Healing Words

Volume 2 Number 3 SPRING 2001   A Publication of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation   www.ahf.ca

Free

MYTHS & STEREOTYPES

The social renewal and healing movement, growing ever stronger throughout Aboriginal communities, is re-establishing the importance and relevance of Aboriginal traditions and cultures that have been for generations the subject of contempt and rancour by a dominant culture. It is also dismantling the distorted perceptions of the history, identity, potential, and realities of Aboriginal people.

These new reactions are positive not only for Aboriginal people but also for Canadians. The efforts to cultivate a pseudo-image of Aboriginal people and their experience seem unrelenting at times, but as a recent articles in the National Post on residential schools shows, they are now seen, both by informed Canadians and Aboriginal people, as an opportunity to challenge and educate. Those are the positive steps that will lead more directly and speedily towards healing and reconciliation.

Deepening cracks are clearly showing in the monumental myths, prejudices, and stereotypes which for so long have kept the self-esteem of entire Aboriginal communities at ground level. The recovery process is gaining momentum, and it has taken a long time to come to this point. Just as the abuses of the past are now seen in a clearer light, it is also possible to envisage that these social constructions will in a few decades be clearly acknowledged and admitted as a form of social abuse.

Celebrating and encouraging the courageous advances towards healing and reconciliation is Healing Words’ mandate. When a people begin to shatter negative myths, this is something important to celebrate and encourage. As difficult and courageous as this challenge is, it is a “liberating experience.” Aboriginal people have many positive myths about themselves and their culture. A positive myth is like a well-loved reflection in a good mirror. The time has come for Aboriginal people to hold that mirror to each other.

A single issue of Healing Words cannot possibly hope to explore or explode the complexity and scope of such a topic. A hundred newsletters would surely not be enough. But understanding what myths are, what they do, where they can be found, and how they can be dismantled is essential to healing the individual and collective psyche of Aboriginal people. This is core healing work.

-Taken from Editor’s note, page 4

Year 2000 Regional Gathering Report Excerpts
SEE PAGE 28
The Editor:

I am attending the Edmonton Residential Schools Survivors Gathering on February 23-25, 2001. I am a Dene person, born in 1938. I attended Beauval Indian Residential School from 1944-1954 [see photo]. I was the FIRST person from Northwest Saskatchewan to go to and complete a grade 12 education, in 1958. I graduated from Lebret, St. Paul's high school. I attended Teacher's College in 1958-9 and taught school in St. Thomas, Ontario (grade 7), Sacred Heart School, in Paris (grades 5 and 6), and Meadowlake, Saskatchewan (grades 5 and 6).


Then I retired. Worst move I ever made. In 1966-98, I moved back to my home Reserve, called English River First Nation, in Patuanak, Saskatchewan, and taught grades 8 and 9. From August 8, 1998 to the present, I plan to run for Chief of my home reserve, and I am 99.9% certain I will be elected.

I have led an interesting life, even though I look "Indian" and not European. I am 63 years old and have no plans of slowing down. Beauval Indian Residential School gave me the incentive to succeed in whatever I set out to accomplish. I quit alcohol drinking at 2 p.m., Saturday, April 30, 1988. I don't smoke tobacco and I have my red belt with black stripe in Tae-kwon Do from Juna Park Tae-kwon Do Center in Winnipeg.

RALPH PAUL,
Meadow Lake, SK.

Please see Ralph Paul's description of Beauval Indian Residential School on page 19.

Dear Editors, Healing Words:

My name is Beverley Carter-Buffalo, Manager of the Samson Cree Nation Healthy Families Project in Hobbema, Alberta. This is actually the first issue of Healing Words that we have come across in our office. We are very impressed with your newspaper and would like to be added to your mailing list. If this request can be fulfilled, we thank you in advance.

Respectfully,

BEVERLEY CARTER-BUFFALO BSW, RSW,
Hobbema, AB.

Dear Editors: Healing Words

It gives me great pleasure to be able to thank you for submitting articles in regard to Native school survivors, and I'm very grateful that I have the opportunity to read the newspaper, Healing Words, of which I have come into contact about two weeks ago. It's very informative, and at the same time it makes you sad as to what had happened to our Native people while being residents in the Residential Schools. I want you to know that I'm one of those Residential School Survivors, and that's why I'm interested in the articles you've published, so that the White society can see what had occurred in years past.

You tell the White people, church people, and other people, what Native people had endured while at the hands of the churches. They would not believe you; they would say, "Our church, our priests, our nuns, are sacred people and would not commit such atrocities toward any human beings on this earth," as if to say these are all lies. (What can you say?)

I guess my reason for sending you an e-mail is I'm wondering if it would be possible for you to send two articles that you published on the back page of the newspaper ("Residential School Resources"). There are two that interest me: 1) Burke, S Report: Residential School. Shingwauk report, 1993. 2) Canadian Conference of Catholic Bishops. Breach of Trust, Breach of faith: Child Sexual Abuse in the Church and Society. Ottawa: Concacan, 1992. Filippation of our request will be well appreciated.

Sincerely,

WANDA BAXTER.

Dear Editor:

We have been reading and following your stories and comments among our relations in regard to healing. We would like to acknowledge and give thanks to others who have put a lot of time and effort and support to these important issues. For five years we have started at a grass roots level that has developed into a healing camp. We have gotten help and support from different societies and cultures. We were wondering because we would like to reach out to our relations and let them...
You may submit your articles, letters, or other contributions, by fax, mail, or email. We prefer electronic submissions in Corel Word Perfect or MS Word. Please send your writing to:
The Editors, Healing Words
Suite 801 – 75 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario
K1P 5E7
Our fax number is (613) 237-4442 and our email addresses for submissions are:
grobelin@ahf.ca
wspear@ahf.ca
Please send email submissions of photos in TIFF grayscale format, if possible. We ask for a resolution of 300 dpi. We cannot be responsible for photos damaged in the mail.
Please include a short biography with your submission as well as a return address and phone number. We may need to contact you about your submission.
The AHF does not pay for published submissions, but we do provide contributors with copies of the newsletter.
The views expressed by contributors to Healing Words do not necessarily reflect the views of the AHF.
There is no set length for manuscripts, but please try to keep submissions to a reasonable length (under 3000 words). All submissions are subject to the approval of the editorial team and may be edited for spelling, grammar, and length.

A TYPICAL DAY IN A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL

• The boys get up at 5:30 am to do morning chores—milking cows, feeding animals, etc. Everyone else gets up at 6:00 am, washes, and goes to chapel for Mass.
• Breakfast:
  - a sticky porridge cooked by students the night before, a piece of bread with some butter and a glass of milk.
• Morning cleaning duties.
• Classes:
  - the first hour is religious studies.
  - two hours of academic studies.
• Lunch:
  - a mush of potatoes, carrots, turnips, cabbage and chunks of meat. Fridays – mushed up fish.
• Work Time/Chores:
  - girls learn to sew, cook and clean.
  - boys learn to farm and grow a garden.
  - some boys learn basic carpentry and shoe repair.
• Cleaning groups clean their designated part of the school (boys and girls).
• Study Hour.
• Supper.
• Clean-up.
• Recreation Time.
• Prayers.
• Bedtime.

(This refers specifically to the Kamloops Indian Residential School and is taken from the book Resistance and Renewal, by Celia Haig-Brown.)

A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO ALL OUR CONTRIBUTORS!

S.O.S. POETS

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

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

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

We receive your paper here at our office, Native Healing Connection. We receive many calls from residential school survivors and reading the articles has been most enlightening.

The Native Healing Connection is a project of World Vision, Canada's Aboriginal Programs. It is a national referral line which connects adult survivors of childhood or adolescent sexual abuse with trained helpers nationwide. Our primary goal is to help survivors of childhood sexual abuse begin or continue a healing journey. When an individual calls we listen to their story and then refer them to appropriate resources (people, books, and conferences) in their area. In addition we provide callers with a helpful booklet, "When Trust Is Broken." A copy is enclosed for your information. I was wondering if any of your readers would also find our referral line information helpful. We can be contacted toll-free anywhere in Canada at 1-888-600-5464.

I encourage you to keep up the great work in communicating to us as readers to be more informed and educated. Thank you.

Sincerely,
HEATHER ATKEY,
Edmonton, AB.

Hi,

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

I look back to those days with mixed feelings. It was good to have decent food, clothing and a home but it was such a lonely experience. I, and others, would like to make the following note. In New Brunswick there was a boarding school in Newcastle called St. Mary's Academy run by the Nuns of Congregation de Notre Dame where native children who reached Grade nine (girls) were sent to school there because they could not go to provincial schools. This was in the '60s. Boys went across the bridge with the Nuns of Congregation de Notre Dame where native children who reached Grade nine (girls) were sent to school there because they could not go to provincial schools. This was in the '60s. Boys went across the bridge with the Nuns of Congregation de Notre Dame.

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Thank you,
MARY JANE PETERS,
Big Cove, NB.

* * *

The social renewal and healing movement, growing ever stronger throughout Aboriginal communities, is re-establishing the importance and relevance of Aboriginal traditions and culture that have been for generations the subject of contempt and rancour by a dominant culture. It is also dismantling the distorted perceptions of the history, identity, potential and realities of Aboriginal people.

Understanding what myths are, what they do, where they can be found, and how they can be dismantled is essential to healing the individual and collective psyche of Aboriginal people. This is core healing work.

These new reactions are positive not only for Aboriginal people, but also for Canadians. The efforts to cultivate a pseudo-image of Aboriginal people and their experience seem untenable at times, but as a recent articles in the National Post on residential schools shows, they are now seen, both by informed Canadians and Aboriginal people, as an opportunity to challenge and educate. The United Church (www.ucan.org), as well as the AHF responses are good examples of the will not to let misinformation create further rifts between Aboriginals and the Canadian public. Those are the positive steps that will lead more directly and speedily towards healing and reconciliation.

Deepening cracks, then, are clearly showing in the monumental myths, prejudices, and stereotypes which for so long have kept the self-esteem of entire Aboriginal communities at ground level. The recovery process is gaining momentum; it has taken a long time to come to this point. Just as the abuses of the past are now seen in a clearer light, it is also possible to envisage that these social constructions will in a few decades be clearly acknowledged and admitted as a form of social abuse.

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So, as a start and as a means to encourage your own exploration, we propose in this issue to look briefly at the source, the evolution, and the dissemination of myths and stereotypes, as they are applied to Aboriginal people. We hope that the article Myths and Facts about Alcohol Consumption in Aboriginal Communities will lead to changing some ingrained assumptions and to further questioning.

We felt that the subject was important and relevant to healing, as the public acceptance of myths has at least two major impacts: on Aboriginal people's will to heal and on Canadians' willingness to reflect on their own relationship with alcohol and other substances. The point of this article is not to place non-aboriginal Canadian drinking habits in a comparative bad light. It is to offer a different perspective on the subject as well as alternative conclusions about Aboriginal drinking habits.

Holding up a different mirror, seeing a good image

Sharing successes, acknowledging positive images, and rejecting stereotypes can only accelerate this healing process. There is no need to make anything up; it is all there --courage, endurance, generosity, excellence, wisdom, spirituality, beauty, compassion, humour, hospitality, creativity, knowledge, expertise, laughter. We hope that you will see yourselves in the mirror of this issue, in a good way.

Aboriginal people everywhere are remembering to look at the world and themselves with the truth-seeking eyes of the Eagle, to embrace life challenges with the strength of the Bear, and confront hardships and problems like the buffalo, who unlike other animals will not turn downwind in a storm, but faces it head on.

--Message from Johnny Daysider, Elder, to Youths attending AHF Conference, March 2001•
Welcome to the Spring 2001 issue of Healing Words—the seventh edition of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation newsletter. I hope you find this material helpful and encouraging.

Healing Words is a unique publication. It belongs to the survivors of residential schools, their descendants and communities. In the pages that follow, you will read the words of residential school survivors, in the form of letters, stories, and poems.

Many have shared with us their pain and suffering, as well as their anger. We also receive messages that inspire and challenge. Healing Words is a place to share the feelings and ideas that are of importance to Aboriginal people involved in the work of healing and reconciliation.

I know that there is a great need at this time for sharing of stories and successes—and difficulties too. In my visits to communities, I have heard many times that the Foundation must help communities by bringing together and sharing the work of Aboriginal people across Canada. Healing Words therefore plays an important role in promoting the strengths of Aboriginal communities.

Future issues will continue to feature healing projects. We will do our best to encourage and support survivors and their descendants, by presenting articles and resources on a variety of topics. Most important, Healing Words will continue to be your place to gather, share, and support one another.

We have a large and growing community of readers. Over time the newsletter has evolved, as I’m certain it will evolve in the months ahead. If the needs of Aboriginal communities change, Healing Words will change too. I look forward to the opportunities ahead.

There is a great deal of difficult work to be done. The Aboriginal Healing Foundation acknowledges the courage and strength of people in the communities. Nothing is harder than beginning the healing process. At first there is much resistance and anger. Even the strongest people become discouraged and consider quitting. Only the thought of their children’s future, and the future of their community, can give them the strength to continue. They draw this strength from traditions, teachings, and people.

Just as there is resistance in Aboriginal communities, there is resistance to healing and reconciliation in Canadian society. Recently, a few people in the Canadian media have suggested that the residential school legacy is a myth. There is denial of the assimilationist intentions of the residential school system. Aboriginal people, in particular those who attended residential school, are not generally supported by the media. Healing Words will address these and other related matters by sharing Aboriginal experiences and perspectives with Canadians in a way other newspapers do not.

I invite you to participate in this work by writing to us.

Masi.

Danét’e:

Year 2000 Regional Gathering Summary Report

Right: At the Iqaluit Regional Gathering, Air Cadet Hall, September 28, 2000.

In this issue of Healing Words, we include a summary report of the Year 2000 Aboriginal Healing Foundation Regional Gatherings. These Gatherings took place in Iqaluit, Winnipeg, Vancouver, Ottawa and Moncton. In January, 2001 Regional Gatherings were also held in Yellowknife and Whitehorse. See page 28 for the Summary Report.*

Healing Words

The purpose of Healing Words is to be an instrument for honouring the Foundation’s commitments to survivors, their descendants, and their communities. It is one of the means by which we demonstrate our respect for the agreements the Foundation has signed. It is also a vehicle for supporting the mission, vision and objectives of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation as well as the goals of the Foundation’s Communications Strategy.
I n the mid-1980s, Willie Abrahams discovered a unique way to undertake his healing journey —by cycling the streets of Vancouver, British Columbia. He saved some money working as a dishwasher and bought a bike, and he has been riding ever since. “It was a great way to see the city,” he says. Among other things, cycling helped him overcome alcoholism.

Willie Abrahams is a survivor of St. Michael’s Indian Residential School in Alert Bay (Vancouver Island), which he attended from 1950 to 1957. “I was 10 when I went in and 16 when I came out.” Not long ago he returned to the former school, as part of his healing. “The building is still there. I hadn’t been there in years, but I went to see it. I don’t care what they do with it now.”

Willie Abrahams’ 1998 bicycle tour, undertaken with four other riders, was called “Honour Our Tears.” He cycled from Prince Rupert to Inuvik, NWT, a route of roughly 1500 kilometres. For those who don’t know, it’s the Yukon. “I bring others.”

This time Willie plans to undertaken a bicycle journey from Halifax to Victoria, a trip he expects will take 3 months. “I can average 100 kilometres a day, but 80 is safer.” And if he has time, he says he will paddle up to Campbell River when he arrives in Victoria.

Forced to attend residential school, where he was sexually abused, Willie is not the first person to use a physical journey as a means to address the effects of the residential school system. Others have brought attention to the legacy of residential schools by walking across parts, and even all, of Canada, alone or in groups. As Willie said at the time of his 1998 ride, “the general public has only a vague idea of the effect residential schools had.”

The purpose of this latest journey is simple and straightforward. “The whole concept is to cycle through Canada and let other survivors know I’m okay —to let them know how I started my healing journey.”

Along the way, Willie plans to perform traditional dances of the Haida Gwaii. “The first dance, the Wild Man Dance, represents what I suffered at residential school. The second, the Eagle Dance, represents my healing journey.” He is asking for permission to take with him 2 Haida Gwaii masks.

Willie, who cycles 20 kilometres every day, will begin his latest cycling journey in early June, returning to B.C. in early September. At present, the local community is helping him to raise the money he’ll need to cover the costs of the trip.

As for the attention of the Canadian media, Willie is glad to have any support. His interest is in meeting with other Aboriginal people and sharing his message with other survivors. “I’m planning to participate in workshops and healing circles, and talk to Elders. I’ll be visiting the communities as I travel.” The focus of this trip, he says, is healing. “I want survivors to have hope.”

### St Michael’s Indian Residential School: some facts

- **Built in 1929**
- **Closed in 1975**
- **This building now houses the Nimpkish Band Council and the Alert Bay outlet of North Island College**
- **Prior to the construction of “St. Mike’s” (designed for a capacity of 200 students), children had been accommodated in two separate buildings. In addition to regular academic subjects, the curriculum included carpentry, boat building, and farming. During the 1950s, the school was virtually self-sufficient, with its own farm, herd of cattle, and water and electric plant.**

- **The building was turned over to the Nimpkish Band in 1973** (NOTE: Another school, Alert Bay Indian Day School, was built in 1900. Mrs. Paterson Hall, the Reverend Hall’s wife, was its first teacher. During the Potlatch Trials of 1922, the building was temporarily co-opted as a lock-up for Kwakwaka’wakw Elders accused of participating in the Village Island Potlatch. The Day School was closed in 1947. In 1948, the school was renovated and subsequently reopened as a Council Hall.)
The Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre (Ma Mawi) has been operating for the past 14 years. Ma Mawi was established in September, 1984 as a non-mandated support to Aboriginal children and families within the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada. It was the first organization of its type in Canada, designed to provide culturally-based, community appropriate, developmental child and family services. The Centre stands as a model for supporting families by following the values, beliefs and practices of the cultural and traditional community and blending these with conventional social work practice in modern society.

Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre Inc.
We all work together to help one another

The Centre was formed in response to the recognition that mainstream systems and services were, more often than not, non-responsive and punitive to Aboriginal families. Unwittingly, these systems tended to aid in family breakdown and often resulted in a deterioration of our values, norms and capacity to care for ourselves. Ma Mawi recognized those strengths and natural abilities of self-care in Aboriginal communities and therefore committed to providing services that would support these strengths.

The name “Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata” translated from Ojibway means “we all work together to help one another.” This statement implies that all individuals within the community have a role to play in supporting each others’ needs, and to help the community to grow. Ma Mawi is committed to the growth and development of the entire community, which has the responsibility to support and nurture the future generations.

In our current society, growing reliance is often placed on the professional service system. Ma Mawi is actively seeking opportunities to reverse this situation, to enhance the role of the community in supporting itself. One primary method to achieve this is to build on, and support, the strengths that exist in community members, providing them with the opportunity to take greater responsibility for the collective well being.

We offer a diverse range of culturally-appropriate and culture-based services and programs, organized into: a Family Support Program; a Nicikwe (Homemaker) Program; a Provincial Correctional Support Program; Ozosunom (Foster Care) Program; an HIV/AIDS Program; an After Hours Program; a Youth Support Program; a Family Violence Community-based Program; and a Family Violence Stony Mountain Project.

Since 1984, the Aboriginal community has grown and changed significantly. In keeping with those changes, Ma Mawi recognizes the need to evolve service delivery. Ma Mawi continues to recognize and celebrate the importance of the child, family and community. Ma Mawi remains committed to facilitating the development of the Aboriginal community through creating opportunities to learn from one another, collectively addressing local issues and building community capacity as a way to support each other.

Over the past few years, Ma Mawi has made a concerted effort to re-engage the community in the care of our children. Direct actions include a re-structuring of the organization to locate directly within several city neighbourhoods; additional partnerships with neighbourhood-based service agencies; development of opportunities to build community capacity, and an examination of options to stimulate volunteer activities in support of families.

Within urban centres such as Winnipeg, the Aboriginal community’s responsibilities for the care and support of its families has been eroded to a point where concerted effort is now required to rebuild capacity and skills.

This emphasis is based on the recognition that the Aboriginal community in Winnipeg has many strengths and experiences. What is often lacking is the means to organize and utilize these strengths in a consistent manner. We believe that it is ultimately important to strive to facilitate development of the community, and to serve as a vehicle to support this development. We must create and maintain opportunities for healing and growth at all levels – the individual, the family and the community.

Today, in our community

• There are approximately 5,280 children in care in the Province.
• Of the 5,280 children in care in Manitoba, approximately 75% are Aboriginal.
• Research has predicted that the number of children in care in Manitoba will increase by 500 next year.
• Manitoba has the highest number of children in care in the Western Hemisphere.
• The Status Quo is not working! We believe it imperative to get our direction from families with experience.

Overview: The current situation as a legacy of residential schools

Over the course of the past twenty years, and on a growing inter-generational basis, the lives of Aboriginal peoples continue to be affected by the aftermath of the residential school system. While the physical reality of residential schools no longer exists, their legacy has been largely transferred to the child welfare system.

Much of the system was designed and operates to protect children, which can be a necessary and valuable response to current situations. In reality, it operates with many elements that are frighteningly similar to those of the past:

• Aboriginal children are removed from their homes, families and communities to ‘protect’ them and provide them with opportunities for a ‘better’ form of life;
• Family and community involvement and decisions regarding removal are minimally respected, as their capacity to decide what is best for the child is viewed as being of little consequence;
• Removing the child from family and community is seen as the expedient way of bringing about change, rather than working to build the capacity of the parents and child within a nurturing community setting; and,
• The current child protection system is largely adversarial in nature and reduces opportunities to maintain and support families.

As a result, the focus of much current child protection effort ends in the removal of the child from his/her natural home, and serves as a penalty to the child. As children are removed from the care of their natural parents, family bonds are broken and parenting skills are lost. As children in care are abused, and parents believe themselves powerless to stop this abuse, a sense of failure and hopelessness is created. A further generational consequence of residential schools is therefore maintained.

At issue is the fact that, within urban centres such as Winnipeg, the Aboriginal community’s responsibilities for the care and support of its families has been eroded to a point where concerted effort is now required to rebuild capacity and skills. These individual do not normally operate within neighbourhoods, do not contribute to the local resource base, and do not acknowledge the existing skills and capacity of neighbourhoods and residents.

Requirements for Change

In order to bring about changes that can have a meaningful and positive impact on the children being served, the environment under which the current system operates must be acknowledged and adjusted. The current system does not tend to acknowledge that there are limited employment prospects for parents, which directly impacts on...
Increasing the capacity of the broader community

The child and family ‘system’ needs to closely reflect the situations of families and work to become more accessible, supportive and focused on the needs of families. Targeting of effort should not focus on ‘correction of the problem,’ but rather upon the elimination of the conditions that work against the care of the child, including the need for recognition and addressing of the inter-generational effects of residential schools. Change should emphasize work to build capacity within families and the community to care for their children.

Involvement of the Aboriginal community in the process to bring about change requires formal ownership of the situation and the means available to resolve it. This point is reinforced in the recommendations of the Final Report... of the Manitoba Round Table on Environment and Economy Urban Aboriginal Strategy (public consultation process) of 1998, which recommends

- A focus on the neighbourhood implies the hiring of people from local neighbourhoods, giving them training, support and good supervision;
- Capacity building requires a transfer of skills that can be matched with local experience and commitment to the care of the child.

Opportunities for Change

In order to accomplish a community-centred healing strategy, an emphasis must be placed on increasing the capacity of the broader community to care for its members. To facilitate increased capacity within the community, its members must have access to opportunities to participate and to increase their skills and expertise.

To our organization’s perspective, these efforts should also equip community members to enable ownership of the well-being of children and families. As part of this, Ma Mawi has actively supported the involvement of the community in identifying issues and opportunities, setting directions, and participating in different approaches for the provision of family support.

Our efforts are based on the assumption that increased community capacity results from a number of factors, working collectively.

- The provision of opportunities for community members to become involved, to learn from and support each other, builds confidence and is the initial step in capacity building.
- The acknowledgement of a collective responsibility towards the community, through actions that promote ownership of the situation and methods to address it, thereby building recognition that everyone has a role to play; and,
- The continual reinforcement of the strengths that exist within the Aboriginal community, by seeking and using input and advice, and by calling upon community members to take an increasing role in supporting children and families, so that their capacity to act as a community to affect change is increased.

Many plans have been established and partnerships developed. There is also recognition that

- the child and family service issues and issues, child protection and the current situation facing many families is a direct impact of the residential school system;
- while a wealth of information may be available to provide knowledge and techniques to address these issues, this information is scattered or not in the form that is accessible or readily transferable;
- professionals in the human service field need to have the best available information and techniques to assist the community in addressing complex issues;
- the community (through its broad membership) is in the best position to affect real change;
- the community membership requires skill development and a transfer of knowledge to enable it to begin to address its issues, support its families, and to achieve its capacity;
- the ‘professional’ community can support and assist through guidance and technical expertise; and,
- the more individuals that are involved in dealing with resolutions, the fewer there will be engaged in the problems.

As a result, Ma Mawi Wi Chi Itata Centre is proposing to take a leadership role in Winnipeg, in support of the capacity building of the community to heal and support itself. To this end, it requests assistance in addressing these issues and building a community-centered support mechanism that greatly expands the limited efforts of professionals and the systems.

The overall intent of our project is to strengthen the ability of community members to identify risk factors early, to support children and families in dealing with or containing the impact of the risk factors, and to build on and celebrate their resilience and ability to thrive even in their challenging circumstances.

Building a caring community

As is outlined in numerous books and reports written on the effects of the residential school era, many Aboriginal people living in poverty-stricken rural and urban areas are under severe stress at the present time. The aftermath of this era has exacted a tremendous toll in human suffering and a litany of social problems including high suicide rates, substance abuse and dependency, crime and violence, gangs, unsafe sex practices, single parenthood and teen pregnancies, homelessness, and child abuse and neglect. Unfortunately, the bureaucratic child and family services system often has been a part of the problem rather than part of the solution, as evidenced by deteriorating communities and the disproportionately high number of Aboriginal children in care.

The overall intent of our project is to strengthen the ability of community members to identify risk factors early, to support children and families in dealing with or containing the impact of the risk factors, and to build on and celebrate their resilience and ability to thrive even in their challenging circumstances. The project will serve Aboriginal individuals, families and children residing in 4 inner-city neighbourhoods identified as exhibiting characteristics of extreme need, particularly with respect to children and families. These families are most often represented by Aboriginal single parent arrangements, extended families or foster parent relationships.

At the community level, the Community Care Model provides a vehicle to identify community issues and engage all partners and stakeholders in designing solutions.

The Community Care Model fosters various mechanisms to ensure that partner agencies and other stakeholders work together to provide for Aboriginal children and families.

The model has developed human and educational resources that address the intergenerational
effects of physical and sexual abuse at residential schools. The development of individuals and the development of their families and community go hand in hand. The strengthening of families and the development of community directly contributes to the healing and development of individuals. The healing approach is informed by the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical aspects of the healing process.

The concepts presented in the Community Care Model are a direct result of consultations held with community stakeholders. Neighbourhood residents play a role in devising strategies for project activities and are engaged in strategic planning sessions for the project’s on-going implementation. Neighbourhood residents own the improvement process.

Model–building

Our first step in building a Community Care model was to address the issue of capacity building and skills development, to assist with community healing and community-centered child and family support. The following operational objectives and related tasks are presented as an outline of the work that we believe must be undertaken.

1-3 months

To assemble, design and make available the collective wisdom within courses, workshops and curriculum that deal with family healing and support.

Within this objective, tasks to be undertaken include:

- Contact with other child and family serving organisations to identify and obtain information on courses and workshops material that are currently available;
- Review of available materials to identify and select appropriate content and methods of using materials within a community setting;
- Identification of training/information needs that remain unmet;
- Curriculum and workshop development to design additional training;
- Reproduction of material for distribution and use within future training.

3-6 months

To develop skills and capacities within ‘professional’ staff to train families and community volunteers to deliver support programming.

Tasks to be carried out in support of this objective include:

- Identification of the current skill base in terms of courses, workshops and information presentation (trainers and potential trainers);
- Determination of gaps in information and priority skill development to enable a broad range of community-centered support to be made available;
- Identification of additional staff from sister agencies who wish to train;
- organisation and scheduling of training sessions;
- Providing follow-up and organising initial community training and delivery sessions.

6-12 Months

To increase the levels of skills available within the community to conduct sharing circles, parenting courses and workshops.

Tasks to be undertaken include:

- Identification of courses/workshops and support programming (holding sharing circles, etc…) that are appropriate for presentation through community helpers and volunteers;
- Curriculum and training content design and scheduling;
- Conducting courses and training sessions;
- Providing follow-up and support to those taking training.

6-12 Months

To engage a broader segment of the community in supporting families and healing measures through the use of skilled and committed volunteers.

Within this objective, the key tasks to be undertaken include:

- Soliciting and identifying individuals from neighbourhoods willing to take training and conduct sessions;
- Promoting the use of community residents as helpers and family supports;
- Identifying, to supplement, current income levels.

E.F. Wilson was deeply committed to Christianizing and educating the Indians. Like most educated colonialists, however liberal, his outlook was Christian and Eurocentric. He thought that the non-white races had simply got left behind and that eventually they would have to join the historical trajectory envisaged by “his” civilization. His mission was simply to minimize the pangs of their assimilation. Gradually, however, the experience of natural ways, “the wild and free life” as he called it, worked its power and he began to understand the challenge and opportunity presented by the resistance, humanity, and wisdom of the Indians. His insight was not shared by his fellow colonists. The military suppression of the Indians’ defence of their Western homelands in 1885 (the second Riel Rebellion) confirmed his suspicion that his own people and Government’s policies were misguided. To determine how to respond he undertook detailed research into “The Indian Problem,” and by 1890 came to advocate self-government and self-determination for Indians, and the preservation and study of their languages and cultures. He recognized that assimilation and cultural genocide were wrong and would not work. But also and unfortunately, his Government and Church disagreed. No challenge to their authority was tolerated. After several years of disagreement and strained relations with his superior, the second Bishop of Algoma, in 1892 Wilson was forced to resign as Principal of the Shingwauk Schools. When a new Shingwauk Hall replaced the old central building in 1935, a cairn commemorating Wilson was built from some of the stones on the spot his residence.

For more information on the Shingwauk Healing Project: http://people.aucc.on.ca/shingwaukproject/indexintro.html

—or contact Donald A. Jackson: jackson@auc.ca. See also the Aboriginal Healing Foundation website abfhca.ca for project info.
This was not meant to be a scientific exercise. A scientific study of media would take a larger sample – say, a year’s worth of clippings. I have, however, read the print coverage of residential schools back to February 2000. Although I haven’t listed a year’s worth of articles (there are far too many to list), I have drawn observations in the notes that follow. One last point on method. I focus on English-language media because I’m a reader of English. There is interesting French-language coverage of residential schools, and I hope to discuss it in a future issue.

Summary
When writing of residential schools, journalists focus on lawsuits. The possible bankruptcy of churches and the costs of litigation to government are top concerns. Some of the articles include a brief history of the residential school system, some do not. Church and government officials are quoted more often than survivors of the schools. But above all else are the costs of litigation and a sense, from the points of view of the church and government, of crisis.

During February 2001, there was greater than usual interest in matters of healing and reconciliation as a result of the APTN, CBC, and Vision TV special, Residential Schools: Moving Beyond Survival. A study restricted in its focus will reflect the momentary focus of the media, and so I found more articles considering the historical depth and social meaning of residential schools than I suspect I otherwise would. Having said this, a few results of this brief study are in my estimation reflective of general trends over the past year.

The National Post, which in February published the greatest number of residential school articles, has led the way. Richard Foot and Rick Mofina both write for the National Post and both focus on lawsuits – in particular the prospective bankruptcy of churches and the costs to government of litigation. (Rick Mofina, by the way, put forward a $10-billion speculation of litigation damages.)

The relative weight of regional focus is also representative. Ontario and British Columbia generate the greatest amount of media coverage of residential schools, followed by Alberta and Saskatchewan. Ontario coverage follows Ottawa’s response to the residential school issue (that is, the potential costs of lawsuits to the Federal government), and in British Columbia litigation is bound up with local political and legal issues: land claims, treaty negotiations, and the recent BC Supreme Court residential school rulings, for examples. I’ve found over the year that British Columbia print media contain an exceptional amount of hostility, not only over the lawsuits but on the matter of ‘race relations’ also. This may be a result of that province’s high-profile and controversial experiences with aboriginal legal affairs.

Healing and reconciliation are not prominent media concerns. A quarter of the articles published in February 2001 consider healing, three-quarters do not. Focus on litigation poses the church and state in a defensive position and shifts attention from the broader social upheavals brought about in Canada by the residential school system. Examinations of the history addressed by the lawsuits –of the residential school system itself– tend to have the opposite effect. There is no question that the prospect of church bankruptcy is a matter of concern to Canadians. But the interest of the churches is, by their own acknowledgement, healing and reconciliation. It is perhaps indicative of Canadian media bias that survivors are quoted far less often than are lawyers and government –survivors, historians, and healing workers– are quoted far less often than are lawyers and government spokespeople. The Canadian media, in short, see the “residential school problem” as principally a financial problem of the church and government, rather than as a problem of Aboriginal people and Canadians.

The residential school story is told, in many instances, as a tale of contemporary confrontation and crisis. Lawsuits, although significant, need to be placed into context. Consider: according to a study conducted by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, roughly 107,000 attendees of Indian residential schools were alive in 1991. Today about 7,000, or 7 percent of that number, are involved in a lawsuit. Even accounting for deaths in the past 10 years, the point remains that many survivors are marginalized by the focus on litigation. Theirs is another story.

Many today seek healing. When the lawsuits have been settled one way or another, and the crisis of the church is no longer a story, will there even be a residential school “issue” in the Canadian media?

Has there been an adequate effort to put the lawsuits into a meaningful historical context?

Conclusions
Healing and reconciliation are not prominent media concerns. A quarter of the articles published in February 2001 consider healing, three-quarters do not. Focus on litigation poses the church and state in a defensive position and shifts attention from the broader social upheavals brought about in Canada by the residential school system. Examinations of the history addressed by the lawsuits –of the residential school system itself– tend to have the opposite effect. There is no question that the prospect of church bankruptcy is a matter of concern to Canadians. But the interest of the churches is, by their own acknowledgement, healing and reconciliation. It is perhaps indicative of Canadian media bias that survivors who understand the residential school system –survivors, historians, and healing workers– are quoted far less often than are lawyers and government spokespeople. The Canadian media, in short, see the “residential school problem” as principally a financial problem of the church and government, rather than as a problem of Aboriginal people and Canadians.

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See next page for the full list of media articles...

English-language Canadian print media coverage of Residential Schools
from 1 February 2001 to February 28 2001

- by Wayne K. Spear

Note on the Study
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Summary
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The adversarial nature of legal confrontation, which in the media is presented as a crisis, has unfortunate potential. Are healing of residential school survivors and reconciliation of Aboriginal people and Canadians adequately considered by the media? Has there been an adequate effort to put the lawsuits into a meaningful historical context?

Conclusions
Healing and reconciliation are not prominent media concerns. A quarter of the articles published in February 2001 consider healing, three-quarters do not. Focus on litigation poses the church and state in a defensive position and shifts attention from the broader social upheavals brought about in Canada by the residential school system. Examinations of the history addressed by the lawsuits –of the residential school system itself– tend to have the opposite effect. There is no question that the prospect of church bankruptcy is a matter of concern to Canadians. But the interest of the churches is, by their own acknowledgement, healing and reconciliation. It is perhaps indicative of Canadian media bias that survivors are quoted far less often than are lawyers and government spokespeople. The Canadian media, in short, see the “residential school problem” as principally a financial problem of the church and government, rather than as a problem of Aboriginal people and Canadians.

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See next page for the full list of media articles...

Quantitative Summary
- Total number of English-language Canadian (i.e., non-aboriginal) print media residential school articles considered in this study: 36.
- Total number of pages of English-language Canadian print media clippings dealing with aboriginal people, for the month of February, 2001: 2,485.
- Total number of pages of English-language Canadian media clippings dealing with residential schools, for the month of February, 2001: 42.
- Percentage of media clippings pages dealing with residential schools in February, 2001: 1.71%.
- Dominant topics: hurtling fishing, rights, water and fraud in aboriginal management of government funds, land claims, Corbino decision, suicide/drug abuse.
- Number of articles concerning residential schools, by region where publication originates: Ontario (14), BC (10), Alberta (4), Saskatchewan (3), Nova Scotia (2), Manitoba (1), Yukon (1), PE (1), Nunavut/NT/NU/Saskatchewan/Alberta (6), BC (10), Alberta (4), Saskatchewan (3), Nova Scotia (2), Manitoba (1), Yukon (1), PE (1), Nunavut/NT/NU/Newfoundland (0).
- Number of residential school-related articles considered in this study: lawsuits (64%), trauma experienced by healing for healing of survivors (29% — includes 2 articles on the CCR/ARTN/TV program, other (1%) — survivor groups, workshops, letters to editor).
- Number of articles openly discussing support for survivors of residential school: 13 (36%).
- Number of articles openly discussing opposition to survivors of residential schools and/or lawsuits: 3 (8%).
The articles

Star Phoenix, Saskatoon, SK. Feb 1. C-12. CP. “Feds float fund for Native suits: $2-billion proposal to cover residential school cases.” Litigation, church bankruptcy, and proposed government fund to help churches cover costs of litigation.

National Post. Toronto, ON. Feb 1. A-6. Richard Foot and Justine Hunter. “Ottawa guessing at liability in abuse bailout: Churches. Plans to spend at least $2B. Religious officials dispute figure since few claims tested.” Church officials say federal plans to spend at least $2-billion on residential school lawsuits are based on a faulty and speculative estimate of the country’s liability for sexual and physical abuse in aboriginal schools.


Times Colonist. Victoria, BC. Feb 5. A-7. R.H. Eldridge. “Abuse of Natives: The church must fight back.” The facts supporting native claims of abuse are few and in most cases non-existent; churches must fight back; native claims along with the devious complicity of our Liberal government must not be allowed to destroy our Christian heritage.

Times Colonist. Victoria, BC. Feb 5. A7. Kevin Ward. “Not cultural lawsuits.” Most lawyers are for physica-land and/or sexual abuse; there is no precedent in Canadian law for compensating cultural loss.


The Temiskaming Speaker. New Liskeard, ON. Feb 14. 2D. Walter Franczyk.”Natives have been there.” Article about the work of Shirley Beach, an addictions counsellor who grew up in a residential school.


London Free Press. London, ON. Feb 21. A13. Mark Richardson. “Vision TV show can help begin healing.” Concerns the CBC/APTN/Vision TV program Moving Beyond Survival. United Church member and columnist Mark Richardson argues that individuals, not church, should be held responsible for abuse. States that 7,000 former students seek compensation totalling $15 billion. Blames United Church for indulging in guilt and states that the Vision TV program can help both natives and non-natives see each other as individuals.

The Citizen. Duncan, BC. Feb 21. Page 8. Innes Wright. “Am 1 of these one oppressive, guilty ‘Whites’?” Response to aboriginal columnist Meaghan Walker-Williams. Accuses Walker-Williams of racism against whites and states that her comparison of residential schools to Nazi concentration camps is not credible. White people suffered abuse in residential schools, too. The people upset by her racism are taxpayers, and tax- payers want equality. “Natives do not come across to the taxpayer as oppressed … but rather as spoiled chil- dren who have found a trough, a trough full of endless, limitless funds…”


Leader Post. Regina, SK. Feb 27. A7. CP. “Widespread sexual abuse charged.” Report on 50 civil lawsuits, filed since 1997, alleging widespread sexual abuse of Innu children. Mentions Innu substance abuse and suicide which have received national media attention in recent months. Quotes Simeon Tshakapesh, Chief of the Innu band in Davis Inlet.

Times Colonist. Victoria, BC. Feb 27. A4. CP. “Lawuits allege widespread abuse of Innu children in Labrador.” Same article as above, but with the 8 paragraphs con- cerning Simeon Tshakapesh removed from the original.

Truro Daily News. Truro, NS. Feb 27. Page 5. CP. Same article as above two, with 6 paragraphs removed from original.


Healing Words 11 Volume 2 Number 3
Identifying a person by racial labels even when legitimized through selective media coverage. Progress toward eliminating mass media stereotyping continues to be reinforced, perpetuated, and even shuffling. The film industry, as an important cultural institution geared to image and appeal, there is pressure to enforce the rule of homogenization and conservatism through stereotyping. Images of consumers need to be sanitized and stripped of controversy or negative connotation for fear of lost audiences, hence revenue. Stereotypes “sanitize” perceptions of the world. Majority apprehension of minorities is rendered less threatening through exposure to familiar and reassuring images. Minority characterization rarely led to critical views of prevailing myths of society, namely, (a) things will get better, (b) systemic racism is not a problem, (c) working within the system is the way to get ahead, and (d) whatever your colour, the American dream is within reach. Through stereotypes, minorities were put down, put in their place, or put up as props and adornments for audience gratification.

Stereotypes in the Media

Aboriginal peoples have long complained of media stereotyping. Historically, minorities were presented in a manner consistent with prevailing prejudices and attitudes. Images of minorities were steeped in unfounded generalizations – virtually to the point of near parody.

For example, media stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples dwelt on themes of “the noble savage,” the “savages Indian,” the “drunken Native,” and the “subservient squaw.” Other racial minorities were labelled as dropouts, pimps, and drug pushers, while still others were stigmatized as mathematical or scientific geniuses. Only rarely did minorities appear with something significant to say or do. Their lived experiences were reduced to the level of an “angle” or “jolt” for spicing up plot lines.

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The film industry, as an important cultural institution, must shoulder its share of the blame for perpetuating stereotypes. According to Michael Parenti, the author of Make Believe Media: Politics of Film and TV, minorities were historically caricatured as heathen savages or as subordinates in devoted service to white masters (e.g., Tonto for the Lone Ranger and Cato for the Green Hornet). Minorities were obligated to know their place on the silver screen, a subservience often conveyed by deferential actions related to serving, smiling, or shuffling.

Progress toward eliminating mass media stereotyping is proceeding at glacial speed. Race-role images are proceeded and perpetuated, and even legitimized through selective media coverage. Identifying a person by racial labels even when irrelevant to the story (“race-tagging”) remains an occasional problem.

The net effect of this stereotyping is that minorities are slotting or labelled as unusual or negative, and this “foreignness” precludes their full acceptance as normal and fully contributing members of society. As well, stereotyping obviously conveys false information. The presence of a few highly visible entertainers or athletes in advertising is hardly typical of minority life experiences.

Sometimes the only way to survive is to laugh

Herein lies a social function of stereotypes. In an industry geared to image and appeal, there is pressure to enforce the rule of homogenization and conservatism through stereotyping. Images of consumer goods need to be sanitized and stripped of controversy or negative connotation for fear of lost audiences, hence revenue. Stereotypes “sanitize” perceptions of the world. Majority apprehension of minorities is rendered less threatening through exposure to familiar and reassuring images.


Images on screen promote aboriginal cliches


LETHBRIDGE, Alberta - The fighting warrior, sexual savage and mystical Indian are all stereotypes that undermine aboriginals searching for a positive self-image, says a native actor. And Gary Farmer lays the blame on TV and the movies.

There’s rarely a dramatic movie made with aboriginals that doesn’t involve scenes of violence and alcohol, says Farmer.

As a result, people fear Indians because of the image of the “fighting warrior.” “To some extent, fear is also the reason you don’t want to live next door to them,” he says.

Even a movie as apparently benign as Peter Pan fosters it. “We think of it as classic cinema we would like to share with a child.” But it has one of the most disturbing images of the Indian as a savage to be feared, says Farmer, co-star in the new movie Dead Man, which just won the Felix Award from the European Film Academy for best foreign film. “Consider the impression left on young aboriginal people when they see themselves portrayed this way time and again. It’s hard for them to have a positive image of themselves.”

“Poor self-image is one of the biggest problems facing native communities,” says Farmer. “We don’t need a lot of money to change the way people see things. We just need an opportunity to broadcast our own images.”

Black Robe, the successful Canadian film about a Jesuit missionary’s quest to save the Hurons’ souls, made it far worse, he says. “Black Robe perpetuated every negative stereotype about our people there ever was. But it was named best film of the year and the company received $60 million from the Canadian government to go out and do more of the same.

Black Robe misses a key element. “The story of the newcomers’ interaction with the Mohawks is always told from the point of view of the Jesuits.” Nobody explains the Iroquois Confederacy’s five centuries of peace between the six nations. The truth is that by the time the Jesuits came, there were 50 chiefs who were required to agree before the confederacy could go to war, he says. “It had to be a unanimous decision, so it was very difficult to get.” But the Hurons saw the devastation from the alcohol brought by the newcomers. “It was seen as a decay that had to be rooted out,” says Farmer. “The Iroquois told the Hurons everyone not affected should leave and they would go in and clean the area out. “There’s never an understanding why that was done and so the story of a classic conflict between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples has never been told.”

Farmer says aboriginal people must control the images presented about them if they are to take control of their lives. “There’s no information in the media that pertains to aboriginal people. We’re bombarded by images that don’t reflect our reality.” When he realized how little influence actors have over the stories told in cinema, he decided he also had to become a producer. That carries its own set of troubles.

Farmer says the job of changing the picture of aboriginal people sometimes seems overwhelming. That’s when his people turn to toxic humor to help.

“Sometimes the only way to survive is to laugh.”•
Negative myths and stereotypes are social constructions. A negative stereotype is an essential component in the dynamics of aggression. In all acts of aggression, whether in war, colonisation, genocide, apartheid, ethnic cleansing, harassment in the workplace, violence against women and children, etc… the pattern is the same: the aggressor always places its victims in a position of a non person, so that the aggression has its own justification. The foundation of aggression is dehumanisation and demonisation.

The Western view of the world is hierarchical: God, man, woman, children, animals, the inanimate creation. In this scheme, God and man are the “Persona grata” [wanted persons] “Persona non grata” [unwanted] occupy the other echelons. She eased the conscience of those who wished to sexually abuse without consequences. She was handy to greedy consumers. Dirty and lazy, she excused those who removed her children and paved the way for assimilation into mainstream culture. She allowed for the righteous position of those who participated in the eradication of Native culture, language and tradition.

- Kim Anderson
“A Recognition of Being
– Reconstructing Native Womanhood.”

Negative myths and their offshoots – stereotypes, clichés, prejudices, and discrimination – exert a heavy toll on those they misrepresent. Aboriginal people have mostly paid with their self esteem. It is difficult to like oneself when the image mirrored back to you is the stereotype. In these histories continue to be presented less in relation to the Aboriginal’s world than to that of the non-Aboriginal, illuminated by references to indigenous culture. The paradigms on which Aboriginal communities are basing their social and cultural reconstruction are still at odds, in many cases, with Western world views.

Even though each Aboriginal community – each Aboriginal nation – is unique in many aspects, communities share a greater number still of common values and ideals. These values and ideals, as we have explored in previous issues of Healing Words, are a deep sense of the sacred connectedness with a Creator and its entire creation, a belief in the essential role of balance in all aspects of life, a belief in the value of healthy and loving human relationships as the true basis for prosperity, a belief in the inherent equality of all human beings, and a traditional trust in their capacity to grow towards maturity and wisdom, a deep respect for the spiritual legacy that Elders bring to a community.

To be dispelled, a myth must be challenged. While the outline of myths from a past period or from a society other than one’s own can usually be seen quite clearly, to recognize the myths that are dominant in one’s own time and society is always difficult. This is hardly surprising, because a myth has its authority not by proving itself but by presenting itself. In this sense the authority of a myth indeed “goes without saying,” and the myth can be outlined in detail only when its authority is no longer unquestioned but has been rejected or overcome in some manner by another, more comprehensive myth.

From stereotypes to ideals
Aboriginal peoples within the “dominant” Euro-Canadian framework often emerge as portrayals of pejorative, historically inaccurate stereotypes, despite the diversity of traditions among the First Nations. Even though a great deal of literature has provided some substantive insights into the histories of Aboriginal peoples within this country, these histories continue to be presented less in relation to the Aboriginal’s world than to that of the non-Aboriginal, illuminated by references to indigenous culture. The paradigms on which Aboriginal communities are basing their social and cultural reconstruction are still at odds, in many cases, with Western world views.

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Show Respect to Others: Each Person Has a Special Gift. Share what you have: Giving Makes You Richer.
Know Who You Are: You Are a Reflection on Your Family.
Take Care of Others: You Cannot Live without Them. Honour Your Elders: They Show You the Way in Life.
Pray for Guidance: Many Things Are Not Known.
See Connections: All Things Are Related.

These values and beliefs, in turn, are the means by which healthy, sustainable social systems can be strengthened: justice, education, decision-making, health, environment.

The road back to healing is long and difficult, but without values and ideals, there would be no road. Let no one scorn such values and ideals as mere myths, if they are, they are very good ones.
The Drunken Indian
Roger Dennie

In Canada we know all there is to know about Aboriginal Alcohol consumption.

Fact:
Despite extensive studies, little is really known about the subject.

In an effort to address the conditions that give rise to substance abuse, government subjects Aboriginal people to a never-ending barrage of epidemiological studies and social surveys. Yet an explanation of the under-lying causes of substance abuse among First Nations people eludes us still. Clearly, this fundamental gap in knowledge about a high-risk population prevents the development of strong and effective substance abuse programs. Substance abuse is only a symptom of deeper individual and community problems.

Aboriginal Substance use: Research issues Proceedings of a joint Research Advisory Meeting CCSA & NNADAP.

Myth:

In Canada we know all there is to know about Aboriginal Alcohol consumption.

Fact:
The relevance of scientific approaches that examine cause and effect to Native problems are questionable.

There are also many methodological weaknesses in current (research) efforts. For example, where survey research is available, few studies discuss the construct validity and reliability of their instruments. In addition, because some communities have been grossly over-studied, data collection is tainted with apathy or majority non-participation. Holistic versus reductionist principles and the inconsequence of numbers and written words makes western scientific methods uncomfortably foreign in Indigenous communities. Significantly greater value is placed on the subjective in Indigenous science and other cultural barriers complicate communications, data collection and interpretation. The more narrowly defined research population of Indigenous people lacks a satisfactory addictions database with which to assess the representativeness of a sample; as a result, mainstream Canadian groups often serve as a comparison group despite non-comparability on several demographic variables.

Aboriginal Substance use: Research issues Proceedings of a joint Research Advisory Meeting CCSA.

Myth:
The methods used to research Aboriginal alcohol consumption are sound and culturally appropriate.

Fact:
When it comes to research into Aboriginal Alcohol consumption, or any other Aboriginal social "problem," methodologies contain flaws. These include:

•Combining data from different communities means very different groups and milieus are being aggregated;
•Studying smaller, more homogeneous communities means small numbers of cases exert a large effect on reported results which may be of no statistical significance or of limited generalizability;
•The definition of who is an Aboriginal person is often a problem due to people living on or off reservation, mixed parentage, style of living, self-identification, etc.;
•Census data may be biased by problems of ethnic identification and sampling which in turn feed the stereotype of the "unredeemable" Aboriginal alcoholic.

Myth: From myth to marginalisation

No other words could resume better than Roger Dennie the content of this article. A negative myth is a formless, deeply rooted belief from which we are fashioned a host of other creations. For example, from the myth of Aboriginal drunkenness has emerged a stereotyped creation, dressed up in the rags of prejudice: untrustworthiness, unreliability, criminality and weak-mindedness. The "unredeemable" Aboriginal, a good candidate for marginalisation. And although the journey from Myth to Marginalisation is often a journey from the past to the present, from the subconscious to the conscious, marginalisation is very much a 21st century social activity, no longer acceptable or tenable.

The perceptions of native people that most Canadians have are defined and limited largely by the second-hand images they see in the media and by the first-hand encounters they have on the street. Given these limited and superficial sources of information, it's not surprising that the stereotype of "the drunken Indian" looms so large in the warped perception that many Canadians have of native people. Although this stereotype is not fully shared by all Canadians, it is nevertheless deeply rooted in the Canadian psyche. In fact, it is as firmly rooted in Canadian belief as the fairy tale that Europeans settled this land peacefully and without bloodshed.

-Brian Maracle, Crazywater.

On the subject of Aboriginal alcohol abuse, research has been the vast reservoir of data, statistics feeding much public debate and generating a vast array of programs of all sorts, all directed to the eradication of "Aboriginal addictions problems."

The myths about Aboriginal alcohol consumption have had subtle and not so subtle influences on research.

•The ingrained assumption that alcohol abuse is universally rampant in aboriginal communities led research to focus an inordinate amount of attention on Aboriginal communities, directed to "curing" the problem, rather than looking into the root of it.

•Failure to address the root of Aboriginal Alcohol consumption and recognising that Alcohol abuse is a secondary cause of problems in Aboriginal communities has lead to failed remedies, which in turn fed the stereotype of the "unredeemable" Aboriginal alcoholic.

The relevance of scientific approaches that examine cause and effect to Native problems are questionable.

Healing Words
Aboriginal Alcohol consumption.

Canadian belief as the fairy tale that Europeans settled this land peacefully and without bloodshed.

In Canada we know all there is to know about Aboriginal Alcohol consumption.

Fact:

Despite extensive studies, little is really known about the subject.

In an effort to address the conditions that give rise to substance abuse, government subjects Aboriginal people to a never-ending barrage of epidemiological studies and social surveys. Yet an explanation of the under-lying causes of substance abuse among First Nations people eludes us still. Clearly, this fundamental gap in knowledge about a high-risk population prevents the development of strong and effective substance abuse programs. Substance abuse is only a symptom of deeper individual and community problems.

Aboriginal Substance use: Research issues Proceedings of a joint Research Advisory Meeting CCSA & NNADAP.

Myth:

In Canada we know all there is to know about Aboriginal Alcohol consumption.

Fact:
The relevance of scientific approaches that examine cause and effect to Native problems are questionable.

There are also many methodological weaknesses in current (research) efforts. For example, where survey research is available, few studies discuss the construct validity and reliability of their instruments. In addition, because some communities have been grossly over-studied, data collection is tainted with apathy or majority non-participation. Holistic versus reductionist principles and the inconsequence of numbers and written words makes western scientific methods uncomfortably foreign in Indigenous communities. Significantly greater value is placed on the subjective in Indigenous science and other cultural barriers complicate communications, data collection and interpretation. The more narrowly defined research population of Indigenous people lacks a satisfactory addictions database with which to assess the representativeness of a sample; as a result, mainstream Canadian groups often serve as a comparison group despite non-comparability on several demographic variables.

Aboriginal Substance use: Research issues Proceedings of a joint Research Advisory Meeting CCSA.

Myth:
The methods used to research Aboriginal alcohol consumption are sound and culturally appropriate.

Fact:
When it comes to research into Aboriginal Alcohol consumption, or any other Aboriginal social "problem," methodologies contain flaws. These include:

•Combining data from different communities means very different groups and milieus are being aggregated;
•Studying smaller, more homogeneous communities means small numbers of cases exert a large effect on reported results which may be of no statistical significance or of limited generalizability;
•The definition of who is an Aboriginal person is often a problem due to people living on or off reservation, mixed parentage, style of living, self-identification, etc.;
•Census data may be biased by problems of ethnic identification and sampling which in turn alter population prevalence rates;
Aboriginal people in some settlements may be much more closely studied or scrutinized than neighboring rural communities, leading to a more complete reporting of cases (e.g. of suicide) and hence, the impression of a higher prevalence of problems where none exists; Studies do not take into account ongoing culture change; In small communities there may be a significant problem of reactivity in research: that is, the researcher may have substantial impact on the community which both threatens the validity of findings and introduces new factors into the system.

- Laurence J. Kirmayer, MD, FRCPC, Emerging Trends in Research on Mental Health Among Canadian Aboriginal Peoples.

Myth:
All research findings point unanimously to the fact that Alcohol abuse is rampant in Aboriginal communities.

Fact:
There is no coherent approach to researching the problem, and no cohesive data on a national scale. The evidence put forward by researchers in the field is often contradictory.

Community-based health data are collected primarily by the federal government (e.g. MSB, HWC), whose collection methods and research priorities vary considerably across regions and differ from provincial systems. This circumstance makes normative data about the use and abuse of alcohol by Indigenous people unavailable on a national basis.

Aboriginal people are the first to recognize that various forms of addiction, including alcohol, remain a serious problem at the community level, and they are taking measures to change. But the picture painted by the many research reports and statistics, so often accepted at face value, is far from accurate and has shed very little light on the root, the nature, and extent of alcohol consumption in Aboriginal communities.

Myth:
Alcohol abuse is the primary root cause of social problems in Aboriginal communities.

Fact:
There is real debate in health care circles, not only in First Nation’s communities, whether alcohol, drugs, and other substance abuse is a primary problem by itself, or whether substance abuse is merely a manifestation of other more deeply rooted problems. Put simply, there are real debates over whether substance abuse is a cause or an effect.

Research on Aboriginal Alcohol consumption and the resulting intervention programs are designed primarily by non-Aboriginals. For this and other reasons, the historical legacy of colonisation and assimilation is not necessarily seen as the root problem. For most Aboriginal people, and some researchers, alcohol abuse is a secondary cause of individual and community dysfunction.

Survivor Syndrome Theory
Researchers Beane, Hammerschlag, and Lewis (1980) define the active pathology in the Native culture as survivor syndrome. They postulate that attempts by Christian settlers to subdue the "sav-age" prompted 100 years of enforced dependency on Federal policy; the constant erosion of sacred culture, dislocation from homelands, controlled poverty, and humiliation have resulted in survivor syndrome.

Myth:
No one seems to know the answer to these questions, because there were no methodologically sound surveys available then to compare with more recent surveys, which are still not being conducted.

Fact:
Several surveys, which are still not being conducted, show short-term benefits from prohibition (56). With bootlegging eliminated, a voucher system for social aid benefits and a job reward for alcoholism treatment completion, the efforts of a determined chief and council transformed a desponding situation to one of industry and hope. In Ontario, isolated communities have shown short-term benefits from prohibition (56). Although it is not known how many communities in Canada maintain prohibitive alcohol bylaws."

-Volume 3, Gathering Strength.

Myth:
Aboriginal people with an alcohol problem live in a constant state of stupor.

Fact:
The APS found that a lower proportion of Aboriginal people than Canadians drink daily or weekly. Although alcohol and drug abuse is a problem in most Native communities, it is a different problem from alcohol and drug abuse in the general population. The Yukon survey found that abstinence is about twice as common among Aboriginal people as among other Canadians. It also found that, of those who do report drinking, more Aboriginal people are heavy drinkers, both in the frequent (‘regular’) and infrequent (‘binge’) patterns. This means that the pattern of drinking is different, with mainstream Canadians drinking more regularly on a moderate to heavy basis, depending on socio-economic factors.

Myth:
It’s in their genes. Aboriginal people have always been drinking.

Fact:
The fabrication and use of alcohol was not part of the social fabric in traditional Aboriginal cultures. Alcohol was introduced to Aboriginal people in the course of trade and social interaction with European explorers, fur traders and merchants. It was deliberately and routinely used a means to induce a state of inebriated pliancy in Aboriginal people selling their goods, so that
they could be manipulated. The effects were somewhat similar to those of introducing smallpox and other infectious diseases: Aboriginal people had no “immunity” to alcohol, in the sense that social norms and personal experience can “protect” against over-consumption.

Not only alcohol was deliberately used as a powerful tool of colonisation and assimilation. The fabrication and perpetuation of the Drunken Indian stereotype was, and is, a ludicrous fact given the western colonisers own relationship with alcohol, dating back thousands of years.

In 1823, "Gentlemen in Canada appear to be much addicted to drinking. Card-playing, and horse-racing are their principal amusements. In the country parts of the province [Ontario], they are in the habit of assembling in pairs at the taverns, where they gamble pretty highly, and drink very immoderately, seldom returning home without being completely intoxicated. They are very partial to Jamaica spirits, brandy, shrub, and Peppermint; and do not often use wine or punch. Grog, [watered down rum] and the unadulterated aqua vitae, are their common drink; and of these they freely partake at all hours of the day and night."

-A social history of drinking in Canada www.canadafirst.net/our_heritage/drink

**Myth:**
Aboriginal people are not doing anything to help themselves with their alcohol problem.

**Fact:**
Beside the sobriety movement and the drive towards dry communities mentioned above, Aboriginal people everywhere are advancing on the path of healing and social reconstruction. They have recognised the root and nature of their addiction, are well aware of the need to rebuild healthy communities, and are turning to their own traditions and spiritual legacy to do so.

The following principles are examples of the kind of blueprints Aboriginal communities have developed and are implementing to fight addictions and rebuild healthier and more balanced communities.

**Alcohol abuse is a social problem. It is a problem that affects both mainstream and Aboriginal Canadian societies. But it affects them differently and for very different reasons.**

**DETERMINANTS OF WELL-BEING & HEALTH**

**BASIC PHYSICAL NEEDS** – adequate nutrition, clothing, shelter, pure drinking water, sanitary waste disposal and access to medical services.

**SPIRITUALITY AND A SENSE OF PURPOSE** – connection to the Creator and a clear sense of purpose and direction in individual, family, and community life, as well as in the collective life of the nation.

**LIFE-SUSTAINING VALUES, MORALS, AND ETHICS** – guiding principles and a code of conduct that informs choices in all aspects of life so that at the level of individuals, families, institutions, and whole communities, people know which pathways lead to human well-being, and which to misery, harm and death.

**SAFETY AND SECURITY** – freedom from fear, intimidation, threats, violence, criminal victimisation, and all forms of abuse both within families and homes and in all other aspects of the collective life of the people.

**ADEQUATE INCOME AND SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIES** – access to the resources needed to sustain life at a level that permits the continued development of human well-being, as well as processes of economic engagement that are capable of producing sustainable prosperity.

**ADEQUATE POWER** – a reasonable level of control and voice in shaping one’s life and environment through processes of meaningful partici-

**SOCIALLY JUSTICE AND EQUITY** – a fair and equitable distribution of opportunities for all, as well as sustainable mechanisms and processes for re-balancing inequities, injustices, and injuries that have occurred or are occurring.

**CULTURAL INTEGRITY AND IDENTITY** – pride in heritage and traditions, access to and utilisation of the wisdom and knowledge of the past, and a healthy identification with the living processes of one’s own culture as a distinct and viable way of life for individuals, families, institutions, communities, and nations.

**COMMUNITY SOLIDARITY AND SOCIAL SUPPORT** – to live within a unified community that has a strong sense of its common oneness and within which each person receives the love, caring, and support they need from others.

**STRONG FAMILIES AND HEALTHY CHILD DEVELOPMENT** – families that are spiritually centered, loving, unified, free from addictions and abuse, and which provide a strong focus on supporting the developmental needs of children from the time of conception through the early years and all the way through the time of childhood and youth.

**HEALTHY ECO-SYSTEM AND A SUSTAINABLE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN HUMAN BEINGS AND THE NATURAL WORLD** – the natural world is held precious and honoured as sacred by the people. It is understood that human beings live within nature as fish live within water. The air we breathe, the water we drink, the earth that grows our food and the creatures we dwell among and depend on for our very lives are kept free from poisons, disease, and all other dangers. Economic prosperity is never sought after the expense of environmental destruction. Rather, human beings work hand-in-hand with nature to protect, preserve, and nurture the gifts the Creator has given.

**CRITICAL LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES** – consistent and systematic opportunities for continuous learning and improvement in all aspects of life, especially those connected to key personal, social, and economic challenges communities are facing, and those which will enhance participation in civil society.

**ADEQUATE HUMAN SERVICES AND SOCIAL SAFETY NET** – programs and processes to promote, support, and enhance human healing and social development, as well as to protect and enable the most vulnerable to lead lives of dignity and to achieve adequate levels of well-being.

**MEANINGFUL WORK AND SERVICE TO OTHERS** – Opportunities for all to contribute meaningfully to the well-being and progress of their families, communities, nations, as well as to the global human family.

Four World International Institute http://home.uleth.ca/~4worlds/4w visionsanddeterminants fulldeter.htm
Aboriginal societies. Statistical research, neverthe- 
less, continues to assimilate Aboriginal societies 
into mainstream categories. 
This leads to unfair and inaccurate results. For 
example, drinking habits of unemployed 
Canadians and Aboriginals are compared although 
the realities of both are not comparable. Another 
example relates to comparative statistics for the 
same geographical (provincial) area, where the eco-
nomic situation of mainstream Canadians will be 
enormously different from Aboriginals on their 
reserves.

2. by communities, through governmental depart-
ment programs and partner organisations. This 
data, reflecting at source some of the uniqueness 
and complexity of every community, is then cen-
trally collected for analysis on a national scale.

Alcoholism as an illness is 
a purely ideological slogan.

This process of categorisation and amalgamation 
of data gives birth to regional and national 
research findings and statistics which have lost 
their accuracy and reliability.

National statistics depicting alcohol abuse in 
Aboriginal communities are simplistic and have no 
real usefulness. As Alkali Lake and countless other 
communities have shown, alcohol abuse is far 
from being the universal phenomenon asserted in 
current statistics. They have also shown that 
Aboriginal peoples themselves are the ones best 
able to develop healing strategies, simply because 
they know themselves and the specific realities of 
their community best.

A different picture

Official research does show some commonalities, 
but also major differences in Canadians and 
Aboriginal people’s drinking habits and level of 
alcohol abuse. Self-reports by Aboriginal commu-
nities show data that run, in many instances, 
counter to official surveys statistics and findings. 
The following stand out:

• The geographical reparation of alcohol abuse 
is different than stated in official findings 
• The consumption patterns are different 
from mainstream Canadians but consump-
tion itself is similar 
• The root of the problems is different from 
that of Canadians 
• The ways Aboriginal people view alcohol 
abuse is different 
• The methods and preferences for Recovery 
and Healing are different

The Aboriginal holistic and integrated 
approach to alcohol abuse

“Alcoholism as an illness is a purely ideological slogan.”

-H. Fingarette, Heavy drinking: the Myth of 
Alcoholism as a disease.

Although a critical analysis of the dominant ideol-
ogy (which affirms that alcohol abuse is an illness, 
a physiological phenomenon which must be treat-
ed through an efficient medicalisation system) is 

beyond the scope of this article, one thing remains 
it is an ideology only, whose efficacy is highly 
questionable. Its most important tenets are: alco-
hol is a physiological phenomenon, alcoholics are 
powerless in the face of their addiction and absti-
nence is the only course of action.

“The concept of alcoholism as an illness supposes 
that the individual is deprived of any will, when it 
is precisely because he has been disempowered in 
relation to his life that he has turned to alcohol.”
-Annmon J. Sousaa, Pourquoi l’alcool n’est pas une 
maladie (why alcoholism is not an illness).

It is important to underline that recent research, 
despite the hostile reactions of the dominant ide-
ology, highly supports the holistic, integrated 
approach of Aboriginal communities in regard to 
alcohol abuse. The lists below illustrate the impor-
tant differences between the two approaches:

Alcoholism as an illness approach

• You are forced to admit you are dependant. 
• The therapist or the group is the expert on 
your illness. 
• You must be made to confront your obvious 
dependency. 
• Only negative information is admissible. 
• You must admit that you are powerless and 
out of control. 
• The diagnostic is that the illness is with you 
for the rest of your life. 
• You must wear the label of sickness and 
dependency for the rest of your life.

Holistic approach to alcoholism

• You can consider your problem as being on 
a scale between severe and minor. 
• You must make your own decision regard-
ing your problem. 
• You become conscious of the impact of a 
variety of choices. 
• You control and evaluate your habits as your 
life evolves. 
• You can leave dependency behind.

-S. Pacha, The truth about Addiction and Recovery.

In conclusion

Statistics do not show the immense odds 
Aboriginal people have and are struggling against 
in their movement towards sobriety. It is time to 
celebrate all those who won their sobriety and are 
now helping others, all those who are new on the 
path, and all those who will make the choice one 
day.

We hope this article will encourage a process of 
reflexion, of discussion, and that it will bring new 
ideas and perspectives on the development of your 
own community research, healing and education 
activities. Above all we hope that you will gain new 
pride and courage: Yes, there is a problem; yes, it 
can and is being solved, and yes, the image in the 
mirror is good, very good –because we got rid of 
some of the myths that disfigured us.

Healing Words 17

Volume 2 Number 3
These Ivory Towers

BY ELIZABETH ESQUEGA

In a bureaucratic jumbled heap,
lies buried beneath the walls, so deep,
majestic papers, scribed and scrawled,
of entire Nations bullied and fallen
into their dungeons of oppression amass.
Why? Oh! Why? How could this last?

Their crimes appear plenty judged tried and true,
for what harm did these Nations unto you.
Their walls of misery, still below the halls,
These Ivory Towers hear still their calls.

As greed and power looms overhead,
These Ivory Towers remain in their stead.
Men garbed in robes, stand triumphantly staged,
Yet Nations though many stay captively caged,

Memories hold secrets, known only to a few,
Where Nations arise in numbers they grew.
Legends are whispered in swirls of smoke,
The drum beats steady, the shackles are broke.

Nations are gathered throughout the land
to claim their victory, together they stand.
These Ivory Towers crumble and wait
for Nations to regain their own fate.

Centuries have passed, it’s time to take hold,
the future is now, our Elders have told.
These Ivory Towers that shone so white
no longer can do what is not right.

The Grandfathers say no tears shall be shed,
For despair is over where many have bled.
These Ivory Towers will scribe once more
an end to the ravages of a stately war.
And bury beneath the walls and the ground
the paers that held these Nations bound.

These Ivory Towers that stood so tall
Will know what it’s like to stumble and fall,
as judgements are rendered to be fair,
First Nations are ever so aware
that pride in victory is bittersweet,
when another falls at your feet.

These Ivory Towers continue to be
where Nations rebuild their destiny.
Let’s bury the shame of this place,
and return it to a State of Grace,
These Ivory Towers.
Because I was considered to be an INDIAN under the Indian Act, at age six I was sentenced to 10 years of assimilation and acculturation at BIRS—the Beauval Indian Residential School. Prior to my being indoctrinated to the whiteman’s culture, I was a happy, contented, care-free Dene child. For the first six years of my life I knew no words in English. I was afraid of the whiteman. I was naughty, vibrant, and possibly (in today’s terminology) a child that had ADHD, because of my excess energy and liveliness. I was often told by my parents at that time that if I did not behave, the white man would come and take me away. I did not listen. The white man did come and get me. Thus began my 10-year sentence to BIRS.

The ten years that I spent at BIRS turned me, a Dene, into a caricature of their lives. The regimentation was closely associated with their religious life. We had no freedom. We were not allowed to think or to reason for ourselves. It was a military type of existence.

The religious personnel of BIRS—Oblate priests and brothers, and the sisters of the Grey Nuns of Montreal—were our rulers and masters. These French people taught us to think, to speak, and to try and be English. They were very strict, unloving, and impersonal human beings. They tried to make us clones of themselves. For example, these nuns and priests and lay brothers had taken vows when they became members of their respective religious organisations. They expected us to follow these vows also:

The vow of Obedience…
They expected us to obey unquestioningly every command they issued. Ours was not to question why. We had to do what we were told, whether we liked it or not. The consequences for disobedience were scolding, yelling, slapping, strapping, hitting, spanking, kneeling in corners, or being sent to bed early. Many times they used peer pressure. I can assure you I endured all the above at one time or another.

The vow of Poverty…
This vow was taken on the premise that they would not be responsible for material things. They were too heavenly to be human. Their only concern was to do God’s will—whatever that means—and to follow the Gospel teaching “to give everything to the poor and follow Him.” Poor as we already were, we stuck to this rule as students of BIRS. The nuns and priests dressed in their peculiar “Habits,” each identical to the rest. We children were dressed in the same way. We were given the same haircut: for the boys, over the ears, and for the girls, Dutch-type hairdos. We were taught to practice humility, another biblical reference. They taught us that earthly, material things were useless and even sinful. Money was the root of all evil on this Earth. As a result, I never knew how to budget, spend money wisely, or save for a rainy day. I have never respected money, even to this day. Our meals were very unappetising and repetitious. Stew (ough).

The vow of Chastity…
They taught us that sex was dirty and sinful, and also that it was against the sixth and ninth commandments. It was a mortal sin even to entertain in our minds anything associated with sex. At BIRS we were kept separated from the girls. We could hardly ever even communicate with our own sisters and cousins. If a boy was caught communicating with a girl, or if he had a crush, he was publicly ridiculed and made to feel shame. They made us ashamed of our own sexuality. I didn’t know where babies came from until I was about 18 years old.

The ten years that I spent at BIRS turned me, a Dene, into a caricature of their lives. The regimentation was closely associated with their religious life. It was a military type of existence. We had no freedom. We were not allowed to think or to reason for ourselves. If we questioned their directives, we were scolded, ridiculed, or punished. We were fenced into our playground, as if in a concentration camp, and if we went inadvertently beyond the fenced area to retrieve a ball, we were punished. If we talked back, we were punished. We lined up for everything. We were scolded, ridiculed, or punished. We were summoned by a whistle, like dogs. If we were late, we were punished. The school learning we endured in those years was by rote and memorisation. It was as if we were parrots. The boys had to learn the Latin Mass responses. If we did not properly recite these responses, we were punished. We had to confess our sins every week. We were lined up for the confessional, to tell our sins to the priests and to ask for forgiveness. Many times I made up sins, because we were told that we were prone to commit seven sins daily. An example was, “Father, I had bad thoughts.” I did not know what these bad thoughts were supposed to be. Then, for punishment, we were told (again) to say “ten Hail Marys.” Or, if we had put something into our confession that was thought to be terrible, we had to say the whole rosary. Their teachings were based on fear rather than on the comfort that religion was supposed to convey to its adherents. Today, because of these experiences, I have rejected the Catholic teachings and religion in general.
I learned to hide my feelings. I never talked about my hurts to anyone. I cry as I write this out. I hardened myself emotionally. I could never express love to anyone. I could never say “I love you” to my wife with complete comfort. I was never taught love in this institution. I could never touch or hug any member of the opposite sex, as a result of my years at Beauval Indian Residential School. I was afraid, scared, and ashamed.

I recall one incident when I was 7 as if it had occurred yesterday. I had been crying and lying on the floor, expecting to be comforted as my parents used to do. Suddenly, I was picked up roughly by the Brother in charge at the time, who started to spank me on the bum. I remember his words: “If you want to cry, well, here’s a reason to cry.” Spank, spank, spank. I expected to be comforted, but all I got was punishment. Right there and then, I decided to hide my feelings. I started to be very impersonal, unloving, and uncaring, like they were. So much for building up my self-esteem and humanity.

My first marriage was a failure. I was very abusive to my wife every time I got inebriated. I never picked up this type of behaviour at home with my parents, because I grew up in BIRS. BIRS is where I picked up this negativity. Nothing I did there was good enough. I learned abuse at BIRS, not love.

Yes, I experienced abuses, except sexual abuse. I can’t recall the number of times that I was punished for one thing or another. I was physically abused countless times, partly because of my personality. I can relate many stories on this type of abuse. In regard to cultural abuse, we were taught that the whiteman was better than we were. When we watched the old western movies, we all wanted to be the cowboys rather than the savage Indians. These “Indians” murdered innocent settlers. I did not know then, that the settlers stole Indian land. We were exposed by these films to the idea that the settlers stole Indian land. We were taught that the whiteman was better than the Indian. I did not mind the baloney sandwich we were given. It was like steak to us, in the bush by a campfire. I enjoyed snaring rabbits at 10 cents each. We played hockey. We became an excellent team. Today, I see big men hugging each other when they score a goal. In our time, when we scored we did not display any emotional outburst, but continued as usual. That is what we were told to do, score a goal and try for another. No display of emotion whatsoever.

These are some of my thoughts of my time at Beauval Indian Residential School.
The vision for our community is to improve the quality of life for our members by providing wholistic healing processes that support the unique needs of individuals and families. Wholistic healing and well-being supports the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual well-being of the people.

Community well-being supports the social, cultural, political, resource-based and educational needs of the community.

The main objectives of this project are to conduct an in-depth community needs assessment; research and document the stories and history of residential school survivors and intergenerational family members; research and document the history, traditions, culture, ceremonies of the Lower Similkameen Nation; develop various community groups; undertake healing work that is reflective of traditional healing practices and/or contemporary healing practices; partake, develop and deliver education, training and workshops to the community.

The Similkameen Unity – Creating Wellness project is guided and supported by the following principles:

- A strength approach draws on the strength of the people and the community and opens the door to community empowerment.
- Allows survivors and intergenerational family members to have voice and tell their stories in a safe and confidential environment.
- Incorporate traditions and culture of our people.
- Utilise the talking/healing circle.
- Educate and provide awareness to second generation and multi generations regarding residential schools.
- Respect is a key value and principle.
- Takes into account the seventh generation of children to come.
- The answer comes from within.
- Individual rights and choices: people have their own rights and choices.
- Key values: Building trust, creating safety and confidentiality, having honesty and truth, maintaining our sense of humour.
- The project must support the wholistic well-being of the members of the community.
- The project must support capacity building, empowerment of families and community relations.

Only recently have First Nations people become involved in the process of telling their stories.

Our first step: finding out what others said

Prepared by Norma Manuel

As a component to the start-up of our project, we conducted a literature review. The following is a summary and recommendations of what others have said in books and videos regarding residential schools. This literature review focuses primarily on Canadian residential schools. Much of the literature selected (17 books and several videos) defines the impact of residential schools on students with only a small emphasis on therapeutic healing strategies, as many of the authors hold the view that healing must be designed and delivered by the communities. There are many stories that are waiting to be told and shared.

Healing work

This is a literature review of residential school material and other relevant material to provide a source of direction and information to guide and support the Creating Wellness project. This paper will review several sources of pertinent literature on residential school. The review analyses, integrates and summarises applicable materials that identify interests: how the impact of residential schools on individual families and communities was assessed and the therapeutic strategies used in addressing the issues stemming from attendance at residential schools. Also included are any conclusions or recommendations derived from the study that may be useful to this project. The review will also attempt to create a typology of survivors, those who did not attend residential schools and second-generation effects on women, men, youth and the community as a whole and community institutions.

The survivors of the residential school experience suffer a wide range of consequences from lowered self-esteem, loss of identity, abandonment, issues and use of mood and mind-altering chemicals. Many interested writers have endeavoured to record the stories of the residential school period. Only recently have First Nations people become involved in the process of telling their stories. Most of the literature was composed of the survivors’ stories with healing methods appropriate for the First Nations involved.

In Indian Residential Schools: The Nuu-Chah-Nulth experience (1996), published by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Council (N.T.C), the aim is to put down the words and stories of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people, depicting real people’s history and the owning of that history. The study is about the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people, not about the larger residential school story. It also states that many studies tend to be academic, highly theoretical and impersonal, losing the individual and personal effect of the process. It stresses that the study is intended to be helpful to all individuals with their own residential school issues. The N.T.C. formed a steering committee whose mandate was to develop a questionnaire stemming from attendance at residential school so that the Health Board and staff would be prepared to deal with the issues. Two members of the N.T.C interviewed one hundred and ten Nuu-Chah-Nulth people, and their findings form the base of this study. The interviews were conducted whenever and wherever possible. The interviews were carried out at the convenience of the individual and in a relaxed manner. Given this environment and the nature of the interview, interviewees were highly emotional and time was spent attending to the individuals’ needs to ensure they were not left in a distressed state. Small recorders were used, in the session, to tape interviews. The interviews were also documented on paper. A single video was made of interviewees lasting sixty minutes. Some of the interviews were conducted in pairs, couples and groups. Many of the groups interviewed were Elders. This method seemed to help the interviewing process as interviewees reminded each other of forgotten facts.

Similar themes have surfaced from research on residential school effects on First Nations people. Common themes found in the literature were methods to obtain information, core issues and healing strategies (N.T.C., 1996, Assembly of First Nations, 1994, Fournier, 1997, Knockwood, 1992, and the Chiefs special Assembly on Residential schools, 1996).

Healing strategies were a combination of a holistic model of healing that included counselling. Therapy working towards litigation, compensation, amends, and some use of traditional practices that included ceremonies and ritual, were also used (Fournier, 1997). Individual holistic healing is seen as the foundation of family and their community healing. Healing strategies addressed the four life areas of mental, emotional, spiritual and physical concepts that included education and rebuilding (Assembly of First Nations, 1994). Healing strategies also incorporated discussions on safety and exploration of principles of respect, responsibility and co-operation. The study stressed the need for safety for the survivor to begin the healing process of exploring the events that happened in the residential school and the impact it had on the survivors. The healing process needs to be structural so that respect for oneself and others is fostered to promote a sense of worthiness regardless of their limitations or imper-
ficiencies. In this manner, different belief systems can exist harmoniously without judgement. Healing requires adults to take responsibility and accountability for one’s actions, not continually placing blame on others. Co-operation is interconnected through all the healing principles. Throughout stories, a healing process is seen to develop into the four aspects of recognizing, remembering, resolving and reconnecting. These aspects help the survivors to move through stages of recovery at their own pace. Engaging in these stages takes the individual away from thinking, feeling and behaving as victims of residential school experience. It also helps the individual to integrate his experience in a manner that enables him to stand as a survivor in his world and to show him that he is capable of living a life of his own making. The uniqueness of the individual will dictate the victim’s response to the healing process (Assembly of First Nations).

Breaking the Silence (1994) concluded that a model of healing should be based on an Aboriginal perspective including a holistic approach. The healing model will integrate First Nations’ history that provides a context for understanding present circumstances and forms an essential part of healing for residential school survivors. First Nations’ people have experienced cultural loss and have been torn from traditional way; therefore it can be assumed that First Nations’ people have first hand knowledge of their histories (Pierre 1995). Christopher (1998) documents Christian activities during the gold rush period along the Fraser River, especially the Fraser Canyon. It tells of the confusion among First Nations’ people during this period. The study offers background information that will help in understanding how strong First Nations’ cultures allowed their children to be taken from their families. The Anglican Church of Canada eventually established a residential school at Lytton, B.C., similar to the Roman Catholic residential schools scattered throughout the province. B.C. contained the largest population of First Nations in all of Canada. The Anglican Church and Roman Catholic orders divided up the province into small religious areas where a concerted assault on the spiritual and cultural practices of First Nations took place by taking away their most vulnerable and precious resources, their children (Fournier, 1997).

In this light, healing from the atrocities of the residential school experience requires unique and individual techniques. In 1996, at the First Nations Summit of B.C. Grand Chief Ed John emphasised that there is no one solution that addresses the unique issues and stated that each First Nations community must decide its own path (Fournier, 1997). John further states that survivors must have some personal support as well as access to therapy and other resources they may need before they speak out. Resources are being drawn on in urban and reserve-based communities. Resources range from mainstream psychotherapy to sweat lodges, rituals, and spiritual counsel (Fournier, 1997). Five area Shuswap communities, outside of Williams Lake, utilize the Nen’gayni Treatment Centre as a source of healing. A concern that was expressed in resourcing support was the way the governments provided funding on an individual basis and not in the context of a holistic approach.

Fournier discussed the Hollow Water program for sex offenders. It is a community-based program attended to the needs of the victim first, then offering the offender jail or the community route. The offender is charged by the RCMP but will remain out of jail or probation as long as he/she participates in the community-based program.

In the Kootenay region of B.C., the Ktumaxa-Kimbasket comprehensive community healing program was launched their Comprehensive Community Healing and Intervention Program (CHIP). Chief Sophie Pierre states, “This allows ourselves to be guided by what the people want to do. We bring in speakers from the community, elders often, and we work on life skills, but we don’t preach or dictate.”

Knockwood (1992), in her book Out of the Depths, describes how the talking stick is employed. The Talking Stick is used among a circle of people who have committed themselves to participate in a healing process. Commitment means not leaving or walking about during the circle. Individuals wanting help state the problem, and then focus on steps taken to solve the problem. When the individual is finished, the Talking Stick is passed to the left and continues around the circle until it arrives at the person who first spoke. In this manner, those in the circle comment on the problem, share their experience and offer suggestions. Everyone in the circle gains from the exchange.

The literature review revealed a substantial amount of information that will benefit the Creating Wellness Project. Assessment of the impact of the residential school experience was documented in two reviews. The assessment method used was a combination of written life history and story telling guided by a comprehensive set of questions (Assembly of First Nations and Nuu-chah-nulth tribal council). The assessment identified participants’ core issues and determined appropriate healing techniques for the individual. Three reviews supported holistic, client-centered, healing techniques integrated appropriate to the background of those First Nations people. One review stressed the uniqueness of First Nations people. One review stressed the uniqueness of the First Nations Communities and choosing a “healing path” that would work for them. One review stressed the need for the safety of the survivors as paramount in addressing the impact of the residential school (Assembly of First Nations). Recommendations derived from the literature review are:

- To involve the whole community in whatever manner and level they want to participate.
- To obtain and review Ktumaxa-Kimbasket Comprehensive Community Healing and Intervention program.
- To obtain and review The Hollow Water Project which deals with sex offenders at the community level.

The literature reviewed did not specifically address the impact of the residential school on women, men and youth. Isolated stories indicated certain stressors for one gender and not for the other. The residential school impacted the family and community by taking away the children, the nations most valuable resources. Stories tell of the loss of learning traditional ways, which were lost through attendance at residential schools. Many survivors are abusing alcohol and drugs as a way of dealing with unresolved core issues. The residential school experience causes many First Nations communities to be split and diseased.

The community institutes are continuing to respond to the challenge of meeting the needs of their First Nations clientele while functioning within the jurisdiction of the Federal/Provincial governments. More responsibility is given to the First Nations communities to institute healing programs with less money to provide needed services.

Conclusions gleaned from the literature review are that planning strategies, involvement of the community, and flexibility in one’s approach are key components to becoming engaged in the healing process with survivors of residential schools. The literature reviewed stemmed from factual reporting of painful emotional disclosure that revealed the ongoing suffering taking place at this writing.

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The Child Who Cries Within

BY BARNEY BEAVER, Webequie First Nation, Residential School Survivor.

A lonely old man sitting on a park bench, thinking of what his life has been through.
Over the years, his thirst needs a quench,
A bottle by his side, is what he has to show.

"Misery loves company" is the motto for people who cannot admit and resolve their own problems.
To seek help, guidance and support is very simple,
but a person who hurts does not agree to these terms.

Many things were taught in a wrong way at residential school,
from being who we really are to what we were not.
The school system made us who we are and that’s no denial;
Lost of native tongue and culture was what you got.

Taking out his bottle and pouring it into a small cup,
his bad memories of the school set in.
How did he survived for so long without any help?
it must have been the child who cries within.

Biography

I am an Ojibway-Cree (Oji-Cree) native living in a remote Northern Ontario native community of Webequie. I attended the Shingwauk Hall Residential School with my two older sisters and an older brother in Sault Ste Marie, Ontario at the early age of six in 1963/64 until it closed in 1970. I have worked for the Webequie First Nation Indian Band for 12 years. Today, I work as an Aboriginal Healing Coordinator funded by the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (AHF), helping out the community’s seventy residential school survivors in a small community of 668.

Our Prayer

BY JOSEPH SHEEPSKIN

Oh Great Grandfather, Grandmother, Spirits of the sky Hear our voices, hear our cry. In hope we pray for the words of a song Show us the way back where we belong, Always in touch with ourselves and the Creator, You’re guiding us in life, we’ll find sooner than later Either in ceremonies, sweats or the Sweetgrass we burn. We find ourselves and seem to learn. From our mistakes we correct and forgiveness in prayer. We feel your presence because you’re always there. Making amends and purifying our soul Praying for our people that one day we’ll be whole That we walk in harmony and balance as you once did, And that all our mixed emotions will finally be rid. For which the words you once spoke they were so strong I pray now for our people, that the road we travel will not be wrong. So, please take these tears and wipe them from our eyes, Oh Great Grandmother, Grandmother, Spirits of the sky. All my Relations.

Healing Tracks

BY LOIS PROVOST TURCHETTI

The road is slow and tortuous in teaching others how to read Earth’s mind through traditional ecological knowledge . . . sounding through skies . . . shores . . . body . . . spirit, but we hear the voice of the Turtle and we are not alone. Let the winds lift up our still-small voices til the sound of many waters moving over once-sharp stones polished smooth by the touch of many fingers traces the path of knowledge our Mother has mapped out for us to follow and our spirit soars with the flames.

Certain Song

BY LOIS PROVOST TURCHETTI

winds weave songs of shore love humbly . . . humbling calling out your name. mountains rising from inertia answering witnessing our pain. beaten, silenced, lonely, weeping in the earth-song with the dawn, tender, hoping, fiercely hoping, with the lightwaves we are born. wind is shore and waves are mountains ever-moving, always free always speaking, ever sharing out Your awesome love to me. speaking softly with the moonlight, singing surely with the sun, each child’s deepest, heartfelt yearnings, each child’s wanting to belong and the secret, sacred silence of this shore-song from the start speaks the Spirit’s great desire for the mountains of my heart wind and water, wishing, kissing, children loving from the soul make me certain, surely certain, we are part and we are whole.

Biography

Lois Provost Turchetti is a mythteller, freelance writer, and artist in popular education of spoken word poesis in the global indigenous storyarts. Her work has to do with myth, culture, history, and with oral tradition as healing. She speaks as an indigenous person born in Jamaica (Xaymaca), an off-shore territory of Greater Turtle Island, of Chinese, French, German, Asian Indian, Irish, Jewish, Scottish, African, Welsh, Italian and Maroon-Arawac-Carib (self-identified tribal affiliation) ancestry and heritage.
THE TALKING QUILT – A HEALING JOURNEY

Stardale Women’s Group Inc. Foundation
“Breaking the Cycles by Creating the Circles”

The Stardale Women’s group is a grassroots community organization operating in the rural community of Melfort, Saskatchewan. The program provides an opportunity for women to rediscover the experiences of abuse they were subjected to while attending residential schools. In doing so, the women share their experiences with one another while engaging in the making of a quilt. The quilt reflects the personal experiences and feelings of the women. Through the shared quilting a healing process begins. The quilt also provides the women with the ability to share their experiences with others.

12 Aboriginal women participated actively in the program. Their ages vary between 18 to 45 years. All the women quilters have between one and five children. Half of the women attended at least one residential school. All of the women have at least one member of their immediate family who attended residential school.

The Quilt was unveiled on May 17th, with a traditional ceremony. Participants came to the unveiling from many different parts of Canada. The group made a video of the group quilting process and wrote the story of their experience, which they share here with us. If you are inspired by this project and wish to obtain more information, please contact the AHF at 1 888-725-8886 and ask for Giselle Robelin or Wayne Spear.

‘The Talking Quilt’
A Healing Journey

(Based on Eliza’s Story & the discussions of the group of women who made the Quilt).

Talking poem written by Oya Aral.

Early in the morning
as the sun’s rays colour the grey sky
in hues of pink, crimson & gold,
we are on our way to another day
full of learning, caring, & friendship
in the women’s quilting circle.

Our drivers pick up the women,
& we share a ride to Melfort.
While some of us gaze out the window
into the crystalline white snow
covering the hills & beyond,
others are still half-asleep or snoring.
It is a quiet ride to town.

For the watchful eye in tune,
the tapestry of trees in white,
shining & sparkling icicles bright,
create a dazzling show
that winter’s beauty is in bloom.
The icy road disappears behind each hill
of this fascinating scene.

We always see with excitement
the white owl & the hawk
dancing in the air
encircling us in their daily ritual
& find them perched up on a tree
waiting for us at Stardale
upon our arrival.

In the quietness of the morning drive to town,
we think about the quilt we are making,
& its relevance in our lives:
we reflect on our childhood days —
a first blanket at home or at the residential school,
then the families we formed
under the quilts that we shared.

Spending time in silent solitude, cold & chill of the morning brings to mind sweet & sad memories,
some horror stories of our growing up years. The women that smoke light up a cigarette before getting into town & sink deep into their own thoughts.

The school days were dreary & pitch black at times:
molested & abused by our teachers & supervisors,
we have lost the roots of our ancestral traditions:
could not even hold hands with our sisters & brothers,
did not even get to see them in our growing up years.
We became a number in the school,
& taken to residential schools,
could not even hold hands with our sisters & brothers,
did not even get to see them in our growing up years.
We were separated from our families,
we lost touch with our families — mothers & fathers,
we lost the roots of our ancestral traditions:
the family bonds & unity
in our lives were destroyed.
The school days were dreary & pitch black at times:
we were separated from our families,
we lost touch with our families — mothers & fathers,
we lost the roots of our ancestral traditions:
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Our spirits soar like an eagle
in search of the traditions of our ancestors.
We seek the tenderness of love & caring
from our long lost generations
to come & find us in our family affairs.

Spending time in silent solitude, cold & chill of the morning brings to mind sweet & sad memories,
some horror stories of our growing up years. The women that smoke light up a cigarette before getting into town & sink deep into their own thoughts.

Each new & enlightening day
brings us to educational programs,
life skills, sculpting & quilting,
we seek the tenderness of love & caring
from our long lost generations
to come & find us in our family affairs.

We share each other’s grief,
desolate times of despair, fear, anger & hatred,
the events in our growing up years:
the traumas —
the booze, drugs & gambling addictions —
the learned behaviours
that destroy our families.
We ask for the boldness & pride of our tribal cultures
& to communicate with each other —
we seek the tenderness of love & caring
from our long lost generations
to come & find us in our family affairs.

Such warm welcome it is indeed.
Helen awaits us
with cheerful greetings
every bright or gloomy day.
Her symbols of nature
are like colours of pink & purple reflecting sweet memories;
dark gray, pitch black or crimson red flags
signaling the dangers,
& the horror stories in our lives.

We shared each story,
& we share a ride to Melfort.
While some of us gaze out the window
into the crystalline white snow
covering the hills & beyond,
others are still half-asleep or snoring.
It is a quiet ride to town.

For the watchful eye in tune,
the tapestry of trees in white,
shining & sparkling icicles bright,
create a dazzling show
that winter’s beauty is in bloom.
The icy road disappears behind each hill
of this fascinating scene.

We always see with excitement
the white owl & the hawk
dancing in the air
encircling us in their daily ritual
& find them perched up on a tree
waiting for us at Stardale
upon our arrival.

In the quietness of the morning drive to town,
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We were also strapped on our hands or other parts of our bodies which made us feel like we were on fire. Even as adolescent female students, we could not escape the trauma of being publicly beaten with pants down on the private days of our lives.

Shameful, shameful – as we think about those days, we feel naked & abandoned – our pride gone, all alone in a world foreign to us, not knowing where to turn. The traumas In our lives led us into alcohol, drugs, addictions, & abusive actions.

The value of self & respect for others – lost; incest & physical abuse, we could not create healthy & happy families. we even failed in raising our own children properly.

All these things were done to us & more, in the name of "God" we were told. It became a fearful world, not understanding the meaning of "God" at all. One of the quilters asked one day: "How come they did this?" And another one answered, "Because they knew they could get away with it!"

Days of discussions on relationships, drugs, alcohol, & abusive partners. What happens when incest becomes a repeating pattern? When a destitute mother watches her daughter as she goes through the same experiences?

God have mercy on us, we need to break these cycles.

Loss, grieving, anger & hate are just some of the emotions we have to deal with in everyday of our lives.

We need to break these cycles as we learn new skills.

Everyday is a new bright & cheerful day if we care enough to make it that way. We can erase the darkness slowly out of our lives.

We have a chance, a God-given chance to understand life & to choose a righteous path closer to the Divine.

We share our feelings & emotions along this healing journey as we create our quilt together, with tears, laughter & joy. In our praying circle, we pray for each other – to break the additions & repetitive cycle.

We can create a wonderful world for our families & children if we change the old habits, teach new values, respect & manners & promote a new vision for the betterment of our communities.

We are the protectors & guardians of our generation; & we seek to be the wise mentors for generations & generations to come.

The "dark night of the soul" must be resolved in our lives, we must reach within ourselves to search for the truth.

We need to destroy the barriers to freedom of thought & understanding. We must be true to our feelings & emotions. We must have compassion for peace & harmony in our lives.

We must trust in the process of healing. We must use our new skills in altering our perceptions and beliefs. Our prayers will transcend us, help us redefine who we are, & bring us closer to the Divine.

Our souls feel the harmony of nature, that we cherish all around us & the wonder of the universe God’s creation is all around us, we feel overwhelmed by its beauty & peace.

The life that we create for ourselves & the people we love should have the same harmony as in nature – caring & sharing we shall stand together not only in making this quilt, but, also by using our new skills, we shall excel in life.

We shall see our life as an eagle, as we strive to be successful participants & leaders in our communities.

Creating such a beautiful Quilt has been a healing journey for us women. We have come a long way crying, laughing, denying & changing to a new light dawning an the horizon – we shall make it shine.

Look at each piece of the Quilt, examine it in detail, look at our stories from the past, depicting our frustrations & anger that still linger deep in our hearts.

This Quilting process has been a new awakening – an awesome healing experience for us.

We learned many new skills along the way, tested our emotions, & hooked into each other’s lives. With prayers in our praying circles, we created a powerful cosmic healing force.

We gained a new understanding & a renewed interest in our ancient culture & traditions. We need to help each other more & more, & give a helping hand – be there for one another at all times, to hold the hand of mistreated & distressed ones.

We the women are the enablers & the rescuers. We shall survive the conflicts & abuse. We shall be the leaders to change the cycles forever. We shall overcome as we stand together, hand-in-hand, to face the new world.

The Stardale Women’s Group Foundation gave us this opportunity to tell our stories through the Talking Quilt. We have made changes for the better already, we are grateful & thankful.

At the age of seven, they took us from our homes. They cut off our braids. Told our parents they would go to jail. Without fail, If they did not send us to residential school, Our parents were not fools. They knew they were going to be used as tools for the priests and nuns.

What a process they put us through! Took away our culture, language and tradition. They shamed and sexually, physically, mentally abused us. All in the name of the Lord.

As we grew older, We could not forget the past. It would for generations last. What the priests and nuns did. To a once proud race.

Now we have alcohol and drugs to make us forget. Our ways are lost. But not by choice. But by who ruled at the time.

Written by Ron Soto
Member of Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Alberta
February 26, 2001
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We are always looking for poems, stories, photos, and information on residential schools and residential school-related matters.

To receive Healing Words, write to us at Suite 801, 75 Albert Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 5E7 or phone 1-888-725-8886. In Ottawa, phone 237-4441. Our fax number is (613) 237-4442 and our email is grobelin@ahf.ca or wspear@ahf.ca. Keep in mind that the newsletter is available in French and English and is free. Also available on-line! http:// www.ahf.ca
Youth and Parent Development and Recovery for the Dene of the Hay River Reserve is designed to create opportunities for the Hay River Reserve residents and band members to regain the self-reliance lost with the introduction and operation of a residential school in Hay River from 1929 to 1939. During this period, many of the elders of today had some experience with the residential school. There are many Hay River Reserve Dene today who are direct descendants of the victims of the residential school. There were other impacts to the Dene community in the area that are still affecting their descendants today.

The introduction of the wage economy and service provision created a sense of dependency on the residential school for some families. Some left the traditional economy to provide services or labour for the residential school. When the school closed in 1939, it is said that the people who were depending on the school for work and services could no longer provide for their families. The trauma experienced would be similar to the present-day layoffs that occur on a regular basis. Some of these people went back to the traditional economy, but many did not and stayed dependent on the wage economy to make a living. There being no jobs available, families became dysfunctional. This resulted in all forms of addictions. Some stayed in the community and indulged in addictive activities. They influenced the other people that were still in the traditional economy, by introducing them to addictions. These and other oppressive activities led the Dene of Hay river to become almost totally dependent by 1970.

The goal of the Youth and Parent Development and Recovery for the Dene of the Hay River Reserve is to develop personal power for youth and their parents, in order for the youth to be able to make healthy choices in life and to prepare the youths to become healthy leaders.

Meeting the needs of the community

Through this project, the youth, parents, adults and elders of the Hay River Dene Band can address issues that have been affecting the community since the introduction of residential school in Hay River. By addressing youth issues, the community is preparing itself better for the next millennium. Access to healing practitioners who the community trust and feel comfortable with, and who can speak the Dene language, helps the participants grow and create personal power.

Community-based, participant-designed healing programs ensure that the unique needs and priorities of each participant are addressed. The project will involve ongoing community-based healing circles, support groups, and other healing programs. More important, however, is the community benefit of healing that will be derived from witnessing positive changes in participants. Knowledge and skill, and first-hand experience with the methods and results of the training and subsequent healing processes, are other benefits. Community-based healing also enables participants to continually be with their family and friends, sharing with them the immediate effects and experiences of the programs.

Not all of the training process occurs in the communities. There are strategic advantages of the on-the land programs, which will give the participants an opportunity to engage in Dene cultural and traditional activities. It is important to immerse the participants in the on-the land programs to challenge the idea that the land is of no value. Through immersion they will experience what it means to live on the land, getting out there and getting their hands dirty.

Who is served by this project?

Youth and Parents Development and Recovery for the Dene of the Hay River Reserve will serve the Hay River members and Hay River Dene Band members in Hay River. Other Dene people who may be in the Hay River Reserve area will be encouraged to participate. The Hay River Dene Band firmly believes these programs and services will better serve the youth, parents, adult and elders of the Hay River Reserve.

The Youth and Parents Development and Recovery for the Dene of the Hay River Reserve addresses residential school issues that are related not only to those directly affected by residential school, but also the...
intergenerational impacts. Participants are encouraged to gain self-confidence in their own inherent capacities, talents and strengths, so as to build enough self-esteem to continue their healing work. Notions of ethics, pathology, self-growth, actualisation of potentials and mental abilities will be used in an active and concrete way so that the participants will become able to empower themselves to go beyond healing of psychological scars.

Those community members who participate in this community-based Healing Programs benefit through participating in a healing process led by familiar, credible and trustworthy community peers, who, upon completion of the program, will be available for support and guidance.

Parenting Development and Recovery

It is vital that the parents of the youth also participate in this program. The parents are ultimately responsible for the needs and development of their children. This responsibility will be given back to the parents by providing parental and personal growth workshops and cultural and traditional programs. The parents are encouraged to take responsibility to support and guide their children in education, employment and justice.

Throughout the project, the Hay River Dene Band is kept abreast of all developments through reports and participation. All programs involved in the project are required to write monthly reports. In addition, each participant is required to do evaluations based on participation. The Coordinator supervises the effectiveness of the program by randomly reviewing participants' reports.

Youth program development

The Hay River Dene Band Youth Development Program supports and assists the youth in education, employment and justice. Personal growth and healing programs are intended to create personal power for youth, allowing them to make healthy choices in life. When the youth run into problems, they are supported. The support is available from the parent whenever possible. However, if the parents cannot provide support, the youth gets support from the Hay River Band program staff. The parents of the youth will be encouraged to take part in the process. The approach is not to remove the responsibility of the parents but to create responsibility.

The youth are given knowledge and skills to function in today's world. The knowledge and skills allow them to create opportunities in their lives that would otherwise be unavailable. With the development of personal power, they are able to make healthy choices. The discipline developed enables them to challenge life without fear and to create well-being in their own life, as well as to support one another in making healthy choices.

The parenting workshops train the parents to give support to their youth. They are given parental knowledge and skills which enable them to respond to any problem their children may encounter. The parents develop this knowledge and skill by participating in our Parenting Workshops and by getting involved in their children's daily life.

Other adults in the community support parents and another one in the development of the youth. They have the opportunity to participate in all the workshops. They also participate in the on-the-land programs and community gatherings. They are teachers, facilitators, spiritual role models and cultural guides. The adults are then able to enhance their abilities to regain their traditional roles lost through cultural oppression.

The Elders are once more able to take on their role as teachers, spiritual guides and cultural and traditional advisors in all aspects of life. They regain the respect of the young people and are once more able to become the centre of the community. Their involvement breaks down the generational gap created by the introduction of new systems.

Our goal is to become a real community, where families support one another, where traditional and cultural knowledge will be revived and become once more part of the Dene life. Our goal is to be once more self-sufficient and self-reliant.

Our programming activities

Our project consists of a series of programming activities aimed at skill-building and knowledge-sharing. These activities are three fold: workshops for parents and youth, on-the-land programs and cultural gatherings. Worksopns for parents and for youth Our series of parenting and youth workshops are designed to develop knowledge and skills and to create personal power in youth and parents so that they are able to make healthy choices, support and guide their children.

Dene Life Cycle workshop series for parents

These workshops are each 3 days' duration: Gestation, Childhood, Puberty, Relationship, Parenting, Grand Parents/Elders.

Other Workshops (5 days each):

- Communications and conflict resolution, Assertiveness, Self-esteem, and Self-awareness.
- Last series (3 days each): Aboriginal Self Awareness, Role Models, Anger Management.
- An additional series of workshop is specifically aimed at youth (3 days each): Culture and Spirituality, Building Youth Support, Family Tree/Pride.

On-the-Land programs

Spring Camp: A spring goose hunt to Buffalo Lake for Youth and parents: A seven-day trip when the geese are returning for the summer. The families have an opportunity to hunt goose and prepare it for cooking. Programs in the evenings are organised to learn about traditional values and beliefs with elders and each other.

Fish Camp for families, approximately 15 miles east of Hay River, on the South Shore of Tusho. This seven-day trip provide families with the opportunity to fish, hunt and gather berries, and to make dry-fish, dry-meat and other food. The youth are given the opportunity to participate in visiting nets, in hunting moose, setting rabbit snares and gathering wood. In the evening, camp gatherings are organised to learn traditional values and beliefs and where Elders tell legends and historical legends.

Full Moose Hunt: A seven-day trip in late September, where families have the opportunity to participate in hunting moose and in skinning it and transporting it back to base camp. They also make dry-meat and scrape and flesh the moose hides. Families also have the opportunity to prepare camps for the winter trapping.

Community Gatherings

These gathering are held on the Hay River Reserve to enhance Dene cultural and traditional values and beliefs.

- Spring Gathering: A feast and drum dance in June, which is also the annual community gathering, involving political, spiritual, traditional events and family participation. An annual Fire Ceremony to give thanks for the past years provision, gifts and health.
- Summer Gathering: A feast and drum dance in August.
- Fall Gathering: A feast and drum dance in September.
- Winter Gathering: A feast and drum dance in January.+
Regional Gathering Report Summary

RECOMMENDATIONS, COMMENTS, AND STORIES FROM THE 2000-2001 AHF REGIONAL GATHERINGS

Information needs to be distributed to communities that the AHF funding process has been reviewed and that some concessions have been made.

Real change needs to come from Regional Gatherings like this.

-Recommendation from a Regional Gathering, 1999.

(Editors’ note: a full copy of the 75-page Regional Gathering report is available from the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.)

INTRODUCTION

LESSONS LEARNED FROM 1999

The 1999 Regional Gathering report, which included transcripts and minutes taken at the Gatherings, highlighted the comments, feedback and recommendations from the participants.

The AHF Board, responding to feedback from the 4 Regional Gatherings held in 1999, made some changes to its funding process, its program operations, its communication strategy, and its structure. The following is a short description of this feedback and responses:

• Many grass-root groups and smaller communities told us that the application form was complicated for them, for the type of project they wanted to propose. As a result the AHF developed a separate, simplified application form for projects under $50K.

• Many individuals, groups and communities told us that they wanted a more equitable distribution of healing resources across the country. To this end, taking into account the limited life of the amount granted to the AHF by the Government, the Foundation designed and implemented a new policy stating that in cases where an applicant has already two funded projects and then applies for another, this third application will be set aside until proposals from other communities and organisations in the region have been considered.

• In response to concerns that disclosed identifying information may be used in court cases, the AHF will not fund any video, written, or other proposals that disclose the identity of healing program participants or other individuals.

• In response to feedback on the greater safety, accountability and wisdom needed regarding the larger amounts allocated to Healing Centres, the AHF designed and implemented a two-part, comprehensive process for Healing Centre applications. This process will also enable applicants whose project can be processed as a regular proposal rather than a Healing Centre to benefit from a shorter review process.

• Many communities told us that our limit for larger projects was too restrictive. The AHF has therefore raised the funding ceiling to $150,000 per project per year, while creating a new stream for smaller project (projects under $50K).

• We were told at the Gatherings that staff assistance was needed in order to clear misunderstandings about the application process, to provide support and help in strengthening applications. The AHF has revised the proposal review process, put personnel and structures in place to provide the help requested and needed, and increased staff in two major areas, Proposal Review and Community Support.

• Many groups and communities told us that in order to have fair distribution, the AHF needed to encourage and help grass-roots groups to develop their proposal development capacity and help them to build a network with other individuals and communities for mutual support. The AHF responded to this concern by hiring Regional Co-ordinators, whose role is to help develop proposals and build networks and partnerships, by organising Proposal Development Workshops and networking workshops in all parts of the country.

• In response to concerns expressed at Regional Gatherings about accountability and sustainability of projects, the AHF has developed key indicators to monitor and evaluate funded projects. This also enables the AHF to assess applicants interested in multi-year funding.

• Communities asked us to give them the chance to improve and resubmit their projects. The AHF set two deadlines a year so that applicants have another chance to resubmit without having to wait another year to do so.

• In addition, the AHF has revised its review process to keep channels of communications open with applicants whose application needs to be improved before it is sent to external review. Applicants whose application needs to be improved will have time to resubmit within the same deadline. This gives applicants whose proposal is not accepted for funding the opportunity, information and support to develop a better proposal.

• The AHF also encourages communities and groups to submit their application in advance of the deadline if they wished, so that feedback can be integrated sooner.

• Many individuals, groups and communities told us of their need to get information about the healing work, projects, and successes of other groups and communities elsewhere in the country. To this end the AHF has developed principles of best practices, engaged in research which will be disseminated and shared with communities, and extended its communication strategy and outreach. Any question or request can be addressed to the Foundation either via our toll-free line, e-mail, or regular mail. Our regularly updated website contains documents and information about all the activities of the Foundation. Our newsletter is sent to an ever growing number of people and communities.

• Some individuals, groups and communities indicated their dissatisfaction with the Foundation approval rate. The efforts of the AHF to develop the capacity of communities to develop proposals, to put in place a process by which applicants can discuss and improve their application with AHF staff, resulted this year in a 50% approval rate.

Regional Gatherings:

Face to Face dialogues with a growing Aboriginal Grassroots Healing Movement

Regional Gatherings remains one of the most effective tools the AHF uses to collect, face-to-face, the reactions, comments, ideas, and recommendations from Aboriginal survivors as well as individuals, groups and communities interested in the work of healing in general and in developing healing projects.

The feedback from the Regional Gatherings added important information to the many comments sent to us or discussed with us over the phone or by E-
mail. Feedback is the driving force behind the AHF efforts to improve the quality and efficiency of its assistance to survivors of residential schools, their families and communities. As a result of the numerous requests to meet and talk face-to-face, the AHF Board decided to increase the number of Regional Gatherings for the year 2000 to 5, with a further 2 Gatherings at the beginning of 2001. The following report highlights the questions, comments and recommendations made by the participants at the gatherings.

“I just wanted to say thank-you for all your hard work that you are doing and to all the people in this room. I would like to recognise how appreciative I am of your presence here today and for the positive spirit, respect and understanding that is here in this room today.”

-Charles, Vancouver Regional Gathering.

GATHERINGS 2000-2001

- September 28, 2000, Iqaluit
- October 12, 2000, Winnipeg
- October 26, 2000, Vancouver
- November 9, 2000, Ottawa
- November 23, 2000, Moncton
- January 26, 2001, Yellowknife
- January 30, 2001, Whitehorse

To reduce the costs while offering more opportunity for the Board to maintain the face to face dialogue that was requested, it was decided that only some members of the Board would attend, including the Board member from the region visited.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In September, October and November 2000, members of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation’s Board of Directors gathered in five Canadian cities to engage in dialogue with Aboriginal people on the Foundation’s funding process, issue an annual report, provide an update on funded projects and announce new initiative.

The first Regional Gathering occurred in Iqaluit, NT, September 28, 2000 at the Air Cadet Hall, Royal Canadian Legion. Further meetings took place in Winnipeg (October 12, 2000, Indian & Metis Friendship Centre), Vancouver (October 26, 2000, Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre), Ottawa (November 9, 2000, Odawa Friendship Centre) and Moncton (November 23, 2000, Delta Beauséjour).

In addition, the Board decided to organise two more Gathering in the North, in January 2001: in Yellowknife (January 26, 2001, Royal Canadian Legion) and Whitehorse (January 30, 2001, Nakawatuk Hall, Kwanlin Dun First Nation). Board Directors enjoyed this opportunity to continue their dialogue with Aboriginal individuals and organisations. The objective of this exchange was to bring back to the Foundation comments and suggestions which would then be considered and integrated in the planning and implementation of the AHF administrative and programming activities.

Each of the Gatherings was organised around the same agenda, which gave AHF board and staff the opportunity to fulfill both its accountability mandate and to listen to Elders, Survivors, their descendants and communities as well as their grass-root organisations and Community Leadership representatives.

Reporting Agenda

Georges Erasmus, President of the AHF Board of Directors, opened each Gathering by providing an overview of the Foundation’s mission and funding activities to date and introducing the Directors present at the meetings.

Following each Director’s self introduction, Georges Erasmus together with Mike DeGagné, Executive Director of the Foundation, provided an overview of the AHF Annual Report, specifically with regard to the following:

•Creations of the Aboriginal Healing Foundation
•Foundation’s mandate and obligations under the Funding Agreement
•Proposal Deadlines and Theme areas in the first funding cycle
•Proposal assessment process

Mr. DeGagné then introduced staff members present at the Gathering, and Ernie Daniels, Director of Finance, introduced and explained the Foundation financial reports.

Following the presentation of these financial documents, Georges Erasmus called for questions from those in attendance. The full text of these questions and answers is contained in the Regional Gathering Report.

Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, presented an overview of new initiatives that will affect future funding cycles. He informed participants of the revisions that were made to the Program Handbook and the proposal review process based on feedback received from survivors, communities and members of the Board in the first funding cycle. New initiatives noted included:

•A more interactive process where Regional Co-ordinators and staff in Ottawa will assist and encourage communities to develop better proposals
•New, separate and simplified application for projects under 50K
•Streamlined review process
•Hiring of individuals around the country to assist communities which did not submit many proposals, i.e. The North (an individual speaking Inuktitut will hold Proposal Development Workshops).
•A two step process for Healing Centres
•Restriction on disclosing identifying information
•Raising of funding ceiling
•Renewal funding
•Foundation mandate
•Increased assistance for the North

OPPORTUNITY TO PROVIDE FEEDBACK

In addition to the question period allocated for the Financial Reports of the Foundation, each Regional Gathering reserved several opportunities to provide feedback.

The full text of these exchanges, arranged under common themes, is provided in the Regional Gathering Report.

QUESTIONS AND DISCUSSIONS ON COMMON THEMES/ISSUES

Reporting of the discussions and questions asked during the morning and afternoon sessions are organised under common themes for each of the Gatherings.

•Mandate of the Foundation
•Language issues
•Accountability/Transparency issues
•Board issues
•Proposal/refusal of proposals issues
•Administration issues (financial, staffing etc.)
•Funding Criteria
•Application issues
•Funding issues
•Contribution Agreement issues
•Fair Distribution of Funds
•Communications issues
•Information sharing/linkages
•Community Support Workers
•Proposal Review Process
•Survivors issues
•Monitoring/reporting/Evaluation issues
In addition to questions and feedback, many participants were able to tell their stories and make recommendations. These stories and recommendations are included at the end of each Regional Gathering summary.

IQALUIT REGIONAL GATHERING

Date: September 28, 2000
Time: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Place: Air Cadet Hall, Royal Canadian Legion

Participants: 20+

Directors Present: Georges Erasmus, Simona Arnatsiaq, Angus Cockney.
Elder: Annie Nattaq.

Staff Present: Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, Al Gabriel, Director of Communications, Rae Ratslef, Assistant Board Secretary, Frank Hope, Community Support Worker.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The remoteness of our territory provides many additional barriers and challenges to accessing resources and funding with which to promote and encourage wellness and healing. For example: Advocacy groups that could support initiatives and projects are often located closer to national centres; Skilled personnel who could help to develop financial or technical aspects of proposals are not often located in smaller communities; Opportunities and funding sources, which may be widely advertised in major centres, may only become known after time as the news reaches more remote areas.

I would like to suggest to the Foundation that to eliminate these barriers and increase your effectiveness in promoting sustainable healing processes that you:

• Have Inuit staff in your headquarter operation;
• Have a presence in as many communities of Nunavut as you can and hire and train local people; and
• Establishing a partnership with the NTI to utilise some of its agencies such as its Nunavut Social Development Council.

The other concern or suggestion I have regarding the AHF and its proposal process is that the review process is too exhaustive. I recommend that the proposal forms and the review process be simplified and that more Inuit influence be incorporated into the proposal forms, the review process and the organisational structure of the AHF.

There is need for more communication here in the North. People do not know about the AHF. I would like to recommend that the AHF address languages. All the languages are important to preserve. I think it is very important to be considered as a criteria to do presentations.

If you think there are problems with the proposal, contact the applicants to talk about it.

Our main concern since we started this work is that there was a non-existence of community liaison workers and a lack of peer support and referral services. The AHF should take a look at this – connecting people.

Does the AHF provide feedback on the quarterly reports?

Because I work by myself most of the time it is frustrating at times because I don't have anyone to talk to – although I do talk to staff at the office quite often. It would be most helpful if we could get together like this and share stories and support each other. If the AHF planned something like that to bring together projects it would help make us all more successful.

VANCOUVER GATHERING

Date: October 26, 2000
Time: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Place: Vancouver Aboriginal Friendship Centre

Participants: 260+

Directors Present: Georges Erasmus, Carrielynn Lamouche, Bill Lightbown.
Elders: Dorris Peters (Board Elder), Theresa Jeffries.

Staff Present: Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, Ernie Daniels, Director of Finance, Giselle Robelin, Communications Coordinator, Daryle Gardipy, Finance Officer, Pauline McCrimmon, Community Support Worker, Rae Ratslef, Assistant Board Secretary.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

I hear about our new Chief setting up trust funds for his children from the funding that was provided. We need to take care of our people. A lot of these things need to be looked into and very carefully.

I would like the AHF to look at every aspect of helping people heal.

I believe there is a need for healing centres.

The residential school issue needs to come to the top — the head of our nations. The residential school issue has affected all bands in North America. Other bands could benefit by holding Regional Gatherings for brainstorming and commenting on what is and what is not working. It would go a long way if we all sat together to exchange ideas where the objective is for all bands to benefit from this process. Nowhere in BC are there any youth treatment centres — those types of ideas need to be discussed in a forum like this on an annual/periodic basis.

WINNIPEG GATHERING

Date: October 12, 2000
Time: 9:00 AM to 4:00 PM
Place: Metis & Indian Friendship Centre

Participants: 120+

Directors Present: Georges Erasmus, Ken Courchene, Carrielynn Lamouche.
Elder: Laurence Houle.

Staff Present: Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, Ernie Daniels, Director of Finance, Giselle Robelin, Communications Coordinator, Rae Ratslef, Assistant Board Secretary, Diane Roussin, Community Support Worker.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The CD needs to be developed even more because some people came to a blockade in using the CD, people who don’t know how the technology works. It was very frustrating for us to use. We had to cut stuff out and really shorten our submission in the process. The CD needs a little more work.

Regarding evaluation — when you give money to a community group — assess.
to make sure all community members are satisfied and that the money is used properly – not just asking the people who received the money but the people in the community.

We think the networking funding should come from the AHF. Set aside a pocket of money and then receive recommendations from areas for networking meetings. I don't think you'd take away money from the community projects by doing this.

One of the reasons I feel my proposal was successful was because I had face-to-face access with people who could assist me along the way in the development of the proposals. In grassroots communities, they need assistance on proposal development and face-to-face assistance.

I was thinking that the best reception I ever received was from the AHF. There are a lot of programs about model personalities, people, etc. But the AHF should be thinking about a model of a community that is healing well and re-harmonising itself.

We'd like to see a network for the people to get together on a regular basis to deal with problems and issues and to build their relationships and as a mechanism in dealing with the situations that they face in their projects.

We pay a lot of expenses to consultants from the south and it would be very helpful for us to have a direct line to other projects.

The number of women in proportion to the women on the Board needs to be equal.

The process for applications is oppressive and unfair. We're competing against each other and it should be on the basis of needs. Some communities don't have people who can write proposals – this needs to be rethought by the AHF.

I would like to ask the AHF to rethink its whole process for funding. When you reject proposals its very painful for communities, organisations and individuals. It makes us feel small and not worthy. It's traumatising in itself. The process is oppressive and is excluding people. We need to look at meeting everyone's needs instead of formulas and numbers, etc. Your process is hurting our people.

We are very far from the AHF and our access to you is nil. I'm asking you to help with proposals – this needs to be rethought by the AHF.

There should be an AHF Children of Lost Parents program.

MONCTON GATHERING

Date: November 23, 2000
Time: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Place: Delta Beaujol
Participants: 30+

Directors Present: Georges Erasmus, Susan Hare, Viola Robinson. Elder: Margaret Labillois.

Staff Present: Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, Ernie Daniels, Director of Finance, Wayne K. Spear, Communications Coordinator, Caroline Garon, Controller, Kevin Barlow, Community Support Worker, Rae Ratslef, Assistant Board Secretary.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The survivors themselves should be looked at, not the community as a whole.

The way the funding proposals are written its tied into survivors, we have to bring in the survivors and identify the issues behind them so I can see how people could place blame on them. In order for us to access funding we had to pull in our 6 or 7 survivors even though they were not necessarily ready.

We can't get the funding without doing that and it does place a feeling of blame on the survivors. Maybe you can put a disclaimer on the application process that survivors are not to blame. I can see how the survivors would feel blamed. You can't put the blame for all the problems in the whole community on the heads of the survivors.

I think that for the project to address 15% of our survivors is good, but is the AHF getting its money’s worth? Equal opportunities should be granted to those of us who left the church and took up our bundles in the traditional way. An equal if not greater emphasis should be placed on us.

Is it possible for the people in the local areas to get together and help each other with proposals? We have some experience in writing the proposals and could help others. Your staff worker could coordinate the people as a referral service.

YELLOWKNIFE GATHERING

Date: January 26, 2001
Time: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Place: Royal Canadian Legion
Participants: 30+

Directors Present: Richard Kistabish, Vice-Chair, Simona Arnatsiak, Angus Cockney, Elder: Georges Blondin.

Staff Present: Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, Ernie Daniels, Director of Finance, Giselle Robelin, Co-ordinator, Frank Hope, Community Support Worker, Rae Ratslef, Assistant Board Secretary.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

For people to talk about the physical and sexual abuse they've experienced takes a long time. In the south they've had access to the healing process for many years, through Elders, programs, etc. In the north there is access as well but it's very difficult to come out and deal with these things to address your healing journey. We need more time, 10 years will not be enough. It takes generations for corrections to be made.

I recommend that at least one reunion in a region per year be allowed.

WHITEHORSE GATHERING

Date: January 30, 2001
Time: 9:00 AM to 5:00 PM
Place: Nakawataku Hall, Kwanlin Dun First Nation
Participants: 100+

Directors Present: Richard Kistabish, Vice-Chair, Rose-Marie Blair-Smith, Angus Cockney. Elder: Ida Calmegane.

Staff Present: Mike DeGagné, Executive Director, Ernie Daniels, Director of Finance, Wayne K. Spear, Communications Coordinator, Frank Hope, Community Support Worker, Rae Ratslef, Assistant Board Secretary.

SUGGESTIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Are there any plans, in terms of the liability insurance for organisations, for a global insurance plans for funded projects to cut down on the costs? There seems to be a lot of duplication with every proposal needing its own insurance.

We need to hear from the AHF, you need to hear from us.

We would like to ask the AHF to be patient with us, it takes a while to get a program from scratch going into a full time program.
Regional Gathering Stories
the following are the words of speakers taken from
AHF Regional Gatherings

From the Iqaluit Gathering
Inuusiq.
I grew up here, in Iqaluit. There is one thing
that I’ve always worked hard at here in Iqaluit.
When I was a little child going to school I was
abused by one of my teachers. I had no one to
turn to and then the person that I confided to
told me I should contact the RCMP but there
was nothing done and it has had a big impact on
me. As I was growing up I have been told
numerous times by the Elders to talk to people
that I can confide in, but at times my mind is
overcome with thoughts of suicide.

From the Winnipeg Gathering
I am an urban street native and a residential
school victim. In 1941 I first entered the school
when I was five and for the next ten years, the
best years of my life, to learn some skills and
technology, I was forced to be converted to a
harsh, Roman Catholic religion. Because of my
experiences with the school, I think the corrup-
tion began from the first day I entered. It was
the beginning of a changing world for many of us,
we were no longer salmon hunters, buffalo
hunters or whale hunters. We had no alternative.

There’s been a lot of pain that’s gone on in our
world –the pain still haunts me and I feel that
I’m still in residential school. I’m a victim. I’ve
lost a lot of my culture. They tampered with our
philosophy as Natives –luckily I was able to
maintain the honesty of our grandfathers’ teach-
ings. In the ten years that I spent in school I had
a rough time, so did others. I’m a survivor and a
chronic alcoholic and drug-abuser. I’ve experi-
enced hitch-hiking, jail, beatings. I’ve quit hero-
ine for 27 years, and alcohol for 20 years. I’ve
lost a lot of my culture. They tampered with our
language and our family relations and ability to
communicate to one another. We were separat-
ed from our families, our brothers and sisters, so
it was hard for the children to mingle with one
another because we were separated as a family
unit.

Since then I have picked up my culture and
there’s a whole lot of information there that’s
missing from my life. I tried going to Church,
but there was nothing there for me. I take up
pow wows and ceremonies, and that is how I’ve
started my healing process.

I still have a hard time discussing because we
couldn’t speak our language and so I had a hard
time speaking out in class. That was taken away
from me as a child. I was punished, and so all
through school, college and university I never
volunteered or spoke out in class unless I was
forced. Now I know we have to tell our stories
in such a way that we can have some good pos-
tive feedback, because the public doesn’t know
what we went through.

Now I know we have to tell our stories in such a way that
we can have some good positive feedback because the
public doesn’t know what we went through.

At times it’s very hard because I see that person
every day. Because I’ve been taught not to hurt,
I don’t hurt this person. I’ve worked sporadical-
ly from time to time but often when I apply for
jobs I don’t get them because of the abrupt cut
in my education. I used to sniff gas but then
questioned if it was affecting my mental ability
and then stopped, and now I help people, no
matter what their ethnic origin. I have helped a
lot of people right here in this community. I
enjoy helping other people and I look for jobs,
but I just want to further my education so I can
get a better job. I have talked to the local educa-
tion authority but they tell me there are no
placements. I have approached them when
courses are going to be opening up, I just want-
ed to make those comments.

I want to let go of this thing that has hurt me for
years. I don’t want to have it in me anymore, but
I think that I want to apologise to the people
out there, we all have to apologise and work
hard because sometimes it’s very hard to find
someone to confide in when you have problems.
I just want to follow the advice of the Elders
because I’m an Inuk. The Elders can give me
advice and I can be very open with that.

From the Vancouver Gathering
I’m a residential school survivor and both my
parents also went to school so I’m second gener-
ation. I know we had a sense of great loss and
my grandparents were very spiritual. When
Christianity came it took away our culture, our
language and our family relations and ability to
communicate to one another. We were separat-
ed from our families, our brothers and sisters, so
it was hard for the children to mingle with one
another because we were separated as a family
unit.

Since then I have picked up my culture and
there’s a whole lot of information there that’s

A concern we had with the AHF was that they
would only allow us to bring on our cook in January
2001. He’s worked incredible overtime to get the
kitchen ready. When you’re starting an organisation
you need to have a lot of time to prepare before
opening.

We were invited to put our proposal in for a second
year proposal, the letter from the AHF was dated
January 4, 2001, it arrived here on the 17th and a
response was due on the 26th. In the North we get
communications long after the due dates and we
miss out on things.

As a Society, we don’t have a slush fund. We can’t
borrow from other programs to pay our bills. Our
program funding ran out on the 31st and we don’t
have money. We have about $6 left in the bank.
The 10% hold back is a problem for societies –direct
deposit will help speed up the process

My only message to the Board is to visit these sites
and check out the projects and get a real picture of
them, witness it, feel it, and know what the Yukon
First Nations are striving for.

Gathering Quotations continued from page 34

"There’s a lot of teachings towards healing. We have
seven gifts - there is a meaning and a direction to
every gift."

"I love my life today –it’s difficult but it’s a good
feeling when I get up in the morning without hav-
ing to think about the pain that I went through in
residential school. I try not to ask for too much
strength and I ask for balance for others to follow
my example. All I can be is a messenger through
songs, prayers and teachings. It’s how you use your
heart that matters to me. That is one of the most
important things that was given to us."

"I appreciate the work that the AHF is doing. It’s a
lot of money to handle and a lot of people to satis-
fy and it’s not an easy job. Thank you."

"Today is a good day because we are still here to
talk about our history of what happened and we
are here with people who love and support us. Sure
it’s not perfect, but the AHF is fair, the money will go
to help survivors. This is the commitment that we
have as survivors, that’s why they call us survivors.
We will survive through the storm to come down
here and help our children, our families and our
communities."

"A long time ago before the residential schools issue
came up an Elder told me to go back to my com-
community because there is a sleeping giant and I had
to go and wake it up, gently. I thought he meant
the Elders but when the residential schools issue
came up, I knew what he was talking about. He said
that when the truth came out it would rever-
berate throughout the world."

"There are all kinds of healing and levels of healing.
We have utilised Elders to come to the gatherings
and they are just tremendous. I think good things are
happening."
heavy to be sober and to be able to stand what's going on, poverty, etc. There's been a genocide here. I believe that I'm healed within my spirit and mind because I can understand what's happened. I'm in the process of protecting our identity as Natives and our future identity. We have a future. I would like the AHF to look at each aspect of helping people heal. I believe there isn't enough money here—it's definitely a start—but I want some form of compensation to provide me with some form of business. I'm all alone, there's no unity here among our tribes. Forget the past, forgive. There's a lot that's happened here and I'm glad that I'm from a culture that does not encourage to go out and kill, exploit, etc.

Canada is a beautiful country and we have a lot of people that are trying to help us. I believe that there are too many stipulations for the law for a legal lawsuit. I know more about heaven and hell than St. John the Baptist—I could take his seat. It's been very tough on our people and our people are hurting. The technological system is working faster, beyond my comprehension.

Is there any way that we could all work together and accept each other as we are, whether we're jobless, prostitutes, drug-addicts, etc.? We only have one chance in a lifetime to put our hopes and dreams to a better destiny for all of us. Whatever you have, give it the best you've got for our survival.

As far as I'm concerned I was lost one day. I didn't hear the drum beat, I heard the organ. It took me 36 years to find out who I am.

Volume 2 Number 3

From the Ottawa Gathering

When I was growing up, when I was in the residential schools, I was lost for a very long time. I tried going to Church, even though I was forced to go to school, they forced me to pray—I didn't really know how. They observed me, I was quite a rebel being abused at school by the white man and then by my father who was an alcoholic. Now I'm finding some peace in learning my own culture. I went to see the Elders and get my spirit name and I found my way in our culture. I am a warrior but I'm also a peace maker. I was given visions to follow through the spirit world. I've always had faith in our culture. Finding my peace could only come through following our culture. We need to listen to the little ones, the melody in their song and laughter, to guide us.

As far as I'm concerned I was lost one day, I didn't hear the drum beat, I heard the organ. It took me 36 years to find out who I am. One of the spirit songs I was given to sing that says for grandfather to watch over us because we are your children. I was asked to use this song in every place that I go—the meaning behind staying away from the streets, from the Elders is the way that I found healing for myself—sometimes I wish it could be that easy for everyone else.

I hated everything when I was in residential school. I never found anything there but I found the power of healing and faith through our ancestors. It doesn't matter how hard it is or how difficult it gets but while I'm sitting there I think about my past and cry about the pain that I've gone through, I get angry. The power of tobacco helps me stay strong when I need it the most because of the faith I have in my ancestors. These are the ways that I've found my own healing. I do not preach to my brothers and sisters on the streets about the Church, detox, etc. I try to be an example for them to show them how simple it is when you put your heart and mind to something that you really want. Open your heart and let the light shine in so you can see instead of wandering around in the dark. Use what you've learned in a positive way.

I'm only one year old in sobriety. 35 years I've wasted. Half of it was wasted through the hands of a white man trying to show me how to pray, talk, be. I can't live those ways anymore. I've been in and out of the circle for so long, I'm tired of being an insid-er-outsider. We all belong in the circle. When we use drugs and alcohol we're outside the circle; we're thinking with a different mind that's not us.

From the Yellowknife Gathering

I am a residential school survivor. As I look into the AHF’s Annual Report, I am2 annoyed. When the AHF was created, it was to focus on the residential school survivors. As it has progressed I have noticed that outsiders are giving their point of view about the AHF. We survivors have a lot of issues to bring forward and we can help each other. We know who we are; we know what it took for us to be away from our families. We have gone through how it feels to be lonely, and going through the grieving impacts us. If I tell you my feelings and my situation—if you can feel my trauma—there is a way that I can be held and reached and overcome my residential school experiences.

The AHF is not focussing on residential school experiences. How many of your staff have gone through what the survivors have gone through? They can't help us. You can only help others when you've gone through what we have.
that helped me to go through this is that my father could speak English and communicate for me with my mother who spoke only Dogrib.

When I met my mom I didn’t greet her, hug her, because I believed that my mother was a Nun at the school. I can say gracefully that the Nun took care of me, she was a very good Nun to me and taught me many things that I didn’t know. When I saw my mom I wasn’t happy at first because I didn’t know who she was.

As the years progressed, I remembered my grand- mother’s advice to never forget my language. She said that once I lost my Aboriginal identity that I would fall apart and not know who I was. As many lickings as I got for speaking my language, my grandmother’s wisdom held me together through the years.

The hardest people to work for is your own. We can’t battle amongst ourselves. We need to work together in a collaborative effort. With limited resources we can’t be fighting amongst ourselves.

If the AHF is going to help people like me you better do a very good job because many of us are not sure who we are. I found help at a treatment centre. I was sober for 7 years and then two years ago adopted a beautiful girl. Then I lost her when I had a relapse. I needed help and I tried to put my pride aside but I was too ashamed.

Now I’m not ashamed because I can relate to oth- ers about how it was growing up in a residential school. I don’t want to see outsiders involved, if we can all come together it would be a great relief. We need to help ourselves so we can help others, especially the ones that are worse off than me. Help us to recover so we can be proud of who we are.

My question is –how many of you have experi- enced residential schools in the office? This is for us, the survivors. There are generations of us. My father went to residential school: what he went through I’m going through. Are you going to start listening and paying attention to those people? Pay attention to us people because we want to help ourselves.

This program has to ease our pain and I want the AHF to do its homework. The survivors are listed with the federal government so no one can take advantage of this program that was created for the survivors. That’s where everything will start from. It will hurt me really bad if there are outsiders tak- ing advantage of the process just to get money. Your process should ask Were you in residential school. How can you help?

From the Whitehorse Gathering

My mother is a survivor of residential school, I am an adult child of a survivor. She has brought me along and helped me together with the family and the community. The intergenerational impacts of residential schools go on when you consider the few people who went. I assisted a youth who had committed a sexual offence. The youth had com- mitted a sexual offence and you could trace back to us. He’s now our responsibility, we know what’s best for him, for his family, for our community. The government is not going to tell this story to people. You have that right and responsibility, take ownership of your people. Government is not our biggest enemy, it is ourselves. The hardest people to work for is your own. We can’t battle amongst ourselves. We need to work together in a collabora- tive effort—with limited resources we can’t be duplicating services and fighting amongst ourselves. We all need to work together so we all move together as one Nation, not 14 communities, towards that goal of healing, with all our brothers and sisters.

"It seems that a lot of us have led two lives but yet we don’t show all of our pain at the skin level."

"I think that the Aboriginal Healing Foundation has a key role to play and that we here in Nunavut can make use of it. As president of NTI, I would like to work with your organisation in building and maintaining sustainable healing processes."

"We need to think of the children as our future lead- ers, and with that in mind, we need to help the resi- dential school children who have to face their prob- lems, because their parents were taken away when they were very small they were not the only ones who were affected. It also affected their children. The love that was coming from their parents didn’t change, but there was a huge impact on the residen- tial school children and on their family members."

"I am a survivor of the residential schools and of sexual abuse in my family for many generations because of the residential schools. I took the ini- tiative to start healing myself because I can’t go out to help my community until I help myself."

"As an adult we can say what we need to say. Regardless of whether the AHF helps us or not, we have to help our children and do something in our communities now. Help from the outside may not come so you have to go out and work in your community to encourage them for healing."

"We need our language back, we need our cul- ture back, we can’t be ashamed anymore. I want to be a voice in my community for the women and children. I want the women and children to stand up and talk about their abuse—it’s healing. I want all the Aboriginal people to stand togeth- er with one voice. Dreams can come through for our people if we believe in ourselves."

"I don’t even have a family tree. I find myself so little of everything—the language the culture. However, that little makes me a proud guy. So language is the foundation of every nationality on earth."

"We have a future. I would like the AHF to look at every aspect of helping people heal."

"When we deal with hurts on the West Coast we turn to our Elders to look for guidance, and some of us use them for our therapists. I just wanted to share and say thank you to those peo- ple sitting there for making it possible for our parents to talk to one another because that’s what the AHF has done for us." "I’m on my own healing journey. I’ve been sober for nine years—now I’m able to acknowledge some of the things in my life that I’m not proud of and move on. We have to take small steps when we’re working on something as delicate as healing. Healing is the top priority for me. I encourage everyone here to keep fighting for their own communities."

"I still speak my language even though they tried to take it away from me. I want to make the AHF aware of how scary this first stage of the healing is. I want to say how proud I am for being a part of the healing in the three commu- nities that got together in my Nation for heal- ing."

"I would like to salute our Elders who have come through the residential schools and would like to acknowledge people who are part of the AHF. This is the first time we’ve seen everyone come together, I would like to give my greetings to everyone here and to my family."

"I am happy to be here. My community has gone through stages of questioning the AHF’s accept- ance of projects. We are doing consultation in the community. Sometimes there are personality conflicts that come from the consultation but we move forward because we know they’ve been try- ing for 500 years to extinguish our nature."

Today Aboriginal people have to rebuild our society. Honesty, humility, sharing and strength are values transmitted to us from our Elders. I am an apprentice grandfather."

"We should not forget that we are working with human beings. We should never lose sight of this. I feel the respect, a lot of respect. If I were to give an award for respect it would be to the AHF because they are very humane and respect- ful. Through the healing process we are learning to know our personal qualities."

continued on page 32
The Aboriginal Healing Foundation website
http://www.ahf.ca

Visit our up-to-date website for the following:

• Announcements
• Handbook Download
• Annual Reports
• Application Forms
• Newsletters
• Press Releases
• Code of Conduct
• Ethics Guidelines
• Healing Centre Information
• Foundation Workshops
• Weekly Funded Project Update
• General Foundation Information and Background
• Board of Directors Biographies
• Funding Agreement, By-law, Letters Patent
• Frequently Asked Questions
• Links
• Residential School Workshops
• Conferences

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

The following form will help us to ensure that, if you move, Healing Words will continue to be mailed to you without interruption. Please clip this form and mail to:

Healing Words
C/O Aboriginal Healing Foundation
Suite 801 - 75 Albert Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E7

Name:

Old Address:

New Address:

Do you have any comments or suggestions for Healing Words?
Residential School Resources

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

Za-geh-do-win

Information Clearinghouse P.O. Box 40, Naughton, Ontario, P0M 2MO http://www.anishinabek.ca/zagehdo/win/videos.htm

Beyond The Shadows. (A documentary which deals with the devastating emotional effects residential schools had on First Nations people in Canada. Provides tools for dealing with the trauma of residential schools within their communities or organizations.)

First Nations: The Circle Unbroken. Vol. 5. (This is the fifth video in the series First Nations: The Circle Unbroken. There are 4 short videos included in this video that cover current issues, cultural identity and healing of the First Nation's people. The stories included in this video are: Qetsuwu: People Gathering Together, O'Siim, McAnmag Family: Migmamoei, and The Mind of a Child.)

The Healing Dance Has Begun. (Narrated by Liz Edgar-Webkamigad and Bea Shawanda and deals with different types of abuse. Includes a teaching on multi-generational abuse and it’s effects on the family as a whole, as well as the individual.)

The Nitsitapi Chronicle. (This film follows the journey of one community – the Ditidtah First Nation on BC’s Nitsitapi Lake Reserve – over a seven-year period as it deals with the legacy of sexual abuse. The healing process that they are going through to break the cycle of abuse is revealed through their own voices. Their stories also reveal the effects of the residential school system.)

One Mother's Journey. (This video looks at the story of Keitha Kennedy and how she overcame her past hurts to begin a journey of rediscovery. Keitha is a single mother of three that lived in a home that was abusive and attended residential school. Keitha began addicted to drugs but eventually found courage to change her life.)

The following videos are available from Za-geh-do-win

Articles


The following articles are listed on First Nations Periodical Index (Saskatchewan Indian Cultural Centre). Contact: 120-33rd Street East, Saskatoon, S7K 0S2. Phone: (306) 244-1146 Fax (306) 665-6520, or visit: http://moon.lights.com/sifc/INTRO.HTM


Angus, Denis J. Okanee. "Residential schools: Telling your story is the start of healing." Saskatchewan Sage, Edmonton, Alberta: Aboriginal Multi-Media Society, 1999. Denis Okanee Angus shares his story on the impact residential schools has had on him and on communities.


Books

The Nitinaht Chronicles. (This film follows the journey of one community – the Ditidtah First Nation on BC’s Nitinaht Lake Reserve – over a seven-year period as it deals with the legacy of sexual abuse. The healing process that they are going through to break the cycle of abuse is revealed through their own voices. Their stories also reveal the effects of the residential school system.)

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Video

Healing Words

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