

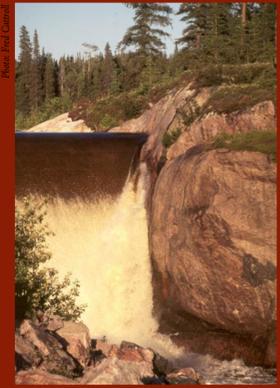
The Healer/Helper

Aboriginal Healing Foundation Interim Evaluations, Individual Personal Questionnaires, National Surveys, Regional Gatherings, Project Gatherings, Best Healing Practices Questionnaires and project file searches are the sources for this information

What is a Healer/Helper? A healer or a helper is someone who can safely and effectively facilitate or lead the healing process for individuals or groups through the use of a variety of tools either western or traditional or both.

A Good Healer / Helper has:

- a solid track record of ethical conduct supported by references
- experience in the community
- power, humility, honesty and gentleness
- accepted the Legacy's reality
- worked through their anger
- completed transition through stages of grief
- recognition by others as a healer
- absolute self-acceptance
- a history of successful recovery
- the ability to share their history and healing strategies
- well-established personal boundaries that protect them from harm/burnout
- the respect of the community
- unmistakable inner peace characterized by fear-less, unflappable (not easily surprised) leadership
- knowledge of and comfort leading or participating in ceremonies
- an open mind
- freedom from the need to control
- unmistakable positive energy
- assumed responsibility for their actions
- been alcohol and drug-free (> two years)
- a clear understanding of their limitations and makes appropriate referrals
- a developed plan for continued wellness
- a commitment to breaking the cycle of abuse that is clear through their initiatives toward community action and their encouragement of ownership
- a spiritual grounding
- reconciled with Mother Earth
- freedom from depression, recognizes life goes on



A Good Healer / Helper can:

- process intense emotion, defuse negativity
- swiftly determine risk and intervene in a crisis
- distinguish between crisis and long-term need
- facilitate a group
- blend techniques and approaches or work well in a blended team
- use traditional medicine or partner with traditional healers
- effectively address unresolved trauma (grief, physical and sexual abuse) and guide recovery
- intervene in and prevent suicide
- share their history and healing strategies
- understand and dissipate lateral violence
- plan and lead
- counsel sexual abuse victims and/or perpetrators
- handle sexual abuse disclosures
- openly and confidently discuss healthy sexuality
- listen intently, hear clearly, communicate effectively
- encourage and facilitate personal responsibility
- maintain good client records/charts
- accept responsibility for their actions and encourage others to do the same
- recognize when to remove themselves
- accept, learn from, and work with clinical supervision
- accept their limitations and make appropriate referrals
- recognize where trauma is stored in the body
- initiate community action and encourage ownership
- understand and engage whole families in healing



Some projects tell us that there is an overwhelming preference and need for community-based healers/helpers who are also Survivors. The rationale for selecting Survivors as healers/helpers:

- demonstrates the influence of role models and local expertise
- ensures long-term Aboriginal solutions that work better and feel right are found to address the Legacy.

While the reasons for selecting community members to lead the healing process are evident, being thrust into the role of healer/helper can lead to unintended and possibly harmful consequences when people are not ready. In addition, some community-based helpers felt too close to clients as relatives, neighbours, and life-long friends to be helpful.

