

Episode 129 - Agnes Williams: Native Americans and a Human Rights and Trauma-Informed Perspective

[00:00:08] Welcome to in social work. The podcast series of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work at www.insocialwork.org. We're glad you could join us today. The purpose of social work is to engage practitioners and researchers and lifelong learning and to promote research to practice and practice to research. We're so sure Hello and welcome to social work. I'm Charles Syms your host for this episode. Diversity cultural appreciation and social justice are important themes in social work education and practice. Our discussion with this episode's guest will hopefully help to extend discussions or stimulate them to take place. Agnes Williams is a member of the Seneca Nation and also a social worker in her 40 year professional career. Ms Williams has worked in direct practice supervision training education and program administration a licensed master's social worker. She is a circus university graduate and has done doctoral work at the University at Buffalo. Ms Williams has served on several boards with missions of serving indigenous people or advancing human rights including serving as a delegate to a United Nations Human Rights session in Geneva Switzerland. In today's interview Ms Williams will provide a cultural context for understanding her nation's world view. She will also address several issues including historical trauma and human rights and social justice and how they have been compromised. Finally Ms Williams will talk about her work with social work student interns and the need to take affirmative steps to provide support for Native American students. Ms Williams was interviewed by Filomena Critelli associate professor of social work here at the University at Buffalo. This podcast was recorded in May 2013.

[00:02:20] So you may hear references to events or programs that have occurred in that time's recent past or may occur in its near future. I'm Filomena Critelli I'm associate professor here at the School of Social Work and I'm here speaking with Agnes Williams who's from Indigenous Women's Initiatives. And we're going to talk today about Indigenous issues in indigenous rights. So the first question that I wanted to ask you is how does Native American culture and traditional life ways impact social work practice today when we talk about Indigenous culture Native American culture in French we kind of have to deal with the term those in those terms came about at different times like after the 60s and 70s the word indigenous was more popular Sixties it was need of after the war. You don't want anyone to American Indian before the World War was India and India was a term that was applied to us by Columbus because they actually thought they were landing in India because they thought the world was flat. So that's kind of where that term comes from but it's kind of hung in there. So it's really a colonial term the Indian we see the word India. So the culture itself is very low specific depending on the area they live here and the North East woodlands and then we have the plains and we have the southwest we have the North West and the south east. And then of course you know Mexico Central America of America. So all of the indigenous cultures there beliefs are similar and they're also specifically related to the locale in which they live.

[00:04:10] So the word indigenous really implies that people who live close to the land. So the belief systems that we're really talking about here in the northeast is the Haudenosaunee or what we call people of the house and we have some context of what we call original instructions the creation story the story of Tall brother of the great law and the narrator content the kota handsome lake. So each one of those the original instructions or beliefs or cultural values are basically the same but they are specific to time and place historically and can retell and reinforce the same cultural beliefs. So in the first one of the cultural belief is really about the relationship to the world and universe actually because there's a lot in there with sky woman falls in and in many of the star people nowadays talk about Native Americans as being from play the star system which is the No way that's the next rung over on the Milky Way. So my generally thought of as Palladian and today but

in our creation story is reinforced a lot of those same kinds of notions but this guy woman folly in the creation of the Turtle Island which is we believe as North America and that relationship to the land in those original instructions that were given by the sky woman for creation. There were two of them and they both had two distinct characters. Skye holder and Flint. So there's a long elaborate story about that and it just talks about the nature of this world basically and how it is to be in conflict the conflict in the world and as well as the struggle to maintain a balance.

[00:06:04] So then the second TTN is the story of tall brothers which came later on and when the humans were made by the twins kind of work that they had and we got another feed more specifically and this one this time gave us our songs and dances and all of the ceremonies that go along with the 13 lunar calendar and we still practice those today in 21 longhouses across state southern Ontario and Quebec original territory home and you show your people. Was from the Hudson River Valley to the Ohio River Valley. And so these are the things that we do in terms of rituals and practices. And we just finish to actually just had where the thunders and the seed ceremony and we're coming up on the strawberries once and strawberries get right. And so all of this is really about again our relationships to where we live. Then the third teaching is great love peace. It came at a time a very dark time for the Haudenosaunee people we weren't actually known as well we were known as people in the Shoni but of lung cancers in the Great Law of Peace. And that was the year round that came across the river. He had been given the seeds and he came and the first person he met here was to go on foot happen to be a woman. He lived at the Falls and her mind was changed from the bad mind to a good mind. And then she carried the message along with Hiawatha and peacemaker. They took the message to all the people on the side and to that they form what we know to the Iroquois Confederacy and that the five tribes in which we buried our war club.

[00:07:57] It was about 1912 A.D. and they've actually carbon dated that. So we actually gave up the notion of war against each other but could stand together to defend ourselves. So that was the third one on the fourth arm of the cold a handsome Lake which came after contact and now really had to do with the consequences from the introduction of European culture and alcohol and Christian religion and gambling. And it was really a individual message you know like individual behavior with ourselves to be of a good mind and to be a sober good mind. So the Great Law of Peace actually was a group that our relationships to one another and we formed the Confederacy and during the creation sorry we cannot clans was our basic human organization before that and then it was the slavery the about. And the third one the great law. So these beliefs you know are still upheld the heart and asone were one of the oldest continuing governments in the Western Hemisphere. We still have our great colorful mother some people gatekeeper's and these 21 lighthouses in this territory. So we along with the Hopi and other Central American people are continuing. Everything that you just said I feel there's so much of an interface with social worker what social work could be. And you mentioned in many of the stories the issues of the relationship to the earth and issues of spirituality and these are huge themes in social work today and the issue of the ecological that we use the ecological approach quite a bit the person and the relationship to the environment.

[00:09:50] And I just heard so strongly a lot of these themes in what you just said and it just kind of struck me is how much social work could benefit from learning and embracing some of the cultural and traditional lifeways that you Native Americans practice. I think that there's many values that you just kind of spelled out things like relationships in relationship to the earth and with the way society world is becoming very globalized and more and more there is I think an emphasis on people being the same and consuming at the same pace in dealing with the earth in a certain way. How do you see these relating to social work practice today. These trends globalization the great consumer is kind of wearing away at tradition and trying to be more or less have the whole world really consume and behave a lot in the same way. I think we are seeing desecration of natural resources and focus on industrializing places and kind of upsetting traditional lifestyles. It's just

been kind of a feature of a lot of the processes that are going on. I mean how has this affected native Americans. Well the first contact you know in Europe there was biological expansion in terms of the European and Middle people. Fifteen hundred were practicing like pooping where they were eating and there was a lot of disease that came over. So for Native Americans when we first encountered Europeans there was 70 per percent devastation from disease.

[00:11:38] Before we even saw a nanny the person and all of these tapings and stories that we have we always have prophecies that we always have messages about how things are going to go and then the time is going to get really bad and specifically in each one of those like the first three talked about that the Europeans were going to come here and that especially the story told by others they specifically said that they were going to come here and that we would go almost extinct because of it and because of that the destruction that was brought from Europe. So they are being told that it did come true with the biological expanse. And then because we didn't have the great love peas our first encounters with Europeans they like with the people from Holland we have this two world wampum treaty which really is our first treaty that really establishes our relationships with one another and we're actually having this year a commemoration of that the two old wampum Treaty was first established in 16 14. So we have 400 years. So we're having this far under your commemoration where we were to do with this on our part of that is with the two world. You know this this these two poles really talks about our separateness and because we were not rich those sections really told not to engage into the destruction that is carried on by the Europeans. So the two are wampum we were to stay in our canoe and then the others would still be here but we would respect one another and go through life and not disrupt one another's soul basically. So the nominators kind of have a term they put together another visual which is a chain three chain. And they talk about the we know all that is to occur and Nikolić polishing the chain of friendship.

[00:13:40] So it was a chain of friendship to all wampum basically set up this relationship and this year we're doing a commemoration of that and it's starting in the dargah which is the seat of the Confederacy the traditional government then a canoe to Oneida and canoe to fondo where importers place and people are making their own canoes and along the way the whole effort is really to do what you had talked about in terms of educating the public about the cultural beliefs and the traditions and the historical past of the agreements that we have made with the nine nations in the past. And it just we knew that friendship and polish came. So that's going to be going on. There's an event. And to fifths I'm sorry I misspoke and there they get to the Fontane our condolences. And then to reffo fêtes colleagues and to both and then they're going to paddle down the huts and August 9th is the Indigenous Peoples Day in the United Nations and they're going to arrive on the West Side of Manhattan and march across Manhattan and go to the United Nations for Indigenous people. Everybody's invited that's going to be a really big deal and a lot of talking and a lot of educating is going to be going on and forging new friendships and relationships and just kind of polishing that scene and renewing the great love piece talking about and educating people about that. So I just wanted to let you know because it hasn't been done in a really long time. One of the other concepts or cultural things that we do is this idea of one dish one's food which is very very old during the creation story time When we first came here we established clans.

[00:15:29] It's like saying my tribe I'm a son and we have a clan for birds for animals and this is really it you know and all the anthropologists talk about it you know the culture has the incest taboo and this was really the incest taboo for live in a marriage. So these clans still exist today the clans are established to the mother. And you know just kind of by common sense because everybody always knew who the mother was and there was a prohibition also in the clan system about marrying into your father's relatives to that exclusive the mother but the near clan is actually designated by who your mother was and our present day operations we still use the clan system that we still practice these things. So that's going to be going on. So there's two Row Wampum. The other part of the original instructions we have elders in news gathering that's been going on

probably for about 20 years and at a certain point many of the traditional people got together on an annual basis and they feared some of their teachings with each other and is kind of like this big puzzle of North America and it kind of all fits together. So many of the things that are talked about and seen like the planes or the southwest for the Northwest southeastern people of Central and South America people are similar and coincide with the same TTN that we were taught. So hence when we got to the U.N. in 1977 and found out that we weren't allowed there because we weren't considered human beings only populations. And it's a the organization that the indigenous people are meeting since then and at the U.N. without a voice because they're not a nation state.

[00:17:17] And then in 2007 we gained recognition as people and having human rights. So that's really big but it took 30 years. So. So you're referring to the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. You've mentioned now that really specifically recognized that indigenous peoples rights had not been honored and set up a special declaration to address those issues. Do you see that as something that has had an impact that it's changed or helped improve the situation and having a declaration of the United Nations is a first step. The greatest impact is being recognized as human beings because before that are considered populations and weren't afforded human rights and the origins of that notion really go back to Europe and actually into the Vatican from your homeland. And the idea of Christian Dohme and for the pope and the Vatican ruled for many many years and then by the 15th century when say the Lutherans started and the Brits started with her to England. So their group started to break away. There was also this whole trade routes to the East conflict between the different countries in Europe and the Vatican or the churches to kind of weigh in on those things they established in the 15th century the papal bull there's people both for Africa people both for North America and the papal bulls basically said that any Christian had the God given right to kill and take the property and land of any non Christians they encountered in their explorations. So that papal bulls was set to begin this horrific especially by the Spaniards here in the Caribbean and North America and then became the basis of the land claims.

[00:19:17] So the basis for the land claims then it morphed into the U.S. The Doctrine of Discovery. So what we see today is there have been two recent decisions two thousand seven decision share all the town a share of the Oneidas in which the court ruled because of the Doctrine of Discovery that people against you know natives and also with Gray in the island. Are the Susan they used the Doctrine of Discovery. It was a land claim. Yeah the Haudenosaunee land claims. So the legal arguments are around. You were conquered just give up and become American. And so which is what I hear when I go out and talk to church people. I get yelled at a lot. I think underneath it all you know really talking about human relationships and people it's really about the Western European notion of cultural value for dominance and after the declaration 2007 in the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous issues for this year they're talking about violence against women. But last year they talked about the Doctrine of Discovery so everybody came and testified. What we have been doing for the last 30 years we've been crying around and buying and wringing our hands and complaining and finally we got the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Now there has to go the next step for that and the UN is for it to become a convention. And it also needs to be adopted on the grassroots level. So what we've been doing in terms of public education is to educate the public about rather than just saying you know here's all our problems.

[00:21:02] We also bring the declaration to say this is what we want we want human rights and we want collective rights and we want prior free and informed consent before anything is done to us honor land. We want to have some say in what happens. So you're really saying that the declaration is beginning but there's a lot of work that needs to be done to really make it binding in terms of a convention. And it sounds like there's a lot of education that needs to be done when you're saying that even in the community people who are I suppose if they're church people they care about other humans but they're still kind of ill informed about indigenous rights. Well there's the whole value in Western culture and especially with the colonizers people who have colonized continue the Koné

continue to globalize. Globalization started when Columbus first hit the shore. It's out there and that's this whole value for it's all about entitlement supremacy that's the basis of white supremacy it's the notion of domination as natural a natural thing in this world. And this is really what we're up against. You know when we talk to people and try to educate people because a lot of people like to believe you know that they are the winner and they're you know what they say. You know what's going to happen in their locale is going to happen because they say so. And it doesn't they really don't take into account any indigenous peoples right to have a say about our own future or our right to exist. So that's reflected in the media. We have this invisibility we have generic problems of identity.

[00:22:54] But given that like a generic Indian identity and then everybody globs on that that it's just to misrepresent untasted and misinformation right down the line. And the sports teams with the mask and you know it goes on and on and on. The English literature you have people writing fiction and claiming to be Indian Native Literature and it's just the misrepresentation is wrapped rampant through out American culture. So what basically American culture does is if that any groups will take one aspect out and then turn it into something in America in which they lose the context they lose that history and they turn it into something that they want because they believe they have the right to do that because they're American so that's the big problem that that's really try to educate people that is like that's the first thing we get who are you to tell us anything. That's kind of what happens. So there's a lack of understanding or embracing of that there could be another world view. There could be another way of looking at things because I mean I'm struck by you talking about the message of relationships to people relationships to the earth of balance of the destructive bad mind something that is oriented toward peace. These are all things in my book that we need more of as a social worker and a person that supports human rights. So I guess I am making a comment rather than a question but I don't know if you have any thoughts about it in this particular point in history where the earth is being threatened with climate change and all these things. Why won't people listen. I mean I think there's some very important messages that come out of your culture and world view.

[00:24:44] So I don't know if you have any comments about that. I mean when we think about just a lot of people are concerned about the environment and what is happening there and some of these teachings I think have a lot of relevance what the environmental problems are at such a gross state today that there's new India and everybody's in India and nowadays when it comes to environmental degradation. So it's not just us Indians that don't have prior free and informed consent. It's all people. We've just had a meeting at the West Valley nuclear waste site. And they have big pools of water that they use to cool these reactors and they release that water into the Ketterer August Creek goes through. Since 1964 flows through our reservation goes into Lake Erie and goes into the water intake for Buffalo. So people you're all drinking irradiated water and there's no prior free and informed consent when they actually dump that water in there and then when there's flooding and erosion happens again. So there's the whole issue of clean water for everybody. The Great Lakes are really suffering from the chemicals and the pollution that have been put into the Great Lakes and we have a real specific Colling here in this region in the Northeast because of the Great Lakes because there's no other place like that and the wrong has his first water lakes. So we're all really called upon not only to buy ourselves to save everybody else. So we're kind of gone full circle back to one day once boom. And finally we've been labeled terrorists in the 60s and 70s.

[00:26:33] Hoover had the COINTELPRO Graham and we were labeled terrorists and we were all rounded up. But the next 30 years in court and later Peltier's still until what we found out about the shootout that he was involved in this that day. The tribe signed away one of the Badlands because the governors in that region had decided that the badlands were going to be a national sacrifice area for storing nuclear waste. So we have these huge policies of government actions. And I talk about the nuclear stuff because I think it's the most extreme and most dangerous thing that counts that we

all face today environmentally. The cat's out of the bag and the ego and the pride of the policy makers that allow them to say that it's a failed industry. They have not successfully contained nuclear waste and Obama put 32 million or billion whatever it is into opening up some old plants. So the whole energy issue becoming a sustainable community is the big thing that we promote and try to become more self-sufficient with our food on our reservation. We do not have a grocery store that's 3000 people that live here. And the development of the first and second world is dependent on the development of third world the working class the workers the low wages and the development of the indigenous people of the fourth world because it's our natural resources. So the land US title does not exist for 70 percent of the land in North America and most of the natural resources are in India.

[00:28:16] So we're really facing this really huge confrontation with the more and the Canadian tar sands and on these environmental issues that are coming up because primarily as indigenous people were the first effect because we still live close to the land. Yes yes the environmental racism and degradation is really a lot of times targeted toward communities that are quote unquote marginalized. So you made a very important point. You've talked about a lot of the different social problems and social issues. They definitely are in the domain. When you said one dish one spoon. I like that metaphor. Because we are all in this together and social workers do treat symptoms and address the causes of social problems. Could you talk a little bit about what a trauma informed human rights perspective looks like for social workers who work with Native Americans. Well we've talked about the cause of these problems. For now we can go to the center. So after contact we had U.S. policy that forcibly removed us from lands put us on reservations which limited our hunting and gathering and our ability to feed ourselves. As a result the reservations the subsequent policies of the boarding schools which came right out of the Department of War military style where children were forcibly removed from their homes at age five not to return to 18 years. If they did return inherit the reservation we had one of those 14 schools. It was the Thomas Indian school so our community is very diverse because many people live here at catalogers or about Seneca. And it really creates a real interesting dynamic for us because this is the home that they know because they grew up in the boarding.

[00:30:09] So there is kind of that captive syndrome thing that goes on because you'll find many people that will find the best that the body will experience in order to carry on. So you get all of this stuff that's going on and it's all been US policy. And it's still in place still in people's thinking in regards the whole idea of Christian Dohme the dominance of the Christian faith. That's really the intelligence as we all know in the Middle East. They've been there forever. Unlike here we weren't really fighting on that scale until the Europeans arrived. So this war has been going on we're behavior is really part of the American psyche. It really is the mental health part of the mental health issue and crises that we face today. So these symptoms we are dying of still 9500 are going extinct as the population of people. We've only had a hundred years of physical recovery. Average life expectancy is 54 years old. We have high rates of heart disease severe diabetes and cancer and these are all stress related diseases. So that's what trauma informed care looks like on a reservation. The historical trauma is really still impacted and experientially with each generation multiplying so that the impact is multiplied and hits easements generationally and very high rates of suicide in people. So we're in a recovery we're in the physical recovery in terms of our health social problems social work. We just recently here on our reservation they decided to start the social work department and hired a Ph.D. social workers. That's interesting because the tribal governments who are elected have the tendency to hire non educated people.

[00:32:21] So we're just now moving into a phase where there is a recognition for the need for skilled trained professional people to work on some of these problems. So we do have some foster care group Generation following the 14th generation of course is the adopted children raised in Britain have no parenting skills and consequently lose their children to foster care and adoptive

systems so this huge numbers of children adults who don't know who they are. They know their Indian. Their skin is dark and they have no idea of who they are. So then you have a mental health crisis on your hands. That's that experiential multiple symptoms that leads to an erroneous occurring as we speak. There are some social workers that work on that. But on the different levels it may be on a micro level but the mental level from family treatment most of its individual treatment some family trip. I know our group the indigenous women initiative was one of the few macro placement for social work. We can maybe move to that but it sounds like in the situation of indigenous peoples the interface of human rights violations and trauma are just so present in terms of your recommendation for social workers. You were talking about treating some of the symptoms of the health disparities in health problems. You kind of hint that it's very important for people to be connected to their history in terms of a trauma informed in human rights a whole part of the human rights framework is that these are rights they're not needs.

[00:34:09] It's a right to to have access to your culture to know your culture to preserve your culture and you were talking about how that was robbed from people and has created intergenerational issues that the community is still facing and social workers are still facing at the end to this women. And I see this in the ecumenical area because it includes the religion. I worked for 35 years in social work in different arenas and I chose the ecumenical arena because it did include the spirituality it did include the religion which is the basis of our cultural values. So thinking these people of all people really want to know and understand the basis of survival of the human race no matter what or who you are. It is a spirituality. The only thing that's going to get you through all this monsters social problems that occur. So going into the ecumenical community the very first talking about the Doctrine of Discovery. Last year five of the national churches the World Council of Churches Episcopalians and Methodists the Unitarian Universalists and The New York Quakers all repudiated the Doctrine of Discovery. So this is what we're asking. Look for a few good people with the churches to take it through their church to repudiate the Doctrine of Discovery and to begin to address this notion of dominance and the justification for conquest indigenous peoples. So the city of St. Joseph have stepped up in the Catholic Church and they were just appalled that they found out that this even existed in there. So they are beginning a campaign to take it to their national level. They had a meeting at St. Joseph's University Parish where he invited area churches to come and hear about the doctrine of discovery. There's many DVDs Steve Neukom and Robert Miller professors that have done extensive work on the doctrine of discovery dismantling it.

[00:36:22] Anybody can go on the Internet to find out. People get so overwhelmed the Fresnoy there that I was like wow what do you want. So then we pull out the declaration that the right kids. From there we can go to the local issues. What's going on which is of course taxation without representation. No economy we don't have a grocery store we just recently started the farmers market on our reservation as we have no grocery store or a community of 3000 people. But that's because we're not supposed to be part of the government. We're only there for the thing that I found in my 40 years of social work. It's mostly when people meet you and they find out you're in India they will say to you or they will think oh what can this do for me. So they're trying to change the image of who we are as people is really a challenge and one of our biggest especially in the media and we've all seen the Lone Ranger and Tonto and that's there. And now when Occupy came about we put two people up in downtown Buffalo for the city hall and we had our sign. People are like What is that about. And the media would hardly ever show that TBS. It's a whole other stop about Occupy but the winners. So there's still that Qantas Blackey now. But the thing that has to do with NBN and when the doesn't succeed then it's always the name calling. And it's always the dehumanizing.

[00:37:58] Yes I was just sort of reading some of the reactions when Obama signed the declaration and Fox News and everyone is terrified of any claim of any race or that Indigenous people will really have a leg to stand on to be able to claim the rights to land and resources and things that were

taken away so they like to frame it in a very negative way. So I see what you're probably up against quite a bit in terms of misinformation on the part of the public 1790 we owned most of the country. I'd say like 80 percent 85 percent of the country in 1850 we had lost half of the country and 18 80. We've been reduced to maybe 5 10 percent and that's our policy. This is deliberate. This was all planned and it really was about dominants people believing that they have the right to dominate others. So we've been talking a lot about social workers and the various social problems and more micro issues but you kind of alluded you just mentioned policy and the need to really address policy. I know your work at Indigenous Women's Initiatives where you supervise MSW interns in a macro placement so maybe you could tell us a little bit about what community organizing and social planning looks like in that context in that agency since it sounds like that's another important area for social work and for policy changes. Well one of the things that we've been working on is called World on your plate and we have this on Columbus Day weekend at training college and we've had it for 10 years and it's really bringing a lot of environmental issues the medical issues the economic issues that are facing people today in America and Buffalo.

[00:39:54] And we really talk about food and how we feed ourselves how that impacts our health how we're sharing our food and how we're sustaining ourself as a community. So everybody's invited to that. That's the RUC around the second week of October and that they need college and that is our one dish one spoon right now we have within our culture we have the what we call sustainer of life which is all of our food the corn beans and squash the three sisters and so we usually do three sisters workshops we do workshops on the water of course with the nuclear sites and our drinking water and our campaign has called the nuclear free cataract Creek. So we're trying to get that going and keep that going and it's forever because that nuclear waste is last forever. We had the poor wampum coming up. The other thing that we were done was we work with students primarily because most of us we have were an American studies at the University of Buffalo. And I was there in the 80s and was a doctorate candidate 1991 and my dissertation topic is very traditional face of Indigenous women as the department's strategy. And I had kind of carved up my area of working with women primarily at that. And so we also do back to school social which is usually the third week of September. We try to get area students together so they can meet and greet and know who's because you know it changes every year and you have to get busy early and to get anything going. And the students do a lot of organizing on the campuses and we are all us we we support their efforts their social and cultural events.

[00:41:41] And then October is World down here play December we do any band on December 10th which is Human Rights Day that we've found at Thorkel society. And this last year we had it at home Wolf. And this is where we talk about the United Nations can we talk about human rights and we had the Salamanca high school students have been going. This is the third year they're down there and at the U.N. and last year they did a testimony on the doctrine of discovery. The first year that testimony was on the Salamanca taking up the land and the cell make at least the Khensu at the gym and how the communities were devastated and relocated for the cancer with them without any prior free and informed consent. So the students testified out that three years ago last year they testified on the Doctrine of Discovery so the last year at dissever we sold their DVD of their testimony and the students came and we also worked with peaced which is a group of high school students in the east side and they go to see a Nobel Peace Prize winner at the end. And they have weekly gatherings and they talked about peace. So all those students came in our suitcase and we headed out how it was very very successful because it's really I guess some of us have really given up hope for all the guys that are you're looking at these younger people because this is what we're leaving them all these problems. This devastation. So we're trying to educate them about that last December and then we kind of have a slow season Larry. February and March of winter of course.

[00:43:22] And then we've had the farmers market projec because of the season this year. So that's the thing that the macro student work that we get all the monthly parking for Coke which is a way

to follow up these kinds of talks and the events that we have to continue the dialogue. It's open to the public. So it's the second day of the month at 12:00 somebody to Delaware in Buffalo at the network of communities at 12:00. We share Gatwick's NIAC and then up at the circle at twelve thirty. And usually last for about three and a lot of people come and give their announcements and talk and we use traditional smudging and the talking circle is the ego father to show who tacky that people don't interrupt there's no crosstalk. That's the hardest thing for most people no. So that goes on we've been doing that for like eight years. Then we have a singing group Youth Group that we work with as well. And then interface of all the other native events for anybody who's interested in what's going on in the native community they ex has a one month meeting the first Thursday of the month at noon and all of the different native people that are doing agencies whatever services community events sports they all come. And we all kind of do a roundtable called National Urban League Table and the public is invited to that they want to find out what's going on with native people in Buffalo. It sounds like you're doing incredibly holistic wonderful work touching on so many important areas of organizing and planning. And you mentioned that you are supervising MSW interns.

[00:45:10] I'm assuming they're either nonindigenous or some of them are Indigenous or non-native because they natives are really underrepresented in the school of social work and there's been a feeling they shouldn't. I think that's really produce a native core of social workers that can come out of the school and go to work in the need of unity. Yes that's exactly where I was going with this in terms of the underrepresentation of Native Americans in the School of Social Work. Why do you think that is and what do you think the school faculty can do to try to increase the presence of native graduates. It's a school of social work. You mentioned that there was a Ph.D. social worker that was hired on the reservation. I don't know if that person or the graduate maybe you could talk a little bit about that. Yeah. And then every graduate and she came to the attack and they're going to work on something. And then recently Pat Sallie who I was working with in the women's studies in the 80s who is now in the school says she has the initiative that she loves as this teacher here and color the Native American pipeline. And we really are trying to recruit them because doing is wanting to do the work. And that's how we kind of run the we is when people come to us and they have an initiative and then we talk about and see what kind of resources we can help them put behind their initiative. So the pipeline. How might that work. I think you're talking about trying to create a pipeline of students.

[00:46:43] I don't know starting how or when to kind of help the kids outreach to Native American colleges primarily for the graduate school that we are going to the colleges where there's higher numbers of Native American student enrollment and talking to them at their meetings and there groups where they gather and the different teachers that are there. Buffalo State has a very good program and they've had several undergraduate social work students graduated from there. When I went to school I was the third Nater social worker in New York State. I went to Syracuse the class of 1973 and the two other social workers Alma Patterson who's from Tuscarora he was working for a New York state the only one position that New York State has for Native American services and he had that position and she would come to the school and search me out. And maybe that's how you do and kind of do the assessment to see whether there is at risk to drop out and take me back in this day. And what the other was Miriel Lu as he was on the dargah and she was actually very close to Turkey so she used to come pretty regular and call up say Let's go out and eat and see others. And then in the school I had the Episcopal bishop son the Bishop of Buffalo at the time in the 70s his son. Well Figley was my adviser in the School of Social Work and he was really the one that you know whatever happened was always in there and it was pretty intense the visual work to keep me in school and that's what it takes.

[00:48:22] You have to have funded personnel to work with the native food and to really hang in there with them and help them get through these programs. Yes I can imagine. I know you went to

school. I actually went to school back in those two and I would say that's a curriculum I don't know how you know I hope we're doing a better job but I think maybe some suggestions on how to improve our curriculum to meet the needs of native students. I mean I don't know how it was for you when you went to school in terms of the content that related to Native Americans. Well in terms of the macro work at Syracuse that was the day that we were protesting the Vietnam War we are all on the streets with our upward gains and we all marched and sat in front of the TV waiting for male counterparts number to be called. And they remember I worked in a dining hall and I had to work to be there. I worked in a dining hall and the one guy that got number one soon as he walked in a dining hall. Everybody started shouting at number one you're not so you know at the time very different. The kids now don't really have a concept of being drafted. They don't see the results of Desert Storm. They don't see the results for all these wars that are going on in even the people that write the policies to send them to war. They don't understand that is whenever you go to war somewhere then you have a flush of immigrants and then it's the same politicians who are writing laws not to allow all these immigrants.

[00:49:55] So it's kind of like wait a minute you guys you've got to take some responsibility here for like you do. And it's really a vicious cycle that we're stuck. And in the legislature and the policy. So it sounds like there's some really important historical lessons for all social workers students. I really appreciate all the time that you gave us in terms of giving us so much background on Native American culture and lifeways and some of the issues for social work. Looking at it from a human rights and trauma informed perspective I don't know if you have any final comments or anything you would like to close with. Well I just want to let everybody know that we're still here. Our populations are increasing and there will be more students. I think the whole thing of going extinct 100 years ago really has to do with why we're partly invisible and why you don't see that many of the other students are really looking for an effort and a commitment on the part of the University of Buffalo School of Social Work to native people and especially because we are the ones that have been here. What's significant about the Holden asone is we're on an original Lanse. So we have a very dear friend and one of the most powerful legal arguments in the United Nations because we are still on it originally and I guess the recognition you know in our tradition we have this protocol of whenever the people gather we do this. Thanksgiving in 16 parts to at least 16 parts history aspects in the first part is acknowledgement and that's because it is so important to be acknowledged as social workers for everybody can identify with it.

[00:51:40] And this is really what we as Indigenous people suffer from is not being acknowledged that we even exist and then things being done behind our backs without our consent to undermine our existence constantly. It's a challenge that is hoping that there are some social workers that will pick up the baton it's like a relay race and only a few of us for a certain time will go out there and we're getting to the point where we've got to pass the baton on and encourage somehow the younger people to pick up these causes to make these kinds of social change. Well thank you so much. I think you just made some excellent points and drove home the real need for more Native American students in School of Social Work. And I think you gave us a lot of important thought. So I really want to thank you very much and I know this is going to be very beneficial to our listeners to get much better background in these issues. Thank you very much. Thank you for inviting me to do this podcast. This is Charles Syms and you have been listening to Agnes Williams discuss the subject of Native Americans a trauma informed human rights perspective. I hope you found it informative. Please join us again. Add in Social Work Hi I'm Nancy Smyth professor and dean of the University at Buffalo School of Social Work. Thanks for listening to our podcast. We look forward to your continued support of the series. For more information about who we are as a school our history our programs and what we do we invite you to visit our Web site at www.socialwork.buffalo.edu.