In recent years, the national conversation around racism and racial inequities has gained momentum, echoing an established understanding amongst the public health field that racial inequities are a key determinant of health and wellbeing.

Injuries and violence – the leading cause of death among persons ages 1-44 in the US - are inequitably distributed across communities, primarily and adversely impacting vulnerable communities with residents who have been historically marginalized. These communities are more likely to be communities of color enduring high rates of poverty, poor access to quality education, substandard housing, and frequent traumatizing events throughout their lives. These inequities are caused and driven by structural policies and systemic practices that maintain imbalances in access to wealth, power, and social resources necessary for achieving optimal health. These inequities and practices exist in every system in our society, and function in reinforcing ways, resulting in high levels of preventable experiences of injury and violence.1

AWARE’s Vision & Mission
Located in Juneau, Alaska, AWARE envisions a safe, equitable, and inclusive community built on healthy relationships, sustained through education and advocacy. This organization provides safe shelter and support services for survivors of domestic or sexual violence; and to affect the social, political, and legal changes needed to eliminate oppression, gender violence, and violence against children. Juneau, Alaska has a high Native American and Pacific Islander population, and through the work of Haa Tóoch Lichéesh, AWARE prioritizes culturally specific work including their restorative training program.

Haa Tóoch Lichéesh is a social justice coalition residing on the unceded territory of the L’eedini Áak’w Kwáan, also known as Juneau, Alaska. This coalition is housed within AWARE Inc. and covers specific locations across Alaska with a race and gender-based violence prevention focus. Haa Tóoch Lichéesh Coalition envisions a socially just community in a reciprocal, healthy relationship with the land and with each other. Guided by the wisdom of our ancestors, we reckon with injustice and commit to healing and liberation, while honoring our interdependence. Together, we are imagining and creating a community free from violence. The Coalition has overseen the Kaa Tukaxsaké Háende community wide program and restorative training within the Juneau School District as part of the Safe States initiative.

In March 2022, Safe States launched the *Equity-Focused Approaches for Injury and Violence Prevention Seed Grant Program* (Equity Seed Grant Program). Three organizations received seed grants to pilot or scale-up existing interventions to advance equity-focused efforts designed to address injury or violence prevention topic areas over a six-month period with projects ending in September 2022.

The foundation of this Equity Seed Grant Program stemmed from the 2021 *Injury and Violence Prevention (IVP) Health Equity Scan* conducted by Safe States in collaboration with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The scan assessed how IVP programs and nationwide entities are addressing health and/or racial equity in their work. Building on the formative work completed with the scan, Safe States held a special convening of the Injury and Violence Prevention Network (IVPN) to mobilize members and other professionals to identify opportunities within IVP to further address inequities through enhanced community engagement, partnership activities, and policy initiatives. Equity Seed Grantees were encouraged to frame their interventions based on the vision outlined in the *IVPN special convening summary report* and integrate equitable approaches to advance one or more needs identified in the summary report.

**PROJECT GOALS AND PURPOSE**

At the beginning of the Equity Seed Grant Program, Haa Tóoch Lichéesh Coalition established three primary project goals:

- Co-create components of the Kaa Tukaxsaké Héende program with eight survivors of race- and gender-based violence.
- Collaborate with the Haa Tóoch Lichéesh Coalition member organizations to develop indigenous-informed restorative practice training and implementation guides for community and school settings.
- Collaborate with the Haa Tóoch Lichéesh Coalition member organizations to increase indigenous-informed restorative practice training within the Juneau School District and community by 50%.  

---

**Key Partners**

- Central Council Tlingit and Haida Indian Tribes of Alaska
- Sealaska Heritage Foundation
- University of Alaska Southeast
- KTOO
- Alaska Association of School Boards
- National Alliance for Mental Health
- Juneau Suicide Prevention Coalition
- Juneau School District
Through the Equity Seed Grant Program, Haa Tóoch Lichéesh is developing indigenous-informed trainings for in-school implementation among BIPOC leaders and survivors across Juneau, Alaska.

To achieve this project aim, Haa Tóoch Lichéesh is utilizing the Restorative Practices Framework. This framework is grounded in the values of showing respect, taking responsibility, and strengthening relationships. It contextualizes an individual’s actions with their larger community and breaks the transactional consequence system of traditional punishment. Methods include increasing access to restorative/healing spaces, developing communities of care, and centering relationships among leaders to support youth and violence prevention. Restorative practices are a social science that studies how to improve and repair relationships between people and communities. The purpose is to build healthy communities, increase social capital, decrease crime and antisocial behavior, repair harm, and restore relationships.

Haa Tóoch Lichéesh is using this framework as a foundational step to achieve upstream impacts on disrupting the school-to-prison pipeline, which disproportionately impacts students of color and neurodivergent students. The framework is intended to reduce punitive methodology, thus interrupting the process where youth are introduced to the penal system. Restorative practices are rooted in Indigenous culture which include activities like strengthening one’s connection to the land, weaving, using plant-based medicines, centering familial, community, and workplace values, and the inclusion of Indigenous language in training. These practices aid in Indigenous peoples’ healing, allowing them to increase a sense of self and cultural identity, learning activities lost during colonization and passing them to future generations.

**Applying Equity Approaches to Support Youth and Disrupt Patterns of Violence**

The aim of this project is to shift traditional public health strategies for systemic change into the hands of those whose lived experiences put them at the center of understanding and implementing solutions. Organizations and institutions (including schools) unintentionally uphold the violence of patriarchy and racism. The consequences often result in the delivery of exclusive, ineffective, or inequitable services - which compromises successful prevention programming. Additionally, many leaders working to support youth and violence prevention programs are not given access to restorative practices and accountable relationships within their organizations, thus perpetrating harm in service delivery through unintentionally upholding systems of violence. The cross-sector collaboration forming the root of the Restorative Practices Framework is built on the assumptions that individual and community wellbeing require strong relationships, in which both positive and negative effects and emotions can be experienced and expressed.
Kaa Tukaxsaké Héende Program and Haa Tóoch Lichéesh (HTL) Coalition

The HTL Coalition hosted a focus group of 10 individuals who have experienced race or gender-based violence. Seven out of 10 individuals were indigenous or black, eight out of ten individuals were women, and all members completed a national-certified version of Restorative Practices based on their work with children and vulnerable community members with the goal of reimagining how wellness is centered for BIPOC leaders across member organizations. The HTL also established a Reflective Practice group to facilitate deep reflection across organizational leaders to understand social location, practice reflection for accountable relationships and begin to build a new muscle for reflective work and accountability processes. Insights and reflections from these two groups informed and co-created the Kaa Tukaxsaké Héende (Towards the River That Untangles a Person’s Mind) program components which include comprehensive elements for a cross-sector learning cohort. In addition to this big picture planning for the cross-sector learning cohort, Haa Tóoch Lichéesh built out aspects of their current Restorative Justice work by indigenizing and decolonizing the current frameworks included in the training materials for schools and organizations. Upon the successful rollout of those updated trainings across the community, Haa Tóoch Lichéesh developed plans to evaluate their effectiveness.

To facilitate the restorative practice training and implementation guides for community and school settings, Haa Tóoch Lichéesh hired an Indigenous consultant, with support from the focus group, to complete a draft for the training plan and curriculum. Members of the focus group participated in and recruited for a train-the-trainer event to be held in November to create more place-based trainings. The training events will be expanded to additional venues in the future.

CHALLENGES & SUCCESSES

Haa Tóoch Lichéesh faced capacity issues: they were not fully staffed, and those staffing issues were exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic and an unanticipated heat wave. With new hires, learning curves caused delays in the project timeline, and the budget had to be rearranged for new staffing and training. There was also a large community celebration in June that caused disruptions to staff capacity. A few months into the program, a key member of AWARE’s leadership team took some time away from the organization, leading to a shift in organizational plans for the project. As time is a valuable resource for partners and volunteers, they also had trouble scheduling time for their cohort of trainers to consistently meet. However, they were able to overcome the scheduling challenges to fully engage focus group participants, HTL coalition members, and community partners.

To ensure sustainability for this effort, AWARE has established a focus group that functions as a brain trust for the organization, a group of place-based trainers, and a core team to continue this work into the future as a cross-sectional program for school districts and community members. AWARE also collaborated with a principal and school district partner who can provide youth education expertise and lead certified trainings for restorative practices. They are also able to provide space for the trainings and in-kind hours for training implementation.
EVALUATION
An evaluation consultant will be utilized to align metrics with the values and intended outcomes of the program. AWARE’s evaluation plan is deeply tied to metrics that align with their HTL values. Evaluation metrics are connected to the following areas:

- Increased knowledge among HTL member organizations to facilitate trauma-informed and equitable organizational change;
- Indicators of successful organizational change which include:
  - Trauma-informed and implemented policies and practices.
  - Trained Restorative practice leaders and implementation
  - Decolonized workspaces and classrooms
  - Culture-centered healing and restoration in organizations
  - Removing white supremacy prioritization and empowering diverse voices.
  - Re-centering on the ground workers ideas and voices.
  - Balancing power from top-down to more equitable power distribution; and
- How this process is experienced by participants and leaders.

NEXT STEPS
Based on the evaluations, the Juneau School District is in the process of launching an equity counsel and is exploring opportunities for permanently housing and expanding the trainings. The group is seeking federal funds and shared resources across partner groups to ensure sustainability of the program. As AWARE continues this work, they’ve prioritized centering relationships with individuals and organizations, especially the local Indigenous community, to collectively broaden support, services, and visibility to people who are pushed towards the margins of society.

Haa Tóoch Lichéesh Values
- Decolonization
- Equity & Inclusivity
- Respect // Idakát át áwé at yáa awooné a jeex tootee
- Honoring Generations
- Vulnerability
- Lifting Each Other Up // dikéede woonch gaxtoolsháat
- Healing & Accountability
- Intentionality
- Courage // i gu.aa yáx x’wán
- Transformation

Lingít Aaní by Leah Bennett