

Healing Words

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A Publication of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation

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Photo courtesy of Frank Hope

Dear Readers,

We have such a lot to share with you in this issue! It seems there are never enough pages to tell you the stories, discoveries, ideas and accomplishments that come our way from people and communities all over Turtle Island. We think this has everything to do with the momentum toward wholeness that is taking place in Aboriginal communities and the fact that the Foundation, little by little, through its healing work over the last few years, has become one of the vantage points from where this movement of connectedness can be observed and shared.

It is a real shock to realise how much this core movement stands in sharp contrast to the movement of disintegration taking place outside of it. But it is no surprise: every Aboriginal culture is rooted in the concept of interconnectedness. The growing movement towards healing is the logical force which is slowly,

painstakingly, but steadily gathering the strands of Aboriginal cultures and weaving them back into solid and diversified societal fabrics. The Aboriginal healing circle of people is getting stronger.

This, however, is not the kind of news that the media are interested in – and for all those outside the circle, who rely on the pages of newspapers, the view is quite different. So be it. Let's carry on the work; the lack of media interest does not make it less real, valid, or significant.

It is our deepest wish that this message will stay with you, because although the Foundation has been given the opportunity to gain a bird's-eye view of this movement, we know that on the ground day-to-day obstacles are real and overwhelming and that the old, tireless and ever-more subtle pressures of oppression and assimilation are, every second of every day, doing their dissembling work.

It is the strong belief in the power of the worldview common to all Aboriginal cultures that will strengthen this growing but still fragile movement.

Believe in the sacred interconnectedness that ancestors preserved until this century, for just this purpose. Believe in its many powerfully relevant expressions in all aspects of Aboriginal life, whether it is the application of Aboriginal justice, of Aboriginal child-rearing and education, of Aboriginal self-knowledge, of family and community relationships, of Aboriginal social and economic development, of Aboriginal wellness and medicine, of Aboriginal arts and sciences, or, even more important in Aboriginal celebration of life and spirituality through ceremonies, rituals, teachings and ... humour!

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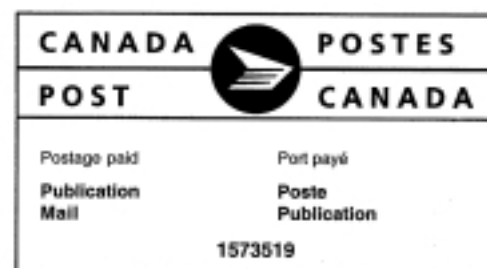
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Hi,

We would love to receive copies of your newsletter *Healing Words*. Your newsletter would be an excellent resource for our students in the Native Community Care Program here at Mohawk College. Please put us on your mailing list – we would appreciate receiving at least 50 copies of *Healing Words* ...

Thanks,
Jeannine Ambeault.

*

Warmest Greetings, from Donald M. Fowler, of Brockville, Ontario, and thank you so very, very, much for your speedy efforts in sending me all those remarkable issues of *Healing Words*. I've read all of them – except one – cover to cover, over the "Canada Day" weekend, and I'm about to read the last one. My goodness, what a thoroughly heart-breaking insight you have given me and my good spouse, Eva. Not only am I fully indebted to you wonderful people in the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, but also to all those magnificent contributors who have written messages, poems and otherwise contributed so insightfully to your *Healing Words* publication. The poems are so very poignant and stirring.

I have attached an outward-going communication that may be of interest to you two great editors – and possibly even to Georges Erasmus whose leadership and initiatives has started it all as a wonderfully "Healing" venture for all Aboriginals who have been so terribly victimised. All good luck to each one of you. I would like to be of help in any way I can – even at age 76 – at no charge whatsoever. My university training and interest has always been in the multi-discipline of "Sociopsychobiology" (par-

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**Healing
Words**

To receive *Healing Words*, write to us at Suite 801, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5E7 or phone 1-888-725-8886. (In Ottawa, phone 237-4441). Our fax number is (613) 237-4442 and our email is grobelin@ahf.ca or wspear@ahf.ca. Keep in mind that the newsletter is available in French and English and is free. Also available on-line! <http://www.ahf.ca>


**healing words
submissions**

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Submit your articles, letters, or other contributions by fax, mail, or email 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 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.

All submissions are subject to the approval of the editorial team and may be edited for spelling, grammar, and length.

youth
issue

**A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO
ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS !**



tially from Socio/Psycho studies in the Honours program at Queen's U, Kingston), but that's a glitzy euphemism for "what makes us tick".

Personally, I am very proud of what the ahf is not only trying to do, but also for what is achieving, for a whole variety of reasons. Bash on! Yours is great stuff for everybody who should be deeply concerned with the successes of the ahf.

Wegwajiwang ("End of the Rapids"),
(donald.)

Dear Donald,

Thank-you for your encouraging words! We appreciate your mail and we hope you will keep in touch.

In the Spirit of Healing,
-Giselle and Wayne.

*

Hi,

My name is Stacey Phillips and I am a member of the Oneida Nation of the Thames first Nation in Southern Ontario. I found your articles in *Healing Words* very interesting and thought I would share a bit of my own story. I am not old enough to have been sent to the "mush hole" like many of my uncles, aunts, and grandparents but experienced much of the same abuse in my own community.

As an individual who experienced much abuse in my life, I would like to say to all my brothers and sisters who have had similar experiences that there is hope, healing and life beyond sexual abuse. As many people who fall victim to sexual abuse, I was consumed with anger, shame, and many other emotions that I could not find the root cause of. In my early 20s I began to investigate the causes of this personal emotional upheaval and began to understand where the emotional upheaval was coming from.

As a male trying to come to terms and deal with the overwhelming emotions, I realized there were no services, native or non-native, in my area to assist me in my path of healing from sexual abuse. In turn I began working with traditional healers from my community and eventually met with healers regionally, and nationally. These individuals have helped me to get where I am today and I would like to give thanks to each and every one of them who took the time to share, teach, and assist in my healing path.

Today, I live my life to the fullest in the spirit of our Traditional teachings and give thanks for the simple things in my life: my family, friends, community, and people. I am a graduate and alumni from the University of Western Ontario, and I would have never been able to accomplish this without the elders helping me move past my childhood trauma. Today those experiences of my past take up very little time in my present – this is a choice that I made and continue to choose on a daily basis.

I channelled my anger into getting up every morning going to class and studying and learning more about social behavior and social organization so I could have a better understanding of why we are as we are today as a people. Everyone must choose their own healing path and seek people who can truly help – but the most important thing is we must act. If we fail to do anything about our current lives our children of tomorrow must then experience what the generations before them have experienced.

Stacey Phillips,
Oneida of The Thames first Nation.

Dear Stacey,

Thank-you for sharing these thoughts and experiences with the many readers of *Healing Words*. We think you make some very good points that are especially relevant to this, our Youth Issue. For example, you end your letter with a point that is often made but which deserves repeating:

"If we fail to do anything about our current lives our children of tomorrow must then experience what the generations before them have experienced."

Well said, Stacey.

-Giselle and Wayne.

*

Dear Recipient,

My name is Georgina Wilson, from the Heiltsuk/Laichwiltach Nations (Vancouver Island, BC). My crest is the wolf. I am interested in contributing some material for your publication. I write poetry, and non fiction, some of which have been published. The resulting material were featured in a teen zine, "The Wave," and an anthology, "Shadows of the Dawn."

Currently, I am on a healing journey. I have experienced profound spiritual renewal with this.

My father was in residential school, and so were my grandparents. Their experience has impacted my life.

I look forward to hearing from you.
May peace follow you wherever you walk,

Georgina Wilson.

Dear Georgina,

We look forward to reading your work! Our address is provided on page 2.

-Giselle and Wayne.

Help!

Healing Words is looking for pictures of residential schools and Aboriginal people for upcoming issues. You can send electronic copies or the pictures themselves – we will handle them *very carefully* and keep them only long enough to scan them (a few days). We also receive many requests for school pictures from Survivors and their descendants. In some cases the schools no longer

exist and family members have passed on, and so pictures and records are among only a few ways these people can learn about their family's and community's history. You'll be helping us out and contributing to the telling of the residential school story as well ...

For more information, please contact us at *Healing Words* (see page 2 for address).





· Dennis Saddleman

Dennis Saddleman is of the Nlaka'pamux and Okenagan Nations. He wrote these poems to help him deal with his residential school experiences.

“The images and metaphors in the poems describe how I see myself being impacted by residential school in Kamloops, BC.” - Dennis Saddleman.

Reborn

I'm an Indian book
I have stories of long ago
I have spiritual words from grandmothers and grandfathers

I have legends about grizzly bears who roamed their territories

Majestic eagles flying in circles timber wolves wise and fearless

I have tales, creation stories

I'm an Indian book
Someone ripped my leaves, broke my backbone, remove my cover, lost my contents, threw me in the trashcan

I'm an Indian book
A little girl from the rez picked me up from the trashcan

She found what I was so she repaired me internally and externally

I'm an Indian book

The little girl read my stories over and over

Editor's Note: "Reborn" is a poem that reminds him of his life before, during, and after residential school. "The beautiful red butterfly" reminds him about life after residential school.

The personal information about Dennis and the two poems were published in *The Survivors Journey*, the newsletter of the Indian Residential School Survivors Society.

I spoke to Dennis the first time over the phone nearly two years ago. He had sent us some poems and we kept those on file with the intention to print them in one of our newsletters dedicated to Survivors. Months passed, we decided to dedicate our newsletter to survivors in 2003. Meanwhile, Dennis kept in touch and we had the opportunity to talk about healing and about some parts of his own healing journey, in particular the work he was doing with youth and his writing.

In early July, I attended the wonderful Conference at UBC organised by the IRSSS, *Survival and Beyond*.

During the closing ceremony, Dennis was called to the stage and after a brief introduction, was invited to recite

two of his poems. I could hardly contain myself, first because of the unexpected opportunity to meet Dennis in person, but also because I was so moved by his poems.

From our telephone conversations, I sensed that Dennis was really moving forward and experiencing a great deal of personal transformation. I admired his courage, kindness, commitment and depth of understanding about life. That evening, as I joined Dennis at the table where he sat after his reading, I was truly excited to meet him. At his side was his lovely daughter. Although we could not speak at length during our meeting, I told Dennis how I felt about his poems: "they are so different from the ones you sent us many months ago, where you were really hurting, struggling with the worst of the trauma of residential school."

Rebirth and freedom hope and strength speak out from these two poems. Dennis says his poem helped him deal with his residential school experience, and I feel they will help many others too.

Dennis, thank you for who you are and for what you do.

- Giselle



The Wolf Ceremony

<http://www.vcircle.com/elders/archive/46.shtml>

I wanted to give something of my past to my grandson. So I took him into the woods, to a quiet spot. Seated at my feet he listened as I told him of the powers that were given to each creature.

He moved not a muscle as I explained how the woods had always provided us with food, homes, comfort, and religion. He was awed when I related to him how the wolf became our guardian, and when I told him that I would sing the sacred wolf song over him, he was overjoyed.

In my song, I appealed to the wolf to come and preside over us while I would perform the wolf ceremony so that the bondage between my grandson and the wolf would be lifelong.

I sang.

In my voice was the hope that clings to every heartbeat.

I sang.

In my words were the powers I inherited from my forefathers.

I sang.

In my cupped hands lay a spruce seed – the link to creation.

I sang.

In my eyes sparkled love.

I sang.

And the song floated on the sun's rays from tree to tree.

When I had ended, it was if the whole world listened with us to hear the wolf's reply.

We waited a long time

but none came.

Again I sang, humbly but as invitingly as I could, until my throat ached and my voice gave out.

All of a sudden I realized why no wolves had heard my sacred song. There were none left!

My heart filled with tears. I could no longer give my grandson faith in the past, our past.

At last I could whisper to him: "It is finished!"

"Can I go home now?" He asked, checking his watch to see if he would still be in time to catch his favorite program on TV.

I watched him disappear and wept in silence.

All is finished!

(by Chief Dan George, Chief of the Salish Band in Burrard Inlet, B.C.)



· Dennis Saddleman

The beautiful red butterfly

I'm a creepy crawler, I'm a caterpillar
Nobody wanted to hold me in their hands

I'm a creepy crawler I'm a caterpillar
Almost everyone said yuk at the sight of me

I'm a a creepy crawler I'm a caterpillar

I watched a beautiful red butterfly
flutter in the air

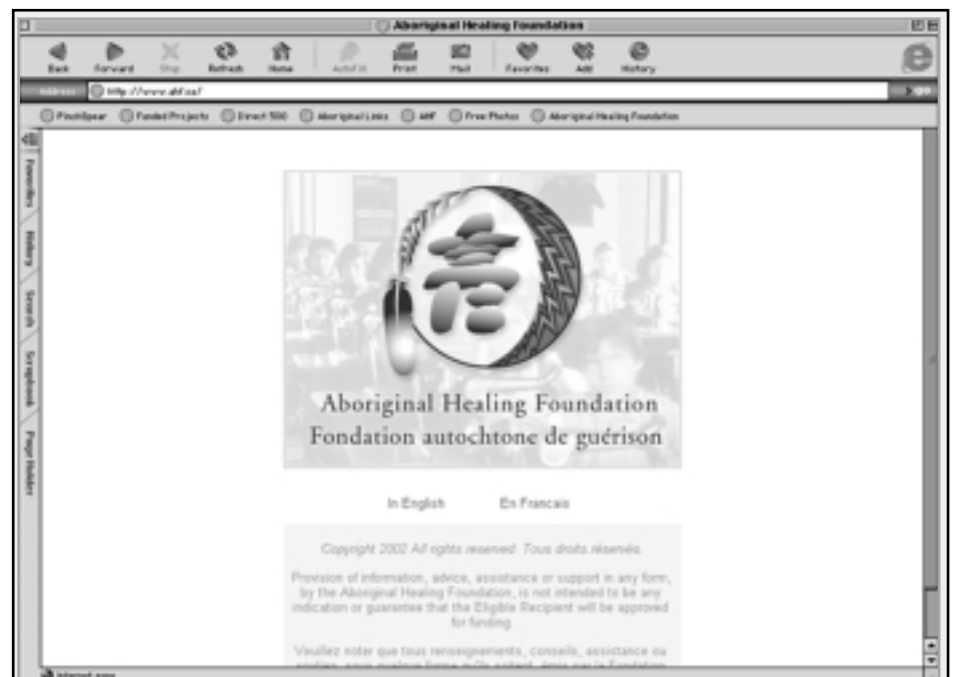
I'm a a creepy crawler I'm a caterpillar

The beautiful red butterfly landed beside me

She sang me a gentle song of friendship

Today I'm a beautiful red butterfly

I fluttered away with her song in my heart



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The Aboriginal Healing Foundation

continued from front cover ...

As Mary Fortier says in the article *Behind Closed Doors*, “I don’t consider myself a residential school survivor but a residential school ‘conqueror.’”

All things are connected. Everything in the universe is part of a single whole. Everything is connected in some way to everything else. It is therefore possible to understand something only if we can understand how it is connected to everything else.

The 12 Teachings of the Sacred Tree

In this issue, we bring you a glimpse of this contrast. It has particular relevance to residential schools, because they were the place where the core Aboriginal belief of interconnectedness as the path to wholeness was purposefully destroyed.

Sacred Lives explores many layers of this contrast through the eyes of a new generation of young Aboriginal people desperately searching for connection and wholeness. *Healing Words* is about walking the spiritual path with practical feet and “Out from the Shadow” offers some practical insights and concrete solutions which can be adapted to any cultural framework. Several important messages are conveyed in this article. First, the Youth to Youth approach, which is based on the Aboriginal principle of respect for the wisdom of those who have learned the lessons of life, be they young or old, and the belief that they are able to help and heal others. Second, the Aboriginal belief in the inherent goodness of human beings, in their capacity to change and heal and the importance of not judging the person but the act, summed in the words: it is the activity that needs condemnation, not the partakers.

To build the hope from “Out of the Shadows,” we offer you a companion article, “Independence, from rebellion to responsibility,” which offers insights into effective practices for helping youth move from rebellion to responsibility.

In our featured project, “Shakotsiën:tha,” we honour and celebrate the unique characteristics that have enabled Aboriginal peoples not only to survive but to remain proud, vital and beautiful. Extracts from the manual developed by the Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health, “Reclaiming Connections,” offer some insights to help healers in their sacred healing

work. It also underscores the message from Sacred Lives, reiterating the fact that Aboriginal peoples, including youth, “have much to teach about a culturally-sensitive approach to trauma recovery, beginning with how to restore faith in those whose trust in others and the system has been badly broken.”

One of the arguments used to justify Residential Schools was that children had to be “caught” as young as possible, because their young minds could be totally molded to the colonizing and assimilationist schemes of a dominant society. It is not the principle itself that is deviant, but the intention and purpose of those who used it to “destroy the Indian in the child,” and thus more speedily destroy Aboriginal cultures.

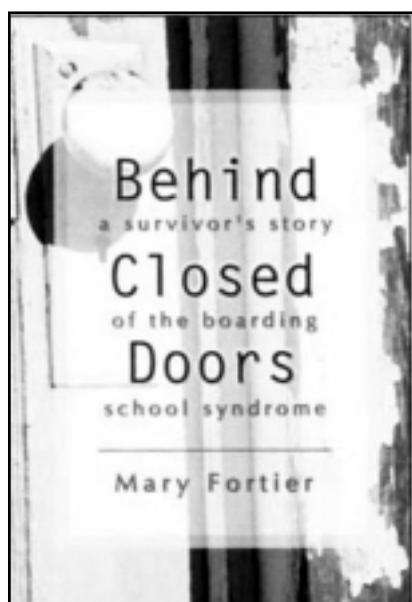
Aboriginal peoples have themselves always known this principle and have used it to pass on their cultures from generation to generation, and to raise children to become healthy and worthy members of their societies. An ever-growing number of Aboriginal nations and communities are using this principle to actively undo the harm and raise up a new generation by reclaiming their traditional child-rearing practices and education systems. It is crucial to reclaim this principle and to speed up the process of healing, so that no more Sacred Lives are lost to Aboriginal parents, families, communities and nations.

Finally, the article extracted from Mapping the Healing journey presents the findings of a study co-funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit of Solicitor General Canada. We hope you will find in these extracts a confirmation and affirmation of your own healing work, and the assurance that you are not alone in the struggles this work entails.

As Mary Fortier says in the article *Behind Closed Doors*, “I don’t consider myself a residential school survivor but a residential school ‘conqueror.’” We hope that you will recognize yourself as the “conqueror” you really are, are meant to be, for healing is the hardest battle of all.

- gr.

More information about getting this book ...



ISBN: 1-55306-330-9

Behind Closed Doors, A Survivor's Story of the Boarding School Syndrome

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See also Mary Fortier's website: <http://www.maryfortier.com/home.html>

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featured project

Shakotsiën:tha – “healing healers”

Prevention Strategies For Aboriginal Counsellors & Frontline Workers

Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

Space: We all need time and space away from our work and occasional escapes from the overwhelming demands of crises to keep balance and perspective. We also need to find ways of creating that sacred quiet place within ourselves.

Be aware of your own self-care: nurture balance by connecting with all aspects of yourself and your holistic health (spiritual, emotional, mental and physical). Laugh, cry, talk, share, paint and sing.

Express love and personal feelings – verbally and non-verbally. Get and give hugs. Do wonderful things for your body: eat good nutritious food, drink pure water and get enough rest and physical activity. Dance, get a message, make love.

Listen to your body: Take cedar baths and attend Sweat lodge ceremonies for cleansing a de-stressing.

Be open to change: Look at the world through different eyes. Every situation is an opportunity to learn and grow. Read, attend healing circles, meditate, listen to beautiful music. Connect with nature and the beauty and sacredness of life.

Keep your spirit strong: Pray (with tobacco), have a vision quest, talk to an Elder, smudge with medicines (sage, cedar or sweetgrass). Laugh at yourself.

Trust in yourself and your own personal resources: Remind yourself of your many strengths, gifts and resources.

Take the time to look special each day in whatever way that has meaning for you. Know who you are for the day.

Trust the people in your life: your co-workers, family and network of friends. Sometimes reconnecting with a loved one or a friend we never have the time to see grounds us in ways we can't do by ourselves. Don't be afraid to say “I love you.” Start a buddy system at work with daily check-ins.

Have common sense limitations: Be able to say no to a client or co-workers. Separate what they may need from what you are able to provide. Take mental health days when you need to. Speak your mind from your heart.

Keep a journal or life map or get a counselor: You need emotional support from peers and Elders who know the pressures of this work.

Vicarious trauma

Vicarious means rather than experiencing something directly and personally, we are impacted by the experiences/stories of someone else.

Vicarious trauma refers to the short and long term consequences of working with victims/survivors of trauma and the painful, disruptive effect this can have on the worker.

Characteristics

VT includes the strong feeling that may emerge during or after sessions with clients as well as our defences against those feelings.

Reactions of grief, rage or despair can intensify over time as we repeatedly hear about incidents of extreme cruelty or indifference to suffering.

Context

Vicarious trauma is intensified by the magnitude of the suffering witnessed by frontline workers. It is compounded by the frustration of too few resources to meet the urgency of the needs.

Symptoms

- intrusive imagery and thoughts; repeatedly visualizing traumatic events described by clients.
- deep disturbances, unable to quiet the mind and/or to stop thinking about clients problems.
- personal beliefs begin to change. Increasing loss of faith and inability to believe life can be meaningful and beautiful.
- troubled and self critical feelings, increasing difficulties in relationships with others.
- reduced sense of commitment and motivation for the work, increasing “knee-jerk” reactions and intolerance towards coworkers and/or clients and/or feelings of numbness and disconnection.
- changes in appetite, fatigue, swollen glands, physical illness.
- high staff turnover and sick days, increasing operation costs to the organisation.

Some strategies for self care

The Chinese symbol for “crisis” integrates elements of two other symbols: one for danger and the other for opportunity. The question underlying all crisis is “Where is the opportunity to learn and grow stronger in this situation?”

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Behind Closed Doors

by Mary Fortier

Printed with permission from Mary Fortier

Behind Closed Doors is the story of author Mary Fortier – what she has lived through and how she finally came to terms with the tragic events that occurred at St-Ann’s Residential School. Join Mary in her healing journey into coping, accepting and coming to terms with the events that have affected her youth and adulthood. Mary doesn’t consider herself a residential school survivor but a residential school “conqueror.”

Mary Fortier is a Cree, registered with the Constance Lake Reserve, Calstock, ON. She is married and has one son.

Her family shares a history of three generations that attended the Industrial, Boarding, and Residential Schools. In 1964, at the age of 9, Mary was enrolled at St. Ann’s Residential School, Fort Albany, Ontario. The experiences she had in the system severely affected her life as a youth and an adult.

For some of us, we were able to conceal our secrets and silent cries of despair within our hearts. We mastered survival skills at the hands of religious and lay people.

In 1975, Mary was diagnosed with a rare muscle disorder called Polymyositis. In 1982, her condition deteriorated, and she became a wheelchair user. The adjustment to diminished mobility was difficult. However, with the support of her husband Terry, Mary learned to accept the disability. In 1989, Mary returned to school as a mature student at Northern College, Porcupine Campus, South Porcupine and graduated as a Drug and Alcohol Counselor.

In 1991, Elaine Ziemia, Minister of Culture and Citizenship, appointed her to the Ontario Advisory Council for Persons with Disabilities and the Ontario Human Rights Task Force.

In 1996, Mary began to write “Survivors of Boarding School Syndrome.” She came across survivors that considered the residential school topics a “taboo” not to be discussed. Others said it was about time someone wrote about it. Mary carefully examined all the responses and decided that the history of native education had to be recorded.

In 1999 Gary Farmer, editor of *Aboriginal Voices*, published excerpts from her manuscript. On July 26, 2001, Mary received a grant to publish her manuscript from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. On January 25, 2002, *Behind Closed Doors: A Survivors Story Of The Boarding School Syndrome* was published.

On March 9, 2002, Mary received an International Women’s Day Achievement Award for Women with Disabilities

Mary welcomes you to join her on a healing journey that is blended with sadness, joy, tragedy and triumph!

The Annual Visits

“In the two years I spent at St. Ann’s (residential school), preparing for the annual visits of government officials was a crucial time for the entire school. Our routine was altered and rigid rules were elevated, our informal uniforms

were changed to formal attire. Staff showered us with temporary love as opposed to the coldness we endured most of the time. Our meals were changed. We all staged talent shows for the government officials to entertain them. In reality, it was a festive scene that covered the silence of our cries in despair.

In the first year’s visit, all the girls wore red jumpers with white blouses. All the boys wore light blue shirts, navy blazers and gray trousers. This formal wear worn by the girls was strictly for special visits. On Sundays, we wore sailor outfits and every other day we wore ordinary plaid jumpers. On the other hand, all the boys wore their best uniforms on special visits and on Sundays. The rest of the time they wore plain attire that resembled blue prison shirts and pants.

Prior to the arrival of the government officials, a strip of red carpet was rolled out on the ground leading up the stairway. All the groups met in front of the school. Girls and boys gathered and made room for the walkway. When the government officials arrived, we would greet them by singing the St. Ann’s theme as they walked on the red Carpet. Next, we would wait outside for about a half hour, while they inspected the school. This did not take long because everything was spotless and clean.

Then we would all return to our designated Recreation Rooms and wait for dinner to be served. Then we would all meet in the cafeteria and eat together. What was abnormal was that the sliding doors were open. A majority of the time these doors were closed to separate us from eating together. On these visits, our menus changed. We would be served: turkey, mashed potatoes, gravy and ice cream. This type of meal was normal for the staff and unusual for us because it was served at Christmas and Easter only. In addition, the rule of silence was temporarily banned and we were allowed to talk as we ate.

Afterwards, all the girls and boys would meet down stairs. The sliding doors that separated the older group of girls and boys were opened. Again, these doors were always locked to separate them. Chairs were set up for our guests. Our school president would officiate the opening with a presentation. He always delivered an excellent report on how the superiors provided excellent care for us. A social evening was planned to entertain the government officials and to impress them.

Meanwhile, we had practiced for weeks. Younger boys and girls sang songs. Older boys demonstrated their Boy Scout skills. Older girls demonstrated Girl Guide skills and cheerleading skills. Boys and girls played instruments as a band. We were bribed money to pay attention to the nun who led with the baton. Winners of the speaking contests presented their topics. The room would be filled with smiles and laughter.

By the time we completed our “show boating,” the government officials left with the image we were one big happy family. Native children contributed the bonus to cover the tips. We were obligated to pay and gratify the priests, brothers, and nuns and lay people. The next day, as the government officials left, we returned back to the same old routine, ordinary plain attire, basic menus and same regimented life-styles with rigid rules. For some of us, we were able to conceal our secrets and silent cries of despair within our hearts. We mastered survival skills at the hands of religious and lay people. Our supervisors would not think twice about enforcing harsh disciplinary measures to keep us under their control. They were exempt from “sin,” that we

◀ Behind Closed Doors

by Mary Fortier

as children, young men and women committed daily, without really understanding what it meant.

The designated play areas The government officials were not informed in the president's presentation about our rigid policies that were enforced by the religious orders and implemented by our supervisors. We were separated according to gender and age. The playground area was off limits in four sections. In front of the school little boys and the big boys shared half of the playground. At the back near the older boys playground, in a portable connected to the school, was the older girl's dormitory. A chain link fence was connected, marking the area off limits. On the other side of that chain link fence was the older girls' playground. In the opposite direction was the playground for the little girls, with an invisible line, which we were trained not to cross.

Tampered mail

There was no privacy for us. Any mail addressed to a student was opened and read. Parcels were opened and inspected; once the student was notified of the package it was kept under lock and key by the supervisor. Letters that were written by the students were censored before they were sealed and mailed out. Students' names were omitted: our names were modernized by the numerical system. The only place we were addressed by our names was in the class or being introduced at special public events.

Discouraging family relationships

Even though we had brothers, sisters, and relatives in other groups, we were refrained from greeting or acknowledging them in any matter, even if we met in the halls or other areas of the school.

Invested with violations Children were subjected to physical, mental, emotional, sexual, and spiritual abuse.

Reinforcing Religion

All students were required to make confirmation and communion by a certain age. We were to go to confession once a week, even if we did not understand what it meant. Most of us lied to go to confession. These were the continuous conditions we were subject to daily. No doubt in a place of dysfunction there had to be a balance of good times. During my stay at St. Ann's Residential School, I do remember the rare moments we were temporarily released from the rigidness of the school. We were permitted together at assembly for social activities and enjoyment. We watched movies: *The Butterfly Catcher*, *The Ten Commandments*, *Gone With The Wind*, *Seven Brides For Seven Brothers*, and *Shenandoah*

◀ featured project

Shakotsiën:tha – “healing healers”

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Strategies to prevent burn-out and vicarious trauma are the same as those for empowering trauma survivors. The first step is making a commitment to a holistic, balanced life at an individual as well as team and organisational levels. The second step is accepting that we are not to blame, nor are we crazy, or in the “wrong line” of work. The third step is to learn, use, and share effectively, culturally-based strategies to promote self-care with our peers.

Commitment for the way we work

Some practices used by frontline workers counsellors and Elders at the retreat that illustrate this commitment to a balanced life are as follows :

Practices of the Elders:

- Use the smudge daily to purify thoughts, words and action
- Continue to strengthen the circle, which has no beginning and no ending, to which we all belong

Frontline workers and counsellors:

- Remember to love and grow
- Connect with other organisations and share the work
- Sustain a commitment to empowering our people
- Grow and develop personally and professionally in working for our people
- Take the learning from his manual back to our organisations and communities

In closing

“Today our nations are struggling to regain their strength which once was found in our cultural teachings and worldview. We knew that life would be a hardship at times on this physical path. However, we also knew that everything we would need to face these hardships was placed upon Mother Earth and that she would provide medicine, food, shelter, clothing and teachings on how one should act and behave within Creation.

Our cultural histories cannot be honoured or praised if we as a people stand silently by and allow our own teachings of kindness, sharing, strength and honesty to be violated. Our past Grandfathers and Grandmothers would not allow for any of their people to go without; this is unheard of amongst our people. We were taught to share life, even if it meant that we had to go without for a time. We would offer our last piece of bread or meat or flour to someone who had none. We need to remind all of our people that we should never allow even one of us to suffer upon our provider, Mother Earth.”

- Daniel Printup, Addictions Counsellor.

The story of my childhood in the white wilderness

Sharing our Wabanaki Perspective - by Dan Ennis

Once a beautiful Indian child was born. A child full of light, life, love and peace. He was innocent and open, full of passion and joy. He saw light and happiness in everything, and he knew with his heart he was connected to all he saw. He knew instinctively he was related to all of creation and that he was part of his Earth Mother, a connection that would last a lifetime. This child of light also knew in his heart this connection needed to be nurtured, protected, respected, and observed through ceremonies for a lifetime.



But as this child grew older, things began to change as outside forces bombarded him. By the age of 12, most of the light, love, peace and sense of connection had been replaced by fear, isolation, anger and hate. He was becoming an adult who forgot about his heart and only used his brain. This meant he also forgot intuition and the sacred, spiritual aspects of his being. The spiritual light grew dim.

The sacred part of his being began to shrink and harden. By the time he was an adult, this sacred part was so small and lifeless, it seemed to be non-existent. So he lived the next 15 years like other adults who had lost their light, and at times, he filled the void with alcohol or drugs so the pain of his loss would be dulled.

Fortunately for him, there were still people in his life who retained their connection and light-energy. No matter how much he tried to ignore or forget them, these people were there to be his teachers. By now, his father had passed on but his mother was still doing what she could to keep her son open to this light-energy. Then the woman who would eventually become his wife was placed in his path to help him open again to the light.

After marriage the man who had lost his light was blessed with two sons. These children were as he had once been, beautiful children full of light, energy and love. But nothing could return him to those early days of light. Nothing – until he turned 43 years of age. At this time he was forced to undergo surgery. It was in the recovery room after this operation that the radiant light-energy he had stuffed down for all those years and covered with hurt and anger finally managed to surface. It dug its way out of the solid dark, polluted mass of anger, fear, hate, resentment, rage, ego, bitterness, helplessness, hopelessness and loneliness – all the toxic garbage that had accumulated through the years. The light surfaced to pay him a visit. It came in the form of a miniature image of himself.

This tiny image came out while the man slipped in and out of consciousness after the surgery. The tiny person came out of his left eye and looked around.

This small person did not like what he saw and immediately went back inside through the same place where he had earlier emerged. Later that same day, the man got very nauseous. He called for a nurse and asked for a bed pan. In a short time, he began to vomit. He vomited for a long time; it felt like hours. Then, he noticed the vomit was black in color, shiny and almost solid in density. There appeared to be gallons of it!

Unfortunately, the man did not immediately recognize that the black vomit represented his negative, hate-filled and fear-filled

life. He did not connect with that other self. He was only glad to put the fearful experience behind him.

The man did not recognize that his 30 years of wandering in the wilderness of white civilization had left him feeling lost, confused and fearful. It had taken away his identity and he no longer knew who he was. He did not recognize that most of his health problems, drinking problems, marriage problems, parenting problems, and spiritual problems, all stemmed from this loss of light-energy and his connectedness to Earth Mother and all her creatures.

For 30 years he had been trying to make himself into something he could never become: a white person. He did not recognize what his tiny visitor and all that black vomit were trying to show him. He could not understand he was being urged to let go of all that heavy bag of garbage he had carried for so long, all the hate, all the fear, all the rage, and all the false male ego that prevented his healing. That meant letting go of the past.

It was some time after that experience in the recovery room the man began to look seriously at the traditional teachings and sacred practices of his people. He began to actively seek out the Medicine Elders through books and films, and whenever possible, in person. He began attending pow-wows, traditional gatherings, spiritual gatherings, and spiritual ceremonies. He began to make connections with all of his personal, marital, family, and emotional dysfunction. He began to see the self-condemnation, lack of self-esteem, and loss of self-respect that had overtaken him in his attempt to become someone he could never be – white.

Slowly, he began to feel in his heart again. He began to believe he could have the strength to let go of the past and this heavy burden he had been carrying for so long. Being a modern male, having done time in gangs, in the military and as a competitor in team sports, he had been conditioned to think of himself as a tough man. That meant he could show no emotion if he was to be strong and fearless. But, he soon began to realize this macho image only hid



◀ The story of my childhood in the white wilderness

continued from previous page

a very weak, fear-filled human being. It was with this realization the man began to reconnect with the beautiful light-filled child from so long ago. He began to recognize his sacred connection to the Sacred Earth Mother, all the grandmothers, the aunts, the mates, the sisters, the daughters, and the granddaughters who are the life givers.

Through the Medicine Elders' traditional teachings, and the sacred ceremonies such as the sweatlodge ceremony, he began to heal and experience tremendous spiritual growth. That beautiful, spiritual child who had been born full of light 40 years before had begun his journey back to the light. Like so many children who arrive in this world as creatures of light and love and peace, a gift from Creator, this man had lost his true self through the journey to adulthood. Man-made religion, laws, and social norms had robbed him of those sacred birth gifts.

In 1993, Creator blessed this man and his wife with another very sacred gift. A new spiritual teacher arrived in the form of a grandson, and immediately he began to teach the sacred ways of the ancestors. The man who had been unable to hear the teachings that had come from his two sons sent by Creator so long before, was now able to pay close attention to this new teacher.

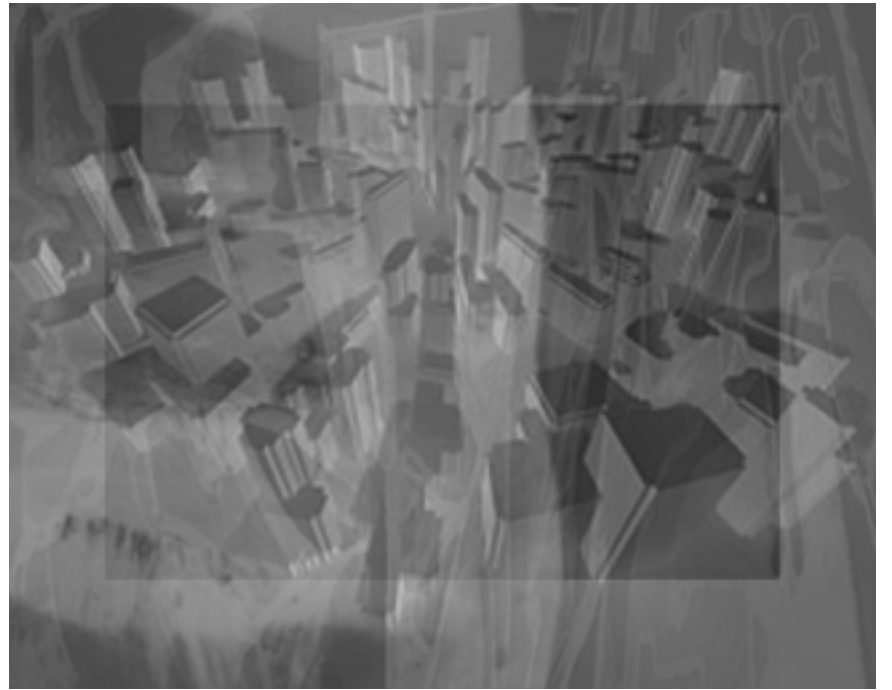
Today, it is still difficult for the man who had once lost his light-energy to hear all this tiny teacher has to bring to him. Much damage was done to this man by heartless adults, authorities and institutions in the white wilderness and at times his hearing is still impaired. But his desire for spiritual growth continues and his spirit continues to heal.

When the grandson was about three years old, the man experienced a vision of him during a sweatlodge ceremony. He saw the image of two human beings. One was small and one much larger and they were walking away from the man hand in hand. The image evoked feelings of love, safety, security and protection. The man immediately assumed the larger adult male represented himself and the smaller one represented his grandson. He was wrong.

At another sweatlodge ceremony, he had a similar vision. This time the grandson made it unmistakably clear that the larger human being was not the man but rather the grandchild. The small child in the vision was instead his grandfather, this man on his healing journey. Once again, the feelings of safety, security and protection overwhelmed the man. He was taken back in thought to the times he had walked hand in hand with those people who had cared most for him as a child: his grandmother, his grandfather, his mom and his dad.

He felt the security and joy of feeling the hand of all those who believed him to be a special gift. Walking with them, and listening to their voices, had fed that light-energy. He radiated in their presence. All these feelings flooded the man as he experienced this vision in the sweatlodge.

The grandson made it very clear that the man was indeed the child who needed guidance and protection. The man needed to feel the security of a loving hand in order to complete his healing journey. The man began to rec



As he accepted this healing, changing and growing would be a lifelong endeavor. And, even though the man could feel the light again in his heart, he was also sadly aware that much had been lost.

ognize, acknowledge and accept this child as his spirit teacher. He knew this child was a sacred gift with those special powers given by Creator. This knowledge filled the man's heart and his spiritual growth began to increase at a much more rapid pace than he had ever experienced.

Now, with his spirit teacher holding his hand and guiding him, the man could see and feel his spiritual growth. As he accepted this healing, changing and growing would be a lifelong endeavor. And, even though the man could feel the light again in his heart, he was also sadly aware that much had been lost. He would never be the same radiant, light-filled, love-filled teacher who had thrived before all the educators, religious people, bureaucrats, politicians and other dysfunctional people, had beaten and lied and ignored him as they systematically extinguished that light so he could conform to life "in the real world." Not during this earthwalk, at least.

Today, that man knows who he is and where he is going. He is no longer a small Indian child lost in a white wilderness. Today, he has learned to love who he is and to let go of fear. He holds on to the assurance that his spirit teacher is with him, and every day he gives thanks because the long, lonely, spirit-breaking journey in the wilderness of white civilization is finally over. Each day he meditates and asks for help from the powers of the Six Directions so he might remain on the healing path of life, the red road, and continue to grow spiritually moment by moment.

All My Relations,
Dan Ennis
Tobique first Nation.

Healing Residential School Scars

This article is from Deana Lancaster, News Reporter, *North Shore News*: <http://www.nsnews.com/issues00/w091100/a-top.html>

SEIS[^]LOM, whose European name is Glen C. Williams, was taken from his family and sent to a residential school at age eight. He's now a community crisis counsellor at the Squamish Nation Crisis Centre, helping others reconnect with their lives, families and culture.

* * *

When entering or leaving a sweat lodge, participants acknowledge their connection to all things by saying "All my relations."

The cleansing ceremony, like all Coast Salish traditions and beliefs, is deeply rooted in the physical world: the four directions, the earth, the trees, rivers and animals.

The river rocks that heat the lodge are the Grandfathers.

No matter what your faith, it shouldn't be difficult to respect a culture that is so intrinsically connected to nature.

"They've been on the earth much longer than the first people and have seen everything," explains Seis[^]lom after we've entered the lodge and crawled clockwise around the pit in the middle of the cedar bough-covered floor. The burst of steam that envelopes us when he splashes the Grandfathers with water is the breath of the creator. Throughout the ceremony we will give thanks and pray to the creator, and be cleansed.

We are blind in the thick blackness of the lodge – only the Grandfathers glow a quiet red.

But other senses are sharpened – I can feel the sweat and damp trickling down my back and the sharp branches of cedar crushed against my legs. Sage thrown on the Grandfathers smoulders and sometimes sparks, scenting the heat and searing nostrils and lungs.

Fat raindrops beat their own song on the outside of the lodge – a squat, half-sphere of heavy blankets and tarps over a frame of willow branches, set in a grassy backyard in Brackendale.

Through four rounds of sweating, then cooling off outside in icy water, we sing, pray and share. When the heat is too much we crouch, face pressed against the earth, breathing in sweet coolness.

Seis[^]lom is our guide, the water-pourer.

* * *

No matter what your faith, it shouldn't be difficult to respect a culture that is so intrinsically connected to nature. Yet in the troubled history of the relationship between the country's First Nations and the Europeans who made Canada their homeland there were repeated attempts to erase that culture and replace it with the language, religion and values of modern society. Residential schools, which were operat-



NEWS photo: Julie Iverson.

ed by the federal government and various religious organizations, such as the Catholic and Anglican Churches, were perhaps the most infamous of those attempts.

According to the Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Web site, the Federal government "began to play a role in the development and administration of this school system as early as 1874, mainly to meet its obligation, under the Indian Act, to provide an education to Aboriginal people, as well as to assist with their integration into the broader Canadian society." In 1920, the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) decided to make school mandatory for children aged seven to 15, and 1946 saw the peak of the residential school movement with 76 of them in operation across Canada.

Not long after, the schools began closing, and just what strategies the nuns and priests of the residential schools used to "assist" their students' integration into the broader Canadian society began to emerge.

Seis[^]lom, whose European name is Glen C. Williams, is now 52 years old. He was eight years old when he was taken from his family in Mount Currie, near Pemberton, and sent to St. Mary's school in Mission.

"When I first arrived there I could only speak my native language. I didn't know English," he said. But speaking anything other than English was forbidden. Children were punished by strapping and public humiliation.

"They would strap us on the front of our hands, on the back of our hands, they'd send us to stand in the corner."

In documents detailing stories of the abuse that took place in the schools across Canada, there is one tale of a boy who had needles pushed through his tongue for speaking his native language. Many children were abused verbally by the nuns and priests, called animals and told their background and culture were evil.

Then there was the hunger. The food was "less than substandard," said Seis[^]lom. "I guess you would call it gruel. We used to break into the kitchen and steal things ... even the things that our own grandparents had sent us. They kept it locked up in cupboards."

As well, the students were separated from siblings, and had to do strenuous farm chores under strict supervision. But worst of all, after the schools began shutting down, stories of physical and sexual abuse by supervisors and even by fellow students began to come to light.



◀ Healing Residential School Scars *continued*

Seis^lom had his first drink at school when he was 12 years old. He and his classmates were sometimes able to get downtown to buy it, or they stole wine from the priests.

“It was a quick release for a lot of us. A way of getting away from the loneliness and the anger.” And for Seis^lom, it became something he would do battle with from then on.

Not surprisingly, the “strategies” for integration didn’t work. Rather than creating a generation of Aboriginals that talked and acted like white men, the residential school system cut a wide path of destruction through a segment of the population that had previously been strong, tightly-knit and linked closely to the earth that supported it.

At the schools, the children lost their cultural identity, their language and their way of life. It changed their relationships with their families, and many failed to get the parenting skills they would need to raise their own children. They, and their children and grandchildren, have gone on to suffer in broken families and communities crippled by alcoholism, low graduation rates, and higher unemployment and crime rates than ever before.

In January of 1998, the federal government apologized for its role in developing the school system and said in part:

“As a country, we are burdened by past actions that resulted in weakening the identity of Aboriginal peoples, suppressing their languages and cultures, and outlawing spiritual practices. We must recognize the impact of these actions on the once self-sustaining nations that were disaggregated, disrupted, limited or even destroyed by the dispossession of traditional territory, by the relocation of Aboriginal people, and by some provisions of the Indian Act ... One aspect of our relationship with Aboriginal people over this period that requires particular attention is the Residential School system ... The Government of Canada acknowledges the role it played in the development and administration of these schools. Particularly to those individuals who experienced the tragedy of sexual and physical abuse at residential schools, and who have carried this burden believing that in some way they must be responsible, we wish to emphasize that what you experienced was not your fault and should never have happened. To those of you who suffered this tragedy at residential schools, we are deeply sorry.”

* * *

Acknowledging the mistake was a critical step, say those dealing with the fallout from the schools. But now, rather than dwelling in the past, it’s time for healing.

At the time that it apologized, the government also committed \$350 million to a community-based healing strategy.

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation was launched in May of the same year to manage the money. It funds initiatives across Canada for First Nations, Inuit and Métis which address issues such as physical and sexual abuse, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, and parenting skills.

On the North Shore and in Squamish there are four programs in place, funded by the foundation, which are designed to help heal members of the Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations.

The Squamish Nation Crisis Centre is one of them. Here, the focus is on community healing.

“We would like what we’re doing here with clients and volunteers to have a positive ripple effect in the community,” said Janice Wardrop, the volunteer coordinator at the centre. “That if they’re healing and getting stronger they’ll take it home and spread it through their families.”

Wardrop and other staff members – including coordinator of services Dion Thevarge; Lisa Andrew, the organizational liaison and intake worker in Squamish; and Seis^lom, now a community crisis counsellor – gathered at the centre in July to talk about what they are doing there.

It opened its doors almost a year ago, on Sept. 25, 1999. It offers contemporary services and forms of treatment: there’s a mental health worker on staff, and clients can receive counselling and art therapy, or get referrals to other services such as doctors, alcohol and drug treatment programs, and legal services.

But more importantly, the crisis centre also offers traditional forms of healing and treatment, arranging for clients to participate in purification ceremonies such as the sweat lodge and smudging, in talking circles, pipe ceremonies, herb ceremonies, and by involving elders in some clients’ treatment programs.

“For so long these services were offered by non-native agencies,” said Wardrop. “They were missing the traditional forms of healing. We want to take a holistic approach, and culture and spirituality are key in doing that.”

The centre is open to all members of the Squamish nation, both on reserve and off.

“In some cases we’re helping the second or third generation from someone who went to a residential school,” said Dion. “It’s different in every family, but that absence of spirituality ... of beliefs and values, gets passed on. Clinically they have a lack of identity, they’re missing a sense of self.”

It’s not happening quickly, say the staff.

“Some people are open to it, but it takes a while for people to feel safe,” said Wardrop.

“Trust has been a major issue in the community,” added Seis^lom.

But progress is being made, more nation members come through the door seeking help every day, and the programs are continually evolving, depending on what the staff see as needs in the community. And it isn’t only nation members seeking treatment who spend time at the centre: about 30 volunteers help with administrative duties and man the crisis line.

There is a tragedy, said Seis^lom, in that many who suffered at residential schools never got the help they needed.

“There are those who have died, those who are lost ... and they have never been able to come forward and deal with what they went through.”

But for others who are speaking up now, and for their children and grandchildren, there is hope.

Through treatment centres like this one, the people of the First Nations are coming full circle and finding their way back to the culture and values that connect them to their physical world.

Reclaiming Connections

Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

What is Trauma?

Increasingly, psychological trauma is understood as an affliction of the powerless. During a traumatic event, the victim is rendered helpless by an overwhelming force. When the force is one of nature, it's called a natural disaster. When the force is that of another human being, we refer to atrocity or inhumanity. Traumatic events overwhelm the ordinary systems of care that give us a sense of control, connection and meaning. The word trauma means, in ancient Greek [τραύμα], "to wound."

Examples of Psychological Trauma

Trauma can be a one-time event or a series of ongoing experiences, including life-threatening situations such as car accidents, fire, physical violence, threats – or fear of harm to or death of one's children or family members. It includes sexual abuse, separation from family and/or community, war, extreme poverty or deprivation, chronic neglect, racism and other forms of oppression.

Who Are Trauma Survivors?

In the context of residential school abuse and forced relocation, we speak of both *direct survivors* and *survivors of the inter-generational impacts*. Both direct and inter-generational survivors have suffered traumatic, accumulated losses of family, culture, language and identity.

Direct survivors are the adults who as children suffered the trauma of forced removal or relocation away from families, home communities, languages and traditional ways of life.

Direct survivors are the adults, who as children endured multiple physical, emotional and sexual abuse and/or neglect by caregivers over many years of confinement in residential schools.

Direct survivors are the family and community members whose children were torn from them, who were deprived of the joys and responsibilities of raising generations of their own children, grandchildren, nieces and nephews.

Direct survivors are Aboriginal youth and adults who have been multiply revictimized through brutal treatment aimed at controlling their "dysfunctional" behaviour whether in prisons, in the streets, in psychiatric wards, mental health facilities, hospitals, addiction treatment centres, or schools.

Inter-generational survivors are the descendants of those children who spent their childhoods in residential schools depriving them of any ordinary sense of family, relationship-building, trust and community life, and whose childhood abuse, trauma and multiple losses were never recognized or resolved.

Because coping responses to traumatic abuse and neglect are so varied and complex, trauma survivors may carry any psychiatric diagnosis or, frequently, many diagnoses.

A culturally-based healing model for recovery from residential school and its intergenerational impacts

Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

Heart

Remembering,
Honouring and
Releasing

Mind

Restoring a holistic
Life through the
Wisdom of Culture

Body

Physical, Emotional
Mental and Spiritual
Re-Empowerment

Spirit

Commitment to
Safety and Respect
For self/Others

And because the abuse was directed against both boys and girls, survivors are of both sexes, now represent all ages, income level, sexual orientation or level of ability.

Although, in trauma recovery programs at present, the greater number of clients are female, many Aboriginal men and boys also suffered childhood abuse and trauma. Under-recognition and under-reporting of male childhood sexual abuse, as well as western socialization that teaches men and boys to deny or avoid feelings, are barriers to healing for Aboriginal men.

Trauma in the context of Residential Schools and Forced Relocation

Direct survivors of the residential school system have broken the long silence about their suffering.

They speak of witnessing violence and cruelty inflicted on other children or younger brothers and sisters, and being helpless to stop it.

They speak of being taken from their families and communities by force, some for

ten months of the year and others for their entire childhoods.

They speak of repeated abandonment, loneliness, and isolation.

They speak of trying to escape the abuse by running away, being tracked down by police, returned to school and punished.

They speak of families and communities who were powerless to protect them.

Inuit speak also of their childhood terror during a first plane ride to schools far away, of missing the tundra and familiar smells, foods, light and shadows of northern life.

They speak of an unexpectedly intense grief visiting sites of long-abandoned childhood camps; of finding, in decades of overgrowth, relics of a lost childhood life – cooking utensils, toys, buttons – all left behind in the abrupt departure of forced relocation.

Intergenerational Impacts

Many generations of Aboriginal children spent the greater part of their childhoods in residential schools. The abuse and neglect they suffered there left its mark on their adult lives as well as the lives of their descendants whose families have been characterized by further abuse and neglect.

As adults, many survivors of residential abuse found themselves struggling alone with the pain, rage and grief of unresolved trauma. Those who sought escape through marriage or domestic partnerships were often overwhelmed by the complex demands of intimacy, parenting and family life, without previous experience or preparation for it. Some were also revictimized by domestic violence or became themselves the abusers of their partners, children or parents. ▶

◀ Reclaiming Connections

Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

Intergenerational or multi-generational trauma happens when the effects of trauma are not resolved in one generation. When trauma is ignored and there is no support for dealing with it, the trauma will be passed from one generation to the next. What we learn to see as “normal” when we are children, we pass on to our own children.

Children who learn that sexual abuse is “normal”, and who have never dealt with the feelings that come from this, may inflict physical and sexual abuse upon their own children.

The unhealthy ways of behaving that people use to protect themselves can be passed on to children, without them even knowing they are doing so. This is the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in residential schools.

- Aboriginal Healing Foundation

Unresolved Trauma

The seeds of lifelong mistrust and fear are planted when children are harmed and betrayed by the people they love and depend on for care. Because abused children are frequently told by the abusive parent or caregiver the abuse is “for your own good,” the stage is set for self-blame and self-hatred.

Children who are abused by adults are also given another clear message – not to express their feelings about the abuse. As a result, traumatized children learn very early to survive repeated trauma through non-expressive coping mechanisms such as denial or dissociation.

When a child or adult is prevented from releasing overwhelming feelings such as rage, fear or grief, those feelings are unresolved.

The symptoms of unresolved psychological trauma are usually very severe. The most common are:

- substance abuse and/or addictions
- suicide or other self-harming behaviours such as slashing, burning, cutting
- dissociation (inability to feel)
- re-enactment.

The unresolved trauma of residential school abuse continues to impact individuals, families, communities and nations.

It will continue to do so until the feelings engendered by it can be expressed in healthy, creative ways.

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder? (PTSD)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a psychiatric disorder that can occur following a traumatic event or series of events.

PTSD is marked by repeated re-living of the traumatic event through dreams, hallucinations or flashbacks. Stimuli such as sights, sounds, smells or tastes associated with the event become triggers for these flashbacks.

Persons suffering from PTSD learn to maintain a constant state of vigilance to avoid anything that may cause a flashback. They may also use addictions to numb themselves from any sensory stimulation that might trigger recall of the initial trauma.

PTSD is characterized by complex biological changes as well as severe psy-

chological symptoms, often occurring in combination, such as depression or mental illness and substance abuse. PTSD impacts all aspects of a survivor’s world, including mental, physical, emotional and spiritual life.

What other factors are associated with development of PTSD?

PTSD is more likely to develop in persons whose subjective experience of the trauma includes the following.

- Greater magnitude, intensity, unpredictability, uncontrollability, betrayal or helplessness
- Sexual as opposed to non-sexual victimization
- Greater perception of threat, danger, horror or fear
- A social environment that promotes shame, guilt, stigma or self-hatred

The Biology of Trauma

People who are in danger need to be mobilized for strenuous action, able to dismiss hunger, fatigue or pain in order to focus only on survival. That is why during trauma, the body moves into a flight, fight or freeze fear response.

Under normal conditions, the brain prefers an even, balanced flow of its chemicals and message processing through the nervous system. But to cope with a traumatic event, the brain massively increases production of adrenalin to allow for greater strength and endurance. This increases the heart rate and blood pressure, causing hyper-arousal of the nervous system.

When a person re-experiences trauma repeatedly over time, the brain loses the ability to regulate its own chemistry. Chronic flooding of adrenalin into the system eventually temporarily depletes the supply of adrenalin. The brain tries to compensate for this by alternating patterns of over-stimulation and depletion.

During times when the brain is flooded with chemicals, the body enters a state of hyper-arousal, anxiety and fear. When in this state, survivors will react to seemingly harmless situations as if re-traumatized, appearing terrified of the people or places around them. On the other hand, when chemicals in the brain are depleted, survivors feel emotionally shut down with no interest or energy to reach out to others.

This explains why some traumatized people feel and act as if their nervous systems are completely disconnected from the present. As brain activity fluctuates, their feelings alternate between numbness and panic or sheer terror.

These physiological changes associated with PTSD also cause hyper-arousal of the nervous system, which is expressed in symptoms such as increased startle reflex, and sleep disturbances.

Impact of Trauma on Memory

The fight, flight or freeze fear response dramatically alters function in two areas of the brain, the *hippocampus* and *amygdala*. Because these areas of the brain are where memory is processed and integrated, there is distortion in how information is processed.

During a traumatic event, memory is shattered like broken glass, with some pieces being stored in the body (referred to as body memories) while others are stored as shards or glimpses of visual imagery, scents or sensations.

◀ Reclaiming Connections

Wabano Centre for Aboriginal Health

This fragmentation of memory occurring at the same time emotion is separated from memory due to dissociation, explains why many trauma survivors can only recall bits and pieces of the experience. In place of memory, they experience bouts of intense, overwhelming emotion without any clear image attached to explain the feelings.

What Are Triggers, Flashbacks and Flooding?

PTSD is marked by episodes of repeated reliving of the trauma through intrusive memories or flashbacks. During a flashback, survivors re-experience the feeling of the abuse as if it were occurring at that moment. Typically flashbacks are set off by stimulation of the senses, such as particular sounds, smells, tastes or types of touch. The terror of these experiences creates excessive fear and avoidance of any stimuli that might evoke a flashback. These stimuli are called triggers.

Sometimes survivors become so totally engulfed by the terror of reliving a traumatic event, they become utterly cut off from the present. This is referred to as flooding. New research on flooding suggests it is a neuropsychological event during which brain chemistry is completely overwhelmed by the flight, fight or freeze fear response.

Flashbacks and flooding are frightening experiences, both for survivors and those around them. Identifying the triggers that cause flashbacks, and building a base of inner strength to confront the memories, are the first steps toward re-empowerment.

Fear of Authority and Intimacy

People who have learned as children that those in authority will harm them, fail to protect them from harm, or abandon them, often develop a deep-seated fear of both authority figures and intimate relationships.

Survivors with such fears become skilled at undermining authority and intimacy as a survival mechanism.

As a result, many survivors experience difficulties in the formal, hierarchical education system and employment systems, above and beyond systemic and attitudinal barriers imposed by prejudice.

In personal relationships, adult survivors of traumatic disconnection in childhood tend to develop disruption patterns such as:

- ending relationships just as the newness wears off and closeness begins, or
- not allowing relationships to progress beyond certain limits of closeness, or
- ending relationships on an extremely negative or conflictual note

Such patterns can also be a form of re-enactment, allowing the survivor to lessen the fears of intimacy and loss by regaining a sense of power and control over abandonment.

Re-victimization

Re-victimization refers to conditions or circumstances, whether intended or unintended, that replicate in whole or in part, the original abuse; and conditions over which the individual has no control and whose impact is disempowerment, disconnection or pain, including “institutional indifference”.

Just as Aboriginal children suffered abuse at residential schools that were supposedly there to educate them, many have also suffered further abuse from counselling and psychiatric services, instead of healing.



Survivors of residential school abuse are especially vulnerable to revictimization due to ongoing marginalization and discrimination against Aboriginal Peoples.

Evidence of this marginalization is the level of social and political tolerance for continued injustices against Aboriginal Peoples, whether by police at Burnt Church, in Saskatchewan, or at Ipperwash, or by health care professionals who disallow smudging ceremonies in hospitals.

Developing an understanding of the conditions that cause re-victimization will help frontline workers and counsellors develop strategies to prevent it. We consider survivors of residential abuse are *re-victimized* in any situation where:

- the full scope of their suffering as children is denied or minimized
- they are blamed for the abuse
- they are not believed
- they are believed but not credible enough
- their cultural or language needs are not understood or taken into account

Without full awareness of the continuing impacts of colonization and ongoing risk of re-victimization, frontline workers and counsellors risk compounding the problems of Aboriginal clients instead of assisting them.

In terms of revictimization, the relationship between police and Aboriginal Peoples requires special sensitivity. Historically this relationship is characterized by deep-seated fear and mistrust.

In the context of residential school abuse, both the RCMP and provincial police enforced policies denying Aboriginal Peoples the right to family life by forcibly removing their children to schools or into foster care and adoption.

Further encounters between Aboriginal children and police often occurred when they ran away from the schools to escape abuse and were returned by police.

The historical role of police in the lives of Aboriginal Peoples, and the mutual mistrust generated by it, contributes directly to the following:

- The chances a 16-year-old Aboriginal boy will be imprisoned at least once by the age of 25 are 70%.
- The rate of incarceration of Aboriginal men is 11 times the rate of non-Aboriginal men.
- The rate of incarceration of Aboriginal women is 250 times the rate of non-Aboriginal women.
- The failure of police to act appropriately to protect Aboriginal Peoples was demonstrated in the brutal murder of two Métis women in Winnipeg whose repeated phone calls to police went unheeded.

This is the third in a series of four special issues on the principles of the Circle of Courage. This model is based on Native American and cross-cultural research that indicates that underlying positive development are four universal needs: belonging, mastery, independence, and generosity. Lakota artist George Blue Bird has illustrated these four needs in the cover art for this series and in the accompanying "four-directions medicine wheel." This issue highlights effective practices for helping youth move from rebellion to responsibility.



Raising Respectful Kids

Martin Brokenleg, Steve Van Bockern, and Larry Brendtro

Autonomous children and youth are responsibly independent. A responsible child or youth has developed the inner power of independence – the third component of the Circle of Courage. This is not just self-sufficiency, but rather the responsibility to engage in actions to make one's life a success. Parents and teachers who respect children will carefully discipline them by providing opportunities for taking responsibility for decisions. Teens who have been disciplined respectfully display the confidence that comes from a growing maturity. By the time they reach adulthood, such persons have a personal power that is tempered by graciousness. They demonstrate a deep respect for themselves, for others, and for all creation.

The Problem of Disrespect

Children are not born with inherent responsibility; they must learn it from persons with greater maturity and wisdom. Unfortunately, North America today is a place in which adults and youth are blatantly disrespectful – and even worse – toward one another. We have created a “culture of disrespect.” Disrespect toward children is so commonplace we seldom question it.

Cultures of Respect

It would be a major mistake to assume that a culture that is advanced in one area would necessarily be advanced in other areas. An example of this dynamic is the Aborigines of Australia. To function socially, Aborigines must know more than 500 kinship terms, which shows the social development and complexity of Aboriginal society. Their technological level, on the other hand, could be considered to be “Stone Age.” By contrast, North America has an advanced technological culture but – I believe – lags in spiritual development.

For example, the Lakota (Sioux) language has many more words for spiritual, emotional, and intellectual states than does English. Lakota society requires a more advanced social intelligence than does North American society. Traditional Native American culture placed a high value on individual freedom. In contrast to obedience models of discipline, the goal was to build respect by teaching inner discipline. Children were encouraged to make decisions, solve problems, and show personal responsibility. In turn, adults shared stories, modeled values, and provided guidance if children erred. In this environment, children learned to make responsible choices without coercion.

This pattern of mutual respect permeated Native cultures. Children and elders held each other in awe. In the Lakota language, children are “sacred beings.” The term “old man,” which is often used pejoratively in English, is

rendered in Lakota as “real man.” Women also had power. For example, in many tribes the grandmothers decided who was worthy of becoming a chief. Their selection depended on how a boy had treated others as he was growing up, because the worst possible leader would be one who might try to impose his will on others. Chiefs would never ask others to do what they would not do themselves.

Respect and Power

To Europeans, respect was based on power. Thus, principles of leadership among social equals were strange ideas to status-conscious European colonists. It was in the encounter between the European and Native civilizations that democracy was born. With the advent of democracy, old systems of education inevitably were challenged.

Blueprint for a Disrespectful School

Even adults who don't want to be dictators get drawn into coercive roles. We need to move beyond philosophical considerations about respect and disrespect and use sound principles to reshape practice. What follows are some common attitudes and strategies rooted in adult fear of losing control of young people. We have heard these kinds of statements in many schools:

- Let's impose a system-wide discipline policy so kids know who really runs this place. If they need to feel some power, we can give them a token student government game to play so they won't challenge our control of really important issues. We should make examples of troublemakers by announcing detention lists on the intercom. We have zero tolerance for any violence, so we need to come down hard on any bullies and let them know who is boss.
- We need to keep students on task and following the prescribed curriculum. Some just want to get into discussions about current events and dodge real learning. Teachers should pace the room like panthers to let students know they won't get away with anything. Keep students at their desks and quiet. We need to post rules and get more bite for the consequences. If anybody violates rules, put his or her name on the board. We need surprise locker searches, and maybe we should have those “drug dogs” come in and sniff around.
- We can use computers to schedule students, because they probably just want to choose classes with their friends. The only teachers they will remember years later are those who don't take any crap. We should prescribe the curriculum because they are too immature to decide what they need. I think it's time for another of those assertive discipline seminars; I felt so good after the last one, being reassured that this was my class and I rule it.

Kids Who Fight [the system]

Even when strong-willed kids are deprived of power, they will find ways of getting it. Disrespect is a perversion of power. Adults who are disrespectful abuse and belittle children. When these kids get big enough to fight back, they battle authority and bully peers. This draws more adult retaliation, and the conflict cycle is joined. Nobody wins.

Building Respect

In many tribal cultures, it is a custom to tell a story that embodies every central truth. At the end of the story, the adult seldom announces the moral, for



this would impose his or her view on the listener. The same idea can be applied to independence. To really understand it, each of us needs to find our own meaning.

The Power of Consensus

In the Western tradition, power is a zero-sum game: I win – you lose. Only cultures rooted in respect can ensure autonomy for all. Thus, the power of true independence happens best in the context of community. To make any important decisions, Lakota people use a consensus process. Virtually all North American Native people believe that this format allows each person's power and responsibility to be employed. Time undoubtedly would be saved by using majority rule, but the cost would be the loss of power of those in the minority.

The Power of a Child

In obedience cultures, respect is owed to those in authority. An example of an institution going against the obedience culture is Irving Alternative School in Sioux Falls, which was built on a philosophy of respecting children and using conflict resolution and mediation training. For example, one morning a first grader who was on hall duty was responsible for safety and smooth operation in the hallway. In all the commotion before class began, a sixth grader set a stack of books in the middle of the hallway while he put his coat in his locker. The first grader approached him but with a bit of hesitancy.

FIRST GRADER: "You can't leave books in the way like that."

SIXTH GRADER: "Why not?"

FIRST GRADER: "Someone could trip over them."

SIXTH GRADER: "Well, what if I put them over here by my locker?"

FIRST GRADER: "They'll be out of the way, and no one would trip then. I'll help you move them."

Respect for the Disrespectful

The Nisgaa' nation from the north coast of British Columbia have restored a ceremony for young people who commit serious offenses in the community. An offender will be taken to a deserted island and left with a tent and food and water for a year. Predictably, the young person (in this example, a boy) blames everyone else for his predicament. After a time, he acknowledges his own responsibility to care for himself and get over this mistake. Each week, men bring more food and water. There is no conversation, and they do not stay any longer than needed to drop off the supplies. At the end of the year, the youth is collected and brought to a long house where the community is gathered. One by one, the victim of the crime and any family members talk about what this crime did to their lives. Other members of the community may also speak to the youth. Finally, the young man has to speak to the community to express his regret. When this is completed, he is undressed and bathed, new ceremonial clothing is put on him, and he is given a new name. The leader of the nation tells him that the community will take him back because they need him, but he must understand his responsibility to lead a good life from now on. The leader then blows goose down into the air. When the down hits the ground, the young man is restored to a new life. Afterwards, there is dancing and feasting to welcome him back. In the memory of the Nisgaa' nation, this ceremony has never had to be repeated for an offender.

Conclusion

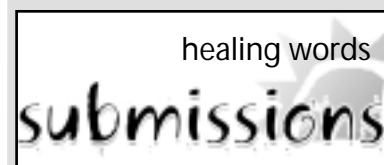
Across centuries of Western culture, adults tried to rear respectful kids by training them to be obedient. Even if children overtly obey elders, it is quite another matter to honor them as mandated by the Ten Commandments. Measured by a standard of respect, adults who demand obedience may be setting very low expectations. Virtually any animal can be trained to be obedient through systematic application of rewards or punishments. Only humans can develop self-discipline and character, becoming autonomous beings who make responsible decisions.

Martin Brokenleg, EdD, is a professor of Native American studies at Augustana College and dean of the Black Hills Seminars, a program of Reclaiming Youth International, which serves professionals working with troubled youth. This article is from a forthcoming book by the authors, Teaching Kids Respect.

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The training, research, and service activities of Reclaiming Youth International are described at their website: www.reclaiming.com. The authors can be contacted at: Reclaiming Youth International, PO Box 57, Lennox, SD 57039.



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Some thoughts on adult help with youth groups

By Michael Piwas, Davis Inlet

In this essay, I will write about adults becoming leaders of a youth group, club or organization. I will give a bunch of reasons why they should get involved in one of these youth groups. Any adult can be a good friend for a day and they can help kids who are in trouble. If the adults don't know how to help them he could go to one of the counsellors to talk to kids. Adults should be role models to us kids.

My first reason why adults should get involved in youth groups is that if the adults take part in the youth groups, they may change our behaviours, instead of us doing more solvents, drinking, and breaking the law. Adults can listen and give advise to kids about what they shouldn't go through when they were kids. Any adult can be a good friend. They can help kids stay out of trouble and not do more solvent abuse, stealing or breaking someone's property.

Kids could get counselling to get help and not to get in more trouble or go out to do more solvents or use drugs to get high. Grown-ups could get together and organize meetings or workshops with the kids. Kids that are addicted to drugs or solvents can ask adults their background when they were teenagers. Adults could question the kids about why they do drugs or solvents? How can they stop or get help? Do they want to go for treatment? Counsellors should organize treatment for kids who are addicted to drugs or solvents.

Elders could talk to kids about the old days and tell legends or teach them how to hunt, survive in the country. Adults could get organized to take the kids out in the country to get taught by elders. Adults and kids could build sweatlodges, and they could go in and sweat or heal themselves. Elders could talk about what the sweatlodge is, and what it was used for in the old days. Adults can go canoeing with the kids to take a break or go for fresh air. Others could go hunting with the kids or out on mug-ups on the hill, or where the rivers comes from, or fishing.

Adults can do fundraising like dances on Fridays, Saturdays, and the kids could help. They should open up a canteen. They can sell pizza, hotdogs, hamburgers and pop or juice. they could also organize tournaments like volleyball, ballhockey. If they have enough money to go on their trip, they could pick kids who are well-behaved, or they could order Nintendo 64 for the kids, or a pooltable.

These kids are still on the road, and we need your help. You could help us if we come forward. We need to learn from you.



The Band Councils should build sportsplexes for the kids and grown-ups to have fun. Kids could play on one side of the building while the grown-ups play ball hockey or volleyball. Adults could supervise the kids so they play fair and don't fight with other kids.

I hope I've got everything in this essay that adults could do as leaders of youth groups. We could change our behaviours. You could help to find our spirits that guided us before we started to lose our culture. Kids are still on the roads doing more solvents and drugs to get high. Every adult can be a role model to us kids, and they can listen to him/her about what she/he says. I think we can change our behaviours if adults take part in youth programs. These kids are still on the road, and we need your help. You could help us if we come forward. We need to learn from you.

My name is Michael Piwas, and I'm from Davis Inlet. I'm 18 years old. I'm in Level 2 at Peenamini McKenzie School. I've got two kids, and their names are Alice Ueuetimishkueu Rich and Paul Tshishuas Rich. My oldest is my daughter, and I was only 16 when I had her. I was a solvent abuser back then. I hope my children and your children won't go through what I went through. Many kids including myself need to be counselled.

Thank you for reading my essay.

Where Are The Children? – Healing the Legacy of the Residential Schools

National Archives of Canada – Exhibition Room B
395 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
June 22, 2002 to February 2, 2003

For more information: Angie Bruce
Toll-free: (888) 725-8886
In Ottawa (613) 237-4441



After the Treaty Dance at Fort Rae, the children are bound for the convent at Fort Resolution, NWT, aboard the mission schooner Guy, 1937. Photographer: Charles Keefer. National Archives of Canada/PA-073735

Children in the classroom of the North Camp School on the Blackfoot Reserve, Gleichen, Alberta, August 24, 1892. On the left is teacher Hugh Baker and standing to the right is Reverend J.W. Tims. Glenbow Archives/NA-1934-1



The traveling portion of this exhibition is now at the University of BC, Museum of Anthropology, 6393 Northwest Marine Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z2. The exhibition opened on July 4, 2002 and will remain there until February 1, 2003.

From Vancouver it will move to Wanuskewin Heritage Park Authority, R.R. #4, Saskatoon, SK S7K 3J7. The dates for this portion are February 14, 2003 until May 14, 2003.

Other locations are currently being secured. For more information and/or updates, contact Laura Milonas or Angie Bruce at the Aboriginal Healing Foundation: (888) 725-8886 (In Ottawa 613 237-4806).

Other Legacy of Hope Foundation news:
CALL FOR RECIPES from the Community.
The Legacy of Hope Foundation (formerly the

a photographic history of residential schools across Canada. The images in the exhibition are drawn primarily from The National Archives of Canada as well as nine additional archival sources, including four church archives. The historical narrative begins with a photograph taken in 1884 and concludes with new photographic portraits of contemporary survivors of the residential schools who are positive figures in today's Aboriginal communities.

Aboriginal-based lawsuits have reframed the way the photographs are interpreted and used today. We look to the past to understand today's systemic problems. Why is the Aboriginal population's rate of drug and alcohol abuse, poverty and unemployment, sexual and physical abuse, suicide rates, and incarceration so much higher than the rest of the Canadian population? Canada's failed program of social engineering and the sexual, mental and physical abuse that took place in residential schools, has had devastating inter-generational consequences. The exhibition encourages Aboriginal youth to question and seek solutions. To see the past is to understand the present and to move towards a healthy future.

Aboriginal Healing Charitable Association) is considering creating a cookbook from submissions from AHF-funded projects.

AHF Golf tournament: October 7, 2002 at the Kanata Golf and County Club, Kanata Link. For cookbook or golf tournament info, contact Laura Milonas or Angie Bruce at the Legacy of Hope Foundation: (888) 725-8886 (In Ottawa 613 237-4806).

*Out from the Shadows:
International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth*

March 12, 1998
Victoria, B.C., Canada

<http://sen.parl.gc.ca/lpearson/action-e.htm>

DECLARATION & AGENDA FOR ACTION of Sexually Exploited Children & Youth

In Victoria, Canada, on March 12, 1998, 55 delegates with experience as sexually exploited children and youth from across the Americas, presented a Declaration and Agenda for Action to representatives from participating governments, international non-governmental organizations and non-experiential delegates at *Out from the Shadows – First International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth*, a five day event which provided a venue for youth to speak.

DECLARATION

We, the sexually exploited child and youth delegates gathered in Victoria, Canada, for *Out From the Shadows – International Summit of Sexually Exploited Youth*, declare the following:

We declare that the term child or youth prostitute can no longer be used. These children and youth are sexually exploited and any language or reference to them must reflect this belief.

We declare that the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth is a form of child abuse and slavery.

We declare that all children and youth have the right to be protected from all forms of abuse, exploitation and the threat of abuse, harm or exploitation.

We declare that the commercial exploitation of children and youth must no longer be financially profitable.

We declare that all children and youth have the right to know their rights.

We declare that the issue of child and youth sexual exploitation must be a global priority and nations must not only hold their neighbors accountable but also themselves.

We declare that governments are obligated to create laws which reflect the principle of zero tolerance of all forms of abuse and exploitation of children and youth.

Our Agenda contains actions that are based on our beliefs. Our beliefs have come from what we have lived. To understand why these actions will work, you must understand our beliefs and the life experiences that have led to these beliefs.

WE BELIEVE that education is vital in our struggle against the sexual exploitation of children and youth.

WE BELIEVE that the voices and experiences of sexually exploited children and youth must be heard and be central to the development and implementation of action. We must be empowered to help ourselves.

WE BELIEVE that we have a right to resources that are directed towards sexually exploited children and youth and our very diverse needs.

WE BELIEVE that as children and youth, we are vulnerable to sexual exploitation whether male, female, or transgendered.

WE BELIEVE that our laws must protect us as sexually exploited children and youth and no longer punish us as criminals.

WE BELIEVE that we are all responsible for our children and youth, yet the issue is not ours alone. Governments, communities and society as a whole must be held accountable for the sexual exploitation of children and youth.

Sacred Lives

Canadian Aboriginal Children & Youth speak out about Sexual exploitation

<http://www.savethechildren.ca/en/whatwedo/pdf/sacredlives.pdf>

A song for a child

*There are some people
Who'll say
Don't cry, cause
That was yesterday
There are others
Who'll question if it's true
But, don't worry darling
I believe in you
I know how the anger
Devours every part
Of your soul, your spirit
Your mind, your very heart
I know how you live with the abuse
Every single day
I know how hard it is
To just push the pain away
I feel it when you scream
Though you sit and stare
I feel the walls push me away
Though you long for me to be there
I don't know what to do
What could I ever say
To erase the years gone by
And make it go away
Please darling
Before you turn to stone
Always, always remember
You are not alone*

- Cherry Kingsley

For six months we were haunted. There were moments when we felt we had lost all faith in humanity. It seemed there was no kindness, no mercy, and no hope. We would retire at the end of so many long days and nights, lonely, missing home, wishing we could 'unknow.'

Just when we felt like we could bear no more witness to the cruelties among us, we would be so touched, so moved, and so inspired by the youth. We found faith in the beauty of the youth who talked to us. Their courage, wisdom, clarity, strength, integrity and spirit compelled us and captured us. Their truth and hope gave us hope. We found solace in the beauty of our land, and in the stories of our elders.

We only wish that we could capture all of it for you the reader. We wish for you to be moved – to be so moved that after reading this you are in a different place – that we all are.

We want to dedicate this report to all of our children who still struggle, still suffer. And to all of you who through your suffering have found courage and vision to try to make it different. Thank you for talking to us, for sharing your stories, for believing still that it can be different. Your voices will be heard. T'ooyaksiy_isim.

- Cherry Kingsley and Melanie Clark

Report: National Aboriginal Consultation Project

In March 1999, Save the Children Canada started its *Out From the Shadows* program, which took as its starting point the *Declaration and Agenda for Action*. It soon became clear that special emphasis had to be placed on the issue of Aboriginal children and youth who were being commercially sexually exploited in Canada. It was also understood that a National Aboriginal Project for commercially sexually exploited children and youth could not be undertaken in any meaningful way without grounding it in child and youth participation.

The report then outlines various individual and systemic factors which commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal children and youth face. Historicizing social factors incumbent on Aboriginal children and youth explains their over-representation within the larger population of commercially sexually exploited people in Canada. The third part of the report outlines the youth perspective of abuse and exploitation, prevention, crisis intervention, harm reduction, exiting and healing, public attitudes, and youth participation.

We know what the problem is, now what's the solution?

This report contends that the very historical, cultural, and economic factors which construct the experiences of Aboriginal children and youth, actually limit the application of non-Aboriginal policy and programs designed for youth-at-risk.

Sexually exploited Aboriginal children and youth form a disproportionately high percentage of the sex trade. In some communities in Canada, commercial sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children and youth forms more than 90 per cent of the visible sex trade in areas where the Aboriginal population is less than 10 per cent.

This serious over-representation is directly linked to the unacceptable and continuing high level of risk factors which this population faces. The Aboriginal children and youth who participated in these consultations are perpetuating a vicious cycle which started hundreds of years ago. The negative impact of European colonialism on Native peoples and their cultures has been a decisive factor in creating and maintaining barriers of social, economic, and political inequality. We must realize that the physical and mental well-being of all Canadian children and youth are profoundly political issues, and are inseparable from social and economic situations.

The Aboriginal children and youth who participated in the cross-Canada consultations are marginalized and vulnerable due to both past and present circumstances.

If these children and youth do not live within their families, their communities and their cultures, where do they live? They exist at the edges of society, where their existence depends on compliance with exploitation and abuse. Having nowhere to go, most youth who find themselves in this situation are also lacking integral life skills, and have few, if any, chances for meaningful employment. Their situation becomes one of survival, and deprivation of the basic necessities of life ensures that sex for money, food, shelter, drugs, or clothing is a decision about day-to-day existence.

The illicit nature of commercial sexual exploitation prevents 'hard' statistics, but there is a widespread consensus among community organizations, service

◀ *Sacred Lives*

Canadian Aboriginal Children & Youth speak out about Sexual exploitation

<http://www.savethechildren.ca/en/whatwedo/pdf/sacredlives.pdf>

providers, and front line agencies that Aboriginal youth participation in the sex trade is increasing.

The Aboriginal youth who were consulted told us in virtually every community that there are no services for them, and that there is nothing for them to do. Front line service providers say they face long hours, chronic underfunding, and minimal resources. Government and private funders have told us there is either no demand for services or that the existing services are not being used. How can such divergent views exist at the same time?

Over the last twenty-five years, it has become increasingly obvious that the majority of programs, services and policies regarding the commercial sexual exploitation of children are not working. The problem has been defined again and again with frightening clarity; what we now need are practical solutions that are workable in diverse communities.

Over the last twenty years, a sizable body of research by academic, legal, and government bodies has focused on the nature and eradication of sexual exploitation. Within this research, however, the voices of Aboriginal children and youth are non-existent. At the same time there is a serious over-representation of Aboriginals experiencing abuse and exploitation which makes this deficiency of research truly shocking.

The simple fact of the matter is that commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth is a microcosm of many of the values, attitudes, and beliefs which are predominant in Canadian society at large.

The average age of juveniles who become involved in sex work is 14, with some starting as early as nine. Aboriginal children and youth at this age are not consenting adults who freely choose to be involved in the trade. While the term 'sex trade' is used in this document, it is crucial to remember that these youth are not trading fairly in a free market system; they are being exploited and abused in exchange for their survival.

Factors such as cultural and familial fragmentation, lack of life skills and higher education, substance abuse, poverty, a history of physical, sexual and/or emotional abuse, and racism create an environment in which many Aboriginal youth cannot help but feel marginalized and vulnerable. It is extremely difficult for exploited, marginalized and/or addicted youth to feel individual and social worth.

Labels of definition, such as 'troubled' youth or

'high-risk' youth diminish their self-esteem. How many see past these risk factors? How many see Aboriginal children and youth in the sex trade as potentially talented, passionate leaders? Quite often we see them as nothing but a problem. We never get a chance to talk to them about their gifts, their abilities, and their dreams. They are poets, writers, inventors, master storytellers, comedians, as well as brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, and friends. How do we keep these parts of them alive?

Part of accepting this challenge is the fundamental need to validate our youth, by honoring their experience and unique expertise. Experiential youth must play a central role in the creation, design, development and delivery of any programs expected to impact the lives of sexually exploited youth.

Aboriginal children and youth who participated in these cross-Canada consultations found the courage to share both their pain and their hopes. They need and deserve your attention, your compassion, and a clear response to their recommendations.

If you see them only as victims, you have missed the point. They ask for an opportunity to work with communities to ensure that no other youth will be forced to experience their struggle for survival. If we do not work with them to achieve this goal, we must share the guilt with those who have exploited and abused them. It is essential to understand that it is the activity that needs condemnation, not the partakers.

After reading this document, there is no excuse to turn away from the reality and say that you didn't know. Nor can you say that you don't know what to do in order to help them. In clear and simple terms, they have shared their needs and desires, and we must ensure that their recommendations do not become one more piece of paper piled under all the others.

Breaking the cycle

The commercial sex trade is exploiting young people at an ever-increasing rate, perpetuating cycles of violence, shame, disease, and death in the lives of countless vulnerable and marginalized children. Sexually exploited children and youth are forced to struggle for survival in the shadows of society. Most become painfully disconnected from family, community, culture, and hope.

One the most compelling problems for Canadians at the dawn of the 21st century is the reality that risk factors for Aboriginal children and youth remain at unacceptable levels. We must realize that the physical and mental well-being of Canadian children and youth are profoundly political issues, and are inseparable from social and economic considerations.

To attempt an understanding of the commercial sexual exploitation of Aboriginal children and youth without this wider context is to invalidate a lived history which continues to affect all of us today.

The lives of all children and youth are intimately connected with their parents and a sense of the wider community. We learn from watching, listening, absorbing, and, ultimately, repeating the words and actions which surround us. Aboriginal youth are often the direct recipients of the pain of racism, residential schooling, forced adoption, and cultural fragmentation. For the First Peoples of Canada, the forced fragmentation of Aboriginal culture has led to radical and negative changes in their connections to their lands and traditions, languages, and to a collective loss of self-esteem.

"Being culturally sensitive involves having an understanding and appreciation of the consequences of European contact on Aboriginal people. With loss of language and externally imposed denial of ancestry came a sense of confusion and loss of self-esteem, which resulted in alcoholism and traditions not being passed down. Despite the length of time Europeans have been here, there is still a lack of understanding about Aboriginal people and their circumstances.

They still negatively judge Aboriginal people based on blanket assumptions and negative stereotypes rather than considering each person's unique circumstances. The general public assumes that Aboriginal people have everything given to them and should be rich. However, these 'gifts' have had the negative impacts of loss of self-esteem, language and connections to land and traditions."

Aboriginal youth today face this legacy with further handicaps. While Aboriginal peoples make up only two to three per cent of Canada's population, in many places they form the majority of sex trade workers.

In Winnipeg, for example, virtually all street-involved youth are Aboriginal. What forces them in such high numbers into this life? The list of factors seems endless. What is happening, however

◀ Sacred Lives

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<http://www.savethechildren.ca/en/whatwedo/pdf/sacredlives.pdf>

is a reflection of the continuing struggles and trauma of the Aboriginal population as a whole.

There is powerful evidence that Aboriginal youth face much higher risk factors than the general population. These factors include, but are not limited to:

- Systematic fragmentation of culture
- Fragmentation of families
- Lack of higher education
- Lack of traditional job opportunities/unemployment
- Poverty
- Physical, sexual and emotional abuse
- Lack of role models and elders
- Substance abuse/addiction
- Homeless/nomadic
- Health risks
- Media stereotypes
- Over-representation in the judicial system
- Racism
- Gender issues
- Lack of resources
- Low self-esteem

Fragmentation of Culture, Fragmentation of Families

Historically, Aboriginal peoples in Canada have been denied the physical and social manifestations of their culture. Community celebrations such as potlatching and the Sun Dance, integral to the continuation of their histories, religions, and cultures, were outlawed. Children were taken from their homes and communities and placed in residential schools, where many experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse. They were forbidden to speak the languages of their ancestors, and taught to believe they were inferior peoples in need of 'salvation'. Reservations were created on isolated and marginal lands as a solution to the 'Indian problem'.

Families were destroyed as youth were forcibly taken by the Canadian government and given for adoption to non-Aboriginal families. These tragedies ensured that the rich and complex cultures of Aboriginal peoples in Canada became fragmented. Oral traditions, traditional ecological knowledge and ritual all suffered from this systemic suppression of Aboriginal peoples and cultures.

All of the Aboriginal youth who were consulted during the focus groups spoke of the physical, sexual, and/or emotional abuse they experienced in

their home lives, as parents, relatives, care givers, and neighbors continued to suffer from the legacy of cultural fragmentation. The cycle of abuse has continued through yet another generation. For the youth who participated in the cross-Canada consultations, their early years were filled with adults who were unable to break the cycle of pain and despair. In order to cope, their families and communities turned to alcohol, drugs, and violence to mask their own sense of hopelessness. Many of those who participated in the focus groups were either forced to leave home in an attempt to survive, or they were placed in the care of the government. Either way, these youth lacked the skills and models necessary to create a healthy life for themselves.

"Take those people from residential schools and generations after...[they need] some kind of counseling to deal with the fact that it happened to them. So that they won't continue the cycle, even though that down the line the cycle has already continued...[we need to say] "look, this happened to you, it's not your fault". Then they wouldn't take another innocent being and do it to them again. I get confused about it all, I know that you can't pinpoint it because it's been going on for decades, centuries... my abusers were abused; their abusers were abused, down the line. We're all hurting in one way or another, and I think that's why the cycle continues and turns.

- Female youth, Vancouver

"My stepfather was abused as a child, and he didn't know himself how to be a parent. So he did his best, which was basically what his father did to him. I think that things like this can be prevented...my situation, if the cycle of abuse is broken.

- Female youth, Halifax

Physical, Sexual and Emotional Abuse

The years of physical, sexual and emotional abuse endured by these youth ensure that it is only a small step into commercial sexual exploitation. Among adult survivors of abuse, common responses include profound feelings of shame and guilt, sleep disturbances, repression, low self-esteem, depression, isolation, inability to trust, problems in developing, the employment of maladaptive coping strategies, trouble maintaining intimate relationships, and self-abusive behaviour.

Tragically, up to 80 per cent of youth who are commercially sexually exploited in Canada report having been sexually abused. Many believe that they are profoundly defective and unworthy of living.

I grew up feeling I had no worth. I didn't put any worth on myself because I wasn't worth anything ... I'd given it free for how many past years of my life, so that's how I went about it.

- Female youth, Vancouver

Lack of Role Models and Elders

Aboriginal children and youth who participated in the consultations felt they did not have adequate parental role models and few opportunities to develop a positive sense of cultural heritage and pride. The youth felt that there was nowhere, and no one, to whom they could turn. Additionally, the youth felt that there are few Aboriginal elders and role models within Canadian communities.

Many young Aboriginals gravitate to the street where their 'street family' looks after their needs, making them feel wanted, nurtured, supported, and protected, at least initially. In the face of poverty, racism, institutionalized oppression, physical and sexual abuse, family violence, alcoholism and cultural shame, Aboriginal children and youth who are commercially sexually exploited experience increasing fragmentation of their individual identities and a profound personal disempowerment.

In the absence of meaningful role models within their communities, youth often turn to their peers and friends in times of crisis or need. If these children and youth do not have a physical, emotionally and sexually safe environment in which to explore their boundaries, they come to see the sex trade by their street, 'family' as acceptable.

Drug And Alcohol Addiction

Faced with the fragmentation of culture and family, physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, a lack of life skills, educational disparities, few job opportunities, and a lack of role models, it is easy to understand why Aboriginal peoples turn to alcohol and drugs as a coping mechanism.

Of course, non-Aboriginal peoples also become addicted to drugs and alcohol. Native peoples, however, continue to be over-represented in populations dealing with substance abuse, and it is important to remember that this is not because they are Aboriginal, but because of their legacy with issues of cultural genocide.

Using drugs and alcohol as a temporary escape from the realities of their daily existence, Aboriginal youth who are sexually exploited

◀ *Sacred Lives*

Canadian Aboriginal Children & Youth speak out about Sexual exploitation

<http://www.savethechildren.ca/en/whatwedo/pdf/sacredlives.pdf>

through prostitution are once again trapped in a cycle of pain, hopelessness, and shame. Alcohol and drugs sedate the feelings surrounding sex work. Many youth feel these substances can distance them from their lifestyles, and provide a mental and emotional break. Typically, youth begin to use heavily after abuse and/or entering the sex trade.

Health Risks

The majority of Aboriginal youth consulted who are, or were, in the sex trade struggle with addiction, often with more than one substance. Sharing needles has increased the risk not only of HIV/AIDS, but also of Hepatitis C, which many outreach workers now see as the new epidemic. Clients pay more for unprotected sex, or refuse to wear condoms, and sexually transmitted diseases in Aboriginal youth often go undetected until serious harm has resulted. Pregnancy is also a major health issue for young Aboriginal females. High rates of alcohol and drug abuse have resulted in an alarming proportion of Aboriginal babies having Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Fetal Narcotic Effects and Sudden Infant Death. Several youth who participated in the focus groups felt that their physical and mental disorders stemmed from this often undiagnosed syndrome.

At best, addiction leads to a suppression of the immune system, leaving children and youth open to a host of illnesses. At worst, it leads to death through illness, suicide, and violence. This is compounded by poor nutrition; most youth live on fast food. Along with poor sleeping patterns, malnutrition increases the likeliness of getting sick, and being unable to fight infections and illness.

There is unequivocal evidence that Aboriginal peoples suffer elevated mortality rates in relation to the general Canadian population.

“The loss of family and friends, public and police harassment, illness, harsh pimps, and the stress of continually struggling for survival in a hostile environment leaves many adolescent prostitutes depressed, emotionally drained, and in despair. These consequences then become added to the problematic situations many of these youth were fleeing in their home environment. The net result is a disturbed, fearful, and much victimized young person whose mental health is often in shambles.” (Mathews, 1987b:13)

Racism

Canadian society has a long history of racism. Racism in the 21st century can take on a variety of subtle forms, but few would deny its existence. Issues of historic genocide remain unresolved, and taint our celebrations of diversity. Confusion and helplessness plague our social relations, yet racism is not inevitable; it is untenable that we do not place the elimination of racism as a priority. Regardless of the geographic location of the focus groups, Aboriginal youth unanimously stated that racism was one of the largest influencing factors in their lives.

Mainstream society's expectation for Aboriginal peoples to walk a 'negative path' had led to a pervasive invalidation of Native cultures and history. This common stereotyping leaves Aboriginal children and youth feeling worthless and undeserving of help. Being told all of your life that you are inferior because of the colour of your skin shapes your thoughts, your actions, and your sense of self-worth.

In British Columbia, community consultations reveal that Aboriginal women are disproportionately the targets of assault. Racism appears to motivate these attacks; patterns of assaults in some areas suggest that victims are selected on the basis of race alone. Despite a proud heritage, shame marginalizes Aboriginal youth. Unfortunately, racism is a problem not only on an individual level; it has become institutionalized in our media and judicial system.

The Role of the Media

The media is an active and powerful component in shaping antagonisms between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples. Canadians state that they want the Aboriginal population to be on equal footings with the rest, yet when strides are made for a balance in political, social, and economic power, the media portrays the general population as outraged. We need look no further than the furor created by the Nisga'a treaty or more recently the Atlantic lobster fisheries crisis, and yet how many newspapers or news stations report on the fact that a quarter of all reserve housing is not even considered adequate for living in? While major traumas may be covered for their sheer newsworthiness, the media are guilty of massing diverse Native cultures, histories and peoples into a single category of 'special interest'. This may be the result of an understandable desire to get to one answer that can apply to

every Aboriginal 'issue', but it misrepresents the diversity of Aboriginal peoples and cultures.

Additionally, adolescents are bombarded with media messages which suggest that self-worth is measured by seductiveness. In a seeming paradox, North American culture rewards youthful appearance, seductive behaviour, and sexual attractiveness, and yet punishes youth who display those very qualities. It is deeply troubling that Canadian society punishes Aboriginal children and youth over these issues rather than blaming those who purchase, or profit from their sexual exploitation and vulnerability.

Over-Representation in the Judicial System

Within the judicial system, Aboriginal peoples, both adults and youth, are seriously over-represented. Aboriginal children are removed at a much higher rate from their homes than non-Aboriginal children. This translates into a serious over-representation of Native children and youth in care. Some care facilities work; many do not.

Studies have determined that the rate of sexual abuse in foster care is even higher than it is in the average home.

For those youth who are placed into foster care, the cycle of cultural and familial fragmentation is perpetuated. Consultations with Aboriginal youth identified their care experiences as paving the way for their commercial sexual exploitation.

Gender Issues

The vast majority of commercially sexually exploited youth are girls. Estimates of girls in the sex trade run between 75-80 per cent with the remainder being boys, transgendered and transsexual individuals. Gender minorities and gay youth are often subject to social and familial disapproval, and experience feelings of isolation from their peers. There is real vulnerability caused by being young and gay in a heterosexual world, which leads to social isolation in mainstream society. Aboriginal gay male youth, as well as those who are transgendered and transsexual, may feel forced into commercial sexual exploitation as a form of self-recognition and a means of practicing. Although they represent the minority of commercially sexually exploited youth, boys still need services since the risks associated with violence and homophobia are present regardless of biological gender.



Lack of Resources

When we examine how all of these issues interrelate it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Small wonder that in some communities, Aboriginal youth appear to make up 90 per cent of the visible sex trade. Attempting to cope with any one of these factors, much less the multiple ones faced by Aboriginal children and youth, can become a nightmare.

"It has been estimated that 50 per cent of Aboriginal children, whether living on or off reserve, are living in poverty. The ill health effects of poverty on children are well documented and particularly disturbing. Poor mothers are more likely to have low birth weight babies. Poor children are more likely to have chronic health problems and to be admitted to health care facilities. Poor children are more likely to die of injuries. Poor children are more likely to have psychiatric and emotional disorders. Poor children are more likely to do badly in school and drop out...On the basis of 1991 census data, more than 60 per cent of Aboriginal households in Winnipeg, Regina and Saskatoon were below the low income cut off or poverty line established by Statistics Canada."

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Vol.3, 169: 1996.

It has been shown that the average age of juveniles who become involved in sex work is 14. Aboriginal children at this age are not consenting adults who freely choose to be involved in the trade. For the commercially sexually exploited youth that were consulted during the focus groups, they did not feel that sex work was something that a person should do. None of these youth feel that it was a long-term career choice, and yet once they are trapped in the trade, few have any way out.

The Effects of Low Self-Esteem

Loss of self-esteem is a serious problem affecting many Aboriginal youth. Lack of self-esteem and confidence can be both a consequence and an antecedent to the above risk factors. Historically, Aboriginal peoples of North

America have faced cultural genocide through deliberate social, political and economic fragmentation and repression. This legacy is alive and well in our society today, despite protestations to the contrary.

"The...dysfunction of today is a legacy of disrupted relationships in the past, but the effects are broader and more diffuse than can be traced in a direct cause-and-effect relationship. There are entire communities whose members are imbued with a sense of violation and powerlessness, the effect of multiple violations having reverberated throughout kin networks. The treatment of individuals is only part of the healing process that needs to take place. Bonds of trust and hope must be rebuilt within whole communities as well."

- Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, Vol. 3, 1996:36

What is needed, not only for youth, but for all of society, is to understand and celebrate the contribution which youth bring to Canadian society. Respect and validation are essential ingredients for a healthy sense of self-esteem. Aboriginal children and youth who have been sexually exploited through prostitution need to know that they can become role models, and that they are the people who can and will be the ones that take the 21st century and make it a better place.

Many Aboriginal youth take an active and vital part in their communities, creating programs, services and activities that highlight their talents and concerns. Across Canada youth are searching for, and finding, meaningful cultural and community connections, learning the language of their grandparents, and graduating with honors from top universities.

A holistic future for Aboriginal youth requires that we ensure Canadian society welcomes and nurtures all youth, regardless of their ethnicity or background.

Developing Solutions

We need to involve commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal children and youth in developing solutions to this problem. Part of the

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history BRIEFS

Hayter Reed

Indian Affairs bureaucrat from 1881-1897

Hayter Reed was born May 26, 1849 in Prescott County, Ontario. Through family and marriage connections he was well-placed in government. His keen dedication to the System assured a quick rise to the top of the bureaucracy.



Above: Hayter Reed attends an Ottawa Ball as Rotinohshonni leader Donnacona, in 1896. Reed's historically-inaccurate portrayal suggests the indifference that informed his policies. Photo: National Archives of Canada PA-139841.

Reed began his career in the militia, at age 16, retiring from service in 1881 with the rank of Major. Informally trained as a lawyer, he never practiced. Instead, Reed entered Indian Affairs with the help of an uncle who had also been the Province of Canada's first prime minister, William Henry Draper.

In 1881 he was appointed Indian Agent of Battleford. From the beginning, Hayter Reed enforced Department rules and regulations with a military-styled strictness that earned him the nickname "Iron Heart."

Once promoted to Assistant Commissioner in 1884, Reed formulated and advanced new directives. He became Commissioner in 1888 and Deputy Superintendent in 1893.

To prevent Aboriginal people from competing successfully with non-Aboriginals, Deputy Superintendent Reed forbade the use of machinery on Indian farms and put in place a permit system regulating what Indians could buy, sell, or transact.

The permit system, like all of his policies, was designed to give him complete control over Aboriginal activity.

Although his opposition to the elective band council system did not prevail (he saw any form of Aboriginal government as a hindrance to assimilation), "severalty" – abolition of the tribal offices of chief and headmen – was perhaps his most enduring legacy.

Overall his policies aimed at "the destruction of communism and the creation of individuality,"* thereby complementing the Indian Residential School system's exertion of "every effort ... against anything calculated to keep fresh in the memories of the children habits and associations which it is one of the main objects of industrial education to obliterate."** Hayter Reed left Indian Affairs in 1897 and died on December 21, 1936. •

Sources: Sarah Carter. *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy*. McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993. Robert Nestor. "Hayter Reed: A Short Biography" (1999). Wayne Daugherty and Dennis Madill. *Indian Government Under Indian Act Legislation, 1868-1951*. Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1980. *PAC, RG10 Vol. 3911, File 111, 404: Letter to Superintendent General Dewdney from Commissioner Hayter Reed, 5 March 1891. **NAC RG10, volume 3818, file 57799, MR C 10143, Reed Report (1889).

The Individual Healing Journey

STAGE 1: The Journey Begins

The healing journey of individuals often begins when they come face to face with some inescapable consequence of a destructive pattern or behavior in their life or when they finally feel safe enough to tell their story.

They may have spent a significant part of their life unaware or denying that the pattern is destructive or may have believed that the rewards of the behavior outweighed the costs. But here they are (in jail, facing other legal consequences, pregnant, their spouse leaves, fired from work, tired of living this way, losing their kids, someone close dies, a spiritual awakening, being confronted, etc.) with some desire to change the way things are. The answer must be to stop the behavior. At this point people often enter some kind of treatment/therapy/support group or they may do it alone. Either way, the healing work remains the same. Often people make many attempts to start their healing but retreat again into denial and pain. When the threat of consequences outweighs the fear of opening up and trusting others or when people feel “sanctuary” (i.e. a sense of safety) in the relationship they develop with those working to support their healing then the journey can really begin. Usually the first steps involve telling their story, at first just to get it out and later to understand how the story is related to the pain and dysfunction in their lives.

It can be very hard to stop the behavior. The consequence of stopping may appear worse than continuing. People may go through many cycles of relapse and recovery. They may become stuck in this cycle for years – even a lifetime. The cycle will continue until they address the primary driving forces that gave rise to and maintain their patterns of dysfunction and addiction. There are two main reasons for this.

1. Substance abuse is usually a whole lifestyle and most addicts are part of an addictive subculture. Whether addicts get involved with the substance and then progress to the lifestyle or gain a sense of belonging within the subculture and find that substance abuse is the price of entry, their lives become oriented around a culture of addiction. Within this addictive sub-culture, the addicts’ basic human needs are met – albeit in a way that has very high costs. Their friends and family, their group membership and sense of belonging, their activities, their daily routines, their diet, their social role, their sense of purpose and order, their dress, their language, their sexuality, their rituals, symbols and music, their livelihood and much more are shaped by the addictive sub-culture. Their whole world and identity are bound up with it. “Quitting” is like trying to get out of a moving vehicle. Treatment is not simply living. Many people learn this the hard way when they return home from treatment centres.

2. Once the addictive behavior is stopped, traumatic, feelings and fearful consequences often surface. Feelings of shame, worthlessness, anger, rage, grief, loneliness, guilt, depression and sadness may have festered and built up for years. Once addicts “quit”, they become aware that such feelings dominate their inner landscape. They are likely to face terrifying ordeals – confronting abusers, being confronted by victims, accepting one’s inner nature or calling, taking responsibility for one’s life. They may have no effective coping strategies to replace the addictive behavior itself. A vicious cycle can ensue in which the addiction is used to treat the symptoms brought about by the withdrawal from addiction or just the complexities and stresses of daily life itself.

It is hard to walk this path alone. There are many things that can help a person to keep going: renewal experiences, supportive community, guides and mentors, participating in a disciplined path (such as traditional ceremonial cycles and activities) and on-going education. Much of the work is invisible because a person is building new foundations, putting down new roots.

The healing journey seldom means returning to a previous healthy life. It is a rite of passage which requires a separation from the old identity, a period of learning, guidance and support and the forging of a new identity, new patterns of life and new relationships.

STAGE 2: Partial Recovery

At this stage individuals have mostly stopped their addictive behavior, but the driving forces that sustained it are still present.

At this stage the journey involves struggling to uncover the roots of trauma from the past that caused the pain and dysfunctional behavior. It can be slow and painful work, but it can also be tremendously exhilarating. While the recovery is precarious, people often experience enthusiasm, excitement and renewed energy. They are doing something with their lives. They make discoveries about themselves. They may join new communities within which they gain acceptance and which rewards them for participating in the healing process. A new vision of possibility emerges. During this transition stage people need a lot of support. Many become involved in healing communities of some kind, whether they be therapeutic (such as A.A. or community treatment programs), religious (such as a church group) or focused on traditional cultural ways. These groups often meet many needs that were previously met by the addictive lifestyle and people may fully and wholeheartedly immerse themselves in this new “culture” (in some cases for the rest of their lives). The culture of recovery replaces the culture of addictions.

STAGE 3: The Long Trail

Once someone has reached a hard-won sense of stability, it takes a great deal of courage, discipline and motivation to continue in the healing journey.

The momentum begins to wear off, the length of the journey becomes apparent, support may drop off (“she’s just obsessed with healing!”), opposition may be encountered (“Why can’t she just let sleeping dogs lie?”) and there is life to get on with. Many people stop doing the healing work once the pain becomes bearable or once life seems manageable. This can be a dysfunctional stability where the old behavior is no longer dominant (I’m sober) but the consciousness that generated it still exists. It may come out in what seems to be less drastic or destructive ways. It may manifest in unhealthy and compulsive relationships with people. Work, food, tobacco and gambling.

Ultimately, this stage is about developing a new identity and life pattern. It may be long, slow work. There may be long periods of stagnation, enlivened





The Individual Healing Journey



by periods of growth and change. There will be many mistakes made, many lessons to be learned. New strategies and patterns will be tried on. Some will fit and some won't. Each person must find his or her own way through.

It is hard to walk this path alone. There are many things that can help a person to keep going: renewal experiences, supportive community, guides and mentors, participating in a disciplined path (such as traditional ceremonial cycles and activities) and ongoing education. Much of the work is invisible because a person is building new foundations, putting down new roots.

STAGE 4: Transformation and Renewal

Ultimately the healing journey is about the transformation of consciousness, acceptance and spiritual growth.

At this stage of the journey, it is no longer about dealing with the demons of the past. It becomes an attraction to a higher vision. There is a conscious determination to build one's life and community around life-enhancing principles (spiritual laws, original teachings, healthy virtues, etc.). There is a conscious articulation of the vision that motivates and draws you. The experience of the hurt self diminishes and the experience of universal self grows. As one's consciousness becomes more fully aligned with life-enhancing principles, one's outer life also naturally goes through profound changes. New relationships emerge. New pathways of expression and of service to the community become important parts of an emerging pattern of life. At this stage it often happens that people no longer need the "culture of recovery" and so participation in "healing" activities declines. Nevertheless, the self-centered focus of o to serving others and a personal identity of dysfunction is replaced by a much richer, deeper identity anchored in culture and community. §

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solution is accepting the fact that experiential youth can provide a powerful message to other youth, service providers and community leaders. We must also help the wider community understand that commercial sexual exploitation is not a lifestyle choice – it is child abuse.

Dangers of the trade

Recent research in Canada indicates that violence is far more likely to occur within the context of the street than in 'protected' indoor venues. Due to racist stereotyping and Eurocentric standards of beauty, Aboriginal sex trade workers are usually street trade workers. They are less likely than non-Aboriginal people to work in the more formalized indoor venues, leaving them further marginalized and in danger. For Aboriginal children and youth, physical violence and emotional abuse are daily elements in this life.

The major factors that lead to the deaths of Aboriginal children and youth who are sexually exploited through prostitution are murder, AIDS, suicide, and overdoses. Violence against those exploited through prostitution is extreme, and in many cities there is evidence that it is increasing. In every city and town there are 'dates' that are less interested in sex than in having the power to hurt youth involved in prostitution.

Almost all of the Aboriginal youth who participated in the cross-Canada consultations reported that they experienced violence while working – from clients, partners, pimps, and the police. They may have escaped their original abusers, yet continued survival in these marginalized circumstances ensures that the abuse continues. Many Aboriginal youth consulted had internalized this abuse as a common element in their lives, and felt powerless and unable to effect change. Even more frightening is that many youth, being recipients of abuse for most of their lives, come to identify commercial sexual exploitation as a 'normal' life progression.

Conclusion

Youth must be involved. One of the main concerns of this project is to facilitate Aboriginal youth participation in providing for a national understanding of commercial sexual exploitation. Youth participation is crucial in the advocacy and implementation of positive social change. Front line programs developed and delivered by experiential youth have a higher success than other programs and services. In order to create meaningful programs, policies, services, and strategies to address the commercial sexual exploitation of

children and youth, we must realize the importance, benefits, and unique perspectives of experiential youth. The benefits of youth participation in community development must be taken seriously to ensure any long-term success.

Intervention strategies and policy initiatives over the last 25 years have not helped in reducing the numbers, and there is a strong consensus across a broad spectrum of service providers and professional groups that the present situation cannot continue without serious consequences for both Aboriginal youth and Canadian society. Youth participation and community development are crucial components in meaningful and long-term solutions which will incorporate all members of our communities, particularly those who are in the most need of social and cultural reconnection.

By viewing Aboriginal youth involvement in the sex trade within a larger social context, and by acknowledging our collective social responsibility for the life circumstances of these young people, we can begin to offer solutions based on progressive economic and social policy rather than in repression by the law. There is overwhelming support for a number of initiatives aimed at helping young people who want to get out of the sex trade. All levels of government, band councils, service providers, community leaders, and policy makers have the resources and the skills, and the youths have the experience.

This document reflects the voices of Aboriginal youth who are, or have been, involved in commercial sexual exploitation. The written word cannot convey the anguish, despair and sadness expressed by the youth who participated in the consultations.

Listening to them is an important beginning, but they also require our trust, our empathy, our support, and our help. If you see these youth only as victims, you have missed the point. The youth have given us the insight to stop this cycle. What they are asking for is the opportunity to work with communities to ensure that no other youth will be forced to experience their struggle for survival.

After everything that they have endured, Aboriginal youth involved in the sex trade have little that hasn't been taken away from them. But one thing that they still have is hope. They have hope that you will truly listen to what they have had to say, and that you will respond quickly and decisively to their recommendations. If we hear them and do not help them, then we must share the guilt of those who have exploited and abused them.

[Editors' note: this article has been abridged and adapted from a 93-page report]

Mapping the Healing Journey

Absence of viable models and clear principles presents a critical challenge to Aboriginal communities and organisations struggling with healing issues, as well as to funders wishing to support healing work. This report, from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation and the Corrections Policy Unit of the Solicitor General Canada aims to uncover the rich experience of Aboriginal communities with healing processes and programs and to share this information to help shed light on the healing journey for all those at any stage of the process.

Lessons about healing and the healing journey

The following article is an extract of the report *Mapping the Healing Journey – The final report of a First Nation Research Project on Healing in Canadian Aboriginal Communities*. To obtain this report, please consult our list of sources in this issue.

Lessons learned about healing in Aboriginal communities can be summarized in the following way:

- Healing is possible for individuals and communities. Both appear to go through distinct stages of a healing journey.
- A healing journey is a long-term process, probably involving several decades.
- Healing cannot be confined to issues such as addictions, abuse or violence.
- Healing interventions and programs have most impact when they take place within the context of a wider community development plan.
- Community healing requires personal, cultural, economic, political, and social development initiatives woven together into a coherent, long-term, coordinated strategy.
- Such a coherent strategy requires integrated program development, funding delivery and on-going evaluation.
- Healing is directly connected to nation building program development, funding delivery and on-going evaluation.

What is Healing?

Healing is a development process aimed at achieving balance within oneself, within human relationships and between human beings and the natural and spiritual worlds. It has to do with choosing to live in harmony with the basic values and teachings that are at the core of all Aboriginal (as well as other) cultures. "Healing" actually describes a wide range of initiatives, impulses and efforts happening at the levels of the individual, the family, the community, organizations and institutions and the nation.

The concept of healing in Aboriginal communities focuses on well-being rather than on sickness. It focuses on moving the population toward wholeness and balance. It includes all levels of the community from individual to nation, and embraces politics, economics, patterns of social relations and the process of cultural recovery. To those schooled in the abstracted disciplines of Euro-



Canadian universities, such broadened definitions seem to include everything and therefore seem to mean nothing. The important point that Aboriginal people keep making is that their way of life – which was an integrated *system* of many dimensions – was taken away, and if healing doesn't mean restoring some form of life that can support human well-being, than what does it mean?

There are two distinct impulses within the community healing process. "Healing as recovery" essentially involves moving away from the pain and suffering experienced by a community in crises. "Healing as well-being" involves moving towards and maintaining healing pattern of life.

The healing journey may well take generations It took generations for many communities to internalize the pain and trauma they now carry and it may take generations to move past them. Healing is possible, however; and although there will always

be a need for programs to help people healing from the pain and suffering which is an inevitable part of life and to learn skills for healthy living, the type of intensive healing work which is now required will not necessarily always be needed. The healing process seems to go in cycles. Currently, there are some special situations (such as the legacy of residential schools and years of colonialism), which require intensive healing work. In time this work is likely to shift from recovery to rebuilding new patterns of life.

Healing as Decolonization At this point in history the healing journey has a lot to do with overcoming the legacy of dependency and dysfunction that are the result of decades of colonization, missionization and residential schools. The term "healing" refers to restoring human and community integrity and well-being that were destroyed by the aftermath of such historical trauma. It is certainly not confined to the restoration of mental health and the ending of dysfunctional behaviors such as abuse, addictions and violence, though it does, of course, include these things. Those working on the front lines of it sometimes describe community healing as "decolonization therapy."

The Community Healing Journey

The healing process seems to go in cycles. There are periods of great movement and apparent growth and periods of stagnation and retreat. This is true of any learning endeavor, from an individual mastering a new skill to an organization reorienting itself around new principles. It is very important for those leading and supporting healing to understand the learning process. Often what seems to be stagnation and retreat is actually a plateau on which important consolidation and learning takes place. The periods of rapid growth are invariably preceded by long periods where "nothing much happens." Learning how to track these cycles is an important step in itself so that people can gain an appreciation for the type of work that must be done at the various stages of the journey.

Periods of rapid growth and development are often triggered by a crisis of some sort If properly managed, such crises can create opportunities to mobilize people for rapid learning and coordinated action. Once the crisis loses its edge (either because the issue is dealt with to a significant extent or because

◀ Mapping the Healing Journey



It is not possible to talk about “healing” or the “healing journey” in one simple definition. We can talk about the attributes that someone acquires through personal healing. For example, healthy people do not need to control others, are not crippled by fears from the past, and have gained skills to look after themselves

people become discouraged, apathetic, bored, etc.), the healing process can really bog down as well. Because the healing work has become organized around a series of crises, it can be very difficult to shift gears in order to take advantage of new opportunities to mobilize the community to responsibility for its problems.

The Individual Healing Journey

People can heal, change, learn and grow There are inspirational and effective leaders of healing processes nation-wide who are a living testament to the possibility of transformation. Program initiatives across the country clearly demonstrate the life-altering power of engaging individuals (no matter how unhealthy they may be in a long-term, systematic transformation process leading from dysfunctional to wellness).

The personal and community healing journeys go hand-in-hand The leaders of the healing movement have to pay careful attention to their own wellness or they will not be able to work effectively in their communities. At the same time, progress with the general wellness levels in the communities gives the leaders the courage to continue and eventually the human resources they need to build on.

It is not possible to talk about “healing” or the “healing journey” in one simple definition We can talk about the attributes that someone acquires through personal healing. For example, healthy people do not need to control others, are not crippled by fears from the past and have gained skills to look after themselves. They have strong confidence and self-esteem, respect themselves and others and can listen to what others say about you without taking it inside. *It is also possible to talk about healing in terms of the medicine*

wheel Healing involves the whole person – body, mind, spirit and feelings. It involves the whole individual, the whole family, the whole community and the whole nation. It involves the whole cycle of life from childhood, to the time of youth, to our adult years and to eldership.

People only began their healing journey when they are ready and that is often when they hit bottom At this point, when they are in danger of losing something (i.e. their freedom, their relationship, their children, their job), people are ready to work. We have to be ready to work with people when they are ready (not in our time frames and on our terms).

Every recovering individual needs to have a dream (i.e. a vision and a plan) that lays out a pathway to a better future The dreams grow as people go further on their healing journey. For some the dream may entail getting more education and training. For others it may mean having access to credit or investment dollars. For others still, it may mean building viable partnerships or obtaining needed support and approval from the community leadership.

Elements of the Healing Journey

Many different healing methods and modalities have been tried in communities The lessons, both from community experience and the literature, is that there are many ways that are of value. Nothing works all the time or is appropriate for everyone. Body therapies, breathwork, spiritual healing, energy work, individual and group counselling approaches (of which there are more than 200 different documented forms), participation in traditional healing ways, participation in religious activities, recreation, skills training, arts and music, support groups, relaxation techniques and mind/body practices all have something to offer. Skilled helpers in communities are aware of the multiple entry points available and are able to guide different people to a modality that will be helpful for them.

A major piece of the healing journey is understanding the past What happened to us? What choices did we make that led to the layers of hurt? What was done to us? What did we lose? What did we use to have that we need to recover or rediscover?

“Forgiveness” is a controversial concept, given the justice-related issues connected to the legacy of residential schools Nevertheless, forgiveness is an essential part of healing. Unless people learn to forgive (not forget), they are still holding onto feelings that hurt them. The healing journey requires taking full responsibility (as individuals, families and communities) for the work that needs to be done to overcome that legacy.

Often it takes a crises (such as a disclosure of abuse on the part of a prominent person) to help the community overcome its denial that a problem exists and to recognize the need for healing.

Supporting the healing process

The Role of Leadership

1. Leadership for healing normally comes from one of three sectors: grassroots community members, professional agencies and departments, or political leadership. Eventually, as communities heal, all three sectors become engaged.
2. A community’s healing journey is often initially catalysed by a small group of people who devote themselves to this work over a period of many years, frequently at great personal sacrifice and with very little recognition. In many communities, women have been the real backbone and catalyst for the healing work.

◀ Mapping the Healing Journey

3. The participation and support of political leaders is a critical piece of the healing journey for communities. When it is missing, the healing process seems to limp along or lose momentum. The control over several important prerequisites to community healing resides within the governance system and leadership patterns of the community.

4. Support from the community's political leadership makes a big difference. It validates the importance of the healing work, it helps channel resources for healing work, and it empowers people.

5. The leadership of Elders is critical. A small group of Elders can create a powerful movement for healing in a community.

Obstacles and on-going challenges

Internal community challenges

Many healing-related workers in Aboriginal communities feel very isolated and beaten down by low wages, low levels of influence with senior program leaders, politicians and a tremendously heavy workload. The pressure of never-ending clients demands, too little money, too few staff, not enough time (ever) and the feeling of being overwhelmed drains the energy of those on the front lines. What sustains them is the knowledge they are making a real difference – that people are healing (in part) as a result of their efforts. But the burn-out rate is appalling.

For some communities, alcohol abuse is still a serious problem. Health Canada and the Aboriginal Healing Foundation seem to have turned their attention to other issues, such as physical and sexual abuse. Unfortunately for a significant number of communities that have not progressed a great deal on their healing journey, alcohol and drug abuse are still the most debilitating front and centre challenge to community wellness. Until this problem is effectively addressed, it is likely to be difficult, if not impossible, to make progress on other key wellness-related areas.

Getting agencies with different mandates and different funding to create a common vision and to work together is no small accomplishment. Part of the

reason inter-agency committees are difficult to sustain relates to the wellness levels of the people who work on them. In fact there is a bit of a catch 22 problem. The agencies, in collaboration with each other seek to engage in processes of recovery and development. But the people working in the agencies are often themselves in need of healing and have collectively created a working culture that mirrors the dysfunction of the community they are supposed to be helping. Building healthy organisations that model love, forgiveness, unity and mutual support amongst staff is of the utmost importance, because only such a healthy circle of people could hope to bring that kind of wellness to others.

Under the current political and economic system within which Aboriginal people are forced to live, there exists a set of built-in obstacles to sustainable healing that is likely to push subsequent generations of Aboriginal people back into patterns of dysfunction (addictions, abuse etc.) even though a previous generation worked very hard to eliminate those patterns.

External obstacles

The current Indian and Northern Affairs Canada Chief and Council system had been identified by every community taking part in this study as a part of the sickness that needs to be healed. The current (externally imposed) system creates disunity and division among the people, reinforces an inherent exclusion of the people from the organic process of governance and the mismanagement of the community resources. From this perspective, governance development is healing.

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Regional Gatherings – 2002

Calgary – October 1

Prince Albert – October 3

Prince George – October 15

Kenora – October 16 ◀ **New Date!**

Moncton – October 28

Quebec City – October 30

The Aboriginal Healing Foundation's Board of Directors will be gathering at these places to engage in dialogue with Aboriginal people on the Foundation's funding process, to issue an annual report, to provide an update on funded projects and to announce new initiatives.

The public is welcome to attend each gathering, but participants must cover their own travel costs. The Foundation will provide refreshment and a light lunch.

For more information or to register (recommended but not required): Marilyn McIvor, (888) 725-8886. In Ottawa: (613) 237-4441.



Out from the Shadows

Good Practices in Working with Sexually Exploited Youth in the Americas

By Liza E. Goulet
http://web.uvic.ca/icrd/pub_resources.html#reports

With extracts from "Sacred lives: Canadian Aboriginal Children & Youth speak about Sexual Exploitation" (see list of sources on back page of this newsletter).



Sharing good practices is critical to the process of learning what works and what does not work and why. Good practices are essentially lessons learned through reflection and analysis of programs and projects based on practical field experiences and approaches. In the case of sexually exploited children and youth, compiling and disseminating good practices is especially important given the limited number of programs which focus on the needs of these children in especially difficult circumstances.

The commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth is a global problem and a growing threat to children's rights to survival, dignity and healthy human development. It is a threat that undermines the very foundation of childhood itself.

Children and youth traumatized by sexual exploitation will experience a lifetime of pain, requiring ongoing healing in an attempt to reconnect with societies that have broken the most fundamental basis for trust. Although no one knows exactly how many children are involved in the commercial sex trade, some estimates indicate that 1 million children are being recruited, coerced and trafficked each year as sexual commodities for sale. This has vast and far-reaching implications for the present and future health of society.

The sexual exploitation of children is a complex issue requiring innovative and integrated responses. There are no simple solutions, no magic formulas. Working with sexually exploited youth is a long and arduous journey, both for the youth and for those accompanying them. Before we can act, we must understand.

Children from indigenous [...] populations are also frequently at greater risk due to the harmful effects of systemic discrimination and social breakdown.

In North America, it is estimated that 80 percent of prostituted children have suffered physical or sexual abuse before entering the sex trade. These children have come from a variety of socio-economic conditions. Research, although limited, shows that many children in the sex trade experienced abuse before becoming involved in prostitution or pornography.

The best way to understand exploited children and youth – and the individual risk factors that lead them into the sex trade – is to let them tell their stories.

The specific physical and psychological effects of sexual exploitation are devastating. The mental and physical violence of clients, pimps, brothel owners and madams has a lasting impact. The extent of the trauma

depends on the resilience of each individual. Some researchers have noted that survivors of prolonged sexual abuse suffer from complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD). "This is the psychological alteration of consciousness, self-perception and relationships with others." An alteration in consciousness may include amnesia, shame, guilt and a sense of defilement. Other researchers have noted that children may suffer from Rape Trauma Syndrome, which includes physical shock, frequent nightmares, flashbacks, depression, grief and the inability to maintain close relationships.

Once on the streets, a lack of food and shelter made them vulnerable to being abused through prostitution.

The cycle of exploitation

Children and youth at a Summit on Sexually Exploited Children and Youth held in Victoria described feeling like outcasts – unloved and unworthy. They felt ostracized by their communities. This stigmatization, along with very low self-esteem and a sense of powerlessness, causes children and youth to fear and distrust adults. Children and youth need assistance during each phase of the cycle of exploitation, particularly once they have made the decision to exit the trade.

Children and youth need assistance during each phase of the cycle of exploitation, particularly once they have made the decision to exit the trade.

A story of indigenous healing

"The healing process is a natural part of life. It occurs as a recovery from behaviors, beliefs, values, attitudes and/or events that have been hurtful or dissatisfying to the self and to others. The process happens in many realms: the body (physical), the mind (psychological), the soul (spiritual), the heart (emotional), and the environment (ecological). Since our sexuality encompasses all of who we are as human beings, the healing process may also occur in the realm of our sexuality. Healing takes place in respectful and authentic connections with other human beings. Healing requires intimacy. Intimacy develops based on trust, communication and shared experiences. This development requires a time, a space, and a rhythm unique to each individual. Healing is a lifelong process."

Cherry is an indigenous youth advocate formerly exploited in the commercial sex trade in Canada. An important part of her healing process involved reconnecting with her culture and indigenous traditions.



Defining Good Practices

Seven critical elements have been identified as integral to good practices in working with sexually exploited children and youth:

Transferability: If large numbers of sexually exploited children and youth are to be reached, the fundamental components of successful programs must be transferable anywhere in the world.

Youth participation: should be a primary programming feature – from program design to evaluation and follow-up phases. For young people who have never before had the opportunity to express their concerns or ideas or make their own choices, this is essential in building self-esteem. One practical way to achieve youth participation is through the youth-to-youth approach, which emphasizes the role and responsibilities of children in learning and transmitting messages to other children. A central feature of youth participation is the involvement of children and youth in decisions that affect them and their community.

Building capacity: This means providing ongoing psychological support and resources. A vital part of capacity-building is education about the causes and impacts of sexual exploitation and raising awareness about possible solutions.

Child-centred focus: A child-centred approach values the voices of children and youth and considers them crucial in developing policies and programs that focus on their rights and welfare. Assisting the whole child is key to long-term change and to eventual community reintegration. Sexually exploited children and youth have been deprived of their most basic human needs for an extended period of time during which they have probably suffered violence, humiliation, isolation and self-hatred.

Inter-sectoral and integrated approach: to healing, recovery and reintegration. Inter-sectoral approaches are effective because they promote a rights-based approach supporting all aspects of children's development.

Community connections: Sexually exploited youth often describe a sense of not belonging, of being lost, isolated and marginalized with no role models to guide, teach, comfort, nurture and accept them. They describe a lack of connection with their family and community. The lack of healthy connection to self, family and community leave them extremely vulnerable. Programs which help abused children and youth to establish healthy relationships with themselves, their spirituality, their families (where possible or feasible), their communities and their culture support youth in their journey of personal change. Feeling that one is a contributing member of a community is vital to building self-esteem and respect for others and self.

Public awareness and advocacy: If one important feature of good practices is transferability and the ability to impact considerable numbers of children and youth in the sex trade, informing the general public at home and abroad is also critical to encouraging action and promoting social change. Targeted communications strategies can educate the public, youth, government and institutions, emphasizing that the sexual exploitation of children is child abuse and that it is illegal. This is extremely important. Advocacy activities at the individual, community, national, regional and international levels hold communities and countries accountable for the well-being of all their children. Advocating for programs and basic services to which they are entitled is part of promoting and respecting their rights.

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Good practices

“To be effective, intervention strategies must be responsive and reflect what the children and young people are saying. Their participation as more than passive consumers of services is critical.”

Prevention

Prevention of such a complex tragedy as commercial sexual exploitation is a long-term process that requires whole communities to heal. Many youth acknowledged that their own pain stemmed from their parents' experiences of physical, sexual, and mental abuse resulting from residential schools, forced adoption, and racism. The youth also realized that this tragic cycle must be broken, and that they could play an instrumental role in the healing process.

The youth were asked how commercial sexual exploitation could be prevented, along with the abuse and exploitation that are daily events in the sex trade. The focus was on community solutions and youth participation.

One of the main themes that emerged from the consultations was the need for both sexually exploited youth, and community members, to be able to discuss the issue of commercial sexual exploitation.

The youth also emphasized the important role of cultural connection in preventing commercial sexual exploitation. Many youth felt that Aboriginal peoples in Canada face a high degree of racism, and that prevention therefore necessitates the co-operation of the Aboriginal community in educating and helping youth.

The third major aspect in prevention to emerge from the consultations was the desperate need for ‘some place to go’.

Good practices - prevention

Promoting children's rights education Training programs on child rights education should be made available for all those involved with children, such as teachers, social workers and law enforcement workers. Children must know their rights before they can promote and exercise them. An important first step is helping children recognize that they are not alone.

Children need to know that it is not acceptable that a child be forced to sell his or her body for food or shelter and that the government has made international commitments to prevent and protect children from all forms of violence and abuse, including sexual exploitation.

Promoting community awareness and involvement The media have an important role to play in educating the public by eliminating stereotypes, condemning discrimination and promoting prevention and self-protection. Educating the media (who in turn educate the public) and increasing public awareness should emphasize diminishing demand – addressing the reasons why adults sexually exploit children and why communities let them.

Reducing vulnerability Innovative ways of making children and their families less vulnerable to the sex trade are key to protecting children.

I guess a good place to start would be educating the whole community that exploitation happens more than everybody thinks it does. I think the first step is education for the whole community. If anybody does get a circle going like this it





will help a lot in the community to raise the level of knowledge.

- Female youth, Goose Bay

Let people in the communities make it a big deal. Make more people talk about it, what these things are, get all the community to talk about it and get it going there...

- Female youth, Brandon

Youth recommendations for prevention

- Awareness-raising through education and discussion in a safe, non-judgmental place to go
- Cultural connection
- Raising self-esteem
- Service providers who have experience in the trade
- Viable economic alternatives

In the opinion of the youth consulted, raising awareness through discussion and education, cultural connection, and having a safe place to go, both in times of crisis and for fun, are of fundamental importance for the prevention of commercial sexual exploitation. The youth indicated that these problems must be addressed collectively for successful and holistic solutions.

Harm Reduction and Crisis Situations

When asked, 'Once a young person is already being abused or exploited, how do we intervene? What is the most helpful and when?' the youth overwhelmingly emphasized 24 hour centers, safe housing, crisis lines, and education about existing resources. Almost all youth participating in the consultations suggested the need for experiential counselors who had themselves survived the sex trade.

It is crucial to understand that Aboriginal youth do not passively accept help. Rather, they reach out in a desire to be treated as equal partners within the larger community. We must listen to them in their times of crisis. We must listen to what they say will help them in their times of crisis to reduce the harm that comes to them.

- Female youth, Winnipeg

Youth also identified a need for more education about existing resources, as well as handing out resource information at schools for youth who are too shy, fearful or ashamed to ask for help.

Good practices - crisis intervention and harm reduction

Providing sexual and reproductive health education and information HIV infection rates are even higher for children abused through prostitution, given their powerlessness to refuse unsafe sex, their delicate inner tissues and the high demand for their services. Young people in the sex trade lack basic knowledge about their bodies, about healthy sexuality and about how to protect themselves. Myths, taboos and misinformation abound. Sexually exploited children and youth need accurate, age-appropriate information so that they can be made aware of the health risks of the sex trade and the services available to them.

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Providing temporary safe houses Children in crisis need timely assistance. To be able to respond to the urgent needs of children and youth, safe short-term shelters which focus on urgent and practical concerns such as safety, pregnancy, drugs, violence, and which respond to peer, family and other social pressures must be available at the time of the crisis. A crisis can often be a stepping stone to exiting the sex trade. Transition houses help youth move beyond crisis control by providing ongoing health and welfare services and support. These safe environments help youth move forward.

Youth recommendations - crisis intervention and harm reduction

- 24 hour drop-in centers
- Safe housing
- Crisis lines
- Experiential youth and counselors to staff all of the above
- Education about existing resources

Healing and Exiting/Leaving the Sex Trade

During the consultations, the youth were asked what was, or would have been, most helpful during the processes of exiting and healing from commercial sexual exploitation. They spoke glowingly about services specialized for sex trade workers, but also expressed frustration that these overtaxed agencies weren't able to provide more resources.

Youth involved in the sex trade exhibit symptoms of their trauma through poor concentration, as well as the loss of ability to structure and use a schedule and/or a budget. They may feel powerless and unable to affect change. Social skills may be minimal. Precisely because of these difficulties, Aboriginal youth and children must receive unconditional positive regard from those attempting to help. Several returns to the trade are almost inevitable. Continued support, therefore, despite regression, is essential.

Inadequate support services were a common theme with Aboriginal youth. Most youths felt that there were no accessible lines of communication and/or help. Most tellingly, all of the youth strongly identified with the need to talk to someone who had been there, who would genuinely listen, and who would take a longer-term approach to their needs in exiting and healing from the sex trade.

A second issue was, again, the importance of cultural connection. The theme of finding strength and power from their Aboriginal heritage was of fundamental importance to almost all youth who participated in the consultations.

Part of the process of leaving was having the [outreach center] here, and I honestly believe that they were one of the main sources of helping me get off the streets. There were caring and understanding, and most of them are like myself, ex-program users. If anybody now says, "I need your help," I give it to them because that's what I didn't have ... a lot of people just need that, in order to leave it all, you need the support. And I find with a lot of people who haven't been through it don't know what it's like. They can hear the story, but"

-Female youth, Halifax





As with prevention, exiting and healing is a complex issue with many concerns. Many youth felt that their own healing needed to be undertaken within the wider healing process of the Aboriginal community. Cultural connection for these youth can take a variety of forms, including sweat lodges, pow-wows, fasting, artwork and oral traditions. The vast majority of the youth expressed interest in having access to a Native center which would both help them exit the sex trade and guide them on their healing path.

The Aboriginal youth who were consulted strongly felt that all four aspects of a person be acknowledged: the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual. This holistic concept balances a healthy person in order that health and harmony can exist in all their relationships.

A holistic approach looks at the spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and social aspects of the child's development.

Good practices - exiting and healing

Promoting a holistic approach Addressing all the needs of children abused through prostitution means providing a multitude of services. A holistic approach looks at the spiritual, physical, mental, emotional and social aspects of the child's development. Ignoring one need may negate progress in another area. A holistic approach requires coordination, cooperation and networking amongst various community agencies and complete understanding of the diverse needs and circumstances of the young person – services may include psychosocial counselling, addiction counselling, health care education and life skills and vocational training. Programs need to be flexible and responsive.

Building on the capacities and expertise of young people Providing opportunities for children and youth to express their ideas, participate in decision-making and reach out to their peers is part of the journey to reintegration. Enabling environments allow young people to participate in establishing policies and in designing programs that use the youth-to-youth or child-to-child approach in outreach activities, support groups, crisis counselling, peer mentoring, and monitoring and evaluating interventions.

Building self-esteem through psychological support Many exploited children and youth need to be convinced that they are valued, loved and respected members of society. Traumatized children have considerable need for psychological support and often cannot move forward without it. Key to building self-esteem is an emphasis on strengths rather than a focus on problems – as well as recognition of diversity, collaboration and mutual respect. Psychological support programs should be professionally designed and evaluated by child psychologists, child psychiatrists and other qualified persons or organizations. Helping youth recognize and draw upon their own strengths – so they can fight for their rights and support themselves and their families – goes a long way toward rebuilding self-esteem.

Creating alternative income-generation strategies Poverty is one of the most common reasons why children and youth end up in the sex trade. The absence of economic opportunities for exploited children, youth and their families increases vulnerability and has to be addressed by offering economically viable alternatives. Education credentials, job training or work skills

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provide options and enable young people to earn a decent living outside the sex trade.

Considering children in the context of their community Children must be considered in the social, political, cultural, religious and historical context of their community. Programs must honour the ethnic, cultural and geographic differences of each youth. “The traumatic experiences and their impact cannot be isolated from their societal context, and thus whatever intervention/therapy is offered, it must take the social phenomenon that are the child's reality, fully into account. Programs that fail to do so, will be in danger of treating the child simply as a dysfunctional individual.”

Building relationships Helping children and youth connect with a person, a project, a community or an institution provides a much-needed sense of belonging. Young people need continuity in the services they receive, in how the services relate to each other and how these services develop over time. Building relationships strengthens this continuity and the likelihood that youth will be able to exit the trade. It is often the bond created with one person, program or institution that acts as the catalyst for a youth to exit the trade. When they can feel that they

are not alone in their struggle to move on and that someone is truly determined to help them live a healthier lifestyle, they may realize that for once in their life they have someone to lean on who does not want anything in return. Many youth indicate that community support was fundamental to their exiting the trade and to enabling them to assume responsibilities and discover and utilize their capacities.

Youth recommendations for exiting and healing

- Specific services/agencies for the unique needs of Aboriginal youth sex workers
- Services and support for those who do not wish to exit the sex trade
- Longer term services
- Experiential counselors
- Decreasing obstacles youth face in accessing services
- Education
- Self-confidence building
- Building trust with agencies, outreach workers and counselors
- Basic life skills training
- Social skills training

Advocacy and public attitudes

Youth who participated in the consultation process were asked, ‘What are some of the negative attitudes or harmful stereotypes which the public has about Aboriginal youth in the sex trade? What information do you think the public needs to know about the abuse and exploitation of Aboriginal youth?’ For Aboriginal youth who are, or have been, involved in the exploitation and abuse of the sex trade, the two most harmful stereotypes they identified were racism and the stigma that is attached to street sex trade work. The double stigma of ‘loose’ morality and racism with which these youth are burdened is further entrenched when society actively encourages a silence around the proliferation of the sex trade itself.





Attempting to address Aboriginal youth exploited through sex work means changing our attitudes toward children and youth involved in commercial sexual exploitation.

Everybody goes around saying, Oh they're just whores, they're just sluts, they're just there for the money ... Nobody actually wants to sit down and find out why they're out there doing it. Some people are just too ignorant to accept the fact that they're not just out there for sex, they're out there because they've got nowhere else to go, to get money, to get clothes, to get food in their stomach.

- Female youth, Mission

Good practices: advocacy and public attitudes

Developing a targeted information strategy. Public education and information aimed at youth, potential clients, business owners, and families can increase awareness of the problem of sexual exploitation of children and youth. Public awareness generates support for children, front-line workers and advocates. Advocacy and public awareness can result in stronger legislation and policies that better protect children from all forms of exploitation.

Creating networks or supporting existing networks. Having your voice heard may not necessarily be a result of the content of the message you are trying to send but rather the scope of the voice. There is power in numbers. A network of agencies or grass roots organizations concerned about sexually exploited children and youth has much more weight and influence than a single one. Networks are not only useful lobbying mechanisms, but can be a wealth of information and resources.

Youth recommendations regarding public attitudes and stereotypes

- Racism needs to be immediately and meaningfully addressed.
 - The stigma of 'loose' morals of those in the sex trade is false and harmful.
 - The social silence and passive indifference surrounding the issue of youth in the sex trade must be changed.
 - The public must recognize its role in sustaining and perpetuating an environment where the commercial sexual exploitation of children and youth can flourish.
 - The public needs to realize the dangers for the youth (emotionally, physically, sexually and spiritually).
 - The need to educate the public that commercial sexual exploitation is a serious form of child sexual abuse.
 - The need to raise awareness regarding why youth engage in the sex trade.
 - The need for the media and advertising to 'de-glamorize' prostitution.
- The need for community respect and understanding must be addressed.

Youth participation

The issue about which youth felt most strongly was using their experiential status to help other youth who wanted to exit. Unlike most service providers who have never worked in the trade, the youth felt that, based on their own experiences, they could better understand the specific needs and concerns of other youth trapped in the trade. Youth have asked, again and again, for the opportunity to connect with those who have successfully exited the sex trade.

As well, those who have successfully exited have repeatedly asked to play a meaningful role in providing outreach, support, public education, advocacy, and in mentoring young people caught in the sex trade. Fostering youth participation means creating a supportive environment in which Aboriginal youth can realize their own potential and be instrumental in the development of public policy and programs that affect them.

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There's girls out there as young as 10-12 years old. My role is to get the information out there, to the people who are picking and choosing who

is going to live and who is going to die. How would they feel if it was their children out there turning tricks? Try to educate these people, and the governments, [because] that is what's killing us.

- Female youth, Brandon

Youth recommendations on youth participation

- Using their own experience to help and benefit other youth
- Training experiential counselors to help others out of their situation
- Connecting with others who have successfully exited the trade
- Having a central role in providing outreach, support, public education, advocacy, and mentoring for others in the trade
- Staffing crisis hotlines
- Creating and running drop-in centers
- Creating and staffing non-judgmental support networks
- Educating the larger community about their experiences
- Creating, developing, and delivering specific programs for commercially sexually exploited Aboriginal youth

Conclusion

Because of the considerable resources required to provide an inter-sectoral and integrated approach to the needs of sexually exploited children and youth, co-operation (including international co-operation) co-ordination and networking are essential. Most agencies *cannot do it all alone* – the needs are too complex, varied and costly. A variety of programs must be available to address the needs of young people during each phase of the sexual exploitation cycle, particularly for youth in crisis situations. Programs offering emergency services and ongoing support for youth in crisis situations are extremely limited even though the youth themselves acknowledge that this is a prime and unique opportunity for change.

In spite of the international commitment to the eradication of all practices associated with the sexual exploitation or sale and trafficking of children, there is little comprehensive data on the extent, mechanisms or root causes of these phenomena. In other words, we know very little about sexually exploited children and youth world-wide.

There is an urgent need for more systematic and global knowledge of the nature and incidence of the problem, including an understanding of the cultural, social and economic context in which commercial sexual exploitation of children occurs and flourishes.

This article is an extract of the Report "Out from the shadows." The report is designed to share good Practices in working with sexually-exploited youth in the Americas. To obtain the full report, please contact:

Institute for Child Rights and Development (ICRD)
 Lisa E. Goulet or Dr. Philip Cook: indcrc@uvic.ca
 Website: <http://www.uvic.ca/icrd>

The report *Sacred Lives: Canadian Aboriginal Children and Youth speak out about Sexual Exploitation* can be obtained from:

Save the Children
 Western Canada Office
 2177 West 42nd Avenue
 Vancouver, BC V6M 2BN7
 Tel: (604) 437-5881 Toll-Free 1-800-325-6873
 E-mail: info@sccwest.org



The four seasons of community healing

In our consultations with the six partner communities, and drawing on knowledge and experience from many other communities, it became clear that the community healing process seems to go through distinct states or cycles. Four distinct stages were identified:

- Stage 1. The Journey Begins (Thawing from the long winter)
- Stage 2. Gathering Momentum (Spring)
- Stage 3. Hitting the Wall (Summer)
- Stage 4. From Healing to Transformation (Fall)

Taken together, these stages form one type of “map” of the healing process, which can be useful both for understanding the current dynamics of the community process and determining future actions and priorities. It must be stressed at the outset that these stages are only approximate models of complex real-life events. They are not “the truth” although there is truth in them. They also do not take place in a linear way. They are more like ripples unfolding in a pool, where each new circle contains the previous ones. Following a review of this model by the six partner communities, it should be stressed that the cycle identified here could just as easily begin in the spring. The important thing is that it is a cycle.

As each stage progresses, those involved further develop their understanding and power to transform existing conditions. This development is primarily driven by dynamic cycle of actions and reflection that generates learning.

Winter – the journey begins

This stage describes the experience of crises or paralysis that grips a community. The majority of the community’s energy is locked up in the maintenance of destructive patterns. The dysfunctional behaviors that arise from internalized oppression and trauma are endemic in the community and there may be an unspoken acceptance by the community that its state is somehow “normal”.

Within this scenario one of two things may happen:

Key individuals begin to question and challenge the status quo, often making significant shifts in their own lives. Their personal journey is often characterized by service to their community as they begin to reach out to other

individuals to provide mutual support and initiate healing and crisis intervention activities. These activities often are undertaken at great personal sacrifice and they frequently encounter intense and very real opposition from within the community.

Another starting point is the program route, in which existing programs and agencies, often frustrated with their inability to affect the scale of the crisis they find themselves dealing with, begin to work closely with other allies in the community to develop a wider strategy. Often interagency groups are formed and begin planning collaborative interventions and initiatives.

Both starting points lead to similar effects. “Healing” begins to make it onto the community agenda. Core groups begin to form that are oriented around health, sobriety, wellness, etc. and these groups begin to lay the foundation of an alternative reality, often with significant support from outside the community in the early stages. Another key source of support and inspiration at this stage are key elders who have kept the cultural ways alive.

What is driving this stage?

- Dedicated key individuals (often women) responding to their awareness that things are bad and there is an alternative
- Leaders and staff within programs tasked with addressing the consequences of some part of the “crisis”
- Visionary and courageous political leaders within the community creating an “enabling climate for healing”

All three are essentially responding to a particular problem (alcohol abuse, suicide, etc.).

Spring – Gathering Momentum

This stage is like a thaw, where significant amounts of energy are released and visible, positive shifts occur. A critical mass seems to have been reached and the trickle becomes a rush as groups of people begin to go through the healing journey together which was pioneered by the key individuals in Stage One. These are frequently exciting times. Momentum grows and there is often significant networking, learning and training. The spirit is strong.



The four seasons of community healing

New patterns of organization begin to emerge. A recognizable network oriented around healing begins to develop which is legitimized by the community, often with political support. The healing process begins to take visible form as programs and organizations. There is often a lot of volunteer energy at this stage, but professional organizations are also beginning to emerge. The way the “problem” is seen also begins to change. There is a gradual shift from a sickness to a wellness model and the focus begins to move from presenting problems to the underlying core issues and traumas.

There is great hope and optimism at this stage. People have the sense that if enough individuals and families can begin the healing journey, then the “problem” will be “solved.” Those driving and involved in the process invest huge amounts of time and energy into the community healing movement. There is still opposition but it is generally overshadowed by the enthusiasm of the healing movement.

What is driving this stage?

- A growing awareness of the scope and scale of the problem within the community. The lid has come off the box and it becomes very hard to put it back on. The growing momentum makes it easier for people to “get on board.”

Summer – Hitting the Wall

At this stage there is the feeling that the leading movement has hit the wall. Front-line workers are often deeply tired, despondent or burned out. The healing process seems to be stalled. While there are many people who have done healing work, there are many more who seem left behind. There is the growing realization that it is not only individuals, but also whole systems that need healing. There may already be some new initiatives in these systems (education, governance, economics, justice, etc.). In some cases these initiatives appear to become institutionalized and to lose the sense of hope that characterized them in Stage Two. In other cases, while awareness has begun to shift, old patterns of working persist for lack of new (and culturally relevant) models strategies. The honeymoon stage is over as the community begins the difficult work of transforming deeply entrenched patterns and reconstructing a community identity that was forged in oppression and dysfunction.

There are often a series of paradoxes at Stage Three:

Relations with organizations, agencies and forces outside the community are being transformed. There is often far more openness and the prevailing climate has shifted. The availability of outside support is much greater than in the past. At the same time, support and collaboration within the community itself may have actually decreased, as old patterns begin to re-establish themselves and a “healing fatigue” sets in.

Just when a significant number of adults seem to have sobered up and regained control over their lives, a new and seemingly worse crisis seems to be breaking out amongst the youth. Youth crime is on the increase. Alcohol use is replaced or augmented by drug use.

Many adults seem to have gained new addictive patterns to replace alcohol abuse. Gambling is becoming a serious social issue, along with prescription drug abuse and other self-medicating behaviors. It also becomes apparent that drinking covered up many other things and community secrets begin to emerge. Despite increased sobriety, things actually seem to get worse.

To those on the front lines it may seem as if a lot of people have “dropped out” of the healing movement. Many people don’t become involved or show

up like they used to. At the same time there may be the emergence of a relatively healthy group of people within the community whose energy is focused on their own lives and the lives of the families. No longer engaging in the “culture of addiction,” they would rather spend time on family activities and live their lives than be actively involved in the “culture of recovery”.

What appears to have been a wall may in fact be a long plateau. One of the characteristics of a plateau is that not much seems to be happening and you don’t seem to be going anywhere, but it is actually where the foundation for all future advances are being laid. On reflection, it is clear that there have been significant gains during this stage. The community norms have shifted; “bad” isn’t as bad as it used to be. More people are engaged in positive activities. Capacity is growing within the community as more people access training, education and employment. There is often a cultural and spiritual revitalization that has developed parallel with the healing process, both shaping and being shaped by it.

As Stage Three develops, a new analysis emerges. There is the dawning realization that “healing” alone is not enough and never will be. Healing from the hurts of the past does not build the future. There is growing awareness of the need for decolonization (of thought patterns and structures) and the need to address structural obstacles to development, such as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada rules, racism, poverty, etc. The realities of the economy of scale become apparent. There is only so much you can do as a small community to address such things yourself.

What is driving this stage?

- The organizations and initiatives that have grown out of the previous stage. Healing becomes increasingly institutionalized as professional capacity develops within the community – a key challenge becomes maintaining community participation. Also driving the process (although not necessarily overtly) are the agendas of funding agencies that provide the material support for healing initiatives.

Fall – from Healing to Transformation

In Stage Four a significant change in consciousness takes place. There is a shift from healing as “fixing” to healing as “building” as well as from healing individuals and groups to transforming systems. The sense of ownership for your own systems grows and the skill and capacity to negotiate effective external, reciprocal relationships develop. Healing becomes a strand in the nation-building process. Civil society emerges within communities and the Aboriginal community at large and a shift of responsibility begins to take place. The impetus for healing moves from programs and government to civil society.

The leaders of the healing movement in Stage Two are now entering a new stage in their own lives. They are approaching elderhood and their analysis and vision has matured and deepened. They have shifted their focus from putting out fires to building new and healthy patterns of life and their own families and networks often begin to significantly reflect such new patterns. A search begins for new partnerships, alliances and support for addressing larger scale issues.

What is driving this stage?

- The realization of the limitations of current approaches, the growing participation by community member in the wider economy, the increased interconnection of the Aboriginal community, the shifting macro-political agenda and wider socio-cultural forces (e.g. increased urbanization, youth culture, the Internet, etc.).



Resources for this Issue

The following resource list is provided as a public service. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation does not necessarily endorse these materials. Included are materials that address the topics covered in this issue. A resource list with new entries is presented with every issue. See earlier issues for other resources.

For a complete list of Residential School Resources, call Wayne K. Spear at the Communications Department:

1-888-725-8886 – extension 237.

See page 40 for additional resources

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