



CIRCLE-NARCH June 2025 Newsletter

Welcome to the Center for Indigenous Research Collaboration Learning & Excellence (CIRCLE) NARCH June 2025 newsletter! CIRCLE-NARCH is a partnership between the Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations and the Division on Addiction at Cambridge Health Alliance. Our flagship training, [xaʔtús \(First Face\) for Mental Health](#), prepares peers, teachers, coaches, and other Tribal community members to be the “First Face” supporting someone experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis or challenge.

Here's what we have been up to this month!

- We recently submitted our paper, "Evaluation of the First Face for Mental Health Program at a Youth Residential Addiction Treatment Facility," for publication in a scientific journal. This paper describes an evaluation of the First Face training at the Healing Lodge. This is a big step in uplifting culturally grounded prevention efforts in Native communities.
- The Training and Research Coordinators (TRCs) have been making plans to attend the upcoming Awtni Shixwitpama-Yakama Nation Behavioral Health's 7th Annual Trauma Informed Care conference which will be held August 19th-21st.

Upcoming Events

- Our CIRCLE Working Group will be gathering at the Healing Lodge on July 16th for in-person collaboration. We're looking forward to deepening our work together and continuing to strengthen the foundation for future programming.
- Did you know that our current grant award represents our third round of NARCH funding? Next month, CIRCLE will submit an application for a fourth round of NARCH funding, with the goal of expanding our First Face training to special populations. If our application is successful, our work will launch in spring 2026.

Thank you, Donell!



As we look ahead to new seasons of growth, we also celebrate a meaningful transition for Donell Barlow, one of our long-standing and deeply valued TRCs here at the Healing Lodge. For over two years, Donell has brought warmth, wisdom, and care to her work—guiding with compassion and cultural grounding.

While we'll miss her in the TRC role, we're incredibly proud to share that she's not going far—Donell is stepping into her next chapter as a Substance Use Disorder Professional Trainee right here at the Lodge!

Congratulations, Donell, on this exciting new path—we're so lucky to continue walking alongside you as your journey evolves.

We Are Hiring!

The Healing Lodge of the Seven Nations is looking for a visionary leader to join our team as the **Director of CIRCLE**. This person will guide the growth of CIRCLE into a nationally recognized, self-sustaining training and research center rooted in Indigenous values and focused on healing, collaboration, and excellence.

This is more than a leadership role—it's a chance to shape the future of culturally grounded mental health and substance use training across Indian Country and beyond. We're looking for someone with a strong background in business development, grant and research management, and community-based mental health. Native applicants are strongly encouraged to apply.

If you or someone you know is passionate about Indigenous wellness, systems change, and long-term sustainability, visit [the Healing Lodge website](#) to learn more and apply.

Let's build the future of healing—together.

Meet the Team



In April 2024, Conrad Durglo, a Behavioral Intervention Specialist at the Healing Lodge, took part in First Face for Mental Health at the Wellpinit Powwow Pavilion. What he carried forward wasn't just training—it was a deeper sense of purpose.

“Although these are difficult conversations and emotions to encounter, you can do so with love and grace. You can help someone without knowing all the answers. Simply showing up and giving someone your time and commitment to walk with them is enough.”

He describes supporting others as part of his own healing:

“Even after the most emotional and difficult days, I can rest peacefully knowing I gave my genuine best to hold a space of safety for others to heal.”

When life feels heavy, he leans into nature, ceremony, and creativity—crocheting, beading, and making buckskin medicine pouches inspired by his own sobriety journey.

“When I sit with my beads, I find my Gram Barb. I don't even have to be working on a project—she's with me when I organize my supplies.”

Now, in his role supporting youth at the Healing Lodge, he brings that same grounded presence and cultural connection into everything he does. His story is a testament to growth, faith, and returning to tradition:

“I made an agreement with the Creator the day I chose sobriety. Since then, I haven't gone hungry, and I've been protected. Faith is what keeps me on the red road.”

His advice for young people?

“You are still growing, even when it doesn't feel like it. Healing doesn't always look like progress. Sometimes it's just learning how to exist peacefully in the here and now.”

We're honored to walk alongside this relative—whose life, work, and creativity continue to inspire healing in others.

Prevention Corner



Honoring Two-Spirit Identity and Supporting Our LGBTQ+ Relatives

Pride Month is more than a celebration—it's a call to remember, to heal, and to protect our most vulnerable community members. For many LGBTQ+ and Two-Spirit people, especially youth, being affirmed in their identity can be a matter of survival. Simple acts—like asking someone their pronouns—can go a long way in supporting mental health and preventing suicide. Respect tells someone, “You belong. You are seen. Your life matters.”

In many Indigenous cultures, [Two-Spirit people](#) held sacred roles as healers, mediators, and carriers of both feminine and masculine spirits. These identities existed long before colonization, rooted in balance and community. Colonial systems tried to erase this understanding, replacing it with rigid, binary views of gender and sexuality.

Reclaiming Two-Spirit identity isn't just about inclusion—it's about returning to our teachings. It's about restoring honor and visibility to those who have always belonged in our circle.

Let's commit to building communities where all our relatives feel safe, valued, and affirmed—because one moment of respect can save a life.

Resources for Our Community

[Mental Health America](#): Refers to local mental health services or support programs: 1-800-969-NMHA (6642)

[National Alliance on Mental Illness](#): Support, information, and referrals. 1-800-950-NAMI (6264)

[Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance](#): 1-800-826-3632

[WeRNative](#): A comprehensive health resource for Native youth by Native youth, promoting holistic health and positive growth in local communities and nation at large.

[StrongHearts Native Helpline](#): The StrongHearts Native Helpline (1-844-762-8483) is a confidential and anonymous culturally-appropriate domestic violence and dating violence helpline for Native Americans, available every day from 7 a.m. to 10 p.m. CT.

[The Trevor Project](#): Crisis information and suicide prevention services to LGBTQ+ young people under 25. 1-866-488-7386 or Online chat: TrevorChat or TrevorText: text START to 678678

Culture Connections



June brings flowers, sunshine, and moments of togetherness.

It's a time to gather, to feel the warmth of the season, and to honor the light that surrounds us. For many of our communities, June also marks a sacred time—summer solstice, when ceremonies like the Sun Dance take place across the Plains and beyond.

The Sun Dance is one of the most powerful and spiritually rooted ceremonies, carried forward with strength and care through generations. Despite attempted erasure through government bans, our people protected it—often in secret—and continue to hold this ceremony as a sacred altar for healing, survival, and prayer for future generations.

Each nation has its own teachings and ways, but what remains constant is the deep purpose behind this time: renewal for the people, the land, and the generations to come. If you'd like to read more, [this article from Notes from the Frontier](#) offers a brief overview from an outside perspective—but it's shared here only for those who might find it useful or who may be reconnecting with parts of their identity.

However you honor this season—through ceremony, time on the land, or quiet reflection—may it bring you peace, grounding, and a renewed sense of connection.



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