



Connection is Prevention

Breaking the Cycles and Stigma of Addiction

a presentation by

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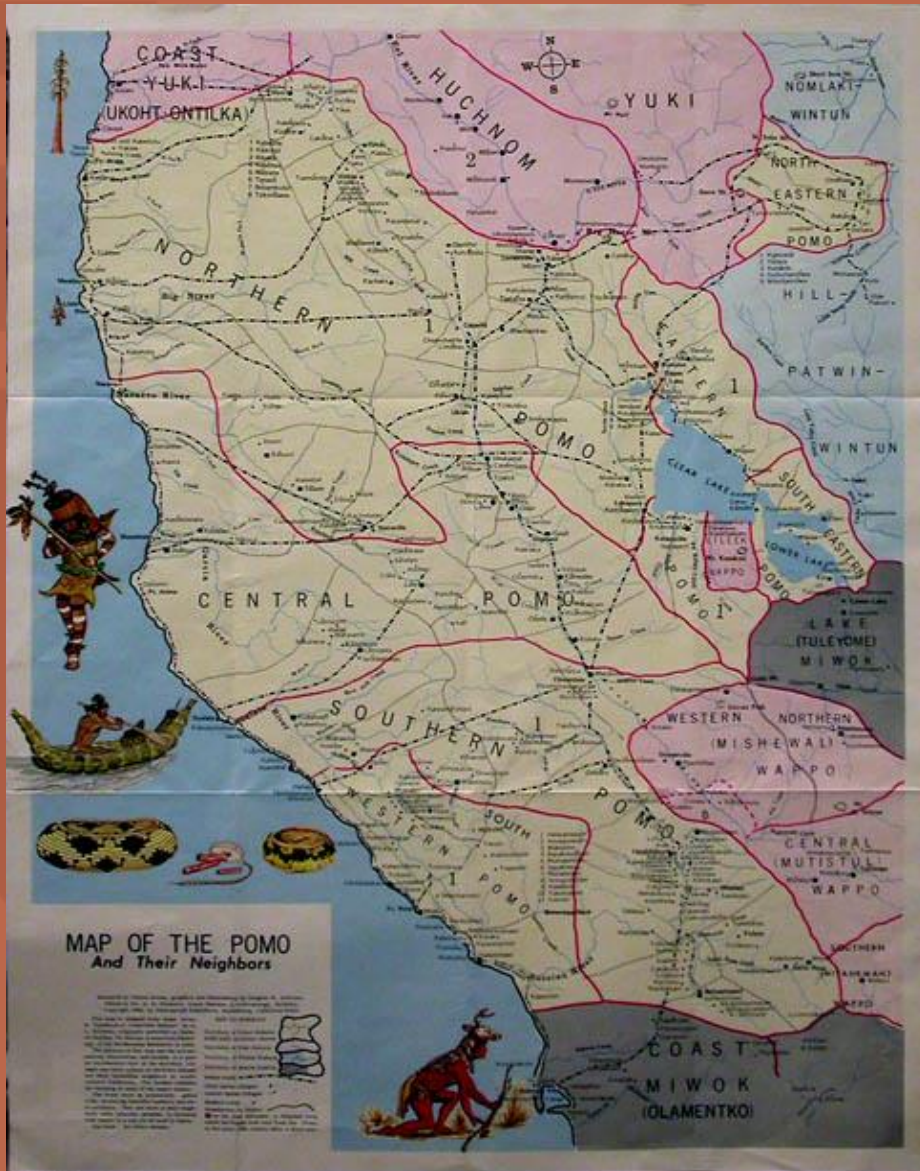
Redwood Community Services

Land Acknowledgement

Land acknowledgment is important for those listening and attending today because it recognizes the historical truths and injustices faced by indigenous communities, shedding light on the enduring connection to the land and contributions to the region. It creates unity, understanding, and support for indigenous initiatives, while promoting cultural awareness and environmental stewardship. Ultimately, it contributes to a more inclusive and equitable society that respects and celebrates indigenous heritage.

Chamay, Yahwíy. Hello and Welcome.

Mendocino County is home to 11 federally recognized tribes and several other tribal communities with deep ancestral ties to the region. These include the Coyote Valley Band of Pomo Indians, Guidiville Rancheria, Hopland Band of Pomo Indians, Manchester Band of Pomo Indians of the Manchester Rancheria, Pinoleville Pomo Nation, Redwood Valley Little River Band of Pomo Indians, Round Valley Indian Tribes, Sherwood Valley Rancheria of Pomo Indians, Cahto Tribe of the Laytonville Rancheria, and the Kashia Band of Pomo Indians of the Stewarts Point Rancheria. We also acknowledge the Yokayo Rancheria and the Noyo River Indian Community. These communities represent a rich diversity of Pomo, Yuki, Wailaki, Concow, Nomlaki, Cahto, and other Indigenous peoples who have cared for these lands since time immemorial and continue to carry forward traditions of cultural strength, healing, and connection.



Opening Reflection

When the circle is broken, we must come together to mend it.

Join us in a moment of silence or acknowledgment of ancestors.

(White Bison, 2024)



History

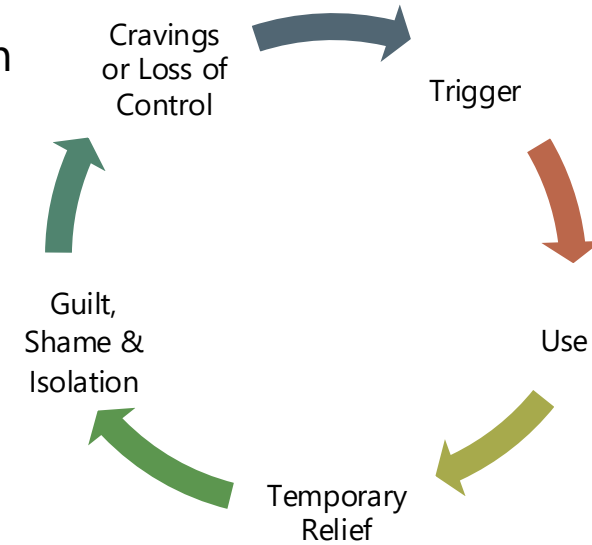
A history and timeline of harm, resilience, and reconnection.

Pre-Colonial Era	Indian Removal & Forced Relocation	Boarding School Era	Alcohol Policies & Stereotypes	Entry of Meth and Synthetic Drugs	Cultural Revitalization and Community-Led Healing
Time Immemorial	1830s and Onward	1870s to 1970s	1800s and 1900s	1980s-2000s	1970s-Present
Strong, thriving Native nations with complex systems of healing, governance, and community care. Substance use was ceremonial and sacred, not recreational.	Families and communities were torn apart. Loss of land and lifeways disrupted wellness practices and community structures.	Native children were forcibly removed, punished for speaking their languages, and often subjected to abuse. Intergenerational trauma took hold.	Alcohol was introduced as a tool of control. Harmful stereotypes were used to justify systemic neglect and criminalization of Native people.	Meth, opioids, and synthetic drugs spread rapidly in Native and rural communities, where poverty, trauma, and isolation left communities vulnerable to their impact. These substances deepened crises and overwhelmed already under-resourced systems.	Tribal communities are reclaiming culture, language, and traditional healing while partnering with local agencies to expand trauma-informed, culturally grounded prevention and recovery efforts. Connection is the foundation of healing.

(Brave Heart, 2003; Gone, 2013; NADARI, n.d.)

Understanding the Cycle of Addiction

- The cycle of addiction



- Addiction impacts individuals, families, and entire communities
- In tribal and rural areas, trauma and isolation can deepen the harm
- Addiction often stems from emotional triggers, unresolved pain, and disconnection
- Historical oppression adds weight to substance use and dependency

(Brave Heart, 2003; Gone, 2013)

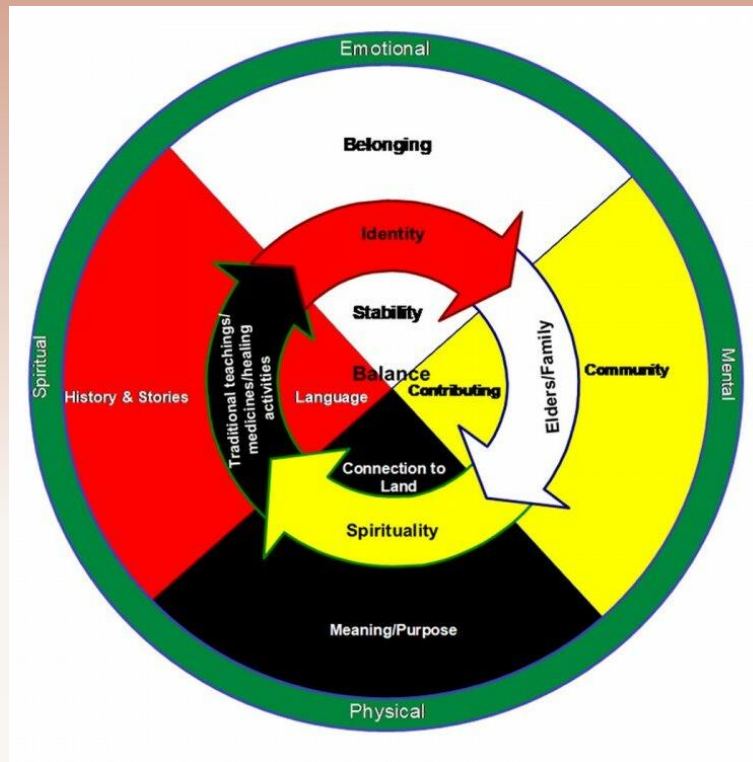
Recognizing the Signs

- ❖ Physical: changes in appearance, sleep, energy.
- ❖ Emotional: mood swings, isolation, irritability.
- ❖ Behavioral: dishonesty, stealing, dropping out of commitments.
- ❖ Cultural: withdrawing from ceremony or family.

(Grandbois & Sanders, 2012; Coyhis & White, 2006)

Community, Family, and Culture in Recovery

Addiction affects more than individuals — it disrupts family systems, community roles, and cultural connection. In both Indigenous and rural communities, shared pain is matched by shared strength. Recovery happens when we reconnect to family, involve youth and elders, and return to the land, ceremony, and story as sources of healing and identity.



(Kirmayer et al., 2011; Lucero & Bussey, 2012; Rains et al., 2004)

Support & Resources

RESOURCE TYPE	DESCRIPTION
Traditional Healers & Ceremony	Offer holistic approaches to wellness
Family, Friends, and Community	Address individual and specific support needs
Tribal Health Clinics	Provide culturally relevant health services
Local Provider Agencies	Provide inpatient and outpatient clinical and non-clinical ongoing supports
Hotlines / National Hotlines	Provide immediate crisis supports

(Coyhis & White, 2006; SAMHSA, 2020; NADARI, n.d.)

Protecting the Next Generation and Honoring the Path to Recovery

Prevention begins early, by teaching emotional awareness, cultural identity, and the power of connection. Involving elders, schools, and cultural leaders helps young people feel seen and valued.

Recovery, too, deserves to be uplifted. It is real, it is happening, and every step forward matters. When we share our stories, we break down shame, create hope, and show others what's possible. Recovery is not only about reaching the finish line, it's also about honoring the small victories along the way.

(HeavyRunner & Marshall, 2003; White Bison, 2024)



Final Reflection

Healing is not a straight line. It's a circle, just like we are. And every time someone returns to ceremony, to family, to life... the circle gets stronger.

We don't have to figure out the whole journey at once. Sometimes, just walking beside someone and reminding them they belong is enough to begin the healing.

Q & A

Questions?

Comments?

We open this space now for further discussion.

If you have any additional questions or want to collaborate,
please contact us by email or phone

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Resources

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