



Public Education Campaign TOOLKIT

Make Connections to Heal & Grow

Encourage Connections to Build Youth Resilience



AUTHOR'S NOTE

This toolbox is designed to give parents, providers and caring adults working with youth 5-18 years old additional information surrounding the education campaign titled *MAKING CONNECTIONS to Heal, Grow and Build Resilience.*

We hope that the users of this toolkit will be become more trauma aware. It may not be easy and require years of support, but we truly believe that anyone can overcome the effects of Trauma or Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). We acknowledge that that can be a long challenging journey. By teaching resilience skills to children, we can empower them to resist and heal from trauma; thus, preventing the long-term health issues associated with ACEs.

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Disclaimer:

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INTRODUCTION

We are all born with some level of resilience. It is built into our survival instincts. It is our ability to bounce back when life gets hard.

Unfortunately, for some children, life is exceptionally hard. Children that experience toxic stress as a result of neglect, abuse, community disasters, bullying, etc. may find life too difficult to cope.

Research and evidence by several sources, including the Center for Disease Control shows that enhanced connections to caring adults and increased parent and youth skills to manage emotions and conflicts using approaches in schools and other settings can reduce the effects of Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs). It is also important for everyone in community to recognize the challenges that families face and offer support and encouragement to reduce stress.

As caring nurturing adults, we can help children build a toolbox of skills that will increase their resilience and protect them against the negative effects of toxic stress caused by adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). This toolkit primarily focuses on the importance of making connections.

It is important to share a common message, provide opportunities for students to practice skills shared in this toolkit, and provide additional resources.

PUBLIC EDUCATION CAMPAIGN GOAL

The goal of this campaign project is to build resilience in youth through increased awareness and education about the importance of making healthy social connections, connections to nature, and cultural connections.

(See also Center for Disease Control studies, <https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/aces/pdf/vs-1105-aces-H.pdf>).

PRIMARY AUDIENCE SEGMENT

This campaign was designed with a focus on youth in Baraga, Chippewa, and Mackinac Counties of Michigan's Upper Peninsula who reside within or around the services areas of the Keweenaw Bay Indian Community, Bay Mills Indian Community, and the Sault Ste Marie Tribe of Chippewa Indians, and all Federally Recognized Tribes.

SECONDARY AUDIENCES

Because of the important role that families and other caring adults play in a child's life, this campaign remains mindful of families with children and/or providers that serve children in Chippewa, Mackinac, and Baraga Counties of Michigan's Upper Peninsula or who live on or near Federally Recognized Tribal service areas.

CAMPAIGN MESSAGING AND PRODUCTS

The messaging in this campaign was made possible through a series of community discussions held across Michigan's Upper Peninsula with ISDs and youth serving organizations as well as youth attending the Sault Sainte Marie of Chippewa Indians Tribal Youth Council Leadership Conference 2022 and the LIFT Teen Center in Suttons Bay, Michigan

Messaging is being delivered through a series of social media posts, a 30 second public service announcement (for TV, streaming, or radio), and a poster/infographic. These assets will be archived through the MIACE website (<https://miace.org/up/>) with a link also available at the Inter-Tribal Council of MI website (go to: <https://itcmi.org> & enter search- childhood is sacred)

This toolkit can provide the reader with additional resources to support the messages shared in the campaign. The contents of the toolkit include ideas

and links to resources that the authors have found useful in their own work. It is not exhaustive and are not meant to replace the diagnosis or opinion of a licensed therapist, physician or doctor.

Campaign PSA:

A copy of the 30 second PSA will be available at <https://miace.org/up>. Feel free to play and share it as frequently as you like to start meetings or as a good reminder for everyone about making a habit of making connections.

Campaign Script:

Child voice(s):

Sometimes life at home or school can really stress me out. I worry about a lot of things. When that happens, I know it's important to think about what I need and connect. I talk to my friend, my brother, my parents, or a teacher. When I don't feel like talking, I go outside for a walk in the woods, sit with my pet, play cards or basketball or listen to my music and sing until I feel better. *These are only a few ways to heal and grow.* What other ways can you think of to connect? Together we are stronger.



Campaign Social Media:

A series of social media posts related to the campaign will be featured on Facebook and Instagram. You can see them on *#Inter Tribal Council of Michigan* or by following the group named **Maajitaan**:



Maajitaan

96 likes · 98 followers



Contact u



Campaign Poster:

Feel free to print copies of the poster (seen on the next page) and display them around the community. Again, you can find a downloadable link at: <https://miace.org/up/> Or reach out to the Inter-Tribal Council of Michigan.

CHILDHOOD IS SACRED

When Life is Hard

Connect to Heal & Grow

Connect to Others

- Everyone needs help sometimes
- Reach out to family, friends, or another trusted adult
- Text "Native" to 741741 for free counseling support or call

Connect to Nature

- Pet your furry friend
- Walk outside
- Sit under a tree
- Put your feet in the sand or water
- Find a special rock to keep with you

Connect to Culture

- Sing like no one is listening
- Listen to your favorite music
- Dance your way
- Play a game or sport
- Smudge or pray
- Listen to an elder tell stories

If you or a friend are in crisis, we've got your back!

Scan the QR code using your phone for Native Youth Support Resources

for more information, go to:
<https://miace.org/up>
<https://itcmi.org/childhoodissacred>



A Message About Connecting with Others:

Everyone needs help sometimes. Research shows (as noted in the introduction), that having one to two people that you can talk to, find comfort in or trust can reduce the effects of trauma and help in the healing journey. Anyone who has experienced ongoing persistent trauma deserves to be treated with integrity and understanding.

Connect to your friends, family and trusted adults in-person, by phone, text or video chat. This is how you build a team who can help.

Different people in our life can mean different things to each of us regardless of their relationship. Human beings are naturally social creatures. While it is important to know that some people recharge in a group, others recharge by being alone. No matter your preference, we all need someone to keep us grounded and balanced when times are tough.

To the parent or provider: Young people may feel let down and alone when depressed, scared or anxious. When a child is depressed, they may experience a lack of motivation, racing thoughts, sleeplessness, isolation or withdrawal from social activities they used to enjoy, or loss of appetite. Some may even become overactive and engage in risky behaviors. They

may experience increased headaches, stomach aches or pains in their muscles or joints.

Always seek the care of a professional or licensed provider for concerning and persistent symptoms.

Skills to practice:

It is important that those who have experienced trauma at a young age or those with chronic anxiety learn how to disengage from their reactive or racing minds. The following skills support the development of resilience and healing. Students will benefit from practices in mindfulness, body awareness, breathing techniques and communication skills.

It is most helpful to introduce these skills when the individual is calm. Make practice fun. These skills often fall under mindfulness. Look for games that make practice fun.

Practice Self-Efficacy Skills: (self-efficacy is the ability to believe in oneself and speak up or act toward meeting one's goals)

- Practice having conversations around subjects that might be difficult for youth. Scenarios may include:
 - how to talk to other adults (or peers)
 - how to talk about tough issues
 - how to be supportive to a peer in crises
- Practice phone skills: Some youth feel intimidated to talk on the phone with someone they don't know. Practice what to say or write down what to say.
- For older youth, practice interviewing for a job.

Practice Self-Regulation: (impulse control & resting the 'racing mind')

- Breathing Techniques: Teaching breathing techniques can give youth the ability to find focus and control their reactions to a situation.
- Body Awareness: Sometimes the symptoms of anxiety are felt in the body and not as apparent in the mind. This can include tight chest or trouble catching breath, aches or sore muscles. Teaching yoga, meditation or other mindfulness activities that focus on body awareness can help
- Emotional Freedom Tapping (EFT):

https://theimageproject.org/eft-tapping/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwwtWgBhDhARIsAEMcxeCM9LXd7J-yqq_1AP_DGXjkQEp4O5itAG4VTeA0qnI7xIXU5GoNMDIaAqxtEALw_wcB

Practice for the Adults

The following ideas do not replace the care of a licensed provider but can be helpful if you are witness to someone experiencing a high anxiety episode.

- *Check all surroundings to ensure you are in a safe place and there are no life-threatening injuries.*
- *Try to "save face" by shielding the person from too much chaos or noise. Move to a quieter space.*
- *Seek medical attention if needed. Remember most panic or anxiety attacks are not life threatening but can be alarming to witness. The person experiencing the attack will likely be ready to nap or rest afterwards.*
- *Try to model calm and not overreact.*
- *Sometimes we mirror others emotions and worries can build quickly. Be calm and give the other person an opportunity to mirror you.*
- *Be still and ready to listen. Too much movement and too many questions will increase anxiety*
- *Sometimes the best reaction is to sit/stand close. A hug or holding the person's hand can be grounding and help the person feel like they are connected; however, not every person may want to be touched during an anxiety/panic attack. In those cases, just be near to make sure they are safe.*
- *One of the most frustrating things to hear during an anxiety attack is "calm down".*
- *Believe that they would if they could. Instead remind them that they are in a safe place and you are here for them*
- *Instead model breathing. Encourage slow deep even breathing (holding the breath is not recommended)*
- *Encourage movement, like a slow walk outside away from others, drinking some cool water or try washing the face with a cool cloth or in the sink.*
- *Don't ask too many questions until the person is calm. It's more important to let the person settle down then find out all the details or what caused the episode when they are back in their calm logical thinking brain state.*

[Additional Activities:](#)

Set up a table, bulletin board or other space with mind 4 health cards, posters and resources for students.



Additional valuable resources for learning more may be found at: Healthy Native Youth (<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/>) and (<https://www.healthynativeyouth.org/resources/mind4health/>)

HealthyNativeYouth.org contains health promotion curricula and resources for American Indian and Alaska Native youth. The curricula housed on this site promotes positive youth development, embraces cultural teachings, and demonstrates evidence of effectiveness.

Mind4Health provides a large number of excellent resources and learning opportunities for youth, parents and caring adults.



Look for the QR code at the bottom or scroll the page for these “Youth Support Resources” to print and share (see also; https://linktr.ee/npaihbthrive?utm_source=qr_code):



Look for Trauma Informed Practices and SEL programming:

These are only just a couple of and infinite number of resources.

- Michigan Dept of Education:
<https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/health-safety/social-emotional-learning-sel>
- GoZen (www.gozen.com) or GoStrengths (<https://gostrengths.com/>) which offers a blog, lessons, and animated videos that support a variety of skill building opportunities for students and adults. You can also sign up to receive free printable lessons at <https://gozen.com/thxprintables/>

CASEL: is helping make evidence-based **social** and **emotional learning** an integral part of education, preschool through high school; <https://casel.org/>

IMPORTANT NOTE: If your role as a caring adult includes being a mandated reported, understand what that responsibility means and learn who to call and what resources are available to you and the students that may be affected.



A Message About Making Connections to Nature

The positive power of our pets cannot go ignored. They are like family and should be part of one's circle of social support. Mother Nature has much more to offer. Numerous studies show that spending time outdoors can have significant positive effects on our mental and physical health. Nature provides us with food, water, clothing and resources needed to make our homes. Evidence also shows that spending time outdoors improves mood, reduces anxiety, stress, and blood pressure. It can improve our ability to focus, think more clearly, and can be a boost our immunity. Trees have been found to actually produce hormones that create a calming effect to our own nervous systems. The "brown" noise of a babbling brook or waves on the shore is also soothing to the nervous system. While we find many comforts being indoors, the quality of our life improves when we make time to be outdoors.

Skills to Practice or Teach:

- **Spend time with your pet.** Time with your best furry friend is as comforting and healing as spending time with other people. Our pets are judgement free and love the attention too.
- **Find time to sit, walk or play outdoors.** Write or draw while sitting by a tree. Go for a swim or walk barefoot in the sand or grass. If you aren't used to being outdoors, challenge yourself to be outdoors for at least two hours per week and work your way up to two hours per day. It could be a life changer for you.
- Find a place in nature that resonates with you. Sit in that space and really look at everything in that space. What does the sky, the plants, the earth, look like up close? How does the wind move there or is it protected from different temperatures and elements?

- **Set up a calming corner, peace corner or bundle of protection:**

Sometimes the weather isn't friendly and we have to stay indoors. That is when it is important to have a small place in your house or bedroom where you can sit and be surrounded by special gifts from outside. Your calming corner may have rocks, sticks, a piece of leather, smudging bowl and medicines, or smokeless smudge (carefully made essential oils and lotions may help), a piece of jewelry, a doll, a prayer feather or prayer braid/tie, a collection of special quotes or photos that seem to help us feel better or connect us to the earth or those people that may have given them to us.



- Our pipe carriers or spiritual leaders often carry bundles of their important items and medicines wherever they go in case they are called to ceremony. These are often special handmade items. We can do something similar by keeping our bundle of sacred items ready when we need them. You might choose to make a cloth or leather bag to hold everything in and keep it safe in a drawer until you are ready for it.

- **Carry a special stone:** Rocks are our earliest relatives on Mother Earth. There are many that were here before the plants and animals. We refer to them as the Grandfather rocks. They are used in ceremony, a place to make offerings or to sit and be one with nature. Some elders teach that in times of need or distress, you should find a stone that calls to you. It should be small and something you can carry with you. Rocks are solid and can take our pain from us. The right stone will feel good in your hand. It might be the shape, it's color, or warmth that calls you. Some people believe that these gifts from nature will come to us and walk with us for a time and when we no longer need them or when they are called to another place, they will move on. Maybe the rock turned up missing or you just felt that it needed to be placed back at the beach or given to another. Whatever the reason, we should all practice listening to that "little voice". It is how our ancestors learned to speak the language of the spirits that dwell in the rocks or feathers we carry. It is also how we start to learn the secrets of the trees and plants around us.



Connect with your Culture

A Message About Making Connections to Culture

Cultural connections offer youth an opportunity to build identity and a sense of belonging. Research shows that a strong cultural identification is a protective factor against the risks leading to substance abuse disorder.

Cultures all over the world evolve and change. Colonialism, removal, and the assimilation of a people can feel devastating. The trauma experienced by people from events like this can cause neurological changes in the body that can be passed down several generations.

This is called historical trauma. It can affect our bodies, minds and spirits. Historical trauma can show up in a family or community in the habits and patterns of the people (stocking food, child rearing, etc).

Healing can and will occur as communities regain their identities and embrace all of the different types of cultures that make a community whole.

The Anishinaabeg people have lived in the Great Lakes region before records can track. Science is only just catching up to environmental, health, and social wisdom that has been passed down through the generations. While there have been many historical tragedies that have interrupted the culture

and family life of the people, the language and culture has many teachings still relevant to the world today.



The impact of Boarding schools, forced sterilization, and other racial inequities or biases of Native Americans is engrained in the memory of many Anishinaabe people today and is part of the cause for distrust of both health and educational systems.

Fortunately, we live in a time where we can participate openly in traditional Anishinaabe

practices and activities. There are some who have been taught traditional ways from elders or teachers who are strict and follow the old ways with a step by step method. There are also some who have been taught by elders or teachers who take the approach of developing a spiritual connection with the ancients and the environment and the “steps” in a ceremony may not seem as strict or predictable because they call in helpers to guide it. Neither approach is wrong and there is wisdom to be learned from both but for individuals wanting to learn and participate, it is important that the elder/teacher is nurturing, reputable, and is respectful. A good teacher or Wisdomkeeper understands the importance of treating their students with integrity.

Good teachers or Wisdomkeepers understand that they earn respect by modeling and sharing it. They do not demand it.

Further thoughts: Native Americans are not the only people living amongst us to have been through the trauma of forced removal, genocide or environmental/community disasters. The Irish and Scottish, for example, suffered many of the same historical atrocities that Native Americans, including forced assimilation and removal from their lands. Before Christianity, their original culture(s) were earth- based cultures similar to Native American communities. While much is unknown of their most ancient people, there is still wisdom shared in their stories and by those following Celtic or Druid teachings.

We do each other harm when we judge the practices of others when those practices connect us physically, mentally, and spiritually to the Earth. Cultural appropriation is real and can be harmful but we need to remember that many old cultures around the world had clan systems; sweat lodges; adorned themselves with bones, shells, and feathers, or even smudged for protection and healing. Before we claim something has been culturally appropriated, it is important to know more about others origins and the earth culture their teachings stem from.

***Teaching:** An elder once taught me that everything we need grows right where we are living. If the Earth is our teacher, then it shouldn't be a surprise that different cultures may have some common ceremonies and practices. The differences were based on the environment and the types of plants and animals that were available where they lived. We should encourage feelings of connectedness especially to the environment. We should also make sure that we give credit to our teachers and the origins of the teachings we have to share. This reverence leads to the protection and continued practice of these gifts. ~Michelle Leask*

Skills to Practice or Teach:

- **The importance of ones' Name, colors, and clan and how to find it.** Elders have shared that making sure a child knows their spirit name, clan and colors can be protection and help connect the child to community, the environment, and family. This is done differently in different families and communities. In some a spiritual leader or pipe carrier does this for the community upon the request of the family following traditional practices or protocols. In other communities, it may be done during a visit to a traditional healer or someone in the family might have that gift or role. The attached brochure can offer a starting point for all of this. There are fantastic

brochures you can download and print on these topics and more at Anishnawbe Health Toronto: <https://aht.ca/>; scroll to the bottom of the page and see their offerings.



- **Praying or Making offerings—with food or tobacco:** Making offerings opens a spiritual connection between us, mother nature and the spiritual realm. It can be described as giving us an opportunity to make a phone call to the spirit of others. This is a great way to teach youth about reflection or traditional prayer. It is also a practice that teaches reciprocity or the idea of give and take. Any time we forage for berries or medicines, go to the water, enter the woods, ask a favor of someone, offering them tobacco or some type of gift shows respect and gives us an opportunity to learn or practice being in tune with nature and the spiritual part of ourselves and the earth. It is one way we slow ourselves down to listen to the nature and the elements.



- **Special Note:** Bringing food when you visit an elder or someone's home or even giving a visitor food when they visit you is also a way to show care and respect for those around us. Likewise, we make food offerings to our helpers, during ceremonies, feasts or the full moon, and for our ancestors who passed away (ghost suppers). Some families will leave uneaten food out as the "spirits' share". Ask elders, pipe carriers, and spiritual healers in your area more about this.

- **Playing, listening to music, or singing,** including traditional drumming, flutes, rattles, etc. There is all kind of research about the benefits of music on mental health and brain development. (see the following articles for more: <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/can-music-improve-our-health-and-quality-of-life-202207252786> and <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8566759/>)

DRUM TEACHING: Why do only the men sit at the big drum: Each community and each drum may have its own story. As a former singer with Rainbow Singers and Bear Creek, in short, that the big (powwow) drum was given to the Anishinaabeg men by a woman (possibly Lakota) to help them bring community together and for healing. The men are given instructions about being respectful and sober when sitting at the drum. There are stories of men abusing their right to sit at a drum and therefore, the woman took the drum back and earned the right to sing at it until the men “cleaned up”. There are also stories of other tribes who have different rules about the big drum but in the Anishinaabe way, this is how it is. Women/girls (or for those of other gender status the protocol is for who biologically would be experiencing or have experienced menstruation) are invited to make a protective circle around the outside of the sitting men and sing. The combination of the voices is carried higher and have even more power when all the genders come together. The drum is a grandfather to be fed and cared for by all, like your own dear grandfather. When approaching a drum you would like to sing with, it’s appropriate to offer tobacco to sing or during a song, make eye contact and watch for a nod or smile. Be sure to thank the drummers afterward for allowing you to be part of the sacred circle. In some communities, only close family or significant others stand directly behind a singer sitting at the drum. If you are unrelated, it is best to stand between two sitting singers. To learn more, talk to the drum keepers and singers in your community (men and women). **Special Note for Women:** This teaching may vary from community to community but often in Michigan, Anishinaabeg women sing (in and outside of ceremony) and can play a hand drum, flute (in the past & in some tribes, this is a man’s instrument), rattles, sticks, and other instruments. There are many great women singing groups to explore.

- **Learn the language of your ancestors:** The Anishinaabe language is ancient and connects us to our ancestors and is so descriptive that one cannot separate the amount of science and social structure also in the language as you become more fluent. When you learn a new word, use it often and in replace of the English word. Teach others the words you learn. Label items around the house, school or at work. Look for opportunities to learn in your community. See also (<https://ojibwe.net>) and you may also want to follow James Vukelich on Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube for his word of the day videos.
- **Clothing:** Wearing cultural clothes helps build a sense of pride and belongingness. The history of ribbon skirts and shirts has been documented for nearly 400 years, since the Europeans started trading with Native Americans in the US/Canada.

Every Native Child should have an opportunity to wear a traditional clothing. Explore opportunities to make, exchange, or share ribbon skirts, ribbon shirts, moccasins, or other forms of dance regalia. See also (<https://www.powwows.com/main/pow-wow-dance-styles/>) for more on the history and teachings.



- **Cultural crafts and creations:** Teach or learn about Beadwork, quill work, birchbark-crafts, grass braiding, dreamcatchers, and rock painting.
- Our people have a history of prizing all things made by hand. Elders teach that when making something for someone else, that we watch how we are feeling and try always to put good feelings into our work. Some crafting we do can be healing so we shouldn't avoid making something just because life isn't perfect. Sometimes creating something new can build us up and working with the materials has a medicine all its own to heal. The lesson is to always gather or source materials in a good way and if crafting feels too hard or overwhelming, put the item down in that moment and come back to it another time. Crafting in this way, keeps one mindful of their body and their mind.

If there isn't someone in your area to teach a certain craft, find a video made by another Native artist online or find your own way of doing it—good ol' trial and error style. There is always more than one way to accomplish anything.

- **Traditional Foods:** The Anishinaabe people traditionally lived close to the lands and survived on the plants and animals that were available seasonally. Our ancestors have a varied highly nutritious diet. This type of diet may feel more challenging in modern times but it is possible. For



additional teachings about traditional foods, cooking recipes, and resources, and videos, go to <https://itcmi.org/?s=traditional+foods>

Note About Traditional Foods vs. Cultural Foods: Traditional foods are those strongly linked to a territory or region. They are typically plants or animals indigenous to an area that have a history, meaning, value and connects the land and people.

Cultural foods are those that also have value and meaning to the people from a cultural group or region but they are foods that may have been adopted or adapted in more recent history. For instance, fry bread is considered a cultural food. Its origins for the Anishinaabe people came during a period in history when the people (our ancestors) were being removed from the land. It is made from flour, a food supplied as a commodity by the government. After learning to fry it and because it was easier to get, it became a food associated with survival for some families and an important part of the culture. Unfortunately, it does not pack much nutrition and is high in fat. Some families may be defensive about cutting out cultural foods but you can highlight and put extra emphasis on

traditional foods like wild meats, wild rice, root vegetable and encourage people to eat them more often.



There is a lot of conversation and work being done around food sovereignty to ensure that more families can grow and have access to the healthier traditional foods. Take time to forage and learn about edible plants that many people pass off as “weeds”. Be sure to learn practices that

don't lead to over picking plants you find. Plant indigenous edible plants near you and reap the benefits.

Ceremonies and etiquette: Attending ceremonies can be very grounding and healing. They can also be scary the first time if one doesn't know what to expect. Find someone you trust who can tell you all about the ceremony and possibly attend with you. Never underestimate the power of positive intention and prayers. If an individual is moved to do their own ceremony even one you have never seen, we should not criticize them; if it is done with a good heart and good intention. We are in a time of the next seven generations and while our old ceremonies have their place and time, our ancestors still speak to us and may move us in ways we don't even realize to create new ceremonies that are more powerful in this modern time and place and for who we are as people today.