

BRIEF SUMMARY REPORT

**Workshop January 22-25
“Rebuilding the Circle”
Wahta Mohawks
J.W.Resort in Minnett, Onario**

I was asked to present a three day workshop for the Wahta Mohawk Community focusing on issues of historical trauma, current and delayed grief, current and historical community division, lateral violence, and community healing.

Outline for the Three Day Training:

Day One:

- Building Your “Circle of Support”
- The Eight Methods of Oppression
- Internalization of Oppression and the Breaking of the Circle
- Replacement of Values: When Traditional Values Are Replaced with Oppressor Values
- The Breakdown of Family and Community
- Exploring Your Community Trauma-Line (see attached)
- Using Mindfulness

Day Two:

- Ongoing Trauma and Grief from the Breakdown of the Circle
- Lateral Violence as Internalized Oppression
- The Difference Between Pain and Suffering
- Healing from Trauma and Loss
- Internalization of Personal Inferiority and Learned Helplessness
- Using Mindfulness

Day Three:

- Resiliency and Personal Empowerment
- The Steps to Individual, Family and Community Healing
- Lateral Empowerment Rather than Lateral Violence
- Returning to the Circle
- Promises to the Next Generation: Inclusion and Cooperation

Throughout the three days I was impressed by the many strengths of the Wahta Community:

- Strong and Compassionate Elders
- Commitment of Young People to Empowerment and Change
- Strength and Commitment of Health Care Providers
- The Majority of People Do Not Want Community Division to Continue

I was impressed by the words of Wahta Elders who spoke about the changes in values in Wahta in a short period of time. Remembering with fondness a time when community members would gather in each other's homes and the experience of a strong sense of connectedness, cooperation and kindness in the community. They remembered with fondness a time when the majority community members lived their lives built on the foundation of the traditional values of kindness and cooperation. One Elder spoke with great sadness about leaving the community for a short period and upon her return inviting community members to her home as she always had in the past and being shocked at the response she received. Many people wouldn't come if others they named were there. All of the Elders echoed the pain of this community disconnection and loss of "community" and traditional values. They all committed to doing their part in returning to the circle and rebuilding a community based on traditional values.

The young people spoke about the commitment they had made to each other to stay united and connected rather than becoming part of the community division. They spoke about the temporary loss of that commitment in the recent election as they too became part of the community division. They resolved at the end of the workshop to return to their original commitment of standing together in unity and honoring differences of opinions rather than personalizing them.

I was also impressed with the dedication of many of the workers in the community and their passion for helping others. This commitment showed in the organization of the conference and the kindness conference planners showed to each and every participant.

I felt welcomed by everyone and well taken care of by the conference planners and the young people in the community who served me lunch every day.

Thoughts on Community Division and Recommendations for Future Consideration:

Community Division:

- Resulting from a long history of historical oppression, trauma and internalized oppression (see trauma line)
- Anger and pain directed towards each other (lateral violence) rather than experiencing the pain of multi-generational sexual abuse and sexual assault, domestic violence, shame, grief, and family substance abuse.
- Anger covering vulnerability and powerlessness from multi-generational trauma and abuse triggered by elections.
- Experience of community division is Wahta reflective of First Nations and Native American Communities throughout North America – the result of long histories of oppression, historical trauma and resulting multi-generational trauma.

Recommendations:

- Continued small group focus on rebuilding the circle. The strength of community felt in a conference such as this can be lost if not continued. It is imperative that small group work continue.
- Trauma-informed awareness – those present at the workshop continuing to educate others on the information received over the three days.

- Community education on Sexual Abuse and Sexual Assault. Education for all health providers on the treatment of individuals, families and community. 1) The difference between sexual abuse and sexual assault; 2) Historical origins, 3) The treatment of sexual abuse victims and survivors; 4) Specialized treatment for Offenders; 5) Treatment of families; 4) Community Healing.
- Focus on individual, family and community healing of sexual abuse and sexual assault with the understanding and compassionate awareness of its origins in historical trauma. Healing for victims of abuse and their families and perpetrators of abuse and their families. Clear understanding that sexual perpetrators of abuse must be treated as offenders first, then as victims of abuse.
- At the end of the second day of the workshop, a note was left for others to see stating that one of the participants was a perpetrator of sexual abuse. The participant in the workshop obviously didn't feel safe in the room with her perpetrator. Another participant also confidentially mentioned that her perpetrator was in the room. As part of a community awareness of sexual abuse, it is important to educate the community regarding safety for victims of abuse as well as treatment for offenders. Every effort should be made to provide safety for victims.
- Educating community on the dynamics of Lateral violence: Focus on Lateral Empowerment.
- Small group focus groups on traditional values and expanding resiliency factors in self and community.
- The importance of Trauma-Informed Schools as primary prevention. Placing children back in the center of the circle.
- Welcoming people back into the community.
- Honoring each other: Children, Women, Men and Elders.

- Realization that all have been hurt and focus on healing, forgiveness, empowerment.

Thank you so much for the opportunity of working with your community. It has been an honor and privilege to work with so many kind, compassionate and resilient community members.