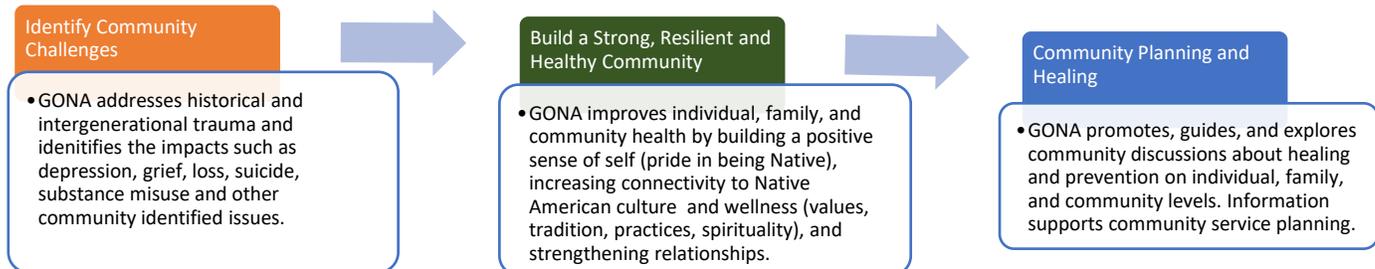


What is the Gathering of Native Americans – GONA:

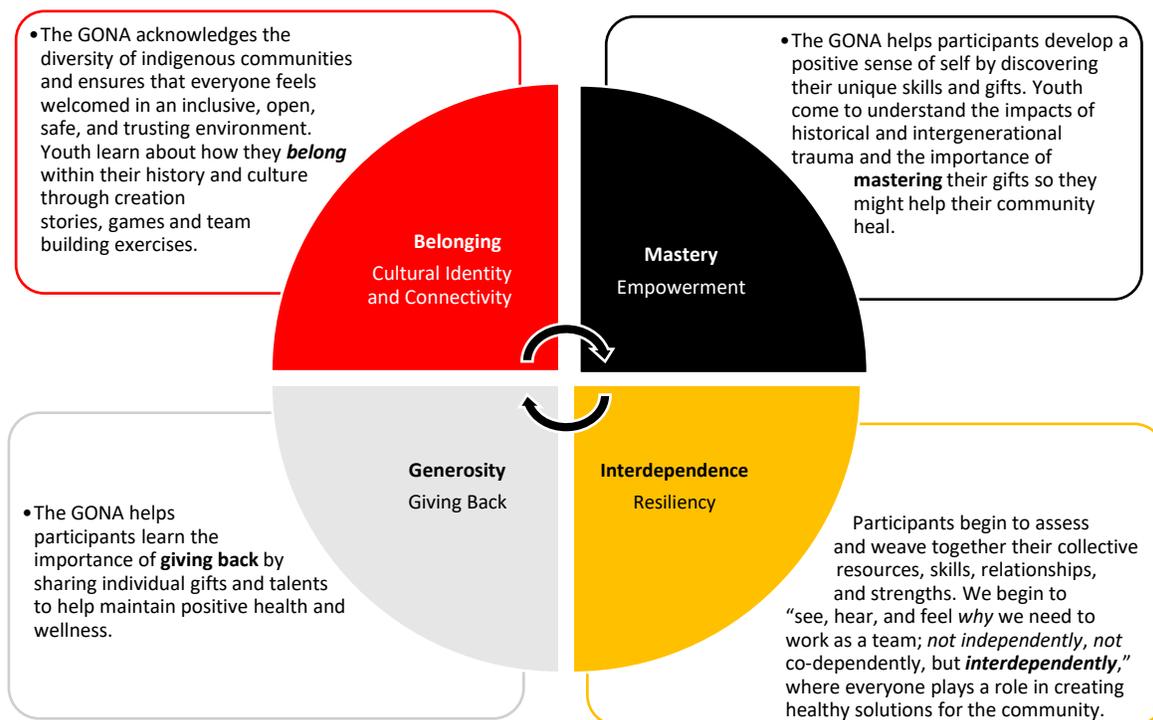
GONA is a curriculum developed *by* Native American/Indigenous social workers, healers, policy scholars and practitioners of alcohol and drug prevention *for* Native American/Indigenous community members and the promotion of their wellness. The GONA was designed to address the effects of historical and intergenerational trauma such as substance use, suicide, and other mental health challenges. GONA aims to strengthen Native American identity and culture through the teaching of four indigenous worldview themes (Belonging, Mastery, Interdependence, and Generosity), so that community members can increase resiliency and positive mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Main Goals of GONA:



The Gathering of Native Americans is about... looking at historical trauma but building off historical *resilience*. It is about understanding lateral violence... so we can plan and heal together. **The process is trauma-informed, resiliency-informed, [and] healing-informed that looks at the issue but looks at the *strength* more importantly.**¹

- Don Lyons (Ojibwe/Haudenosaunee)



¹ Murama. (2017, June 27). Gathering of Native Americans (GONA) at Murama [Video file]. Retrieved from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I9ytYFOuFTY&feature=youtu.be>

GONA Outcomes

1. Surveys collected from 241 youth participants in the 2012-14 Oakland and Fresno GONAs show that youth's hope for the future (as measured by the modified Herth Hope Index) *and* self-perceived connection to community (indicating resiliency) significantly increased after the GONA intervention². Furthermore, it has been found that cultural connection as measured through the CCS-CA³ has a positive correlation with hope for the future. As cultural identity, traditions, and spirituality increase so does hope for the future, which is key for prevention of suicide, substance abuse, and other mental health related challenges.
2. GONA participants have helped create culturally informed “strength-based” tools that evaluate health and wellness. For example, the Fresno American Indian Health Project (FAIHP) Youth Council developed and published the *Personal Balance* tool, a **strength-based**, holistic, and youth-friendly self-assessment tool that helps youth “learn how to balance” their health in all areas (i.e., mental, physical, emotional, spiritual), and helps them consider where they need to improve their own “whole” balance.⁴
3. Youth participants make commitments to stay in contact with one another and report that they stay in contact via social media, calls and texting, and arranged social outings (unpublished responses from 6-month follow up assessments). All the GONA collaborative communities have created youth and/or community councils or workgroups to increase the number of youth and family voices in GONA planning, evaluation, interpretation, and dissemination of GONA findings. (unpublished process evaluation data).
4. GONA has resulted in significant capacity building in leadership and local workforce to support GONA and mental health and wellness more broadly. In 2020 alone, Youth Peacekeepers across the state have received CITI Evaluation training, becoming certified to assist with future GONA evaluations, 34 mental health and related professionals across the state of California from 6 urban Indian communities⁵ have been trained to be GONA facilitators, and behavioral and mental health clinicians have been trained in the GONA curriculum, ensuring that they are able participate and offer their expertise at youth GONAs.⁶
5. Local elders have made personal commitments to supporting GONA for life, increasing youth access to spiritual and cultural teachings. For example, the Friendship House of American Indians partnered with a traditional storyteller and Choctaw Native language speaker and the Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley partnered with a traditional healer to lead workshops on traditional medicine, Lakota language, roles within the community and culture as a healing mechanism at future GONAs.⁷

² Kraus, Carolyn; Bartgis, Jami, Lahiff, Maureen, Auerswald, Colette. (2017). The Gathering of Native Americans Intervention: Cultivating Hope and Meaningful Relationships for Urban American Indian Adolescents in California. *Journal of Adolescent Health, Volume 60, Issue 2, Supplement 1, Page S1*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2016.10.024>

³ King, Janet; Masotti, Paul; Dennem, John; Patel, Chirag; Hadani, Shir; Linton, Janice; Lockhart, Bonnie. (2018). *The Culture is Prevention Project: Development of the Cultural Connectedness Scale – California for use in multi-tribal urban communities*. APHA San Diego.

⁴ Barraza, Rachele; Bartgis, Jami; Fresno Native Youth Council. (2016). Indigenous Youth-Developed Self-Assessment: The Personal Balance Tool. *American Indian and Alaska Native Mental Health Research, Volume 23, Issue 3, Pages 1-23*.

⁵ Our participating urban Indian communities include Fresno American Indian Health Project (FAIHP), the Friendship House Association of American Indians of San Francisco (FHAAI), the Indian Health Center of Santa Clara Valley (IHSCSV), Native American Health Center (NAHC), the San Diego American Indian Health Center (SDAIHC), and the Sacramento Native American Health Center (SNAHC).

⁶ Unpublished NAHC IPP-Excel-Report (last edited 5-22-2020).

⁷ Unpublished NAHC IPP-Excel-Report (last edited 5-22-2020).