

Brown University Alpert Medical School Presents:



Ceremony Medicine

February 3rd

5:30 PM – 6:30 PM

Lecture Hall 170

Lori Alvord, MD

Chief of Staff & General Surgeon for Astria
Toppenish Hospital in Toppenish, WA

This talk describes Navajo ceremonies and the many elements of ceremony that contribute to healing. Ceremonies work at multiple levels, first by the use of mind states to heal our bodies (mind-body medicine or “psychoneuroimmunology”). Chant, prayer, and guided imagery are used, and these practices are similar to Eastern meditation practices. Meditation practices have been shown to change how the brain functions (neuroplasticity). The talk will also discuss the Navajo approach to keeping the physical body strong. Many elements of how native people lived traditionally contain natural examples of how to keep the body healthy and strong, and traditional foods have also played a role in keeping the body healthy. This talk will also describe the role of Native spirituality, which works as a background matrix to bring together, individuals, and community, and also connects the human community with the natural world. Subsistence living philosophies are also woven into ceremony teachings. The teachings in ceremonies are examples of how interconnection can promote sustainability theory, and teach humans a way of living that honors and protects our natural world. If time permits, the talk will discuss how the principles of ceremony medicine can be used to create healing environments.

In addition to introducing the audience to the healing nature of ceremonies, this talk provides an in-depth introduction to Navajo and Native American culture, beliefs, and values that provide important information for students who wish to provide health care to Native Americans.



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