



Wellbriety!

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Four Generations Healing, Four Generations of Solutions

Theda New
Breast says
more about the
4 Generations

In this issue...



Generations!

A photo from Hoop Journey IV in Tonawanda, NY in 2003 brings together the generations.



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Four Generations Healing, Four Generations of Solutions

By
Theda New Breast, M.P.H.

A Native Elder gave us a “secret” to a good life a long time ago when asked. She said, “You cannot think yourself into right living, but you can live yourself into right thinking.”

The past 50 years has seen tremendous change. I thought about this while waiting for a doctor’s appointment at our Indian Health Service Hospital and realized the change this type of health care brought when they came to our reservation in 1955, two years after alcohol had become legal for Indians to buy. Ten years later the civil rights movement would begin the process of reversing the internalized colonization process and the need to remain invisible. It would be another 23 years before we would have religious freedom and more say about our children with the coming of the Indian Child Welfare Act in 1978.

So how and where do Indian people learn how to think? And what is right thinking? Have we been brainwashed? Are we Indians, or Americans, or both? Why can’t some of us heal from generations of trauma? Why are there so many funerals every week? And why do we take our relatives to endless doctor’s appointments for a terminal illness, then, as a last resort we take them to ceremony and beg Creator to save them?

To help us with these answers and solutions for healing we must sit together with a sincere motivation to take a stand and help. A curious mistake we have made, and I don’t think it was intentional, is not to look at who is in the room, who

is attending the Conference, who is working a program of recovery, and who is thinking like our Ancestors? The mistake we have made is not to have made sure we have representation from what is now called the “Four Generations.”

During the past five years, we have started to ask at gatherings for people to identify which Generation they belong to, what’s important to them, and what do they value? Borrowing from the field of education, we have taken a loose framework of dividing Indian people into these Four Generations:

- ⇒ **Traditionalists:** Those born before 1940.
- ⇒ **Bi-cultural Boomers:** Those born between the years of 1940-1960.
- ⇒ **Transitional Generation:** Those born between the years of 1960-1980.
- ⇒ **Millennial:** Those born between the years of 1980-2007.

Please look at the descriptions, qualifications, values, and behaviors that have been given to us from these four generations. Some belong distinctly to one generation, some are on the cusp, and some belong to more than two generations. What we are beginning to find is that the healing process is different for each generation. We may be making another mistake by having one generation impose their view and process of healing on the other generations.

Thanks to my Sister and colleague Dr. Deb Pace from the Blood Kanai Nation in Alberta, Canada, who is collaborating with me in her work on healing from residential schools. T.N.

Traditionalists

Born before 1940



1. Married till death do you part
2. Did not grow up eating sugar, white bread or potatoes
3. Praying is second nature
4. Normal Rites of Passage (manhood, womanhood, etc.)
5. Believed and witnessed the power of medicine in animals, rocks, songs, dances, water, tobacco, roots, plants, flowers, etc.
6. Subsistence living
7. Spoke the language
8. No television-gatherings and visiting
9. Expected miracles
10. Behaviors of caring, kindness, compassion and loving
11. Spoke Honesty and truth
12. Humility and wisdom
13. Believed the northern lights were spirits and came out as a doorway to the other side
14. Looked at the stars every night
15. Knew the seasons well by signs and behavior of animals, plants, stars, wind
16. Chopped wood, used outhouses and kerosene lamps
17. Generosity from the heart-helped everyone...unconditional love
18. Used Real instruments
19. Never cussed
20. Braided hair, belonged to clans, societies
21. Government Policies, Organized religion, Boarding schools, Residential schools, "Blanket Indian" (Shame began)
22. WWII

Bi-Cultural Boomers

Born between 1940-1960



1. Bridge between Native and non-Native cultures
2. Built a resiliency in both cultures
3. Different foods were consumed in commodities: sugar, lard, white bread, & potatoes
4. First generation with diabetes
5. Flushing toilets, mimeograph machines, and 8 tracks
6. Grew up shamed over "Drunken Indian" stereotype
7. First to experience urban and/or city living
8. Witnessed an era where Native conferences norm went from *everyone drank and acted out to no alcohol served or tolerated*
9. Media and television influenced
10. Identity crisis
11. Started willingly cutting hair
12. Penicillin cured any aftermath of multiple sex partners
13. Kept "Indian Pony," car, truck running as long as possible with new motor, new transmission, bailing wire, duck tape trend
14. Divorce was an option
15. Stretch pants, Big hair, vinyl
16. Loved Beatles and Rolling Stones
17. AIM, Cultural Renaissance, cassettes
18. Love to Dance white dances, twist
19. Vietnam War

Transitional Generation

Born between 1960-1980



1. First generation not speaking the language
2. Began buying water in a bottle
3. First generation to "go to treatment"
4. An education became very important
5. Tribal colleges helped bridge the gap to getting GED, entrance into University, study skills, and increased income
6. Seasonal change based on Pow-wow, basketball, hockey etc.
7. Studied Federal Indian Law
8. Witnessed Sobriety, Wellbriety, and Wellness movements
9. Sense of Pride in being Indian; experiencing "Wannabees"
10. They need a book, DVD, audio to assist a "Spiritual awakening"
11. Driving to dialysis to pick up or drop off is common
12. Waves, perms, gangs
13. New telephones, owning a cell phone is new behavior
14. DINKs (double income, no kids)
15. Persian Gulf War

Millennials

Born between 1980-2007



1. Only drink water from a bottle
2. Enjoy fast food and cooking in microwave
3. Make TV time, or TV time is important
4. Seventh generation type pick up language easy, going back to ceremonies, canoe journeys, Sundances, Native American Church, Longhouse, and asking for an Indian Name
5. Get your education before you start a family
6. More electronic time (ipod, texting, computers)
7. Having an income is very important
8. Do not enjoy outhouses
9. Seasonal change—schools out, tournaments, proms
10. Very rarely look at stars, or spend time in Wilderness
11. Don't keep the same job for years because it provides retirement
12. Courtship starts on-line
13. Change jobs often
14. Addiction to meth and oxycontin primary over alcohol
15. Adventurous
16. Universal gender roles (single women the "bread winner")
17. Iraq War



Generations

A spiritual remedy for a spiritual malady

A *spiritual remedy for a spiritual malady* is to be defined differently for each generation. Physical Sobriety is different for each generation. Emotional Sobriety is different for each generation. Intellectual Sobriety is also different for each generation.

My daughter jokingly said, “Mom you can see the difference in how the generations drink coffee. The traditionalists drink Folgers, the Bi-cultural Boomers drink strong roasted Columbian coffee, the Transitionals drink a latte with one shot, and the Millennials drink a triple latte. When they are down they drink a rock star.”

Each gathering of Native people is different. At each one we will get different solutions. For example, when asked how they got to accept “right living” and began to live it, some will say through ceremonies, some will say AA, some will say therapy, some will say jail, some will say treatment, some will say Native American Church, some will say Jesus saved them, some will say they Sundanced, some will say they dreamt it, some will say they had a vision, some will say their newborn children’s eyes told them to. And you know that they are all right.



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