

Understanding and Working with Disabilities among Indigenous People: The Sweetgrass Method.

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- **Tap Pilam Coahuiltecan Nation (Mission Indian) Member**

- Mohawk & Pawnee descent

- **General Psychology PhD, specialization in Cognition**

- Licensed School Psychologist
- Licensed Alcohol Drug Counselor
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- **Assistant Professor**

- Clinical and Counseling Psychology @ BSU

- **Private Practice: Native LIFE**

- Psychological/Psychoeducational evaluations, assessments, consultation
- training/presentation

- **President-elect of the Society of Indian Psychologists (SIP)**

- **Mission**

- Advance Health Equity among Indigenous Communities



AGENDA

Gaps in Care Have Many Contribution Factors



Addressing Inequity



What Coloniality may look like in Therapy



Cultural Connections



SGM

What is disability from Indigenous perspectives?

- Indigenous perspectives on disability have challenged the dominant approaches – on disability from the Emerging scholarship addressing Indigenous perspectives on disability has shown understandings of disability that emphasize personhood, agency, and cultural belonging rather than individual deficits
- Within Indigenous cultures, there is an emphasis on spiritual ties and the connection of the community to all members.

GAPS IN SERVICES FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS: CONTRIBUTING FACTORS, INCLUDING:

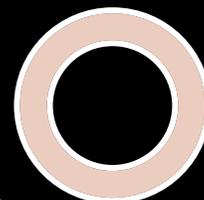
- Discrimination
- Lack of diversity in mental health providers
- Lack of culturally responsive clinicians
- Clinician bias



DISCRIMINATION

Documented abuses, inequities, and oppression—past and present—have led some people of color to **lose trust** in health care providers and mental health professionals.





Lack of
culturally
responsive
professionals

- According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), “Consideration of culture is important at all levels of operation—individual, programmatic, and organizational—across behavioral health treatment settings.



BIAS

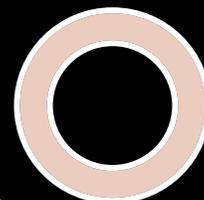
Educators/practitioners may have conscious or unconscious biases, defined as unwarranted judgments, expectations, or reactions to people based on a certain quality or group membership.





Addressing inequity in mental health by being culturally responsive

- Acknowledge cultural norms: Consider clients' cultural values, beliefs, and practices.
- Challenge stigmas: Understand the impact of stigma across different cultures and work to reduce its consequences.
- Consider historical traumas: Recognize how past experiences may have shaped a client's mental health needs.
- Recognize socioeconomic disparities: Consider how socioeconomic factors may contribute to gaps in mental health care.



CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE IN DISABILITY SERVICES

Culturally responsive services are a client-centered approach that provides support and care that is sensitive to and respectful of an individual's cultural background, beliefs, and practices.

It is based on the idea that every student brings unique cultural strengths to the classroom. Culturally responsive teaching isn't simply getting students motivated to learn, but the instructional practices that will allow them to feel stress-free enough to turn their attention to learning (Hammond, 2016)





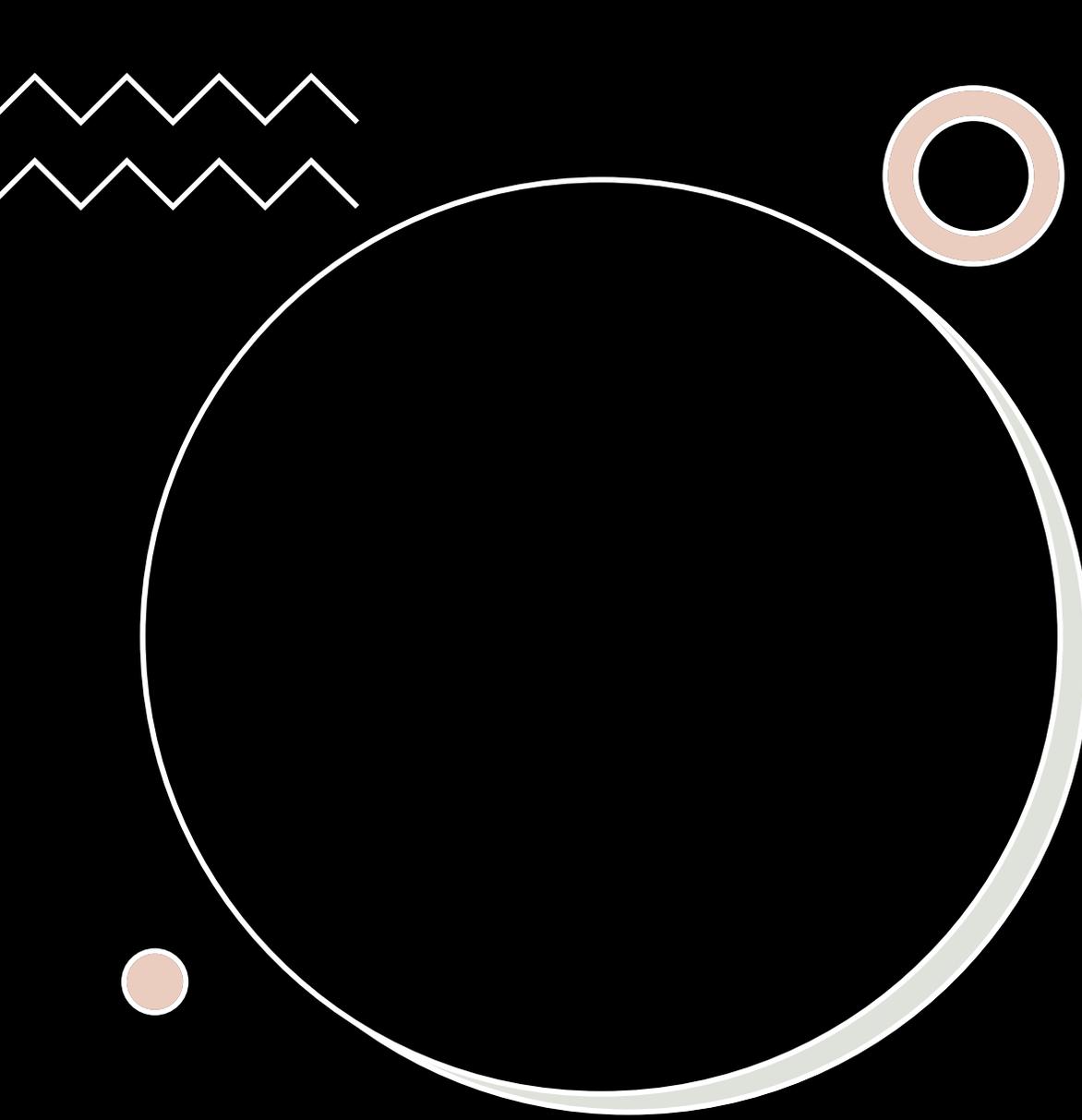
Make Cultural Connections Across Services

- **Being culturally knowledgeable**
 - This means understanding, appreciating, and working with different cultures' beliefs, values, and practices. Educators/Providers can improve their cultural competency by taking training programs on cultural diversity, biases, and communication skills
- **Being culturally responsive**
 - This means intentionally and consistently seeing, respecting, and celebrating the aspects that make each person unique. Providers can be culturally responsive by actively engaging in anti-oppressive practice

Indigenous methodologies come from many years of intergenerational tribal and cultural ways of knowing and being (Kovach, 2010).

Indigenous Ways of Understanding and Knowing





QUESTION

What is working with your institutions/community that is culturally informed and responsive?

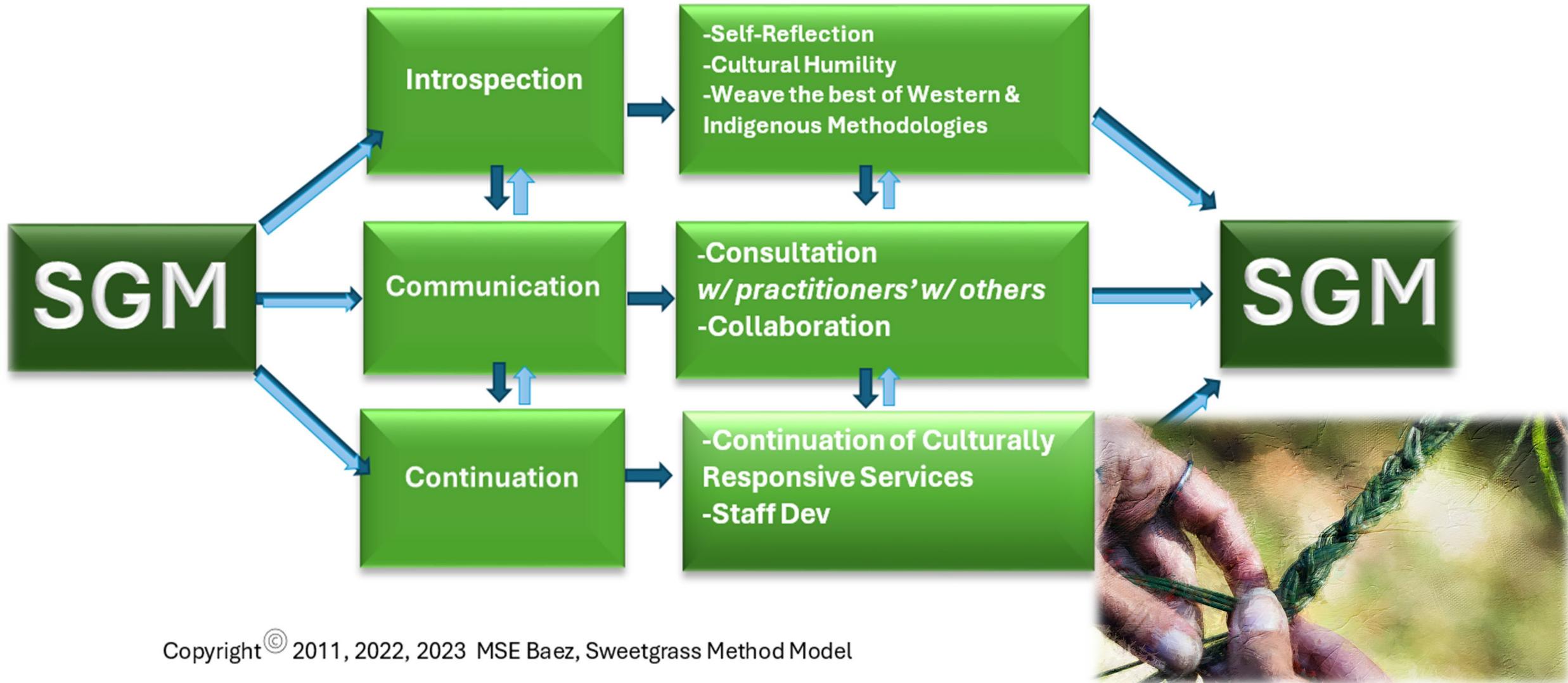


Cultural Framework: An approach to working with Indigenous communities.

- Three principles drive the framework:
 - **Introspection** (self-reflection/Weaving the best of Western and Indigenous methods and cultural humility),
 - **Communication** (consultation and collaboration),
 - **Continuation** (continuum of culturally responsive services).



Cultural Framework: Sweetgrass Method



Sweetgrass Method

Stand

Scientific Rigor
Theoretical
Analytical
Empirical Evidence
Individualistic
Self Reflection

Strand

Respect
Understanding
Relevance
Community
Wisdom
Humility
Self Reflection





Important Steps before We Begin the SGM include:

1. **Educate Yourself:** Learn about the history, culture, and rights of Indigenous peoples in your area.
2. **Build Trust:** Approach Indigenous communities respectfully and openly (layout intentions, no secret).
3. **Engage Respectfully:** Initiate conversations, ensuring you listen actively and value their input. Seek introductions through trusted community members.

SGM Applicability in Mental Health

To effectively address this range of critical needs, we must provide services that reflect best practices grounded in cultural awareness and responses. (Baez, 2023).

Acknowledge and examine biases and social-cultural factors impacting the therapeutic relationships and interactions.

Allows clients' cultural identities, values, and environment to shape their understanding of presenting problems, development of mental health goals, and delivery of interventions.



- Indigenous Approaches are often viewed as secondary, or worse, overlooked and not considered, reflecting the marginalization of Indigenous Knowledge (Hart, 2010).



Essentials to
Understand

Sustaining traditions while living in today's society.



Niawen/Naletzam
(Thank you)

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