

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION IN ACTION

When the unnatural beliefs of our oppressors becomes part of the life way of the oppressed group, the oppression is internalized. Native women suffer the "double-whammy," because are both Native and women. Native women who are battered suffer the "triple-whammy." Internalized oppression is difficult to identify and deal with because it comes from the thoughts and actions of those within our group, and from within ourselves.

Internalized oppression is not always conscious.

As Native people, we internalize messages that tell us:	As Women, we internalize messages that tell us:	As Native Women, we internalize messages that tell us:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being Native is bad, being male has privilege • Being Native makes me inferior to white people • There is no information or misinformation about Native people in history • Columbus discovered America • White people are smarter • Native people have less access to power than white men & women • Talking native language is bad (illogical, is "backward") • Native men's cultural expression is less than white male expression • Native's are jealous of each other • Native people can't get along • Using a "white last name" validates you • Native organizations, tribal councils, and institutions aren't professional • White professionals/helpers are more competent • White fraternal organizations are valid and powerful; Native men's societies aren't as powerful or valid as white men's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being female is bad; double standard • Being a woman makes me inferior to men • No info about women in history • Men are smarter • Recognize women have little power • Talking "women's way" is bad (illogical, too emotional) • Women's culture is non-existent or not valid • Women are jealous of each other • Women can't get along • Using a man's last name validates you • Women leaders and women's organizations aren't professional • Male professionals/helpers are more competent. • Women's organizations are "fluff" and not as powerful or valid as men's. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being Native and female is twice as bad; "judged" • Being a Native woman makes me inferior to men and white women • There is no info or misinformation about Native women in history • Men & white women are smarter • White people & Native men have power because they're white &/or male. • Talking your native language is bad (illogical, "uncivilized") • Native women's culture is non-existent, not valid or important • Native women are jealous of each other and white women • Native women can't get along • Using any man's last name validates you • Native women's organizations aren't as professional as men's or white women's organizations • Male & white women professional helpers are more competent • Native women's societies are non-existent or not as powerful or valid as white or Native men's organizations or societies.

INTERNALIZED OPPRESSION - Oppression is the unjust exercise of authority and power by one group over another. It includes imposing one group's belief system, values and life ways over another group. Oppression becomes INTERNALIZED when we come to believe and act as if the oppressor's belief system, values and life way is reality.

Internalized oppression is also called "self-hate," "internalized sexism" and "internalized racism" and "lateral" or "horizontal" violence.

Internalized oppression in Indian Country is the result of colonization. Colonization is one of the most powerful weapons of oppression. The result of internalized oppression is shame and the disowning of our individual and cultural reality. Internalized oppression also causes violence against women, children and other relatives, alcoholism and other self-destructive behaviors.

Internalized oppression is an effective means for keeping us as Indian people, and as women, under control. The oppressor no longer needs to exert physical control, because we now do it to each other and ourselves. Divide and conquer works. We resist internalized oppression by relearning our traditional respectful and non-violent belief system.