

# The Tribal Circle Process and the Potential for Positive Peace: A Focus on the Native American Experience in the United States

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Boozhoo, or hello in Anishinaabe. The primary research question this paper will address is how has the US Government failed to move beyond negative to positive peace with Native Americans and what policies are needed to allow this shift to a positive or 'sustained peace' to occur and why is this critical?

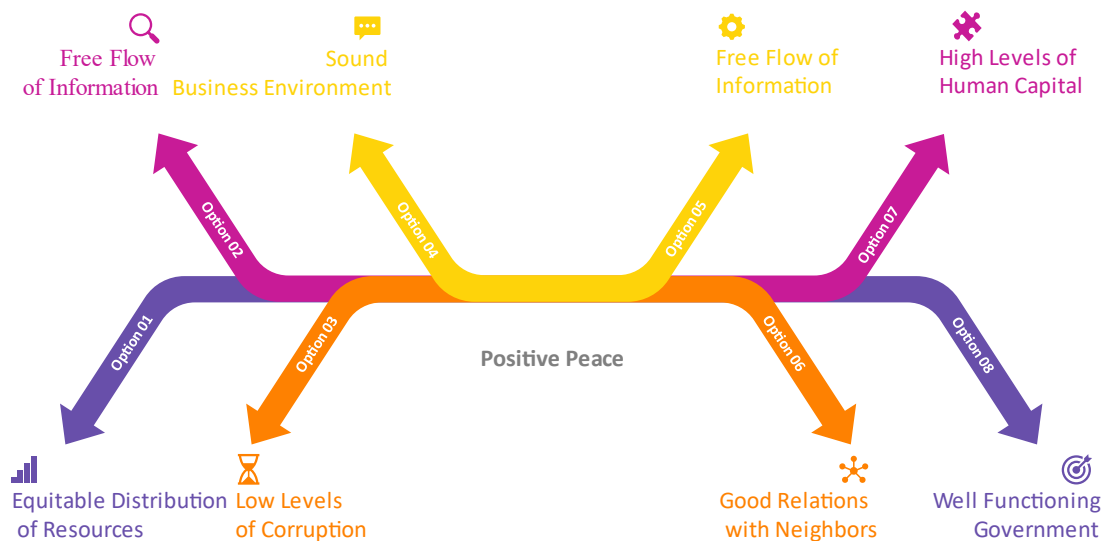
**Racism** is one of the dominant historical contributors to conflict between the US and Native Americans. Racism is a prejudice, discrimination, or antagonism directed against a person or people on the basis of their membership in a particular racial or ethnic group.

**Colonization** is the action or process of settling among and establishing control over the indigenous people of an area. Colonization occurs when one nation subjugates another, conquering its population and exploiting it, if not eradicating it, often while forcing its own language and cultural values upon the existing people.

**Negative Peace** is more than just the absence of war, it is the absence of violence or even the fear of violence.

**Positive Peace** on the other hand, is a transformational concept meant to put the focus on positives instead of negatives in society. Positive peace improves measures of inclusiveness, wellbeing and happiness by creating socio-economic resilience and maximizing human potential.

Figure 1: The Eight Pillars of Positive Peace



## Inhibitors of Positive Peace

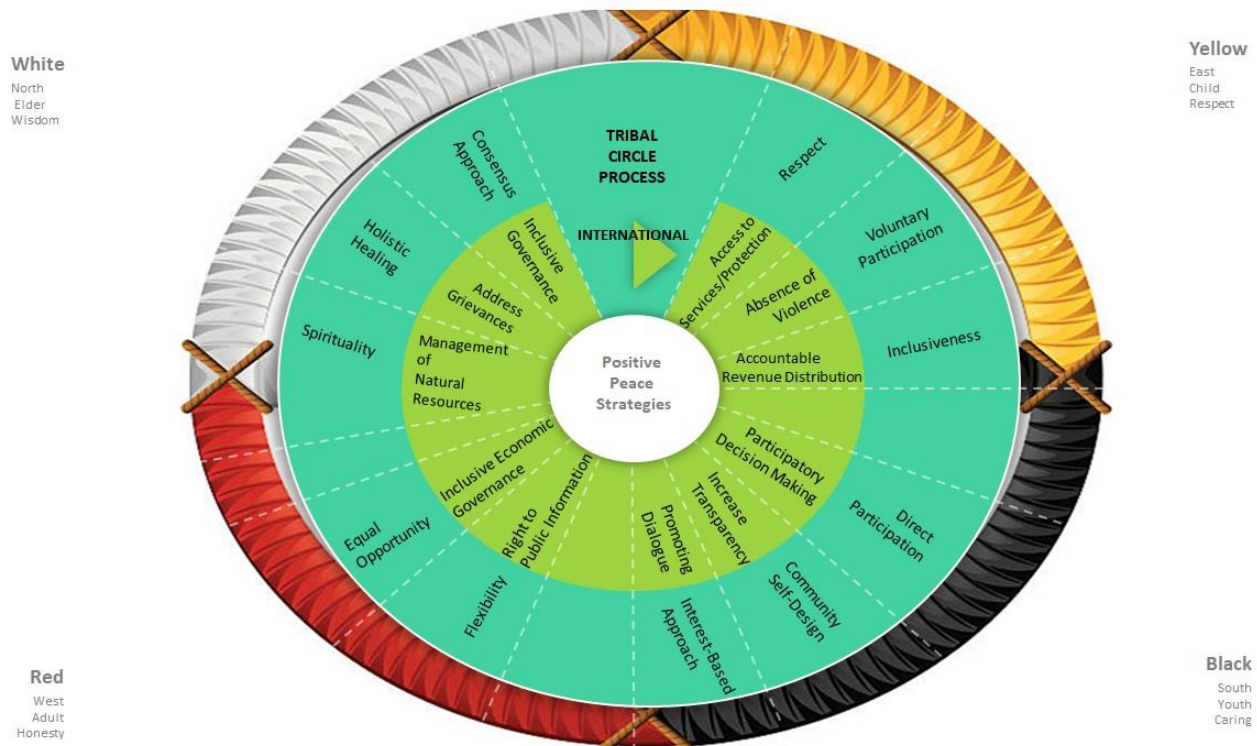
To improve US Tribal relationships from one of negative peace at best, inhibitors of positive peace must be drawn out and addressed. If one wants to know why American Indians have the highest rates of poverty of any racial group, why suicide is the leading cause of death among Indian men, why Native women are two and a half times more likely to be raped than the national average and why gang violence affects American Indian youth more than any other group, do not look only to history.

The ability to have voice and protest and shape policy is important in the movement toward positive peace. As policing continues to be militarized and state legislatures around the country pass laws criminalizing protest in the US, the fact that a private security firm retained by a private Fortune 500 oil and gas company coordinated its efforts with local, state, and federal law enforcement to undermine the Native American protest movement has profoundly anti-democratic implications.

## The Model

In support of the possibility of moving toward a positive sustained peace, a few International policy suggestions for peace between countries, as well as cultural based teachings from the Tribal Circle Process will be shared. I do not presume to speak for all Native people. The circle represents the interconnectedness of all of us and the Medicine Wheel puts the emphasis on getting well rather than getting even. The Circle Process is often used in Native American culture to solve conflicts and gather community members to collectively assist those in need of healing or support and accountability. The international recommendations are shared in the innermost circle while the Tribal Circle Process ideals are listed in the outer ring of the model.

Figure 2: A Medicine Wheel Model of Policy



## Conclusion

All of us, including the federal government, have an important role in helping to improve the lives of Native Americans. Strengthening partnerships and sustaining engagement serve as linchpins to bring together the necessary resources, following a culturally appropriate model, to achieve Positive Peace and improve life outcomes for future generations.

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