

# STAHs honors author Castle at local book signing for *A Time to Wail*

By Teresa Simmons

It was with great pride that STAHs (Siletz Tribal Arts and Heritage Society) honored Grace Elting Castle at her book signing for *A Time to Wail* on Dec. 1 at the Tribal Community Center on Government Hill.

A native of Siletz, Grace has spent her life digging, uncovering, exposing and writing about the events and lives of the first of people in the Lincoln County area and then on a national scale. Many local people have followed her career first as a writer for the *Lincoln County Leader* (now the *Newport News-Times*) and then on to larger venues, most recently *Oregon Coast Magazine*.

For many years Grace worked as a private investigator in Chicago. She participated in the re-investigation of countless wrongful convictions and continues the battle to reform our system of justice.

She was an outspoken advocate for the passage of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) and was often the lead investigator for American Indian defendants.

After an eventful life as an award-winning journalist, photographer and private investigator, Grace set herself the task of creating this novel that has received the best of reviews.

Michael Koryta, *New York Times* bestselling author, had this to say: "*A Time to Wail* is a marvelous novel, written with unique empathy and authenticity. Grace Elting Castle uses her firsthand knowledge of both PI work and the reservation life and customs of the Siletz people to create a compelling and insightful read that will call to mind the great Tony Hillerman."

STAHs took this opportunity to honor Grace with a plaque to express appreciation for her efforts and ongoing support of Native people and to celebrate her achievement in creating a literary work featuring Siletz.



Courtesy photo by Teresa Simmons

STAHs members Cynthia Farlow (left), Gloria Ingle, Angela Ramirez, Grace Elting Castle and Shawna Gray (far right) at the book signing

For more information about the Siletz Tribe, please visit [ctsi.nsn.us](http://ctsi.nsn.us).

## Adverse childhood events can impact digestion and health

By Nancy Ludwig, MS, RDN, LD, Head Start Consulting Nutritionist

As part of my role as a consultant nutritionist to Siletz Tribal Head Start, I offer information for families. In a previous issue (February 2017), I stated that stress could significantly interfere with digestion, even when nutritious vital food is consumed. Everything is connected – nothing in our body stands apart. Digestion is at the core of health, yet more than what we eat influences our digestion.

My focus this month is on adverse childhood events (ACE or ACEs when plural) and their correlation with negative, lasting effects on health and well-being.

Niki Gratrix is a nutritionist who educates about the topic of adverse childhood events. ACEs are potentially traumatic events that range from physical, emotional or sexual abuse to parental divorce or the incarceration of a parent or guardian.

Niki's website is [www.nikigratrix.com](http://www.nikigratrix.com)/where you can find a link to calculate your ACE score, learn about additional ACE factors and get her free e-book on *The 7 steps to Healing Childhood Emotional Trauma and Building Resilience*. Her references are provided in the e-book.

Possibly the most under-exposed risk factor on health across a lifetime for all major chronic health conditions in the world today is the effect of unresolved emotional trauma from childhood.

In the late 1980s, a study of obese people discovered that more than 50 percent had been sexually abused as children. Research suggests a 34 percent increased risk of developing obesity as an adult when one is subjected to moderate abuse during childhood. For severe abuse, research supports a 50 percent increased risk of developing obesity in adulthood.

Trauma isn't always a direct experience with memory. Trauma can be a collective experience, inherited or passed down through families and groups.

Collective or intergenerational trauma is at work in the Native population and adds a burden to health. In research, it has been found that third-generation children of the survivors of the holocaust have the same physiological symptoms of trauma as their grandparents.

The prenatal period, the time we are in our mother's womb, is also a critical time when trauma experienced by our mothers can be passed on to the unborn child. When evaluating your own ACE score, you may want to consider the following: whether your mother experienced significant trauma during her pregnancy with you, what the ACE scores were for your parents or key caregiver, or whether your parents or grandparents were affected by war, political upheaval or other adverse events listed above during their lifetimes.

If during childhood there was no outside support or the ACEs we faced were even a family "secret," research shows the impact is worse for the child. Research shows just having one reliable adult to speak to about their experience can help children bounce back from an ACE.

How does our childhood biography become our biology? People who experienced trauma in childhood have an increased risk (7 out of 10) of the top 10 causes of death and a 20-year reduction in lifespan.

How does emotional trauma and early life stress change our biology over a lifetime? It turns out that emotional trauma has an effect on three major areas – our behavior, our biochemistry and our beliefs, all of which lead to diseases and health conditions in later life.

Behaviors or habits, like over-eating to suppress or distract from emotional pain, and addictions often occur after unresolved childhood emotional trauma. Studies show an increased likelihood of using injection drugs, binge drinking, smoking and risky sexual behaviors. It is noted that these behaviors may lead to

increased risk of diseases like hepatitis, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, cancer, diabetes and heart disease.

ACEs also lead to other destructive health patterns, which lead to lack of healthy self-care, including perfectionism, workaholic and over-achievement.

Our biochemistry shifts when we face trauma. The body responds with increased activity in the brain's limbic system to release stress hormones. These hormones ready the body for a fight or flight response.

In the case of emotional trauma in childhood, however, when neither a fight nor flight response is possible, these impulses cannot switch off and two things result: 1. The trauma becomes "frozen into the psyche of the body." 2. Young brains become hardwired to respond to stress more easily; less external stress is required to produce all the cascading changes in the body that result from a stress response.

Toxic early life stress creates low-grade inflammation in the brain, something that was thought not to be possible. This toxic stress leads to depression, digestion problems (called dysbiosis or leaky gut), hormonal imbalances, chronic fatigue and immune system problems, such as susceptibility to infection or food and chemical sensitivities.

Beliefs have an extremely powerful effect on biology, directly and indirectly. When we are unable to process and release the impact of the traumatic event, our memory becomes stored in the unconscious mind and in the body.

World-leading expert in trauma recovery, Dr. Bessel Van Kolk, discusses this in his book, *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind, and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. When traumatized, the body remembers. Time does not heal, but it conceals and our biography eventually becomes our biology.

When trauma becomes unconscious, it is possible to have parts of us that are

angry, crying or fearful all the time. These parts of us can have unconscious beliefs associated with them that may include feeling unworthy of health and wellbeing, feeling ashamed and like we deserve to be punished with ill-health. We may have a conscious belief that we can be well and recover from an illness, but this can be sabotaged by our unconscious belief systems linked to trauma from ACEs.

Science does not yet fully understand how conscious and unconscious beliefs can change biology, cause spontaneous disease remission and so forth, but it happens all the time. Many clinicians and healers have observed that unconscious beliefs and "conflicts of consciousness" that are not consciously processed can become symbolically expressed via pain and illness in the body.

Healing emotional trauma is one of the most important aspects to address in all chronic complex illnesses. Unresolved emotional trauma leads to pain and is at the core of addictive and destructive health patterns (behaviors).

Unresolved trauma leads to a state of chronic stress and inflammation (biochemistry), which perpetuates illnesses and leads to beliefs that sabotage our ability to recover.

Siletz Tribal Head Start offers nutritional support at no cost to Head Start families. This usually occurs over the telephone. If you have questions or nutrition concerns about your Head Start child, please contact your teacher or the director and ask to speak to the nutritionist.

For trauma, additional help may be needed (at any age, regardless of cause). When we learn about and support children's needs, we help Head Start children and their families. Likewise, if we didn't get the support we needed as children and we address it now, we also help children, their families and a much greater world.

We are all connected. Let's support each other to be well.