

For the Gathering of Native Americans (GONA): Who can facilitate a GONA?

What is a Healer/Helper? A healer or a helper is someone who can safely and effectively facilitate or lead the healing process for individuals or groups through the use of a variety of tools either western or traditional or both.

A good Healer/Helper has:

- A solid track record of ethical conduct supported by references
- Experience in the community
- Power, humility, honesty and gentleness
- Worked through their anger
- Completed transition through stages of grief
- Recognition by others as a healer
- Absolute self-acceptance
- A history of successful recovery
- The ability to share their history and healing strategies
- Well-established personal boundaries that protect them from harm/burnout
- The respect of the community
- Unmistakable inner peace characterized by fearless, unflappable (not easily surprised) leadership
- Knowledge of and comfort leading or participating in ceremonies
- An open mind
- Freedom from the need to control
- Unmistakable positive energy
- Assumed responsibility for their actions
- Been alcohol and drug free (>two years)
- A clear understanding of their limitations and makes appropriate referrals
- A developed plan for continued Wellness
- A commitment to breaking the cycle of abuse that is clear through their initiatives toward community action and their encouragement of ownership
- A spiritual grounding
- Reconciled with Mother Earth
- Freedom from depression, recognizes life goes on

A Good Healer/Helper can:

- Process intense emotion, defuse negativity
- Swiftly determine risk and intervene in a crisis
- Distinguish between crisis and long-term need
- Facilitate a group
- Blend techniques and approaches or work well in a blended team
- Use traditional medicine or partner with traditional healers effectively
- Address unresolved trauma (grief, physical and sexual abuse) and guide recovery

A Good Healer/Helper can: (con't)

- Intervene in and prevent suicide
- Share their history and healing strategies
- Understand and dissipate lateral violence
- Plan and lead
- Counsel sexual abuse victims and/or perpetrators
- Handle sexual abuse disclosures
- Openly and confidently discuss healthy sexuality
- Listen intently, hear, clearly, communicate effectively
- Encourage and facilitate personal responsibility
- Maintain good client records/charts
- Accept responsibility for their actions and encourage others to do the same
- Recognize when to remove themselves
- Accept, learn from and work with clinical supervision
- Accept their limitations and make appropriate referrals
- Recognize where trauma is stored in the body
- Initiate community action and encourage ownership
- Understand and engage whole families in healing

Note: this list was compiled by GONA Trainers who have facilitated more than 50 GONA Healing Processes and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.