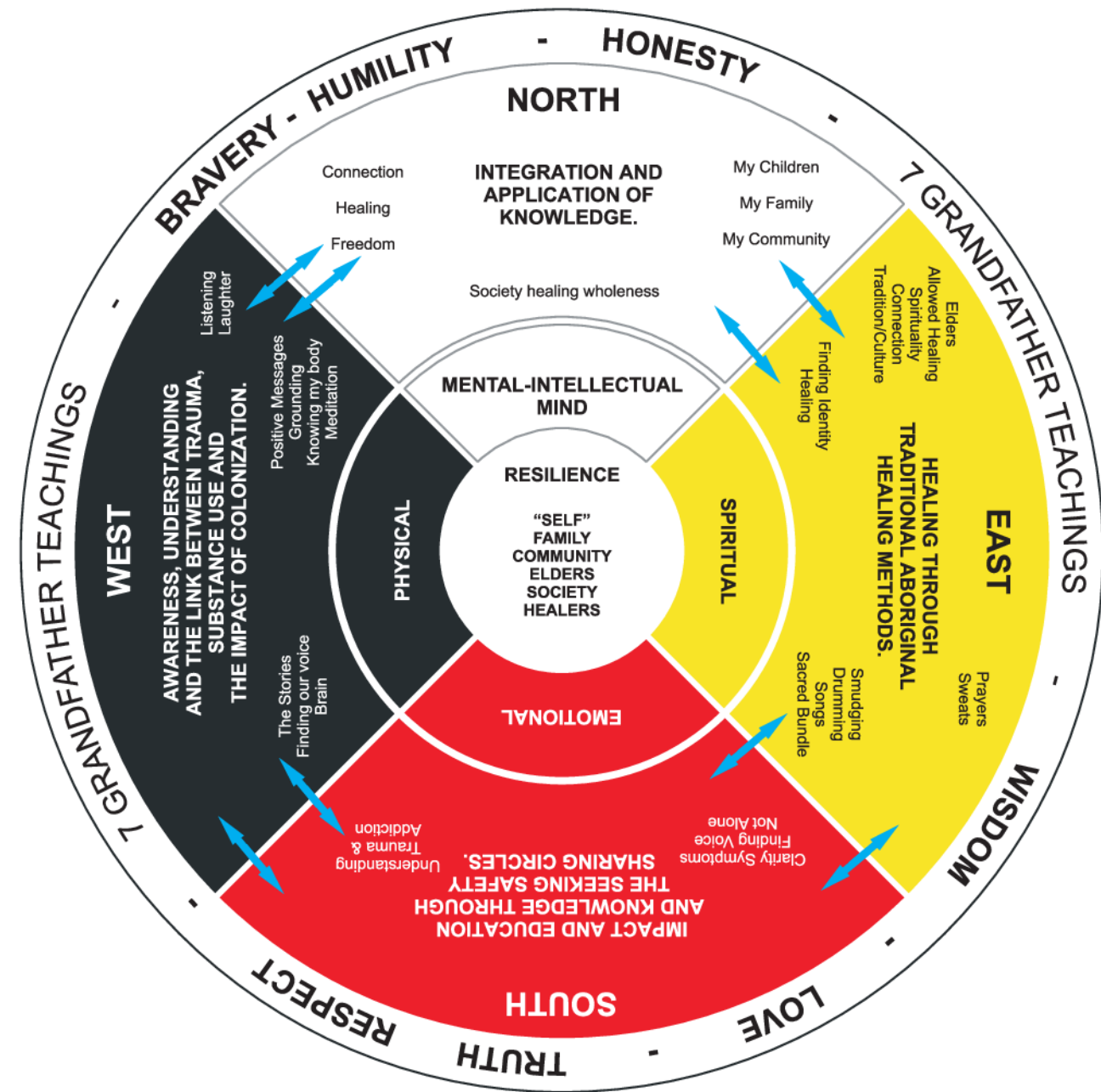
TI Values in Action: **Cultural, Historical, & Gender Issues**

- Work to move policies, protocol, and practices toward a postcolonial paradigm
- Ensure training curriculum includes content on...
  - ✳ Trauma (individual/interpersonal *and* historical) and its potential impacts
  - ✳ Cultural humility
- Create hiring questions that reflect candidates' awareness of and sensitivity
- Be attentive to noticing and amplifying cultural strengths
- Expand support mechanisms available to staff to include access to traditional cultural healing practices and community-based resources for free/at low cost
- Evaluate whether and to what degree conditions currently reflect AIAN needs, values, priorities, and criteria for success
  - ✳ Get authentic input from those most impacted
  - ✳ *Consider: how can you build on what's already working to meet current needs and build in sustainable change mechanisms to bring you toward your vision?*
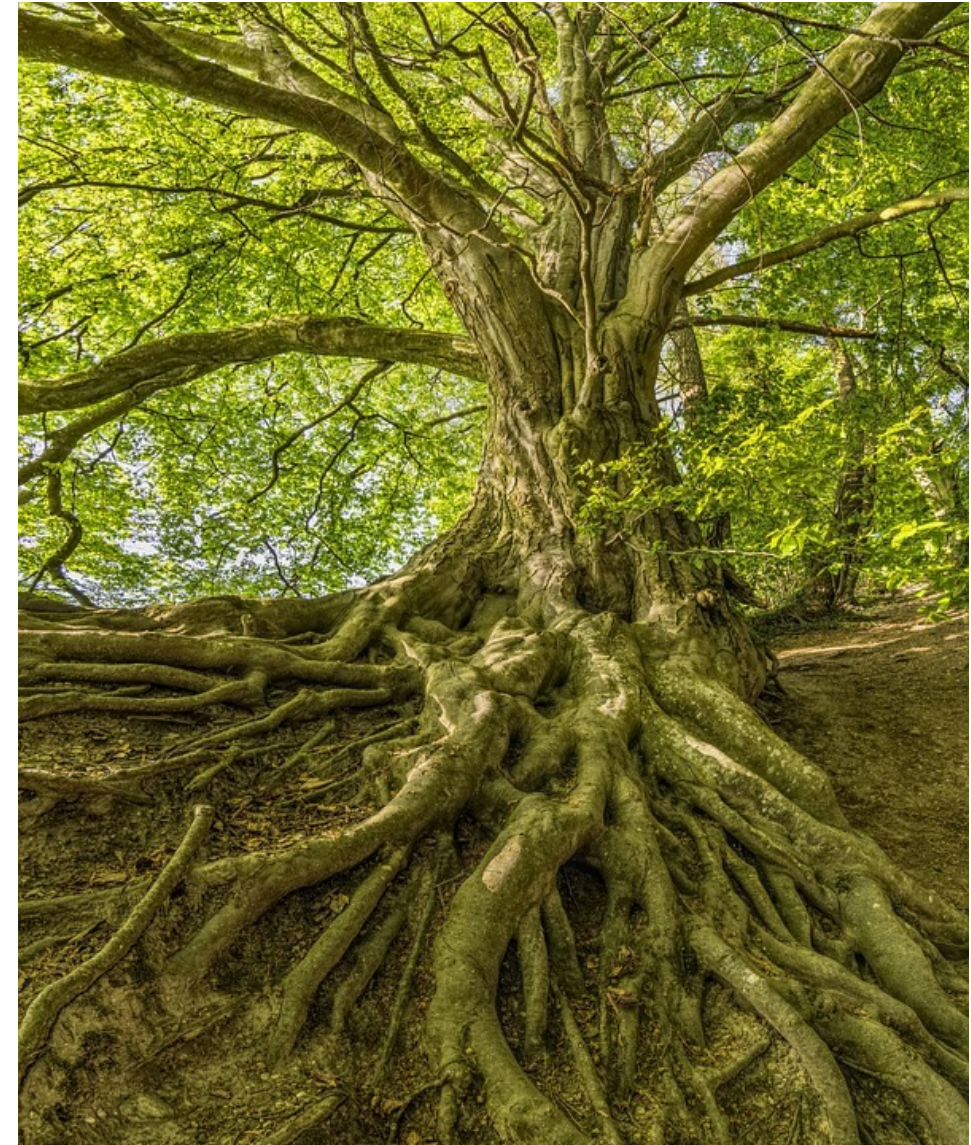
Chakraverty; Christiansen et al.; Duran et al.; Marsh et al.; Morven & Cunningham; U.S. Department of Labor

TI Values in Action: **Safety**

- Align policies and practices with fairly, consistently meeting diverse needs
  - *Consider: how can you ensure your mission, vision, and values explicitly reflect this commitment?*
- Provide visual cues in the environment signaling acceptance and celebrating culture reflected in the organization and the broader community
- Clearly, proactively encourage taking time off to engage with cultural activities
- Offer opportunities for each person to participate to advance a positive, supportive work environment
- Check in regularly

TI Values in Action: **Trustworthiness & Transparency**

- Let people know what they can expect *and* what is expected of them
  - ✸ *Consider: how can you adapt existing expectations so that they do not reflect oppressive, colonized paradigms?*
- Create pathways to *privately* report discrimination, bullying, and other harmful workplace behaviors without fear of retaliation
- Engage tribal leaders – share your work, values, and how you support staff
- Do what you say you will do
  - ✸ When that doesn't happen, be honest and forthcoming about what happened
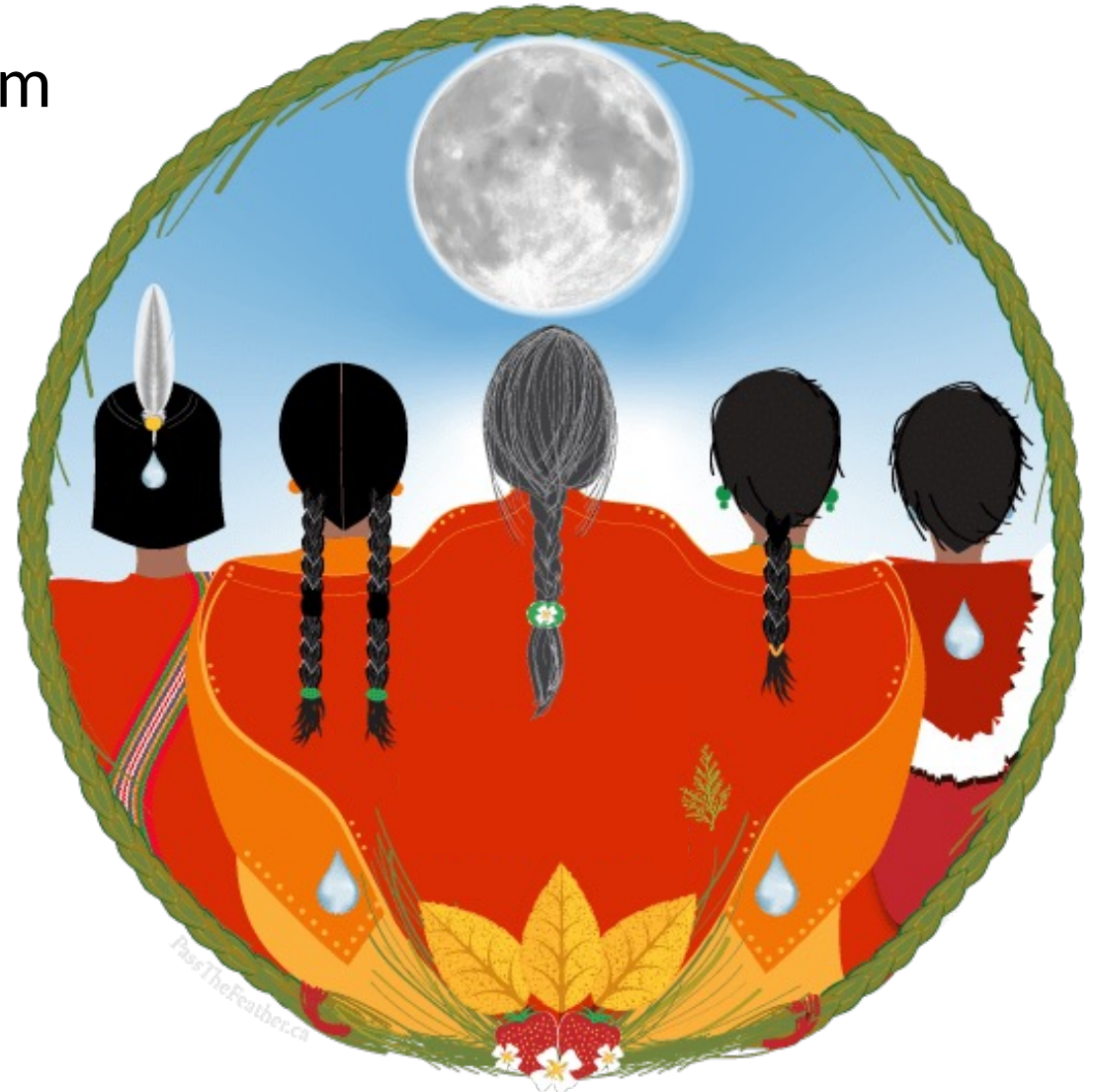

Chakraverty; Christiansen et al.; Duran et al.; Marsh et al.; Morven & Cunningham; U.S. Department of Labor; *Image: FelixMittermeier/Pixabay*

TI Values in Action: **Empowerment, Voice, & Choice**

- Provide opportunities for all to use their voice and remove obstacles to them doing so
  - ✴ Shared/participatory decision-making
  - ✴ Committee/council/etc. positions
  - ✴ Check in with all – what do they say they *really* need?
- Allow for flexibility in *how* a person completes their work tasks
- Create and distribute a resource repository for supports and services
- Support upward mobility and advancement
  - ✴ Create training/education/development programs to build relevant capacity
  - ✴ Ensure pathways to leadership are clear and access is equitable
  - ✴ Arrange ongoing touchpoints with supervisors to set and assess movement toward goals, identify learning opportunities and projects, etc.
  - ✴ Support further education for those that want to pursue it
    - o Emphasize that working WHILE attending school is an option
      - ▪ Reimburse part of tuition for those who remain employed
- Honor Indigenous knowledge

Chakraverty; Christiansen et al.; Duran et al.; Marsh et al.; Morven & Cunningham; U.S. Department of Labor

TI Values in Action: **Peer Support**

- Create a mentor/coaching/liaison program

- Enable access to affinity groups and/or employee resource groups
  - ✳ *Consider: if not in the organization itself, how might you partner with neighbors and local tribal leaders?*

- Amplify stories of success among AIAN people who can serve as professional role models

Chakraverty; Christiansen et al.; Duran et al.; Marsh et al.; Morven & Cunningham; *Image: Indigenous Art Collective*

TI Values in Action: **Collaboration & Mutuality**

- If resources allow, provide free community programming based on expertise
  - ✷ e.g., financial literacy, holistic wellness, technology/business skills, etc.
- Partner with educational institutions, online training providers, and others to affordably support skill development and workforce preparation
  - ✷ Consider supporting young people with academic and vocational preparedness as well as career exploration with families involved
- Consider offering alternative ways to resolving conflict, such as circles
- Convene local coalitions to reduce barriers to economic wellbeing
  - ✷ e.g., carpools to offset transportation costs
- Coordinate with relevant local providers to support the workforce
  - ✷ e.g., affordable childcare, health providers, legal support, etc.
  - ✷ Establish relationships with traditional healers
- Create and participate in opportunities to give back to the community
- Work with TEROs ☺

Chakraverty; Christiansen et al.; Duran et al.; Marsh et al.; Morven & Cunningham

Advocacy Avenues to Further Enhance Wellbeing

- **Strengthening the AIAN workforce means attending to holistic wellbeing**
- Challenge federal policies that undermine sovereignty and limit self-determination
- Increasing accessibility to and coordination of quality, culturally-responsive services
- Provide funding to support practices aligned with healing trauma among AIAN people
  - ✳ Soul wound/unresolved intergenerational grief workshops
  - ✳ Traditional cultural practices and ceremonies
- Addressing disparities implementing trauma-informed, equity-centered approaches to mandated reporting to preserve safety while reducing family separation
- Efforts to heal the land and advance environmental wellbeing
- Greater truth and reconciliation efforts
- Support for restoration of disrupted cultural modes (e.g., language, practices, etc.)
- Recruit, develop, and retain a dedicated, competent, caring, and diverse workforce
- More robust economic supports to generate equity and repair harm
  - ✳ e.g., baby bonds, universal basic income, reparations
- Greater public awareness of ongoing challenges and AIAN-informed solutions

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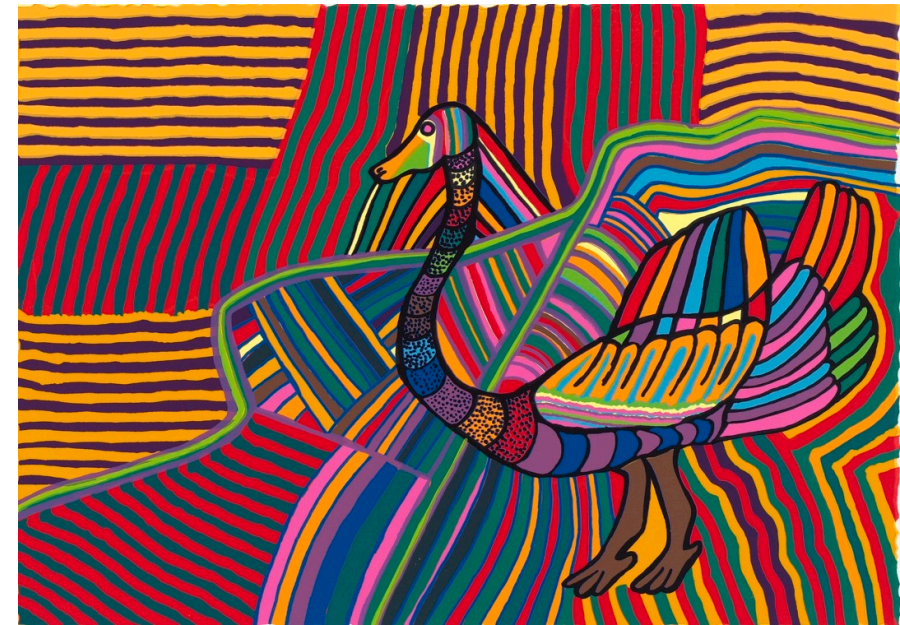
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