

## TRADITION

Indigenous communities traditionally gathered at the **FIRESIDE** to tell stories and discuss matters of importance.

- **F**ind community strengths
- **I**dentify community stories
- **R**ecover positive patterns
- **E**mbrace ancestral connections
- **S**et community goals
- **I**mprove communications
- **D**iscover strengths and talents
- **E**nvision a promising future

## ANCESTRAL CONNECTION

### Program Facilitator: Ms. Autumn Morning Star, BALS, MALS

Ms. Morning Star is a traditional storyteller who uses her art to facilitate multi-cultural community wellness programs. She graduated with honors, *Summa cum Laude*, from the University of Memphis, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Studies Degree and a Master of Arts in Liberal Studies Degree, both with emphasis in American Indian Studies.

Her Master's Thesis, *American Indian Cultural Survival: Resistance in the Diaspora*, won the Distinguished Special Project Award from the University of Memphis.

She was awarded the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Human Rights Scholarship by the President's Standing Committee on Human Relations, University of Memphis, for her outstanding efforts in areas of social justice, human rights, and race relations.

Morning Star is one of fifty Native American Indians selected by the Smithsonian Institute's *National Museum of the American Indian* for her work as an outstanding cultural artist. Her story is a permanent part of *Living Voices*, a series of contemporary cultural profiles.

In addition to her work as with wellness, she is an award-winning performing artist, a published poet and short-story writer, an award-winning sculptor, and an herbal medicine specialist. She lived in Europe for six years where she studied languages and cultures.

Autumn Morning Star reflects the essence and spirit of her Blackfeet and Choctaw heritage through her eloquent performances, workshops, and lectures, which are presented with respect and dignity.

*"In every conceivable manner, the family is link to our past, bridge to our future."*  
Alex Haley

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## MORNING STAR HEALTH AND WELLNESS



### *The Power of Prevention Through the Art of Storytelling*



*Creating effective  
guidelines for behavior,  
health, and wellness  
within the community  
group*

## Health, Wellness and Prevention In Native Communities

*The power of prevention  
through the art of  
storytelling*

Our program focuses on the healing component of traditional storytelling.

Science has shown that the human brain organizes, retains, and accesses information through story form. Story form is considered one of the most effective method for learning.

Traditional stories are powerful models for the transmission of history, behavior, and culture. Each story models group balance, spirituality, and wellness patterns. The overall story moral teaches decision making skills and encourages thoughtful behavior.

When communities embrace their traditional stories, they experience ancestral pride, cultural cohesiveness and improved self-esteem. These important elements are directly linked to the prevention of substance abuse and the enhancement of mental health.

Traditional stories, when used as a dynamic model for positive behavior, serve as lasting and effective guidelines for health, wellness, and prevention within the community group.

*“Humankind has not woven the web of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves.”  
Chief Seattle, 1854*

## CULTURAL SURVIVAL:

**How did our indigenous ancestors survive so well?** Through an organized system of traditions that were balanced within the local community and surrounding ecosystems.

Each indigenous group used stories, which served as a set of instructions, for preserving these balances and maintaining physical, spiritual, and emotional wellness.

When Europeans established colonies in Native lands, these ways of life were severely disrupted. Native people, along with enslaved Africans, were removed from tribal homelands, and stripped of languages, cultures, and stories.

European immigrants also gave up their ancestral identity; along with their languages, stories, and the connections to their natural homelands to become “Americans”.

The loss of these connections and the disruption of identity *in all groups* left a tremendous emptiness and lack of cohesiveness that is reflected in America today.

*A tree is only as strong as its roots.* We can learn to help each other embrace identity, cherish the similarities, and celebrate the differences.



### HEALING FOCUS:

- Traditional storytelling exists in all groups of people worldwide.
- When traditional stories and ways of life are disrupted, human beings struggle for generations with issues of connection, identity, health, and wellness.
- Storytelling is a cultural component that can strengthen community connections by establishing traditional instructions that cultivate physical balance, spiritual wellness, and emotional well-being.

*“A tree is only as strong as its roots.  
Without strong roots, even the mildest breeze  
can challenge stability.  
Ancestral connection is the human root system.”*

*Autumn Morning Star*