

# Healing Words

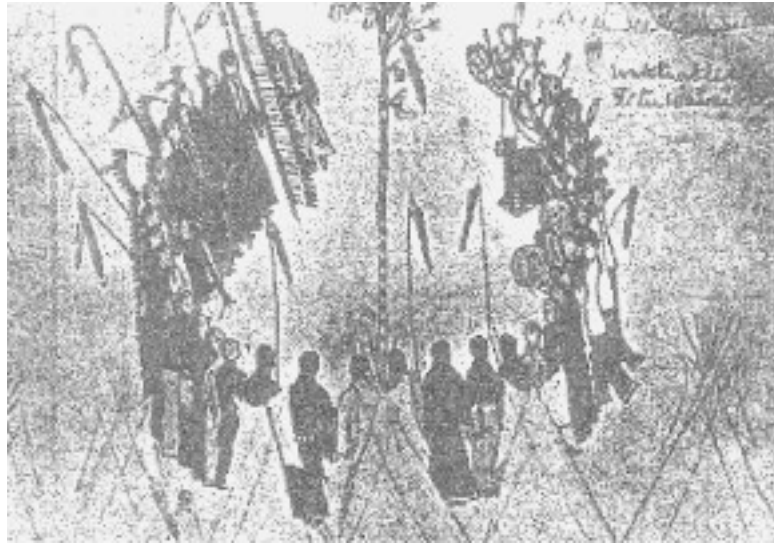


## KANAWEYIMIK

Child and Family Services  
Box 1270  
Battleford, Saskatchewan  
S0M 0E0

### Healing Within the Circle

by Gloria Durnmitt



This project is targeted at assisting the survivors of residential schools in Canada, including those who were sexually or physically abused, and those who have suffered through inter-generation trauma. The initial focus will be individual healing, leading to better community health. The first part of the project's outcome will be healthier individuals. It is expected that as they heal they will become a part of the journey within the community to heal the broken circle. All of the communities will benefit as people improve their child-rearing skills, become healthier in their interactions with each other, and build a healthier and stronger place to live. The project will form the first part of a network of healing planned for families.

This article presents two of the activities undertaken by the project: The elaboration and delivery of a training event, entitled Reducing the impact, and training in treating Residential School Physical and Sexual Abuse through the generations.

#### TRAINING PROJECT

The Healing Within the Circle Training for the Treatment of Residential School Abuse and its Inter-Generational Impacts was about processes which can help participants and trainers to assist or coach others in the healing of past pain and trauma.

The treatment processes which are a part of this Training package are among the four most effective known treatments in the world for trauma. (Guidebook for Thought Field Therapy.) The "Healing Within The Circle" course outline was based on the NeuroLinguistic Program training and treatment models. An underlying belief system or philosophy of NLP (NeuroLinguistic Programming) is that people have within themselves the ability to resolve their own problems. The events of their lives may temporarily block access to those abilities but they are there. Most if not all individuals can enhance their problem-solving skills when they can access these abilities. The focus of the therapy is to coach people in accessing their many strengths and choices in life. The strengths and choices were always there, however the nature of the past trauma in their lives has meant that panic attacks, severe anxiety, reliving terrifying memories, nightmares, inability to act, depression and other issues have dominated in their thinking at the expense of memories of more positive events. As individuals, families and communities gain access to memories of healthier events in their lives, they begin to have a greater sense of self-worth, self-love and ability to care for themselves and their families. They begin to have a sense of a possible positive future for themselves and their loved ones. The Elders have said that we need to honour the defences of those who have lived through residential school abuse. The defences include a variety of coping mechanisms from the socially positive, such as helping others, to the socially destructive. All have

achieved something for the individual in pain from abuse in the past. This is also part of the framework for dealing with Residential School Abuse. The purpose these behaviours have served is protecting them sometimes from pain and trauma and/or from anxiety over the years.

#### TRAINING PARTICIPANTS

Training participants included staff people for the new "Healing Within the Circle" project, Child Welfare staff, Family Violence Staff, Foster Care staff a NADAP Counsellor from Saulteaux First Nation, a Lawyer staffing a Justice project and a parent-child worker. The counselling staff were hired because of backgrounds in counselling. Other staff from the agency were included, as it was felt that all could benefit from some training in treatment skills. All staff in the agency work with trauma and its impact to some degree or another. The group ranged in age from 20s to middle age. Many of the older people had attended residential school at some point in their lives. The younger people were frequently victims of the inter-generational impact of growing up with parents who had been abused in residential school.

#### DESCRIPTION OF THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL POPULATION APPEARING IN A THERAPIST'S OFFICE

Victims of Residential School Abuse and its inter-generational results are appearing with ever-greater frequency in counselling offices. These people are frequently suffering from the impact of untreated shock, delayed reaction to many types of abuse and the delayed impact of repetitive abuse. Many have avoided thinking about the past for years; and have only recently become aware of its impact on their lives. There is some evidence that the media material about residential school has had an impact on such negative behaviours as addictions. The type of trauma-related anxiety, depression, etc. that these people live with is very complex. They have usually suffered throughout childhood from multiple forms of trauma which may include but are not limited to: premature separation from parents and loved ones (frequently at age 5 or 6); cultural abuse (put-downs of First Nations culture and aggrandizement of European culture); language abuse (being forbidden to speak any language but English from the date of admission to the Residential School); complex sexual abuse from both male and female caretakers; physical abuse; emotional abuse; and racial abuse. There are stories from survivors who carry both physical and emotional scars from attempts made by residential school staff to wash off their brown skins, frequently in rather horrible ways. Results of such abuses frequently include varied addictions and relationship problems.

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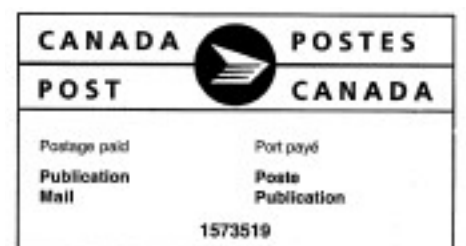
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The past year has been for us both challenging and dynamic. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation is now two years old; it has been only a year since we announced our first 35 funded projects, on 23 June 1999. As of June 12, 2000, we have 212 contracts in place for a total of 41.8 million dollars.

This would not have been possible without the efforts of many. On behalf of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, I would like to thank the people who have contributed to the work represented in this report—Elders, Survivors, and External Reviewers. Thank-you also to those people who over the past two years have attended our various gatherings, offering words of constructive criticism and advice.

Our mission is to encourage and support Aboriginal people in building and reinforcing sustainable healing processes that address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the residential school system, including inter-generational impacts. We have three years to spend or commit the money entrusted to us. Survivors have told us to invest wisely the limited funds entrusted to us, and to get the funds flowing as quickly as possible into the communities. We have acted accordingly.

We have faced the challenges of a growing organisation. The Foundation full-time staff are now 59 in number, reflecting an ongoing effort to provide improved assistance to individuals, organisations, and communities. Every effort has been made to meet the needs of Survivors while also keeping operating costs to a minimum.

**From the Chairman, Georges Erasmus**

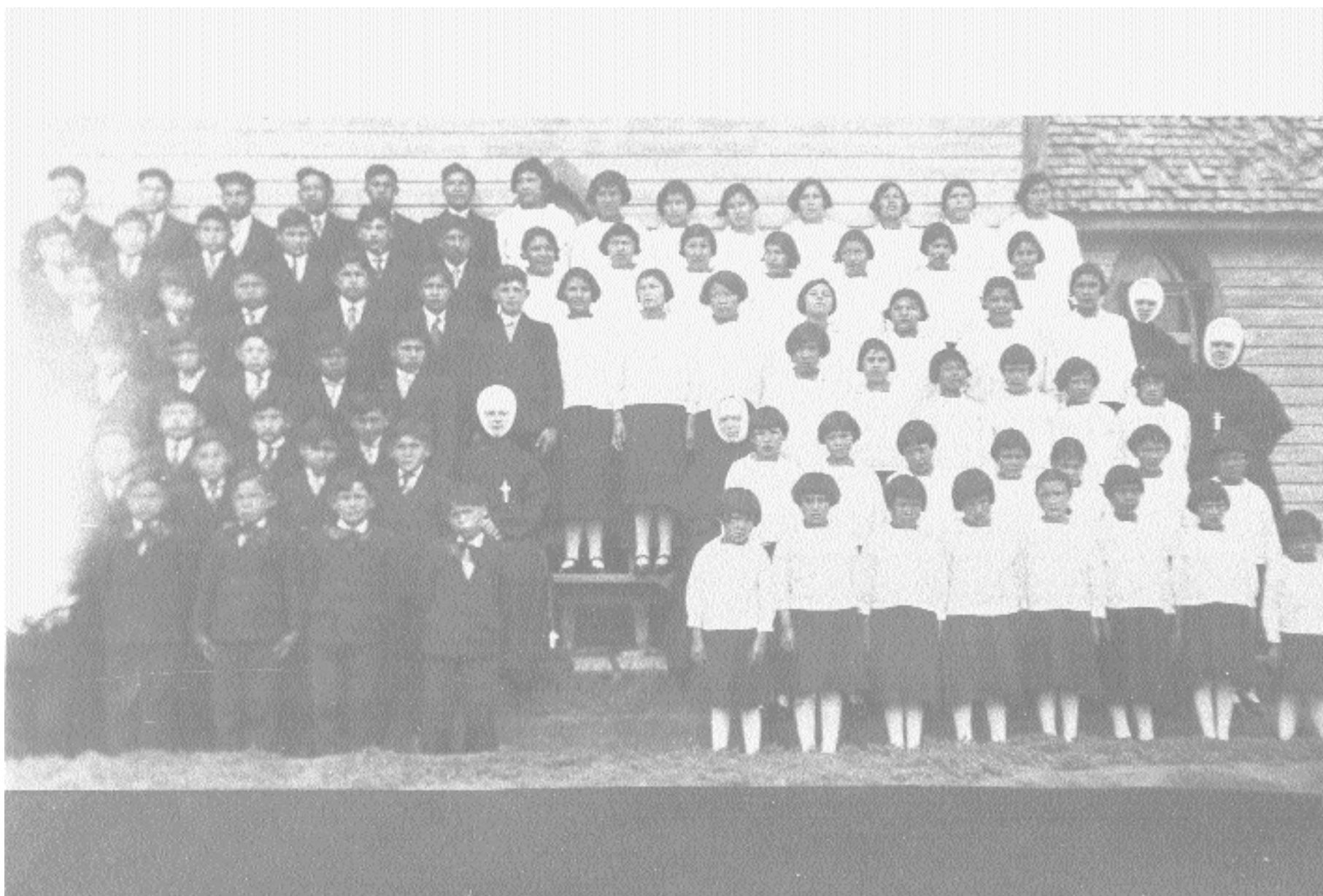


To make Foundation resources both more effective and accessible, we revised the Program Handbook to reflect refined funding and assessment processes. We launched a call for Healing Centre proposals and brought our Proposal Development Workshops to over 50 communities. Last year we held four Regional Gatherings across Canada, in keeping with our commitment to accountability. This year we will be holding six more. Other accomplishments include the addition to our staff of a Program Review team and the introduction of a re-designed webpage.

Communications have focused on projects. Our focus will shift to engaging Canadians in the healing process by encouraging them to walk with us on the path of reconciliation. To this end, we have a Communications Strategy to guide the task of promoting awareness of the residential school system and its effects. The Foundation must bear its responsibilities in the work of healing and reconciliation. In the coming months we will therefore redouble our efforts in reaching the Canadian public, including government, the churches, and the corporate sector.

The year ahead is sure to bring more refinements as we continue to seek more effective ways of meeting the needs of Survivors, their families and descendants. As in the past, the evolution of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation will be driven by the suggestions of Aboriginal people and in particular Survivors. And also as in the past, our vision will be of a future where individuals and communities have broken the cycle of abuse to build healthy, sustainable nations.

Masi.



*The purpose of Healing Words is to be an instrument for honouring the Foundation's commitments to survivors, their descendants, and their communities. It is one of the means by which we demonstrate our respect for the agreements the Foundation has signed. It is also a vehicle for supporting the mission, vision and objectives of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation as well as the goals of the Foundation's Communications Strategy.*

# Healing Centre Proposals

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation recognizes that there is no single definition of healing. Healing is a personal process which occurs over time and involves individuals, families and communities. The AHF supports culturally-appropriate, community-based healing programs which address the needs of members of the Aboriginal community. The Foundation also supports healing programs that are designed to meet the needs of special groups, including women, Elders, youth, the incarcerated, two-spirited people, disabled people and those whose bodies, minds, hearts and spirits have been affected by the legacy of sexual and physical abuse in residential schools, including intergenerational impacts.

While Healing Centre Programs will differ according to community needs and community-based initiatives, the well-being of Aboriginal communities requires that all Healing Centre Programs meet similar standards of safe operation and sound management. The AHF has developed a Model of Healing Centre Programs to help communities meet this requirement in submitting proposals to the Foundation.

The Model has been structured to preserve the safety of participants, ensure accountability to survivors and those impacted intergenerationally, and promote and incorporate effective, holistic healing approaches that directly address the legacy.

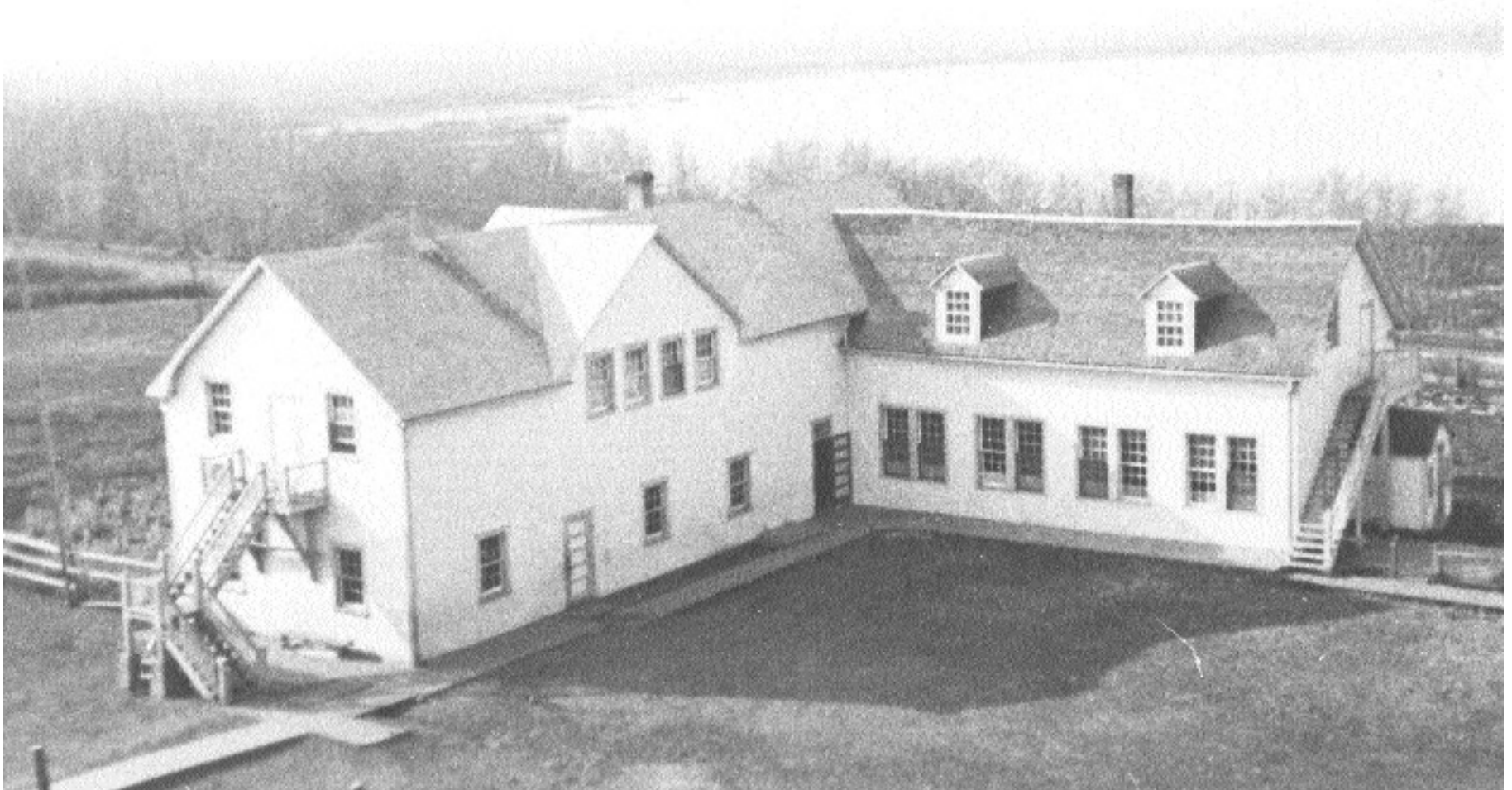
The Foundation also wishes to increase and share Aboriginal knowledge on healing and wellness. Healing Centre Programs funded by the AHF should be prepared to distribute free of charge information on "best healing practices" which can contribute to a shared knowledge base of healing practices. The AHF also supports the development of Canadian healing resources. The Foundation requests that Healing Centre Programs utilize existing professional resources.

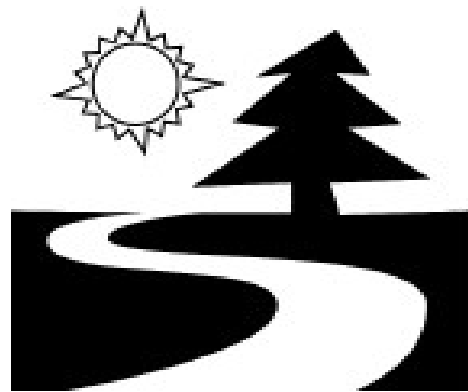
The application for Healing Centres is a two-part process. First, contact the Aboriginal Healing Foundation to request a Statement of Intent. Second, complete an Application for Healing Centre Program Funding.

The Healing Centre Model is to be used as the basis for project submissions and is not intended to replace existing healing centre programming and will not prescribe healing methods nor attempt to choose one "model" over another. A copy of the Healing Centre Model will be sent to those invited to submit under the Healing Centre theme.

## ***Healing Centre Model Highlights***

- new protocol developed by the Board based on expert opinion
- new model intended to provide safety measures to protect all involved in healing
- funding likely to go to areas where there are few existing Centres
- call for Healing Centres proposals announced on AHF website, through direct mailing, and in media





## JOURNEYS

Healing is the “letting go” process of our hurts. It breaks the cycle of violence and abuse and replaces in our lives the anger, shame and guilt. Healing begins using the seven teachings of honesty, truth, humility, love, courage, wisdom, and respect. Healing is the search for who we are, who we have been, and what we will become. It means feeling good about ourselves, our families, communities, and Nations. Our understanding of our journeys will differ, and we may backtrack many times before the teachings are learned. In time we can reclaim the trust and accept the guidance of the Creator.

Healing is a journey. This is perhaps the only certainty we do have about it. Do we know the time and place where our journey begins? Do we know why we start? Do we know where we are going? Do we know where we wish to go? Do we know how to get there?

Healing is as much about finding answers as asking questions. And the journey is always one of discoveries, some deeply satisfying, but often deeply painful. And we do know where the journey takes place first: inside ourselves. This issue is about inner and outer journeys. From learning about inner justice, love and forgiveness, to sharing and creating healing stories with others.

We hope that the spiritual, physical, mental and psychological journeys we begin in this issue will encourage you on your own healing journey, lead you to some useful discoveries, raise interesting questions, and inspire you to share your personal or community healing journey stories with us.

The articles are meant to celebrate the gifts the Creator has given us for our journey towards healing. They are offered as a means to encourage and inspire both individuals and communities involved in their own healing or in projects to help others heal. We hope they will lead those engaged in community healing to new insights, new ideas or approaches to develop projects, whether it is in renewal of language or culture, storytelling, nature retreats or dream sharing.

Through the stories of some of the AHF-funded programs, we honour all Aboriginal individuals and communities who have, with immense courage, determination and creativity, began or continued on their healing journey.

“Healing can only come from within us. Our healing can be supported and nurtured in the most important and endearing ways by family, friends and healers, but can only be brought about by ourselves. Our healing is attending to our own woundedness. We heal ourselves when we attend to our own woundedness in a deeply compassionate way. It is the act of bringing our loving attention, rather than our judgement, to our woundedness that brings about and continues our healing. This is an ongoing and lifelong process for each one of us. It is about becoming more fully ourselves in mind, body, heart and spirit.”

-M. Montgomery, *Inner healing*



*Come to me and I will hold you  
 Within the grasses of my meadows  
 Come to me and I will soothe you  
 As your tears give life to my children  
 Come to me and I will embrace you whispering my love for you in the wind  
 Come to me and I will comfort you  
 Through the waters of new life  
 Come to me and I will warm you  
 With the rays of the shining sun  
 Come to me and I will light your way through the darkness  
 With the glow of the full moon  
 Come to me and I will heal you  
 For your heart is my heart beating  
 Come to me my child  
 Come home to who you are*

Jeanne, Words to heal the soul – Earthdrummer

HEALING IS A JOURNEY, A JOURNEY THAT ABORIGINAL PEOPLE understood since the beginning of time. The common Aboriginal symbol of this journey is the wheel of life. Its simplicity contains the most complex and complete representation of the web of sacred connections that exists in the universe as well the natural laws of healing.

We know that the journey to healing is a difficult one, a slow one, one that includes many steps backwards, many moments of doubts, discouragement and stagnation. It is an experience as well as a tool, it requires courage, patience, faith and love for oneself and others. It starts within and spreads without, it is sometimes done alone but best done with others. The articles offered here are meant to focus on the positive but realistic aspects of journeys.

As a funding organisation we are in constant contact with Aboriginal individuals and communities starting or moving forward on their healing journey. We cannot fully express the profound effect your strength, wisdom, extensive knowledge, courage, determination, compassion and creativity has on all of us here.

These words were found in a report on the four circles of Hollow Water:

*We hunger for heroes, for icons who can mobilize public energy, act as beacons, and show us just how good we are or how much we can achieve as human beings.  
 Aboriginal people are looking for heroes — something, or someone to show that they have done them proud, so the world at large will see that they, too, have the best.*

We hope, in this issue of *Healing words*, that you will discover, just as we have at the AHF, that Aboriginal people do not need to look for heroes. To have experienced endured and survived centuries of cataclysmic individual and collective trauma is the stuff of heroes. We have done ourselves proud, are doing ourselves proud, because Healing is a heroic act.

We also hope that you will find in *Healing Words* a confirmation of your own strength, creativity and determination to progress towards wellness whether as a person or a community.

featured

project

## INNER JOURNEY – RECONNECTING WITH THE CHILD WITHIN

The Waskaganish Wellness Society  
P.O Box 419  
Waskaganish, QC, J0M 1R0

The Waskaganish Wellness Society has developed and is implementing a 5-part traditional healing program. One of the five components of this program, entitled “Our journey as native people is inner child healing,” acknowledges that for a community, better health begins and spreads one person at a time.

*You will never understand who I am on the outside until you have touched the child within me. If you do not develop empathy for the little Cree boy who was given a little brown bag, put in a big black airplane and flown 90 miles away to an Indian Residential School and forcibly kept there for assimilation and education, then you will never understand my erratic behaviour as a man on the job, or in the home, or with my sons and daughter, now my grandchildren.*

-Chief Bill Diamond

**F**OR ALL SURVIVORS, REDISCOVERING and understanding the inner child is often journeying back to the beginning of our existence, to childhood. A painful, wrenching journey back to pain, woundings, fear, but for healing, a necessary one.

The following is the story of the Waskaganish community journey towards healing from the trauma of Residential Schools, a journey which started at its first Conference on the Indian Residential School Syndrome in March 1996. But it is also the journey of one person, a little child very much like the one within each of us.

When one person has been in a place like Indian Residential School for a number of years, whether it be Moose Factory, La Tuque, Amos, Sault Ste. Marie or Brantford, you develop a special language that only the former students of Indian Residential School understand. Here are but a few of the Indian Residential School sayings: “*ever good me, eh?*”

“Ever hucks, eh?”

“we’re going to do this later, first!”

“got any slab?”

“O.K. everybody line up...me first “

“The food we are about to receive, may the Lord truly bless. Amen.”

“Now I lay me down to sleep...”

“Far out, eh.”

“Groovy it.”

“Doroth-eesh.”

“What a Dorothy.”

“Are you a school boy or a schooler?”

“Boy, eh!”

“Ever slick, eh?”

“A stick man.”

“Dor-tic! “

“...you know...”

“Mush, again!?”

“Scrap”

“Trash”

“Hey, chogs!!!”

“Ever sick, eh! “

“Ever lucky us!”

“Wait first!”

“I’m going over there me!”

As you can see, we have not forgotten those years in Indian Residential School. Ever remember us, you know, me too!

I remember the times that my parents travelled up the Nottaway River to get to their trapping and hunting grounds to exercise their traditional pursuits. These were happy times and sometimes difficult times. It was also the years as an infant when my foundations were laid down. These foundations are placed by parents and extended parents during pre-natal and during the first six years of life. It was foundation-laying filled with hugs, laughter, singing, travelling, activity and love.



**It is at Residential School that we lose all sense of security and safety. Where I used to be free and to play at will without fear of harm or harassment I now tremble in fear, doubt and hesitation**

During the summer following the birth of my little Brother Stanley, in 1956, I was a carefree safe young boy whose life was about to change. During that same summer, my oldest sister got maimed.

But that early fall when my parents went to the family trapline, I was left behind.

What did I do to get left behind in the village?

Why are my parents throwing me away?

Why can't I go on with my life on the trapline?

These were very difficult questions to answer for a seven or eight year-old boy, especially when he was separated from his natural parents. But the worst was yet to come...

That October while I was chasing shorebirds with my newly homemade slingshot, along the sandy shores of the Rupert River, the Chief Counsellor came up to me and said:

“You better go home, boy, and change clothes because THEY will be sending you out to-day. “

Being obedient and respectful to the Chief Counsellor, as these were one of the principles that were laid down during my foundation years, I went home to change clothes. There are only two reasons why you changed clothes in Waskaganish — they were ‘You went to church or you went to a wedding.’

Well, there was no wedding or church that day, except that it was the last airplane from Waskaganish to Moose Factory before freeze-up. But false hope arises out of you when you hope that this is the moment when you are being sent to the trapline to join your parents and little brothers. But it was not to be.

Instead I was walked down to the shoreline dock to the same place where a just few hours ago I was shooting shorebirds with my slingshot. At the dock, there was this menacing black airplane waiting for us three children about to be sent to Indian Residential School. As my older sister Annie kissed me, she handed me a little brown paper bag with candy in it. Then we were forcibly put on the airplane and the door of the aircraft was slammed shut. As the aircraft made its flight to Moose Factory, the destruction of tearing down the foundations that were laid in my childhood years began. The tears did not stop all this time — the crying continued.

Upon our arrival at Moose Factory, we were whisked to the Residential School and assigned our dormitories, and supervisors. At our dorms, we were told to strip off our new used clothes which were put in a brown bag. I never saw them again. The crying and tears continued.

For the first time, I was told to go into the shower and wash. The only time I saw steam in my life was when my mother was cooking something — I had imaginings that I was going to get cooked in this steam. The tears and crying continued as I was escorted to the cafeteria and I was now registered in an Indian Residential School.

I wondered, What did I do to deserve this treatment? Why don't my parents love me? Why am I being abandoned? When a seven or eight year-old child is forcibly removed from his parents, his extended family, his village and territory, the destruction of the childhood takes on immeasurable proportions. A lost childhood and deprivation of childhood dreams began when it sunk in that Mom and Dad were not coming to get me out of Indian Residential School. Even though I saw my older sister through the “girls’ side” of the compound, she couldn't hold me, hug me or tell me that everything was going to be alright.

It is at Residential School that we lose all sense of security and safety. Where I used to be free and to play at will without fear of harm or harassment I now tremble in fear, doubt and hesitation, confined and restricted in an area surrounded by a six-foot

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steel fence with barbed wire on top. When I saw relatives, or when my grandmother came to walk by the fence, all I could do was stare, cry and wave with a trembling hand.

The sense of trust is destroyed. I used to feel safe, to think that touch is safe and my parents will not neglect me and not abuse me. My Dad always protected us. Now I shuttered in fear and withdrew every time the supervisors raised their voices or raised their hands. I questioned the sense of belonging. I thought my parents will not abandon me, but why did they send me to such a place? Out on the land, I felt that I am a part of something bigger than me and I am included just because I'm me. In Residential School, I was just a kid of many other kids with a number and I was to be administered by a policy of a Federal Government and in the name of a God that I did not know.

I couldn't explore and create anymore. I was restricted and confined to dormitories and regulations that I did not understand and rules that were foreign to me. I always thought that I would make an impact on my world and I could take care of myself, but not in Residential School, where you were told what to do and you were regimented into all your activities like clockwork. Your sense of capability was destroyed and a new way of doing things was drilled and imposed upon you.

Indian Residential School destroyed the sense of value and worth. Back in Waskaganish I was valued for just being me. I was one of eight children and I knew my important place in the family and that was OK with me. But in Residential School, all this changed because of the chaos and crises and use of strict order and fear. You did not know where you stood in the school.

Every sense of territory, land, and boundaries is destroyed when you are forcibly removed from your home to a school far away. All the bonding done through hunts and ceremonies vanish when you are separated from your proud kinsmen who celebrated their heritage through their children. Now it is destroyed. Many of the necessary stages of growth from childhood to adulthood are frozen in childhood. For many of us former students of Indian Residential School, we bear the wounds of childhood trauma into adulthood. For our childhood is stolen years which we are attempting to reclaim.

A sense of spirituality is non-existent as we attempt to reconcile our thoughts *unto a God that would do this to us*. We were told to pray and go to church and we're in Indian Residential School in the name of God. But we see God as cruel and punishing. How can such a God be worshipped and praised by his littlest creations. Our hatred for religion is the reason why in adult years it is difficult to come to develop a relationship with God the Creator. You lose the sense of purpose of life and you see this new God as menacing, punishing and damning when you dream of a relationship, knowledge, wisdom and love.

When the separation between my parents and me took place, I kept crying "why do my parents not love me?" As a child, I had known non-violence except those times when we met Nature's harsh conditions to survive on the land. All my early childhood I had know compassion and gentleness from all those around me. Now to be pulled away from

those parents, sisters and brothers and home that you so treasure was heartbreaking and frightening. I kept crying "Doesn't my Dad love me?!" "Doesn't my Mom love me?!" When I felt the pain and hurt, no one was there to hold me! When I had an accident, there was no one there who loved me to make it go away. The pain and hurt grew and grew inside me.

As the days in Indian Residential School grew into years, a new root began to be implanted in my childhood. The forcible separation and isolation grew a new root in my foundation years. The principles and values instilled in me as a child began to be replaced with a Root of Bitterness that had many tributaries as I met many different situations and circumstances. The root of bitterness sprang forth into resentment, anger, hatred, prejudice, shame, guilt, disgrace and vengefulness. As these roots grew they overtook the value system of my parents and community.

**Some six years ago, a group of people in Waskaganish decided that we could make a difference and a community wellness program could be initiated. The question was How to do it. What was going to happen? How does one begin a healing journey?**

These roots of bitterness grew and they became larger and larger. There are still absolutes in this world. What you sow, you shall reap. The roots of bitterness were later reaped in a broken relationship, marriage difficulties, child rebellion, alcohol and drug abuse, spousal abuse, mental anguish, lying, cheating, suicidal tendencies, heartbreak after heartbreak, broken promises, expectations and judgements that led only to performance orientation. The damage and destruction is still there that I am trying to handle even today in my adult years. "Deprivation dwarfism" is a psychological concept used to describe children who have been physically dwarfed because they were not nourished, touched or handled. The lack of love and physical closeness caused their physical handicap. The Cree Nation of Quebec has hundreds of their Cree men who are "dwarfed" in their emotions and personalities because they were deprived of love, affection, touch or gentleness as children in an Indian Residential School.

When we dropped out of school or finished school, we came home to our villages looking to re-establish relationships with family, extended family, relatives and community. We soon learned that it was easier to keep pretending and live a life of denial. We tried burying the past in alcohol and drug abuse, spousal abuse, broken relationships, living fast, living hard and living loud, but it kept getting worse as we began to pass the dysfunctional behaviour to our children and grandchildren.

Some six years ago, a group of people in Waskaganish decided that we could make a difference and a community wellness program could be initiated. The question was How to do it. What was going to happen? How does one begin a healing journey? Perhaps my suggestions to you are too simple, but let me reassure you that simplicity sometimes is the most efficient solution.

My suggestions are the following if you want set up a COMMUNITY WELLNESS PROGRAM:

A) Any program begins with ADMISSION that there is a problem. Admission leads to DIALOGUE and you will face many charges of denial, blame and finger pointing. For three years we as a community talked about the problem before we began to do something about it. Admission also lets you decide whether you wish to continue on the path of destruction or to change to one that is healing, safe and stronger.

B) The second matter that one has to do is BELIEVE. Believe that you can make a difference and believe that you change for the better. Believe in yourself and that you are the most important person on Mother Earth. Believe that you can make a positive contribution to your community, no matter what the adversities. Believe that all things are possible and there is no failure but the failure to try.

C) Recognize that when you are setting up a wellness program that there will be a POWER CONFRONTATION. I say this because we are so used to the standards and norms of hurt, pain and abuse with more hurt, pain and abuse, and the cycle continues. This cycle has to be broken. When you do this, there will be those who are happy with their denial, blame and finger-pointing They are happy in their comfort zone. The power confrontation will be a battle because what you effect in the natural will impact matters in the spiritual world. The power confrontation will quickly permit you to know that your greatest enemy will be from within and not without.

You can never become who want to be until you can stop who used to be. The POWER CONFRONTATION will be a long and difficult process sometimes because of the elements working in your community. It took us three years to talk about our problems before we started a healing process, because every time we got near the pain and hurt, we ran away and glossed it over and swept it under the rug until the next crises, chaos and unpredictability came along. Then the POWER CONFRONTATION would start all over again. Be prepared that everything will come against you both spiritually and physically when you begin a healing process.

D) Begin the process of healing — SMALL. Don't expect that everyone will come running to the meetings, workshops and seminars and healing circles that you will organize. Develop leadership in healing among a small core of people who are ready to dedicate their lives as CAREGIVERS of the community. From the leadership of these individuals, you build your healing program.

E) A wellness healing program needs a SUPPORT NETWORK. The support service not only needs leadership but financial and technical resources. This includes follow-up and control but especially a community designed SUPPORT NETWORK with employee assistance programs, AA, women's and men's groups, the Healing Circles, and CAREGIVERS to call upon.

F) A wellness program must be a wholistic approach where the mind, body and spirit is taken into consideration. Remember healing is a journey that must be taken one day at a time. There is no miracle cure for recovery but time and care. Spirituality becomes an important factor for one to determine the purpose of life. God the Creator does not become so menacing, punishing or forbidding as you develop a walk-

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-ing relationship with your God the Creator. But remember the choice is yours — you have to make the decision to get healing or continue on the self-destructive path. God the Creator waits for you to determine your path. HE will not impose HIS WILL upon you but waits to heal you.

G) Finally, there is no magical solution to a wellness program. You will make mistakes but the mistakes are yours. It is our responsibility to take upon ourselves to start this healing journey. Like any other journey, when you stumble, fall, get hurt along the way or get stuck in one place, it will be time to REGROUP, RETHINK, RETREAT and LAUNCH OUT. Through this process it is one day at a time. Learn to CRY A LOT. And when that is over, CRY again and then let the joy flood your soul.

The healing wellness process will be hard and difficult, but it will be worth it all when you soon discover your full potential in life.

All that I express, speak and understand is relative to my childhood.

You will never understand who I am on the outside until you have touched the child within me. If you do not develop *empathy* for the little Cree boy who was given a little brown bag, put in a big black airplane and flown 90 miles away to an Indian Residential School, and forcibly kept there for assimilation and education, then you will never understand my erratic behaviour as a man on the job, or in the home, or with my own sons and daughter, now my grandchildren.

Allow me to be healed, O Lord, touch my very hurt and pain!

Thank you for your attention.

## Aboriginal Healing Foundation Regional Gatherings

# 2000

September 28, 2000,

Iqaluit, Nunavut

October 12, 2000,

Winnipeg, Manitoba

October 26, 2000,

Vancouver, BC

November 9, 2000,

Ottawa, Ontario

November 23, 2000,

Moncton, New

Brunswick

## Healing gift of Spirit

**O**f all the traumas experienced by Aboriginal peoples, the deepest is the spiritual trauma they endured through the enforced disconnection of their individual and collective Spirit with their Creator, with the spiritual vision of their place in creation, their spiritual roles within this creation, and their spiritual guides, the desecration of their spiritual grounds and ceremonies, the obliteration of their spiritual traditions, and the arrogation or destruction of their spiritual objects. Spiritual wounds are the most profound because spirit is for Aboriginal people the universe, the Creator. Today, an important part of Aboriginal Peoples's healing journey is their renewed quest for their wholesome identity, individually and collectively, their rightful gift from the Creator: Spirit.

*The first peace, which is the most important,  
is that which comes from within the souls of people  
when they realize their relationship...*

*Their oneness with the universe and all its powers,  
and when they realize that at the center of the universe,  
dwells the Great Spirit, and that this center  
is really everywhere...*

*For, It is within each of us.*



The baby's name in the Mohawk language is **Ie Ri Wa:Kwe Nies Ta Horn**. The English translation of her name means, "She Has Respect for Everything She Sees." The older people say that when she looks out and sees the trees, flowers, birds, sky, etc. she has respect for all that she sees. Her dad is Forrest Horn.

Many of us, communities and Nations, have started on this renewed quest and our travel on this spiritual path has been eased because we are already carrying with us the things that were protected for us by our elders: teachings, languages, oral traditions, ceremonies. All those things are essential to deal more directly with our emotional nature, because they give us something that is stronger than the tendency to go with assimilated and self-destructive patterns. It helps us understand that the Creator is still present on our journey to healing and that wholeness is about reconnecting with the Creator through our spirit.

*To change is indeed a state of mind. When one resists the healing of change they perpetuate confusion of the soul. The soul only knows change. If we accept the soul's needs as our own we see the imperfections of ourselves and others as acceptable and even look forward to the opportunity! When we embrace those imperfections, when we show love for those imperfections, we have stepped up one rung on the ladder of evolution.*

*Seek not to be perfect, seek not those that are perfect for therein lies no growth. Rather seek out your imperfections and embrace those of others and walk together the road to perfection. When you are truly on that path shall you see the beauty of imperfection as a manifestation of your own perfection.*

*Therein lies your happiness!!!*  
-Two Feathers, Blood Clan of the Blackfoot Confederacy

## Healing gift of teachings

**A**lthough there are numerous variations in specific teachings, the concept of wholeness and connectedness are basic to First Nations peoples. The central idea is that we, as human beings, are part of a larger extended family in the universe which includes the moon, sun and stars. The concept of the circle, of wholeness and connectedness, is used to explain that we are not alone in the universe. Plants, animals and minerals are part of the concept of wholeness, and for this reason, non-human things are considered to possess spirits as do human beings. They are our relatives. We need each other to survive in this world.

According to the teachings of First Nations People, each of us has been given a purpose in this world. As individuals, we learn that we are composed of mind, body, emotion and spirit. We need to develop and nurture each of these parts of ourselves as we grow to live in balance with ourselves. Neglecting any of these aspects can create an imbalance in ourselves, which in some teachings denotes illness.

*-Breaking the silence: an interpretative Study of  
Residential School impact and healing*

## Healing gift of change

**I**magine walking along a forest path, or any other path in the place you live on mother earth. At each step that you make, the entire world changes, the ground, the stones that your foot touches are different, the blades of grass, the leaves, the twigs that you passed by but a minute ago are different. The rhythm of the wind against your face, the warmth of the sun as it filters through the branches, the sounds of a bird song as a bird flies closer or further, the silent teeming birth and death of a million beings. If you were an animal with sharper senses, you would also notice the minute changes in the light, sounds and smells of nature. Although we may register a minute portion of the changes at each step, we miss a million others. And imagine the changes we go through in every second of our everyday gestures and activities. These changes are just beyond our ability to see them or feel them, but they are real. The whole universe is constantly in a state of motion and change and we are part of this universe.

As for all journeys, healing our spirit is about change, awareness and reconnection. Through change we exercise our power and courage to take that step forward, to leave something behind, to welcome the new, although is often difficult or painful. In accepting that life is not easy, that we are not always perfect, we are just being part of the universe. We have been given a natural ability to change. Through change we are thus able to create for ourselves a new identity, one that is filled up with the energy of the life given to us and the whole of creation by the Creator. Through change we are more aware of all the connections and of the forces that are there for us to help us heal.



# STORIES AND THE HEALING JOURNEY

Journey and stories...To tell your own story but also to listen to stories that help you reach the places, deep down, that need healing. There is an immense healing power in stories. Aboriginal people have a rich oral tradition.

In Aboriginal cultures healing knowledge for the body, spirit, heart and mind has been passed on for centuries, from generation to generation. Healing stories are for the spirit, heart and mind, what herbs and plants are for the body. They are medicine.

*The telling of oral histories is one of the most ancient of the arts — and we feel that it is an art if done well. Through the centuries, it has provided not only entertainment, but has also been used to pass on traditions, community and cultural paradigms, and moral and ethical codes of conduct. Personal histories provide a golden thread of awareness in humans. They help us know, question, remember and understand.*

-David Sidwell

## TELLING STORIES FROM OUR LIVES

By David Sidwell

**O**ur personal stories are important to us. Our lives are made up of stories, stored in our minds as memories and images. As with anything that we do, sharing and giving is important to both us and those around us. We need to share our personal stories.

Since life is a story that is constantly unfolding, telling our own stories reminds us of where we have been and where we may be going. As we think of where we have been in our story, we can begin to understand the patterns of our past that have an influence on the way we behave in the present. Discovering healthy and effective patterns also helps us maintain them in the future. Likewise, as we discover unhealthy patterns and actions, we can learn from these and avoid them in the future.

Telling our own stories also puts us in touch with the myths that surround us. The fallacy of myths is that they are often taken to be untrue. "That is just a myth," we might say. Whether a myth is "true" or not is not relevant to their functions. It simply does not matter. Myths are our ways of looking at the cosmos to understand how it works and how we relate to all other things.

Positive myths are healthy. They remind us that all the things that we see around us are merely tips of extremely huge icebergs. We remember our parents, siblings or friends, but we realize through telling our stories that they are complex and interesting individuals with a wealth of feelings, histories, talents and shared experiences. To individuals who may have no myths, or who may have negative myths, these beloved people are merely icons walking around in a video game — like existence. The tip of the iceberg is all that they can see.

Valuable life ways, constantly threatened by a quickly changing world, can be preserved through the telling of our own tales. As we remember the positive ways we related to events and people in the past, these ways can be reestablished or renewed. Of course, the simple pleasure of remembering is another reason to tell our own stories. As we tell more and more of our stories, especially as these stories are shared out loud with others, our memories of the events in our lives expand.

Oral histories are told events. They are oral in nature. Stories, and especially personal stories, are not alive until they have been told. A story is like a seed. Written, it is dormant and dead. It comes to life when it is told, for all of the teller's background, cultures, personal experiences, values, thoughts, and beliefs combine with his or her facial nuances, ges-

tures, and body tensions to bring the story to its fullest living state. Without these things, it cannot be called a story, nor can it be called living.

The directness of "telling" our personal histories, as opposed to writing them, has a great impact upon listeners. It allows the teller a natural and effective use of gesture and facial expression. The teller can gauge his/her telling by watching the response of his/her listeners; such responses motivate the teller to become more involved and energetic, and to adjust the volume and language, if necessary. Telling our personal histories helps us understand and explore these webs and their many and myriad connections that ultimately make up our communities.

When people engage in the telling of personal histories, a spirit of *communitas* pervades the entire attending group, regardless of the various backgrounds each individual member of the group possesses. *Communitas* is a feeling of equality, a profundity of shared, vital and in a way spiritual involvement that a group experiences in the process of ritual or quasi-ritual activities.

**There is something about telling others about our disappointments that heals us. A broken relationship (and heart) demands that we tell the story to our closest confidant. We need to sing the blues to get over them.**

Not only are cultural paradigms shared through the telling of personal histories, but personal and individual interpretations of life and the moral and ethic codes that accompany these interpretations are also shared. Society and the individual are brought together in a synergy of experience for both the teller and the audience. This is part of the magic of personal history performances.

The telling of personal histories has an advantage over many other arts in creating a culturally sharing atmosphere since it is so ephemeral and so personal an art. Through storytelling, other cultures and differing personalities can actually be accessed and shared in real and entertaining ways, with narrative that sparks interest in and personal involvement with characters from diverse and varying backgrounds.

By telling our stories, we participate in the process of reaffirming qualities of orality in a society that sore-

ly needs it as it becomes further technological and impersonal. In fact, if such orality in society ceased to exist, meaningful and artistic communication would also cease to exist and the very foundations of vital sharing would collapse — and society with it.

Tellers of personal histories are givers. They give their stories to others, hoping that in some way, other individuals' lives will be improved. They are service-oriented, unselfish, and seek to make others happy. They gladly make their stories available to others.

When the imagination is stirred and feelings and attitudes are explored and reaffirmed, the most fulfilling type of entertainment occurs. The personal history performer brings images and visions of people and places to life for her or his listeners. Such engagement does not numb the mind as movies or television do. Storytelling demands that the audience share with the teller in creating the pictures, scenes, actions and emotions of the story. In this way, the mind is stimulated and exercised, and the listener and teller leave the experience invigorated and energized.

Some personal stories are told to help us heal. "My name is Joe and I'm an alcoholic" is a familiar beginning to a story that will, hopefully, begin the healing process for a damaging story. There is something about telling others about our disappointments that heals us. A broken relationship (and heart) demands that we tell the story to our closest confidant. We need to sing the blues to get over them.

Some stories from our lives we carry around have been feeding us with damaging information. These stories need to be told, and then replaced with future positive stories. While parents or others may have told us "you can't" others will help us replace this negative story with the "I can" story. And our lives will reflect this new story of success. Telling stories that are dark and painful gives us a chance to realize that we are in the middle of our great Life Story, and that the future contains the hope of possibility.

Personal stories are for sharing and for hearing and for seeing and for feeling. As the storyteller paints with words and gestures the varying sensory images in a personal history, the listeners' imaginations take them to often faraway places, let them meet people they have never met or remember those whose voices have become faint in their memories, and give them an understanding of experiences they may or may not have experienced. This is all accomplished by a portrayal of both the familiar and the unfamiliar-made-familiar as the teller identifies, internalizes, and then portrays the images and events in the story.

*continued on next page*

### The Healing Art of storytelling

And as the last rays faded over the distant mountains the elder began again to tell more of the story to the children — of the journey of the young ones.

‘And remember we left our journeyers paddling upstream and they had realised that they did not have to fight the current and so we rejoin them as they now face once more the mighty current against them and feeling themselves different now, energised by the energy of the mighty river and the swift swirling of the waters that they have learned to read and they let it flow them backwards to the quieter side where their paddling is now making more progress and what was once a draining struggle has now become energising fun as they are going with the flow each time to gentler ways for going up into the high country returning to the homelands of their ancestors to re-visit and remember the old ways and as one they are back there now in the joyous spontaneous flow of the moment re-connecting and re-living the old ways...’

Back in ninetytwo I used to get up each morning before sun-up to listen to Old Man tell the stories to the young boys who had been exiled from remote communities because they ‘didn’t have a cooperative bone in their bodies’ and were ‘troublemakers’ and so they have been sent to live for a six weeks with Old Man and I will tell a little of the storytelling ways of Old Man.

In the early frost (synchronising healing context, time, and place) the youths huddle together to keep warm (a living metaphor of cooperative cohesion). In contrast, there’s no time for stories at 2PM as they urge their horse to try to keep up with Old Man and his horse at full gallop. So in the predawn gloom eyes are peering from under blankets to watch Old Man’s hilarious antics as the scrumptious smells of Norma’s cooking are wafting by (healing placemaking). And the early morning stories he makes up on the spot embody the ‘unfinished stuff’ of the previous day.

Old Man’s stories both embody the boys’ problematic behaviours, ideas and feelings, and contain the seeds of their resolving. Each story involves the shift from the problematic to the functional.

Additionally, Old Man’s stories embody the seeds of possible alternative behaviours towards individual and group wellbeing and have the listeners entering into possible future ideal worlds of their making — as Old Man uses all manner of metaphors to stand for the boys and aspects of their life together — the two boys who fought over the new saddle hear, along with the other boy’s, the story of two eagles fighting over a rabbit — where a third eagle gets the rabbit and then in healing mediation shares the rabbit with them in a joyous fun filled feast. Old Man would subtly mark these two boys out by gesture and glance as he told the story.

Another boy who felt shame after falling from his horse hears the story of the animal who felt shame and then took action to regain composure and integrity, and again that boy is subtly marked out and hardly notices as he shifts himself into a posture embodying the feeling of power (unconsciously mirroring Old Man’s accompanying shifts in body posture).

Moments later another story is picking up the theme of a limiting belief and within the unfolding story the belief is challenged and replaced by a more functional belief and a different three boys involved are subtly marked out.

Old man often half tells a story and then switches to another story. He may finish this second one then return to finish the first story. Sometimes he may half tell a number of stories and then go back and finish them one by one (multiple embedded metaphor/stories). Sentences in the stories are joined by ‘joining

words’ like ‘and’ and ‘so that’ or ‘and the next thing that happened was,’ and this pattern has the effect of maintaining the flow and the telling may become very enchanting.

The metaphors match all the significant elements in the context, as in the ‘two boys and the saddle’ becoming ‘two eagles and the rabbit’. Old man picks up two nearby pieces of stick and waves in the air to represent the diving eagles. All manner of nearby items are used as metaphors. An angry feeling becomes a ‘big stick.’

You may want to identify the references to behaviours, ideas and feelings in the story fragment at the start of this article and throughout this paper. It is seasoned with patterns. Perhaps you can use words like ‘perhaps’ to act as softeners when introducing suggestions.

Perhaps you can also notice the use of suggestions, metaphors and joining words (perhaps you can X). And while (a reference to time, setting up a presupposition\*) reflecting on this, perhaps noticing also the subtle shifts in reference to the past, present and future. Look for inference, and presupposition and the patterns for setting up possible futures and for the exploring of possibilities for flexibility and choice, and perhaps you can find that you can do all this (use of content free generalisation) easily when (\*) you use this in your healing ways as all are connected to all.

Further material on these patterns may be found on the internet at: [www.laceweb.org.au/hea.htm](http://www.laceweb.org.au/hea.htm)

### Exploring the Healing Storytelling Art

One way to practice your healing storytelling art with others is to pick a partner and sit facing each other close enough to have your knees touching. Have other partners on either side of you so you are in two long lines all up close against each other, and all facing your respective partner. One partner in each pair will start the story and after 30 seconds to a minute say, ‘and’, and then ‘throw’ the story to your own partner opposite you to continue. Your partner makes up the next short segment, says ‘and’ and then passes the story back to you again. The story unfolds by passing the storytelling backwards and forwards between the same two partners.

Before everyone starts they are told that the story that is to unfold between each pair is to be about a journey. Two or more entities (people and/or other creatures) who are very fond of each other go their separate ways and on their respective journeys many things happen that stretches their resourcefulness and makes them increase in wisdom. The journey involves many behaviours and ideas and generates many feelings and then circumstances happen such that they find each other again and share their wisdoms and increased appreciation of each other.

Once underway, everyone is bathed in a ‘sonic bath’ of storytelling. Inevitably, there is the sound of humour — giggles and laughter — from other storytellers. Your focus on your partner has you engrossed, though occasionally a theme from a next door story may enter your consciousness and so an aspect of their story may become embedded in your story.

Once in setting up such a group, one couple introduced a bright orange glowing ball into their story. After a time this glowing ball had found its way down the lines through about twenty pairs. Inevitably all involved end up with fascinating stories and amazement at their spontaneous creativeness. They can then move to sharing their experiences and learnings in pairs and in the group.

## Remembering residential school



For most residential School survivors, healing means giving voice to memories, taking the shame and guilt and fears from them. This is a very hard journey which asks for much courage, a courage that more and more survivors are finding in themselves, safe and supported by others.

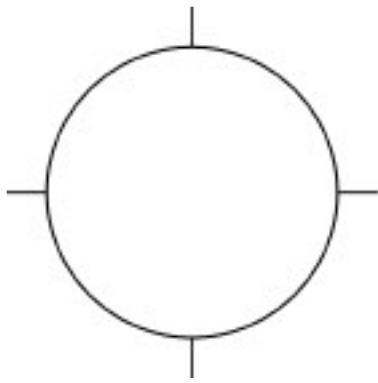
Remembering your past and discussing it with others breaks the code of silence, and for that reason, it is the moment when residential school first appears as an important event in the lives of those who attended them. It is the moment when, for the first time, an individual sees clearly the possibility that residential school was more than “something that happened in the past” and consequently “something that was not worth thinking about at all.”

Remembering is a commitment to recalling parts of the experience that have been lost to memory. Regardless of how this is accomplished, whether it is by visiting the site of their old school, or joining a healing circle, from this point on, residential school becomes an important event.

Remembering means that one makes known to oneself and to others what happened in residential schools and recalls the experience in such a way that the experience emerges as a complete story which makes sense. Regardless of how and where, this initial disclosure about residential school is remembered as being painful and difficult.

*-Breaking the Silence, An interpretative Study of Residential School Impact and Healing Assembly of First Nations*

There is also a fact we must not forget about memory, and that is that experience changes memory. That is because we are constantly learning beings. When we are on the path of healing, we open to new, more positive and healthy experiences, and those positive experiences are able to change our memory. And this is also a gift.



## SPIRITUAL JOURNEYS

**Y**our life is a sacred journey. And it is about change, growth, discovery, movement, transformation, continuously expanding your vision of what is possible, stretching your soul, learning to see clearly and deeply, listening to your intuition, taking courageous challenges at every step along the way. You are on the path... exactly where you are meant to be right now... And from here, you can only go forward, shaping your life story into a magnificent tale of triumph, of healing of courage, of beauty, of wisdom, of power, of dignity, and of love.

-Caroline Adams

### HEALING GIFT OF LIFE

The first journey we made was to this earth, when we were born. Each of us was born with personal gifts. Some of these gifts of personal qualities, traits of character were given to us from our parents and even ancestors, some were given to us as we grew up in the form of advice and teachings from others, our Elders, parents, friends or communities. But a great many of these good gifts are given to us by the creator, gifts that we may not always remember as positive and healing.

#### RECONNECTING WITH THE CREATOR

The Great Spirit has given us many sacred gifts to journey on the trail of life. What was a trail of tears can be, if not a trail of constant joy, at least a trail of comfort and progress. Today as ever, the Great Spirit's gifts are abundant. They are, as ever, provided for our every needs, the need for healing most of all. The journey proposed here is one of recognition. Recognition of a few of the many gifts the Creator is giving us for our well-being, happiness and healing.

Each morning upon rising, and each evening before sleeping. Give thanks for the life within you and for all life, for the good things, the Creator has given you and others and for the opportunity to grow a little more each day. Consider your thoughts and actions of the past day and seek for the courage and strength to be a better person. Seek for the things that will benefit everyone.

-The sacred tree

We first acknowledge the sacredness of your being. You may be in touch with your sacredness or this may enhance your very personal understanding of who you are. Our world is centered on the circle of life, consisting of, the physical, the intellect the emotional and the spiritual. In our lifetime we must nurture each aspect and become acutely aware of all phase of our lives To know the "I am" of yourself is to know life in it's wholeness and you will know the message your very life must tell. To know our individual sacredness is to know our oneness, for are we not brothers and sisters after all.

Each morning upon rising, and each evening before sleeping. Give thanks for the life within you and for all life, for the good things, the Creator has given you and others and for the opportunity to grow a little more each day. Consider your thoughts and actions of the past day and seek for the courage and strength to be a better person. Seek for the things that will benefit everyone.

In addition to the sacred teachings concerning the nature of things, And of the gifts of the Four directions, the teachings of the Sacred Tree include (code of ethics to which all should conform their lives, they wish to find happiness and well being. This code describes what wisdom means in the relationship between individuals, in family life, and in the life of the community. These are the sparkling gems of experience practiced by Native people everywhere. (They represent the path of safety leading around the medicine wheel, and up the great mountain to the sacred lake. What follows is a summary of some of most important of these teachings that are universal to all tribes.

Ernie Voyageur — *An introduction to the Sacredness of our World* — [www.capescott.net](http://www.capescott.net)



#### EQUALITY

Our people believe and practice equality. Sex or age does not bar one council. Among our people it is said, "We are all of the same height."

#### GIVING OUR THANKS

We are humble and helpless. Without our people and creation's gifts, we would be nothing. Everyday, we give thanks to all our relations in our own way - to our people, to the sun, to the green vegetation, to the animals, to the winds, to all things.

#### COOPERATION

We, are put in this earth to help each other. It is not our way for one person to leave his people behind. We cooperate together, all persons helping as best they can. Our people grow strong with one wind, one heart, one body.

#### AGE

Our people respect out leaders. We value their wisdom and guidance. We provide for them as they provided for us, their children. Our grandparents strengthen our nation — we help them remain strong.

#### HOSPITALITY

We thank our visitors for coming to our lodges so we can share our gifts for the Creation with them. Without visitors, we could not prove our hospitality, our generosity, our kindness. Someday, we too may travel, and need food and lodging.

#### FAMILY

Aunts, uncles, grandparents, sons, daughters, nieces, brothers, sisters: We are one family. Is it not right that we should live together in peace and cooperation, working and caring for each other, our relations?

#### PEACE

We walk parallel paths, each on their own road, but side by side in peace. Peace among nations happens when we unite in the old ways.

#### STRONG DEFENSE

We are vigilant and strong against those who would destroy Creation. We are always ready to defend our people and our Mother, the earth. We keep our winds and bodies ready with power, health, and peace.

#### VISION

Who we are, and why are we on this earth? We turn the Creation to guide us, to give us the answer to what path we will take. We seek and value vision in our lives.

#### RESPECT

Each person's spirit speaks in its own way. It is not for one person to tell another what should be done. As each person works hard to keep the cycles of Creation moving, we respect ways and ideas different from our own.

#### HARMONY

To be in harmony with the natural world, one must live within the cycles of life. Our spirit, and those of the bird, bear, insects, plants, mountains, clouds, stars, sun must be in communication with each other. We seek harmony and beauty in our lives.

#### SHARING

The Creation shares with all its creatures, giving us the privilege of sharing, in turn, with others. Since nothing is really ours, we pass Creation's fights on, keeping the cycle of life strong.





## Communication...

*I have gotten so used to this body  
that it has become the focal point of my reality.  
It may only be a momentary pause in time  
but, it is mine.*

*It has taken me a while to get used to its mechanics  
with a modest understanding of this radar we call feelings.  
There are times where I want to break free from this constricting shell  
when the moments I try to explain to you this feeling that I have...  
and though words can paint adequate images  
I feel there has got to be a better way.*

*While thoughts race at an amazing speed within my head ~ my heart.  
The meaning gets gray when I use the spoken word.  
And though I have known you for a while  
and have an idea of your thought process  
The boundaries that encompass us only serve to give me  
a miniscule understanding of what you are receiving.*

*I sometimes wish that I could reach inside myself  
and take out this feeling  
and give it to you to experience.  
Then we could sit and discuss the similarities and differences,  
learning more of one another.*

*I assume that my life experiences, where different from yours,  
can be measured on a common universal scale.  
That the only thing that keeps us divided are these shells in which we reside  
and the intensities with which we've experienced the events.  
But, if we were to share them  
could we see the subtleties of the hues  
that have been painted in our separate worlds  
and come to a better understanding of one another?*

*The few who may want to experience this are walking down the Red Road.  
Looking inside themselves for the answers that they seek  
and you my friend are walking next to me.*

**-Richard Buffalo**

I am of the Cree Nation. My home community is Day Star Reserve. I have lived on my reservation for the first 12 years of my life and then we moved to the city. I have since lived in Vancouver and have been exposed to the many different issues that affect us as first people, most of which were issues of racism and equality.

I have been fortunate to have met many elders and other young First Nations people within the city who were eager to share what they know and have learned about the cultures of the first peoples. Through these meetings and discussions etc. a lot of my work has been formed.

I am glad that throughout my travels I have met many people who are proud of who they are as a member of the first people of this country and who continue to learn the truth of who we are as opposed to the inaccuracies of the history books from which we all were taught.

I consider myself to be lucky in many different respects because I have met many different people who practise their craft in many different ways. I was also fortunate enough to be introduced to Julia Cameron and her book "The Artist's Way", however there are also many different ways of getting in touch with our creativity.

I believe that one of the ways that have helped me was the "Talking Circles" that are prevalent within many different communities and organisations within the Vancouver area. Through the teachings I have come in contact with, these words ring through: 'each person has a voice that should be heard.' When I look back on my own life and my residential school experience I realise that my voice as well as many others have been extinguished and only now through our life experiences we have learnt to speak out in many different mediums ~ my voice comes through in my writings ~ other peoples voices come through in different ways and that is expression. I hope that I can carry not only my voice but the voices of others from whom my inspiration comes from.

All the best,  
Richard Buffalo

# Residential School Resources

The following resource list is provided as a public service. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation does not endorse these materials. Included are books, articles, videos, audio tapes, reports and websites that address residential schools and/or their intergenerational legacy.

## ARTICLES

Barman, Jean. "Lost Opportunity: All Hallows School for Indians and White Girls, 1884-1920," *British Columbia Historical News*, Vol. 22 (Spring 1989): 6-9.

Gresko, Jacqueline. "White 'rites' and Indian 'rites': Indian education and Native responses in the West, 1870-1910," in David C. Jones, Nancy M. Sheehan, and Robert M. Stamp, eds., *Shaping the Schools of the Canadian West*, Calgary: Detselig, 1979.

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Redford, James. "Attendance at Indian Residential Schools in Western Canada," *BC Studies*, No. 44 (Winter 1979/80).

Titley, E. Brian. "Indian Industrial Schools in Western Canada," in Nancy M Sheehan, J. Donald Wilson, and David C. Jones, eds., *Schools in the West: Essays in Canadian Educational History*, Calgary: Detselig, 1986.

York, Geoffrey. "From Lytton to Sabaskong Bay: Fighting for the Schools," in *The Dispossessed: Life and Death in Native Canada*, London: Vintage, 1990: 22-53.

## AUDIO

Lawrence, Mary. *My People, Myself*. Prince George, B.C.: Caitlin Press, 1996. 7 cassettes (8 hours 10 mins.)

## BOOKS

Barman, Jean, Yvonne Hébert, and Don McCaskill, eds. *Indian Education in Canada*. 2 vols. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1986.

Barman, Jean, Neil Sutherland, and J. Donald Wilson, eds. *Children, Teachers and Schools in the History of British Columbia*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Ltd., 1995.

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Cariboo Tribal Council. *Impact of the Residential School*. Williams Lake, B.C.: 1991.

Chrisjohn, Roland and Sherri Young. *The Circle Game: Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience*. Penticton, BC: Theytus Books Ltd., 1997.

Crey, Ernie and Suzanne Fournier. *Stolen From Our Embrace: Abduction of First Nation Children and the Restoration of Aboriginal Communities*. Toronto: Douglas and McIntyre, 1997.

Deiter, Constance. *From Our Mothers' Arms: The Intergenerational Impact of Residential Schools in Saskatchewan*. Etobicoke: United Church Publishing House, 1999.

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Operation Hope, History of the Five Nova Scotia Residential Schools: <http://www.ns.sympatico.ca/operation.hope/chart2.html>

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United Church Residential School resources, A history and a chronology of three BC Schools: <http://www.uccanbc.org/conf/justice/resscho1.htm>

Za-geh-do-win Information Clearinghouse: <http://www.anishinabek.ca/zagehdowin/reschool.htm>



# Community Support

*Left to right, BACK ROW: Sharon Clarke Community Support Manager, Frank Hope Community Support Coordinator - Yukon/NWT, Pauline McCrimmon Community Support Coordinator - BC, J. Kevin Barlow Community Support Coordinator - Maritimes, Diane Roussin Community Support Coordinator - Manitoba, Danielle Descent Community Support Coordinator - North, Jackie Kistabish Community Support Coordinator - Quebec. Left to right, MIDDLE ROW: Joanne Langan Community Support Coordinator - Saskatchewan, Lena Autut Community Support Coordinator - Nunavut, Wanda Gabriel Community Support Coordinator - Ontario. Left to right, FRONT ROW: Margaret Kappo Community Support Coordinator - Alberta.*

Your Community Support Coordinator helps you throughout the proposal submission process, working with the community as part of a team. Coordinators assist you in strengthening your submission and building support and resource networks. They will tell you about the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and will also conduct a Proposal Development Workshop in your community. Their mission is to support and encourage communities in their efforts to address the intergenerational legacy of sexual and physical abuse in the residential school system.

If you are interested in hosting a Proposal Development Workshop for 2 or more organisations/communities, please send a letter of request to Sharon Clarke, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, Suite 801, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7.

## featured

### project

**A**s a result of the alienation, physical and sexual abuse experienced through residential schools, many of the survivors within our communities have suffered wounded perceptions of self and ravaged self-esteem. This legacy has been passed through the generations, crippling individual identities while impeding abilities to trust and develop healthy relationships. Our program is designed to develop trust, communication and problem-solving skills while increasing self-esteem through learning, competence and mastery. Participants are empowered through the discovery of their potential and promise. The program seeks to restore a sense of identity within individuals, promoting a renewed sense of pride and esteem amongst our communities.

The Knaw-chi-Ge Win program rebuilds self esteem and restores balance within the identity of our people. It incorporates all four aspects of the Medicine Wheel : physical, mental, emotional and spiritual.

Our program allows participants to experience enhanced body awareness through adventure

#### Grandfather Story

Grandfather,  
Look at our brokenness.  
We know that in all creation  
Only the human family  
Has strayed from the Sacred Way.  
We know that we are the ones  
Who are divided  
And we are the ones  
Who must come back together  
To walk in the Sacred Way.  
Grandfather,  
Sacred One,  
Teach us love, compassion, and honor  
That we may heal the earth  
And heal each other.

#### Journey to self-esteem

*Extract from an article in Balanced Visions [www. powistik.firstnations.ca](http://www.powistik.firstnations.ca)*

**NO ONE WAS EVER MADE GOOD BY BEING TOLD THEY WERE BAD.**

Self-esteem grows in many different ways: through everyday thoughts and behaviours, by establishing goals and values, by making fair and honest decisions, by sharing your goodness with others, and by taking care of your body.

-Let whatever is bothering you out:: cry, pound on a pillow, talk to friends.

When you are young, you don't have a lot of experience in life. When you care deeply for someone, you may think that you will never feel that way for anyone else. What you don't realize is that it's all a part of growing. In your lifetime there will be people and things that will "come and go" that may break your heart. If you feel you cannot handle the pain, go and talk to people that you trust. They may have gone through the same kind of situation. You're never alone. Remember: there are always people who understand and want to help.

*Each person has the power to heal his or her own body. Life is precious so take care of yourself.*

It is important to maintain a proud positive self-image. Preserve your traditional culture, and develop and apply traditional skills and values to the modern, changing world.

Balanced Visions [www.powistik.firstnations.ca](http://www.powistik.firstnations.ca)

#### Respecting Yourself

Respect. Respect means "to feel or show honour or esteem for someone or something; to consider the well being of, or to treat someone or something with deference or courtesy." Showing respect is a basic law of life.

# a journey back to balance and reality

## a project from UCCM Mnaamodzawin

retreats which incorporate physical challenges. Activities include camping, kayaking, canoeing, hiking, rock climbing, interactive games/exercises and ropes courses. Individual capacities and interpersonal skills are thus developed, translating into enhanced community functioning.

Mentally, those involved with the program may experience shifts in their self concept, discovering facets of themselves through introduction to new, less predictable domains. These encounters will sever old perceptions of self and will include skill development initiatives (establishing trust, effective communication, problem solving) as well as traditional teachings and storytelling. Through rebuilding these perceptions we seek to restore balance to personal and community identities, wounded through the Residential School experience.

Emotionally, participants are challenged through exposure to, and negotiation through various personal and interpersonal struggles. Their self esteem will be impacted through the exploration of our past and how history has influenced personal development, and through the discovery of personal capacities. Through promoting self-esteem, individuals may experience greater courage and confidence in pursuing their personal healing journey. Community based support group or healing circles will be provided to facilitate this process.

Spiritually, those involved embark on a new path of healing, recognizing their ability to affect change physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually through one's actions, thoughts expressions and faith. This program restores the role of Elders within our communities through utilizing their teaching and honouring our history.

Always remember — **YOU ARE SPECIAL. YOU DESERVE TO BE TREATED WELL BY YOURSELF AND OTHERS.**

Self-esteem is the way you feel about yourself. Having a healthy self-esteem reflects the positive feelings you have about yourself, your appearance, and behaviors. It shows how confident you are. Low self-esteem, on the other hand, reflects negative thinking. The process of thinking and living in a good way balances a person. In life, there are many trials and tribulations (lessons) which teach us about our self-identity and ourselves, and help to build our self-esteem. When a person is strong he or she has an easier time coping with negative situations of loss and fear, thus restoring balance of the mind and body. By not caring for yourself or for those around you, you may bring sorrow to our communities, which brings sickness to the heart. You may lose your power, visions, and dreams, and you will forget how to survive as a person of Aboriginal descent.

Stress can frustrate all of us. It gets in the way of who you want to be. To manage stress in everyday life you should self-assess, use spiritual methods such as prayer, and make an effort to relax. There are many ways to accomplish these tasks:

- Take a walk or jog to let off steam.
- Accept yourself as an individual.
- Stay away from alcohol, drugs and harmful substances.
- Balance school, work, and leisure time.
- Do positive things for others such as parents, friends, siblings, and neighbours.

- Treat every person, from the tiniest child to the oldest elder with respect at all times.
- Special respect should be given to elders, parents, teachers and community leaders.
- No person should be made to feel "put down" by you; avoid hurting other hearts as you would avoid a deadly poison.
- Touch nothing that belongs to someone else (especially sacred objects) without permission or an understanding between you.
- Respect the privacy of every person. Never intrude on a person's quiet moments or personal space.
- Never walk between people that are conversing.
- Never interrupt people who are conversing.
- Speak in a soft voice, especially when you are in the presence of elders, strangers or others to whom special respect is due.
- Do not speak unless invited to do so at gatherings where elders are present (except to ask what is expected of you, should you be in doubt).
- Never speak about others in a negative way, whether they are present or not.
- Treat the earth and all of her aspects as your mother. Show deep respect for the mineral world, the plant world, and the animal world.
- Do nothing to pollute the air or the soil. If others would destroy our mother, rise up with wisdom to defend her.
- Show deep respect for the beliefs and religions of others.
- Listen with courtesy to what others say, even if you feel that what they are saying is worthless. Listen with your heart.

-Ernie Voyageur, *An introduction to the Sacredness of our World* – [www.capescott.net](http://www.capescott.net)



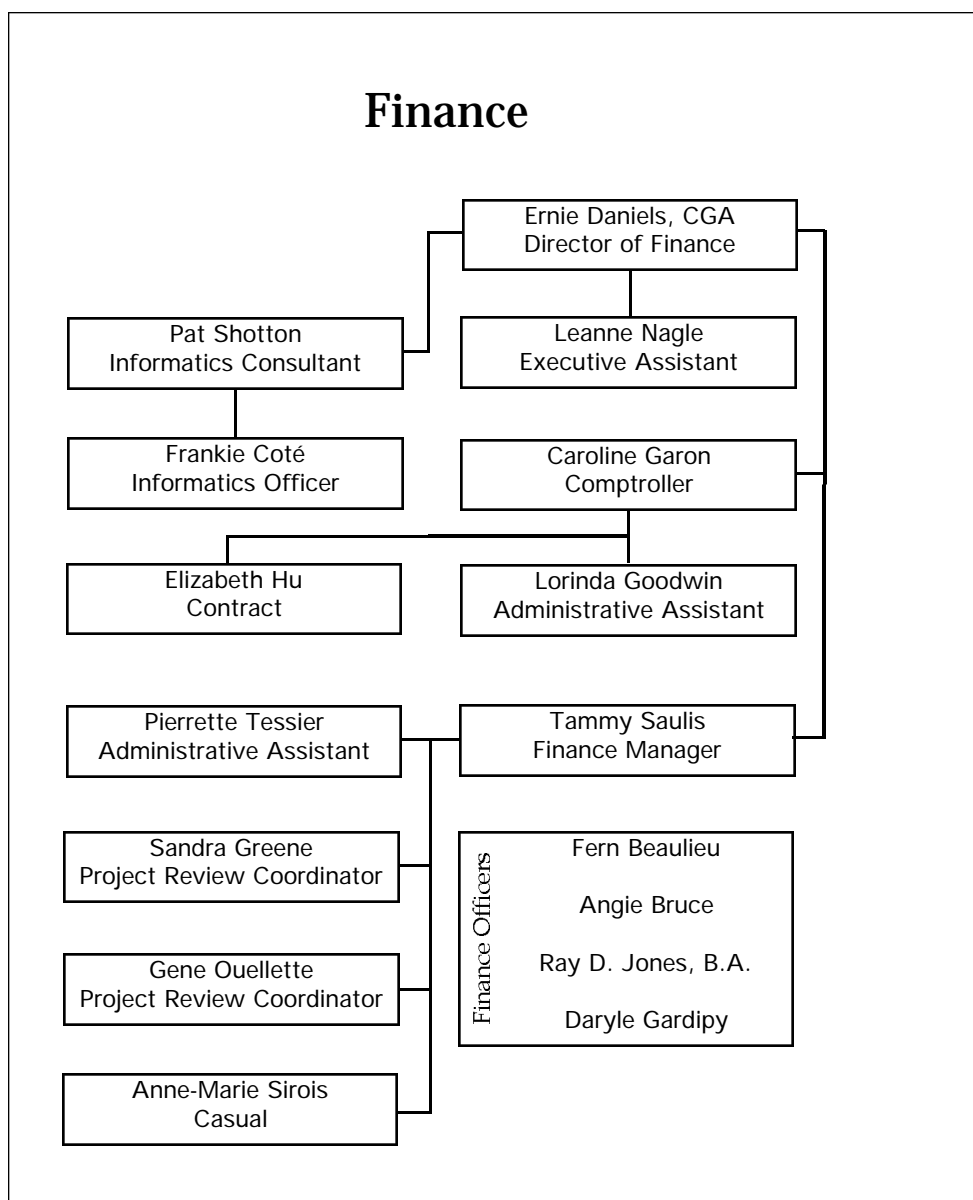
## focus on the finance department



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*Lorinda Goodwin, Administrative Assistant*



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*Anne-Marie Sirois, Casual*

## There are many ways that dreams speak to us in our life's journey...

Among many Native American tribes, young adults would travel alone into the wilderness as a rite of passage, where they would fast and pray. After being blessed by a dream filled with guidance or revelations, they would return to their tribe to share their revelations and enact the guidance.

Dreams are not a free ticket away from the challenges of life, and sometimes they demand a lot from us, pointing us in directions we might otherwise never consider. If we occasionally look to them for insight, honestly contemplate their messages, yet avoid completely relying on them to make decisions for us, then dreams can support our waking lives as the useful tool they are meant to be.

-Harvesting Dreamland, Craig Webb

Learning to decode our dreams and visions enhances our awareness, broadens our understanding and sparks our creativity.

To ignore our dreams is to waste a valuable resource. Our physical, emotional and spiritual well-being are mirrored in our dreams. We observe them as familiar or strange, analyze and react to them as if separate from us. We can be most objective when the ego is quiet.

Nightmares are often emotional messages. Typically, the "monster" in our dreams is an aspect of our lives that is out of control, destructive. Anger, rage, frustration and low self-esteem trigger most nightmare themes.

Understanding the mechanisms in the events that trigger nightmares, be they simple or complex, and altering our reactions, diminishes or ends the nightmare cycle.

*Dreams brought us here. Dreams will take us home*

The healing processes of sleep are, again, holistic, taking place on all levels of the system.

## THE HEALING POWER OF DREAMS

by Charles Esau -Social Service Worker & Drug and Alcohol Counselor, Waskaganish Wellness Society

### Introduction

The Waskaganish Wellness Society is promoting holistic health and wellness in Cree and English. In Cree we say *Miupimaatisuin*, it is life that is well and healthy and healing. To translate that we can break it down by the syllable, *Miu* meaning good, well, or body, *pimaaslin*, soaring free in the wind, and *satsuin*, meaning love. *Miupimaatisuin*, a whole well-being called life. Our Wellness center is called *Miupimaafissuikamik*.



There were a few who were recovering from trauma who made a positive effort and decision to develop a program that will assist others. From prayers, thoughts, dreams, words, good energy and action from people who cared we helped develop a program. We have been on a wellness journey with the holistic programs we promote for the ninth year now in Waskaganish, Quebec, near James Bay.

### Dreams Heal

I work as a counselor in my home in Waskaganish, Quebec with the Waskaganish Wellness Society, and I am also a student at Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario. This is a story about dreams and how we can learn to use and view this concept to heal. I will use real events and dreams.

When I counsel people it is always good to find out about dreams they are having. I started my healing journey questioning dreams I was having and I had many. I will relate to you about a creative writing process and deciphering your dream. It is from the wisdom of elders, teachers and university professors that I was able to learn and from life experience that I can relate this story to you.

When we begin to heal from a life of suffering and pain, everything affects the mind, the body, emotions and spirit. Coming out of the darkness we see a light and hope. It takes time to learn and to be able to see that. When that vision becomes knowledge, it will help to make positive changes with behaviours, character traits and attitudes towards a good life. Dreams tell us where we need to go and to be able to take action and do many new things.

### Healing Tree

Like a tree always reaching up and growing, we grow too. The branches are the episodes in our life, the periods of hardship and pain we have suffered or fun times we have enjoyed. The layers of bark are like layers of emotions and issues. To heal, we must peel to get to the core.

When we get to the core, to the seed of hurt and pain that caused the guilt and shame, then we gain more knowledge. We heal by identifying the cause of our behaviour, attitudes and beliefs. We can plant new seeds, and grow new, healthier leaves and branches.

*From the vision, we gain knowledge with time and start doing. We start seeing it, relate to it, figuring it, and we act on it.*

-Culture, Behaviour and Identity of the Native Person, Jim Dumont, Professor of Native Studies, Laurentian University.

### Dream Definition and Understanding

Dreams are defined in the thesaurus as self deception, mental images, hope, fantasize, believe, or conceive. In the world view of the Cree the elders say it is an avenue that sends messages to you. When we sleep our spirit travels places to see many things, of hardships, pain suffering, or joy. We call good dreams or nightmares.

How we feel when we awaken or how our body reacts guides us to understand events that bother us, seen or unseen. Dreams we have appear to be in an abstract or a complex form and at times difficult to understand. It is our spirit that knows where we need to heal in our emotions, our mind and our body. The dream is a reconnection to our life. It will communicate to us what we need to take care of in our life.

I have heard a young native youth from South Dakota speak. He said, "We are living on a prayer of our ancestors." Those words stuck to me and I pass them on to you. When we pray, we pray for others who suffer for future generations so they do not have to live in the deplorable conditions like we have. I believe that this is the generation that is reversing the effects of trauma and oppression. The belief we must have is with understanding, love, prayer, forgiveness and care for one another and it will be healing. That is all a part of the continuum.

There are many ways that dreams speak to us in our life's journey. At times that dream or communication from our spirit is neglected and we find ourselves in a hopeless situation. Sometimes I will fall asleep to have a dream or just to rest my being. Answers come. Reoccurring dreams are good to explore. An example is a poem that I wrote which is from a reoccurring dream when I began to sober my life from a 19 year period of drugs and booze. I started to learn this in a creative writing process.

### My Canoe

My canoe is stranded, frozen into the ice  
I see open water I want to push it there  
It seems hopeless it is broken at the bow  
Finally I repaired it and I paddle forward

The shore I see I remember from childhood  
The water is calm, clear and pristine  
As I travel the river becomes wide  
I am beading down with water  
It is like rapids getting fast and rough

I see others heading for the waterfalls  
I yell for them they do not hear  
I have to steer my canoe  
The river is getting narrow like a creek

Branches from willows are whipping my  
body and face  
It is dark I have to keep moving forward  
In the darkness I feel afraid  
I pray for hope to see a light in the dark

It is clear now I see the river widen into a  
lake

I see calmer, clearer, sparkling waters  
I look behind me I see my precious children  
My family is safe and unharmed  
They travel with me in my canoe

continued from previous page

### Dream Interpretation

The dream of water and a canoe is a life's journey. Pimmaatisuin. Its interpretation is in the symbols that are in the dream. Water is a healer. We all need water in our life. The river represents the direction of life, a journey we are always on. The canoe represents the vessel we use in our travel in this world, the family unit. As an individual who is a father, my role with my family is to be model to them so they in turn can teach their children.

The others that are heading for the waterfalls is an example of today's world when others are heading for trouble. We can only help others if it is in their heart and soul to want to heal. Then we can help. The shore I remember from childhood playing along that river. It is the same shore where I landed in a canoe before entering residential school. Those layers of unresolved emotions of hurt and pain of family breakup were shown to me - of where I needed to go to start a healing process. The ice represents where I was stuck in a world of hopelessness, helplessness and darkness.

### Residential School Learning and Unlearning

I was one of the young kids out of a family of 10. Eight of us went to five different residential schools. We were brought as children unknowingly to these schools to be Europeanized in our viewing and understanding the world. I have spent eight years (1963-1970) in Horden Hall, a residential school, from the end of each summer through fall, winter, and spring, returning home to Moose Factory in Ontario at the beginning of summer. I learned at an early age in my life what the system of the dominant governing group was doing to us.

With emotional learning it was "Quiet, don't cry." In mental education, "The cowboys are the good guys, the Indians are dirty savages" (as in Saturday night movies). Spiritual teachings were, "If you lie, cheat or steal your heart will be black and you will go to hell."

The physical part of residential school education was the food that we ate because we did not have the nutrition from native foods. Many of our people suffer today from heart disease, cancer, diabetes, and arthritis and so on. Many more from family breakdowns, homelessness, AIDS, alcoholism, drug abuse, violence, addictions, parenting problems and incarcerations. For workers and caregivers that is a lot of work for us to do.

As original people, we can relate to the generational issues of oppression, genocide and trauma which we have endured. Colonizers used residential schools for power and control. We were victims in the tidal wave of oppression across Canada and the US. Colonization effects us in our own need of power and control over our people. It is ingrained in us. Today we suffer from ethnostress, lateral violence, oppression, and assimilation.

For many of us it is still a period of hurt and pain. The reversal of the effects will take more generations. It is our journey home together. Let us pray from our hearts to see the vision and dream to join that path for healing together. Not only for us but also for our brothers and sisters around the world, and those who have gone ahead into the spirit world.

### Open End

I thank the people who understand the message in this story and the people who requested this information on dreams for their newsletter. It is important to share. We no longer need to be afraid to do a ceremony. Our spiritual ceremonies and rituals are not museum artifacts or an anthropologist's thesis, collecting dust in a university library. Ceremonies are alive and well. We are not just practicing culture, but we are living it.

Lastly I had a vision, a dream. It took me back to the fence gates that I entered in residential school. A spiritual woman with long black hair appeared in my dream when I opened that gate to get out. She had a golden glimmering light that shone brightly all around her being. She smiled as I opened the door to get out. I looked to the side. I saw an endless fence with more doors.

Within us, our families, our communities and our nations we can heal. We have the potential to take down those fences and open the doors that keep us imprisoned psychologically.

As my friend George says in Waskaganish, "Take care and stay well."



**H**i, my name is Celina Peck (nee Celine Wheesk) from Attawapiskat, Ontario. The scene depicted in the article below is about my mother, who passed away 22 years ago. Only after she died did I think of all the hardships and heart-break she, and all other parents, endured when they saw their children leave for the residential school in Fort Albany. My aunt had told me about this, and I witnessed it myself when I didn't go to school one winter. It would be nice if this could be printed in *Healing Words* as a tribute to Mother's Day. Meequetch.

*She's partially deaf from an early childhood disease, but Cecilia can see the plane longer than a person can hear it as it disappears in the distance. Two of her daughters are in the plane being flown to a residential school and won't be back until next spring. She tries to ignore the aching in her heart and smiles at the baby in her arms. She goes inside only to be reminded of the loss and feeling of hopelessness as she picks up the scattered clothes. She has a special trunk of possessions where she'll put her daughters' things away. Often her sister, Louise, will drop by and find her going through the contents of the trunk and Louise knew, from the redness in her sister's eyes, she missed the girls. This seems to be the only way to heal from the longing.*

*Earlier, she asked her oldest daughter to take good care of the younger one, but she knew this would be just a futile attempt on her part. Little did she know her daughters did also try to ignore their own feelings of despair. They looked and walked away fast after the hugging and kissing so as to hide their pain and no sound came as one of the daughters looked back and mouth the word "mama". After so many times going through this you know you cannot control what is happening.*

My aunt, Louise, helped us go through the grief of my mother's death, and passed away herself six years after. It seems these two women were there when we needed them. Now I use their loving memory to find peace and happiness in my life.

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### Submission of stories

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You may submit your articles or other contributions by fax, mail, or email. We prefer electronic submissions in Corel Word Perfect or MS Word. Please send your writing to:

The Editors, Healing Words  
75 Albert Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1P 5E7

Our fax number is (613) 237-4442 and our email addresses for submissions are:

grobelin@ahf.ca  
wspear@ahf.ca

Please send email submissions of photos in TIFF grayscale format, if possible. We ask for a resolution of 300 dpi. We cannot be responsible for photos damaged in the mail.

Please include a short biography with your submission as well as a return address and phone number. We may need to contact you about your submission.

The AHF does not pay for published submissions, but we do provide contributors with copies of the newsletter.

The views expressed by contributors to *Healing Words* do not necessarily reflect the views of the AHF.

There is no set length for manuscripts, but please try to keep submissions to a reasonable length (under 3000 words). All submissions are subject to the approval of the editorial team and may be edited for spelling, grammar, and length.

*The spirit longs for the ways of our ancestors. The penal system was not our way of dealing with human mistakes. In the first place, First Nations peoples were not bestowed with the right to judge, punish or forgive each other; that is an individual effort and it is in the Creator's realm. We are not our brother's keeper. I do not believe that humans heal each others; rather they assist each other in a spiritual healing process. You have to heal yourself -Owiciyisiw*

Richard Simaganis, Elder and traditional Healer for Inmates, Poundmaker Cree Nation



# ABORIGINAL JUSTICE

**I**n our previous issue, we began to explore the relationship between Justice and Healing, with articles underlining the leading position of Aboriginal justice in the contemporary movement towards Restorative justice now transforming penal systems in western societies.

We intend to continue exploring this issue not only because it is eminently relevant to this dynamic societal trend but because of its direct pertinence to the healing process of Aboriginal communities from the traumas of residential schools and their intergenerational impacts.

Knowledge of Aboriginal justice principles and of their role in the restoring of balance and well-being at individual and community levels will help in the development of efficient healing projects in harmony with Aboriginal spiritual and cultural values.

It is now more and more widely recognized that Justice, considered in the context of a social principle rather than a social institution, is one of the most important components of healing.

Healing, a process in which Aboriginal Peoples worldwide have been engaged in, first as part of their ancient spiritual and cultural ways of life then as part of a survival effort under dominant cultures and finally as part of their contemporary cultural renewal, is today a hot issue in unlikely arenas. Leaders of thought the world over are awakening to the deep social significance and close relationships between spiritual principles such as justice, health, wellbeing and economical, political and scientific development.

The idea of social capital is not new to Aboriginal people. The principles of Aboriginal justice and the knowledge and science of healing as means to enhance this social capital are rooted in Aboriginal cultures and traditions.

In our February issue, we underlined the following elements of Aboriginal justice and the link between Justice and Healing:

**Aboriginal justice is a spiritual principle**, and not a retributive or punitive system. The two main elements anchored in this principle are the right of all human beings to be treated with dignity, and the overriding need to restore and maintain harmony within the individual, and in the social fabric of the family, the community and the nation.

Because Aboriginal Justice is a principle rooted in centuries of culture and traditions which views crime as both a cause and an effect of imbalance, it is perfectly suited to the healing of Aboriginal individuals and communities.

Because it is primarily a principle applicable to social imbalances, and not a retributive or punitive system, it cannot be dissociated from the healing process whether at an individual or collective level. Aboriginal justice is above all a transformative principle. In this issue, we will go further in the exploration of this healing principle and its social applications.

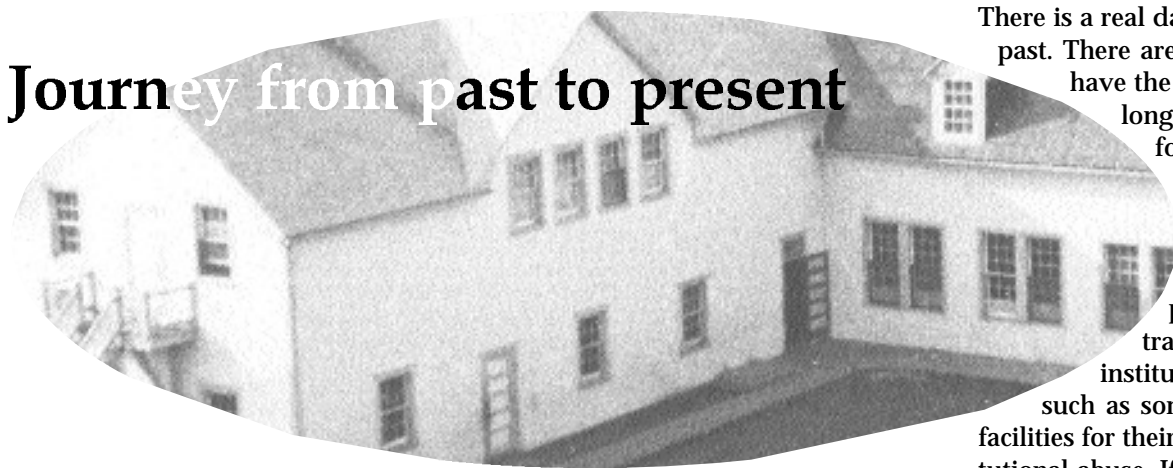
The wisdom of Aboriginal justice is best demonstrated in the application of the two dimensions of Aboriginal justice on the healing process. One dimension of Aboriginal justice is its relationship to inner healing. We explore this relationship in our article on *inner justice*.

A second article contrasts two systems of justice, Aboriginal and western, and the third is an extract from the last report from the Law Commission of Canada, which very much echoes the need, voiced more and more urgently, for the kind of positive transformation Aboriginal justice can bring to individual and community relationships.

These articles are not meant to be in-depth studies but signposts for the long journey ahead, seeds of ideas to be consulted and shared further in your communities.

*Healing is a long, difficult and complex process; there are no miracles. But as Aboriginal People we are the ones who have been left with the soul searching; we are now veterans in the experience of healing. That makes us pioneers in the knowledge of the healing processes that are now catching the interest of the rest of the world.*

## Journey from past to present



In seeking to redress the wrongs of the past, society must not become complacent and assume that these problems no longer exist. One reason why institutional child abuse that took place many years ago is a current issue is the recognition that child abuse continues today. Settings may have changed somewhat, but the vulnerability of children remains. This is true not only for children with special needs for whom residential institutions remain an appropriate option, but also for children now being placed in settings such as group care facilities and foster homes that have been developed, in part, as substitutes for some larger institutions. Survivors of past abuse feel a deep need to ensure that child abuse is stopped. They want to see education and prevention made a societal priority, for they know first-hand where abuse lurks and how it occurs.

There is a real danger that we have not learned enough from the wrongs of the past. There are children today who suffer abuse at the hands of adults who have the responsibility of caring for them. Even though children are no longer forcibly removed from their homes in order to attend school, for example, we have no cause for complacency. Many children who formerly would have been placed in institutions are now placed in other settings, where the treatment they receive may not be easily monitored. Resources are needed so that more children are able to live at home, in security. When this is not possible, we must not hesitate to invest in programs to select, train, supervise or monitor the foster families or staff at any non-institutional setting where these children may live. Other children, such as some of those with special needs, continue to require residential facilities for their care or education; as such, they may still be vulnerable to institutional abuse. If we choose to turn the same blind eye, refuse to discharge our obligations, or persist in denying our responsibility, there is every chance that another group of survivors will be coming forward in 10, 15 or 20 years from now.

The fact that physical and sexual abuse was common in many institutions intended to protect, nurture and educate young people reflects a tragic breach of trust by those who were abusers. It is an indictment of the supervisory processes in place at those institutions. And it is a damning commentary on the casual attitude that we took towards the children we placed in residential facilities. Each one of us is damaged when we permit our children to be abused in the institutions that our governments have established, or supported, to care for them. Understanding how that damage occurred, how it may be redressed, and how we may prevent it from recurring is the challenge we face, and must meet.

It is about attitudes in Canada toward Aboriginal peoples and the lack of respect accorded to Aboriginal values. It is about facing up to some unpleasant truths, not only about abuse of power and the pedophiles in our midst, but about how the people who are charged with the care and protection of children can fail, and in some cases deliberately refuse, to protect them from those in whose custody they are placed.

Another reason why historical child abuse cannot be treated simply as an issue of the past is that its effects are passed on from generation to generation. Those who grew up in sterile institutional environments with harsh discipline and little nurturing, and who experienced physical or sexual abuse while there, are at great risk of being harsh and non-nurturing with their own children. These intergenerational impacts make it all the more critical for society to help survivors and their families to confront the abuse and to heal. Only in this way can we hope to prevent another generation of children from suffering as their parents suffered.

Finding appropriate responses to past institutional child abuse is, consequently, a current and urgent concern. We must come to terms with history and deal with the wrongs committed. At the same time, we must scrutinise the situation of children currently in care outside their homes to ensure that we are not repeating the complacency that allowed previous generations to ignore or to discount complaints of abuse.

### Learning From the Past

The Minister asked the Law Commission of Canada to comment on which processes may best respond to the needs of survivors of institutional child abuse. This task is not, however, just about how to compensate people for the wrongs of the past, and it is not just about law. It is about understanding how our society views its children and how it allows them to be treated. It is about attitudes in Canada toward Aboriginal peoples and the lack of respect accorded to Aboriginal values. It is about facing up to some unpleasant truths, not only about abuse of power and the pedophiles in our midst, but about how the people who are charged with the care and protection of children can fail, and in some cases deliberately refuse, to protect them from those in whose custody they are placed. It is about our faith in certain institutions, and how misplaced that faith can sometimes be. It is about wrenching families and communities apart through misplaced notions of cultural superiority. Above all, it is about our own failure, even today, to fully acknowledge the harm that was done and to take adequate steps to address that harm.

### Life in a Total Institution

To fully understand the impact of past institutional child abuse, it is crucial to investigate the nature of life in those settings at the time the abuse took place. Although children lived in a wide variety of institutions, designed for different purposes, serving different communities, and located in different regions of the country, all can be described as *total institutions*. This term refers to institutions that seek to re-socialise people by instilling them with new roles, skills or values. Such institutions break down the barriers that ordinarily separate three spheres of life: work, play and sleep. Once a child enters, willingly or not, almost every aspect of his or her life is determined and controlled by the institution.

First, all aspects of life are conducted in the same place and under the same single authority. Second, each phase of the member's daily activity is carried on in the immediate company of a large batch of others, all of whom are treated alike and required to do the same thing together. Third, all phases of the day's activities are tightly scheduled, with one activity leading at a prearranged time into the next, the whole sequence of activities being imposed from above by a system of explicit formal rulings and a body of officials. Finally, the various enforced activities are brought together into a single rational plan purportedly designed to fulfil the official aims of the institution.

Total institutions are not simply places to live; each is a world unto itself. In this world, those who are in charge hold all formal power. Rules govern almost every aspect of daily life and residents have little say about how these rules are administered. More dangerously, life in such institutions may at times be governed more by arbitrary and unpredictable orders than by established rules. In such a situation, the possibility of effective protests or appeals is inhibited. During the period in which the abuse under consideration took place, there was little effective external oversight and usually no independent procedure for handling complaints from children. Contact with the outside world – family, friends, community – was tightly controlled and infrequent.

*continued on next page*

Residential schools for Aboriginal children, reformatories, schools for the Deaf and blind, orphanages, training schools and mental institutions tended, as total institutions, to impose the following conditions on their residents: disconnection; degradation; and powerlessness. While all children in all institutions did not necessarily experience them, each condition played a part in facilitating and perpetuating the infliction of abuse.

### Disconnection

Disconnection means experiencing a sense of both physical and psychological isolation. Aboriginal children, for example, were often taken to residential schools far removed from their home communities. Many did not see their families during the entire school year; they returned home only in the summer. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples summarised the effects of disconnection on the family life and culture of Aboriginal peoples in the following manner:

Residential schools did the greatest damage. Children as young as 6 years old were removed from their families for 10 months of the year or longer. They were forbidden to speak the only languages they knew and taught to reject their homes, their heritage and, by extension, themselves. Most were subjected to physical deprivation, and some experienced abuse. We heard from a few people who are grateful for what they learned at these schools, but we heard from more who described deep scars – not least in their inability to give and receive love.

The Royal Commission went on to note that many of the problems encountered in Aboriginal communities today – violence, alcoholism and loss of pride and spirituality – can be traced back to the sense of disconnection that children experienced as a result of being sent to a residential school.

Psychological isolation is equally alienating. When mail is censored, outside visits are strictly controlled and telephones are non-existent or are located only in public areas, children have no ability to convey their concerns in a meaningful way. They have no one in whom they can confide without fear of reprisal.

Life in a total institution is a world cut off from family and community – a world where there is virtually no one to question the actions of staff or to challenge the way in which authority is misused and abused. Here is how one former student described the institution he attended:

*... I learned that there is a prison that occupies no physical space. This prison is a form of solitary confinement that when expertly inflicted upon you, can hold you in check for decades. For lack of a better name for this prison I will call it FEAR.*

The experience of disconnection can be particularly acute for children with disabilities. They are more likely to be placed in an institution and, because their needs are greater, they are more likely to rely on adults for care and attention. This reliance makes them especially vulnerable. They may not resist abuse or expose an abuser because they do not want to jeopardise the care they are receiving.

Children with intellectual disabilities may have difficulty interpreting the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour. They

may be easily tricked, bribed, scolded or coerced by an abuser. Children with communication disabilities may experience additional barriers to disclosing incidents of abuse. These factors increase the disconnection of children with disabilities and heighten their position of vulnerability. They then become even more accessible targets for abusers.

**Powerlessness, some might say, is a natural condition of childhood. There is a critical difference, however, between respect for, or obedience to adult authority, and lack of control over the fundamental aspects of one's life.**

### Degradation

Degradation is another characteristic feature of life in a total institution. It can occur in both subtle and obvious ways. Gross physical punishment and beatings are only one form of degradation. Humiliation, discrimination, the constant message that “you're no good and will never amount to anything” – all contribute to what is commonly referred to as “low self-esteem”. This term is used to describe the harsh reality of months or years of being emotionally beaten down and having one's self-confidence and pride continually undermined, with little or no opportunity for nurturing, support or encouragement. Consider this example from the Mount Cashel inquiry:

[One boy] frequently wet his dormitory bedsheet. On each such occasion the moistened portion of the sheet was cut away by a Brother. When, one night, nothing remained of the bedsheet, save its hem, the resident was ordered out of his cot by a Brother and required to remove his underpants, the only article of clothing he was then wearing. He was given a canvas suitcase containing his few worldly goods and marched, while wearing nothing and bearing his suitcase, through his dormitory and all the others. He was required to shake hands with and say goodbye to all of the 90 or so residents then at Mount Cashel; having been told by the Brother escorting him that he would not be seeing his Orphanage chums again because his bedwetting required him to be exiled from Mount Cashel. Having bid his farewells he was led out onto the Orphanage grounds, then out through its gates, while some of his friends watched from the dormitory windows. It was a cool autumn night, about 10:30 p.m. The gates were secured and the doors of the Orphanage closed. He stood, naked, holding his suitcase on a public road in St. John's. Within half an hour he was repatriated by the Brother with his Orphanage comrades and furnished a fresh blanket under threat of future punishment if he wet his bed again.

The scars of such treatment may not be visible, but the damage is as real as in the cases of physical and sexual abuse.

### Powerlessness

Powerlessness, some might say, is a natural condition of childhood. There is a critical difference, however, between respect for, or obedience to adult authority, and lack of control over the fundamental aspects of one's life. There is a critical difference between accepting the directions of another in a context of parental love and affection and being roughly and coldly ordered around. Children can learn and understand that there are rules of behaviour that must be followed within a home, a school or an institution. Most children can accept that misbehaviour will lead to punishment or other consequences.

Power in an institution, however, is not reflected in the equitable enforcement of fair and explicit rules. It is reflected in the infliction of suffering on arbitrary grounds, the meting out of punishment disproportionate to the misconduct, or the imposition of rigid and overly harsh rules that make compliance a hardship and punishment a virtual certainty. For example:

At the Hearing the applicant testified that on his first night at the Training Schools, he was in the bathroom and admitted that he and another student were fooling around squirting tooth paste. A [Christian] Brother came from behind and punched him on the side of the head, striking his head on the wall. He was made to stand in front of the clock with his hands behind his back. He was very scared and [had] tears in his eyes. The Brother struck him with a closed fist on his shoulder, he fell on one knee and he was punched. Later on the Brother came and took him to another Brother's where he was sexually assaulted and bugged by both Brothers. Thereafter this would occur on a regular basis two or three times a week. Sometimes he was subjected to sexual assault by a single Brother, but most of the time it was with the two Brothers. At times, instruments would be inserted in his rectum.

A psychologist's report produced for the court summarised the abuse of an eleven-year-old male resident of a Protestant orphanage as follows:

He stated the abuse consisted of frequent beatings with a stick, hair pulled, thrown in the 'hole' for extended periods of time and on one occasion a female staff attempted to drown him in the bathtub.

These examples of punishment go so far beyond any reasonable bounds of how one would expect a caregiver to discipline a child that they cannot in any way be explained or excused.

The fear of arbitrary or excessive punishment generally relates to physical abuse. Added to this may also be the fear of a form of abuse that has nothing to do with rules and discipline, but everything to do with the arbitrary exercise of power: sexual abuse. It is an intensely private form of abuse, and a singularly potent expression of power and domination that totally undermines a person's autonomy.

Once that sense of the unchecked power of those in authority is firmly established, an atmosphere of insecurity and fear pervades an institution. Children do not have to experience arbitrary or excessive punishment to want to avoid it – they just have to witness enough of it to understand that they could be next.



Justice as healing is an old tradition in Aboriginal thought and society. Yet after our experiences with colonialism, racism, domination and oppression, we have returned to this tradition as a foundation for contemporary remedies. We need to explore in their totality our visions of Justice as healing. We need to rethink Justice from our traditions.

-James Youngblood Henderson, *Exploring Justice as Healing*

**T**he journey described here is not an usual one. It is an ancient one that takes us back to the root of our culture. It is part of a journey of rethinking justice from Aboriginal traditions.

Aboriginal justice is based on the natural laws given to us and the natural world by the Creator. From these laws flow our teachings and ceremonies which in turn shape the way we see the world and live our lives. The path to healing, harmony and balance is a difficult path. Understanding the root causes of our inner and outer imbalances is the first step to healing. Deciding to start on the path and finding healing is the second step.

Aboriginal justice is a way to understand the connection between our inner world and the natural laws and to seek the kind of healing that will bring us closer to our cultural and spiritual roots.

#### Justice within

Justice, being a spiritual principle, is not confined to repairing a dysfunction, an imbalance or even harm done by an individual or groups of individuals against another or a group of others. The journey from justice to healing starts with restoring balance within a person. This principle of justice to oneself is based in the Aboriginal concept of natural law.

Long ago our ancestors had a clear understanding of the natural law and they understood how all things were inter-connected. It was understood by our ancestors that when one walked with disrespect, their own spirit paid with retribution. Even by insulting the smallest child, one already insulted their own spirit.

-Gloria Lee, *Defining Traditional Healing*

The Spirit is a gift from the creator, a gift which helps us to preserve balance and harmony within. Being out of balance happens because one has not lived a "careful" life. By not living life in a good way we are not treating our spirit with justice. We are all, as human beings, offenders against our own spirit. Thus healing has first to start with the application of the principles of justice to our own selves.

When the way we live our lives is in conflict with the way the creator has meant us to live, that is, in harmony with the Natural Laws, we feel the conflict between our offended spirit and our offending actions. Too often we continue or increase our offending actions to punish our own spirit for talking to us, or for making us feel powerless. Thus the cycle of our own inner abuse continues.

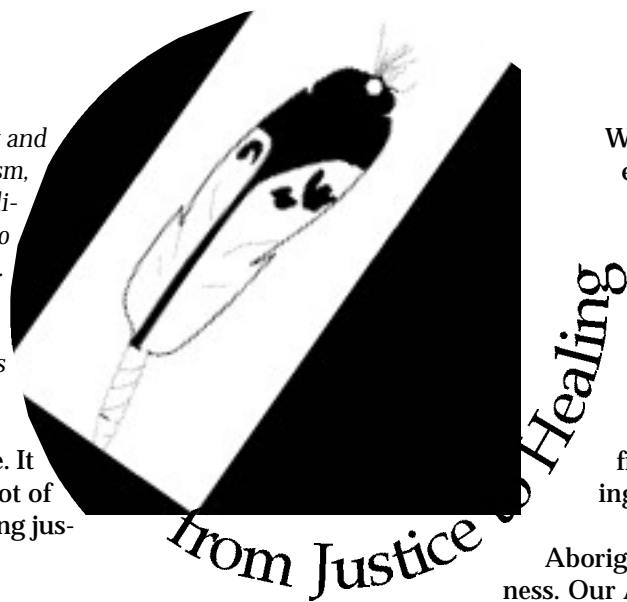
#### The right to dignity

One principle of Aboriginal justice is that every human being is born with a right to dignity. If we understand that this can be applied to us in the context of our own inner conflicts just as it is meant to be applied in cases of conflicts between individuals — offenders and victims — we can begin to see ourselves in a new light. We have the right to treat ourselves with dignity. This is a natural law. All the dimensions that make us human beings have a right to be treated with dignity, but especially our spirit.

When we are not treating ourselves with dignity, we cannot treat others with dignity. There is a direct connection between the imbalances in the inner fabric of the spirit, and the imbalances in the fabric of our communities, nations and world. Understanding that we have a right to dignity and why is one of the keys to healing.

The purpose of a justice system in an aboriginal society is to restore the peace and equilibrium within the community. With the support of Elders and the assistance of healers and Elder apprentices, we can find the right healing for the illness and an explanation for why the illness happened in the first place.

-Gloria Lee, *Defining Traditional Healing*



We are all hosts to a community of physical, spiritual, emotional and spiritual entities, which compose our body, our qualities, our thoughts, our feelings, our behaviours etc... The purpose of a justice system in this inner world is to restore balanced and harmonious relationships in all the dimensions of our being.

When these inner entities and communities are in conflict, we often feel overwhelmed, powerless and are tired or afraid to listen to their voices. We disconnect from our inner world by whatever means we can, blocking pain rather than face it, because this pain is too much.

Aboriginal justice is based on wholeness and interconnectedness. Our Aboriginal teachings, ceremonies and languages help us understand how harmonious relationships with all our relations, including our inner relations, can be established. They allow our inner voices to be expressed, heard, manifested and reconciled.

#### Accountability

Healing is also about taking responsibility. It is about re-learning how we are supposed to be. Without knowing what traditional responsibilities are then the right to self-determination really means nothing. Healing is about learning to act in a good way.

-Patricia Monture, *Justice as Healing: Thinking about change*

Another principle of Aboriginal justice is accountability. In most Aboriginal cultures, offenders are helped to understand the consequences of their behaviour and are required to participate actively in the restoring of the balance and harmony their actions have disturbed in their community.

To apply this principle to our inner world means that we need to understand how our inner imbalance has been created and to take responsibility for our own healing. This means that inner healing cannot wait for outer justice. We cannot give power to forces outside ourselves to make us well inside. Today, as in the time of our ancestors, the creator is still present, providing new strength to our Aboriginal teachings, ceremonies, cultures and languages. Today we can also use our wisdom to select healing ways from other directions, if we wish.

#### Decolonizing the inner self

Healing begins at one's own centre. This is the ultimate responsibility for one's well-being.

-Sue Deranger, 1996

When we apply Aboriginal principles of justice to our inner world through the teachings of our diverse cultures, we establish a connection with our past and thus find new dimensions of peace and balance through our sense of identity.

This process also enables us to uproot what does not belong to us but comes from traumatic experiences that were imposed on us. We can clear, reclaim and rename our inner territories. Through a process of emotional and spiritual healing appropriate to our culture, we can find balance and strength through inner justice.

We have suffered in so many ways. Our belief in the Creator, and the ways in which we manifested those beliefs, has been ridiculed and even been made illegal in Canada. Many of our people have turned to mind altering substances such as alcohol and drugs to anaesthetize us to our grim reality. The results of such practices and behaviour have been witnessed in many ways: lowered self-esteem, marital breakdown, elder abuse...As individuals we must have the opportunities to heal, to learn and to regain our self-esteem.

-Grand Council Treaty #3 Report on Community Consultations

#### Peoples of the circles – a sense of safety

In past times, just as today, the circle is the most sacred symbol in the belief system of Aboriginal people. The circle continues to symbolize the Circle of life which represents belief in the process wherein all living things are born, live, die, and then-re-enter the process once again.

-Donald. E. Worme, *Restoring the shattered confidence*

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The circle symbolically shows us that although — whether from cultural assimilation or abuse of self – our spirit may feel dead, we can always re-enter the healing process and be born to health and life again.

It also tells us that our healing our inner world through justice is not a journey we are meant to do alone. Aboriginal cultures teach that we are all involved in ongoing relationships, not only with each other but with all other things around us. Aboriginal teachings tell us that people heal best when they heal with each other.

The Circle. When Native people pray, we form a circle. When we dance, we dance in a circle to honour our Creator in Celebration. Mother earth is round, the trees are round, our Wigwams are round. Each day has a cycle. Grandmother Moon circles her Daughter, the Earth...

-Noel Knockwood, Spiritual Leader, Elder, MicMac Nation

Taking the first step to healing is like opening the door of an inner jail. It is entering the circle of healing, the Medicine Wheel. When we step out and join the circle, we begin to find the help and connections we need to heal ourselves.

Understanding begins with the Elders and what they have to teach. Their knowledge comes from the Creator. Because traditional healing is within each of us, we are all capable of healing ourselves, sometimes with the assistance or support of others such as Elders, Healers and Helpers.

-Gloria Lee, Defining Traditional Healing

### **Hope and the capacity to heal**

When we view ourselves as part of the universe which moves under the laws of the creator, we can see the relevance of our Aboriginal justice principles to inner healing and how our culture, customs and traditions, which were also provided to us by the creator, are essential to our healing.

This vision gives us hope and strength. We can always re-enter the circle of healing; we are not alone, we possess a knowledge that comes from the creator and people who can help us find this knowledge.

For those engaged in developing Healing projects and programs, the principles of Aboriginal justice and natural laws can provide a framework for inner healing.

### **PRINCIPLES OF INNER JUSTICE**

- All creation moves under the natural laws of the creator
- The Natural Laws teach us about connectedness, balance and harmony
- Aboriginal justice is based on the Creator's natural Laws. Imbalances, dysfunctions, conflicts occur when we do not know or respect these laws
- The knowledge of these natural Laws and the knowledge to restore balance are provided by the Creator to Elders and Healers
  - We can always re-enter the Circle of Life and Healing
- We are responsible for seeking own healing and following our own healing path
  - We heal best when we heal with each other
- Like the world outside, our inner world moves under the natural Laws of the Creator
  - Our inner world is made of many circles and dimensions.
- All these circles and dimensions are interconnected and imbalance in one creates imbalance in others.
- The core of our being is Spirit and healing our Spirit will heal many other parts of ourselves

We have today a wide choice of healing concepts, processes, therapies, programs, projects. But the teaching, as Aboriginal Peoples is different, because it is based on a holistic view of the world and creation.

*The First Nations' philosophy of justice is really an expanded understanding which in the end does not even mean "justice" any more. There is not an English word for the First Nations' wholistic meaning. Aboriginal people have inherently a higher standard or a fuller concept of what is required to make things right. This understanding is guided by the spiritual realm and the teachings of the Creator, sometimes referred to as the Natural Laws.*

-Gloria Lee, Defining Traditional Healing

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### **TRAINING OUTLINE**

The training had a number of components. These were:

Critical Incident Stress Debriefing was intended as the first week of the training. A CISD is "A group meeting or discussion about a distressing critical incident. Based upon core principles of education and crisis intervention, the CISD is designed to mitigate the impact of a critical incident and to assist the personnel in recovering as quickly as possible from the stress associated with the event. The CISD is run by a specially trained team which includes a mental health professional and peer support personnel from the emergency services (law enforcement, fire service, emergency medical services, nursing, disaster services, physicians, corrections, park services, dispatch, etc.) ...CISD is not psychotherapy nor a substitute for psychotherapy." (Mitchell and Everly, Critical Incident Stress Debriefing.)

The material used in the course can provide a foundation for the study of the treatment of Residential School Abuse. It defines the basic concepts of trauma and stress; and the research behind it indicates the potential long-term negative impact of traumatic events of lesser severity than often occurred in Residential School abuse.

### **Discussion of Residential School within the context of social and political history.**

Colonization and its impacts on First Nations people were assessed. Residential School as a tool of colonization was examined. The role of children in European society was looked at as was the role of children in First Nations society. The role of schooling in society and with respect to commerce was examined - in terms of goals of the schools and the reality afterwards. Methods of assisting clients to feel safe in the therapist's office were taught through exercises and some theory. Additionally, ways of respecting clients rights were discussed - e.g. do clients have to talk about residential school abuse before the healing process can begin? The younger trainees whose parents had been to residential school tended to believe that talking had to come before healing. Others, who had been to residential school, did not share this belief but were reluctant to speak up and say so. Phillips and Frederick in their book on healing post-trauma strongly recommend against forcing disclosure accompanied by description until clients have moved far enough into their healing process that they can avoid retraumatization. Even then the choice for verbal description should be that of the client. Participants were taught communication methods which they could use in any client interaction which would assist the client in feeling more comfortable. They learned about body language and about changes in facial expression and the need to initially check with clients regarding interpretation of body and facial language. They learned how to assess the meaning of changes in body and facial language - the types of questions and comments which they could ask in order to interpret body and facial language without asking the client for an interpretation. Additionally, they began to learn ways of assisting clients to stabilize themselves, before beginning the process of therapy. Participants learned how to recognize the basic language patterns

### **Kanaweyimik Healing Within the Circle Program: Values**

Healing within the community; belief in people's potential and internal resourcefulness; respect for cultural beliefs; belief in human willingness to thrive (or human desire to thrive in life) in the face of challenge; compassion, empathy, acceptance, patience, trust, love, honesty, integrity, ethical behaviour; personal and community rights; equality rights; confidentiality within legal and ethical boundaries.

### **ASSESSMENT OF TRAINING**

The group who initially came into training represented an assortment of professions. They came from a variety of backgrounds and from different generations. Some had attended and lived in Residential Schools. Others had been brought up in their own homes on the Reserve by parents who had attended residential school. Their training needs were as diverse as their backgrounds, and the jobs they did. Additionally, preconceptions about training were found to be as diverse as their backgrounds. Child Welfare staff operate in a difficult environment. They are caring people who frequently work with involuntary clients. They must be prepared to drop everything and go out on what are often emotionally draining emergencies. They must then return to the office and take up where they left off with paper work, meetings and the everyday stuff of any office. Additionally, they must keep abreast of the latest knowledge of child abuse, etc. Counsellors, or mental health workers, must work with voluntary clients. They see people who are in emotional or mental pain and actively looking for relief of that pain. They are able to book appointments and for the most part to keep them. While they occasionally deal with emergencies, this is rare. It is important for them to keep up with new information regarding treatment modalities - and in the case of a Residential School Abuse Treatment Program to keep up with both effective and emerging therapies in the trauma and post trauma field. Family violence staff have a similar mandate, although clients are frequently court-ordered to attend. Frequently clients in the anger management program have a background of attendance at residential school. The youth program has a very different recreational orientation. Other programs are equally different. The justice program may be seen as dealing with the results of inter-generational residential school abuse.



# Review of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation

## Funding Process

Throughout the course of our first two rounds of funding, AHF staff have encouraged feedback on our funding process at every turn and have monitored reaction. The Program Handbook and website contain a Feedback Form, and we have provided feedback forms at all of our Information Workshops. We have also completed a number of strategic planning sessions with our staff to strategize about how to best improve our operations. Together we have prepared a long-term work plan.

We have learned that we need to re-examine proposal deadlines, increase staff assistance to applicants at the outset of the process, provide more targeted financial support, address the need for multi-year funding, and find ways to better target high need and under-served areas. Survivors have told us they want the process to meet their needs and to be grassroots oriented. Many have also told us the application procedure was "too complicated."

We are addressing all of these areas and will continue to make changes to improve the Foundation's operations in the months ahead. We recognize that the funding process and Handbook are comprehensive and, therefore, can seem complex to those who are simply trying to apply for funding. Although certain elements are necessary to ensure accountability and to assist the Board in making wise and effective investments in healing, we are trying to balance this by providing as much assistance as we can to help people through the process.

As a result of our review, the following actions have been taken:

### Simplified Application

Taking into consideration feedback from Survivors, communities and project funding applicants, we have revised the lay-out and simplified the language and the application form in our second edition of our Handbook. We made application under specific themes optional, offering themes as suggestions for those who found them useful in developing their proposals. We also provided an electronic application form on CD-ROM, which we will improve upon for future rounds.

### Revised Proposal deadlines

Several funding cycles have been set over the life of the Foundation to provide potential applicants with more opportunities to submit proposals. Applicants who were not successful or who missed the first cycle can resubmit their proposals when new calls are made.

We have set two deadlines per year so that applicants have another chance to resubmit without having to wait an entire year to do so.

We have set up an in-house prescreening process to offer applicants the option of revising an application before submitting it.

### DEADLINES

There are 2 deadlines in the year 2000:  
February 25, 2000  
August 25, 2000

There are 2 deadlines in the year 2001:  
February 23, 2001  
August 31, 2001

### Increased staff assistance

In order to respond more effectively and rapidly to the healing needs of Survivors and Project funding applicants, we have increased staff assistance in two major areas, Proposal Review and Community Support.

### Evaluation and Monitoring Process

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has developed key performance indicators to monitor and evaluate funded projects. Performance indicators enable management to take action quickly to respond to and correct problems. As well, they provide the basis for determining whether a project's financial and activity reports can be deemed satisfactory. Applicants interested in multi-year funding must satisfy the key performance criteria to be recommended to the Board for funding renewal.

### Clearer reporting requirements for funded projects

To ensure efficient and responsible use of funds, as well as project safety and sustainability, the AHF developed common requirements for all funded projects related to financial and activity reporting, development and implementation of a code of ethics and safety measures, liability insurance, and evaluation and monitoring reporting.

### Limits for project funding

To provide funding to a greater number of communities, AHF has established criteria for two funding limits:

- funding limit of \$20,000.00 for sponsored individuals
- funding limit of approximately \$100,000.00 for single community, organization or group

Projects requiring funding over \$100,000.00 must meet specific criteria.

Based on these guidelines the Foundation expects to fund 400 projects each year.

### Refined appeal process

The AHF now has a well-defined process in place for appeals from applicants.

### Ongoing monitoring of one-time Funding program for Proposal Development Assistance

The Proposal Development assistance was a one-time grant to support applicants, and is no longer available as of March 31, 1999.

- total PDAF submissions received: 1282
- total PDAF submissions funded: 917
- total value of PDAF Funding: \$4,362,052.00
- 917 communities served
- 414 proposals submitted as a result of PDAF to date \*

\* PDAF is not time sensitive; those who have received PDA funds may submit a proposal at any time during our funding cycle.

### Refined proposal review process

The proposal review process has been refined to provide more intensive staff and professional reviews of proposals. These reviews will determine whether a proposal meets Mandatory Criteria, as well as the Administrative pre-screening requirement. Staff will work with applicants who need help bringing their proposals up to a minimum standard. This interaction should not be construed as a guarantee of funding. Rather, it is intended to assist applicants in ensuring that the application is complete and meets mandatory criteria.

The AHF has revised its review process to

- keep channels of communication open with applicants whose application needs to be improved before it is sent to external review
- give applicant whose application needs to be improved enough time to resubmit within the same deadline or the option to reapply in the next deadline
- give applicant whose proposal is not accepted for funding the opportunity, information and support to develop a better proposal.

The AHF has refined its criteria for reviewing proposals:

- 4 mandatory criteria
- 11 other criteria to assess the strength and weaknesses of the projects

### Enhanced Proposal Development support

To provide the kind of assistance requested by Aboriginal communities in regard to developing proposals, the AHF has developed a comprehensive support system:

- proposal development workshops in all parts of the country
- phone support provided by our Program Information team

From the start, the Board wanted to ensure the money entrusted to the Aboriginal Healing Foundation is administered and invested in the most effective and fair manner possible. It was deemed essential to seek the guidance of survivors in order to ensure the work of the Foundation is relevant. The Residential School Healing Strategy Conference, held in Squamish Territory on July 14, 15 and 16, 1998, was organized for that purpose. One message that rang clearly from survivors is that they expect a high degree of accountability from the Board. In order to maintain credibility and to garner trust, the Board must communicate that they are accountable to residential school survivors, that the Foundation is responding to their recommendations and that people at the grassroots are guiding the work of the Foundation.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation has developed and refined many channels of communication with Aboriginal people in their communities to learn what they think is needed to address the Legacy of Sexual Abuse and Physical Abuse in Residential Schools including intergenerational impacts.

#### Communications

There are important strategic communications considerations and implications in every aspect of the Foundation's work. The achievement of these goals will require a concerted communications effort.

#### Communications Team

The communication team is now complete with the recent addition of a Webmaster and a Database Officer.

#### Integrated Communications Strategy

To reach out to survivors and Aboriginal communities, the AHF has developed a comprehensive communications strategy, recently approved by the Board. This document provides a framework for the Foundation to promote itself effectively to target audiences. The strategy discusses, in general terms, the need for and purpose of the Foundation's communications, as well as the goals of the strategy. The document also identifies specific communications tools and activities that could be implemented to assist the Foundation in realizing its goals. The goals of the Foundation's communications strategy are to make the Foundation more effective in:

- helping Aboriginal people help themselves by providing resources for healing initiatives
- promoting among the Canadian public wide-spread understanding of the residential schools history and of the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools, including intergenerational impacts
- promoting awareness of healing issues and needs -nurturing a supportive public environment
- engaging Canadians in this healing process by encouraging them to walk with us on the path of reconciliation
- maintaining a consistently open and transparent process for the operation of the Foundation and its use and allocation of funds
- ensuring that the relationship and image of the Foundation to the community at large is positive
- promoting networking and fostering partnerships

#### Website

The AHF now has a fully functional, bilingual Website, which is being updated and enhanced on a weekly basis.

#### Database

We have refined our database and designed a process which will allow us to keep pace with expansion and updating while maintaining low mailing costs.

The database gives the AHF fingertips data access (by regions, provinces, activities, languages, nations and cultures) for over 1,600 individuals and 5,900 organisations.

#### Newsletter

We have developed an editorial policy to define a framework for our newsletter and to guide our relationship with our readers and contributors. This policy lays the foundation for an ongoing dialogue between the Foundation, Survivors and communities, and between Survivors and communities themselves.

We have developed an efficient economical production process and consolidated our network of contact with Aboriginal Residential Schools Survivors, funded projects, communities, individuals, leaders of thought, artists, poets, etc. interested in healing in the context of the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools.

This network gives us the necessary feedback and creative momentum to produce a quarterly newsletter which reflects the needs and aspirations of our readers. In March 2000 our readership numbered 3,500.

#### Handbooks & Application forms distribution

As of March 2000, the AHF has sent over 12,000 Handbooks 2000 (2nd Edition). Each handbook sent contained a CD-ROM version of the Application form.

#### Reporting

In the period from March 1999 to March 2000, the AHF has produced the following reports:

Regional Gathering Report; Presentation Report to the AFN; Presentation Report to the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development; Funded Projects report.

#### Regional Gatherings

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation is keenly interested in hearing from residential school survivors, organizations and others. To facilitate this we have put in place a number of ways people can share their views and feedback with us. The key method is through a series of dialogue sessions held in various regions throughout the country.

- September 28, 2000, Iqaluit, Nunavut
- October 12, 2000, Winnipeg, Manitoba
- October 26, 2000, Vancouver, BC
- November 9, 2000, Ottawa, Ontario
- November 23, 2000, Moncton, New Brunswick

#### Feedback

We also encourage people to speak with us when we travel to their regions for conferences, workshops and other gatherings. We can also be reached by phone, fax, email and regular mail. There is a toll-free line for those calling outside of the local Ottawa area. Email can be accessed through our web site.

Members of the AHF Board, its Chairman, and its Executive Director have attended a number of events organised by Aboriginal communities.

#### Media Liaison

The Communications Department has developed and maintained channels of communication with Aboriginal and Canadian Media through the following:

- initiating and responding to a number of printed media and radio interview invitations
- establishing a network of personal contact with aboriginal and Canadian media
- raising the AHF profile and accessibility to journalists at national level through its Media Link listing

In order to adapt our communication strategy and activities to the needs of our stakeholders, the Communications Department needs to gauge the mood of target audiences. To this end, the following processes have been implemented:

- regular monitoring of AHF coverage by daily and community newspapers and electronic media

from across Canada (Canadian and Aboriginal Media)

-responding to issues directly related to the AHF internal operations and mandate (op eds, letters to editors, interviews)

#### Public announcements

The AHF has announced events and activities through its newsletters, mail-outs, telephone and fax campaigns, press releases, other organizations communications newsletters and bulletin boards, AHF Website, Workshops, Conferences and paid advertisement.

#### Proposal Development and Information Workshops

To respond to demands from communities throughout Canada in regard to direct assistance in developing proposals, the AHF formed a team of Community Support Coordinators and developed and organized Proposal Development Workshops. The workshops, open to anyone interested in preparing and submitting a proposal, were held in all regions to provide information and help to applicants.

These two-day workshops are offered to assist those interested in developing and submitting proposals to the AHF. Participants are given the opportunity to work on their proposal during the workshop. The workshop reviews and discusses the following components of the application process:

- what the Foundation will fund
- how to complete an application form
- deadline dates
- application review process

Workshops are facilitated for multi-organization/Band/Community groups. Single Bands/communities/organizations are not eligible, given the small number of staff we have available for this purpose. Where possible, partnerships are developed with the Foundation to share jointly the coordination of the workshop. The Foundation provides the documents (Handbook 2000, application forms, evaluation forms, etc.) and other materials for the workshops.

### Reaching Us

*The Foundation's staff members are here to help you. Please call if we can be of service.*

#### Executive Offices

Mike DeGagné, Executive Director  
Linda Côté, Executive Assistant  
Extension 236

#### Programs

Yvonne Boyer, Director  
Pamela Lussier, Executive Assistant  
Extension 223

#### Finance

Ernie Daniels, Director  
Leanne Nagle, Executive Assistant  
Extension 261

#### Research

Gail Valaskakis, Director  
Jackie Brennan, Executive Assistant  
Extension 306

#### Communications

Kanatiio (Allen Gabriel), Director  
Marilyn McIvor, Executive Assistant  
Extension 245