




# Healing our Families Through Relationship

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INDIAN + COUNTRY  
**ECHO**  
LEADING THE WAY >>>

*Growing the Ability to Deliver Quality Healthcare to  
American Indian and Alaska Native People.*

# Keeping our Children in Mind



With consistency, structure, predictability, American Indian parents can understand that they are the designers of their environment and can enhance their parenting skills and their ability to interact positively with their children.

**Dr. Dolores Bigfoot, 2021**

All of early development – cognitive, motor, language, communication, growth- occurs within social and emotional development, and within the system of caregiving relationships. \*

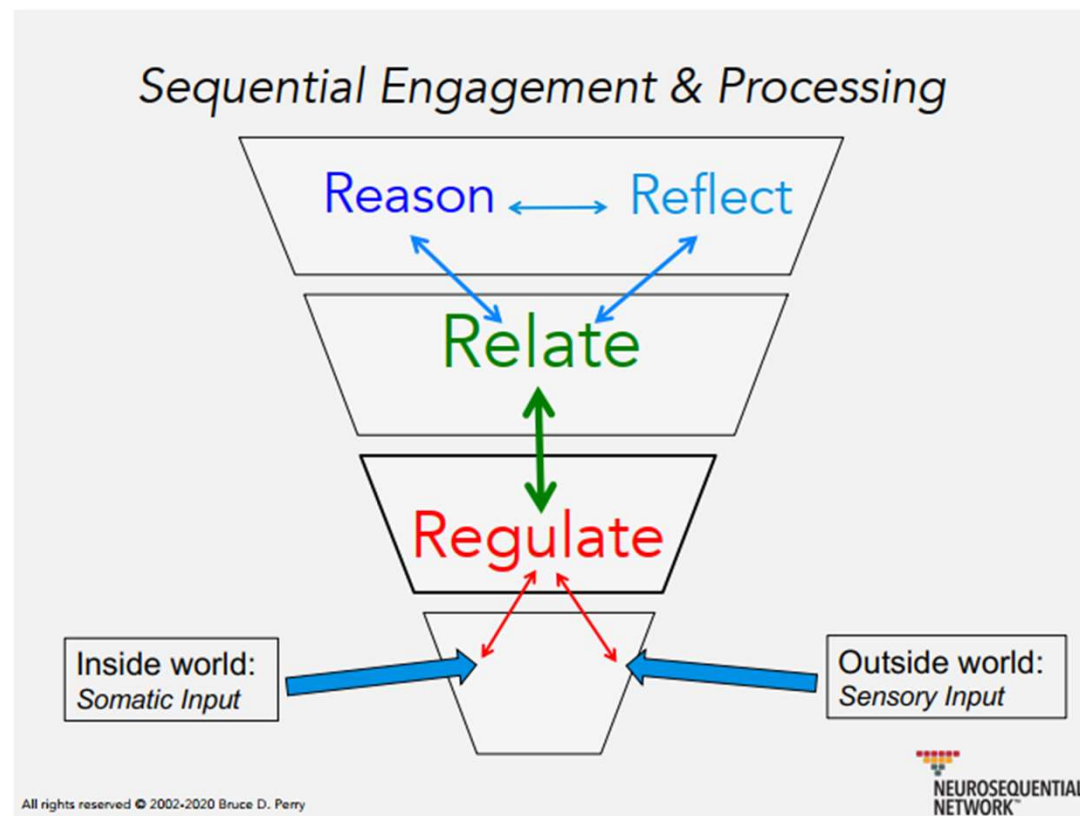
More on the work of Dr. Dolores Bigfoot  
[PSB-CBT new > Training Team > Dolores BigFoot \(ouhsc.edu\)](#)

# STRESS RESPONSE CONTINUUM & FUNCTIONAL CHANGES

## IN REFLECTIVE SUPERVISION, CONSULTATION & FACILITATION (RSCF)

	STRESS LEVEL →				MASSIVE STRESS RESPONSE
	BASELINE	▶▶	▶▶▶	▶▶▶▶	
ADAPTIVE RESPONSE	Rest	Flock	Freeze	Flight	Fight
AROUSAL	Baseline/Rest	Vigilance	Resistance	Defiance	Aggression
SENSE OF TIME	Extended Future	Days Hours	Hours Minutes	Minutes Seconds	Loss of Sense of Time
MENTAL STATE	Calm	Alert	Alarm	Fear	Terror
BRAIN AREAS	Prefrontal Ctx Neocortex	Cortex <i>Limbic</i>	Limbic <i>Diencephalon</i>	Diencephalon <i>Brainstem</i>	Brainstem <i>Autonomic</i>
COGNITION	Abstract	Concrete	Emotional	Reactive	Reflexive
FUNCTIONAL AGE	>15 YEARS	8-15 YEARS	3-8 YEARS	1-3 YEARS	0-1 YEAR
HEART RATE	70-90	90-100	101-110	111-135	136-160

# Sequential Engagement



# Connectivity

***“How we connect with land changes our brain”***

-Dr. Michael Yellow Bird (0-3 Conference October 2021)

***“Nuerdecolonizaton involved using mindfulness approaches with traditional and contemporary contemplative practices to change the function and structure of key regions of the brain (neuroplasticity) as well as neurochemistry (neurotransmitters and neuromodulators): epigenetic expression: and molecular: cellular, enzymic repair, in positive and empowering ways. ”***

-Dr. Michael Yellow Bird (Dakota Diabetes Summit 2018)

More on the work of Dr. Michael Yellow Bird


<https://www.indigenousmindfulness.com/>

# Indigenous Luminaries

- **Dean Hoaglin** CSAC (Coast Miwok, Pomo, Wailaki, Yuki)
- **Heidi S. Roibal**, MS, IMH-E<sup>®</sup> (Acoma Pueblo)
- **Joelfre Grant** MA PhD Candidate (Salish/Kootenia)
- **Jessica Sanigaq Ullrich** MSW PhD (Nome Eskimo Community)
- **Art Martinez** PhD LP (Chumash)
- **Michael Yellow Bird** MSW PhD (Mandan/Hidatsa/Arikara)
- **Tessa Evans- Campbell** MSW PhD (Snohomish)
- **Jeff King** PhD LP (Muskogee Creek)



# “We knew the how before the why”



Neurorelational  
Health and Parental  
Reflective Functioning  
Woven Through  
Indigenous  
Childrearing Practices

- Pregnancy and birth
- Breastfeeding
- Baby basket/cradle board
- Naming Ceremony
- Co-sleeping
- Baby’s first laugh
- Traditional language lullabies
- Intergenerational Non-nuclear family structure
- Ceremonies connecting child to place
- Exceptional children see self reflected back
- Day to day activities that exemplify the 6 Rs

# Tribal Grounding



- Sacred little ones, Sacred beings, Sacred gifts, Caregiving as nurturing a soul
  - Closest to the spirit world – nurture with reverence
- Ceremony is built into the fabric of our culture to mentalize, honor and nurture the infant, the parents and community – promoting PRF
- Children are born self-actualized
- The burden basket as metaphor for trauma healing and general wellbeing



# Cultural Meaning Making – Our Children



## Integration of traditional relationship to children/childhood

- What meaning do we make when a new tribal member is born
- How do we invite that spirit into being
- What do we share about their belonging to tribe and place/land
- Who is promised to be there on this child's journey
- Wishes and hopes, holding curiosity about what might get in the way

## Create the baby's origin story and tell the child often

- Creates connectivity, a felt sense of safety in family, tribal members, land as medicine

# Ancestors Hold the Basket

- Based on Ghosts and Angels in the nursery (Frieberg, 1975 Lieberman, 2005) 2 articles – foundational IMH
- Concepts – Our own relational/ancestral traumas and relational/ancestral buffers enter our relationship with our children- repressed/dissociated/disowned affect
- What we bring into our parenting journey
  - Gifts and burdens
  - Known and unknown

More on the work of Dr. Selma Fraiberg and Dr. Alicia Lieberman

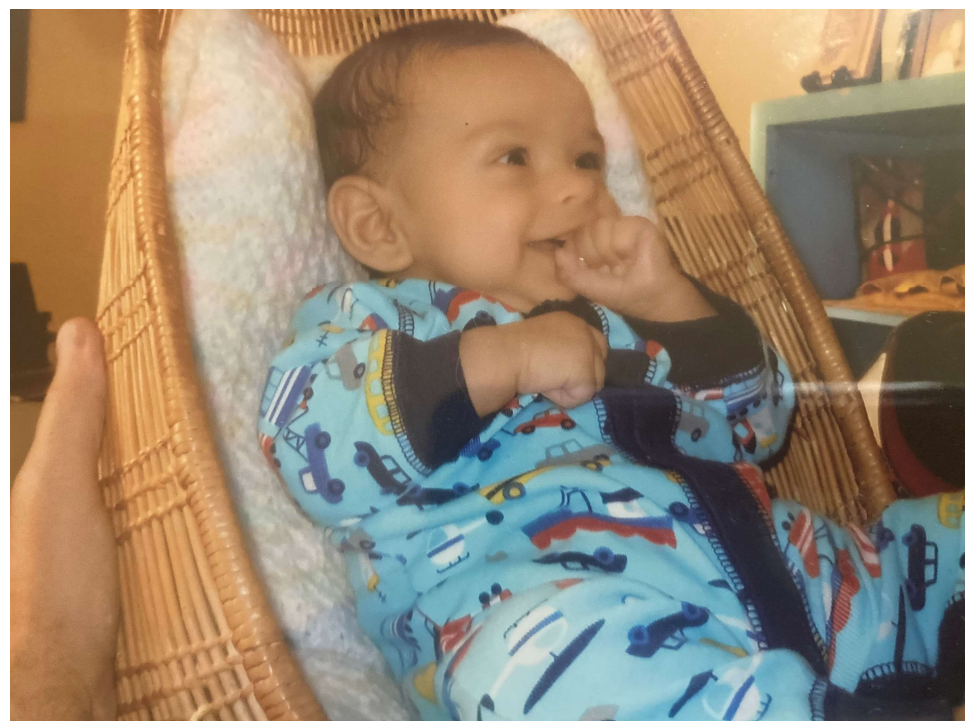
[Fraiberg-Ghosts-in-Nursery.pdf copy \(upenn.edu\)](#)

<https://chhs.fresnostate.edu/ccci/documents/Angels.in.the.Nursery.pdf>

# Ancestors Hold the Basket

## Breakout Group 1:

What might be the Ghosts and Angels holding this Tribal Member?



# Positive Parental Reflective Functioning- Keeping the Child in Mind

## Reflective Functioning

- A caregiver's capacity to specifically reflect upon her child's emotional internal experience
- Intentions, feelings, thoughts, desires and beliefs- make meaning of others to anticipate the relationship
- Relating to the mental states of both parties and the behaviors associated, moment to moment reciprocity
- Crucial in development of secure attachment and robust development.

More the work of Dr. Arietta Slade

[https://medicine.yale.edu/profile/arietta\\_slade/](https://medicine.yale.edu/profile/arietta_slade/)

# What do we Believe About Children

## Inherently Bad

- Focus attention on bad behaviors
- Remind child about bad behavior
- Distrustful in Intent
- Attribute behaviors as manipulation
- Need for caution
- Anticipate always bad outcomes
- Resentful about children not grateful and appreciative
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## Inherently Good

- Focus attention on learning
- No anger toward child for making mistake
- Recognize curiosity
- Make explanation about cause and effect
- Anticipate good outcomes
- Support creativity and imagination
- Have stories about child
- Model kindness and respect
- Listen to child

# Wondering Out Loud- Building Parental Reflection

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- Listening
  - Mirror
  - Wonder
  - Hypothesize
  - Repair

Based on the work of Arietta Slade; Yale trainings and publication *Enhancing Attachment and Reflective Parenting*

# Wondering Out Loud-


## Break out Group #2

1. Why might this be triggering to a parent's stress response system, identity, sense of safety, etc.
2. What are some possible Projections and Misattributions a parent might bring to this interaction with their child and what are the associated emotions?
3. What might you offer in a phrase to explore Listening, Mirror, Wonder, Hypothesize, and Repair



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# In the Circle Way: Teaching of the Spirit



Know that You are Sacred  
Know that you are Honored  
Know that you are Prayed for  
Know that Others had offerings on your behalf  
Know that you are Not Alone  
Know that you were Known before you came to this place  
Know that you have Choices  
Know that you have a Name  
Know that many know your Name  
Know that when you reach, You are also reaching toward Others

Dr. Dolores Bigfoot, 2021



# Restoration of Relationships

Build or restore “**reflective functioning**” to hold the basket well

- **Spending time in cultural spaces with cultural mentors-** this is a natural place for gaining reflection on parenting and can be the only spaces that some will receive prevention and intervention
- **Serve and Return**
  - Notice and share attention- **The serve, Return the serve, Give it a name, Take turns, Practice endings and beginnings** – Center for the Developing Child –Harvard
- **Restoring Co-regulation and 3X attunement**
  - Culturally therapeutic moments each day (Prayer, Meditation, Nature time)
  - Bruce Perry 6 Rs -- **Relational, Relevant, Rhythmic, Repetitive, Rewarding, Respectful**
- **Family Spirit, Parents as Teachers, The Incredible Years-** Native adaptations with play
- **Minding the Baby – Slade**
- **CPP – Child Parent Psychotherapy – Lieberman**
- **Nature Therapy – Strengthening primary relationship to homelands**
- **Brazelton Touchpoints –** Provider level intervention on approach and partnering



The background of the slide is a photograph of two traditional tipis (Native American tents) set up in a grassy field. The tipis are made of light-colored fabric and are supported by wooden poles. In the background, there is a dense forest of evergreen trees under a grey, overcast sky. A faint rainbow is visible in the sky behind the right-hand tipi.

# As a parent I can...

- Greet my child each morning by name
- Have one family sit-down meal each day
- Read to my child each day
- Let my child hear me pray each day

Dr. Dolores Bigfoot, 2021

# Resources

## **More on Serve and Return**

<https://developingchild.harvard.edu/science/key-concepts/serve-and-return/>

## **More on Family Sprit program**

<https://www.jhsph.edu/research/affiliated-programs/family-spirit/>

## **More on Minding the Baby**

<https://medicine.yale.edu/childstudy/education/practitioner/mtb/>

## **More on CPP**

<https://childparentpsychotherapy.com/>

## **More on Brazelton Touchpoints**

<https://www.brazeltontouchpoints.org/>

