

# Cultural Health

What is it and how do we interact with it?

# Tribal Cohesion

- To some extent:
  - All tribes v.s. non-Indians
  - All tribes advocating for federal retribution for past wrongs
  - Cultural revitalization of language, spirituality, art
  - Rewriting history to include each tribes perspective, contributions, voice
  - Tribal sovereignty
  - Health, economic stability, personal wellbeing, & education on Native terms

# Wellness from a Native Perspective

A Native perspective of wellness is holistic including the wellbeing of the body, mind, spirit and relationships with others. Wellness includes balance, harmony, peacefulness, and prayer. Traditional healers use herbal medicines, counseling, prayer, diet, and exercise to treat their patients. The outcomes of traditional healing methods can have immediate effect, but long term implications are also expected.

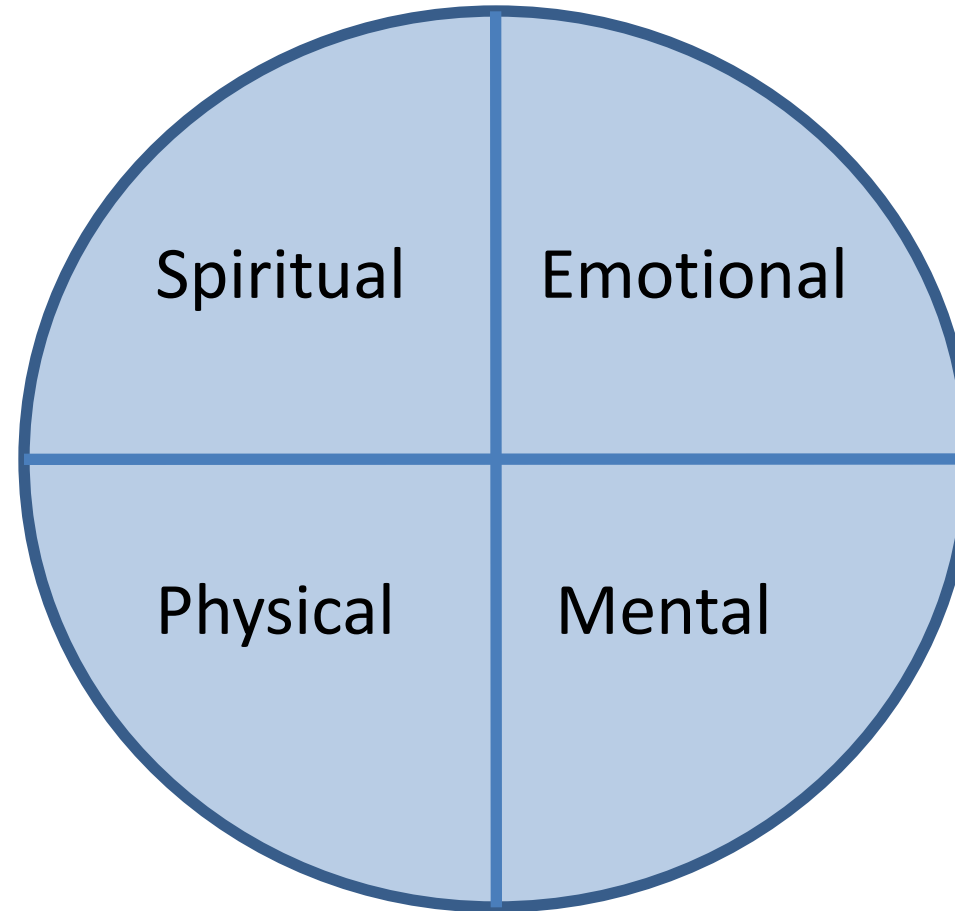
# Healthcare is a Cultural Construct

- Healthcare arises from beliefs about the nature of disease and the human body.
- Cultural issues are actually central in the delivery of health services treatment and preventive interventions.

( National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services in Health Care, Executive Summary, 3/2001. U.S. Dept. of Health & Human Services, OPHS. Office of Minority Health )

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# 4 Elements of the Person



Culturally &  
Linguistically  
Appropriate  
Services (CLAS)  
Standard 1

**BALANCE**

# Loss of Balance

- PHYSICAL

- Poor diet: Everything white: sugar, salt, flour
- Inactive lifestyle
- Poor health in general

- EMOTIONAL

- Emotional detachment
- Ability to cope with stress
- Behavior problems
- Attachment issues
- Self-hatred, invalidation
- Alcohol addiction

- SPIRITUAL

- Internalized helplessness
- Connection with the Creator via ceremony and identity is lost
- Harmony with the earth is lost

- INTELLECTUAL

- Individualism v.s. communal ways of life
- Traditional parenting disrupted
- Lost of language
- Learning styles disrupted, & values attacked.

# Separate Culture from Addiction

## Cultural Thinking

- Plants are useful as food, medicine, tools, housing, or smudged in prayer.
- Keeping my life in balance is important to my Native identity.
- It is my role within an extended family to contribute to the wellbeing of others.

## Addiction Thinking

- Weed is not a “real” drug and can be used freely.
- Getting high on Pot is okay and it doesn't interfere with my life.
- When I'm high, I'm not hurting anyone.

Whiteman's disease  
then use Whiteman's  
medicine

# Relationship Building Protocols

- Acknowledge the elders and extend the best hospitality of your institution
- Shake hands gently
- Comfortable eye contact is respectful
- Create a relaxing and attentive environment – Don't be in a hurry
- Explain in advance – examination and treatment methods, including touching.





# What can you do?

## **Always a Learner**

- Ask for instruction on how things might work best for the patient.
- Have genuine interest in cultural perspectives as it may have an impact on the quality of care, integration of treatments, and long term outcomes.
- Don't be in a hurry, don't get flustered, and try to relax. Be calming.

## **Ask Questions with a Respectful tone.**

- Nothing can replace sincerity and kindness.
- Open ended questions.
- Initially, address your client, then acknowledge the person who appears to be in charge, acknowledge the elders. Be a gracious host for your organization.

# Be Present in the Community You Serve

- Places to Observe Culture
  - Pow wows,
  - tribal parades,
  - rodeos,
  - basketball tournaments,
  - arrow tournaments,
  - Hand game tournaments
  - Indian organization conferences
  - Indian museums
- Places to Participate in Culture
  - Pow wows and rodeos
  - Conferences,
  - Community events like American Indian Heritage Day,
  - Ultimate Warrior, Crow Native Days,
  - School events





98 - 100°

Wool dresses over  
cotton dresses

Buckskin dresses over  
cotton dresses

4 to 5 hours of  
standing and dancing  
during the hottest part  
of the day.

The Crow Parade Dance  
is our celebration of  
the new year. The  
dance is a prayer for  
the people and for  
those yet to come.  
Once you start, you  
must finish.



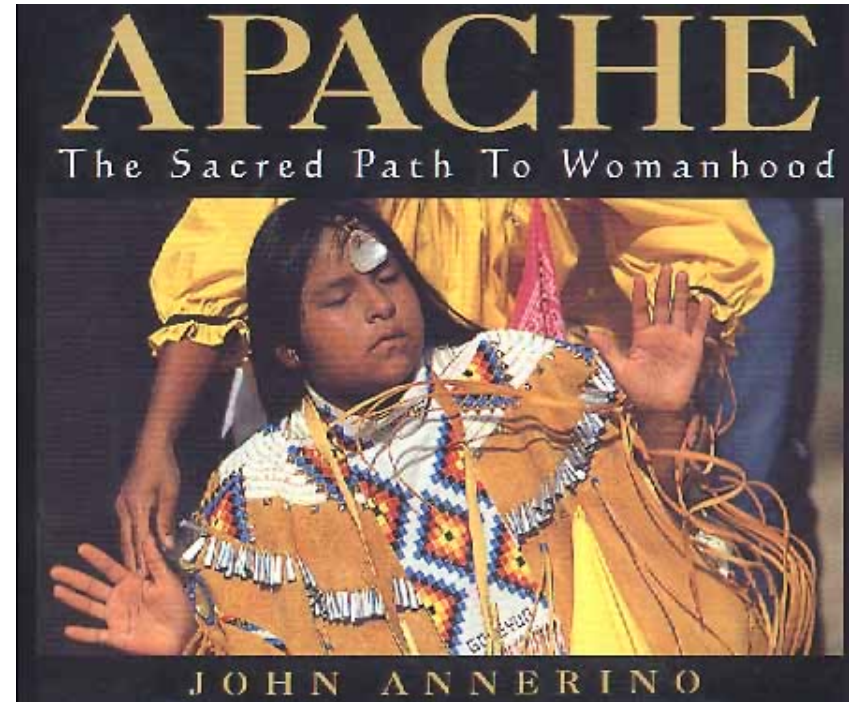
of these Crow traditional  
passed on by my mother.  
from her mother. Now I'm  
daughters how to make  
s—to try to follow the  
tern. These traditional  
ntify you as being a  
d being able to take  
f your children.

Jefferson (Crow), 2005

Cut  
**ONLY**  
on the  
seams!

# Traditional Coming of Age

- California tribes thought a girl's first moon to be a time of possessing supernatural power.
- Navajo rejoice the first moon as the young woman becomes a tribal symbol of fertility.
- Tohono O'odham (Papago) regard a menstruating woman as a vessel of supernatural power – the power to give birth.
- Muskogee consider that a woman changes into another stage of life where she naturally purifies herself.



Seclusion of women during their menstrual cycle is the most misinterpreted aspect of understanding Indian women

# Women are Sacred



Fanny Takes Horse with her son Clark



Clark's grand daughter Tana with her son Tre

# Modern Experiences



- Fathers are increasingly involved in the birthing experience.
- The birthing woman's female family members are a force NOT to be reckoned with. Proceed with caution. Expect lots of visitors.
- Swaddling and feeding on demand are commonly practiced.
- Save the umbilical cord.
- Expect to see the “mongolian spot”.



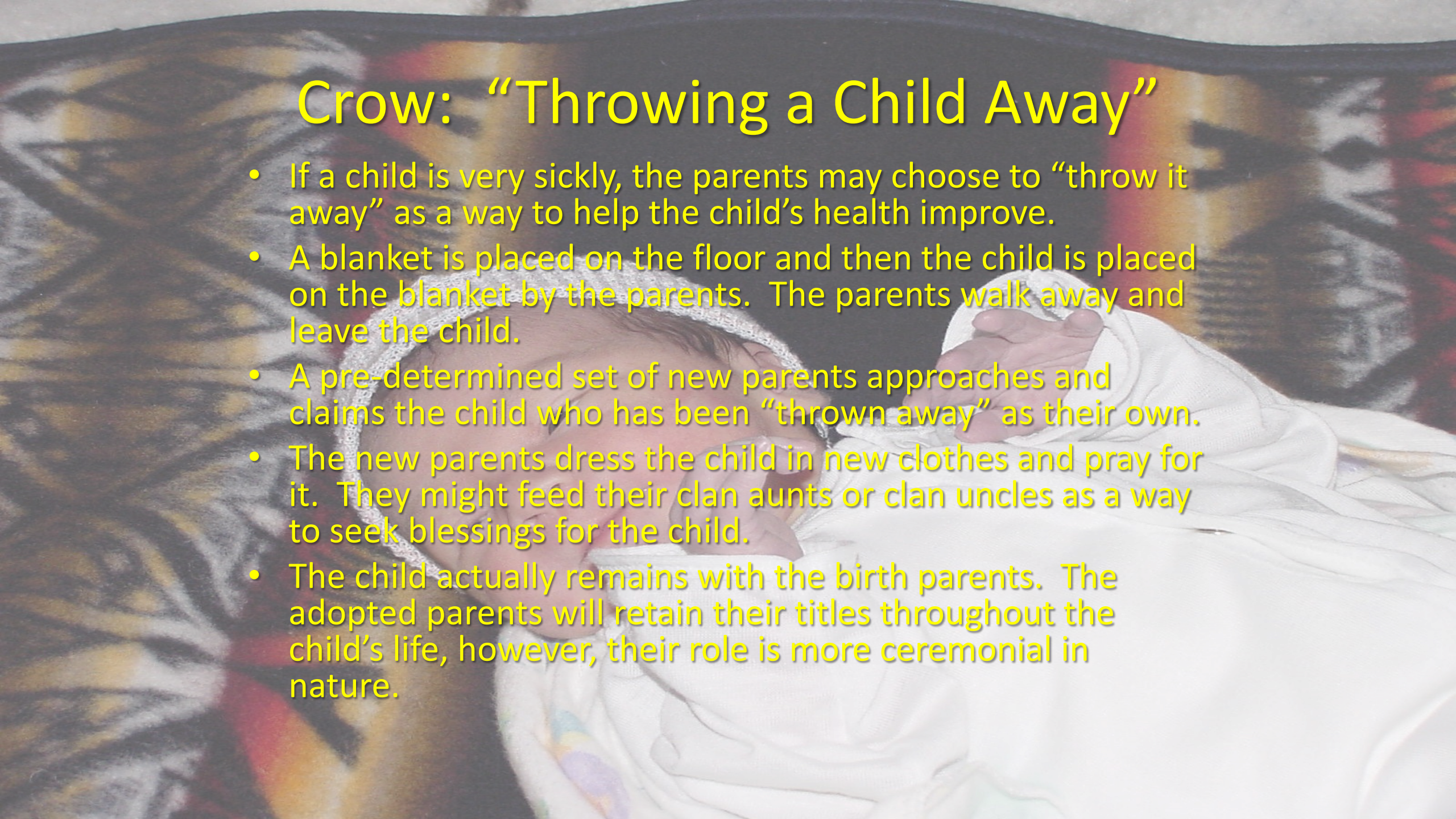
# Fetal Demise

- Infanticide is not commonly practiced among the tribes of the Great Plains region.
- Stillborns and infants that die soon after birth are mourned and buried.
  - Warriors may take a child during warfare from an enemy group to sooth the pain of a mother's loss.
  - These mothers may become wet nurses.
- Most tribes consider a fetus as a human being from the first moment the pregnancy is known to exist.
  - Infanticide due to birth defects is not practiced.
  - Mothers who are perceived as causing an abortion or infant death are viewed as criminals.



# Crow: “Throwing a Child Away”

- If a child is very sickly, the parents may choose to “throw it away” as a way to help the child’s health improve.
- A blanket is placed on the floor and then the child is placed on the blanket by the parents. The parents walk away and leave the child.
- A pre-determined set of new parents approaches and claims the child who has been “thrown away” as their own.
- The new parents dress the child in new clothes and pray for it. They might feed their clan aunts or clan uncles as a way to seek blessings for the child.
- The child actually remains with the birth parents. The adopted parents will retain their titles throughout the child’s life, however, their role is more ceremonial in nature.



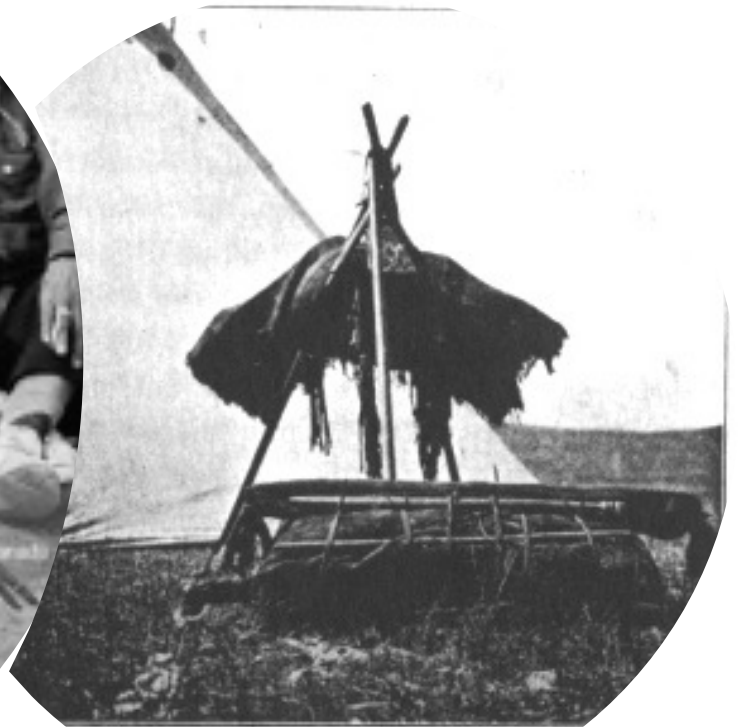


...-BLACKFOOT

*The Sepia Photograph 1871 by G. W. K. ...*



gettyimages  
National Film Board of Canada



BEAVER BUNDLE OF MAD WOLF  
It lies at the foot of tripod

# Meth searches v.s. Free Exercise of Religious Liberty (Religious Freedom Restoration Act)



Compelling justification .... In the least restrictive way.

# Cultural Practices Tribally Specific



# Clinical Facilities are a Challenge

- Indian families will take over a waiting room in a vigil for a hospitalized loved one. Expect crockpots, bedrolls for the kids, and a 24/7 vigil.
- Smudging freaks out the hospital staff.
- Wailing is especially concerning to hospital staff.

# We are all one Spirit

- Tribal people are interconnected spiritually, related through kinship, and interdependent for wellbeing.
- When one member is challenged physically, other members come to surround that person with the strength of their collective spirits to support and lift up the one who struggles.

# The Vigil for American Indians

- It's rooted in relationships
- It functions as a coping mechanism
- It functions as one of the roles of women
- It functions as a cultural teaching tool
- It serves the wellbeing of the patient and family
- It's available to medical providers as a source of strength, support, and collaboration



# Cultural Elements in a Clinical Setting

A circular, multi-colored woven basket with a fringe, set against a light background. The basket features concentric rings of blue, yellow, and red, with a white fringe hanging from the bottom. The background is a light, textured surface.

- Smudging: Cedar, sweet grass, sage
- Elders, healers, and ceremonial leaders
- Songs and prayers
- Herbal remedies
- Artifacts: feathers, medicine pouches, beaded necklaces and bracelets
- Blankets: star quilts, Pendleton's, serape's

# Birthing Medicines



- Mothers save the umbilical cord in a beaded pouch.
- This helps ensure the child will have a long life and feel connected or bonded with their place in the world.

# Children Celebrating Culture

- Most tribes of the Great Plains Region have ceremonies for children as they reach developmental benchmarks:
  - Piercing ears at an early age so they good listening skills
  - Feeding elders when they take their first steps
  - Give Away, naming, clan feeds, first dance
- Cultural opportunities for making the child feel like they are the center of the universe.

# Crossing Over to the Other Side

- The power of words: Knowing is one thing, speaking of it will surely make it happen.
- Ways of knowing the inevitable is near. Spiritual visitors, dreams by the patient &/or family, messengers like white owls bring signs that death is close by.
- Sometimes clues are seen in physical nuances that the family and traditional healers notice.

# Cultural Competence is Personal

- The first step toward achieving cultural competence is accepting the reality that openness to long-term, ongoing, and persistent development is **required**. The culturally skilled professional is one who is in the process of actively developing and practicing strategies and skills in working with culturally different clients.
- [http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET\\_DYNAMIC\\_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&Redirected=true&dDocName=id\\_016417](http://www.dhs.state.mn.us/main/idcplg?IdcService=GET_DYNAMIC_CONVERSION&RevisionSelectionMethod=LatestReleased&Redirected=true&dDocName=id_016417)

This is a safe place to ask any kind of question.

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Aho!