



Understanding Intergenerational Trauma and Intergenerational Healing: *Recovery, Resilience and Wellness*

Host: Cyril Cromwell
Invited guest: Nene Kwasi Kafele



YOUTHREX
Research &
Evaluation eXchange

LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT



YouthREX's Provincial office is located at York University. Both YouthREX and York University acknowledges its presence on the traditional territory of many Indigenous Nations. The area known as Tkaronto has been care taken by the Anishinabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, the Wendat, and the Métis. It is now home to many Indigenous Peoples. We acknowledge the current treaty holders and the Mississaugas of the New Credit First Nation. This territory is subject of the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement to peaceably share and care for the Great Lakes region.

Source: <http://aboriginal.info.yorku.ca/>

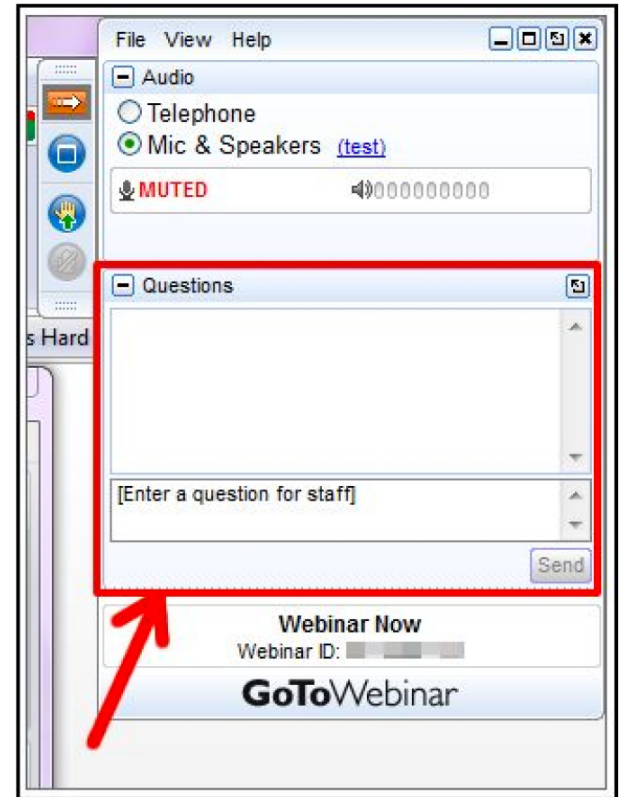
THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND



- We are recording this webinar and it will be uploaded to the YouthREX website and to the eXchange
- If you have trouble with the audio quality today, please try calling in with a phone

ASK A QUESTION OR SHARE A COMMENT

- Submit questions throughout the webinar using the box on the right side of your screen
- You can also tweet us @REXforyouth



ABOUT YOUTHREX



OUR VISION is an Ontario where shared knowledge is transformed into positive impact for all youth.

OUR MISSION is to make research evidence and evaluation practices accessible and relevant to Ontario's grassroots youth sector through knowledge mobilization, capacity building and evaluation leadership.



**KNOWLEDGE
MOBILIZATION**



**CUSTOMIZED
EVALUATION SUPPORTS**



**CAPACITY
BUILDING**



PRESENTER

Invited guest: Nene Kwasi Kafele

Nene Kwasi Kafele is an educator, social justice and youth advocate, researcher, and community organizer.

To read more visit

<http://youthrex.com/webinar-intergenerational-trauma-sept/>



OVERVIEW



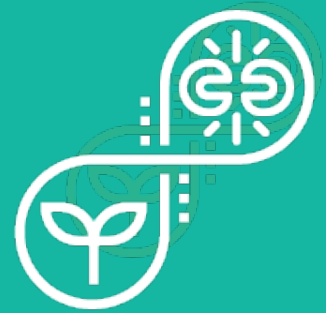
Contextualizing Trauma

Understanding Trauma's Impact

Promoting Healing and Resiliency

Concluding Thoughts

Discussion



FRAMING AND CONTEXT



Anti-oppressive- practices that seek to lessen the exclusion of certain social groups from social equality, rights and social justice

Social Justice- approaches that seek to address and re-balance the unequal distribution of social and economic justice

Culturally grounded- community's cultural worldview, value systems and practices

Asset focused- communities are sites of historical resistance, resilience and defiance to oppression. No “victims”, only survivors.



Racism- abusive use of power to reinforce an ideology, value system and worldview of racial hierarchy through dehumanizing, persistently negative and oppressive systemic experiences against racialized and Aboriginal peoples.

Racial Terrorism- the frightening use of state and state - sanctioned use of force, harassment, surveillance violence and death.e.g historical and contemporary murders and lynchings of African Americans and Jews by the Ku Klux Klan

TRAUMA: A CONTEXT



- **Individual trauma** results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that are experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or threatening
- Lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being.
- Trauma manifests behaviorally as a set of conscious and unconscious actions and behaviors
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TRAUMA: A CONTEXT



Psychological Trauma is an emotional state of discomfort and stress resulting from memories of an extraordinary catastrophic experience which shattered the survivor's sense of invulnerability to harm

WHAT MAKES AN EXPERIENCE TRAUMATIC?



- The experience involves a threat to one's physical or emotional well-being
- It is **OVERWHELMING**
- It results in intense feelings of fear and lack of control
- It leaves people feeling vulnerable and helpless
- It changes the way people view themselves, the world, and others

INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA

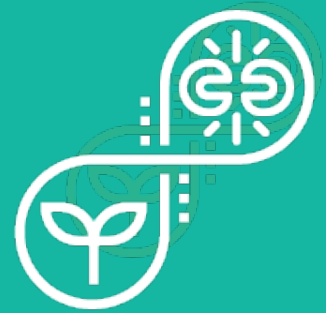


A trauma transferred from the first generation of survivors of the direct experience in the past to the second and further generations

HISTORICAL AND INTERGENERATIONAL TRAUMA



- **Historical trauma** is related to the emotionally devastating experiences of people, when a major event(s) is aimed at a particular group because of their status as an oppressed group
- **Examples:** the Holocaust, Enslavement of Africans, Experiences of Aboriginal/ First Nations peoples in contact with Europeans, Colonization
- Far reaching effects of historical trauma



UNDERSTANDING TRAUMA IN MARGINALIZED COMMUNITIES

BLACK AND ABORIGINAL REALITIES



- Historical trauma has morphed into a myriad of **contemporary traumas**
- Structural and systemic racism has created “**cumulative trauma**”.

BLACK COMMUNITIES



Violence experienced in many of today's Black communities may include:

- the way children are taught to behave
- police shootings, and community/gang violence
- early death and over incarceration
- lack of fairness and justice in the criminal justice system
- boys are part of the effects and evolution of historical trauma.

BLACK COMMUNITIES



- **Systemic neglect** of Black and racialized neighborhoods
- A world of **armed violence-prone**, delinquent gangs and peer groups
- High level of **addictive drugs**, infectious diseases and easily available firearms.
- Some neighborhoods which resemble police states with **constant surveillance, and stress** being the norm.

ABORIGINAL/FIRST NATIONS



Most of the historical traumas for the First Nations/ Aboriginal people have been related to colonization:

- Banning of indigenous languages, religious practices, tribal governments, and tribes
- residential schools and removal [informal and formal]
- warfare, genocide, and disease

IMPACTS FOR ABORIGINAL/ FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES



- Loss of language and culture
- Disproportionately higher levels of peer, spousal, community and state violence
- Substance abuse & alcoholism
- Chronic health issues (including diabetes, mental health challenges and depression)
- Pervasive (generational) poverty
- Higher rates of suicide when compared to the national average

GENERAL INDICATORS FOR BOTH COMMUNITIES



- Depression
- Anger
- Psychic Numbing
- Hypervigilance and deep distrust of the state
- Fixation on Trauma
- Somatization
- Deep Anger
- Survivor Guilt
- Victim Identity
- Re-victimization by those in authority
- Fear of Authority & Intimacy
- Domestic & Lateral Violence

SOME GENERATIONAL IMPACT



- Chronic or episodic family violence (physical, sexual, emotional and/or verbal)
- Difficult (or lack of) healthy emotional bonding
- Denial of cultural heritage
- Identity confusion/racial discomfort
- Poor or irregular contact or the absence of contact with family
- Extensive alcohol/drug abuse that crosses generations

SOME COMMUNITY INDICATORS



- Unconcealed alcohol and drug abuse among community members
- Lack of coordinated and comprehensive cultural opportunities (language skills, history, traditional values, spirituality)
- Generally low levels of social engagement/capital (trust, reciprocal helping relations, social engagement)
- In - fighting, competition, potentially destructive patterns of engagement
- Example: overly relying on substances to escape psychological strain

RACISM, RACIAL TERRORISM AND SYSTEMIC OPPRESSION



Racism, racial terrorism and systemic oppression compound allow for the continued oppression of these communities (e.g. media, economic, political, social, legal and educational systems, child protective services, etc).

- Reinforces the view that the world is an unsafe place for entire groups of people
- Significantly shapes the lived experience of individuals within a cultural group

POST TRAUMATIC SLAVERY SYNDROME



- A devastating condition that exists as a consequence of centuries of chattel slavery of African people followed by institutionalized racism, racial terrorism and oppression
- This has resulted in multigenerational adaptive behaviors
- Some positive behavior demonstrating resilience
- Some behavior that is harmful/destructive.

“Black infighting,” materialism, poor parenting, jealousy, colorism, defeatism, frustration, rage—these “dysfunctional,” these “negative behaviors” as well as many others are in large part related to trans-generational adaptations associated with the past traumas of enslavement, colonization and on-going oppression.

Dr. Joy DeGruy

CONCENTRATED NATURE OF GENERATIONAL TRAUMATIC OPPRESSION



- Extreme concentration of poverty and underprivileged groups (“Ghettos”, “reservations”).
- Drugs have a devastating impact on Black and Aboriginal women and children
- People from the Black community are 20 times more likely to be incarcerated for similar drug- related arrests from the Caucasian community.
- Concentrated police presence in the inner city.

FREEZE & DISSOCIATION



- Depression, emptiness, detachment and difficulty defending self
- Conscious/Unconscious belief that things or people cannot change; that Black or Aboriginal communities are automatic markers for “problems”
- Not speaking up about inequities, a sense of resentment, shame, self blame
- Lack of sense of personal agency
- Loss of hope

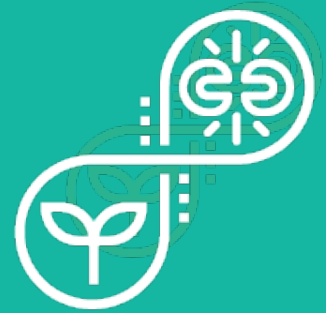
A CAUTION...



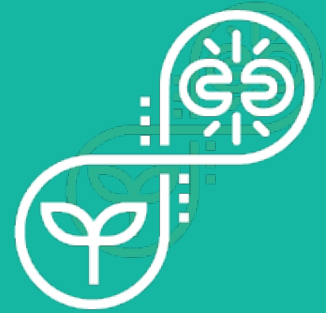
- This does not explain all the challenges of Black or Aboriginal communities
- This type of trauma is a Social Determinant - part of a multiple array of issues
- “Trauma” is a notion that is very Western.
- The language of trauma is culturally incompetent.

QUESTION

What practices or interventions have been effective for you in your work with youth who experience intergenerational trauma?



POLL QUESTION



HEALING & SUPPORT

APPROACHES TO WELLNESS



- See communities as sites of historical resistance, self-reliance, deep strengths & assets.
- Put affected families first.
- Centre Black & Aboriginal culture.
- Use multiple forms of appropriate therapies.

APPROACHES TO WELLNESS



Ensure educational focus on understanding and unpacking:

- the realities of racism, racial terrorism & oppression;
- the relevance to culturally -grounded, anti -oppressive practice; and
- the specific counselling/interventions skills & competencies needed.

Directly address racism, racial terrorism, and oppression as key features of the re-traumatizing realities of communities.

OPTIMAL SUPPORT

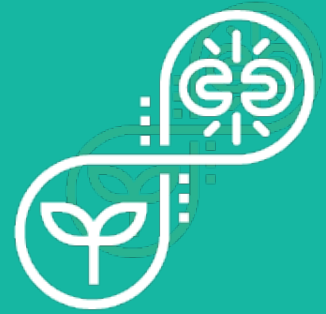


- Does not label, diagnose individuals or families as the “problem”.
- Creates opportunities for children, teens & adults to tell their stories of trauma.
- Empowers family recipients to have control over the kind, type, direction, and amount of their help.
- Uses successful survivors of trauma to guide others.
- Explores, teaches, and practices specific alternative responses and behaviours to future dangers.

OPTIMAL SUPPORT



- Promotes recovery group experiences structured to help recipients learn personal responsibility and ways of managing traumatic reactions.
- Teaches information about intergenerational trauma and its impact.
- Must not encourage recipients to avoid re-experiencing the trauma.

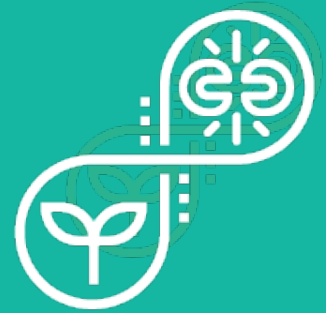


DISCUSSION

Scenario



Many youth who attend your program are extremely afraid of the police or being out in public and are triggered by sudden loud noises, sirens and men in uniforms. It's having a significant impact on your ability to run the program effectively. In the past 3 weeks, 4 young men in the community have been brutalized by the police. There have also been 2 gang-related homicides in that same time period. Both of these incidents were witnessed by other young people.

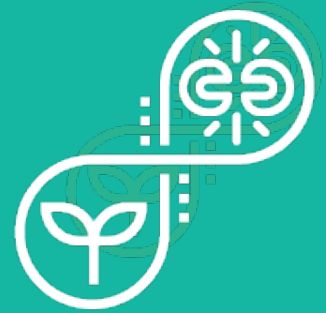


CONCLUSION

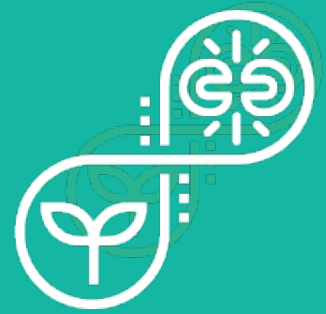
CONCLUSION



- **Intergenerational trauma** is a trauma transferred from the first generation of survivors - who experienced (or witnessed) it directly in the past - to the second and further generations.
- The role of emotional/affect regulation, narrative, and symbolic representation are **potent factors** in the intergenerational transmission of the experience.
- Culture, community strength, anti-oppressive clinical practices, centering families on the healing journey, and challenging racism, racial terrorism, and anti-oppression all support **effective responses to intergenerational trauma**.



QUESTIONS?



THANK YOU!