

Healing Words

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Photo: Fred Cattroll

What is a healthy community?

What is healing? It's an important question, one which we will be exploring in this and future issues of *Healing Words*. While healing may mean different things to different people, it is helpful to establish certain principles and, as one of our featured articles points out, "to understand the reasons or problems which motivated us to begin the healing journey and to know what we want to get from that journey." (See *Manawan: a model for community healing and social reconstruction*.)

All across Turtle Island, Aboriginal people are on a healing path. Communities are addressing the intergenerational effects of the residential school system. People are well aware of the problems that they face. The questions What is healing? and What is a healthy community? take us to the core of the challenges ahead.

Our article *Recovering What We Never Had Ourselves* explores the relation of healing and parenting, acknowledging that "the way that we parent determines the future of the First Nations people." Other articles approach healing from the perspective of childhood, considering what it means to experience trauma as a child. The article *Yesterday's Child is Today's Child*, for example, states that the first Declaration of the Rights of the Child is "eminently relevant to the experience and healing of survivors of the residential school system."

We hope that you find this issue of *Healing Words* useful. The publication will continue to evolve as readers send us their comments (see *Letters* on page 3). As always, our commitment will be to the healing of survivors, their families, and descendants. We look forward to your partnership in this commitment.

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Survive the Little Children



Modern research has made universal the knowledge that Aboriginal communities always possessed about healthy child development and the rights of children.

The main theme of our last issue was Youth Suicide. It was, like the theme of justice explored in earlier issues a difficult subject to open up. Difficult not only because it is a very painful reality for many families in Aboriginal communities, but also because the research that deals with the core issues is still scarce, and very hard to track down.

The theme we are presenting in this issue is, for those two reasons, even more difficult. But you have told us, in your own words, through your letters, telephone and e-mail messages and your conversations with us, that you are not afraid of confronting the difficult, as long as it is a truth that helps heal. And we at *Healing Words* are, in hearts and minds, dedicated to serving and helping you in any way we can, including searching for the rare documents that support the truth of your experiences.

The main theme of this issue is dedicated to Survivors. There is an important reason why we have chosen this theme, beyond the fact that Survivors are at the very heart of the work of the Foundation.

As you may know, the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has traveled in many parts of the country to meet and talk with communities. Many, many of you came up and offered us your advice and your perspectives on the healing work we, and you, are doing in Aboriginal communities. Many more of you came up and told us your personal stories. It is the impact of your stories which made us reflect on the need to explore Survivors experiences with different hearts and different eyes.

Of course, the articles do not reflect the perspective of every listener, and they are not the only way to look at survivors' experiences. The objective of *Healing Words* is not to advance or defend a universal or political theory around healing. Our objective is to promote healing by opening the doors of understanding. This means engaging both the heart and the mind and listening to the voice of the traumatized child who survived is the way of the heart. The way of the mind is to present researched evidence that this child is the same as the one we are today actively trying to protect or heal from trauma. Modern research has made universal the knowledge that Aboriginal communities always possessed about healthy child development and the rights of children.

In Traditional Societies, the earliest instrument of governance and law to ensure social order came from quality mothering of children

-JEANNETTE ARMSTRONG, WOMEN OF FIRST NATION (HONORING TIME—HONORING THE FOUR STAGES OF LIFE...WITHIN THE FAMILY CIRCLE - WWW.NINGWAKWE.ON.CA)

The nature and legacy of the traumas experienced by children subjected to acknowledged organised violence have been the focus of recent research. The psychosocial framework supporting the findings about traumatized children is mostly concerned with children victims of recent eruptions of organised vio-

lence. These findings uniformly promote healing principles and practices sensitive to and respectful of the culture, language, family structure, uniqueness of the individual child and of his reactions to trauma.

In other words, it is sociologists and psychologists who, in the main, have researched and written what we do know and accept today about the specific impact of organised violence on children. The aims of our articles are to widen the narrow historical and geographical focus of this fairly recent research and to demonstrate that the nature of this violence, its multilevel impacts, the reactions it triggers in children are, in all aspects, relevant to the experience of residential school Survivors. They are relevant because the child of yesterday is still the child of today.

A Walk on the Child Side

Survivors stories, all of them, are meant to be listened to with the heart. When this happens, they take on a life of their own. They awaken our own stories, shake them up and disrupt the familiar inner set-up they were used to. Our heart is now a different kind of place.

Our own stories are at the core of our inner security and identity as human beings. Given the choice, we would rather not disturb the familiar landscape of our inner world. So letting the stories find their place, letting them change things around, is not that easy. Sometimes, however, there is an instant recognition in our heart, a knowing that what is being heard and let in was waited for, is being offered as a gift. There is a saying in most cultures that assures us that when the student is ready, the teacher comes. ▶

Survive the Little Children



At that moment, the energy of the heart becomes entirely devoted to building a bigger, more complete and satisfying understanding. We are willing, we are growing, and we are healing.

It is the common thread that runs through the stories shared by survivors attending the gatherings that illuminated the thoughts offered to you here.

They are Survivors. This is the name they have been given. As a recognition of what they were made to go through as the little person they were at that time and as the person they are now. They were children. Their experience is a child's experience. Now they are adult, they have grown up, but almost no one really sees the child or feels the child's feelings when they hear the experience. To hear, you have to listen with the heart of a child or a loving parent.

What the heart could hear were the stories of children and what the eye could see were adults, many of them now Elders. Between heart and eyes, between childhood and Elderhood, stretch the long, long years that reduce the immediacy of suffering to mere memories. But for many Survivors, the stories they share are not just memories. The voices that tell these stories are those of the children that still carry the pain of them everyday. The pain is not the memory of some half-buried past wounds. It hurts, right now.

Every one has a place in the heart where a child lives. It is that child that is being spoken

to when a survivor has the courage to tell of the things he has endured when he was a little unprotected child. Whatever the current age, he or she is no different from the child who, today, in so many part of the world, is enduring the horrendous trauma of organised violence.



Has there been, since the residential school system, a genetic shift in human beings that made today's child so much more fragile, less in need of the protection, love and acceptance universally recognized and advocated by modern psychology and conventions on the rights of children? Modern psychology may have deepened and clarified our understanding of them. But as research bears out, children themselves and their basic needs have not changed—whatever the age, whatever the culture.

But child psychology, like the Americas, was not an empty continent: at a time where children were seen more as little animals whose innate tendency towards deviant behaviour was to be straightened by a system based on punishment, the majority of Aboriginal cultures were child centered. All the principles of healthy child rearing discovered by modern psychology were actually daily practice in the lives of Aboriginal families and communities.

The full force of the shell shock experienced by Aboriginal children, some as little as three years old, torn away from their secure environment to be placed into a system of organised violence, can only be fully felt through an emotional reaction to the horrors of today's children, also targets of organised violence. Today's child is yesterday's child.

When children have been exposed to "events beyond the normal boundaries of human experience," that is, traumatic or psychologically wounding events, all kinds of stress reactions will be apparent – a normal reaction to abnormally distressing events.



www.savethechildren.net

Communities and individuals involved in healing can use the research findings presented in this issue in three ways:

- To revisit the requirements for healthy child development
- To access the most current information of healing principles and practices applicable to children or to Survivors who were victims of organised violence traumatised as children.
- To understand the specific nature and impact of organised violence on Aboriginal children in the context of the residential school system.

letters

Hello,

We have just seen an issue of *Healing Words* and would like to subscribe to it. Is it also possible to obtain copies of the first 3 numbers? If you would send us an invoice for a subscription plus those 3 issues we will send a cheque to you.

Many thanks,
Caese Levo

We receive many requests for back issues and subscriptions. Each request is appreciated. There is no charge for the newsletter. We will send back issues for free and add anyone who so wishes to our mailing list.

*

Dear Editors:

Recently at our Metis Resource Centre in Winnipeg, I came across a copy of your paper. I have had a chance to read it. It is excellent information. The personal entries from the people that went through the residential school make me sad but now I understand.

I work in St. Boniface School Division as an Aboriginal Support Worker. Our main focus is to provide teachers, counsellors, students and parents with resources such as your own.

We find it a constant battle to get some parents and school personnel to see what the mainstream society has done to us, our elders and our children. The damage done by residential schools is devastating. Please keep doing the work that you are doing.

I would like to know if we could be on your mailing list. We are always looking for information not only for ourselves but for those who we work with.

Meegwetch,
Arlene Desjarlais,
Winnipeg, MB.

*

Hi,

I just read with interest *Healing Words* and would like to make the following note. In New Brunswick there was a boarding school in Newcastle called St. Mary's Academy run by the Nuns of Congregation de Notre Dame where native children who reached grade nine (girls) were sent to school there because they could not go to provincial schools. This was in the 60s. Boys went across the bridge with the priests at St.

1 August 2000 Thomas. If you wish to know more, you can always contact others or me.

Thanks,
Mary Jane Peters,
Big Cove, NB.

*

The Editors:

I am reading your newsletter *Healing Words* and find it informative, however the language used is not for grass roots understanding, English is our second language and to read such high words is a waste of time. Clear and to the point makes more sense. Also, it sounds like the funding dollars are going to communities. What about the 100,000 or so urban residential school survivors.

Agnes Gendron,
Cold Lake, AB.

Agnes,

We will make the language clear and to the point for the grass roots. Also, many projects funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation serve urban residential school survivors. For more information on funded projects, contact the Foundation or visit our website. (See page 4.)

*

Your paper was given to me by someone, and it is very nice to know that there is a paper like that out there that First Nations people like my self can relate to and understand the stories are true and not made up as the churches are saying.....Keep up the good work...

-Robert Jackson.

*

Editor; *Healing Words*

Thanks for the opportunity to drop you a line. A gentleman in my class brought a copy of your publication to class today (I teach the STEP 1-2 class at the Saanich Adult Education Centre, a part of the Saanich Indian School Board). They were doing a writing assignment about history, myth and legend. I was impressed by the strength of the writing and my student was inspired to write a historical legend for his assignment. It is truly moving and he may submit it to you at a later date.

28 November 2000

But for the moment I was wondering how we could get a copy of *Healing Words* when it is published. I have people in my class who were in residential schools and those who were affected by it with parents and siblings. There is much to share with in the class. Let me know how we can order it, please.

Thanks,
Diane Kirby,
Victoria, BC.

*
Healing Words

Hi my name is Gloria Contois President of Local 87 Metis in Calgary. Our local receives your paper titled *Healing Words*. It is a wonderful learning reference. What I am requesting is a few more copies at least 20. We run along with Bow Valley College in Calgary an Adult Aboriginal Program with 34 students Metis status Bill C-31. We have a new Social Studies program called Native Studies 10-20-30. Your wonderful magazine would really benefit our students. Also we do have a local office as well as a site where the students attend. If possible could you please send the *Healing Words* paper to the education site.

Thanks,
Gloria Contois,
President, Local 87 Metis,
Calgary, AB.

*

The Editors, *Healing Words*

Memories were brought back when I opened the latest issue of *Healing Words* (Volume 1 Number 4) to find a picture of the boys hall and classrooms (Sturgeon Lake Indian Residential School) at Sturgeon Lake, Alberta.

I thought of the years (1940s-1950s) when I was a resident there. The suffering and pain that I and others endured there was horrendous. I still have vivid memories of the sexual deeds done by both our peers and the oblate fathers. The physical pain rained down on us daily by the nuns and even by some of our older peers. The psychological damage done by the staff was unending. I could go on into more detail, however it would take many more words and pages.

I was taken, along with my siblings, from our parents when I was an infant. At the time we were living at Edmonton, Alberta. We ended up at the Sturgeon Lake Indian Residential School. I ended up staying there from 10-12 years before I ran



◀

away at age 13 or 14. I was sodomized, kicked and beaten very often. There was a thick leather strap used on us without any feeling from the nuns.

In their haste to convert us to their way of life, they taught us no social skills and there was no nurturing. Everything was regimented, so by the time the boys and girls were released they could not cope in the outside world. The least they could have done was to give us lessons in social skills like "values and attitudes," empathy, assertiveness, and coping skills.

I applaud the work that the Healing Foundation is doing, however I can't take advantage of any local program, because I am situated in Moncton, not near a reserve. However through my own initiative I have taken some social skills programs to help me cope.

I am currently having problems with Indian Affairs regarding my status application. They have been working on it for 1 1/2 years.

Keep up the good work.

Yours Sincerely,
Jim Cunningham,
Moncton, NB.

Jim,

Thank-you for your letter. It was a pleasure to speak to you in November at the Aboriginal Healing Foundation's Moncton Regional Gathering. I hope we addressed your concerns at that time. Concerning access to local programs, we suggested that rural near urban areas build travel costs into their budget proposals to serve off-reserve populations. Also, individuals in urban centres can explore existing local services, whether provided by non-government agencies or government (such as the Medical Services Branch). Jim, please keep in touch.



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, English and Inuktitut and is free. Available on-line! <http://www.ahf.ca>

submissions

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

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

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



grobelin@ahf.ca
wspear@ahf.ca



Healing Words editors: left, Gisel Robelin and right, Wayne K. Spear

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

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

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

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

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

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS

S . O . S . POETS

Thank you also to those poets whose work we publish here from other sources. Do you know how hard it is to find you? PLEASE, to ALL poets out there in communities, young, older, already published or not—send us your thoughts, your work, in poems, prayers, chants or songs.

It is especially difficult to find poems that we can publish in our French newsletter. But we would love also to get poems and songs in your own language.

As the AHF's third funding cycle approaches, we look forward to some upcoming developments.

We are now processing applications for the January 26, 2001 Healing Centre deadline and the new under-\$50,000 proposal category. As you probably know, the deadlines this year for our regular funding process are February 23, 2001 and August 31, 2001. You are encouraged to send your proposals for either of these deadlines. If your proposal is late, we will put it aside for the next deadline and consider it then.

Over the past 4 months, Directors and staff have been fulfilling the Foundation's commitment to accountability as they travel the country to meet with Aboriginal people at the AHF Regional Gatherings. Since October last year, we have been to Iqaluit, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Moncton, Ottawa, Yellowknife, and Whitehorse. These gatherings have been a great success — and they will continue in the coming months. If you have been unable to attend our gatherings, watch for the next issue of *Healing Words* this March. Our Spring edition will feature an article on the Regional Gatherings which explains the

From the Chairman, Georges Erasmus



purpose and nature of the meetings. The article will show you the way a gathering works and will tell you about the comments that people have made. We hope this will give our readers a feeling for the event.

As always, Foundation staff are available to hear your questions and comments. I encourage you to call if you need information. Also, for those of you with internet access, you will find our website to be a useful resource. Visitors to the website can download our publications, receive funding updates, get workshop and (when applicable) regional gathering news, read about our projects, and register for events — among many other things. The address is <http://www.ahf.ca>.

If you do not have internet access, you can call toll-free: 1-888-725-8886 (in Ottawa, call 237-4441). We look forward to hearing from you.

Masi,

This Spring, Healing Words will be dedicated to youth — the leaders and the Elders of tomorrow. We will explore their aspirations, ambitions, and vision in the context of healing. We will also present our report on the year 2000 Regional Gatherings. Please send us your articles and letters.

continued from page 24

through their tongues, left there for extended periods of time; a little boy kicked because he was crying and forced to walk with a broken leg; tiny children with no warm clothes crying from the bitter winter cold and wetting their underclothes which would be frozen stiff — and being spanked for it; a little girl being left lying for days until she died from being repeatedly hit with a heavy belt across the back; a little boy pounded to death in a boiler room of the school by two staff; little children's fingers put in the fire; children forced to eat their own vomit...*

As the Very Reverend Bob Smith, a retired United Church moderator, spokesman for the Church Fund admitted: "I really expect that if those things had happened to me, I would not have been able to cope either, it's life-wrecking stuff"

COPING AND REBUILDING

Every generation of children, in fact, offers mankind the possibility of rebuilding his ruin of a world. Survivors were the generation of Indian children that went through the worst and made it through.

**◀ Abuse:
from there to here...slowly**

Even though for most Survivors the coping is a lifelong, painful task, they are here to demonstrate the power of resilience. Their presence among us represents new hope for the future and can be celebrated.

Celebrations of passage, in Aboriginal traditions, represent those experiences of communities where individual members become empowered to take on the new stages and the skills and abilities that go with that new stage in the seasons of life.

-Circle of life, Battleford Tribal Council

*From *The Circle Game, Shadows and Substance in the Indian Residential School Experience in Canada*, by Roland D. Chrisjohn & Sherri Young, with contributions from Michael Maraum, and *No End of Grief: Indian Residential Schools in Canada*, by Agnes Grant.

Healing Words

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

p o e m s

Donna Doss

Brief Bio:

Donna Doss is the daughter of Lawrence Lugan Doss and Antoinette John Doss from the X'ax'lip First Nation (Fountain) near Lillooet, BC. She works as a Secretary/Receptionist at Helping Spirit Lodge Society in Vancouver. Helping Spirit Lodge Society has a transition home and a pre-employment bridging program. Donna is a poet, aspiring/emerging artist, and journalist. She is the former editor of *The Indian Voice* (from 1971 to 1983). Donna works primarily in watercolour crayons and uses her works as art therapy. She paints to music, adds colour and patterns emerge. Lately she has been working in pastels and her goal is to publish a book of poetry and short stories. She thanks her parents for the gift of creativity and Margaret Lally Murray ("Ma" Murray), the former editor of the Bridge River-Lillooet Newspaper for instilling self confidence and the love of the written word.

Together We Can?

Residential school, boarding school
New Words whose connotations are
Genocide, sexual abuse, pain and fear
How can we heal from this intergenerational anguish?
Do we walk backwards to visit the words of the Ancestors?
Do we forge a new path of enlightenment?
Tell me, because I really want to know
I've talked about this before and I want to know
Who will help to heal all our wounded children?
Who will ease the pain they all feel?
Can you? Can I? Maybe, together we can?

Racism

Racism raised its ugly head
In a most unlikely incident
You said "No!" to me
I was crushed
I knew the lies were there
I've heard them before
I don't even know your name
I'm not your enemy.
Yet your words will remain
With me forever.
How soon we forget that
Beneath the color of our skin
We all are RED....
Brothers and Sisters
Are we ALL
No matter if we are
Short, Fat, Skinny or Tall

The tragic legacy of residential education began in the late nineteenth century with the government's three-part vision of education as the means to accomplishing "assimilation." It was a policy designed to "civilise" the Indian and therefore to make Canada but one community—a non-aboriginal, Christian one. There is no other phrase that fits this policy so well as *cultural genocide*. Education was the means to facilitate this policy.



The first part of the education plan included a justification for removing children from their communities and disrupting First Nation families. Establishing residential schools great distances off reserves was the justification for separating families. Second was a precise system of teaching for re-socializing children in the schools by denying them their language and culture. The third part, to develop schemes for integrating graduates into the non-aboriginal world, was never accomplished.

Across Canada, from the mid 1800s until the 1980s, First Nation children attended Indian Residential Schools. The Canadian Government funded 88 residential schools nationally that were administered by the following Christian denominations: Roman Catholic, 50 schools, Anglican, 26 schools, and Presbyterian/United Church, 12 schools.

There were approximately 20 residential schools operating in Saskatchewan. In addition, many Saskatchewan First Nations children were removed to residential schools in Manitoba and Alberta. All of the residential schools were funded by the federal government but were usually operated by one of the churches: Roman Catholic, United, Presbyterian or Anglican. An exception was the residential school operated on Gordon First Nation, which since the 60s was run by the Government.

In building the schools, the Department of Indian Affairs and the churches constructed them without consideration of quality and safety,

and they were routinely erected on very primitive plans, with faulty lighting, heating and ventilation. Overcrowding, lack of care, unclean conditions, poor sanitation and poor food all contributed to the spread of tuberculosis within the schools. In 1907 a report on the death toll for the 1,537 children of 15 residential schools in western Canada was 24 per cent and could have been 42 per cent if they had tracked children for three years after returning to their reserves.

We were brain-washed into believing that the white race was superior. Women were inferior to men. Indians were heathens, savages and pagans, and if we listened to our parents and grandparents, we would go to hell.

The school was to be home. On crossing the threshold, the children were entering a non-aboriginal world. There, dressed in European clothes and with their hair shorn, they would leave behind the 'savage' seasonal, nomadic life of hunting and gathering. It was to be replaced with a life ordered by the regimentation of hourly precision and an annual calendar of church and state rituals.

Aboriginal languages could not be spoken and swift and brutal reprisal was meted out for any infraction.

Hunger was a permanent reality; the food was often too meager or not appropriate in quantity or quality. The food supply was inadequate for their needs, or to sustain vigorous growing children.

A Personal Story

The following excerpt is an account of how the residential school impacted one person's life. This story could be told by almost any person who attended residential school in any part of Canada. The names and First Nation's origins may be different, but the experience is frighteningly similar.

"As a child of six, I remember being loaded on the back of a cattle truck with stock racks and taken to a residential school. I remember getting to the school and feeling so lonely. I was so far from home. I wanted my parents, instead a stern nun told me something in a harsh voice, I did not know what she said as I did not understand a word of English. No one ever called me by my name—I was just a number. I had lost my identity. I was no longer an individual. I was part of a group that was all dressed the same with the same haircut. We were expected to act the same as everyone else and to eat the same food. For breakfast we had rolled oats (porridge) with crumbs on top. Most of the time those crumbs were blue from mold.



We have to look at the residential school issue to understand our past and come to grips with it.

Since that time, I have been scared of abandonment and hate standing in line for anything. There are deep psychological scars that remain today. Some residential school survivors have been abused physically, emotionally, mentally, sexually and spiritually. There was no compassion shown; no parental skills were taught.

There was loss of culture and cultural teachings. In fact, we were taught that if we went to any ceremony we were committing a sin and therefore we would go to hell. Hell was a place where we would burn forever in eternal damnation.

We were brain-washed into believing that the white race was superior. Women were inferior to men. Indians were heathens, savages and pagans, and if we listened to our parents and grandparents, we would go to hell.

One of the results of these residential school teachings was the lack of trust for parents, grandparents and other Elders—a loss of trust for anyone in authority, any adult or anyone with any power, especially over you. The loss of respect for parents and Elders was due to the brain-washing. We were forbidden to speak our native language and forced to speak English. We could no longer communicate with our Elders. As a child, no one ever told you that the Elders had the wisdom, knowledge and experience to guide you through the turbulent times of your life.

The Continuing Impact

The residential schools have affected not only the parents, but also the grandparents and the children of our First Nations. In the North Battleford area, St. Henry's residential school was located in the hamlet of Delmas. When this school burned down in 1948, the children were taken to Onion Lake Roman Catholic Church, Duck Lake or other ACC schools.

We have to look at the residential school issue to understand our past and come to grips with it. We have lost our parental skills due to these residential schools. As young children, when we should have been learning from our elders, we were shipped off to school. To really understand why we are lost today and trying to find our way back to our traditions, we have to understand what happened.

"Everywhere we have gone, we have been told about the impact of residential schools ... Most of the stories we are hearing are negative ... 99% of them ... Inevitably, we are told about the loss of culture, the loss of language, the loss of parenting skills, the agony of being separated from family, from community. The years of being away from home, the return home, the alienation, the need to reintegrate into the community, the pain that people have experienced themselves, the way it was passed down."

-(George Erasmus, 1993, Co-Chairman of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.)

"Most of the residential school products were now parents and raising their families. We really had no role models to follow as we grew up in the residential schools and saw our families only during the summer holidays and sometimes at Christmas."

-(Don Pooyak, Director BTC-ICFS)

The abuses suffered by residential school survivors were of four domains: mental, physical, emotional and spiritual. There was sexual abuse from priests, nuns and older children. Boys that were sexually abused became abusers, resulting in the abuse that is rampant in our communities. Boys that were sexually abused would usually not tell. They did not want to be labeled as homosexuals. The abuse stayed hidden and the shame and hurt would be turned inward, making the

abused turn to alcohol to forget. When he drank and got drunk, the hurt and violation would turn to violence. This violence would be directed to those he cared about.

This has been one of the reasons we as First Nations people have forgotten our way of life, our culture, our language and traditions. The policy of assimilation carried out by the Canadian Government and the churches utilizing the Indian residential school system has affected at least seven generations over approximately 150 years. The re-emergence and rebuilding of our people will take more than just a few years.

If our children's children can be raised with positive parenting skills, having not been subjected to violence and having more of an appreciation and pride in who they are, as First Nations people, then we will have moved in the right direction. (p. 164 RCAP)

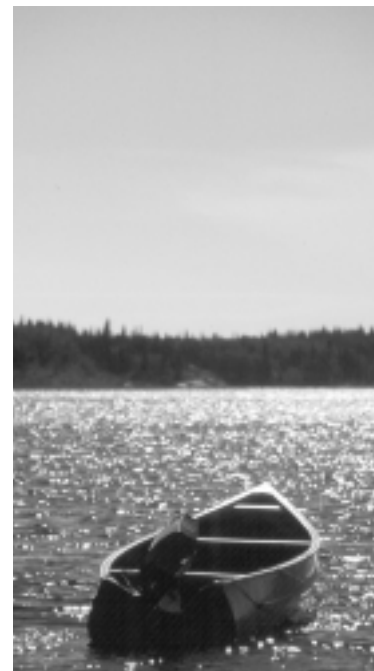


Photo: Fred Cattroll

Traditional Aboriginal Parenting—healing the generations

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In this section, we begin to explore the rich history of First Nation culture and heritage. By examining where we come from, we can take pride in who we are and bring the lessons of our history to the task of building healthy families in today's world.

Circle of Life

Traditional Indian parenting nurtures, protects, guides and teaches. It is central to all other aspects of life and is the foundation of a healthy culture.

-(Positive Indian Parenting,
National Indian Child Welfare Association)

These traditions were handed down from one generation to the next for hundreds of years and are commonly referred to as “the old ways before the white influence.” Their purpose was to ensure the tribe’s survival through its children. The tribal elders encouraged positive and loving relationships between parents and their children.

Many tribes believed that children were special gifts from the Creator. The whole tribe acknowledged a child’s worth and their growth and development was recognized through ceremonies or rites-of-passage. These ceremonies were important in the development of the child—for example, the naming ceremony helped a child establish his or her identity in the tribe.

“The only way names are passed on among us is when an old man or woman gives his or her name to a child or grandchild, Then the giver is called by his other name. When a child is born its parents prepare food, get some cloth, fill a pipe, and call in an old man. Many people come to watch. They tell the old man what they want and give him the cloth and pipe. The old man lights the pipe then puts it down and talks to God and to the Spirit that taught him to give names. After he has talked he sings one song. Then he says, ‘Put the baby here.’ He takes the child in his arms and gives it the name and begs God to give it good luck so that it may grow up and become old. He asks the Spirit that gave him the Power to give that name to be the guardian of that child.”

*Chief Fine Day, Sweetgrass First Nations,
Quote from ‘My Cree People’.*



The tribe’s members depended on each other for survival and children quickly learned to cooperate, share and to show respect for Elders. When a child had to be disciplined it was delayed until a well thought out remedy could be applied to teach the child a specific rule or lesson. Children learned about coexisting with other people and the environment through the telling of stories and legends. Storytelling taught the children the skills of listening and observing. In an oral society they learned that words were sacred.

Spirituality in a First Nation society is a way of life. Without spirituality our First Nations culture would surely die. We need to believe in our own traditions and culture. Once we have established this need, it will assist those parents or caregivers with raising, nurturing, loving and caring for children.

Nurturance, stimulation and safety were supplied by the use of the moss bag to carry the child, which meant children were rarely separated from their mothers. But assistance in raising of the child was given freely by others. The whole tribe or community was considered a family. Other tribes or communities were considered the extended family. Kinship referred to all.

Our heritage treated children with respect and understanding. The traditions developed strong parent and child relationships. The traditional or “old ways” had valuable elements of parenting and provide strong models for First Nation parenting today. Even in a more complex world than that of our ancestors, their parenting practices still provide a strong foundation for First Nations parenting skills today.

WHERE
WE COME
FROM



Traditional Code of Ethics

Give thanks to the Creator at any time you feel the need, especially each morning upon rising and each evening upon sleeping. Seek the courage and strength to be a better person.

Showing respect is a basic law of life.

Respect the wisdom of people in council. Once you have given an idea it no longer belongs to you; it belongs to everybody.

Always treat your guests with honour and consideration. Give your best food and comforts to your guests.

The hurt of one is the hurt of all. The honour of one is the honour of all.

Receive strangers and outsiders kindly.

All races are children of the Creator and must be respected.

To serve others, to be of some use to family, community or nation is one of the main purposes for which people are created. True happiness comes to those who dedicate their lives to the services of others.

Observe moderation and balance in all things.

Know those things that lead to your well being and those things that lead to your destruction.

Listen to and follow the guidance given to your heart.

Expect guidance to come in many forms: in prayer, in dreams, in solitude and in the words and actions of Elders and friends.

Values and Beliefs

Give thanks for the life within you and for all life, for the good things the Creator has given you and others and for the opportunity to grow a little more each day. Consider your thoughts and actions of the past day and seek the things that will benefit everyone.

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

Treat every person with respect at all times. Everyone should work hard to gain the respect of others.

People should not criticize. No person should be made to feel "put down" by you.

Avoid hurting each other through words, deeds and actions as you would with a deadly poison.

Touch nothing that belongs to someone else (especially spiritual objects) without permission, or an understanding between you.

Respect the privacy of every person. Never intrude on a person's quiet moments or personal space.

To show respect, never walk in front of people, especially Elders.

Speak in a soft voice, especially when you are in the presence of Elders, strangers or others.

Do not speak unless invited to do so at gatherings where Elders are present but if they ask you to speak, do not hesitate to do so.

Never talk about others in a negative way, whether they are present or not.

Treat Mother Earth and all creations as your mother; rise up with wisdom to defend her.

Show respect and be open-minded for the beliefs and religions of others.

Respect the wisdom of the people. Once you give an idea, it no longer belongs to you. It belongs to the people.

Listen with courtesy to what others say, even if you feel that what they are saying is worthless. Listen intently and make decisions from the heart.

Be truthful at all times.

Receive others, outsiders and people less fortunate with a loving heart and as members of the human race.

All the races and tribes in the world are like the different coloured flowers of one meadow. All are beautiful. As children of the Creator they must be respected.

Observe moderation and balance in all things.

Listen to and follow the guidance given to your heart. Expect guidance to come in many forms; in prayer, in dreams, in times of quiet solitude and in the words and deeds of wise Elders, family and friends.



WHERE
WE COME
FROM



'Circle of Life' Traditional Family Mental Health, Battleford Tribal Council, Indian Child and Family Services.

When I hear people say "We've lost this, we've lost that," I do not believe that. We have not lost anything; we have just forgotten; we are coming out of a big sleep. We are waking up, and it's a beautiful thing, to wake up and see we are alive, we are still here."

- VERN HARPER

Healing ourselves by raising a healthy new generation

The purposes of our project are to regain and teach traditional parenting skills that were eroded by the arrival of the Europeans, the cultural genocide, the attempted assimilation and acculturation of First Nations people by the religious sects and the resulting development and forced attendance of residential schools era.

- To revive the pride, self-esteem, and nurturing aspect of parenting by educating parents and prospective parents.

- To educate First Nations members of the effects of alcohol and drug usage on an unborn fetus, thereby educating these members on Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects. These First Nations members will obtain information regarding these issues and will assist with preventing this disorder and raising healthier children.

- To acknowledge and expose all forms of abuse—mental, spiritual, physical and emotional.

To assist First Nations members in recovering their communities as they journey on their healing paths.

To develop a traditional model of therapeutic counselling services that will assist with the recovery of tradi-

tional counselling and traditional beliefs.

The following are extracts from the parenting skills manual we have developed and produced. This manual is the result of a needs assessment that was conducted with the Battleford Tribal Council First Nations parents.

A guide to Traditional Aboriginal Parenting

"Most of the residential school products were now parents and raising their families. We really had no role models to follow as we grew up in the residential schools and saw our families only during the summer holidays and sometimes at Christmas."

-(Don Pooyak, Director BTC-ICFS)

The Battleford Tribal Council Elders have defined parenting in the following way:

"Parenting is the ability to nurture, guide, teach, protect and love the children that are on loan to you from the Creator." (Elders gathering, Little Pine First Nation, 1998.)

Another Elder further clarified that "children are gifts from the Creator. They are on loan to us to support, love and nurture, as the Creator wants us to. We should be proud that we were picked as the parents for these children. They are our future, the legacy we have in this world." (Fred Paskimin, Elder Sweetgrass First Nation.)

These definitions are precious and have significant meaning in identifying our personal aspirations as parents.

The first goal of the manual is to help First nations parents to explore the values and benefits inherent in traditional First Nation child-rearing practices and then to apply those values and skills to modern parenting.

The second goal of the Traditional Parenting Skills manual is to help parents develop positive attitudes, values and parenting skills that have their roots in our history and culture.

The way that we parent determines the future of the First Nations people. If we parent well today, we are investing in our future. We will raise good, strong, well-balanced people who will lead our First Nations to also be strong and well-balanced nations, thereby preserving our culture and traditional values that ensure that our Elders will be treated with respect and love.

As Elders we are told we are over the hill. Our Elders, before us, said that 'the Road of Life is all up hill', therefore we are not over the hill yet. We are all working to make life better for our children, grandchildren and our great grandchildren – some are not yet born. When our journey is over and we have helped children then our life has been worth it. We can go feeling we have accomplished our goal.

-(Elder, Solomon Stone - Mosquito First Nation, June 1998.)

As parents it is our responsibility to acknowledge and heal our own past hurts so that we can enjoy our present moments. We can celebrate in the joy that comes from being one with the Creator in order to embrace our future. We need to address the hurts so we could move on to the joys of living and rejoice in our accomplishments. We need to be happy and healthy as we face our future. Most important, we need to teach this to our



youth. We need to address that hurt, deal with it and come out a stronger people knowing that we survived. We as First Nation's people are survivors.

Our children, grandchildren, great grandchildren and all of the future generations will profit from our past. Once we have examined and re-examined our past we will have learned great and invaluable lessons from it. Then we will not repeat our mistakes. Thanks to all our Elders we will be a stronger people and their love and caring, shown through prayers, will not be in vain.

It is with this love, caring and deep commitment from all the Elders that this manual is created. Elders from the Sweetgrass, Mosquito, Little Pine, Poundmaker and Lucky Man attended meetings to give the insight into the traditional parenting skills that are not being used because they have been eroded, misplaced or temporarily forgotten.

In order to understand the present we have to go back to our past when the Elders taught parenting skills to young parents.

skills, which have their roots in our culture, is the ultimate goal of this manual.

We love our children, but love for our grandchildren is still greater. We love our children with all their strengths and weaknesses. But the future of our grandchildren, their well being and security, is the main reason for our existence. When we do wrong as parents it's the ones we love the most that suffer, our children and grandchildren.

-(Elder Solomon Stone, Mosquito First Nation)

In order to understand the present we have to go back to our past

Every new generation faces the difficult task of raising its children. Times may be very different from that of our grandparents, but as parents we have the same responsibility that they did. We must raise and protect our children, help them to learn both traditional and mainstream society's ways, and teach them the survival skills they will need as adults.

In our role as parents we have to teach our First Nations beliefs, values, customs and traditions to our future generation. We need to balance these with the mainstream beliefs and values so that we do not confuse ourselves and contribute to the divide and conquer tactics of previous governments. We need to teach this value base so that we do not live in isolation.

We need to live peacefully with the rest of society as our grandfathers envisioned. Our children have to learn to cope in the world and it is a parent's responsibility to teach them how to survive. We need to teach the children skills that they can utilize in order to become strong, independent, worthwhile members of any society.

For hundreds of years, First Nations parents were guided by traditions that never left parenting to chance. These traditions were passed from one generation to the next. What happened from then till now?

The Government's policy of assimilation through residential schools was a major cause of the loss of the traditional parenting skills suffered by First Nation people. In the residential schools our children had no positive parenting role models and spent so little time with their parents that parenting skills were not passed on. The movement of First Nations families to urban centers led to the influences of the dominant society which also contributes to the decline of much of our culture and our traditions within the families.

We cannot go back to the world as it once was, but we can still find great value in our parenting traditions. These traditional parenting skills can make our job as modern parents a richer experience. Promoting the growth and well-being of our First Nation children by using positive parenting

Other extracts from the manual on traditional Aboriginal education are in another section of this newsletter.



**Cree
Blessing**

May the warm spring winds, a gift from the creator,
Blow gently on your home,
And may the great spirit bless all who enter.

May your mocassins make happy tracks in many snows
And may the rainbow always shine after each rain.
May your home fire keep your family fed.

May the warm spring winds, a gift from the Creator,
Blow gently on your home.

▼

Manawan: a model for community healing & social reconstruction

Responsibility for healing takes many forms. It includes the responsibility to care for oneself, particularly if one is working as a caregiver in the community. Responsibility for healing also means accepting responsibility for ourselves and our actions. The community has the responsibility to heal itself. This process of community healing may look different for different communities. Pushing the community to heal itself may take a lot of courage. The community also has a responsibility to help its individual members to go through the process of healing.



Communities in Crisis
—Healing Ourselves
www.waseskun.net

What is a healthy community? — a community on the healing path? — social reconstruction?

•A healthy community is composed of people who are able to live, work and play together.

When we decide to begin our healing journey, it is essential to understand the reasons or the problems which motivated us to begin the journey and to know what we want to get from that journey.

We want to see results that show substantial, steady and positive changes in comparison with the situation at the beginning of the healing process.

The evaluation report which spans the healing experiences in Hollow Water in the course of the last ten years provides us with a knowledge base from which we can extract a definition of community healing. In a few years' time, in Manawan, the evaluation of the healing process we began in 1992 will also give us significant signposts pointing to a definition of healing and reconciliation in our own community of Manawan.

•Healing is a continuous process that happens over a long period of time. It is a process that is experienced day after day, and which requires the personal participation of all community members.

Leaders' own involvement in healing activities will be the example which will motivate other people in the community. If a local hereditary or elected leader coordinates an efficient activity, this creates a favourable environment which encourages and facilitates the participation of people. In such a case, coherent decisions will be made by the entire community circle rather than by a few people or groups.

When leaders show little or no support, the healing and social reconstruction process is longer and more difficult. When we stated on our healing and social reconstruction process in Manawan in 1992, our leader was fully supportive of the community action movement undertaken by the Mikisiw Circle and placed it as a priority on the Council's Agenda.

•To trust, to care for others, to get involved and share is at the core of such a movement.

Another sign that a community is healthy or in the process of healing is that its members nurture relationships between themselves and with the whole community, that they have succeeded in establishing a climate of trust, respect and mutual help which results in a natural and spontaneous participation in community life. It is essential that we trust one another. There is still a lot of distrust and hurtful gestures. There is fighting for power and money, which harms the well-being of people and of the community.

A healthy or healing community is a place where people can trust each other, trust the families, the neighbours where our children go and play. It is the kind of place that is a good example for our children.

•We have to promote our most precious resource—youth. They are tomorrow's leaders, artists, teachers, nurses, healers, scientists and entrepreneurs.

As for every other precious resources, the capacities of our youths must be nurtured in a stimulating and supportive environment.

A community on the way to being healed is one which directs its youth on the straight path, one where family serves as a model and teaches the important things in life: the circle, the wholeness of every human being, healthy nutrition, healthy sexuality, the value of culture and traditions etc....

In our five-year action plan, we plan to hire a nurse, a community psychologist, and a community police person who will also be an educator. They will work with youth and parents in the schools, in the community and in the hush, in collaboration with other school and social workers.

Another component in the vision of a healthy community or a community in the process of healing is connected to communications. In such a community, people are able to talk openly to each other and are being listened to. They are





*Healing is a search for who we are, who we were,
and who we want to become. In the historical context of
colonisation, of forced assimilation and oppression, healing is to take
again ownership of the responsibilities
of our identity and our destiny.*

able to demonstrate tolerance, empathy and active listening and sharing.

In a healthy community or in a community in the process of healing, people are able to help each other rather than compete with each other.

Often the attraction of status, money and power, as well as the dependance on external agencies or organisations, can impede or slow down the community healing process. A healthy community functions better.

As long as our families are not able to resolve frictions and dysfunctions, we will not be functional. A healed community is able to bring problems to the table and say: we must do something to finish with these problems once and for all.

In a healthy community or in a community in the process of healing, people talk to each other with open hearts, extend gestures of caring and love to each other, trust each other and do not hide things from each other. They are honest towards themselves and others.

•We must stop being ashamed and break the silence.

This aspect is connected to communications. We learned not to express ourselves verbally or not to publicly bring up questions which could create conflicts.

An element of healing consists in helping people break the silence and to speak freely and with an open heart about their feelings and worries.

•Honour one's responsibilities and have clear expectations

In a healthy community or in a community in the process of healing, people honour their responsibilities, not only towards themselves, but also towards their family and their community.

We cannot heal if we have a tendency to let things happen or go, to indulge in self-pity or to blame others for things that happen to us.

To heal, a community has to share a common vision and create a structure which matches this vision. The community must then define and understand the roles that each member has to play as well as the framework which support these roles.

We must work together and create a structure and a community framework which encourages awareness, responsibility and opportunities for growth.

A common vision of community healing: community healing is the opportunity for each of us to become aware of others. It is the first step towards a better understanding of the role that each individual, family, organisation or government can play in the healing of the whole community.

What is healing?

When we hear the word healing, we feel good and we are able to feel hope, for ourselves, our family, our community and our nation. We first have to empty our mind, reconcile ourselves with our past, and work for our future and the future of our children and grand-children. We have to free ourselves from the pain, the hurts that we inflicted on ourselves and on others.

•Healing means breaking the cycle of abuse and violence, whatever its form.

Each day of our lives, healing replaces our anger, shame, guilt and vulnerability with the seven traditional teachings: honesty, love, courage, truth, wisdom, humility and respect.

Healing is a search for who we are, who we were, and who we want to become. In the historical context of colonisation, of

forced assimilation and oppression, healing is to take again ownership of the responsibilities of our identity and our destiny.

There are two ways to define healing

Most non-Aboriginal people see healing as the closing up of a wound, the repair of a body hurt. They have a tendency to regard healing as a phenomenon that affects the surface of things.

For First Nations, healing has a much deeper meaning. For many people in our community in Manawan, healing is not restricted to the body, but embraces healing of the spirit and psychological healing. Such an understanding takes into account the whole being, and not only its outer parts.

We look at healing in a holistic perspective. Instead of isolating the different parts of the body or the different aspects of the spirit in need of healing, we attend to the physical as well as to the psychological dimension of a human being.

Community development in Manawan.

Creation of intersectorial Community Circle (sharing, collaboration and concerted endeavours).

Community development is the process of supporting community action where members of the community:

- Decide to meet
- Organise common needs and problems
- Devise collective plans to respond to their defined needs and solve their problems
- Implement these plans by making use of the resources that exist in their own community
- Call on outside help only when necessary, in order to get support, advice and professional assistance or training.





The principle which supports community development is that people themselves are the ones best able to improve the life situation (health and well-being) of their community.

Community development is organising for action. It is a process which enables people to get to know each other and help one another. This is what was the mobilising principle for the Manawan community action movement, which began in 1992.

The first outcome of community development is the growth of people who work together to solve their own problems. For community members who decide to involve themselves in the process, healing happens as a natural process. When a common language is generated among members of a group and other partners, the words used to define community development can become synonymous with the concept of healing as we have defined it here.

The word healing is often used to describe the changes that have to happen in a society, especially in Aboriginal communities.

Healing seems to have its roots in culture and is defined in different ways in different languages. Globally, members of First Nations communities have similar visions and definitions about healthy communities, but there is not a single definition of healing.

However, most regard healing as a process that "begins inside" a person. To heal a community or a nation, it is first necessary to heal oneself and one's family. Healing means reaching a feeling of balance or wholeness, by (simultaneously and not separately) taking care of all the aspects of one's life.

Spirituality is part of this holistic approach to healing. Notions of spirituality are not easy to translate into words. In Manawan, for example, when we open or close our meetings, we always allow a time of silence. During this time we reinstated offering and purification ceremonies (prayer, songs, drumming, smudging). This revitalisation of our spir-

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itual traditions is a spiritual movement. The rediscovery of traditional healing practices is an important dimension of the identity of the Manawan community and of its social reconstruction.

What is a healing process?

Healing is not a static state but a process which is experienced on a daily basis.

Our healing process is like a decolonisation therapy and a fight against oppression. Our story is that of a community, of a nation, of a people who have been oppressed and who are trying to heal from the legacy of forced assimilation.

Dimensions of the healing process

First dimension: The process begins inside

Community development is in the hands of people who get together and devise measures to improve the situation of their community. However, before the problems of the community can be resolved, people and families must be able to confront their own problems and undertake to resolve them.

For example, individuals and families are like the legs of a chair that the community is trying to repair.

If the chair has two legs, it will fall. If it has three, it will be able to stand but will easily be toppled.

The chair needs at least 4 legs to be stable. We are not saying that 4 persons or 4 families are needed to begin healing the community, but that the more people are involved, the better are the chances.

Although healing takes root within a person, the example of the chair highlights the importance of the support that comes from without. The greater the number of persons who participate in the healing process, the better are the opportunities to create a climate of unity and growth.

Healing is a process of interdependency. The more people are involved, the greater are the chances for success.

To embark on a healing process, we have first to recognize the source of our problems, which in a large measure are also the problems of the community.

We have to look inside ourselves before we look outside. We have to learn to take responsibilities as a person and as a family before blaming others. Blaming is easy when we look to the outside for the source of our problems.





The essential components
of community healing are
participation, trust,
responsibility, examples
shown by parents, by
leaders and healing
helpers, tolerance,
communication and clear
expectations.

Healing begins when we begin to look at ourselves, not only on the physical level but on the psychological level, to look at what happens in our mind, our body and emotions. When we confront questions that have never been answered. Collectively we also have to look at the historical causes of our problems. This can be painful, but if we do not do it, it will haunt us our entire life.

Feeling better inside: healing can begin at any time. Every day people heal because they can express their anger, guilt, frustrations.

So to be efficient a community healing process cannot start from outside the community. An imported healing process is sure to fail.

The process must be adapted to the reality of people and of the community. Ideally, then, any initiative or program which aims at responsibility or autonomy must be developed by the community, for the community, with professional external assistance if needed.

Second dimension: Balance and Wholeness. Wholeness is a healthy mind in a health body"

The second dimension of healing is balance. It is recognised that in order to heal, it is necessary to reach a balance by taking care of all the dimensions of our lives, –simultaneously and not separately .

The essential components of community healing are participation, trust, responsibility, examples shown by parents, by leaders and healing helpers, tolerance, communication and clear expectations.

Balance, mental health: "a healthy mind in a health body."

Evolving from "programs" to "process"

The healing process includes a large number of activities. It is therefore necessary to strengthen the resources that already exist in the community. At the beginning, programs were aimed at children, an approach in harmony with our natural laws. It is natural to protect children first. We are a holistic society, we heal collectively, the whole family heals. It is the basic principle that animates all we do. We cannot separate healing into separate elements. We cannot separate children from family and community.

In Manawan, we refuse to separate and compartmentalise the healing of children and their families from our community services or programs.

The whole family needs healing. There does not exist in Quebec or in Canada any organisation which heals the whole family. Some programs concentrate on children, others on adults, mental patients, criminals, victims, aggressors, but nothing or so little for whole families. And we wonder why these programs do not work.

Perhaps if we included them all in one program, they would work—because everything we do impacts on the whole family. It is necessary to coordinate all programs into a coherent whole.

Training is another means to ease the passage from programs to process and to eliminate obstacles that exist now between governments and communities on the subject of the creation, development and delivery of services.

Communal training, tailored to the needs and the environment, can be very useful because it gathers in one place people who play a differing roles in community healing.

In Manawan, we chose this type of training to encourage community action. In 1997, we experimented—successfully—with training and learning circles on suicide and grief.

This training emphasises strategies (rather than programs), cooperation and the establishment of a wide variety of services.

People need different kinds of services at different moments in their lives. To respond efficiently to these various needs, it is important to coordinate the work of various professional and helpers, organisations and levels of government.

Our aim is to create the means to develop services and programs that are people and family oriented, instead of concentrating our effort to enhance the financial or power status of organisations and/or the professionals who work for them.

Without experience, without suffering, it is more difficult to recognise and appreciate happiness or even the value of the experience itself. To transform a negative experience into a positive experience is a gift which allows us to build a healthy and productive life. These experiences give us the capacity to learn what we want to do and gives us hints on how to get it.

How can we determine when a community is ready? When does the healing process begin?

Continued on page 18 ▶

**Provincial
Residential School
Project**

For Workers:

We can offer workshops on residential school history, impacts on individual and family, suicide prevention, sexual abuse response, the justice system (civil and criminal). We can also give referrals and suggestions on how to best meet your clients' needs.

Services we offer

Individual

- Crisis counselling
- Support through the healing journey
- Referral to community based services
- Workshops on the effects of residential schools, healing models and spirituality
- Information for survivors who are seeking justice in the criminal and civil processes
- An advocate for funding to enable healing

Community

- Support for creating healing centers and healing models
- Support for creating healing teams
- Training in crisis intervention, suicide prevention, sexual abuse issues and healing methods
- Support community initiatives
- Resource library
- Help build partnerships
- Raise awareness

Other

- Educate the public and government on effects of residential schools
- Advocate on behalf of survivors in the communities
- Liaise between survivors, communities and governments
- Educate caregivers

BREAKING THE SILENCE

History

There were at least fourteen residential schools in British Columbia, the first opened in 1861, the last closed in 1984. Through their doors walked generations of First Nations children, the hostages of government and church policies that resulted in emotional, physical, sexual and spiritual abuse.

Our children were robbed of their families, culture, innocence, and in many instances...their lives. As adults, some died by suicide, drug and/or alcohol abuse, and even murder.

Today

The silence has been broken. The truth is unfolding throughout First Nations communities. Police investigations have been launched and the number of court cases grows. Journalists are now interested. Canadian society and politicians can no longer deny or ignore the devastating effects residential schools had on first Nations individuals, families and communities.

Positive Action

The Provincial Residential School Project is one of the positive results of First Nations and other governments coming together to deal with the impacts of residential schools. The Project was established in 1995 with a mandate from the First Nations Summit to provide help, hope, and healing, through services to all First Nations in British Columbia. The Provincial Residential School Project operates with a ten member working committee and a staff of up to eight.

MANAWAN

The state of preparedness is the element that allows us to measure whether a person or a community is able to face its own problems. This is the first stage, essential to the process of change. This state of preparedness assumes that people or communities are ready to take responsibility of their own and to take charge of their resolution.

Three criteria are essential:

- To be aware of the problems
- To want to change things
- To take responsibility and act to change the situation

The community itself must determine (and not external people or agencies) if it is ready or not.

First criterion: To be aware of the problems

A community is ready to take measures for its healing when its members are aware that problems exist and when they acknowledge that the community situation or their lifestyle is no longer acceptable or tolerable.

The healing process begins when the community and its members begin to reflect on what they are doing. When people are able to sit with someone and talk, it is at that moment that healing begins.

For a community, the process begins when a group of people meet and acknowledge that problems exist. Healing begins even before that, but it is only when people start to ask questions on how to put the brakes on the cycle of destruction that that cycle begins to be broken. It is at this moment that healing and social reconstruction begins.

In Manawan, the activities of the Community theatre group have, in the last three years, contributed to the process of awareness.

Second criterion: To want to change things

When a person or community has gained awareness, some changes in our lifestyles et behaviours start to illustrate the positive measures that the community has taken to take charge of the problems.

When people participate in a healing process, they continue to deny certain things, but it is easier to recognise this denial because it is less difficult to admit things when one is in the supportive environment of a group.

The process begins when people decide to act.

Third criterion: To take responsibility and act to change the situation

People begin to take responsibility for the community and influence the behaviour of other, as their awareness grows.

Who determines if the community is ready?

A core group of people, such as the Mikisiw Circle for hope. Core groups are as varied as communities





MANAWAN

are. In certain cases, groups are composed of people who belong to the same gender or age group; others are mixed and their members are united by common expertise, needs or mission.

The main element which differentiates these groups from other community groups is that they have identified and defined a problem which they want to resolve. These groups are also willing to take risks and to adopt a new method or approach to solve these problems.

It is therefore the core group that sometimes determines the moment when the community is ready. In Manawan, the community embarked on a movement and a healing process after a mother denounced sexual abuse. This was followed by a decision, by the Women's Council, to create a working group on sexual abuse. A group of people created a circle and decided that a change was necessary and that measures had to be taken to begin a process of community healing. This group included workers and professionals from various sectors of the community and quickly became a working group on the wider issue of violence.

This notion of a "core group" questions the prevalent idea that the entire community must demonstrate it is ready and a consensus is needed to begin the changes.

In Manawan, The Mikisiw Community Circle aims at reinforcing the competencies and resources that already exist in the community, at making optimal use of local resources.

This is why community theatre has been the chosen strategy for healing by breaking the silence and denouncing abuses. It is an answer to the urgent needs in individual and collective ethics development, and in personal and social restructuring. It is for us, in Manawan, a tool that enables us to take charge of our problems. Actors are from all age groups and all members of our community, except for one who is a member of the Wemotaci community.

Drama allows a reflection of oneself; it is a mirror which frees the imagination and

enhances collective well-being. We have developed this Atikamekw theatre initiative as a means to respond to the specific needs of Atikamekw people and to begin a process of intercultural exchanges between Aboriginal and non Aboriginal people.

Our community is ready to begin a healing process because several people want to change things or heal. And it is this collective elan that determines whether a community is ready or not.

HOW TO MAKE CHANGES

First, clarify the vision

The vision of healing, in the opinion expressed by several members of the Mikisiw Circle, is the process which begins when an individual or a group of people or the community passes from the stage of reflecting to the stage of inner motivation.

In other words, once problems have been identified and acknowledged, it is necessary to determine how things can be changed and problems resolved. Then it is necessary to act together.

If changes are to be made, the motivation must come from inside the individual or the community. That does not mean that external assistance is to be renounced completely, but the decisions and priorities regarding activities and plans are to be made by the community. The action plan must be rooted in the vision.

From conviction to community development

Once there is unity of action and the vision and the conviction is clear in the mind of several community members, the community which has succeeded in beginning a process of healing is also at the beginning of a community development process. This process consists in learning to work together and to make the best use of all available resources.

The construction of new foundations on which the future of our children, our families, our community and our nation can be

built is the responsibility of each community member. We have to create and develop programs and activities which eliminate the poor social conditions that affect the whole community and which have negative impacts on our education, our work, our families and on each one of us.

We begin to work together to remove all the obstacles that separate us.

Factors that generate change-oriented activities

The factors that motivate a community to change and to develop change-oriented activities are:

Experience, the awareness that self-esteem and self-validation was lost, the weakening of the spirit energy, the loss of personal identity or roots, the absence of a vision or life goals, not understanding how systems work and how resources can be used to respond to one's needs.

**Larry Looyie
& Constance Brissenden**

Remember

Remember your parents
Your grandparents
All of your ancestors
Study their ways
Talk about them - Write about them
Sing about them - Dance for them
Paint them - Carve them
In metal and wood
Weave for them
Bead in their memory

You are the parent of thousands of years
Of First Nations History

To preserve our past
Is to save our future

Through your words and actions
Your art
Your rejection of
drugs, alcohol and abuse
You honour your rich history

To honour yourself
Is to honour your ancestors



Extracted and adapted from an article by Derek Neary, Northern News Services, and from a letter by Margaret Thom.

This locked-up anguish is surfacing and we need to help one another to begin the journey of dealing with this abuse in order to become happy once more.

-MARGARET THOM, SURVIVOR

HISTORY

The Fort Providence Residential Society was founded in 1996 by a small group of Aboriginal people in the Deh Cho who felt there was no happiness and no meaning in their lives. They felt much sadness, anger, and, most tragic of all, spiritlessness. Some contemplated suicide, abused alcohol and drugs and basically lived in a state of numbness for many years. But they gathered the strength to reach out to others in the same situation and began the positive growth together.

But we had to really struggle to get some initial funding and had to explain our situation to many funding organisations and agencies to convince them of the seriousness and validity of our issues. But we knew exactly what we were doing and we were not going to stop! It was a critical

point in our lives and our mere survival depended on this. It took a lot of planning to organise a first healing workshop on the subject of residential schools. The theme I JUST WANT TO BE HAPPY was chosen for that reason. Participants identified intense unhappiness and related it to residential school years and what had happened to them during those years.

This good positive beginning was initiated by a small group of people who, having steadily grown over the years, is now the Fort Providence Residential School Society. Members of the Society are former students of the Sacred Heart school in Fort Providence. The school, which was run by Roman Catholic missionaries and nuns, was established in 1867 and closed its doors in 1960. Thousands of Aboriginal children have gone through the Convent and experienced years of many forms of abuse. The children came from all the communities along the Deh Cho (Mackenzie River).

The Survivors of the school remembered it as a place of fear designed to remove every shred of aboriginal identity and responsible for the dehumanizing process of children being removed from the homes in the bush, having their bag of belongings taken away and their hair was cut. They were forced to wear coveralls. In addition, they were often referred to as

“savages.” Some were baptized and given saints’ names.

Some of the abusive acts they endured were verbal, others physical, and still others were spiritual. A great number of the social problems found in the North — individuals and couples having difficulties raising families, experiencing depression and winding up with addictions — are seen as a direct result of the inhumane treatment people received in the schools.

“If that cycle is not broken, we know now that it’s generational.”

“We have to start naming those demons, what is plaguing us.

Hopefully, one day we will be happy, normal people with happy, normal families.”

-Joachim Bonnetrouge

RESTORING BALANCE

There is no short-cut to healing; the process will be a slow and painful one, but will be effective in dealing with residential school trauma and eventually restoring balance in people’s lives.

There are approximately 3500 residents in the Deh Cho region, most of whom are Aboriginal and have been affected by Residential Schools. 90% of people have attended residential school or have family members who were in the schools. Beside the Fort





Providence Residential School, there were two other schools in Fort Simpson (1960-1980). Working closely with all groups and agencies dealing with addictions etc. and with the Deh Cho Health and Social Services Social Workers, the project will serve both the Survivors of the Sacred Heart and of the Fort Simpson's Schools. Where appropriate, the project uses the Natsejike Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centre on the Hay River Reserve.

The residential school was established in Fort Providence by the Grey Nun Sisters of Montreal and the Oblate priests and brothers in 1860 and operated until 1960.

Fieldwork is necessary before healing workshops are undertaken because the problem of residential school is "latent" in that many former residential school students do not admit or fully realise the adverse affects and the extent to which the residential school has affected them.

During its 100 years of continuous operation, hundreds and hundreds of students attended the school from all over the western Northwest Territories. Most students, however, were from along the Mackenzie River and the Deh Cho region. The field work focuses on the 9 communities of Fort Simpson, Fort Providence, Fort Liard, Hay River reserve, Kakisa Lake, Trout Lake, Jean Marie River, Wrigley, Nahanni Butte, all of which make up the Deh Cho region of the Northwest Territories. Fieldwork is necessary before healing workshops are undertaken because the problem of residential school is "latent" in that many former residential school students do not admit or fully realise the adverse affects and the extent to which the residential school has affected them. They suffer through alcoholism, drug use, anger and violence without realising the impact of residential school. The fieldworkers will provide information and assist people in bringing

out in the open all of their experiences and trauma. They will assist them in taking the necessary steps to healing themselves. They will be trained counsellors, specialized in residential school trauma; they will provide individual counselling and organise residential school group meetings in each community.



The second part of the project is holding healing workshops—about 4 major workshops per year—near the location of the Sacred Heart Residential School in Fort Providence. Most of the workshops are held at a bush camp established by the Deh Gah Got'ie Dene Council (Fort Providence Dene Band) in 1997 for healing purposes. There is no short cut to healing; the process will be a slow and painful one, but will be effective in dealing with residential school trauma and eventually restoring balance in people's lives

The workshops deal specifically with the following residential school issues:

Sexual and physical abuse. There is no lack of that from what we have already heard from the people who attended the Sacred Heart Residential School.

Spiritual deprivation. We were told



that we were "pagans" and were forced to learn and practise the Catholic religion and its many foreign practices. Catechism was drilled into our young minds, creating inordinate feelings of guilt and fear of hell and the devil.

Cultural deprivation. We were not allowed to use our own clothes and our native language.

Cultural and spiritual genocide. They took away our dignity and individuality. On arrival to the residential school, the sisters took away our personal clothes and belongings. They cut our hair bald and gave us cover-alls to wear and forbade us to speak our language. We were forbidden to look at girls if we were boys and boys if we were girls even if they were our brothers or sisters. They instilled irrational feelings of guilt and fear of communism. (Many students believed that the Russian communist army was going to march out of the bush across the river from the school.)

No parental skills. Some students remained at the Fort Providence Residential School up to 12 years without ever returning home to visit their parents. Institutional upbringing did not foster normal emotional and psychological growth and development. No wonder so many people did not know how to be good parents to their children.

Lack of emotional and loving care. There were often 50-60 children cared for by one or two nuns. Sisters were mean and kept everyone under control by using strict discipline, such as having students kneel for hours in corners or twisting our ear lobes and hitting us with scissors across the knuckles. •

Yesterday's Child is Today's Child

"The only international language is a child's cry".

-The Convention of the rights of children

At a time when a Regina Physician, Dr. Corbett, after inspecting one of the many Residential Schools where Aboriginal children were forcibly institutionalised, found tuberculosis, eye disease, Scrofula and scabies, overcrowded dormitories, no hospital and poor ventilation, the first Declaration of the Rights of the Child, authored by Eglantyne Jebb, was immediately adopted by the Save the Children International Union. With Eglantyne's lobbying, it was then adopted by the League of Nations in 1924.

By the present declaration of the Rights of the Child, commonly known as the declaration of Geneva, men and women of all nations, recognizing that mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give, declare and accept it as their duty that beyond and above all considerations of race, nationality or creed:

THE CHILD must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually.

THE CHILD that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; and the orphan and waif must be sheltered and succoured.

THE CHILD must be the first to receive relief in times of distress.

THE CHILD must be put in a position to earn a livelihood, and must be protected against every form of exploitation.

THE CHILD must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of its fellow-men."

These 5 paragraphs later became 7 paragraphs, and in 1959 were the basis for the United Nations "Declaration on the Rights of the Child."

The expansion of this declaration by Non-governmental organisations, governments and the United Nation, served to articulate, in 1989, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most comprehensive of all United Nations human-rights treaties.

Although the Convention of the Rights of the child came into being as a result of the horrendous treatment of millions of children all over the planet and in order in order to reduce the

violations of their rights and protect them from violence, the articles of the Convention of the Rights describe the optimal conditions that have been universally recognised as being necessary for the holistic development of the potential of a healthy child. As such they are both a powerful tool for education on children issues and a blueprint for healing strategies.

Eglantyn Jebb's declaration as well as the principles implied in the other documents related to the rights of children are eminently relevant to the experience and healing of Survivors of the residential school system for at least three important reasons:

- In each Survivor lives a child in need of healing, and the 5 paragraph are therefore applicable to them today.

- It provides criteria by which we can fully understand the nature and scope of the abuse experienced by Aboriginal Survivors as institutionalized children.

- It confirms the Aboriginal traditional model of healthy and loving child rearing and protection as well as the place and role held by children in Aboriginal societies.

Survivors of the residential schools in Canada were children when they experienced the violation of their rights. They were torn from parents, families and communities whose world view, spirituality, culture and traditions already integrated all of Eglantyn Jebb's principles.

In 2001, the reality behind such words as violations, abuse and trauma has been blunted, and they now have more of a narcotic effect that a electrifying one, even in the context of the most recent bestial behaviour against





Yesterday's Child is Today's Child

children in Kosovo or Rwanda. Survivors of residential school have to contend with the inertia of History.

To heal, Survivors require empathy, not sympathy. Even though the mention of abuse usually generates sympathy, this is not enough. We need to penetrate the wall that hides the raw immediacy of the traumatic experience which the words were meant to convey. We need to find and see the child behind the wall, and witness what was done to him. This is where empathy is born.

Two important aspects of the violations against Aboriginal Survivors as children and their relationship to the healing process will be examined in this issue:

In "Traditional Aboriginal Parenting," we come to realise and understand both what was stolen from children when they were torn from their parents, families and community, and the wealth of knowledge and practices that was despised and rendered invalid, only to be resurrected and promoted as the highest aspirations for child development at an international level.

In a world where millions of children are daily destroyed, physically or psychologically, through war, abuse, exploitation and neglect, *Traditional Parenting* also illustrates the immense resilience of Aboriginal traditions and serves as one example of leadership. First Nations are showing in rebuilding healthy communities.

In *Abuse: the raw experience* we come to understand how the narcotic effect generic terms we have been overusing affects our empathic response to Survivors and on their capacity to begin their healing.



Abuse: from there to here...slowly

One important element of the healing process, for Survivors, is to receive genuine validation not only of their traumatic experiences, but also of unique qualities of mind and spirit that characterise them and were the main factors in their survival

In 1924 the Geneva Declaration documented the rights of the child, but it is only in the 60s that the Battered Child syndrome found a consensus definition that recognised three core categories of abuse: Physical abuse, Physical neglect, emotional abuse and neglect. In 1970 another core category was added: Sexual Abuse.

The findings from research specifically focussed on the impact of massive trauma such as natural disasters, organized violence (cultural genocide, ethnocide, genocide, wars etc...) on children are even more recent.

The similarities in the nature of and impact of trauma experienced by residential school survivors and recent child-victims of other types of organised violence in the short and long term are evident and well documented.

One important element of the healing process, for Survivors, is to receive genuine validation not only of their traumatic experiences, but also of unique qualities of mind and spirit that characterise them and were the main factors in their survival. It is easy to look at the residential school syndrome only in terms of the problems. These are real, but they often completely obscure the numerous positive strengths that could play an important role in the rebuilding of healthy communities.

Deep trauma and child resilience
From an article by Judith L. Evans, *Children as Zones of Peace*:
www.ecdgroup.com/cn/cn19lead.html

As a testimony both of the deep trauma residential school children suffered, and of the resilience that made them Adult Survivors, and as a framework for child raising and child trauma healing, here are some extracts from the International Resilience Research Project. The research is described in *A guide to promoting resilience in children: Strengthening the Human Spirit*, by Edith Grotberg.

For each of the elements that are described here, pause and think about the experience of Aboriginal children in residential schools and the legacy they live with today as adults. When you read and reflect, see the Child in the school and not the adult of today.

While there is a diversity of responses in people's behaviour, an analysis of the data suggests that across the countries there is a common set of beliefs about one's self that serves as the basis of resilience. To overcome adversity, children draw upon three sources of resilience—I have, I am, I can. The elements within these are as follows:

The *I have* category represents the external supports that provide children with security and feelings of safety:



Abuse: from there to here...slowly



I have

People around me I trust and who love me, no matter what; People who set limits for me so I know when to stop before there is danger or trouble; People who show me how to do things right by the way they do things; People who want me to learn to do things on my own; People who help me when I am sick, in danger or need to learn.

The *I am* category describes who children are in terms of their internal sense of self and how they present themselves to the world:

I am

A person people can like and love, glad to do nice things for others and show concern, respectful of myself and others, willing to be responsible for what I do, sure things will be all right.

I can refers to the ways in which children relate to the world. This dimension includes the child's social and interpersonal skills.

I can

Talk to others about things that frighten or bother me; find ways to solve problems that I face; control myself when I feel like doing something not right or dangerous; figure out when it is a good time to talk to someone or to take action; find someone to help me when I need it.

Grotberg goes on to explain that children do not need all of these features to be resilient, but one is not enough. Resilience results from a combination of these dimensions and is developed as a result of the way in which adults interact with children—through their words, actions and the environment they provide for the child.

Children's resilience to trauma is affected by the degree to which their culture is disrupted:

Children will experience less trauma if the immediate family and community remain together. There is a sense of continuity and security that children are able to maintain if familiar structures and practices are maintained, even though the setting may have changed. But when the aggressor forces change in rites and ceremonies—when they prohibit practices that once brought the community together and introduce alternative schemes (whether they are in the form of schooling or religious practice or ways of earning a living)—then children are left without familiar supports and are more likely to be traumatized.

When a child is separated from the family and is placed in a cultural group where customs and foods are different, then there are even greater disruptions and trauma.

Child survivor

Children learn to cope with traumatic situations and frequently their inventiveness and ability to survive far exceeds what might be expected, given the situation. Nonetheless the trauma resulting from a disaster can cripple a child for life. Dr. Magne Raundalen, a child psychologist who specializes in war-related trauma, describes psychological trauma as:

A sudden unexpected event that overwhelms the person and renders him or her helpless. It is an attack on the senses. When you are in danger your senses widen, they receive more impressions of what you see, hear and smell or touch, and you are helpless to block them out. It is like looking at the sun with completely dilated pupils. The impressions

are burnt in the mind. If these impressions are not dealt with the trauma can be so tormenting that up to 25% of people have lifelong trouble.

Research on the impact of organized violence on children lags far behind that of adults.

The nature of the trauma, the age of the children involved, the length of time during which the children endured the trauma, the gender of the child, his previous family experience, the ties he maintained with his parents, brothers and sisters, other members of his family, and other factors influenced the way the child coped with the trauma in residential school.

Research on the impact of organized violence on children lags far behind that of adults. Most of what has been published has been about adult Survivors, about the state of their mental health and lifestyles and about the impact of their "dysfunctions" on communities. More and more Survivors are telling their stories, however, and we are more able to travel back in time with them and witness the violations they endured, and that they are attempting to heal from.

Abuse: the raw experience

Young girls having to undergo abortion in terrible conditions after being impregnated by men in authority; little children with needles stuck

Continued on page 6

In the native community, all children are welcomed, regardless of where they come from or who their parents are. Each one is respected, right from birth.

-Ann Jock, Mohawk

Discipline DOs and DONTs

Children should not be spoiled. They should know that they cannot have everything they ask for. They like to test their parents.

Force should not be used on children. It teaches them that power is all that counts. They will respond more readily to being led.

Be consistent. Being inconsistent confuses children and they will try to get away with everything that they can.

Be careful about the promises you make to children because if you cannot keep your promise your children will think that you lied to them. This will discourage your children's trust in you.

If you do make a promise, make every effort to keep it. Too many broken promises destroy their trust in you.

You should not fall for your children's provocations when they say and do things just to upset you. If they succeed they will try for other "victories."

Be understanding when your children say, "I hate you." They do not mean it. They feel that they were treated unfairly. They want you to feel sorry for the way you have treated them.

Praise your children. Make them feel that they are important. Then they will not behave like a "big shot" just to feel important.

Let your children do things for themselves. Let them try things for themselves rather than you doing everything for them. Doing everything for them makes them helpless, dependent and insecure in doing things for themselves. As long as you will permit it they will continue to have you in their service.

Ignore your children's "bad habits." If these bad habits receive too much attention it encourages your children to continue with this behaviour.

Never correct your children in front of other people. This will lower their self-esteem. They will take much more notice if you talk quietly with them in private.

Never try to discuss your children's behaviour in the heat of a conflict. For some reason their hearing is not very good at this time and their cooperation is even worse. It is all right to take the action that is required but do not talk about it until later when tempers have cooled.

Children should not be preached at as they do know what is right and what is wrong. You can discuss appropriate behavior and the consequences of inappropriate behaviour.

Children should not be made to feel that their mistakes are sins. They have to learn from their mistakes without feeling that they are no good.

Nagging your children will make them pretend to be deaf. If you nag your children they will eventually tune you out.

Never demand explanations for your children's inappropriate behavior. They really do not know why they did that.

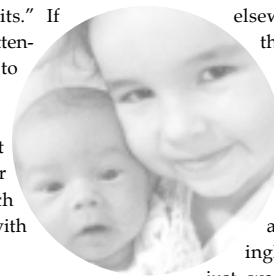
Children's honesty should not be taxed too much. They are easily frightened into telling lies. Believe your children and give them the benefit of the doubt.

Children love to experiment. They learn from it, so please put up with it.

Never protect your children from consequences. They need to learn from experience.

You should not take too much notice of your children's small ailments. They may learn to enjoy poor health if it gets them too much attention.

Never put your children off when they ask HONEST questions. If you do you will find that they stop asking and seek information



elsewhere. Usually from their peers who will have no more or even less information on the subject than your child.

You should not answer "silly" or meaningless questions. They just want to keep you busy with them.

You should never think that it is beneath your dignity to apologize to your children. An honest apology makes them feel surprisingly warm towards you.

You should never suggest that you are perfect or infallible. It gives your children too much to live up to.

Do not worry about the little amount of time you spend with your children. It is how you spend it that counts.

Never let your children's fear arouse your anxiety. If you do they will become more afraid. Show them courage.

Never forget that your children cannot strive without lots of understanding and encouragement.

Never make threats that you will not keep.

Let your children know you love them and that it is their behaviour that upsets you and not them.

Never forget to be honest and truthful to your children.

Always let your children know you love them and you will support them physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.

We are all called to be teachers. Our history is rich with the knowledge of life as the Creator intended it to be. Seek it! Share it! Then the gift of Wisdom our ancestors left behind for us will be yours and our children's future.

- Tiarorehensere
Prayer from Elder Paul Shanks



Rebuilding a Powerful Culture

Our logo artwork was created by Thlo-kee-tupp (Art Thompson), in memory of our people who suffered in residential schools.

Centrally there are two hands grasping a window and breaking it, allowing spiritual release from the system. On either side are a female and male Thunderbird representing our spirituality; above them is a new generation forming in the shape of an immature Thunderbird.

-Thlo-kee-tupp

What is the Residential School Project?

The Residential School Project assists First Nations in B.C. to be empowered from the generational effects of residential schools. It is a First Nations organization that reports to the First Nations Summit of B.C. Chiefs.

What is the purpose of the Residential School Project?

The purpose of our project is to enhance our current work in coordinating a provincial response to residential school issues in BC by supporting individuals, communities, healing centres and agencies. In our five years of operation we have seen residential school responses begin and falter and some have even failed. This failure can be linked to a lack of support for the programs in the form of encouragement, clinical supervision, appropriate training, networking, more intensive programs to refer to, and isolation.

Our proposed project will place six new residential school workers in each of six regions in the province. The workers will be highly trained in

the history and effects of residential school, suicide, and trauma response, conflict resolution, responding to anger, facilitation of group processes, traditional and western methods of healing, resource location and how to make appropriate referrals. These workers would provide direct services to individuals and whatever training communities feel they need, free of charge.

Our proposed project will also develop and implement a process (alternative disclosure mechanism) that survivors can access to begin telling their stories in a safe environment and where validation of their story can occur. In addition, our researcher will gather statistics and information to give us a broader view of what survivors want and need to embark on their journey home from the residential school inside them.

What does the Project do?

- supports survivors: crisis counselling, information, referrals
- assists communities to help survivors: build partnerships, training workshops
- raises awareness of residential school issues: contact with the media; conferences
- conducts research: history and effects of residential schools
- advocates for justice and healing: traditional and non-aboriginal forms

How old is the Project?

The Project was started in 1995 to support survivors who made disclosures within the criminal justice system. It has supported many First Nations and continues to provide support in healing and for those undertaking civil and criminal actions.

If you went to residential school you have several options:

- Healing: counselling, traditional healing
- Criminal investigation: charge your offender if he/she is still alive
- Civil case: sue for compensation
- Helping: advocate for healing, encourage others to heal
- Waiting: take action only when the time is right for you

For Survivors:

The Project can help in many ways. If you need information about what your options are for healing or justice you can call and speak to a Survivor Support worker. We can tell you where to start researching, how to start a criminal case, give you information on civil cases and help you find resources. We can tell you about what is happening in the rest of the country and we know about books, videos, and sometimes healing circles in your area. We can help you start a healing circle.

We can also listen when you need to talk. Our service is completely confidential. Our survivor support staff are trained crisis counsellors who are very knowledgeable about residential school experiences. We know what it is like when you start to remember. We know about the shame, anger, sadness, loss, rage, confusion, and sense of utter aloneness. We can help ground you when you feel lost in the feelings.

We can also refer you to longer-term help whether it be a traditional healer or counsellor. If other kinds of therapy are useful to you we can help you find practitioners and suggest ways for you to find funding.

Continued on page 18 ►



Residential School Resources

The following resource list is provided as a public service. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation does not endorse these materials. Included are books, articles, videos, audio tapes, reports and websites that address residential schools and/or their intergenerational legacy. This list is updated every issue. See earlier issues for other resources.

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VIDEO

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WEBSITE

Grand Council of the Crees. History of Cree Education: <http://www.gcc.ca/Education/history-education.htm>



Reaching Us

237-4441 / 1-888-725-8886

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

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Research

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