

We have had numerous requests at UTFAV for information about a Traditional pamphlet series and how it can help survivors of Domestic Violence. Please see this as a starting place on your road for healing and recovery ~ The UTFAV Team

## **Approaching a Traditional Healer, Elder or Medicine Person**

When you are on a healing journey, it is a natural step for you to seek help and guidance from a Traditional Healer, an Elder or a Medicine Person. If you are seeking healing from Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault or Stalking, chances are you are reading this because you are looking for traditional healing. There are many paths that lead to healing.

### **Healers**

When Healers talk about healing, they say that the Creator and the spirits work through them to help the people. If they are asked in what way they are different, they say that it's the gifts they have and they are allowed to use, is what makes them different. They always express their deep gratitude for the healing powers of everything that the Creator has put here and for the spirits that do the healing.

Each Healer has a purpose and that purpose is to help the people. They tend not to call themselves Healers but might refer to themselves as helpers in Traditional Healing or helpers to the spirits.

The help that they give is credited to the spirit they have, the Creator, and the spirit helpers who come in many forms to assist them. Helpers can manifest in any form to assist them. They can be animals, trees, sticks, rocks, fire, water, plants and earth.

The abilities of some Healers are said to be

their birth right and generally these individuals start training and working at an early age. The abilities of others may be revealed later in life as a result of a severe illness or a near-death experience. Some may go on fasts or on a vision quest where their gifts and their responsibilities are revealed and explained to them by the spirits.

A Healer can be given his or her direction of how to take care of the people through dreams and visions There are similarities to all healing practices but each Healer has their own way and medicines that they work with. Each Healer is an individual and they live their lives according to the teachings they have received. Some may work with plants, some may counsel, some may use other forms of doctoring and some may heal with their hands. They may work through ceremonies such as the sweat lodge or the shaking tent. There may be one or many forms of healing that they have received training in.

Depending on the form that their healing work takes, Healers may use drums and shakers as they sing and pray. They will use one or more of the four sacred medicines for smudging.

### **Medicine People**

Some Healers are called Medicine People because they work with the plant medicines. They know about plants and they prepare medicines.

There are special procedures for everything. If a Healer needs a powerful medicine for someone, the Healer has to find out how to get it, how to keep and store it, and how it should be used and given. One plant may have five or six different uses. The Healer may need to fast in order to learn about a particular medicine. Healers say that they are continually learning.

### **Doctoring**

Doctoring takes many forms. The use of the medicines is one of them. Removing sickness by extraction is another.

Some Healers are specialists in treating certain illnesses. For example, a Healer may have special abilities to help with heart disease or with diabetes.

As Traditional Healing is holistic, if a person seeks help for an ulcer, it is not only the ulcer that is treated. The root cause of the condition is addressed.

### **Spiritual Healing**

All Healers look at all aspects of the individual; the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical, as they are interrelated. There are some who describe the work they do in terms of working with energy, the mind and the spirit. They might work with eagle feathers to get to the core of the problem.

### **Counseling**

Counseling is an intrinsic part of all Healing, but there are Healers whose particular gift is to use words to heal. Some communities have seers who it is said can see backwards and forwards.

### **Ceremonies**

Healers may perform doctoring during a sweat lodge ceremony or they may take care of you when you go on your fast for healing. They may work through the shaking tent to advise and prescribe and they may support you when you participate in the sun dance.

## Traditional Elders

A Traditional Elder is someone who follows the teachings of our ancestors. It is said Traditional Elders walk and talk the good way of life.

Traditional Elders teach and share the wisdom they have gained of the culture, history and the language. The sharing of their wisdom is healing.

An Elder does not have to be a senior but could be someone younger who has many teachings and who has earned the respect of community by contributing to its spiritual development.

## Visits With Healers, Elders and Medicine People

When you go to a Healer, Elder or Medicine Person, be yourself, be respectful to them and to yourself.

Take tobacco to give as an offering. Tobacco is meant for that communication between you, the Healer and the Creator. The tobacco can be in any form. For example, it can be one cigarette from a pack, it can be a pack of cigarettes, it can be a pouch of tobacco or it can be loose tobacco wrapped in a small square of cloth (called a tobacco tie).

Talk to the Healer or Elder explaining why you have come to them.

Refrain from taking alcohol or drugs for four days before going to a Healer.

Women schedule their appointments with Healers for times when they are not on their menstrual cycle, also called moon time.

Other gifts can be given to express your

gratitude for the help you have received. This may be in the form of an item such a basket or blanket or it could be money.

There are certain protocols specific to each Healer, Elder or Medicine Person. Many Healers will have helpers who will convey these protocols to you. For example, they will let you know whether you may receive treatment after having chemotherapy.

## How can you find a Traditional Healer, Elder or Medicine Person?

Contact your nearest Tribal Center for more information by phone or in person. Tribes are the best resource for finding Traditional Healers, Elders and Medicine People who are recognized as such by in your area. For Michigan Federally Recognized Tribes you can find a list of tribes at our United Three Fires Against Violence web site. [www.utfav.org](http://www.utfav.org).

## What if I have not been involved in my Native traditions?

Everyone has been on different paths and because of the many things that have historically happened to Indian people, we all have different levels of knowledge. The tobacco you offer will help you ask your questions to the healers.

*Information shared in this pamphlet was used with permission from Anishnawbe Health Toronto* <http://www.aht.ca>

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**Uniting Three Fires Against Violence**  
*Helping and Healing from all Directions*



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