

# HISTORICAL WELLNESS: CONNECTING TO OUR STRENGTHS AS A PEOPLE

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# WE ARE ALL ON A HEALING JOURNEY

**Native people have been deeply impacted by colonial efforts of both eradication and assimilation**

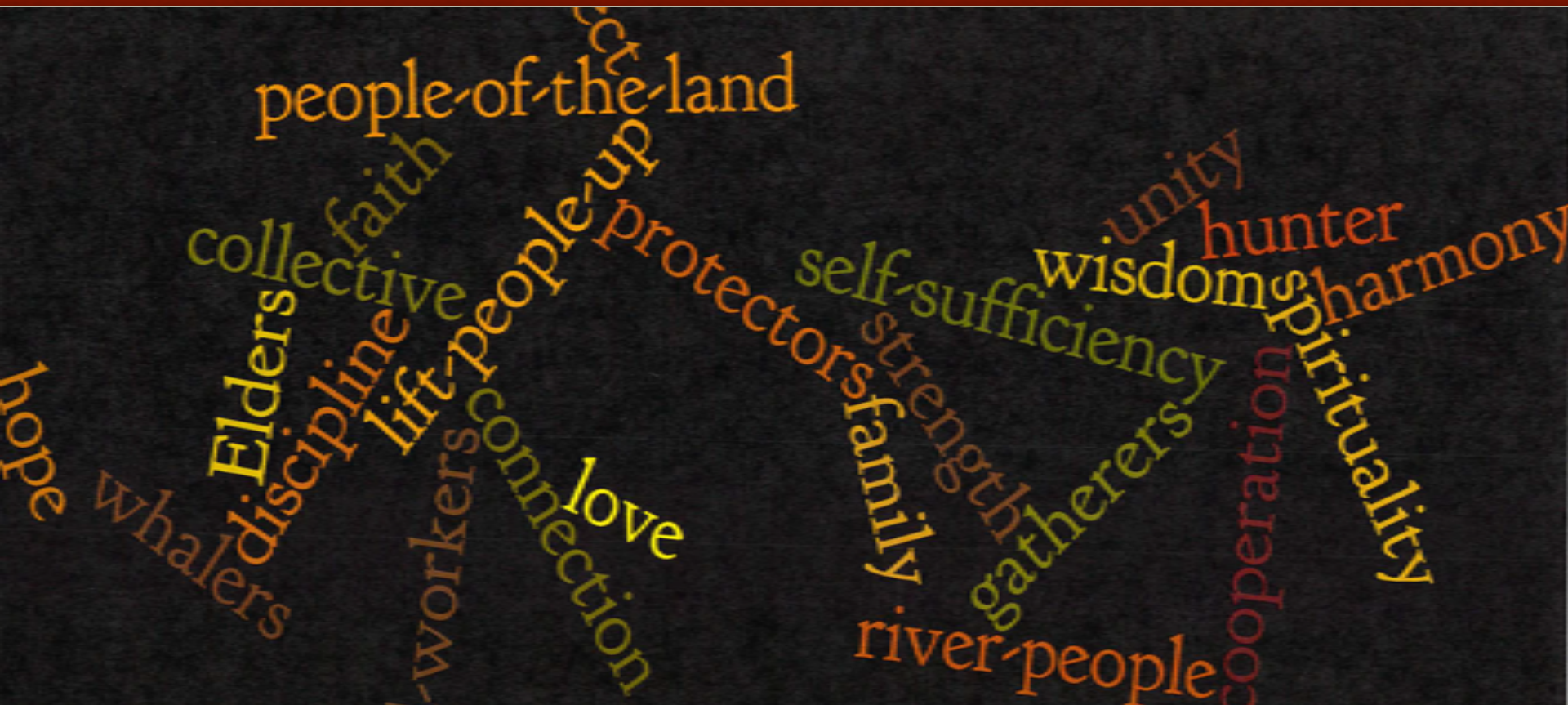


Colonization included missionaries, boarding schools, epidemics and oppression.

As a result, Native people lost their language, culture and experience cycles of unresolved grief.

School at Kasaan, Alaska. Photo by B.A. Haldane, 1905

# WHO/WHAT DEFINES WHO WE ARE AS A PEOPLE?





# WHAT IS WELLNESS?

## Wellness occurs when challenges are inevitable

Wellness is how we rise from those challenges.

## Wellness is contextual

*When we de-contextualize ourselves or others, we are stripping away our identity.* (Saleebey, 1997)

## Wellness is holistic

Shaped by a combination of factors  
(mind, body, spirit, environment, history,  
traditions and relationships.)



Rudy Demientieff  
Photo by LaVerne Demientieff

*Wellness is determined by individuals and groups  
in the context of their respective environments and worldview*

(Durie, 2004; Hodge, et al., 2009; Marsalla, 1998; Weaver, 2002).

# A HEALING JOURNEY: FOCUSING ON STRENGTHS

Focusing on strengths doesn't ignore problems or challenges.

We can make a conscious effort to begin with what is working and what is right.



Cecelia Andrews and Alice Demientieff (sisters)  
Photo by LaVerne Demientieff

# “ORIGINAL INSTRUCTIONS” AS HUMAN BEINGS

**Healing from historical trauma includes understanding what our “original instructions” are as human beings.**

Karina Walters, School of Social Work -Indigenous Wellness Research Institute, University of Washington



My nieces, Marie, Madeleyne and Julie.  
Photo by LaVerne Demientieff

- Understanding who we are
- Feeling a sense of connectedness and belonging
- Knowledge of our history and traditions
- Focusing on what is working, as opposed to what is not working



# HISTORICAL WELLNESS

**Traditional beliefs and practices connect to the wisdom and knowledge about what it means to be human.**

Our people knew how to live a balanced life . . .

- Singing, drumming and dancing.
- Survival stories highlighting responsibility, safety and the power of nature and animals.
- Ceremonies and practices that help us move through grief and trauma.
- Practices that teach us about how to live in harmony with nature, animals and other people.



LaVerne Demientieff in Aniak  
Photo by LaVerne Demientieff

# HEALING OURSELVES IS A POWERFUL PLACE TO BE IN...



Son, Khayree, making moose soup.  
Photo by LaVerne Demientieff

You are in a very powerful place . . .

By healing yourself,  
you are healing the grief  
and pain of your ancestors and  
you are also healing the generations that will  
come after you.

What a powerful place to be in...

*From 'Healing the Soul Wound' by Eduardo Duran*



# IN CONCLUSION...

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