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Research Report

Addressing Domestic Violence through Circle Peacemaking in Kake, Alaska: Reflections on Building Tribal-Researcher Capacity

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Abstract: We begin by acknowledging the impact of historical trauma on the community, as this formed the backdrop for the entire capacity building project. In January 2021, the Organized Village of Kake (OVK), Alaska, received funding for a planning grant from the National Institute of Justice through the Tribal-Researcher Capacity-Building Grant program. The project focused on how to incorporate domestic violence (intimate partner violence) cases into the Circle Peacemaking process, and on developing a proposal to study that process. The partnership team consisted of members of the OVK Tribal staff and independent researchers. The grant was awarded in the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic, so all work on this project had to be conducted remotely. Of particular importance, Zoom allowed for face-to-face meetings, even though they could not be held in person. The partnership determined that a research study on use of Circle Peacemaking to handle domestic violence cases should centre an Indigenous research paradigm. The conceptual framework for the Circle Peacemaking process, rooted in Lingìt culture and life, is described. Existing strengths in the community that support the potential for using Circle Peacemaking in Kake to address domestic violence, potential measures of success, potential problems in carrying out a future study, and key learnings are also described.

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Historical Context

Many of the crimes and public safety issues that plague the remote and isolated village of Kake, Alaska, are rooted in historical and intergenerational trauma, as well as in the lack of cultural protective factors in the lives of community and Tribal citizens. Historical trauma is defined as cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma (Brave Heart, 2003). This trauma results in unresolved grief. This historic unresolved grief comes from the life shock, invasion, and genocide that came with first contact with non-Indigenous Peoples, and was followed by the trauma of subjugation, boarding schools, prohibition of Lingìt language and practices, loss of a subsistence way of life, ongoing racism, and forced assimilation.

As an example of historical trauma and grief, the people of Kake still live with the devastating impact of the near annihilation of their entire community at the hands of the United States Navy when, in February 1869, the crew of the USS *Saginaw* totally destroyed three Kake village sites in the dead of winter. At a recent meeting with Alaska's senior military leader to open up dialogue about these bombardments, Dawn Jackson, executive director of the federally recognized Tribe in Kake, known as the Organized Village of Kake, stated, "We are in the weeds of intergenerational trauma. It will take five generations from me, to heal what has been done" (Juneau Empire, 2020).

We begin with this acknowledgement of historical trauma, as it formed the backdrop for our entire capacity-building project. In addition, understanding that Kake has been systematically repressed for pursuing a traditional way of life in the territory where residents have lived for millennia is an important part of the context for understanding the importance of using a Circle Peacemaking restorative justice model for addressing domestic violence (intimate partner violence) in Kake. This context had direct implications for how the research team communicated and conducted its work together, and its ultimate success in meeting the original goals of the research effort. Setting aside time in meetings for team members to check-in, to listen, and to share information about current community and family trauma and events was an important part of building trust, mutuality, and safety within the group. "Success" of a research project in this context is rooted in relationships.

Introduction

In January 2021, the Organized Village of Kake (OVK) received funding from the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) through the Tribal-Researcher Capacity-Building Grant program. As described on NIJ's web site, this program funds:

> Planning grants to develop new and innovative criminal and juvenile justice research or evaluation projects that address the challenges of fighting crime and strengthening justice in Indian country and Alaska Native villages. To ensure proposed projects result in tangible and mutually beneficial studies, they must include a new tribal-researcher partnership component. (National Institute of Justice, 2020)

The OVK project focused on assessing how best to incorporate domestic violence (DV) cases that are brought before the OVK Tribal Court, into the Circle Peacemaking process. The ultimate goal of this effort is to strengthen Tribal families and the community of Kake by shedding new light on the issues of addressing domestic violence through the use of Circle Peacemaking. In addition, a goal of the project was to ensure that program and related research components are rooted in the cultural values and traditional "ways of knowing" of the Lingìt people of Kake. The purpose of this article is to describe the learnings from the planning grant. The article begins with a description of the community context of Kake and of the planning grant. We then review Circle Peacemaking, including concepts of restorative justice and design principles, a comparison of restorative and non-restorative approaches, discussion of historic trauma, and a description of the Circle Peacemaking Program in Kake. It then describes learnings about centring an Indigenous research paradigm, and a conceptual model, that emerged from the planning grant. This is followed by discussion of existing strengths that support the potential for using Circle Peacemaking in Kake to address DV cases, measures of success, and potential problems and anticipated solutions in carrying out a study of using Circle Peacemaking to address DV cases. The article concludes with key learnings from this planning grant.

Community Context

Kake is a rural community located on Kupreanof Island in the heart of the Tongass National Forest in Southeast Alaska. The community of Kake has a population of 543 citizens (US Census Bureau, 2020). As of June 2020, the Organized Village of Kake had a Tribal enrolment of 1,020 citizens, of whom 396 live in town (OVK, personal communication, 2022), representing 73% of Kake's total population. Kake is 145 kilometres (90 miles) south of Juneau, the state

capital, and 80.5 kilometres (50 miles) east of Sitka. Kake is inaccessible by road, and transportation to and from the community is provided by small air carriers and occasional ferry service (see Figures 1, 2, and 3).

Although the United States government identified the Organized Village of Kake as a federally recognized Tribe in 1947, the Lingìt people of the Kake area have lived on their traditional land for millennia. The word "Kake" is an English version of the Lingìt word Kèex, which means "the place where there is an opening to daylight." The people of Kake refer to themselves as Kèex Kwàan, the people of the place where there is an opening to daylight. This Lingìt phrase both describes a physical feature of the location of the community and is an apt metaphor for the purpose of this research planning project: to strengthen Tribal families and the community by shedding new light on the issues of domestic violence through use of the Circle Peacemaking approach to restorative justice.

The project design was based on the Tribe's identified core purpose of "strengthening Tribal community and culture" as well as OVK's five core values of respect, collaboration, endurance, safety, and security. This purpose, and these core values, are rooted in the history and traditions of the Kèex Kwàan people.

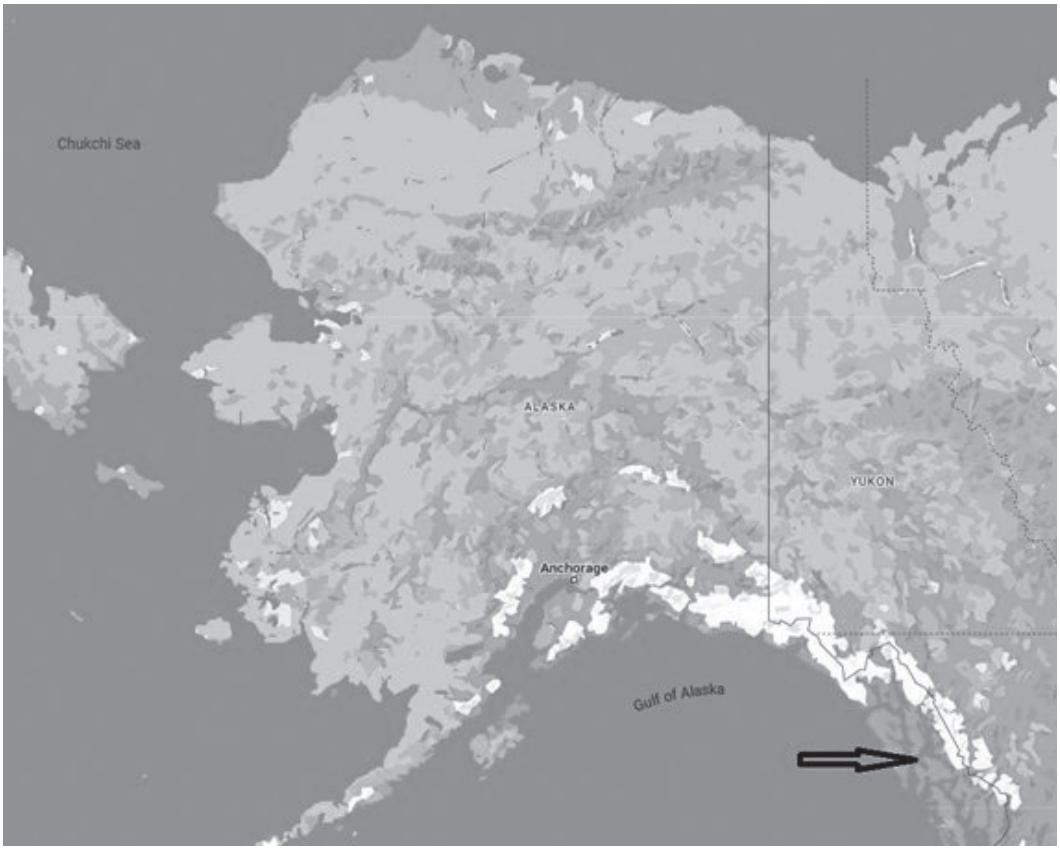

Figure 1. Location of Kake in Southeast Alaska

Figure 2. Aerial View of the Village of Kake, Alaska. Photo credit: Jon Wunrow

Figure 3. Low Tide in the Village of Kake. Photo credit: Jon Wunrow

National Institute of Justice Grant

The National Institute of Justice Tribal-Researcher Capacity-Building grant was awarded during the midst of the COVID-19 global pandemic. At that time, and throughout the eighteen-month duration of the project, travel was restricted and discouraged. Thus, all work on this project was conducted via Zoom videoconference calls, email, online searches, and telephone calls. Of particular importance, Zoom allowed for face-to-face meetings, even though they could not be held in person. As noted above, through this grant solicitation NIJ awarded "planning grants to fund applications to develop new and innovative criminal and juvenile justice research projects involving federally recognized tribes (or tribally based organizations) and that represent a new tribal-researcher investigator partnership" (NIJ-2020-17329, p. 5).

The core research partner team consisted of three members of the OVK staff and two independent researchers. Dawn Jackson (Lingìt and Haida) was the principal investigator and had overall responsibility for project and grant management. Ms. Jackson is an OVK Tribal member and the Tribe's executive director. Mike (Ka.oosh) Jackson (Lingìt and Haida) is an OVK Tribal member and was one of two co-principal investigators on the project. Mr. Jackson founded the Kake Circle Peacemaking Program in 1998 and is the current Keeper of the Circle. He previously served for twenty-seven years as the District Court Magistrate Judge in Kake and is an advisory committee member of the Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative (https://peacemaking.narf.org/about-us/). Anthony Gastelum served as the Tribal court liaison, carrying out local aspects of the project. Eric Einspruch, principal and founder of ELE Consulting, LLC, was one of two co-principal investigators on the project and had responsibility for the technical aspects of the project. Jon Wunrow was an associate researcher on the project, under subcontract to ELE, and provided keen insights in support of all aspects of the project.

Partnership members met on twelve occasions in March, April, and May of 2021, and in January, March, May, and June of 2022 to conduct a situational analysis and then develop the study proposal. The purpose of the situational analysis was to identify and understand local issues that need to be considered when developing a program to incorporate domestic violence issues into Circle Peacemaking, and when developing the research study proposal. The situational analysis included a brief literature review, determination of local concerns that need to be addressed in the research design for the proposed study, communication with others outside of Kake who are using Circle Peacemaking to obtain their perspectives and ideas, consultation with subject matter experts, and communication with persons in Kake who provide domestic violence services so they could share their concerns and ideas about what needs to be in

place for Circle Peacemaking to be used in domestic violence cases. The results of the situational assessment directly informed the development and design of the proposed research project. Several additional data gathering meetings were also held from May to December 2021, and in February 2022. Participants in these additional meetings included two staff members from an out-of-state Circle Peacemaking program, two Tribal court judges (one retired), one state court judge, the director of a women's shelter in Alaska, the director of a women's resource centre in Alaska, and two researchers who have worked in the Village of Kake. Community input was also obtained through one-on-one contact by phone and email through November 2021. This input was gathered through a structured interview questionnaire that included the following questions:

- What are your thoughts about using the Circle Peacemaking process to address domestic violence cases?
- How could Circle Peacemaking be used in domestic violence cases in a way that both protects the survivor and empowers them?
- How could wrongdoer and survivor participation in the Circle be handled (same circle, different circles, or some other way)?
- What are your thoughts about how to know whether or not the Circle Peacemaking process was helpful for domestic violence cases that were handled that way?

Circle Peacemaking

The studies reviewed indicate support for using Circle Peacemaking to address domestic violence cases. However, little is known about using Circle Peacemaking to address DV in the setting of a small rural village such as Kake, or about how this can help the community heal from historical and intergenerational trauma.

Restorative Justice

Circle peacemaking is a form of restorative justice. As noted by Zehr and Mika (1998), fundamental concepts of restorative justice include the following: 1) crime is fundamentally a violation of people and interpersonal relationships; 2) violations create obligations and liabilities; and 3) the goal of justice should be to heal and put right the wrongs. Regarding the third point, the justice process belongs to the community and is a process to maximize opportunities for exchange of information, participation, dialogue, and mutual consent between victim and offender.

Butterwick et al. (2015) note that peacemaking is rooted in ancient traditions and the fundamental principle that people are profoundly connected to one another and their communities. They note that it "is understood that those

affected by the conflict may belong to wider communities – family, workplace, school, neighborhood, or other relationships – that may also need to be part of the solution" (p. 35). In peacemaking, conflict provides an opportunity to build community and human relationships. Peacemaking honours three values intrinsic to Tribal Courts: relationships, responsibility, and respect, offering an alternative to the limitations of the adversarial system by recognizing the importance of relationships. Similarly, Zion (as cited in Butterwick, 2015) notes that in Indian justice, disputes are resolved not by rules but by the idea of relationships. The basic concepts of Indigenous justice are relationships, reciprocity, solidarity, and process, as opposed to hierarchy. These ideas are consistent with those of Nancarrow (2006), who reported on two task force investigations considering justice responses to violence against women, which contained opposing recommendations about the suitability of the use of restorative justice in these cases. In interviews with task force members, Nancarrow (2006) found that Indigenous women and non-Indigenous women agreed that "stopping violence" was the most important priority of a justice response to domestic and family violence and that "supporting women by validating their stories" was one of the three most important priorities. However, they disagreed on the relative importance of three other priorities. Indigenous women prioritized "restoring relationships" and "sending a message to the community that violence is wrong," over "holding men accountable," whereas non-Indigenous women prioritized "holding men accountable" over the other two. Similarly, Mills (2009) provides two compelling examples of the benefit of Circle Peacemaking in domestic violence cases.

Design Principles

Rieger (2001) noted that, in general, in the circle sentencing model the offender applies for the circle and a waiver from the state justice system, develops a healing plan, and assembles a healing committee of people who will attend the circle. The victim also develops a safety plan and a safety committee. Community members may attend the circle, though they keep the discussion confidential. Each circle participant talks in turn, holding an indicator of the right to speak. The discussion goes around the circle until the group as a whole reaches consensus about a plan to which the offender must agree to complete within a certain period of time. Jarrett and Hyslop (2014) examined restorative justice practices in Kake and in Tok, Alaska, and provided nine design principles for restorative justice programs in the Alaskan context that are more general than the model described by Rieger (2001). These principles included: 1) involve local stakeholders in all stages of the restorative program; 2) do not accept a one-size-fits-all method; 3) seek solutions in reference to the "bigger picture"; 4) encourage agreements between the State

and Tribal courts; 5) provide the necessary motivation, skills, and resources; 6) seek out lower cost procedures that ensure sustainable programs; 7) reformulate and expand the definition of "success"; 8) focus on restorative "practices" instead of restorative "justice"; and 9) include local cultural norms in developing restorative practices.

Comparison of Restorative and Non-restorative Justice Approaches

Latimer et al. (2005) conducted a meta-analysis using data from studies that compared restorative justice programs to traditional non-restorative justice approaches. Restorative programs were found to be significantly more effective in terms of victim and offender satisfaction, restitution compliance, and recidivism (however, the findings were tempered by self-selection bias; also, there were no appropriate empirical evaluations of circle sentencing models or healing circles to include in the meta-analysis). Mills et al. (2013) conducted a randomized controlled trial that found generally non-significant differences in recidivism between Batterer Intervention Program (BIP) and Circles of Peace (CP) restorative justice program groups, leading the authors to comment that the findings dispel the belief that restorative justice cannot be used to treat domestic violence criminal activity since circles of peace did no worse than the traditional intervention program. Subsequently, Mills et al. (2019) concluded that the hybrid batterer intervention program plus circles of peace should be considered a viable treatment option for DV offenders.

Historic Trauma

Circle peacemaking is consistent with Historic Trauma and Unresolved Grief (HTUG) Interventions that are considered mental health Tribal Best Practices (Brave Heart, 2001; Administration for Children & Families, n.d.). These interventions result in measurable reductions in feelings of anger, sadness, shame, and guilt, as well as increases in feelings of joy (Brave Heart, 1998). HTUG activities and interventions focus on moving individuals through four phases: Confronting historical trauma and enhancing connection to cultural history, understanding the trauma, releasing the pain, and transcending the trauma. Interventions place a heavy emphasis on engaging individuals, families, and communities in activities that enhance the traditional protective factors of generosity, compassion, respect, humility, bravery, and wisdom (these are similar to, and have some direct overlap with, the traditional values mentioned in the first paragraph in the section on Circle Peacemaking in Kake below). Brave Heart, a leader in the area of identifying and healing issues of historical trauma with Indigenous people, has noted that unacknowledged and unresolved grief expresses itself in depression,

psychic numbing, and low self-esteem that can lead to self-destructive behaviours including alcohol and drug abuse, as well as anger and aggression that can then lead to violence and property destruction.

Circle Peacemaking in Kake

Kake instituted a Circle Peacemaking model in the community in 1999. Ka.oosh, former local magistrate and current Keeper of the Circle, has been instrumental in reviving the model in Kake and disseminating it outside of Kake. In Kake, both the victim(s) and wrongdoer are present at peacemaking circles, along with family, friends, and other invited guests and Elders. Ka.oosh noted that many Circle participants attend to help both the victim and wrongdoer, as a display of concern for the community. The Circle Peacemaking process is detailed in the Kake Circle Peacemaking Handbook (2013; Jackson, 2016) and a related video (Indigenous Peacemaking Initiative, n.d.). The process includes seven stages:

Stage I: Opening (welcoming by the Keeper, opening prayer, circle guidelines, and introductions);

Stage II: Legal facts are set (police/state opening, defence opening, probation report, and legal summary);

Stage III: Clarifying information (support group report);

Stage IV: Finding common ground (passing of the talking stick or other appropriate symbol/object);

Stage V: Exploring options (passing of the talking stick or other appropriate symbol/object, and summary by the Keeper of the Circle);

Stage VI: Developing consensus (i.e., called a circle sentence by the State of Alaska Court System, in which everyone has a stake); and

Stage VII: Closing of the Circle (summary, closure, and closing prayer).

These stages are rooted in traditional Lingit values, which include respect, remembrance, responsibility, truth, care of subsistence areas and property, reverence, sense of humility, care of the human body, dignity, and peace (Kake Circle Peacemaking Handbook, 2005, updated 2013, p. 4). Ka.oosh noted that, in addition, during the Closing of the Circle, participants are asked to provide any critique of the process or suggestions for how the process could be improved.

In Kake, Circle Peacemaking has mainly been used to address substance-related crimes, particularly alcohol-related offences committed by minors. The Tribe found that over a four-year period the peacemaking project had a 97.5% success rate in sentence fulfilment compared to the Alaskan state court system's

22% success rate (Butterwick et al., 2015). In another study, Nesheim (2010) found that the Kake community overwhelmingly supported the Circle model, and that recidivism was lower than the statewide rate of 66%, though not as low as the 5% recidivism rate reported by the Circle. Hyslop (2012) also noted the success of Circle Peacemaking in addressing underage drinking and suicide in Kake, in terms of youth with violations for underage drinking completing the terms of their sentences.

As described by Ka.oosh, the primary difference between DV cases and substance abuse cases is that in substance abuse cases the wrongdoer and the victim are the same person (although other victims may include family, relatives, and the community), while in DV cases the wrongdoer is the offender, and another person is the victim. Ka.oosh noted that if the wrongdoer and the victim are present in the same room, the wrongdoer may have control of the victim just by their presence. This may be the primary concern about including DV cases in the Circle Peacemaking process. Similarly, Coker (1999) noted that domestic violence and victims' advocates are concerned that the circle process will perpetuate the cycle of power and domination that results in victimization. Thus, based on findings from the current planning grant, separate circles will be conducted for the offender and the victim followed by the integration of the consensus agreements reached by each of the circles, unless both sides think that a single circle would be better. Local concerns that will be addressed in carrying out Circle Peacemaking for domestic violence cases include the following matters.

Safety of the survivor. There are issues of intimidation, power, and control that a wrongdoer may have over a survivor, and these may be very subtle and difficult to recognize. Wrongdoers and survivors will therefore participate in separate circles, though if appropriate and agreed to by the survivor then they might participate in the same circle (perhaps after initially participating in separate Circles). The circle process will be primarily for addressing wrongdoer behaviour, rather than for survivors.

Confidentiality. Kake is a small village where community members see each other regularly. Circle members will need to understand the importance of confidentiality, and to abide by their oath of confidentiality and the rules regarding what can and cannot be shared.

Decisions regarding the Circle process. The circle process will not automatically be used in DV cases, and has to be appropriate for a particular case in order to be used for that case. This will be determined through a thorough intake process. Wrongdoers will need to understand the circle process and help decide whether it is right for them, and they will need to be assessed to determine whether the circle is appropriate.

Wrongdoers may need to attend a batterers intervention class, and other classes as appropriate (e.g., anger management, relationship) prior to starting the circle process. Wrongdoers may also need to obtain help for substance abuse or mental health concerns prior to engaging in the circle process. Circles will need to be made up of selected individuals with appropriate training, who are able to protect the survivor, hold the wrongdoer accountable, and help the wrongdoer navigate learning and incorporating new (non-violent) behaviours. It will be important to begin with cases likely to succeed, as those participants will then advocate for the process.

Wrongdoer accountability. The circle process will succeed only if the wrongdoer is held accountable for the harm they have done—accountability is the way to healing. In addition, survivors need to be helped to reestablish their own power, especially with regard to the wrongdoer, family, and peers. This might involve survivor participation in the circle.

Care for children. Children are almost always involved when there are cases of domestic violence, so it will be important to ensure their safety and that they are not re-traumatized.

Historical trauma. The circle process will need to incorporate issues of historical and intergenerational grief and trauma, so that it is not perpetuated.

Given the literature cited above, and OVK's experience with Circle Peacemaking, it is reasonable to expect that Circle Peacemaking could be effective in addressing domestic violence cases in Kake.

Centring an Indigenous Research Paradigm

The partnership determined that a research study on use of Circle Peacemaking to handle DV cases should be grounded in a community-based participatory research (CBPR) approach, and be carried out with respect for Indigenous ontology (the nature of reality or existence), epistemology (the nature of thinking or knowing), methodology (how knowledge is gained), and axiology (the ethics that guide the search for knowledge). Wilson (2008) has provided a good overview of Indigenous research methods and ways of knowing, and Chilisa (2020) has provided a detailed presentation of these topics. Recent issues of *New Directions for Evaluation* (Cram, 2018) and the *Canadian Journal of Program Evaluation* (Bourgeois, 2020) are devoted to Indigenous evaluation. The research should be guided by the "Three Rs" of respect, reciprocity, and relationality (see Wilson, 2008, p. 58), recognizing

that in an Indigenous world view "relationships are the essential feature of the [research] paradigm" (Wilson, 2008, p. 127). As described by Wilson (2008):

> Relationality seems to sum up the whole Indigenous research paradigm to me. Just as the components of the paradigm are related, the components themselves all have to do with relationships. The ontology and epistemology are based upon a process of relationships that form a mutual reality. The axiology and methodology are based upon maintaining accountability to those relationships. There, that sums up the whole book in one paragraph! An Indigenous research paradigm is relational and maintains relational accountability. (pp. 70–71)

CBPR (Israel et al., 2003) facilitates collaborative and equitable partnerships in the research (e.g., working together from a foundation of equality); builds on strengths and resources within the community (e.g., the research that emerges from the project is rooted in the interests and experiences of the Tribal partners who live in the community and understand its strengths); promotes co-learning and capacity building among partners (e.g., the Tribal and research partners are committed to understanding each other's perspectives and to learning from each other); and disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners and involves all partners in the dissemination process. This is consistent with Castellano's (2008) description that "Indigenous research is systematic inquiry that engages Indigenous persons as investigators or partners to extend knowledge that is significant for Indigenous peoples and communities" (p. 424). Overall, the study should recognize "Tenets of Indigeneity":

> These tenets should inform the work of evaluation in Indigenous contexts. The first tenet is that Indigenous people regard themselves as descendants of those who lived on their lands well before colonization (historical continuity). Second, it is accepted that Indigenous peoples are inextricably linked to their territory through having lived there before others with a relationship to those lands. Third, Indigenous peoples, by virtue of their own perseverance, maintain certain cultural features and value these as worthy to pass to future generations … Fourth, Indigenous peoples have experienced a collective suppression of their cultures, expressed through discrimination, subjugation, dispossession, and various forms of cultural diminishment. (Groh, 2018, p. 56 as noted in Shepherd and Graham, 2020a)

Examples from other authors provide additional insight into these ideas. Gullickson (2020) noted that "Indigenous communities, in contrast [with a Western approach], prioritise relationship with people, community, and environment and co-creation of knowledge, rather than objective investigation (Cram, 2018). World views and values underlie what counts as credible and relevant data, and what constitutes culturally appropriate approaches or procedures" (see p. 5). Shepherd and Graham (2020a, see pp. 393–394) noted that in Western ontological and epistemological paradigms, there is an underlying assumption that knowledge is understood individually and is superior, and that conveyance of that knowledge is also done on an individual basis in ways that privilege Western ways of knowing. By contrast, in most Indigenous ontologies knowledge is relational, regarding reality as a process of relationship. In English, objects are named, whereas in many Indigenous languages, verbs are more prevalent to describe the uses of the object or one's relationship to it, rather than labels. Knowledge is relational, and knowledge creation is shared. Other authors have also discussed the importance of relationships in Indigenous research, for example, Shepherd and Graham (2020b), Richmond et al. (2008), Wilson and Restoule (2010), Kovach (2010), NCAI Policy Research Center and MSU Center for Native Health Partnerships (2012), and Delancey (2020).

In addition, the concept of two-eyed seeing may be of particular importance in studying the use of Circle Peacemaking for handling DV cases in Kake. Two-eyed seeing is defined as "to see from one eye with the strengths of Indigenous ways of knowing and to see from the other eye with the strengths of Western ways of knowing" (Hall et al., 2015, p. 1; see also Goodchild, 2021). Simultaneously holding both perspectives will allow for a greater depth of understanding than what would be gained from either perspective alone (similar to how a person gains depth perception by simultaneously looking through both eyes).

Thus, a study of the use of Circle Peacemaking for DV cases should attend to an Indigenous framework for validity. This involves fairness (inclusion of all voices in the research texts); authenticity (participants as co-researchers and acknowledgement of relationships); positionality judgments (knowledge is referenced to a position); involvement of participants in ensuring quality and accuracy of data analysis and interpretation); voice (including both researcher and participant voice in the study reports; and researcher self-reflexivity (Chilisa, 2020, pp. 219–220). Of particular importance, partners engaged in such a study should strive toward ontological competence, which "requires that we (a) continuously interrogate our ontological stance, (b) be open to changes in our ontological stance, (c) be knowledgeable and respectful of the ontological stance of others, and (d) commit to not privileging our ontological stance over that of others" (Billman, 2022, p. 3). Thus, the rigour of the study would be rooted in its coherence, and in

the alignment of methods with the research world view relevant to those interested in the research and to those the research intends to benefit. This is consistent with Patton's (2015) call for methodological pluralism and appropriateness as a platinum standard for research (to supplant the idea of randomized control trials as a so-called gold standard for research).

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework for the Kake Circle Peacemaking process is rooted in Lingìt culture and life. When asked about the origins of Circle Peacemaking Ka.oosh shared the following:

> This history of the Naa.Káani comes to mind about being the Guwakaan for the opposite Moieties. Our Íxt' (Medicine Man) had a vision shortly after Lingìt Creation Time. The Yéil (Raven) appeared in his vision that the Lingìts (Human Beings) had to have two Moieties—Eagle and Raven. And that the two Moieties had to have a Guwakaan (Deer People-Peacemaker) who they would pick from the opposite Moiety to speak for them in Ceremony and for Peacemaking. This selected speaker is called the Naa.Káani (Favourite Brother-in-Law). (Ka.oosh, 2022, used with permission)

This concept is that the two moieties, who together constitute all Lingìt people, must have a Guwakaan or peacemaker, to serve as the Naa.Káani, the person who speaks for the opposite side. This role or person is essential for keeping peace and for balance between the moieties. A similar description of peacemaking is provided by the Sealaska Heritage Institute: A Lingìt symbol of peace is the deer or Guwakaan since it is considered gentle and is a symbol of peace. The traditional Lingìt value of Wooch Yáx (Social and Spiritual Balance) governs interrelationships between Lingìt clans, and between the Lingìt and other tribes, nations, and institutions. The settlement of disputes between Lingìt clans and other groups relied on concepts of balance, achieved through compensation, to approach a state of peace among the parties (Sealaska Heritage, n.d.).

The Kake Circle Peacemaking Handbook (2013) incorporates this concept, listing ten Lingìt values, which include:

> **respect** for self and others, including elders; **remember** our Native traditions, our families, sharing, loyalty, pride, and loving children; **responsibility**; **truth** and wise use of words; **care** of subsistence areas, care of property; **reverence** Haa shageinyaa is a great word in Lingìt culture. This was the Great Spirit above us, and today

> we have translated that reverence to God; **sense of humility**; **care of human body**; **dignity** for which the Lingìt word is yan aa duuneek; and **peace** with the family, peace with the neighbors, peace with the others, and peace with the world of Nature. (p. 4, bold in the original)

The image of a traditional Clan house can be used to illustrate the conceptual framework for the Kake Circle Peacemaking process (see Figure 4). The explication of this model was co-created by the planning grant team (the image of the Clan house and the explanation of its structure was provided by, and is used with permission from, Tribal partner Ka.oosh, in response to prompts from the research partners):

> **The floor or foundation of the house** is the history and wisdom of the Keex' Kwaan people, and their connection to the land and all living and non-living things. It provides the basis for everything that occurs.
>
> **The house posts** represent the cultural values of: respect for self and others; holding each other up; listening well and with respect; and living in peace and harmony (we could add more as well).
>
> **The roof of the house** represents the people who come to the circle for healing, who are being lifted up and supported by the values (house posts), and the history and wisdom (floor or foundation).
>
> **The smoke hole** of the house represents the releasing of the healing that occurs, out to the world, out to the community.

Figure 4. Tribal House in Village of Hydaburg, Alaska. Photo credit: Jon Wunrow

Taken as a whole, the image shows that a connection to one's surroundings forms the basis for an understanding of Lingìt values and Traditional ways of knowing, which connects to an understanding of relationships and connections (e.g., to the land, people, and community), which leads to identifying the current situation that the wrongdoer and survivor find themselves in, and to the activities that can address the situation (i.e., Circle Peacemaking), which then leads to conscious peacemaking efforts (see the story above about the Deer People), resulting in balancing (or rebalancing) within family and Clan and community, then coming full circle to reclaiming a connection to one's surroundings and reaffirming Lingìt values.

Existing Strengths

Based on information obtained by conducting the situational analysis, the partners identified several existing strengths that support the potential for using Circle Peacemaking in Kake to address DV cases. These strengths include the following.

Experience with Circle Peacemaking

Kake's longstanding experience with Circle Peacemaking provides a strong foundation for exploring whether and how DV might be incorporated into a Circle process. Kake's experience with Circle Peacemaking gained national recognition when it received High Honors from Harvard's JFK School of Government *Honoring Nations* (n.d.) project, which promotes Best Practices in Indian Country within the United States. Kake's Circle Peacemaking Program staff have also assisted in the publication of articles and other written materials (for example, see Hyslop (2012), Hyslop (2018), Jarrett and Hyslop (2014), and Kake Circle Peacemaking Handbook (2013)).

Available Subject Matter Experts

Persons from outside of Kake who are experienced in handling domestic violence cases were keenly interested in and enthusiastic about this project, thought that Kake provides a context well-suited for the project, and are willing to continue to help by answering questions or providing input as appropriate.

Existing DV and Court Programs

OVK has had a DV program funded by the US Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women Program, for the past ten years. OVK has had a Tribal Court in place since 2019. There are also existing Tribal Court policies and procedures regarding DV cases.

Clear Sense of Tribal Values

OVK members of the partnership spoke about maintaining a focus on the land, and that being Indigenous means knowing your core values (see for example Central Council Tlingit & Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska, n.d.). These values are about how one lives one's life, and reflect an understanding of the *law of the land*, such as: respect for honesty, taking just what's needed, respect for each other, knowing how to treat Elders, showing care for children, looking forward rather than backward, being accountable to all one's relations, and so on. Ancient laws used to be in place to teach and ensure respect. Domestic violence is not in the native language, and instead one would probably be talking about respect; to be called a "good person" represented high regard in the community, similar to earning the title of Elder through having wisdom and experience. Domestic violence is contrary to these values, and people may find themselves by returning to the culture's values. Speaking publicly about DV and bringing it into the light will help the community address the issue.

Answers Exist Within the Community

Wisdom and answers already exist within the community and its members, based in large part on the values and traditions of Lingìt families and Clans that have lived in this area for centuries. Elders, Tribal Leaders, and others can participate in sharing these "traditional ways of knowing" as the program is developed.

Measures of Success

During the course of the project the partners identified the following potential measures of success: 1) reduction in repeat offenders; 2) wrongdoer (and possibly survivor) demonstration to resolve issues within the Circle context and follow-up with other support; 3) wrongdoer and survivor talking about healing; 4) wrongdoer fulfilment of agreements made during the Circle process; 5) recommendations for the survivor and family are followed; 6) indications of success from a follow-up Circle or participant surveys; and 7) reflections of Tribal values in the form of community peacefulness, community members caring for one another, and looking forward rather than backward. Ultimately, the goal is to restore the health of the community.

Potential Problems and Anticipated Solutions

Partnership members identified several potential problems that might be encountered in carrying out a study to address DV cases with Circle Peacemaking. These problems include the following.

1. There may be difficulty in ensuring that community members are supportive of handling DV cases using Circle Peacemaking, that referral sources are in place, and that service providers are available. Similarly, busy community members and leaders may not have availability to fully invest time in the project. In addition, policies and procedures for effectively protecting survivor safety and confidentiality need to be developed. These topics need to be addressed by having meetings, between a program coordinator and relevant stakeholders, to arrange for needed support and to develop necessary protocols.
2. Ensuring a well-integrated Tribal and researcher partnership, each with a maximum understanding and appreciation of Tribal and Western perspectives, requires time for building trust, and for sharing values, vocabulary, and world views. This necessitates that outside team members spend significant time in the community with local team members, and participate in community and Tribal events, reocgnizing the corresponding budget implications.
3. Inclement weather may impact the ability of team members who do not live in Kake to travel there to work on-site. Thus, travel needs to be scheduled during a time of year when weather is usually conducive to travel, sufficient travel time needs to be allowed, and travel needs to be rescheduled if is not possible at a particular time (if rescheduling is not possible then meeting by videoconference would be an alternative).
4. Videoconference technology may not function as well as desired; however, based on the partnership's experience meeting by videoconference during the planning grant this is not anticipated to be a problem.
5. The COVID-19 global pandemic may continue to preclude travel to Kake. If travel to Kake is not possible, then meetings would need to be conducted by videoconference.

Conclusion

This article has provided information obtained through carrying out the Tribal-Researcher Capacity-Building Grant program, funded by the National Institute of Justice and awarded to the Organized Village of Kake, as well as the authors' reflections on their experience with this project. The key learnings from carrying out this grant include the following.

Understanding the Particularities of Place

The partnership was grounded in an understanding of the importance of developing relationships, cross-cultural learning, open communication, trust, and reciprocity. It is essential to attempt to understand the particularities of place, including local history and experience with research, as part of building a meaningful and effective research partnership. In particular, historical trauma affects Tribal citizens and life in the community, and current conditions (for example, the lack of Village Public Safety Officers, and the lack of professionals to provide other services such as anger management or substance abuse services) contribute to ongoing trauma. This current situation makes it that much more difficult to heal from the historical trauma, which one partnership member notes will take generations to heal. Circle peacemaking offers a path to healing, offering an opportunity to rebuild relationships, as an alternative to procedures that primarily focus only on punishing a wrongdoer.

Rooting Research in Cultural Values and Traditional Ways of Knowing

Any program, and research related to that program, that is carried out in the Village of Kake needs to be based on ethics and values that are rooted in the cultural values and traditional "ways of knowing" of the Lingìt people of the Village of Kake. An Indigenous way of knowing is relational and grounded in experience. With regard to being grounded in experience, a possible analogy is that of playing a musical instrument. One can read extensively about an instrument, or listen to many recordings of it, but one only comes to truly understand it through the experience of learning to play it oneself. However, this analogy only hints at the knowing that emerges from a culture's experience across millennia. At the same time, there is value to Western ways of knowing, which may be complementary to Indigenous ways. Simultaneously holding both perspectives (i.e., "two-eyed seeing") allows for a greater depth of understanding than what would be gained from either perspective alone (similar to how a person gains depth perception by simultaneously looking through both eyes).

Focus on Participant Safety

Outside experts who were contacted had significant interest in the idea of using a Circle Peacemaking approach to work with some DV cases, expressing both encouragement and caution. OVK Tribal staff also expressed both support and caution for expanding the current Circle Peacemaking Program in Kake to include DV cases, with a focus on the safety of all DV survivor participants. Outside experts included State and Tribal Court representatives, domestic violence staff, and subject matter experts. Other than one program that the partnership identified, Kake appears to be unique in its interest in using Circle Peacemaking to address domestic violence.

Research Team Spending Time Together in the Community

In forming a research partnership that blends research partners and Tribal citizens and staff, there is no adequate substitute for the entire research team spending as much time with each other as possible, preferably in the community, to better understand a myriad of historic and contextual factors. This time together allowed for an open dialogue to help build an understanding of the community and of how to approach the question of using Circle Peacemaking to address domestic violence.

The Importance of In-Person Meetings and Planning for the Unexpected

The COVID-19 pandemic severely impacted the ability to build the new tribal–researcher partnership by precluding travel for face-to-face meetings, just as it also impacted many other aspects of life in the village of Kake. For example, one partnership member from Kake noted the increase in problems related to addiction and violence during the pandemic. In addition, there was the loss of essential DV staff during the pandemic (and people have not been applying for available positions), and there continues to be a lack of needed wraparound services. Thus, those working in social services in Kake needed to have a great deal of patience. Even though the pandemic impacted the partnership's ability to meet in person, the group learned more about what is (and is not) feasible regarding the use of Circle Peacemaking to address domestic violence, and also prepared a study proposal, both of which will be useful in the future. Although the partnership was thus successfully established using videoconferencing technology, future in-person meetings will be important for deepening the relationships.

Based on what was learned throughout this planning grant, the Village of Kake appears well suited to explore using Circle Peacemaking to address domestic violence in appropriate cases. OVK staff have extensive experience with the Circle Peacemaking process, and there is support for expanding the program to include

DV cases so long as the primary focus is kept on survivor safety, with necessary supports for both the wrongdoer and survivor in place. Finally, an understanding was developed about the need to root both program and research components in the cultural values of the Lingìt People of the Village of Kake, and how that may be accomplished.

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