

Integrating the Medicine Wheel, ETC and Holism to heal historical trauma experienced by Native American urban youth.

Abstract

This workshop will share results the of an integrated, multi model therapeutic approach incorporating art therapy and Adlerian Individual Psychology within a traditional Indigenous healing context. Addressing the status of mental health and appropriate intervention for urban American Indian (AI) adolescents must begin with a discussion regarding the impact of colonization, historical trauma, intergenerational trauma and historical unresolved grief (Yellow Horse Brave Heart, & DeBruyn, 1998). Studies conducted on reservations and tribal communities in Canada (Archibald, et al., 2012), addressing the benefits of integrating the creative arts will be presented, including a case study of the results of the Sabe Project conducted at Nawayee Center School in Minneapolis, MN.

The Sabe Project explores the effectiveness of the integration art therapy, specifically addressing the connection between the Expressive Therapies Continuum (ETC) framework (Hinz, 2009) including a Neurodevelopmental art therapy approach (Chapmen, 2013), and Individual Psychology's concepts such as holism (Roberts et al., 2003) into an AI context using the Indigenous Medicine Wheel to address reduction in cultural isolation, decrease in historical trauma symptoms and the development of a positive sense of self.

The inclusion of healing ceremony rituals, traditional teachings, historical and inter-generational trauma education, creative arts experiences, art therapy groups and individual sessions, and expressive arts has been found to be effective tools in the healing process for AI adults, adolescents and children (Archibald & Dewar, 2010). The Medicine wheel exemplifies holism consisting of four quadrants; physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual. It is a road map

for life suggesting that balance between the four quadrants are required to live a healthy life. Individual Psychology's concept of holism reflects the individual's use of thoughts (mental), actions (physical), and feeling (emotion) within a social context. Adlerian theory, and the Medicine Wheel have separate components that are equal and necessary components in the larger world (Roberts et al., 1998). The authors suggest the similarities between the directions of the Medicine Wheel and Adlerian Life Tasks. The East (Physical) = Social Embeddedness, South (emotional) = Striving for Mastery, West (Mental) = Life Style, and North (Spirit) = Goal Orientation or Teleology. While the placement of the four components varies from tribe to tribe, the basic principle of holism remains.

The Sabe project incorporates the Expressive Therapy Continuum (ETC) (Hinz, 2009), informed by Neurodevelopmental art therapy approaches (Chapman, 2013) within an Indigenous context. The ETC consists of four components; Kinesthetic/ Sensory, Perceptual/ Affective, Cognitive/Symbolic, and Creative. These four components can be compared to the four components of the Medicine Wheel; Sensory/ kinesthetic can be connected to Physical, Perceptual/ Affect can be linked to Emotion, Cognitive/ Symbolic can be linked to Mental, and Creative component can be linked to Spiritual. Connections between the ETC framework and the Indigenous Medicine Wheel will be explored highlighting shared and overlapping concepts informed by Neurodevelopmental art therapy approaches to treating historical trauma.

During year two of the project the DAB assessment was given to 18 students directly involved in the therapeutic arts component of the Sabe project. The Draw-a-Bridge (DAB) is a projective art therapy assessment that projects in symbolic form, the ability to overcome obstacles, solve a problem, and assesses level of hopefulness (Hays, Lyons, 1981). The Bridge is a universal object build to assist in the movement and connection from one place to another. The

Sabe project coordinator utilized DAB to assessment individual movement during a six months period from October 2017 to March 2018. Of the 18 students, 15 completed both pre and post assessment. Of the 15-youth completing the assessments 95% of post drawing reflected positive changes in at least four to five of the nine variables. The most notable changes were in the areas of placement of self, places drawn on either side of the bridge, emphasis by elaboration, bridge construction, and type of bridge depicted.

An art therapy based experiential will be offered for participants to explore the concepts and directives addressed in this workshop as a ritual for a closing and synthesizing experience.

References

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