



# MENDING BROKEN HEARTS

## HEALING FROM UNRESOLVED GRIEF & INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA



**Develop the capacity of individuals and communities to heal from unresolved grief and the losses created by the legacy of Historical and Intergenerational Trauma.**

### Unresolved Grief

Unresolved grief is a significant issue in Indigenous communities. Unresolved grief occurs when relationships are broken by death, separation, divorce, or anger. People feel a sense of incompleteness, that they should have said “I love you” or they should have expressed how they felt in other ways.

For Indigenous people, especially those whose relatives attended Boarding Schools between 1879 and the 1960s, there are even more complex issues:

- Children were forcibly taken from their families
- They were abused emotionally, mentally, physically (including sexually) and spiritually
- Family structure was disrupted and children never learned loving parenting skills
- Loss of language, culture, sense of identity
- Loss of the Elder system
- Loss of the ability to love

In addition, many Indigenous people have been affected by the historical and intergenerational trauma that are a result of the US government policies of relocation either from the “long walks” of the 1800s or the efforts to remove people from the reservations in the 1950s by helping them move to large cities.

### Significance

The significance of unresolved grief is demonstrated in the many social issues that Indigenous people experience, as represented in the “sick” forest illustration.

Traditional healthy cultures have been made “sick” by the anger, guilt, shame, and fear passed on from generation to generation.

This creates a “culture” that is shame-based. This sense of shame and unresolved grief contributes to the behavioral, emotional, physical, and spiritual issues that challenge wellness.



### Reconnecting Ourselves

This 3 day culturally-based program explores strategies for reconnecting with our loved ones, how to complete those relationships, even with family members who have made their Journey.

The “Ancestors within” are also provided the opportunity for healing. The foundation for this healing process is based in traditional cultural ceremonies and teachings and on the importance of forgiveness. The goal is for the individual to reconnect with the culture, with their identity as a Native person, with family members (living and deceased), to complete those relationships where important things were left unsaid or where important things were left undone.

The process used is based upon two important teachings: The Natural Order of Change and the Four Directions of Forgiveness. These teachings, plus the teachings of the Healing Forest, can help to restore a sense of wholeness, connectedness, and most importantly, learn what it means to “be able to love,” by mending our broken hearts.





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### Topics & Themes

- Ribbon Ceremony & Commitments
- Intergenerational Trauma
- Exploration of Grief
- Messages and Myths
- Masks We Wear
- Community Resources
- Personal Trauma & Loss Chart
- Incomplete Relationship History
- Sharing Incomplete Relationships
- Speaking from Your Heart
- Letter for Mending Broken Hearts

### Outcomes

1. Understand the way our belief system shapes our ability to grieve
2. Recognize the characteristics of grief
3. Recognize what to do and what not to do with someone who is grieving
4. Recognize and remove the masks we use to hide our grief
5. Apply the Natural Order for resolving grief
6. Create an action plan for completing incomplete relationships and healing from grief

### Facilitate Circles in Community

1. Set up Mending Broken Hearts: Healing from Unresolved Grief and Intergenerational Trauma workshops in your own community
2. Assist family members and friends in dealing with grief
3. Assist family members and friends in dealing with the legacy of Boarding Schools and the experiences of Intergenerational Trauma
4. Make lesson plans for implementing each of the sessions
5. Organize and lead community talking circles
6. Apply traditional ceremonies to specific aspects of the grieving process
7. Apply mind mapping as a learning and organizing tool

24 Continuing Education Hours  
NAADAC Provider #64009

