

◀ healing words ▶

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Recently, Aboriginal Healing Foundation staff attended the Holy Angels Indian Residential School reunion in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. Also in attendance were staff from the Legacy of Hope Foundation, who have been recording stories for over two years as part of an education project designed to teach youth, and the broader public, about the residential school legacy. The photographs, above and below, were taken by during the reunion, in August 2007.

Holy Angels Indian Residential School closed over thirty years ago, in 1974. In attendance at the reunion were over 200 former students,

mostly from out of town. Also in attendance were friends, family, and Grand Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, among others.

One of the many notable moments was RCMP Sgt. Fred Kamins's apology for police force's role in carrying out the residential school policy of apprehending students and arresting parents who refused to send their children. Part of his apology read, "I am ashamed that our country's history – a proud history of meeting adversity and challenge – should be tainted by this tragic chapter."



inside

Message from
the Editor
PAGE 2

New AHF Research:
the Impacts of Lump
Sum Compensation
PAGE 9

Aboriginal Survivors
for Healing
PAGE 3

Healing Life Through
Culture
PAGE 4

The Millbrook
Healing Centre
PAGE 13

Stages of Healing
PAGE 14

Photo: Holy Angels Residential School Reunion, Fort Chipewyan, August 2007

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Message from the Editor

It's been some time now since the last edition of *Healing Words*. However, the newsletter is back now, and we will be producing regular issues at more frequent intervals. *Healing Words* invites you to send in your letters, articles, questions, pictures, and comments. After all, this is your publication, and we hope you will find it informative, helpful, and above all healing.

Below is the schedule for upcoming issues of *Healing Words*. In these future editions, we will profile healing projects, provide news related to healing, and share stories of courage and resilience. We look forward to hearing from you!

- The Staff of *Healing Words*.

Healing Words Production Schedule

- Volume 5 Number 4 – end of March 2008
- Volume 6 Number 1 – end of September 2008
- Volume 6 Number 2 – end of March 2009
- Volume 6 Number 3 – end of September 2009

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.



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). The fax number is (613) 237-4442 and the email address is wspear@ahf.ca. Keep in mind that the newsletter is available in French and English and is free. Also available on-line! <http://www.ahf.ca>

healing words



wayne k. spear

THANK-YOU TO
ALL OUR
CONTRIBUTORS !

Healing Words is a free publication of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Dedicated exclusively to Indian residential school stories and to sharing resources for healing, this newsletter is your place to share your thoughts and experiences related to residential school (including hostels, industrial schools, boarding schools, and day schools).

You can send your articles, letters, pictures, or other contributions by fax, mail, or email to:

Healing Words
75 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario
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The fax number is (613) 237-4442 and the email address is wspear@ahf.ca. Please include a short biography with your submission as well as a return address and phone number. *Healing Words* may need to contact you about your submission.

The AHF does not pay for published submissions, but contributors get free copies of the newsletter. The views expressed by contributors to *Healing Words* do not necessarily reflect the views of the AHF. All submissions are subject to the approval of the editorial team and may be edited for spelling, grammar, and length. Thanks!



Aboriginal Survivors for Healing

✍ written by Jackie Miller

THE ABORIGINAL HEALING FOUNDATION

I had the wonderful opportunity to visit with several projects recently.

The purpose of the visits was to learn about their experiences as service providers, and to write this article in order to share their success and challenges with our readership. As the AHF looks at winding down our operations, it is important to create networks throughout these communities; and to go back to our original function of empowering communities to heal themselves. All across this country projects have worked to develop strategies and support programs for their communities. It is the aim of these articles to share these stories with you our readers.

These articles also continue the traditional ways of storytelling yet utilize modern technology. We can all learn from the stories of others, because we can personally relate to their struggles and achievements, as we travel along together on this healing journey. It is our hope that as you read these stories you will gain insight into your own community and own journey. Perhaps it will entice you to contact someone from another region or project and create new supports and outlets for your own process. As well, we anticipate it will bring about a sense of belonging and closeness as you read that other regions are dealing with the same issues that face you; and therefore you can realize that you are never alone on this path.

We would also like to highlight the achievements of individuals and communities who have gained personal growth because of the programs funded by the AHF.

Thank you for journeying with us!

Building Strength Within:

ASH or Aboriginals Survivors for Healing Inc is located in Charlottetown PEI. The funding for the program from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation began in 2000 with a mandate to provide services and support to Survivors of the Shubenacadie Residential School and their families on Prince Edward Island.

When speaking with the Director Tarry Hewitt, she stated that the key to success is staff stability and continuity of programming. In order to build trust within the community and from the individuals, it is imperative that the staffing remains consistent. In a world where there is continuous change and ever increasing mounds of paperwork and information about the Indian Residential School Settlements it is key that the programs offering healing and reassurance has staff who become someone that clients trust and respect. This is essential to establish a safe and confidential environment.

As well, because PEI is a small province, many of the services that may be offered by other provincial governments can end up falling in the laps of non-profit organizations. Thus positive networking between these non-profit organizations is of outmost importance as they coordinate and support the healing journeys of Survivors with inter-agency issues.

Dale Sylliboy has been a Councillor with the ASH program for the past 5 years. Dale uses the traditional teachings as a way for people to take action and make the necessary changes in their lives. Healing circles are held weekly. Women meet on Wednesday with lunch served for the circle participants before the circle starts at 1:00 pm. Men have breakfast and then begin their healing circle on Thursdays at 10:00am. The healing circles last as long as the participants want and some times they can continue on until evening.

Many survivors have difficulty understanding the problems they currently face in their lives, and so they must to go back to the time when it all started. They have to go back to when the abuse started. They talk about the learned behaviours from residential school and how they passed those behaviours on to their children; which is why families of residential school survivors have issues in their lives.

Sharing can be extremely emotionally difficult for many of the Survivors. But in the healing circle they learn to sort through their garbage and to let it go. Each week they have a different topic to journal on and then share during the circle. An example topic would be what it means to be a good parent. Many Survivors could not answer that question at first and so in circle they went back to the family before residential schools and looked at the activities of community life and the family structure from that perspective. At the end of the 8-week session, the group takes part in a big ceremony complete with a sweat. The Survivors then burn all of their journals and begin as new people. The group as a way to celebrate their journey finally enjoys a feast.

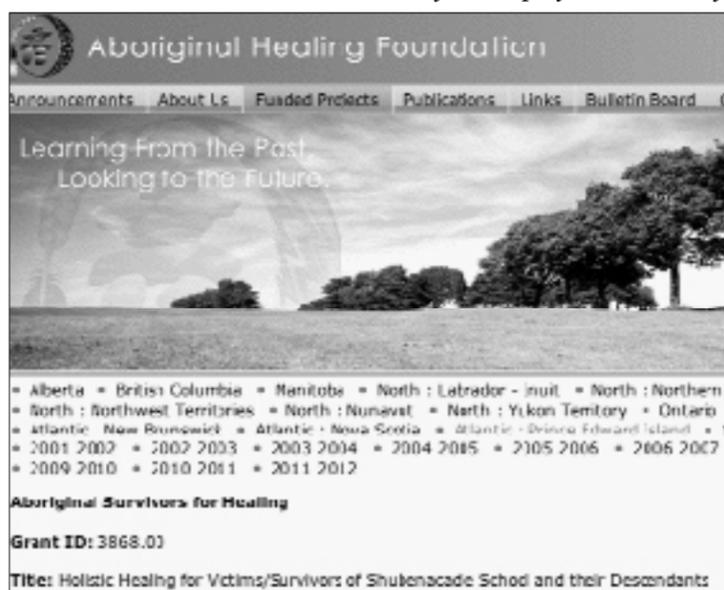
Once the participants learn this process and continue to use the traditional ways and teachings they can further continue on their healing journey. The women have created a very strong unity of the sisterhood, who are supportive of each other and at the same time hold each other accountable to the journey. They have also brought other people into the circle as they recognize the need for healing in other people within the community. This is true development, as the community is empowered to become mentors and healers. Survivors are further able to heal themselves as they work through their issues and simultaneously assist others to begin their own journey of healing. It is hard work but it is also very rewarding work.

Descendents often appear to be more angry that the survivors, because they don't necessarily understand what happened to the survivors. And therefore, they tend to harbour more anger that their parents were not there for them. It is so important that these family members understand what happened and also begin a healing journey to release the anger and hate. (I am not sure where to place this or perhaps delete it)

"The problems people face in their lives today are due to the neglect and abuse of the past, but if people face and own the problems and these issues from the past, life will get easier. The scars will always be there, as scars don't go away; but life will go on in a new way." Dale Sylliboy.

For more information on this funded project, please visit the Aboriginal Healing Foundation website at <http://www.ahf.ca/funded-projects/atlantic-prince-edward-island/aboriginal-survivors-for-healing>

Visit the AHF website to read about funded projects: www.ahf.ca.



Healing Life Through Culture

¶ Originally published in the Fall 2000 Edition of Healing Words
(Volume 2 Number 1)

Elders and others have known for years that if Aboriginal peoples could hold on to their culture they could survive. Despite attempts by non-Aboriginals to destroy our nations, the people have managed to survive. Secretly, some people held on to their beliefs, even practiced them by clandestine means. They are to be honoured for their efforts.

-Tehaliwaskenhas

Cultural continuity as a hedge against suicide in Canada's First Nations
[Full article: web.uvic.ca/~lalonde/manuscripts/1998TransCultural.pdf]

Extracts adapted from a research article by Michael J. Chandler & Christopher Lalonde, the full text of which can be found on the Turtle Island Native Network.

This research report, which is all about self-continuity and its role as a protective factor against suicide, comes in three parts.

Youth and identity

Anyone whose identity is undermined by radical personal and cultural change is put at special risk of suicide because they lose those future commitments that are necessary to guarantee appropriate care and concern for their own well-being. It is because of this that adolescents and young adults - who are living through moments of especially dramatic change - constitute such a high risk group.

This generalized period of increased risk can be made even more acute within communities that lack a sense of cultural continuity which might otherwise support the efforts of young persons to develop more adequate self-continuity warranting practices.

Children tend to proceed gradually and fitfully toward first one and then another increasingly mature way of warranting their own continuous identity. En route to the construction of some acceptably grown-up ways of thinking about personal persistence, children and youth regularly abandon the outgrown skins of their own earlier ways of finding sameness within change.

Until newly refitted with some next-generation means of connecting the future to the past, they are often temporarily left without a proper sense of care and concern for the person they are becoming.

Under such transitional circumstances, when self-continuity has temporarily gone missing, suicide newly becomes a "live option."

Conclusion

Our aim in the present research report is to demonstrate that the risk of suicide run by First Nations youth is determined by the ways in which they undertake to construct and defend a sense of identity that allows them to survive as continuous persons despite often dramatic individual and cultural change.

What we hope will prevent this research program from being yet another in a long series of cultural assaults on Aboriginal peoples is our attempt to show, not that suicide rates are demonstrably higher within the First

Nations culture as a whole, but that: 1) that there is wide variability in the rates of youth suicide across different Aboriginal communities and, 2) that this variability is closely associated with efforts on the part of these communities to preserve and promote a sense of cultural continuity.

Our second set of findings - meant to demonstrate that some good measure of the variability in rates found between Native communities attaches itself to efforts to restore and rebuild a sense of cultural continuity - constitute what we hope is a step in the right direction of searching out variables that not only have some explanatory power, but also admit to some degree of potential for modification or provide opportunities for change.

Taken together, it also proved to be the case that having more of these factors present in the community was decidedly better: the observed 5-year youth suicide rate fell to zero when all six were found to be true of any particular community. Here at least are a half dozen examples from what is undoubtedly a much larger set of cultural factors, the promotion of which may hold some real promise of reducing the epidemic of youth suicide within certain First Nations communities.

Markers of Cultural Continuity

Self-Government

Although just over 12% of all Native youth (2,201 of 17,902) reside in communities that enjoy some measure of self-government, this factor appears to provide the greatest protective value with an estimated 102.8 fewer suicides per 100,000 youth within communities that have attained self-government against those that have not (18.2 vs. 121.0 suicides per 100,000).

The Self-Government classification recognized those few bands that, irrespective of having begun their land claims efforts early or late, were nevertheless especially successful in their negotiations with federal and provincial governments in having further established their right in law to a large measure of economic and political independence within their traditional territory.

Land Claims

Each of BC's First Nations communities were classified as having taken, or not taken, early steps to actively secure title to traditional lands.

While the majority of youth suicides (50 of 97, or 51.5%), and the majority of the youth population (64.3%) are to be found within communities marked by long standing efforts to exert control over their traditional land base, the rate of suicide within these communities is substantially lower: 86.8 vs. 147.3 suicides per 100,000.

Education Services

Data derived from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada were used to divide communities into those in which the majority of students either did or did not attend a band school.

While just 21.8% of the youth population live in communities in which a majority of children are known to attend band controlled schools, only 11.3% of all youth suicides occur in such communities. The difference in suicide rates between communities that do and do not have such educational systems in place is substantial: 71.1 vs. 116.2.

Health Services

At the time our data were collected, communities could be rough-sorted

Healing Life Through Culture

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into those that exercised some direct measure of control (provided funding for permanent health care providers within the community), and those that had little or no such control (temporary clinics and ‘fly-in’ care providers, or services rendered outside the community).

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Healing Life Through Culture

A slight minority of the youth population (46.4%) live within communities that have some measure of control over the provision of health care services and, as expected, an even smaller percentage of youth suicides (38.1) occur in such communities, resulting in comparative rates of 89.0 and 125.1.

Cultural Facilities

Community profile data from Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and information obtained directly from individual band offices was used to calculate the number of communal facilities located in each community.

The percentage of suicides within communities that contain cultural facilities was lower (56.7) than the proportion of the population that reside in such communities (61.7), resulting in lower overall suicide rates: 99.4 vs. 128.7.

Police & Fire Services

Data on these local efforts, provided by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, permitted bands to be classified as having or not having substantial control over their police and fire protection services.

Communities that control police and fire services contain 62.1% of all Native youth, but account for only 56.7% of all youth suicides, resulting in suicide rates of 99.0 and 123.7.

Taken all together, these results are abundantly clear: First Nations communities vary dramatically in the rates of youth suicide that they evidence, and these differences are strongly and clearly influenced by a group of predictor variables or protective factors all meant to index the degree to which these various bands are engaged in community practices that serve the purpose of helping them preserve and restore their Native cultures.

What we believe these restorative efforts could accomplish within these cultural communities is not just the strengthening of those family and peer relations that might help shepherd any adolescent from any cultural background across awkward transitional moments in the formation of a mature sense of self-continuity (though clearly they do this too), but, more importantly, such efforts serve to highlight the important connection between self- and cultural continuity.

The clear message that is sent by the evidence brought out in this report is that the communities that have taken active steps to preserve and rehabilitate their own cultures are also those communities in which youth suicide rates are dramatically lower.

- Invest in cultural heritage - insulate against suicide.
- Being connected to your culture provides you with a valuable resource, an ally to draw on when your sense of personal identity is in shambles.
- A strong continuity in culture - a strong protective factor.
- It is not true that all First Nations have a higher rate of suicide than the general population - but some First Nations do have dramatically high rates. Some communities have suicide rates 800 times the national average. But there are others where suicide doesn't exist.

First Nations communities could look at the fact that every band in BC that has taken all of the protective steps outlined in this report have a youth suicide rate of zero, whereas all those in which all of these community actions are missing show suicide rates that are best described as “a crying shame,” and still insist that, because “correlation doesn't equal causation,” nothing should yet be done. Or alternatively, it could be decided that doing all of those things that might only mimic a saving of lives is still better than no action at all. In either case, this research teaches what sorts of actions it would be wise to have in mind.



Photo: “Regina Industrial School – Graduating Class, 1898.” Indian Affairs Annual Report.

Journeys

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

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

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

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

The articles are meant to celebrate the gifts the Creator has given us for

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

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

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

-M. Montgomery, Inner Healing
(<http://www.inner-healing.com/coping.htm>)

The Inuit and “Residential Schools”

While the Inuit attended a number of northern residential schools, federal day schools, hospital schools, and/or missionary day schools, most were sent to Yellowknife (Akaitcho Hall), Inuvik (Stringer Hall and Grollier Hall), Chesterfield Inlet, Aklavik, Coppermine, Tuktoyaktuk, or Churchill in Northern Manitoba.

According to the 1925 Indian Affairs Annual Report, a modest amount of federal money had been allocated to “Eskimo Mission Schools” at Aklavik, Shingle Point, and Herschell Island in the MacKenzie District. There is also a reference to the “Lake Harbour School in Baffin Land.”

It was during the 1922-23 fiscal year that an amendment to the Indian Act provided that the Inuit - about 6,000 in number, according to the latest census - be brought under the charge of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs.

Amendments to the Indian Act aside, the government was slow to develop policy and to build schools. The employment demands of northern economic activity and the DEW line led eventually however to an emphasis of vocational training.

In 1955, a residential school was opened at Chesterfield Inlet. Others followed at Yellowknife (1958), Inuvik (1959), and Churchill (1964).

By 1966, 33 schools were in operation in the Northwest Territories and Arctic Quebec: 28 federal-run day schools, 2 mining company schools, 2 separate (Roman Catholic schools).

The predominant model adopted for the Inuit was a day school under federal government control with an accompanying residential hostel, whose management was contracted to the churches. The government controlled curriculum and standards, while the churches carried out their work of indoctrinating Aboriginal people with Christian values.

From the beginning, there was under-resourcing across the system, and the churches (particularly the Roman Catholic) resisted participating in an arrangement which entrenched non-denominational education for Aboriginal people. The Inuit, who supported vocational education, objected to the use of a system which would remove children from the home to far-away locations. As elsewhere, in the North the residential school system contributed to the breakup of families and communities, the undermining of cultures and languages, and - most acutely for the Inuit - a profound change in the traditional diet.

Telling Stories from Our Lives

¶ written by **David Sidwell**

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

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

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

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

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

Oral histories are told events. They are oral in nature. Stories, and especially personal stories, are not alive until they have been told. A story is like a seed. Written, it is dormant and dead. It comes to life when it is told, for all of the teller's background, cultures, personal experiences, values, thoughts, and beliefs combine with his or her facial nuances, gestures, and body tensions to bring the story to its fullest living state. Without these things, it cannot be called a story, nor can it be called living.

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

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

There is something about telling others about our disappointments that

heals us. A broken relationship (and heart) demands that we tell the story to our closest confidant. We need to sing the blues to get over them.

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

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

By telling our stories, we participate in the process of reaffirming qualities of orality in a society that sorely needs it as it becomes further technological and impersonal. In fact, if such orality in society ceased to exist, meaningful and artistic communication would also cease to exist and the very foundations of vital sharing would collapse - and society with it.

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

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

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

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

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

The Healing Art of storytelling

And as the last rays faded over the distant mountains the elder began again

to tell more of the story to the children - of the journey of the young ones.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Old man often half tells a story and then switches to another story. He may finish this second one then return to finish the first story. Sometimes he may half tell a number of stories and then go back and finish them one by one (multiple embedded metaphor/stories). Sentences in the stories are joined by 'joining words' like 'and' and 'so that' or 'and the next thing that happened was,' and this pattern has the effect of maintaining the flow and the telling may become very enchanting.

The metaphors match all the significant elements in the context, as in the 'two boys and the saddle' becoming 'two eagles and the rabbit'. Old man picks up two nearby pieces of stick and waves in the air to represent the

diving eagles. All manner of nearby items are used as metaphors. An angry feeling becomes a 'big stick.'

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

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

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

Exploring the Healing Storytelling Art

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

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

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

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

Remembering residential school

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

Remembering your past and discussing it with others breaks the code of silence, and for that reason, it is the moment when residential school first appears as an important event in the lives of those who attended them. It is the moment when, for the first time, an individual sees clearly the possibility

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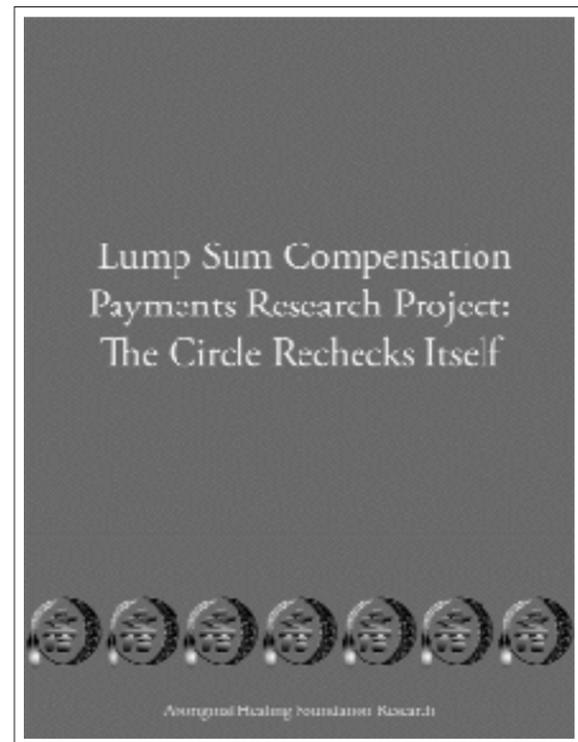
that residential school was more than “something that happened in the past” and consequently “something that was not worth thinking about at all.”

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

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

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

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



New research from the AHF

“Lump Sum Compensation Payments Research Project: The Circle Rechecks Itself.”

Published by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

Written by Madeleine Dion Stout and Rick Harp, with contributions from residential school survivors and other interviewees.

About this publication (from the Introduction):

“The AHF commissioned the Lump Sum Compensation Payments Research Project in pursuit of the following aims: a) to assess the impact that past lump sum payments have had on First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Survivors, and their families and communities; b) to help identify the benefits and costs of such payments; and c) to prepare recommendations on what might be helpful with respect to the imminent distribution of Lump Sum Compensation Payments (LSPs), including Common Experience Payments. According to the AHF, approximately 86,000 former residential school students stand to receive, on average, \$28,000 each in compensation, with an average recipient age of 60 years old. This wave of payments represents a massive and sudden influx of money into Aboriginal communities across Canada.

Indeed, evidence revealed that very little research attention has been devoted to the impact and use of lump sum payments by individual recipients, making the key informant survey of the Lump Sum Compensation Payments Research Project all the more critical (Dion Stout and Jodoin, 2006).”

Nouveau document de recherche présenté par la FADG

« Lump Sum Compensation Payments Research Project: The Circle Rechecks Itself »

Publié par la Fondation autochtone de guérison.

Rédigé par Madeleine Dion Stout et Rick Harp avec la collaboration des Survivants des pensionnats et d’autres personnes rencontrées.

Au sujet de cette publication (extrait de l’introduction) :

«[TRADUCTION] La Fondation a commandé un projet de recherche portant sur les paiements compensatoires forfaitaires (en somme globale) dans l’intention d’atteindre les objectifs suivants : a) évaluer les retombées que ces paiements forfaitaires ont eues dans le passé sur les Survivants de Premières nations, métis et inuits, de même que sur leur famille et leur communauté; b) aider à identifier les avantages et coûts de paiements de ce type; c) préparer des recommandations sur ce qui pourrait être utile relativement à la distribution prochaine des paiements compensatoires forfaitaires, dont le Paiement d’expérience commune. D’après la FADG, environ 86 000 anciens élèves des pensionnats devraient recevoir en moyenne chacun 28 000 \$ en compensation, l’âge moyen du bénéficiaire étant de 60 ans. Cette vague de versements forfaitaires représente un gros afflux soudain d’argent dans les collectivités autochtones au Canada.

En réalité, les informations dont on dispose ont révélé que très peu d’attention de la part de chercheurs a été accordée aux retombées que les paiements forfaitaires ont eues et à l’utilisation que le bénéficiaire en a fait, ce qui rend l’enquête auprès d’informateurs clés dans le cadre du projet de recherche sur les paiements compensatoires forfaitaires encore plus cruciale (Dion Stout et Jodoin, 2006). »

Traditional Native Culture and Resilience

By Iris HeavyRunner (Blackfeet), Coordinator, CAREI, Tribal College Faculty Development Project, University of Minnesota, and Joann Sebastian Morris (Sault Ste. Marie Chippewa), Director of the Office of Indian Education Programs, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Department of Interior.

Cultural resilience is a relatively new term, but it is a concept that predates the so called “discovery” of our people. The elders teach us that our children are gifts from the Creator and it is the family, community, school, and tribe’s responsibility to nurture, protect, and guide them. We have long recognized how important it is for children to have people in their lives who nurture their spirit, stand by them, encourage and support them. This traditional process is what contemporary researchers, educators, and social service providers are now calling fostering resilience. Thus, resilience is not new to our people; it is a concept that has been taught for centuries. The word is new; the meaning is old.

Our world view is the cultural lens through which we understand where we came from, where we are today, and where we are going. Our cultural identity is our source of strength. In historical times the cultures and world views of tribal peoples were regarded by non-Indians as impediments to the speedy assimilation of the young. Regrettably, remnants of such viewpoints continue to be held by some professionals who impact the lives of contemporary Indian youth. It is critical that researchers, educators, and social service providers recognize the valid and positive role culture plays in supporting Indian youth and tapping their resilience.

A culture’s world view is grounded in fundamental beliefs which guide and shape life experiences of young people. It is not easy to summarize fundamental Indian values and beliefs because there are 554 federally recognized tribes in the U.S. alone and an almost equal number in Canada. In spite of tribal differences, there are shared core values, beliefs and behaviors. Ten are highlighted here to guide our thinking about innate or natural, cultural resilience: spirituality, child-rearing/extended family, veneration of age/wisdom/tradition, respect for nature, generosity and sharing, cooperation/group harmony, autonomy/respect for others, composure/patience, relativity of time, and non-verbal communication. Educators and others must understand that the values held by Native children are interrelated.

Spirituality is a fundamental, continuous part of our lives. In traditional times, spirituality was integral to one’s daily life. Embodied in Native spirituality is the concept of interconnectedness. The spiritual nature of all living things was recognized and respected. The mystical aspects of life were openly discussed. A strong ceremonial practice was interwoven into the cycle of seasons. Ceremonies marked important times in our people’s lives, such as children’s naming ceremonies or puberty rites.

We believe that spirituality is at the core of our survival. Many Native educators agree that our spirituality has been the cornerstone of our survival through generations of adversity and oppression. Most traditional people approach Indian spirituality with tremendous care and respect. It is very important that educators and other service providers recognize its value while also respecting the private nature of our spiritual beliefs and practices. Basil Johnson, (Ojibway), explains the deep personal nature of traditional spirituality.

“To understand the origin and the nature of life, existence, and death, the Ojibway speaking peoples conducted inquiries within the soul-spirit that was the very depth of their being. Through dream or vision quest they elicited revelation-knowledge that they then commemorated and perpetuated in story and re-enacted in ritual. But in addition to insight, they also gained

a reverence for the mystery of life which animated all things: human-kind, animal-kind, plant-kind, and the very earth itself.”

- Johnson, (1982, p. 7)

Spirituality is one of four essential parts of our world view philosophy. The others are the mental, emotional and physical aspects of life. All four dimensions must be kept in balance. A child is born with a natural capacity or resilience evidenced in all four dimensions. This resilience is our innate capacity for well-being. En route to unlocking community resilience, our goal is for children to recognize when they are out of balance, understand what caused the imbalance and learn how to regain balance. Dr. Roger Mills calls this “healthy thought recognition.”

We have a variety of strategies or cultural ways to teach healthy balance. Joseph Epes Brown, reveals, “one of the symbols that expresses most completely the Plains Indian concept of the relationship between human beings and the world of nature surrounding them is the cross inscribed within the circle” (Brown, 1988, p. 34). In some tribes we use the medicine wheel to help young people understand the interconnectedness of the mind, spirit, heart and body.

What is often termed the “Red Road” philosophy has been articulated well by Isna Iciga (Gene Thin Elk):

“The Red Road is a holistic approach to mental, physical, spiritual and emotional wellness based on Native American healing concepts and traditions, having prayer as the basis of all healing. Native American psychology is essential in reaching the inner person (spirit) using specific sound, movement, and color. All these essences are present in the Medicine Wheel, which is innate to Native Americans. The traditions and values of the Native American People ensure balance by living these cultural traditions through the Red Road. Healing is a way of life for the Native American who understands and lives the cultural traditions and values” - Aborgast, (1995, p. 319)

Our traditional philosophy is holistic. The contemporary health realization work of Dr. Roger Mills is very helpful in explaining the role of thinking in our experiences. This is one example of the understanding we want children to have about their natural resilience.

Our culture is rich with ways to teach children the world view philosophy or the good way of life. These include using our traditional languages, ceremonies, dances, blood/clan systems, music/arts, medicine, foods’ clothing, and more. Our children’s cultural strength or resilience can also be fostered by the oral tradition of storytelling. Children learn to listen with patience and respect. Our stories can be told over and over; they are developmental. At every step we learn something new. In essence we grow up with our stories. They are protective factors that convey culturally specific high expectations, caring, support, and opportunities for participation.

The traditional Indian family unit is the extended family. Each child has an abundance of blood and clan relatives to share the responsibility of child-rearing. Elders hand down tribal legends, history and traditions and, therefore, are treated with tremendous respect. Our belief in the sacredness of all creation causes us to view ourselves as caretakers of the natural realm. Recognizing the connection with others, emphasis is placed on sharing material possessions. In our world view, it is more important to be a good person than to acquire material goods. Natural cooperation among group members takes precedence over competition. Harmony within the group is all-important. Balance and harmony are maintained by not imposing on an individual’s rights or beliefs. Being quiet and still is not uncomfortable to Indian people. We are comfortable with silence and talking for the sake of talking was not our way. Time is viewed as flowing and always with us. We learn to follow nature’s rhythm.

Educators and others working with Indian youth who demonstrate respect for these fundamental values, beliefs and behaviors, foster resilience. They can build on young peoples' connection to all other living entities, encourage and openly discuss their spiritual development; recognize the vital role played by elders, aunts, uncles, and other blood or clan relatives and seek their involvement. We also can make use of the outdoors, encourage generosity of spirit, incorporate more cooperative learning activities, respect the individual, allow for a longer response time, be more flexible with timelines, and respect that learning can also occur through listening and in silence.

Taken as a whole these traditional values and beliefs are the cultural foundation which, if respected, extends high expectations; caring, supportive relationships and meaningful opportunities for participation to Native children. We believe when these innate, cultural protective factors are brought into play, the natural resilience of children will be realized. Our beliefs, values, or philosophy must be incorporated into any work done with our children. Social service providers, educators, and others must help Indian families become safe and secure places for children. Researchers and evaluators need to use culturally competent research and evaluation designs in Native schools and communities to capture and interpret the essence of our growth accurately.

Cultural teachings unearth individual resilience as documented with many personal stories in *Wounded Warriors* by Doyle Arbogast. These interviewed individuals found - "what their ancestors always knew-that the pathways to peace, balance, and living are found by taking responsibility to honor the beauty, spirit, and the mystery of their own heritage"

- Arbogast, (1995, p. 1)

Cultural practices unlock our human potential. Sisoka Luta, (Jerome Kills Small) states, "through the drum I feel the Native American part of my spirituality. I have a special bond with it. I know that a lot of the others find the greater part of their strength in other things like the sweatlodge and the pipe. For me, I get my strength from the drum."

- Arbogast, (1995, p. 145)

Sungmanitu Hanska, (Long Coyote) says, "getting involved and attending things that are part of my people's ways have been incredibly significant. I have a seed inside that needs to be nourished before it will grow. When this seed gets a little nourishment, like permission and encouragement, or an invitation for myself to nourish it, it begins to sprout. I am beginning to understand that the seed is my Spirit"

- Arbogast, (1995, p. 84)

We believe this is the innate health or resilience Dr. Roger Mills, Bonnie Bernard, and others describe.

Candace Fleming (Kickapoo/Oneida/Cherokee), explains, "In an attempt to depart from lifestyles and situations that compromise well-being, Indians... [Native Americans/Alaska Natives/First Nations] have begun to identify for themselves culturally congruent values and behaviors that enhance life for the individual, the family, and the community ... A balanced treatment ... needs to focus on the resiliency, strengths, and significant contributions"

- Fleming, (1992, p. 137).

In our work with 20 national Native educators/trainers we found agreement that our tribal identity, spirituality, elders, ceremonies and rituals, humor, oral tradition, family, and support networks are essential protective strategies. These are the things that have kept us strong. A study in progress with the Minneapolis-based Healthy Nations collaborative surveyed 136 Native program directors and front-line workers. They indicate they draw tremendous strength from family support systems, caring communities, strong identities, spirituality, and cultural values, world view, ceremonies, and traditions. These resources foster our cultural resilience.

Our recent training experiences indicate Native prevention workers find the term resilience helpful. One participant said, "Now I have a word for what I have always known and struggled to explain to the children and adults I work with." Resilience helps us assist students in reconnecting with our cultural strength. Our work in Red Lake, Minnesota, has been resilience-based. We are pleased to see that a hopeful resilience message, well grounded in local cultural traditions, frees educators, social service providers and tribal community members to view future possibilities with excitement and energy. Our innate human capacity for transformation and change, our resilience, is ever present; like the circle of life it is unbroken and unending. Black Elk describes the circle of strength this way:

"You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. In the old days when we were a strong and happy people, all our power came to us from the sacred hoop of the nation, and so long as the hoop was unbroken, the people flourished. The flowering tree was the living center of the hoop, and the circle of the four quarters nourished it. The east gave peace and light, the south gave warmth, the west gave rain, and the north with its cold and mighty wind gave strength and endurance. This knowledge came to us from the outer world with our religion. Everything the power of the world does is done in a circle. The sky is round, and I have heard that the earth is round like a ball, and so are all the stars. The wind, in its greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles, for theirs is the same religion as ours. The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same, and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves"

- Brown, (1988, p. 35)

We wish to acknowledge our appreciation for our cross cultural collaboration with Kathy Marshall at the University of Minnesota, Center for Applied Research and Educational Improvement, Safe and Drug Free Schools Project. It has made our ongoing work and this article possible. Such joint efforts serve the needs of all children well.

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The Impact of Residential Schools on Metis People

“No one can understand the enormous effects of residential schools upon Metis people without some basic awareness of the foundations upon which Metis culture and family life is built. Most Canadians are aware that fiddling, jigging, beadwork and the Metis sash are characteristic cultural symbols of Metis people.”

- Metis Survivor Family Wellness

Many Canadians know that Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont were famous Metis leaders, and that the Metis were renowned bison hunters, makers of pemmican and key players in the fur trade history of the country now called Canada. Fewer Canadians, however, are aware that Metis people have their own distinct language (with various dialects and usages) which is referred to as Michif. Nor do many Canadians understand the deep and historical roots of Metis aspirations to reclaim their cultural and political heritage as a distinct nation within Canada.

Having adapted characteristics from both sides of their heritage -- be it First Nations (mostly Cree, Ojibway, Saulteaux and Dene) on the one side, and either French or British (including Scottish) on the other -- the Metis became a distinct culture in the early 1800's. Some aspects of being a distinct society began appearing even prior to the establishment of the Red River Settlement, in the vicinity of Sault St. Marie ON.

Like First Nations, Metis people relied on hunting, fishing, trapping and gathering for survival. Additionally, being children of the fur trade, Metis people became highly skilled as traders, including trade involving exchange of money.

Freedom, independence and self-sufficiency as a group were qualities that were highly respected in the Metis way of life. Forerunners of the historical Metis Nation were groups referred to as 'the freemen' or 'voyageurs'. Later, once a distinct identity emerged, Cree people referred to the Metis as Otipemisiwak, meaning "the people in charge of themselves". When government land surveyors came to mark boundaries on the land where Metis were living, the Metis either tried to stop them or they moved further west in order to be free to live their way of life.

These same qualities, however, were viewed very differently from European eyes. What the Cree saw as responsibility, the settlers referred to as a "permissive" or "licentious" Metis way of life. That is why Europeans believed that Metis children had to be removed and isolated from the influence of their families. Metis people were widely viewed by the dominant interests and by the newly arrived flood of settlers as "wild, immoral and savage-like."

The high importance attached by Metis people to the extended family can best be understood from within a traditional Metis context. If the extended family as a group, or a group of extended families survived, the individual survived - not the other way around as it is in Euro-Canadian society. You proved yourself to be a true Metis by demonstrating your commitment to the family group, not by American or European styles of nationalism or patriotism.

One of the main ways you proved yourself to be a good family member was by providing food. Whenever food was needed, you simply got out your gun, net, or trap or used your hands (for gathering) to get the food or goods that creation provided. Every member of the extended Metis family unit had a role (job) in finding and preparing food. However, when the industrial revolution and market forces took hold and grew throughout the country, it split up the family unit by forcing some members to move away from the family in order to get "jobs" in the centralized economy imposed in Canada after the fur trade. Having a job in the market economy was not the same thing as fulfilling your role in the traditional Metis family.

Together with the dominant forces of industry and commerce, residential schools seriously eroded the traditional Metis family unit. On one hand, younger adults were forced to leave the family to secure an income and on the other hand, the children were often separated from the family unit to be 'educated' (so they too could get an income later on). Education and the economy are often viewed as value-neutral influences by the dominant society but their influence upon Metis people radically altered the very fabric of the Metis family, thus shattering Metis identity. In view of state/church agenda to colonize and civilize, it is clear that those in positions of authority realized that by destroying the Metis extended family unit, you effectively offset the development of a Metis Nation.

Many Metis people who attended residential schools continue to carry the burden of very painful and horrifying experiences including physical and sexual abuses they endured at school. Others feel shame about their identity as Metis because they were taught that their culture and traditions were wrong and primitive.

Still others live in fear of harassment by the dominant society because they were forbidden to speak Michif at school and practice their way of life. There are some Metis who say that, as far as schoollife goes, their experience was uneventful and tolerable except for bouts of loneliness for family. They point out that they would never have learned to read and write or find out about ways of life other than their own, if they had not gone to residential schools.

Although the experience of Metis people in residential schools may vary, it is the purpose of this paper and the Metis Survivor Family Wellness Program to deal with the physical, sexual, mental, spiritual and cultural abuse that took place. Was learning to read, write and do arithmetic worth it for those who were beaten or raped? Was it worth the cost of not being raised in a warm, caring environment with a loving family? Was it worth the cost of undermining the culture and being assimilated into mainstream society?

One of the factors that contributed to the negative experiences of many Metis students was the way in which residential schools were organized and operated. The structure and methods of learning imposed by these schools was clearly not based on the needs and learning styles of Metis children and their families. Metis, like other Aboriginal peoples, learn best through "practice" and "doing" in the actual context. Sitting in a classroom isolated from the real life situations where you were expected to simply repeat information according to formulas established by outside authorities is foreign to many Metis people. The frequent punishments applied to students in residential schools shows that the real issue was one of control and power, not awakening minds and hearts to a life-long journey of learning and growing within their own social and cultural context.

It is one thing to consider the impact that a foreign model of learning and structure has on a people with their own distinct culture. It is quite another matter to understand or make sense of the immediate and long-term effects of the more outrageous actions committed by residential school authorities and others, such as caretaker personnel and older students.

It is important to come to terms with the reasons why the day-to-day experience of so many residential school students was such a horrible and miserable existence. How can anyone possibly make sense of the brutality that took place? Are such cruelties just part of the daily annoyances and frustrations to be expected in schools that are rigid and strict? Can the atrocities be passed off with rationalizations of incompetence or people who are unsuited to the tasks they have been assigned? Was it just the presence of some "bad apples"? Or was it the imposition of a whole new way of life?

While the 'bad apple' excuse may be an acceptable explanation to mainstream society, it clearly evades the truth. The anguish and gloom experienced by most students in residential schools came as a result of a deliberate, well

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thought out, long practiced policy undertaken to achieve specific results. There is very little that cannot be justified in the controlling, top-down, class structure on which residential schools were modeled.

When one adds to this mix the belief that Aboriginal peoples were inferior to Europeans, any action, no matter how inhumane, can be justified. If it is deemed necessary to destroy and replace a people's culture, it follows that the violation of the bodies of these people will be tolerated as well. One need look no further than recent conflicts in eastern Europe involving "ethnic cleansing" for contemporary examples.

The public record of physical, sexual and psychological/emotional abuses have been made painfully clear: violent beatings, racist outbursts, rape, buggery and other horrifying sexual abuses by staff and sometimes by older students. A variety of means and ways of abusing residential school students were applied under the guise of discipline and development of character. There are many similarities between such punishments and the treatment endured by prisoners-of-war.

http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/english_index.html

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If you have questions, call 1-866-879-4913.



The Millbrook Healing Centre

The Millbrook Healing Centre opened their doors in 1994 to assist with the multidimensional issues affecting communities operating under the umbrella of the Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services of Nova Scotia. The common thread among those they serve is Family Violence.

The Child and Family Services mandate is to empower the community for social action and to change policy towards early intervention and family violence prevention utilizing a holistic approach at the community level. No matter what the entry point into the system is, the same strength based approach to the support the family will be implemented. This comprehensive and cost effective program consists of: early intervention, family support and healing centres.

A successful example of this coordinated approach is a young woman who recently delivered a baby. She has other children in permanent care and a long history of domestic violence and addiction issues. By incorporating this holistic approach a team of support workers has been put into place. The young woman, who is also FASD, and her child are receiving coordinated support services through the healing centre, child welfare and family support programs. The support in the healing centre consists of postnatal care, a women's counsellor, mental health worker, and family support worker. The case plan also includes life skills training in order to equip her to become the primary caregiver of her child, and to prevent this child from entering the system. This case plan process is also done without a court order.

The Healing centre also offers a variety of other family programs and provides home visits in the community. An Elder Abuse day was held on June 15th to raise awareness of Elder abuse and prevention. A girl's retreat is held annually to highlight self-esteem, as well as family violence awareness and a bullying presentation. There is also a retreat for girls who currently live in the social services system and will soon be leaving due to reaching the age of majority. The program called, Aging Out of Care Retreat, and focuses on: life skills, self-esteem, relationship building and family violence awareness, as well as how to look for an apartment and budgeting skills. Staff also provide individual counselling, outreach services, family and community healing events and work closely with residential school survivors to provide supports in order to build healthy communities.

The holistic approach to dealing with family violence and addiction issues has been very successful and is the vision of the former Executive Director, Joan Glode. Another success story is the fact that the Mi'kmaq Family and Children's Services of Nova Scotia has secured funding from the federal government to continue their healing work!

The biggest challenge has been the struggle to change the perception of the agency as a resource to the community rather than a watchdog. This shift in paradigm has also taken place within the staff, as it is important for the staff to be visible during community events, not just when there is a crisis in the community. The breakthrough with the development of partnerships with other Child Welfare agencies has also been a shift in thinking for all agencies, as the goal to maintain the integrity of the family while balancing the risk to children is paramount in the creation of healthy communities.

The Stages of Healing

Excerpt from: *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*
by Laura Davis and Ellen Bass

It is important that people who support survivors understand the healing process. Healing is never a straightforward progress. It might best be described as a spiral. A survivor on her healing journey climbs upward, but she re-traces her steps at various points along the way. If you, a supporter, understand this, you will be better able to support the survivor you know.

There are a number of ways to describe the healing process, many are both valid and help us to understand the healing process. The medicine wheel, used by many Aboriginal cultures in North America is one way to describe healing and balance that we all strive for. Another description, often used by survivors and community-based organizations, is by Ellen Bass and Laura Davis.

Bass and Davis have described the stages of healing a survivor goes through. Most of these stages are necessary. However a few or them - the emergency stage, remembering the abuse, confronting your family, and forgiveness - are not applicable for every woman. While these descriptions are directed to a survivor - male or female - this information is vital for any supporter, be they partner, family member, friend, therapist, or other professional helper. The more we understand about abuse, its effects and the healing, the more we are able to support the survivors in our lives and heal ourselves. Here is how Bass and Davis describe the steps in the healing journey.*

The decision to heal

Once you recognize the effects of sexual abuse in your life, you need to make an active commitment to heal. Deep healing only happens when you choose it and are willing to change yourself.

The emergency stage

Beginning to deal with memories and suppressed feelings can throw your life into utter turmoil. Remember, this is only a stage. It won't last forever.

Remembering

Many survivors suppress all memories of what happened to them as children. Those who do not forget the actual incidents often forget how it felt at the time. Remembering is the process of getting back both memory and feeling.

Believing it happened

Survivors often doubt their own perceptions. Coming to believe that the abuse really happened, and that it really hurt you, is a vital part of the healing process.

Breaking the silence

Most adult survivors kept the abuse a secret in childhood. Telling another person about what happened to you is a powerful healing force that can help you get rid of the shame of being a victim.

Understanding that it wasn't your fault

Children usually believe that abuse is their fault. Adult survivors must place the blame where it belongs - directly on the shoulders of the abusers.

Making contact with the child within

Many survivors have lost touch with their own vulnerability. Getting in touch with the child within can help you feel compassion for yourself, more anger at your abuser, and a greater intimacy with others.

Trusting yourself

The best guide for healing is your own inner voice. Learning to trust your own perceptions, feelings and intuitions becomes a basis for action in the world outside.

Grieving and mourning

As children being abused and later, as adult struggling to survive, most survivors haven't felt their losses. Grieving lets you honour your pain, let go, and more into the present.

Anger: The backbone of healing

Anger is a powerful and liberating force. Whether you need to get in touch with it or have always had plenty to spare, directing your rage squarely at your abuser, and at those who did not protect you even if they could have done so, is essential to healing.

Disclosures and confrontations

Directly confronting your abuser is not for every survivor, but it can be a dramatic, cleansing tool.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness of the abuser is not absolutely required as part of the healing process, although it is often the most recommended. The only essential forgiveness is to forgive yourself.

Spirituality

Having a sense of a power greater than yourself helps you in your healing process. Your spirituality is unique to you. You might find it through traditional cultural practices, through organized religion, meditation, nature, or a support network.

Resolution and moving on

As you move through these stages again and again, you will reach a point of integration. Your feelings and perspectives will stabilize. You will come to terms with your abuser and other family members. While you won't erase your history, you will make deep and lasting changes in your life. Having gained awareness, compassion, and power through healing, you will have the opportunity to work toward a better world.

Excerpt from: *The Courage to Heal: A Guide for Women Survivors of Child Sexual Abuse*, by Laura Davis and Ellen Bass Harper & Row, New York, 1988 pages 58-59

<http://www.tamarashouse.sk.ca/stages.shtml>

The Four Seasons of Community Healing

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

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

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

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

Winter - the journey begins

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

Within this scenario one of two things may happen:

Key individuals begin to question and challenge the status quo, often making significant shifts in their own lives. Their personal journey is often characterized by service to their community as they begin to reach out to other individuals to provide mutual support and initiate healing and crisis intervention activities. These activities often are undertaken at great personal sacrifice and they frequently encounter intense and very real opposition from within the community.

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

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

What is driving this stage?

- Dedicated key individuals (often women) responding to their awareness that things are bad and there is an alternative
- Leaders and staff within programs tasked with addressing the consequences of some part of the “crisis”

- Visionary and courageous political leaders within the community creating an “enabling climate for healing”

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

Spring - Gathering Momentum

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

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

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

What is driving this stage?

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

Summer - Hitting the Wall

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

There are often a series of paradoxes at Stage Three:

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

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

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

To those on the front lines it may seem as if a lot of people have “dropped out” of the healing movement. Many people don’t become involved or show up like they used to. At the same time there may be the emergence of a relatively healthy group of people within the community whose energy is focused on their own lives and the lives of the families. No longer engaging in the “culture of addiction,” they would rather spend time on family activities and live their lives than be actively involved in the “culture of recovery”.

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

As Stage Three develops, a new analysis emerges. There is the dawning realization that “healing” alone is not enough and never will be. Healing from the hurts of the past does not build the future. There is growing awareness

of the need for decolonization (of thought patterns and structures) and the need to address structural obstacles to development, such as Indian and Northern Affairs Canada rules, racism, poverty, etc. The realities of the economy of scale become apparent. There is only so much you can do as a small community to address such things yourself.

What is driving this stage?

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

Fall - from Healing to Transformation

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

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

What is driving this stage?

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

<http://www.residentialschoolsettlement.ca/French/French.html>

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We Are the Experts

Talking and continuing to talk about the residential school will lessen the violence exercised on others or on oneself. It means putting an end to the transgenerational transmission of the trauma that weighs on youth today.

In order to allow Aboriginal women and other Aboriginal people who wish to get involved in testimonials about this historic episode, we are suggesting here some questions that can be used as part of a reflection prior to sharing or dialogue.

These questions have been developed based on the difficulties inherent in the trauma experienced by women in the residential schools. They take into account the long journey of the former residents to find their own voice. This devictimization journey brought them to express their desire and to testify as part of a responsibility they feel towards Aboriginal history and culture. Its transmission has become for them a commitment that must be maintained.

WHAT IS THE IMPACT OF THE TESTIMONY OF A TRAUMATIC CONTEXT AS EXPERIENCED AT THE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL?

o Freedom of speech

The former residents reveal that, for some of them, the simple act of talking about the residential school experience, that is the act of talking about it in therapy, with their family, with their parents or with their children and in their community, proved to be beneficial for them and for their loved ones. Some have spoken publicly during conferences, others have published their story. Others have shared with their parents and their children. Some have even created private places for discussions where women are invited to share in a support group context. Whatever the chosen method, they have found the freedom to talk which had been killed over many years, have re-established true lines of communication with those around them and have supported other people to do the same thing.

All the former residents and all families used silence to protect themselves from the pain of being separated from loved ones or from the many assaults inflicted upon them in the institution. It was a choice to survive unacceptable conditions in such surroundings and the punitive rules that governed them. In the long-term, however, silence, denial or forgetting had some ominous consequences for them and their children. Those measures intended to protect them when they were in the institution drove them to adopt self-destructive behaviours. They also recognize today that silence and denial maintains suffering in the communities.

WARNING AND THE THERAPEUTIC IMPACT OF TALKING

However, to open up on this topic or to be informed in an inappropriate way can be damaging and can intensify the trauma. One must keep in mind that a prior journey with support was necessary for the former residents before unveiling the wounds from the past. This disclosure did not occur without suffering. Talking must remain open in order to be healing. The necessary time must be granted so it can develop and the flawed understanding can enlighten the basis of the trauma. So that the person is able to recognize themselves in what they say and reclaim their past, it is indispensable that they remain in charge of what they say. Talking and silence should never be imposed or forced as it was at the residential school.

The violence of the Institution was aimed directly at children and their families. These attacks were aimed at the social bonds woven between the members of a community, bonds maintained from one generation to another by the way of the passing on the spiritual traditions...

With these considerations in mind, testimonials and sharing have a therapeutic impact. They allow people to rebuild the truth based on their subjective and collective view of things. The significance, the interpretation and the understanding that they acquire about their history minimizes, to a certain degree, the negative effects of the experience on their lives. This work to elaborate it allows for the establishment of a real separation from the abuser. Therefore, talking delivers the past and opens up the future. For some, forgiveness can be the outcome of healing through talking. The former residents make the distinction between forgiveness and forgetting. Forgiveness is described as the outcome of a type of grieving whereby the former resident finally finds peace with herself after having decidedly left behind the residential school and the torture that had been internalized. It happens in such a way so as to free them to say no to the abuser who wanted to torment them. A break is made with the traumatic past and the people concerned that does not leave any room for hate or resentment. Anger, however, can remain a source for action. Therefore, testimonials allow those affected to recognize themselves as part of a collective experience. Through this, they break out of the isolation. Shared testimonials lessen the anguish linked to confusion, to black outs, and individual questioning that inhabited them as children and that confronted them again as adults.

Finally, these testimonials about their personal history allow them to rewrite and to recall for themselves the collective history under the light of day. By testifying, the former residents themselves have reclaimed their personal history by putting it in relation with their collective history, since the collective history is that of each one of the members of the community who builds it. Culture develops and is built from the relationship and the exchange of information between these two forms of memory. This is the way that all human subjects can live their feeling of belonging to their culture and rely on their cultural identity to open the future.

WHY CONVEY IT IN THIS CONTEXT?

o To rebuild the family

The violence of the Institution was aimed directly at children and their families. These attacks were aimed at the social bonds woven between the members of a community, bonds maintained from one generation to another by the way of the passing on of the spiritual tradition that played the role of an identification card. Through the attack on the family, the transmission and the memory of many characteristics of traditional life was deeply disturbed and disrupted. In addition to the serious personal traumas suffered by the children, family ties were shattered and parental functions were usurped or corrupted. When their children were in the residential school, several families abandoned the bush and the teaching of these skills and the nomadic customs in bush. Great hunters became workers, unemployed or alcoholics.

Without any real reference points (the land, traditional food, skills...) and essential cultural symbolism (language, rituals, myths, traditional medicine, conception of the world...) and key support people (father, mother, ancestors, elders) the traditional family organization as well as the customs tied to it deteriorated. Yet, the Aboriginal peoples always knew of the importance of passing it on. As demonstrated by the former residents' stories of their childhood, their parents knew how to recognize the efficiency of how to educate children as well as the efficiency of how to pass on the heritage of the past. Aboriginal peoples always recognized the value of talking as a powerful means for healing people. The practice of taking circles and healing circles is the best example.

The women who testify or who testified about their residential school experience have added this page of their personal history, to that of their family, their community, and their Nation. They have recreated the social bond

that had been infected. Every story sheds light on the experience as well as puts the house back in order... The former residents do not try to deny or forget the violence and the abuses they suffered. They have moved beyond the victimisation, a consequence of the institutional violence towards them, while becoming aware and becoming more aware that the remembering of residential schools can be a tool to heal them.

CONVEY THE STORY OF THE EVENT TO WHOM?

"It is necessary to tell other women that we passed by there," said Niska. "We are the experts," said Sunshine Aki. The former residents speak from their subjective experience of the residential school. They know, however, the expert's role is delicate. It is not the same role when a woman shares her story as mother with an injured child, as member of her community during a public testimony or as a therapist with abused adults. In addition, the former residents want to speak not only to the other former residents, but also to the male partners who were in the residential schools.

The former residents who have a family believe that their children endured the trauma of the residential school. We cannot minimize the transgenerational repercussions tied to the institutional violence in the communities. The members of their families of origin as well as their children underwent the violence of the residential school in their turn. They felt the distress and assisted, powerless, the repercussions on their parents. Sometimes they developed symptoms tied to the parental uneasiness that had not been talked about or worked on in therapy.

HOW TO CONVEY THE STORY OF THE EXPERIENCE?

The means of conveying and distributing the residential school experience

The means of sharing and distributing the residential school experience are many and it is necessary to make a discriminating choice of these means while taking into account the people to whom they are addressed. The experience of the residential school can be conveyed through written documents, such as biographies or autobiographies, novels, news, poetry, essays or the newspaper articles, the oral document or the audio-visual document. The residential school experience can be distributed through school programs, publications and local or external newspapers, community organizations, community meetings in large or restricted groups, and through radio and television broadcasts. Some former residents have already begun to produce the documents that they would like to circulate in their area and outside of their community. One has done research and has written a script for a documentary but there was not enough funds to complete it. She also writes poetry.

According to several former residents, the reunions to which they have been invited over the years are not always a means of conveying the residential school experience. By considering the reunions in the Aboriginal residential schools like any other happy reunion is, instead, a means of deferring the truth. For some, the site of the residential school ruins that are not completely gone can make them relive intense feelings of pain and anger. Those

that live near these ruins are of the opinion that they should be burnt. They suggest that it be a symbolic act to keep alive the memory of the communities of this episode in Aboriginal history. In order to do so, they suggest that a monument or a work of art be erected in these places to remind future generations about the importance of this historic passage. In some communities a real commemorative celebration has taken place with the primary goal of sensitizing all generations about the events.

WHAT TO PASS ON?

Name, language, pride, spirituality and the means to heal oneself

Besides the need to talk with loved ones, the former residents described what transmission represents to them in their recommendations. We have organized them here. They are presented in detail in the MALI PILI KIZOS research report:

1. To reclaim for oneself, one's original name and understand its significance if needed.
2. To reclaim and to pass on one's native language not only because it is a major element for cultural identity, but because it allows for the creation and reinforcement of the ties with children and grandchildren. Some have a hard time to forgive themselves for not having passed on their language to their children.
3. To pass on the pride of being Aboriginal because they are not ashamed of their origins anymore. They want to share this pride by passing on the knowledge of their culture, and, more important, that which deals with the Native residential school episode, so as to contribute to the recognition of the First Nations here and elsewhere in the world.
4. They want the results of this research to be distributed to all the Aboriginal communities, and to make possible this kind of project for other Aboriginal women and men.
5. Most wish to reclaim and pass on Aboriginal spirituality in order to give to their children the open-mindedness and openness to others and to the world demonstrated by their ancestors to the same peoples and to new arrivals. In this sense, they are reclaiming for themselves the values and the meaningful words they were taught in their childhood. The former residents do not all give the same importance to the traditional healing rituals. But they all tell us that the reclaiming of Aboriginal spirituality will not take place without the freedom to think and to choose which had been rediscovered through the devictimization.
6. They want to share the means to heal oneself while creating tools that encourage solidarity and talking and by organizing therapeutic services where the counsellors would have specific training for former residents, workshops that apply to former residents and to other women, talking circles at the local level, technical resources for the youth, a ceremony involving the whole community and a awareness program for women. §