

First Alaskans Institute



HOW WE HEAL TOOLKIT COMMUNITIES AND COLLECTIVE

At First Alaskans Institute, we operate with the understanding that when Alaska Native peoples are grounded in our ancestral ways of knowing, we are healthier and more knowledgeable about effectively stewarding our lands, animals, and waters, and strengthening our cultures, languages, and peoples in perpetuity. In the *Truth, Racial Healing and Transformation (TRHT)* Alaska movement we are incorporating the knowledge and vision of our healers to foster healing and connectedness for thriving communities. Here are words of advice from traditional healers who gathered to help inform TRHT Alaska.

GETTING READY TO HOST A GATHERING

- **Cleanse the mind, body and soul** through purification songs and/or prayer.
- **Pray and/or fast prior to hosting**, to be able to hold space for others.
- **Set your intention** to come into the gathering from a place of love.
- **Honor and recognize the land, water, and spirits** with an offering of food. Ask the spirits for support and permission, so they know what is happening.
- **Select your space well.** Recognize that steam houses can be a safe place for people to share out. Honor this in communities.
- **Recognize the history of the gathering place:** what happened on this land?
- **Cleanse the the meeting place.** Smudge, or pray. If you cannot smudge, place a container of open water somewhere.
- **Bring photos of ancestors** into the space. Ancestral presence matters.
- **Who will be invited?** Everyone must be included and allowed time to heal. Make space for, and reach out to, rarely heard voices.
- **Remember that you have the truth already** - you must acknowledge it within yourself and others. Honor what is revealed.
- **Prepare a collection of resources** for people: places they can go afterward to continue their healing journey.

We invite you to join the TRHT Alaska movement! Contact us to learn more and become involved.

HealOurCommunities.org | (907) 677-1700 | anpc@firstalaskans.org



@FirstAlaskans | First Alaskans Institute



First Alaskans Institute



HOW WE HEAL TOOLKIT HOSTING A TRUTH TELLING GATHERING

SOME LOGISTICS TO THINK OF

- **Have a microphone and speaker system** so that everyone can hear what is being said.
- **Have food ready to** offer people.
- **Open with a prayer** or other kind of opening ceremony.
- **Encourage people to make introductions** so connections are made and the space feels safer.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS AS THEY SHARE

- **Demystify and demonstrate what healers do**, so people know there is nothing to be scared of. Let people know these gifts are from the Creator.
- **Have a leader open up first** and be vulnerable. This clears the path for others who are nervous or shy.
- **Be ready for grief.**
- **Offer private space** for those who don't want to speak in front of everyone. Some can't yet speak, others may be quiet out of cultural respect.
- **Be sensitive to the energy in the room.** People will need to be uplifted after sharing something heavy. Incorporate cultural practices, languages, activities, and humor.
- **Provide a space for people to nap or rest** so they do not feel too exhausted to participate, especially Elders.
- **Create a support group plan for all who share** so they can check up on each other after the gathering closes.

First Alaskans Institute

HOW WE HEAL TOOLKIT CLOSING IN A GOOD WAY



AT THE END OF THE GATHERING

- **Have a closing ceremony:** incorporate prayer, song, dance; however the community wants to close.
- **Remind people to seek out their support group members** and check in on them.
- **Dump water out** after its been in the room where truths are told.
- **Never leave people heavy** before they leave. Let them sing, dance, pray before going home. **Uplift their energy.** Get people laughing. Host exercises to help people let go of bad feelings and energy.
- After a gathering, **what is kept in the community to continue healing?** Prepare resources for people to access: books, articles, etc. Develop a plan for continued healing.
- **Prepare gifts of love for the attendees** so they know the community loves them. Have the community decide what this is.

Take care of yourself, take care of each other. Follow up with other participants and organizers after gathering. Follow-up with any needs/next steps identified in the gathering. Be a part of community; don't isolate yourself. Healing is an ongoing journey and a continual process. We hope these tips help advance community healing.

First Alaskans Institute

HOW WE HEAL TOOLKIT INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY



TRADITIONAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

- Maqi (steam bath)
- Kargi (men's sweat house)
- Traditional healing
- Dance practice
- Therapeutic Acupuncture
- Processing/gathering traditional foods together
- Walking along the river, beach, lake

WISDOM FROM OUR ANCESTORS, CULTURES AND TRADITIONS

Be in service to others. Not for your own gains but for that of others, that is of upmost importance. Self-care from an indigenous perspective means you are cared for, by caring for others; and in the act of selflessness, you gain more gratification and peace of mind, helping you to be well.

Develop sisterhood and brotherhood. Identify a close group of friends/family who you can trust. Share ideas and examples for how you heal individually provide recommendations, tips and share resources.

Share your truths. Write down your experience to help yourself process it. Gather strength from ancestors, culture and relatives.

Prayer and ceremony. Practice cultural traditions to draw on the knowledge of our ancestors, like burning sage, sweetgrass, cedar, or food, etc.

Eat more traditional foods and strengthen your body. Endurance, strength and agility are part of wellness. Pay attention to what your body is telling you.

Continued on next page

First Alaskans Institute

HOW WE HEAL TOOLKIT *INDIVIDUAL AND FAMILY*



WISDOM FROM OUR ANCESTORS, CULTURES AND TRADITIONS

Have those difficult conversations. The revolution begins with you, and we need to start addressing the trauma we've experienced (individually and collectively) in order to take the next steps towards healing.

Follow our Ancestors ways of strengthening and healing. If you're Ancestors walked slowly and prayerfully into the ocean or water to heal physical, emotional, and spiritual pains or to physically strengthen and sharpen themselves, you should too.

Reawaken our spiritual connection. We did not practice a human-centered way of life, yet that is how we live now. Understand the naming process and live up to your name and our Ancestors that brought us here.

Potlatch healing process. Heal through hard times by sewing and doing beadwork. Beading brings us together, gives us a creative outlet, and traditionally helps us honor the people we have lost.

Remember womanhood is sacred. Bring back the sacred practices and understanding of our menstruation cycle as women, this used to be a time of rest and gathering ourselves. Teach our young women and men about respecting their bodies and all bodies.

Do not hold grudges. That's how we survive in tight quarters and small villages. We respect each other because we respect our grandfathers and grandmothers, and we remember what they taught us. We carry the responsibility of upholding their names. Don't leave a meeting with a bad heart. When you leave, shake hands and hug.

