

*Molly Miller:* My son Pewehsen has been in the spirit world for fifteen years now. In the beginning, I was broken-hearted. They had a healing sweat for me because I really – I really was in bad shape after he died. And in that sweat, his spirit came and he said, “Ma, I didn’t do that on purpose.” He was in his lane, so he went this way and the guy corrected and they hit. And the other guy was drunk. I believe that, but I still struggle that it was suicide. So even if it ended up being some accident, he felt very upset. And he said, “I’m just gonna end up in prison the rest of my life. “And that’s how down he was on himself.

What happened after he died was they immediately went into motion and started talking circles with our kids so that nobody would follow him. And all of a sudden, sweat lodges were appearing and lodges. Because of his death, the culture came back. I guess he was sent here for fifteen years for that reason.

So everything I do is pretty much dedicated in memory of my son. We are starting over in this community. We have had no clan mothers for many years, no identified. I am Molly Miller. I am an elder and helper in my community, and I have been named a clan mother. In this way, by declaring that clan mother, that now other clans will step forward and will appoint their own clan mothers, because we have to start over.

It’s been recognized for many years now that the boarding school experience had a major impact on our people. You know, taking the Indian out of them or attempting to. We had that early historical trauma. We try real hard to hang on to that community feeling, but those things that happened a long time ago, there’s a pain in you, and there’s a hurt and there’s an anger.

And you know, people will say “Well, that happened a long time ago so why do you still hang onto it?” But that’s what we mean by historical trauma. It’s still in there. I know the kids are watching us adults and what we do. I want them to have a better example, so I’m trying to be that for them. I don’t always like to dance, but we know that those kids are watching. So the rule here is a circle is sacred.

Who you see here, what you hear here, when you leave here, let it stay here. Right now we've started a women's group. We're a matrilineal society, and it is the elder women's responsibility to take care of our community. We're talking about just grassroots. What can we do to make this community better?

My granddaughter came to me and said one of the kids she goes to school with said she's just feeling so down and she's feeling suicidal. 'Grama, can we have a talking circle?' 'Yes, we can.' It's a tough transition to realize you are an elder. It's not about age. It's not because you're 65, you're an elder now and deserve respect. Respect goes both ways.

So we have a responsibility back to those young people. You know, I'm still trying to find out my purpose in life. But I live as a Native grandmother, a teacher of the language, a teacher of history. I'm a community helper. Healer in the mind and heart.

That's an angel right beside me.