

**TF-EAL**  
**TRAUMA FOCUSED EQUINE ASSISTED LEARNING**

LORI NELSON, DIRECTOR AGRICULTURE & LAND GRANTS  
 NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE, NEW TOWN, ND

KATIE OAKLAND, EQUINE INSTRUCTOR NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE





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**YOUR GUIDES**



Lori Nelson – Land Grant Director: Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College, New Town, ND  
 8 years at NHSC  
 Pre-Engineering Director 2013-2018 (2+2 collaborative with NDSU)  
 Land Grant Director 2018-current  
 NDSU: Industrial Engineering & Management, B.S.  
 MSU: Mathematics Education, M.A.  
 Prescott College: Post-Masters Equine Assisted Learning and Mental Health  
 Live and Ranch with husband, Chris, north of Towler, ND

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**YOUR GUIDES**



Equine Instructor: Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish College  
 Executive Director: TR 4 Heart and Soul  
 Professional Development  
 Certified Therapeutic Riding Instructor- PATH Intl  
 Natural Lifemanship  
 Bachelor of Science- Special Education, Elementary Education, Early Childhood Development  
 Career Technical Education- Postsecondary Ag Education Certificate  
 Current- Masters of Science: Clinical Mental Health with an Emphasis in Trauma

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## NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE

- ▶ Formerly Fort Berthold Community College
- ▶ Tribal College located on Fort Berthold Indian Reservation, New Town, ND - home of the Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara (MHA) Nation (aka Three Affiliated Tribes or TAT).
- ▶ Founded in 1973, granted accreditation in 1988 offering associates degrees
- ▶ 1994 Land Grant Institution
- ▶ 2011 approved for 3 bachelors degrees
- ▶ Approximately 200 students

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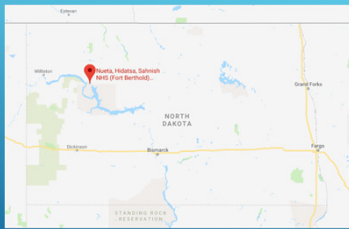
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## NUETA HIDATSA SAHNISH COLLEGE




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MISSION: The mission of Nueta Hidatsa Sahnish (NHS) College is to provide a unique educational community founded in culture and spirituality that nurtures holistic student success.

NUETA  
HIDATSA  
SAHNISH  
COLLEGE




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## AGRICULTURE DEPARTMENT

### Gardens



### Equine



Only tribal college in the nation with an Equine Studies degree (A.S. Equine Studies)

Grew out of community need for interventions to address historical trauma/public health issues

"grow our own" equine specialists to provide horse programming

Reconnect people to the land and food

Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara culture and holistic health/wellness

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## OUR WHY



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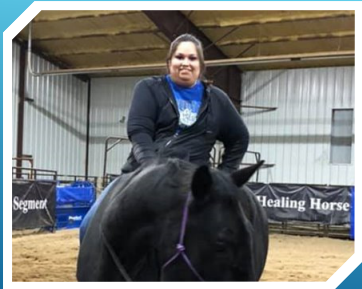
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## OUR JOURNEY



NHS College- Historical Trauma & Trauma Informed Care

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NHSC EQUINE STUDIES DEGREE PROGRAM (WITH TRAUMA LENS)

**Natural Horsemanship**

- ▶ "perfectly honors the MHA Cultures & Traditions"
- ▶ Psychology and behavior of the horse
- ▶ Communicate with horses through natural herd dynamics and body language
- ▶ Partner not a dictator
- ▶ Connection & Relationship

**Equine Assisted Services**

- ▶ Physical, Mental, Emotional, Spiritual
- ▶ Healing often happens through relationship with horse
- ▶ Integrates Trauma-Focused Equine Assisted Services




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WHY NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP?

**"RELATIONSHIP FIRST"**

Learn the behavior of horses and language in order to communicate more effectively and create partnership with them – honors Native ways of holistic living





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THE RELATIONSHIPS ARE REAL




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## HISTORICAL TRAUMA




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## HISTORY OF FORT BERTHOLD INDIAN RESERVATION

**Three Affiliated Tribes (TAT)**  
Mandan, Hidatsa, Arikara (MHA Nation)

- Dwelled in Earth Lodges along Missouri River
- Center of Trade – strong economy in hunting and agriculture
  - Large Gardens on Missouri River Bottom
  - Fur Traders
  - Knife River Flint
  - Hunting & Horse Culture

Smallpox epidemics banded the tribes together


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▶ Native American children sent to boarding school – “Assimilation”  
 ▶ Children as young as 3 years old no longer with parents  
 ▶ Abuse was prevalent (mental, physical, sexual)  
 ▶ Created a “cycle of abuse” and mental trauma that continues today  
 “Kill the Indian, Save the Man”  
 ▶ – Carlisle Indian Boarding School, founder Capt. Richard H. Pratt

## BOARDING SCHOOL ERA (1870-1960)

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BILL WRIGHT, SHOWN HERE AS A FIFTH GRADER AT THE STEWARD INDIAN SCHOOL IN NEVADA IN 1945, STILL HAS NIGHTMARES FROM THE SEVERE DISCIPLINE ENDURED AT BOARDING SCHOOL.



Bill was just 6 years old. Wright remembers matrons bathing him in kerosene and shaving his head.

Wright explains:

"you grow up with discipline, but when you grow up and you have families, then what happens? If you're my daughter and you leave your dress out, I'll knock you through that wall.

Why?

Because I was taught extreme discipline."

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### MHA NATION BOARDING SCHOOL ERA

"I learned about white people. I couldn't speak English when I went to school. I couldn't speak a word of English! They put me in a school with a teacher who spoke a language I couldn't understand, and you thought you had problems in school!"

- Malcolm D Wolf



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### HISTORY: GARRISON DAM PROSPEROUS AGRICULTURE LAND LOST

- ▶ 1947 US Army Corps of Engineers Garrison Dam project flooded a large portion of tribal lands
- ▶ 1/4 of Fort Berthold Reservation was flooded (154,000 acres of fertile river bottom – farm & ranch land)
- ▶ Gardens & fields lost / livestock displaced
- ▶ Towns Flooded (Van Hook, Independence, Sahnish, Elbowoods)
- ▶ Families displaced



"We will sign this contract with a heavy hand. With a few scratches of the pen, we will sell the best part of our reservation. Right now, the future doesn't look too good for us."

George Gillette, chairman of the Mandan, Hidatsa, and Arikara Nation, 1948

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### HISTORICAL TRAUMA GARRISON DAM



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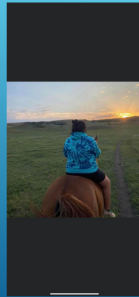
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### THE TIME FOR HEALING IS NOW

▶ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zjUto-mQrfQ>



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### WHAT IS TRAUMA?

Traumatic Stress (or trauma) is any situation where **the brain changes to accommodate** an environment where **survival is the overriding condition**.



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## TRAUMA

We can further breakdown the definition of Trauma as any situation in which much of the sensory input is arrhythmic.



• Can be passed down generation to generation (historical trauma)

Examples: • Abuse • Neglect • Domestic Violence • Threat to Life • Helplessness • Poverty • Family Separation • Major loss (death, job) • Illness • Natural Disasters • Accidents • Divorce • Etc.

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## SENSORY INPUT

### Arrhythmic Sensory Input

Disorganized and Unpredictable



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### Rhythmic Sensory Input

Organized and Predictable



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### Hand Clapping Activity

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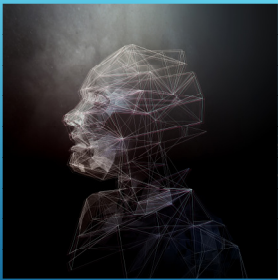
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- Sensory information is what develops the brain.
- Anytime the sensory input is arrhythmic/chaotic, the brain can't handle, and it doesn't know what to do with it – this is trauma




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### TRAUMA IS REAL...BRAIN DEVELOPMENT IS REAL

- If arrhythmic sensory input (disorganized), then lower regions of the brain over-develop
- If disorganized at bottom, all levels are disorganized

#### Hierarchy of the Brain

- Abstract thought
- Concrete Thought

- Affiliation
- "Attachment"
- Sexual Behavior
- Emotional Reactivity

- Motor Regulation
- "Arousal"
- Appetite/Satiety
- Sleep
- Blood Pressure
- Heart Rate
- Body Temperature

© 2017-2018 The Child Trauma Academy

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### HOW WE WERE TALKING TO THE BRAIN...HOW SHOULD WE BE TALKING TO THE BRAIN



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Our brains can look like this



or this



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### THE BRAIN IS AN ORGAN THAT FUNCTIONS LIKE A MUSCLE

► If we are in survival mode all the time, the **part of the brain responsible for survival** (brain-stem; fight/flight) **becomes stronger**



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NEURONS THAT FIRE TOGETHER WIRE TOGETHER  
-DONALD HEBB, NEUROPSYCHOLOGIST

The more the brain does a certain task, the stronger that neural network becomes, making the process more efficient each successive time.



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FIGHT, FLIGHT, OR FREEZE



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GENERATIONAL OR HISTORICAL TRAUMA



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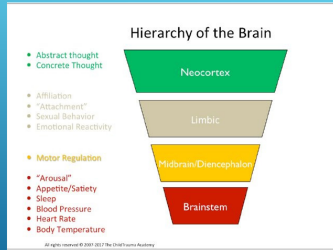
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### REORGANIZING THE BRAIN BOTTOM-UP REGULATION

- The brain continuously can and does change for environment so it's important that we create environment for healing
- We first "talk" to lower regions of the brain (depending on where the person is)
- If person is in survival mode, talk therapy or working calculus problems will not work
- Then help students build pathways to higher regions of the brain




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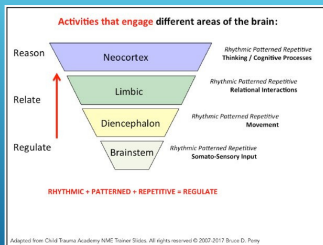
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### SAFE SPACE FOR SELF-REGULATION BOTTOM-UP REGULATION

- When students make bad choices, that is telling us they are dysregulated
- Do 2 Things First
    - Help them regulate
    - Help them relate
- Once students are regulated and relating, then they can reason




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### NATURAL RHYTHM & PARTNERSHIP

- Walk- 4 Beat
- Trot- 2 Beat
- Lope- 3 Beat




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### RELATIONSHIP IS THE VEHICLE TO CHANGE



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### NATURAL HORSEMANSHIP & DR. PERRY'S NEUROSEQUENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

#### Dr. Perry 6 R's

- ▶ Relational – offered by a safe adult who has established a trusting relationship.
- ▶ Relevant – developmentally-matched to the child & their emotional age, rather than matched to their chronological age.
- ▶ Repetitive – patterned.
- ▶ Rewarding – pleasurable.
- ▶ Rhythmic – resonant with neural patterns.
- ▶ Respectful – of the child, their family & culture.

#### Natural Horsemanship fundamentals

- ▶ Pressure & release
- ▶ Communication through body language
- ▶ Relationship first
- ▶ Timing & feel
  - ▶ Reward the slightest try
- ▶ CONNECTION
- ▶ Approach & Retreat
- ▶ Rhythm

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#### We see:

- ▶ Cross-lateral movement-based intervention integrates brain hemispheres which provides emotional regulation, strengthens relationships, provides rhythm, and builds problem-solving skills

#### Participants say:

- ▶ "Good Medicine Here"
- ▶ -Good Road Recovery Center



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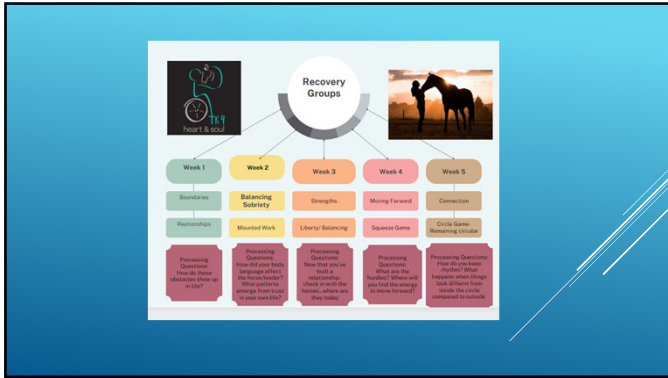
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- ### CRITICAL PARTNERS
- NDSU Dept of Public Health- Dr. Ramona Danielson
  - University of Mary- Dr. Julie Sandvig
  - NHS College- Joe Reum, Natural Horsemanship Instructor
  - Parell Foundation- Jenny Trainor, 3 Star Instructor
  - USDA / NIFA
  - Healing Horse Ranch
  - TR4 Heart & Soul
  - NDSU Extension

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- ### RECOMMENDED RESOURCES
- Child Trauma Academy <https://www.childtrauma.org/>
  - Saint A's Trauma Informed Care <https://sainta.org/trauma-informed-care>
  - Natural Lifemanship <https://naturallifemanship.com/>
  - CDC ACE (Adverse Childhood Experiences) Score <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/childabuseandneglect/acestudy/index.html>
  - ▶ University of Minnesota Extension - Historical Trauma and Cultural Healing <https://extension.umn.edu/mental-health/historical-trauma-and-cultural-healing>
  - ▶ What Happened To You? Dr. Perry & Oprah Winfrey

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### QUESTIONS

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