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FROM MY SEWING BASKET...

**TRADITIONAL NATIVE HEALING CEREMONIES
AND SOCIAL WORK PRACTICE
WITH NATIVE PEOPLE**

Alice Nowegejick (c)

**Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Arts in Social Work**

Lakehead University

June 1997



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Meegwetch to my husband Mark and my children, Khanena, Sierra and Raven for giving up a little bit of me so that I could have this.

Ch'Meegwetch to the Elders, and especially to Maria Linklater for giving and sharing so much of her life with so many. This 'story' has come with what was taught freely and with love.

Thank you to the staff and friends I knew at the Patricia Centre for Children and Youth who planted the seed for my education and career direction.

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PREFACE

In 1989 I attended a healing workshop called 'Women Healing'. Elder Alana Abosawin, who has for some years worked with the homeless in Quebec sang a song that told a story about 'bush lady'. The song spoke to me of the truth of my light brown skin and dark hair and the hidden shame that follows with the lineage of the Indian woman. It frightened me. Today I know the past is our past, my past, their past. In that totality I seek awareness, clarity and acceptance. It was her eyes that were a thousand years old who saw through me and beyond me. It was the words of her song and the beat of the drum which summoned me from my place of slumber and began the journey towards understanding.

Prior to any substantial influence by the Elders and Native people, I was drawn to a profession which as I understood was based on caring and giving of oneself. Dave Henry, an M.S.W, was influential in his work with the ideals behind unconditional care (Brown, J., 1978). Amongst Native and non Native people I observed examples of human kindness which served as a constant source of power generating an atmosphere of what I understand today as healing. This was in the acceptance, in the goodness of others and the strength that comes from being in a place of complete absence of judgment, without prejudice and with a firm willingness to believe, accept and listen. It was there that I was told that it would be beneficial to work with my own people. It was the first place that I observed Non-Native professionals give complete respect and recognition towards the Native helper. They recognized the ability of the Native person to work effectively and meaningfully with their own people.

This thesis is a search for understanding, a quest for direction and a vision of what can exist for Native women, their families and communities. This is for those who come to the circle, who place their trust in each other and in the Creator to search for the things necessary so we can reach back with something good and strong.

Ch' Migwetch Aki Nemama

Meegwetch Gitchi Manitou

Nishinahbeque gani ganziwat

Thank you so much Mother Earth

Thank you Creator Great Spirit

Native women are forward moving

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Harsh realities exist in Native communities. Statistics reveal that family violence is still prevalent and suicide amongst the youth pose a risk to the continuance of future generations (Ontario Native Women's Association, 1993, Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, 1994). Extraordinary challenges face Native leaders to resolve these pressing issues. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples has undertaken extensive discussions regarding types of and appropriateness of the services being delivered. From these discussions, decisions will take place that may determine whether or not there will be an opportunity to reintroduce traditional Native healing practices. To date, very little has been done to utilize traditional healing practices alongside of or as a substitute for non-Native Western philosophically based approaches to delivering mental health services to Native people. It appears timely to explore the positive impact that traditional Native healing ceremonies may have as related to social work practice through a qualitative study. The focus of this research is to bring to light the significance of how traditional Native healing practices relates to social work practice with Native people.

Extensive documentation can be found on the effects of colonialism and the negative impact on the traditional way of life including family and community structures. There is growing support for the belief that traditional Native healing practices may be a primary means of positive recourse for the past attempts of what has been called by some cultural genocide (Waterfall, 1989; Solomon,

1990; Hodgson, 1990; Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989). Available research on healing ceremonies and the relationship to the helping profession of social work has been given less rigorous attention. The quest for understanding has extended to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Affairs where healing was identified as one of four touchstones for a National inquiry on Native issues. Early documentation on ceremonial practices has been criticized for the white male Eurocentric biases (Allen, 1987; Gunn, 1985). In addition, the means of acquiring the data was questioned as paid informants were not given permission from their community to share the knowledge (Geertz, 1976).

Native writers are beginning to gain prominence in their contribution to literature on the significance of healing for Native people (Allen, 1987; Armstrong, Cardinal 1991). While early literature placed more emphasis on mystical aspects of Native healing ceremonies, recent literature is more grounded in Native values and the Aboriginal world view (Brant, 1985; McPherson, Rabb 1993). The wisdom and philosophy inherent in Native spirituality is viewed as necessary to revive and restore the spiritual void prevalent in Western industrialized society (Beck, Walters and Francisco 1992; Lewis, 1972; Perrone, Stockel, Kreuger, 1989). Specific to social work practice, shamanism has been suggested as a paradigm for the renewal of clinical social work (Canda, 1983).

There is a growing awareness amongst Native and Non-Native social service providers of the importance of traditional healing practices including consultation with Elders, healers and incorporation of traditional values in mental health services and related education (Ashby, 1987; Brant, 1985; Gilchrist and Miramontez, 1987; Lake, 1983; Mandamin, 1989; Mokuau, 1990; Minor, 1992; Nelson, Kelly and McPherson, 1985; Redhorse, 1991). However, a

recognized absence of a framework of understanding has led to under-utilization of the Native cultures natural support system which include traditional healers (Lake, 1982).

What research has been done on healing ceremonies points to the validity of traditional healing practices as a viable practice in contemporary times (Mokua, 1990; Brant, 1985; Minor, 1992). Further investigation through the research carried out for this thesis can increase an understanding and awareness of healing practices with particular relevance to Northern social work practice from the perspective of one Ojibwe woman, Alice Nowegejick.

PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this research is to seek out, identify and describe thematic principles existing within traditional Native healing ceremonies. In doing so the researcher will shed light on how such ceremonies may be utilized in a respectful manner within social work practice and why this has significant meaning for social work practice. Traditional healing ceremonies may be broadly introduced as those practices which have existed prior to European arrival, are culturally and spiritually based and provide physical, mental and emotional well being to the individual, family and community.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method of inquiry focuses on a qualitative study within the District of Thunder Bay in Ontario, Canada. The unit of analysis includes the individual as well as group. Sources of information include literature, participation in traditional healing ceremonies,

observational information from the author's own work with the Healing Our Own Counselling Unit at a Native Women's Crisis Home and from interviews with Elders. The holistic approach is appropriate given the complexity and intense nature of traditional Native healing ceremonies. Thus, specific attention will be given to heuristic inquiry. *Heuristic inquiry focuses on intense human experience. Furthermore, Heuristic is concerned with meaning, not measurements, with essence, not appearance, with quality, not quantity; with experience, not behaviour* (Douglas & Moustakas, 1984, p.70).

From the literature review, discussion with Elders and pretesting, the following questions were developed to guide the research process:

- 1) What circumstances motivate an individual to seek out a traditional healing ceremony and how can this be of benefit?
- 2) What encompasses a traditional healing ceremony and what kind of aftercare is there?
- 3) What are the requirements of an individual which would qualify them to conduct traditional healing ceremonies and ensure the safety and continued well being of those attending?
- 4) Who can attend a traditional healing ceremony and what is expected of them prior to attending, while attending and afterwards?
- 5) How have traditional healing ceremonies evolved over the last several decades?
- 8) What is the appropriate protocol should an individual be interested in attending a traditional healing ceremony?
- 9) Are the traditional healing ceremonies a universal experience within the Native culture?

- 10) Have traditional healing practices been utilized in social work practice?
- 11) How does the philosophical base compare to that of standard accepted social work practice and what are the methodological implications for social work practice when considering the role of the social worker?

Due to the longevity of the research, the process of collecting the data is separated into three distinct phases. The first phase entailed attendance at traditional Native healing ceremonies as a participant observer; the second phase was the field practicum placement at the Healing Our Own Counselling Unit in a Native Women's Crisis Home; and the third phase involved the interviews with Elders. While the findings are described in three sections, the methodology of participant observation remains the primary, continuous method of data collection. The duration of data collection for the entirety of this research spans over a ten year period.

Phase One - Participation at Traditional Healing Ceremonies

The first phase began in 1987 when the ceremonial lodge known as the "sweat" was revived on the Fort William Reserve on the shore of Lake Superior after fifty years of absence. The researcher participated in this and subsequent ceremonies that were reintroduced including the Pipe Ceremony, Woman's Circle, Sacred Circle, Full Moon Ceremony and what is known as the Vision Quest. While attendance at these ceremonies was intended for a thesis, participation was an essential learning experience for preparing this Ojibwe researcher with an understanding of the potential healing value of these ceremonies. The requirement to attend was to respect everything and everyone there. Admission was not monetary but rather

an offering of tobacco, food and gifts such as blankets were made and presented to the person conducting the ceremony.

Phase Two - Practicum at Healing Our Own Counselling Unit

The second phase of data collection was a student field practicum in March of 1993 at Healing Our Own Counselling Unit in a Native Women's Crisis Home. The site was selected on the basis that this Counselling Unit had been developed to provide traditionally-based healing. When approached, the Executive Director was receptive to opportunities for additional programs. Subsequently, a proposal was developed for a week long Workshop with the objective of promoting the strength and ability of Native people by creating awareness and accessibility to Native healing processes. Proposal development and program coordination for the Workshop took place during the first month of the placement while the latter part of the placement centred on follow up to the Workshop. The week long Workshop was led by Native American Art Therapist, Kathleen Westcott-Emerson and funded through the Native Community Branch of the Ministry of Citizenship and Culture ¹

Workshop participants were informed of the research being conducted and were assured confidentiality would be maintained. The presentation of the experience and observations made can be found in part one and two of research findings.

¹ Kathleen Westcott-Emerson is a member of the Ojibwe/White Earth Band. She has completed a Masters Degree in Art Therapy at the University of New Mexico. What was unique about her approach is that she drew extensively from personal experience with Native healing ceremonies and integrated that knowledge throughout the entire workshop.

While extensive documentation took place during the field placement, select portions and summarizations directly related to the research topic are presented.

Phase Three - Elder Interviews

The third and final phase of research involved direct open-ended interviews with Native Elders who live in Northwestern Ontario and are active within the community as cultural teachers, spiritual advisors and have attended and in many cases conducted traditional healing ceremonies. Prior to each interview, a traditional offering of tobacco was made with a personal visit to explain the research. When an Elder agreed to participate and to be interviewed, a hand crafted gift by the researcher made from leather or beads was presented to the Elder as an expression of appreciation. Interviews were conducted over the summer and fall of 1994. The collection of data for this segment of the thesis was rigorous and time-consuming. For example, preparation of the questions alone took almost nine months of reworking after a number of pretests. In addition, beaded and quilted gifts to present individually to the Elders were made by the researcher, who was respectful of the cultural traditions, beliefs and practices, in the evenings over a four month period. The preliminary visits with the Elders with the offering of tobacco took several weeks and numerous trips. This was followed by months of waiting until the Elders were available which required systematic rechecking and rebooking. The wait may have been a question of time and availability of the Elders, but also of testing by the Elders to ensure that integrity and commitment existed in the researcher. One particular interview required four visits until the individual was available. On other occasions, respondents were readily available and the

interview was immediate. The Elders who were interviewed were invited to share their experiences and personal understanding of traditional Native healing ceremonies. The initial questions centred on those presented on pages eight and nine. Thus, the Elders were asked what characteristics existed in the Elders and healers which deem them respected and trustworthy as ceremonial leaders to Native people. Later questions provided opportunity to reflect on Elder involvement with Native leadership in matters concerning the Native communities and families. Interviews were concluded with an opportunity for the Elders to give their ideas as to what contribution university trained Native social workers may bring to Native healing.

The content of the six interviews contained in Chapter Three are presented in the thesis and may appear lengthy. However for Native people, the interviews presented in this form will be of great value. The Elders stated that a great amount of information has not been passed on and the generations have in some cases not been able to come together to transfer knowledge, some of which of has been achieved here.

The need for forums was identified by the Elders in order to meet and talk with each other on traditional healing ceremonies. The Native Student Association at Lakehead University based the 1995 Elders Conference on Healing which points to the growing interest and need to have the opportunity for such forums.

There were a number of Elders who opted out of being interviewed. This may relate to their uneasiness about the written documentation of traditional healing ceremonies. From the original list of fifteen potential interviews, there were ten responses and a total of six completed interviews. Four individuals who agreed to be interviewed were unable to do so

due to limitations with time. Five of the six interviews were completed in the homes of the Elders and one outside. Those Elders who had previous contact with the researcher through extended family, previous professional interaction or shared experiences with ceremonies were more apt to be interviewed than those with limited or no contact. Thus, personal connections were an important factor in success in fully achieving the trust of the Elders to allow their thoughts to be recorded and included as written documentation in this thesis. The interviews were all in English and half of the interviews followed the structure of the open ended questions while the remaining three took a course of their own where the researcher was primarily listening. The disclosure of names and identities of the Elders was optional and the majority of the respondents chose not to identify themselves, thus for consistency all of the names have been left out.

The interviews were recorded and tapes transcribed. Some data was lost as segments of the conversation were inaudible and on some occasions the tape was not turned over in time to capture the completion of the interview. Segments of the six interviews are presented individually. To integrate six interviews without paying due respect to each Elder would risk losing the vitality of what each person brought forth. The interviews remain in the original order of interviews. Each reader may draw different perspectives from the interviews.

I found the experience of learning from the individual Elders was meaningful having developed an appreciation of their knowledge and wisdom. The effect of being in their presence was enriching. To describe the stature of the Elders that were interviewed may assist in portraying what the experience was like. The Elders spoke effortlessly, their knowledge was heart felt. It was evident that the topic of discussion to them was greater than

an interview for a thesis. The depth from which they spoke reflected the life-time of experience and years of commitment given to the work that they have done. What the Elders saw as important during the interviews were teachings that came from other Elders with whom they were connected. For example, four of the Elders mentioned their grandmothers or grandfathers and spoke of their teachings. The Elders did not assume to be the expert on certain topics but merely called attention to what had been given to them. When a person visits an Elder or a healer there is always the distinct feeling that one is treading on the strands of time and the present becomes illusive. Following presentation of the data, a comparative analysis is presented identifying themes contained in the literature review, the traditional healing ceremonies, the art therapy workshop and the interviews with the Elders.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

Elders have stated that the one thing that has not been stolen from the Native people is their spirituality. The first concern is that the most outstanding risk of the research, one which has been closely guarded against, is a violation of the Native oral tradition, a tradition which strongly discourages written documentation of sacred customs. Traditionally, Elders share their wisdom through orally relating personal experiences.

The second concern is in regard to representation, particularly with ensuring that the Elders chosen were appropriate sources of information and adequately representative of the Native culture. Thus, having identified Elders known and active within the community as spiritual and or cultural advisors, the list was presented to two Native organizations who

utilize Elders in their programming. It was agreed by both organizations that those selected were reliable sources of information. The meaning of the term Elder within the Native community is an individual who is respected, honoured and sought out for her ability to provide cultural and spiritual advice or what is known as 'wisdom' to those seeking assistance (MenoBimahdizawin Child and Family Services Proposal, 1991).

LIMITATIONS AND STRENGTHS OF THE RESEARCH

Limitations of the study include a lack of fluency in the Native language by the researcher. The data collection process may not have been able to compensate for this. For example, in spite of the fact that the Elders were offered the option of using an interpreter, all eight Elders chose to be interviewed in English as a courtesy to the interviewer. It has been said that to grasp the depth of the teachings and to understand the meanings of the culture, a person must first be able to speak and understand the language. The scope of what is presented may be limited because of the language factor. In addition during the interview process, it was evident that the Elders were selective in what they offered to share due to the fact that the information was being recorded.

Another limitation relates to geography. Participation in ceremonies and interviews were limited to the Thunder Bay region. Comparative dialogue with others who have attended ceremonies in other parts of Canada and the United States has occurred. Comparisons were also drawn from the literature available on traditional healing ceremonies.

In spite of these limitations, one strength of the research is that it is a beginning for Northwestern Ontario whereby contributions and knowledge that Native people have made towards their own people can be formally recognized. Through thoughtful analysis, increased understanding and appreciation of the traditional healing ceremonies can be formally established. The results of this research may encourage the profession of social work towards greater utilization of traditional healing ceremonies as an important resource for maintaining and enhancing the well being of Native people. In the future, organizations may be more informed and receptive to traditional healing ceremonies as potential alternatives for culturally meaningful social work practice.

An additional strength is that the research maintains cultural integrity having honoured the customs of the Native people in collecting the data. Having done so may mean that the information presented in the thesis will be more meaningful especially to the Native reader who might otherwise dismiss the research if cultural ethics had been violated.

Furthermore, the information contained in this thesis on traditional healing ceremonies provides an opportunity to inform people who provide Native people with services in the areas of health, education, economic and social development. The information may assist organizations who are moving towards integrating or restructuring programs to include culturally specific programs. Limited formal documentation of the value of traditional healing practices has been an ongoing concern in successfully securing potential funding sources to explore traditional healing practices. In particular, the Ministry of Community and Social Services on a number of occasions with which the author is personally familiar have requested

clarification on the significance of Native traditional healing practices as a means of assisting Native families and communities.

The fourth strength of this research is that the voice of Native people will be spoken through the researcher as a Native person, an important step in the identity and unity of Native people. It is conceivable that over time, through sharing and utilizing of what was learned in this thesis, Native people will be in a better position to make informed decisions concerning the delivery of social work services to Native families and communities.

RESEARCHER'S BIAS

First, it can be stated that the data being presented has been influenced primarily by Native women healers, spiritual teachers and advisors. This does not mean men were absent or not considered. However, the experiences and certain practices differentiate in terms of gender. The research presented here stems out of a custom of Native women who are cognizant of their ability, and exercise that in all aspects of their life. Second, by having experienced the healing ceremonies the researcher has established a firm belief in the value of these traditional healing ceremonies.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

From the onset of this research, particularly in the first phase, extensive exploration of the literature took place to ensure that the shift from the long standing oral tradition amongst Native people to a formal documented style of learning would neither jeopardize nor hinder the existence and continuation of traditional Native healing ceremonies. Having done so the researcher has endeavoured not to repeat the same methods of documentation for which other authors have been criticized. Rather the researcher has paralleled other works which are sensitive to the sacred aspects of traditional Native healing practices. To avoid departing from the original intent of the research, only a segment of the literature that was reviewed regarding the documentation of traditional healing practices has been presented.

Existing literature acknowledges traditional Native healing practices as an aspect of Native culture which differs significantly from Western thoughts and beliefs. Recent publications have broadened this to include the importance of such practices as a vital aspect of life for Native people in modern times. The Ontario Native Women's Association (ONWA) calls for a return to Native healing as the only means of recourse to the many effects of colonialism.

..... it is imperative for our people to return to our own ways, our own languages and own healing processes. The majority of our people do not utilize psychiatrists and psychologists because the perceptions, beliefs, values and behaviours of the Non-Native professional differs from ours. The Aboriginal people who have, however, gone for their help tell our Elders that the traditional ways of healing far surpass anything they have experienced while in the care of the professional (ONWA, 1993, p. 5).

The quest for information on traditional Native healing has extended to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (1992). The national enquiry identified healing as a major aspect of study. From these discussions, Native people in Canada identified the need for healing for both the individual, the family, the community and the nation. This requires restoration of cultural wholeness and cultural identity (Montour, 1993).

Destruction of ceremonies and traditions is considered a major loss which has had a severe impact on the health of Aboriginal people. (Shawanda, 1993). An alternate paradigm is considered necessary where *our energies shift from a narrow illness service model to a more holistic, integrated, multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approach to improving Aboriginal health conditions* (Proctor, 1993, p. 517). Proctor elaborates:

...that the Euro-Canadian concept of holistic health care, while an important development within Western society, is only a pale reflection of the holistic approaches to health that characterize Aboriginal traditions. These traditions, which emphasize the multi-dimensional nature of people as physical, mental, emotional and spiritual beings, must inform Aboriginal health development. Emphasis on the conceptual sophistication of Aboriginal approaches to holistic health are increasingly attempted to be incorporated into current practices (Proctor, p.17).

The shift to a traditional healing paradigm is an effort to rediscover aspects of traditional healing. *Healing circles, for example, link people's spiritual and social well being with physical and emotional problems they experience* (Proctor, 1993, p. 54). The work going on in Aboriginal communities, in finding ways of integrating traditional healing with modern medicine can help the further development of new ways of understanding human health. (Proctor, 1993).

It must be understood that Aboriginal healing is a way of life rather than a segregated or specialized activity (O'Neil, 1993). An absence in understanding the culture and healing has led to a gap in services. *To develop culturally appropriate programs we must learn to see the world through more than one cultural window* (Dyck, 1993, p. 17). Traditions and culture are desired to be primary guides in achieving a system of care for healing of families (Riel, 1990). First Nations have stated the need to incorporate traditional ways and cultural perspectives into the planning and implementation of community programs. Aboriginal people wishing to seek traditional medicine people as an alternative to Western medicine for health care experienced difficulty in obtaining access to traditional Native healing ceremonies (Sinclair, 1993).

Social Work - Culturally Sensitive Practice

The inclusion and integration of traditional Native healing practices in standard social work practice holds promise. There is a growing awareness and appreciation of Native culture by the non-Native community. While some efforts have been made to include traditional healing practices within social work practice with Native people and their respective service agencies; extensive exploration of the exact nature of traditional Native healing practices as they pertain to social work practice has yet to unfold.

The contrast between Native culture and traditional values and the social work profession has been established. The research findings of Nelson, Kelly and McKay (1985) identify that the ecological systems perspective provides the fluidity within the conceptual framework which recognizes the importance of cultural factors that exist when working with

Native people. Consideration is given to the unique role the social worker has when engaging with Native groups. Relevant features include mutuality, maximizing differences and empowerment (Meyer, 1978; Turner, 1986). Further work of Nelson and Kelly encourage Indian helpers to advance the use of their culture in their work in the community as helpers. *The primary focus on support is essential to enable Indian helpers to develop knowledge and skills to meet their challenges of helping Indian people in Indian ways* (Kelly, Nelson, 1984, p.30). Separation from the role of the expert to a relationship based on mutuality and mentoring was found to be in keeping with the Native customs and thus more effective. This identification of cultural factors working within a given cultural climate sets the stage for further research on traditional Native healing ceremonies and social work practice.

Inclusion of traditional healing practices has been demonstrated to be effective when practising social work with Native people (Mokuau, 1990; Meketon, 1983; Minor, 1992). The cultural context of group activity is viewed as a community unifier centring around social, cultural and religious activities. The ties to the land, the culture and language are important to the people regardless if in an urban or rural setting (Edwards, E.D. and Edwards, M.E. 1984). Shamanism has been recommended for future development of spiritually sensitive practice. The use of prayer, meditation and ritual was recognized for its therapeutic value (Canda, 1988). Shamanism is the oldest and most widely distributed therapeutic system in the world, thus the use of shamanistic treatment is encouraged to augment contemporary therapies. Mutual respect and learning among healers of differing world views is mandated by a transcultural commitment to social work (Canda, 1983).

A cultural specific design for social work practice begins with an understanding of the traditional healing practices and acceptance of the traditional healers (Minor, 1992). For example, Minor states shamanism is the most credible source of help within the Inuit community.

It has been stated that an apprenticeship with Native Elders is necessary education to complete one's professional development. *The education of an Indian is twofold, learning the ways of the white man and learning from the Elders and making it work* (Couture, 1979 p. 3). The latter being the roots from which the depth of human development is fully realized. It is from these roots that the individual is fully realized and equipped to continue towards satisfying engagement with life (Gunn, 1986).

Research indicates that spirituality is a basic aspect of human experience, both within and outside the context of religious institutions, it should be explored more fully through social work research, theory building, and practice (Siporin, 1985). A growing movement to work with the psyche of the people has begun with and amongst Native people. The absence of a spiritual framework of understanding has led to under utilization of the culture's natural support system which include traditional healers, extended family and tribal and clan resources (Lake, 1982).

Younger generations are looking to the traditional teachings as a way to gain strength for their minds, bodies, spirits and hearts. This is ultimately how the nations will begin the healing process and from those trained in traditional ways. A holistic approach to nurturing the individual, family and community back to balance is called upon to restore the health of all Native people (Beendigen proposal, 1989, p. 15)

Healing is found by an inner journey through one's past; and expelling personal pain is an important part of healing. The healing person has a high degree of self-knowledge or self

awareness. *It is the point of departure for genuine caring for society and others* (Longboat, 1992, p.32).

At times, social workers have a feeling of emptiness associated with an inability to relate to people. Healing is needed to revive the identity. One of the greatest losses in the profession has been the ability to care and nurture each other freely. Hope is found in the holistic approach where one is reconnected to the community and to oneself with a strong tie to the culture (Waterfall, 1992).

Traditional Healing Practices

Tribute and recognition of the Native world view and accompanying spiritual practices has began to occur. Proliferation of literature related to Native spirituality and the ceremonial life of Native people has made its way to the forefront. This literary development is a reflection of a growing interest in Native American culture and religious traditions (Capps, 1993).

Traditional healing practices cannot be isolated to a singular experience that is activity-oriented, but rather traditional healing practices are to be viewed as a complex interconnection with people and life. Included in that relationship is the extended level of respect and discipline Native people have when it comes to traditional healing ceremonies (Krueger, Perrone, Stockel, 1989; Beck, Walters, 1992).

Noel Knockwood, spiritual leader and special advisor on Native Affairs explains:

Native Spirituality is not a religion such as Catholicism. It lacks the infra-structure which includes a Pope, Cardinals, Bishops priests etc. It's more of philosophy and a way of life, yet, it is a belief in God. Like other beliefs it has a duality of good and evil,

right and wrong, Native beliefs have holy rituals and sacred ceremonies (unpublished notes, see Appendix C).

From this it can be understood that the purpose and function of the ceremonies is closely centred on the spirituality of the people.

Differentiation is made between non Aboriginal doctors and Native medicine.

Traditional healers do not stitch. The focus is on connecting the patient to oneself and to the harmony of the world around self (Krueger et al. 1989). Ultimate power is from the Creator and is inherently connected to the spirituality. The ceremony becomes a manifestation of the inter-relationship between the patient, the healer and the universe.

People who conduct healing ceremonies share that whether they are from New Mexico or Iglulik in the NorthWest Territories, there is a unity in the expressed reverence and connection to the land, for the universal energies and for all living beings. There is a strong belief in unseen powers. Annie Khan, a medicine woman calls her home in Lukachukai, Arizona *Nizhoni, meaning it is beautiful. Our connection is the earth, and the sky. What the medicine woman does before the patient enters is of the earth, the whole earth. When we're talking about healing, we have to find the healing in me. We have to find the healing in you. Two people coming together to make medicine* (Perrone et al. 1989, p. 40).

The belief in knowledge and unseen power follows secondly to the concept that the person who is receiving the healing must be an active participant and not a passive receiver. This is the greatest difference noted from the medicine practised in Western society. The thrust of the change is on detachment from negative thoughts and an ability to create wellness

through power of positive thought on self and what exists in the natural world and amongst other people (Hodgson, 1990).

The existence of a healer from early life is centred on the development of a relationship with the natural world which stems from an inherited ability developed through the assistance of tribal teachers. Dhyani Ywahoo refers to being called 'the old man' as a small child and being taken by *the old people* at the age of two. *The people who are trained from birth [within the priestcraft have] certain signs of character ... certain staunchness or straightness of eyes, sometimes being born with a veil over the face, and communication of the spirit to its relatives before it comes* (Krueger, et al. 1989, p.61).

Najegneq, an Eskimo shaman affirms the connection to universal power. *I have searched in the darkness, being silent in the great lonely stillness of the dark. So I became a shaman, through visions and dreams and encounters with living spirits* (Beck et al. 1992, p.8).

Blackhorse Mitchell, a Navajo, explains that medicine people who studied the world and the mysteries over a long period of time found that everything in the world is made of four elements: earth, water, air, and light, including fire. Healers have remained close to these four elements when working with people (Beck et al. 1992, p.11).

Native spiritual ceremonies interact with universal energies which are connected within a continuum of time, place and relationship. In the subtle and sometimes substantial variations of spiritual ceremonies described in the literature, these three elements continuously resurface. *Shamans through the nonmaterial means of their sacred traditions are able to travel at will through the freedom of sacred space unfettered by mechanical, profane time. Timeless and universal across the cultures is the centre from which all else transcends, this is found in the*

tipi, the hogan or the longhouse (Brown, 1978, p. 31). These interchanges with the supernatural world are viewed as the bedrock of Native spirituality (Gunn, 1992).

For the medicine person, artistic creation is part of the healing or correcting what was out of balance Lewis states:

the way in which tribal art, in its passionate spontaneity, is woven into the fabric of society is rooted in something that the modern world has lost, a cosmic confidence in ourselves and in the whole scheme of things. It is this confidence that enables tribal societies to resolve the conflicts and contradictions that are an inevitable part of life itself, to play with opposition that would otherwise tear their worlds apart. Tribal art thus becomes a means of reconciling what is otherwise irreconcilable, of making the painful crisis of life manageable - even of overcoming the ultimate disjunction between life and death (Lewis, 1972, p. 163.).

Creative expression has a close relationship to the spiritual life of Native people.

Preparation of ceremonial items was and is an integral aspect of spiritual development which involves both spiritual wellness, protection and healing.

Cardinal reveals a commitment to contributing to healing as they incorporate principles of healing into all aspects of their work which is largely expressed in contemporary artistic works. Creative self expression is viewed as necessary. In the postindustrial technological society and information age, Cardinal and Armstrong feel strongly that Native people need to continue the creative cycle as a means not only of personal development which eventually leads to full potential but also as a means of survival as a cultural view in the face of great adversity and hostility (Cardinal et al. 1991).

Summary

In summary, the literature reviewed the distinctiveness of traditional Native healing ceremonies from Western philosophically dominated practices and beliefs. On the national level, there is a movement toward recovering and utilizing traditional healing practices as an antidote to the cumulative effects resulting from systemic abuse of Native families and communities. (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People, 1992). Traditional healing practices are closely interwoven with Native values and beliefs and rely closely on the natural world as well as the spiritual ability of Elders and Medicine people.

Existing cultural resources including Elders and Medicine people are identified as sources of assistance for Native people. Historically, most information on traditional healing practices was not shared outside of the ceremonies themselves. However, there is growing support among the Elders that the time has come to share this information. The majority of Native people now live off-reserve and this requires new means of communication with Native people in order to reestablish spiritual traditions for Native people.

CHAPTER THREE

Presentation of Research Data

TRADITIONAL HEALING CEREMONIES

Learning From The Past

This section focuses on the spiritual and cultural aspects of traditional healing ceremonies. Attention is drawn to the unique nature of traditional healing ceremonies which demonstrates insight into the inherent strength within traditional healing ceremonies. To avoid misinterpretation of the meanings of the actual ceremonial passages and to minimize any risk of undermining the significance of what transpires, the data is presented in a manner that provides a context for comparative analysis.

A Vision Quest: Fasting In Gull Bay

In quiet and in silence, the truth is made clear. Those were the thoughts I had following my first experience with the vision quest, or what is known in these parts as fasting. In itself, fasting is not a healing ceremony but an essential part of the healing process. In the spring of 1987, I was asked to partake in the spring ceremonies at Kabkah, a mountainous area near the Gull Bay First Nation. After preparation of a bundle aided by the women from the community, I was led up the mountain where I was to stay for two days. Others there were situated at different sites and remained so for four days and more. Evening approached and my only instructions were to always look ahead of me and never was I to look back into the darkness for that would only defeat me. There alone in the dark of night overlooking the bay

of water illuminated by the moonlight I felt a connection to the earth, the sky and the Creator. Although not paralysed with fear from the night the gratitude felt as the first light of dawn appeared was immense. I realized each sunrise goes often unnoticed but at that particular place there seemed nothing more important than the return of sunlight. In the afternoon I would sleep on the rocks warmed by the sun. The time was spent reflecting and praying. It is the vision quest where spiritual people obtain knowledge and direction. For me it was a significant beginning towards taking risks. It meant going beyond just saying, *I want to learn about the culture*. The vision quest is the experiencing of a culture. It provides the opportunity to become acquainted with the natural forces and to learn from that experience as it presents itself. The custom provides opportunity to gain spiritual direction in one's life and to identify the means of doing so.

At the end of the two days my friend and advisor came back. The completion of the fast included a sweat lodge and feast. There amongst members of the community in a state of complete weakness and exhaustion I realized how vulnerable I am in comparison to those who had adapted to such experiences and were able to endure the challenge. It gave me the opportunity for the first time to face my own fears and to meet my inner strength. I began to understand faith and trust in others, in nature and in myself.

An Autumn Vision Quest

A few years later I went on a second fast with two Elders. We were situated for four days on a sacred mountain. Once alone, I peered over the cliffs to the ravine below and reflected in view of tranquillity and peace. I was awed by feelings of the perfection and

enormity of the world as reflected in the mountains and water for as far as the eye could see. I began to realize that I was searching and it was there that basic but important truths unfolded. In my journal I wrote *one has no meaning when one doesn't feel rooted and from that one proceeds to do destructive things. Our society is twisted by hunger for power, we refuse to accept our death. I have been trying to buy time and security through materialism. I have been one of those empty people. I have not fully accepted myself. Relationships are plenty and yet I am afraid to commit to myself, to be alone lest truth be revealed leaving me open and vulnerable. How is it I asked myself can these wise ones, the Elders move beyond the grip of our present establishment and find meaning in simply living a quiet and unobtrusive existence?* It was the Elders who accompanied me that were seemingly untouched by the strong winds and cold, damp night air. It was then I understood their connection to the earth and the sky and what was out there. It was I, young and incomplete, who would shiver through the night half from cold and the other from fear while they slept.

I was inspired to go beyond what I knew to be familiar and just as I could only see the front of the mountains and the face of the islands out on the lake below, I wondered what was on the other side. For several days after the completion of the fast which involved a feast and pipe ceremony I was to remain at home for two days doing little but sleep and recover. Following this experience, I was able to let go of many emotional barriers and move forward in life with renewed strength.

Pipe Ceremonies

I have had the opportunity over a number of years to join Native people in their homes to partake in a pipe ceremony for the purpose of healing. After the pipe ceremony is complete and the food and visiting is over, often at three or four in the morning I have gone home tired, relaxed and with a heightened sense of well being. The closeness of the group is carried over to daily life where personal level of contact becomes more meaningful and intimate.

From such ceremonies I have experienced vivid, spiritually significant dreams which have provided greater understanding about my life as well as reassurance and direction. I have been told this is an important part of healing. People may sleep during ceremonies. This sleep is not disturbed by other participants, as it is considered a sacred time.

A Women's Circle

I brought a Native woman who was new to the city to an Elders home for dinner and afterwards we went upstairs to look at some of the sewing projects that had recently been completed. When we were up there, one of the two drums hanging on the wall beside the bed sounded once by itself. The two women saw nothing unusual about this and suggested the spirit of the drum was welcoming us. Those who came together included a fourteen month old daughter; a twelve year old entering womanhood; my friend who was single with no children; myself a mother and the hostess,, a woman who was preparing for the future as an Elder. After the sewing had been put away, we were invited to stay for a women's circle. Once started, the Elder's daughter curled up on the bed and slept under a quilt. The baby sat in the centre content with her soother and the three of us on a blanket on the floor. The circle

was passing onto the children our traditions. There was a sense of security being amongst Native women in a circle. It was reminiscent of a time long ago when aunts and grandmothers would gather. The women's circle is a time of sharing, a time of teaching and a time of relating to each in a meaningful way. There is a nourishing feeling that transpires. A sense of strength and unity permeates the group and carries over to one's daily life.

The Sweat Lodge

I joined a group of people outside of Nipigon as they were bringing into spring the first sweat lodge of the year. My intent was to tan a deerskin that was needed for the coming women's healing gathering. Determined as I was, my plans went to the wayside as I was drawn to join in the healing lodge. I had been there earlier in the summer. That afternoon as I endured the heat, I remembered the birth of my daughter and considered what she had to go through to join this world. They say the lodge represents a rebirth. Four hours after continuous heat, I came out, dressed myself in layers of clean dry clothing and laid down on a small bed to rest enough for the drive home. Laying there I was surrounded with a peace that comes with the familiarity of Native people talking and laughing. It brought me back to the time when I was a child in the care of my aunts and grandmother.

Driving home I thought about the depth of connection and responsibility one obtains from being part of the healing ceremonies. After a number of years I have acquired a rooted commitment to support the healing which comes from such ceremonies. One does not go for one's purposes but gives of oneself in the form of prayers to support others who are suffering. When asked to attend a ceremony it is understood that such an event has a purpose with a deep

meaning beyond a social event. It has far reaching purposes all of which I do not understand but have witnessed and experienced. Time and time again people find release from emotional pain and physical illness. Awareness and clarity is a common feeling after attending the sacred lodge.

The Workshop: Indian Traditions Take Root in an Urban Setting

The Workshop held at the Native Women's Crisis Home's Healing Our Own counselling unit was informal. The outline for the workshop was Monday to Friday, nine o'clock a.m to three thirty p.m. What occurred within that frame was not controlled by the clock. A person was given as much time as needed with no expectations about input or outcome, just being there was accepted and appreciated. Subsequent discussions and sharing were equally informal and from a personal place which often led to expression not only of words but of emotion.

Chairs had been placed in a circle but by the afternoon most of the participants were seated on the floor on cushions. The room had natural light, was sparsely furnished and at the centre of the circle was an ample supply of coloured threads, beads, cotton and velvet, beeswax, beading needles, sewing needles and horsehair. In addition, a supply of quills, bark, beads, quilting supplies, iron or dye were brought in by participants and also placed in the centre of the circle. From my sewing basket, I brought thread that belonged to my grandmother who has passed on but was renowned for her sewing and crafts. As the Workshop progressed, materials were shared amongst the participants. Anything not being used was always placed back carefully into the centre of the circle. Native flute and drum

music was played during the breaks and meal times. Tea, coffee and light meals were brought into the circle as well. Ceremonial use of Sacred Medicines throughout the entire workshop was conducive to a relaxing and soothing environment.

Participation was open. Throughout the week attendance fluctuated in numbers, ages and sexes. Elders, Mothers, toddlers, school age children, grandparents and teenagers attended. In spite of the diversity in backgrounds, there was mutual respect for each other. The trust and willingness among some twenty North American Native women became evident within a short period of time. The depth of sharing, expression of emotion and caring that took place was a reflection of this trust. The topics discussed were relevant to Native people and initiated in a manner that did not impose disclosure but rather prompted individual self-directed sharing in a supportive and familiar environment. Participants related experiences of childhood trauma related to sexual abuse, adoption and residential schools. Death and dying, parenting, relationships and addictions were also prevalent aspects of sharing. In spite of the seriousness and intensity, humour was prevalent throughout the week. WestCott-Emerson chided with others using what is known as 'Indian humour' which is to poke fun at oneself by sharing an absurdity with another which then often prompts a round of laughter followed by other such similar or equally humorous experiences. Food was bought ahead of time by the participants and placed out with care. Stew was made along with bannock. Meals were not set at a certain time. When there was a break, people would get lunch and return to the circle.

As the week progressed there was a growing recognition of the strength of Native women, particularly in light of the amount of abuse and suffering that has been endured over the generations. This connection grew out of the personal histories that were shared. When

asked how has the Workshop affirmed the individual as a leader and as a healer, some of the responses included: *I am not alone and am of value, I am one with Mother Earth as my healer of healers; I have been affirmed as a woman by holding my head up in the grace of a woman because we have a gift and that is to conceive a child; I learned that I have to take a look at my own needs, just listening to what the women had to say was enough to make me look at what I was and was not doing; I realized there is strength in the group of women without outside distractions.*

It became evident to the participants that, at times, those in positions of trust including healers, teachers and Elders misuse their power abusing vulnerable people either sexually or spiritually. The facilitator talked about her experience and how it was important to recognize and identify patterns that led to such misuses of power and trust. This was beneficial and as one woman stated in the evaluation, *I will not put anyone else's needs before mine and will think about myself as well. As a Native person I will not tolerate any intolerable behaviour as I did in the past. I know that I am a good person and I did not deserve what was done to me as a child. Going through this healing process will help me.* Another person stated: *Some of the gifts I received from this were forgiveness. I feel that a lot was given to me from each woman/person who spoke about themselves to every one of us. I feel grateful and I think that these gifts that were given like sharing, crying, and acceptance will always be with me.*

Summary of Observations From Traditional Healing Ceremonies and the Healing Our Own Workshop

It was characteristic of medicine people who conducted ceremonies to attend to the individual needs of each person and in accordance with tradition. This same tentativeness was observed by the facilitator in the art therapy workshop. Native people are intuitive and respond with respect to this kind of presence and discipline. People sensed the authenticity of what was transpiring and responded accordingly. It was clear that throughout the traditional healing ceremonies and the art therapy workshop that people did not hide behind a facade.

There is a gravitating energy which Native people are drawn to when they seek the assistance of Elders and Medicine people. Having spent a number of years in the company of traditional Elders, I have observed a continuous movement of visitors who would come alone or with family members. Elders have had people stay for months and even up to a year all as part of the healing process. It isn't only in the ceremony that healing takes place, it centres around a commitment to others involving a great deal of care and giving of themselves in a loving manner. Healing ceremonies take place outdoors, most often near water and amidst the trees and mountains. Ceremonies are not controlled by when the weather is right. The ceremony takes place when there is a need. It can be the coldest evening in January and the Medicine people will go and pray in a lodge with little clothing or immediate protection from the elements. Everything is carried out in accordance to custom, nothing is rushed or left out. At times there may be torrents of black flies, mosquitos or days and days of cold wet rain.

The traditional healing ceremonies vary. What constitutes a healing ceremony can be something very different for everybody; it depends on the actual process of what transpires

and the individual meaning of events. What may appear to be a loosely organized gathering of women and men may evolve into an intense healing as the combination of activity and people that are present will lead to a very powerful experience of healing. One visit with a medicine person may be all that is required. Most often however the relationship is ongoing and begins within a ceremony itself. For Native people who have been disjointed from their biological family or ancestral community, this is a very important event as new roots of belonging start.

Native people who are addressing addiction often seek out the assistance of Elders and Medicine people. Those dealing with the aftermath of sexual abuse are also connecting with Elders and ceremonies. An adoption process evolves as people become connected and continue to support and care for others. This may be partially connected to the absence of formality in terms of visitations which may last over a period of weeks or months or periodically over a number of years and evolve into an apprentice role. As time evolves the ones coming for teachings are at a point of independence and instead of coming for help or direction may be doing their own work and are also in the capacity of being of assistance to the Elder.

Connecting with the Elders and ceremonies is informally initiated through contact with natural helpers, alcohol workers, health care workers, or someone who is in the process of healing. Ceremonies provide a meeting place for people who are working towards personal healing. It becomes a collective or community experience where support extends beyond the ceremony. People help each other get to the ceremony, during the ceremony, and they visit one another afterwards in an environment which is not structured, official or authoritative.

People are told that *any time you go to a ceremony you leave your ego at the door, there is no social order there*. Regardless of where people are from, be it an urban or rural setting, institutional setting or street life, there is a personal comfort amongst all present. Respect is the order, people were intent and focussed. The mood is relaxed, there is no hurry. Time is spent sitting at the sacred fire which may be kept burning for hours before and after the ceremony. People gather on canvas tarps or sit on wood stumps around the sacred fire. People visit and smoke cigarettes, but no alcohol or drugs are ever allowed. Ceremonies do not force people to expand or analyse what has transpired in their lives. Sharing occurs, but as the ceremony evolves, words become less of a part of the activity as one moves beyond the intellect to the integration of the body and the spirit. The healing aspect of the ceremonies is in part the opportunity to be cradled in the warmth and protection of a safe environment. Interaction is both from the natural world and from the spirit world. The language of the medicine people is not always with words. They see behind the face that masks and it is in the ceremony that they uncover what is buried or hidden. They seem to absorb the reality of the healing needs of the participants.

The Elders who passed on teachings during traditional healing ceremonies are instrumental in bringing people to make major lifestyle changes involving the correcting of negative or destructive behaviour. However, the teachings are never communicated directly or through commands such as *I think you should...* Rather the Elders reflect on their own personal experiences thus providing indirectly significant direction to the participants in the healing ceremonies. Native people begin to realize their ability and seek out new ways of relating to themselves and those around them.

The Elders have spiritual clarity. They have achieved a high level of serenity by living by traditional teachings and teach others through example. Native people have always responded to the power of example. Advice is never forced, and changes are not demanded. Elders are reserved and yet encouraging. Elders view themselves in a continual process of learning, often requiring them to travel extensively to other areas including out of province and country. Some become members of Medicine societies. They are quiet about this training and are selective in terms of discussing what is experienced. Nevertheless, the Elders who believe in the ceremonies, in the way of life, continue to offer this to the community without any expectation of financial remuneration and with little or no mention of their challenges and sacrifices. They have an intense parental-type love and the message is clear: come and be attentative here, listen to what is said and go and find your way.

ELDER INTERVIEWS

Interview # 1

Prior to being interviewed I met with the Elder in her kitchen where the two of us drank tea and discussed my research while she worked on a ceremonial item. She sewed and listened without saying much. By the end of the visit she had taken the tobacco and said she would get a sense of me. In the meantime she took up an offer to read what had been written on my thesis which included material on the literature review as well the raw data. A few days later she agreed to be interviewed.

The interview took place in the basement of her home where I had been at previous times to attend ceremonies. We sat drinking tea and started the interview after having a sweetgrass ceremony.

I first asked her to share her understanding of Native healing. The response focussed on a way of life.

And a way of life being it's holistic, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, it takes in the whole spectrum of life. That's how we are taught to live our life in a holistic way, so Elders that I've talked to say Anishinawbe way is a way of life - how we live from day to day. Native healing, Native spirituality, those are new terms that have recently been coming up. The Anishinawbe is a way of life where we live in balance with nature and all humans.

And the way of life takes us on that journey, that life cycle. The journey that we go on is the stages of life. That's the way of life that we follow and everything that we are taught is taught in cycles, in cyclical ways, of how things are explained to us. There is no beginning, there is no end. It continues for us.

When I was a young child I was always with my mother and my grandmother, ² I know that there are medicines for healing, like roots and all different kinds of things.

There are also spiritual Elders who can envision or know what the cause of the problem is of the person who is sick. They do a ceremony and it's usually between the healer and the one that is to be healed plus a helper. So it would be in an enclosed area where they would do the ceremony. I know that healing has come from that, from my mother and other relatives of mine to the Elder. As an adult I have experienced healing through ceremonies with a spiritual Elder. I have been healed physically through that. I know that it works. The Elder will also give you guidance as to what you need to do in your life. Many times your emotions are the ones that make you sick and then you get sick physically because of these emotions. So

² The Elder is referring to her biological grandmother. Throughout the interviews Elders refer to Grandmothers or Grandfathers. The reference usually relates to biological grandparents; however in discussing healing practices, grandmothers and grandfathers relate to the spiritual entities existing in Native healing ceremonies.

the Elder tells you those are things that you have to change in your life. You have to look at yourself in a different way to do some emotional work on yourself. There is credibility in this.

I have seen healing take place at the sweat lodge ceremony, the healing sweats they call them. I have seen miraculous healing take place. It's offering of yourself and your prayers. And the healing takes place. If you're asking me how, I don't know. It's something that is mysterious and I can't explain it. And I don't even dare to try to explain it. I just leave it.

After sharing some initial experiences about the ceremonial lodge and meeting healers I asked her about trusting a healer.

I use to go from one Elder to another, go to one sweat lodge to another and had some bad experiences. I have learned from that experience to really question, to find out about the person who is running the sweat. Where does this person get his or her teachings? Who are the teachers of this person? And I usually ask how is this person respected in the community. Is this person looked upon in a respectful way from where he or she is living? If I still have doubts, I ask the Elders from that area where that person is coming from because there are respectful Elders all over the country. When you are involved in a society you know that in societies there are different clumps of people here and there who are very respectful people. And those are the people that you approach and you ask. I've heard about this person who is running sweats, what do you know of this person?"

She went on to go so far as to ask the person directly because in some cases people have been given permission to conduct these ceremonies. She stressed the importance of checking people out and to be careful.

For myself I cannot run a sweat lodge, I have assisted many times but that doesn't mean that I have the teachings, it has to come from my teachers to say that you are now ready, go and do your work. So it is good to understand that. It is good to reference check. How do they treat their families? How do they treat their Elders? How do they present themselves in the community? It is something that is needed especially for the people that are just newly searching, they need to know these things. When we are searching we are naive, we are innocent and trusting because somebody says he is an Elder or looks like an Elder we approach that person not really looking deeper into the person's life.

When asked about the characteristics of an Elder or healer which attracts people, her response was love.

Because the teachings of the Anishinawbe way, the way of life is that love is what makes humility. We love people no matter what because the teachings tell us that. The basic teaching about the universe is that the sun comes up every day from the east and then it finishes its journey in the west as the earth turns around. Because we are told that our brother is the sun we walk with our brother the sun every day in love, in unity, in balance, in equality with all whom we meet during that day. And that is the quality that I look for in a person when I ask because that is the teaching that we're given. And we have to work in that balance in order to teach the young ones and others who are just newly into the traditional way of life. We have to love them, we have to give them love. And that's trust and universal love because the sun shines on everybody. The sun doesn't say I'll shine only on this person or that person, it doesn't deserve my sunbeam. And that is how we have to walk with our brother, the sun everyday to walk in balance, to love everybody. In our prayers when we do our pipe

ceremonies we pray for all. Even those that are faltering, even the teachers who are not doing their work. We pray for them also that they will come back on the road and begin to do their work in the right way. That is how we look at the Elders, we find those that are able to love, to give us that love and to be able to understand where they are coming from. If they love their families, if they love their children, and grandchildren they can love you too. Because universal love is what the teachings are based on.

When asked about the use of Elders for guidance by the Native leaders she responded:

I find that because the way of life of the Anishinawbe is new to the people that even the leaders, that is chiefs and council are being looked up to for leadership and if they don't know their spiritual traditional way of life then how can they know to approach Elders? In many communities experienced Elders who have seen life, who have seen things as they are changing, with the suicides, the sexual abuse the family violence; but nobody has gone to them and spoken with them. I think it's because of the leadership or because we don't look around as we should to find these people who are out there who have a wealth of knowledge. I know one experience. For five years they were having sweats, recently an Elder came to see these young men and one evening the young men were having the pipe ceremony and the Elder came and spoke with the young men and said 'Did you know I have a pipe too?' So it's taken that long for the Elders but they are watching and observing.

When asked what the Native social workers may bring to Native healing, the Elder commented on how demanding the education system is and that it was necessary to put forth the energy to do that well and when time permits students would then go back to the Elders and learn about the ceremonial life.

Interview # 2

When I called this Elder I asked if I could meet with him to explain the research I was doing. He asked to just bring some tobacco over, that was all that was needed. Several days later we set up a meeting at his home. There was no long waiting period. It was apparent he was interested in what I was doing and had something to say. The tobacco offering went into a ceremony prior to accepting the interview. On the morning of the interview, I arrived and was greeted with a cup of coffee. Prior to starting, we had a purification of sage which provides a mental clearing and where honesty is given precedence. I had presented a traditional gift of blueberry jam, salmon and tea and he appeared pleased and commented that he could use this in his ceremonies.

When the topic of healing was introduced the Elder stated: *to understand what Native healing is, is to understand our people, Anishinawbe people.*

To accomplish this the Elder presented a story about Creation. In this story he spoke of how the animal and plant worlds were here prior to the arrival of Native people. Each of the plants and animals made a commitment to the Creator to help and serve the Indian people for physical and spiritual nourishment.

...and the plant life told the Creator - if they use me in their ceremonies I will make a good smudge for them. If they boil me I will heal them inside.

The Creation story went on to tell of how the Native people were guided to find their songs and ceremonies, but after the arrival of the Europeans the system was disrupted. The greed of the Europeans was such that they did everything they could to take away the power the Native people had.

And they started realizing that the Native people were strong, if they really wanted to do something they were going to have to get rid of the Native people. Because Native people are spiritually based, they could not use death as a means of intimidation for Native people do not fear death. It was decided they would break the strength of the family. The church and

government conspired to break the family and also to break the culture. To break apart the things that were holding the people together. It is now the seventh generation that Native people are reclaiming these things that have been put aside. It's not correct to say that we have lost them.

The story went on to emphasize the duty to the spiritual realities that exist within the animal and plant life and with Native people.

We have a duty to make our offerings, to put out our tobacco, to feed the Thunderbird, to feed the bear, to talk to those things because they are our teachers. And they have the sacred songs, those spiritual songs, all of those things are part of that strength, a spiritual strength. What we are doing is we are loaning each other the use of those things for a short time. And we share those with our brothers and sisters that don't have anything. So what happens is that the circle of life is beginning to turn again. And the young people are picking it up.

The Elder spoke of his duty to bring that back.

And how it's working is through the young people because the older people, they lost that. And they have been or have difficulties because the outside has told them that well, this is not good what you have.

It seems that the urgency is not limited to Native people in North America but internationally. *Aboriginal peoples all over the world are saying the same thing. That is we got to start respecting Mother Earth and all these things in Creation. We got to take them back and start using them.*

The Elder described the losing of our spirit because the young people weren't taught the culture. *There is difficulty at this time as many of them are being influenced by the outside world and they can't see any hope in the future. The Elders really can't teach them, they don't have the tools because of this oppression that is going on.*

The Elder emphasized the relationship Native people have to the natural world.

The Creation (Mother Earth) has a duty to perform for us and we, likewise, have a duty to perform to that Creation. And there are three generations that are involved, there is the Elders and then there are the parents and then there are the children.

For healing to take place there has to be an interest and willingness to take risks.

You don't need money to heal, what you need is a community of people willing to get together because there is a risk involved in this. We have to step outside of what we know. There is a risk involved when you go out on a vision quest. You have to sit there in the rain, you have to sit there in the dark, you have to sit there in doubt. But you go anyway and you pray and you cry. You ask those things in Creation that you have a humble prayer and they might hear you.

The outcome or reward of these sacrifices is to have something to pass on to the next generation. Something that perhaps was not there for the previous generations.

You don't get it because you're good looking; we get it because we worked very hard for that. And there is no other way to do it. As far as the healing part is concerned, those things will come. But I think it's important to start with forums, when we have people getting together that we have something valuable to share with our young people. That is part of the duty of the parent, there is a responsibility that is entailed in this. We have a duty to go out

and search those things. We like to be comfortable, but our duty says there are times when you're going to have to put your needs and your comforts aside in order to think about what's going to happen to your children. When we go to the sweat it's uncomfortable some times. All these ceremonies are demanding, but we work so we give part of our life so that our children can understand it. It's not that we're going to give that life up and we are never going to see that again. It goes two ways. We're going to get that life back, but we have to be not afraid to go out and look at those things and step outside ourselves. Our people have to get back into that rhythm of the cycle.

The biggest medicine that we have as Native people and this is very, very important is the power of example. If you drink, what kind of message are you giving young people? If you abuse your wife, what kind of message are you giving to the young people? If you're a substance abuser, what kind of message are giving to them? There is nothing the matter with our young people. That is not where the problem lies. The problem is that their parents and their grandparents are kind of in a vacuum and they never stood up and said our own way is important. And that's not to say that's widespread; it's happened all over. But there are certain things which were suppose to have been done. In other words, people kind of put their culture - like a painting on the wall and it was there to look at every once in a while. But that's not what it's there for - it's there to be used. And our language, our culture, it's all intertwined like a sweetgrass braid. That's the teaching of the braid, when someone has braided their hair, it can't be broken. It represents the body, mind and spirit.

And now the generation that's coming up is going to be the first generation that's going to have the power of choice. The first few generations were under a dictatorship and were told

what they were to do - there was no negotiation. Now we can choose what we want. If we want to be in the white society, we can be in the white society. If we want to be in the Indian society, we can be in the Indian society. My grandmother's teachings were that "You were born into this world Anishinawbe. And when you leave this world at the end of your life you are going to leave it as an Indian person. So you better learn that there's a certain way of life that you have and it can't be changed.

Interview # 3

I met with the Elder in her basement in the evening. I had been there previously for beading and leather work classes. The Elder spoke quietly throughout the interview bending forward in earnest concentration of what she was thinking about. Out of all of the interviews I was touched by this interview, possibly because she was the eldest of the six people being interviewed. There was great depth to what she was sharing which included aspects of her life history, of her pain which she experienced in her life time and without hesitation she shared that to provide understanding of how important healing was. At the end of the interview I had presented a piece of moose hide that was given to me. I was pleased to know that she was going to have use for it for one of her ceremonial items.

For me Native healing is a holistic thing it involves your everyday life including your career. People use different terms but they are all the same when you think about it. It requires one to be more communicative and to listen to each other. The main thing is for me is my work with the creative art. That is my life. When dealing with other people I have to be very careful. I do not impose my beliefs on other people. I listen and then go from there. I am not the Creator.

One learns from each other, from children, from young mothers like yourself. I find it hard to describe what healing means. It is the simple things, people know within themselves

what they must do. They find this as they search. I cannot tell people what to do. Elders in the sacred sense is that they can communicate on a higher plane as they call it.

How I got on this, what some people call a tobacco road, was I went to a healing circle in Fort Francis where I met an Elder there. She told me it was time to go and get your bundle, tobacco, cedar, sage and sweetgrass and go out and find your Creator and when you do you will be thankful. She told me one day people will come to you and contribute to your bundle. She told me I was a healer. I denied it but she was right. People should be open minded.

Last week I was at a meeting, I sat there and did not say very much. One lady told me I have a very nice presence about me - I think what she felt was the love that I had for those people, that is what is really important to bring when someone asks me to come and listen.

I have gone to healing ceremonies. I was an alcoholic and went to meetings but I realized there was more that I needed. I got married young and had children early. That bond with my mother was broken early, especially because I went to residential school. That nurturing was lost and it hurt. I raised my family in a white society and did everything that I needed to do. One day I applied for a job and they asked a lot of questions and they asked if I wanted to go to work in a Native encampment. Once we walked down there past a little clearing in the bush there was a wigwam and a river. I felt in my mind I had come home at last. I started to cry. My longing was to be there, my culture, my language, my work... it was there waiting for me to pick it up like I had not even left it all those years. It has been a good feeling to work there and be in my own place as a Native woman. Those years in a white community were lonely. Times have changed and people are starting to accept and appreciate

who we are. In a modern age, things are written down. I read everything I can get my hands on that speaks to our people and where we are.

To understand the healing one has to look at the cycle of life. When a new baby is born they are knowledgeable because they come from the Spirit world. You have to go through life to know where you are at and know who you are. If you ever want to feel close to the Creator feel the soft forehead of a child. They have been so new to the world; they know the Creator. Native people communicate spiritually, they know. I find they are very spiritual. A special gift.

My sister worked with Native people in Winnipeg at social services, many times they would go to the office for help. Of course, the administration would give them a form. If they went to her they would not say a word; they would just sit there. She would offer them tea. They would get up and walk out. Next day or three days later they would come back, same thing. She didn't push the papers; and then they would open up and they would thank her for not pushing papers. They won't understand forms, they come from isolated areas and do not understand how modern society operates. They have lost the closeness in our society. There is a lack of friendship. Be yourself and tell them you are one of them, nothing complicated, and don't push papers.

Where I feel very comfortable is in the healing circle; where there is a feeling of oneness and beauty. Don't lose your sense of touch with people, when you get swamped with papers, stop. Human life is more important, papers burn, and blow in the wind. Life is sacred.

Interview # 4

When interviewing this Elder about his understanding of Native healing, I did not interject any questions but listened to his words. Although spoken in English, the flow of the message was similar to the Ojibwa language. He did not pause through his comments except to drink tea and check to see if I was able to understand and follow what he was talking about. He did not look at me directly but instead looked towards the ground as in deep concentration. He did not seem to be concerned with how the information matched my questions; but in fact when he stopped he had in fact, covered all aspects of the interview format. This particular Elder is related and therefore reference to our grandfather, a well respected traditional healer, who is deceased, is in fact my biological grandfather.

In regards to your inherent rights as a Native person it is hard to summarize in a few sentences. What I do is to relate a short story. It is important to understand exactly what we are talking about. In regards to healing and spirituality, it involves traditional values as a whole. Some call me medicine man for some reason or another I stay away from that term. I know I am old enough to be one but a lot of people in my position do not understand the responsibilities. What I am going to do is explain as much as I can, as much as I know, and what I do in life. Ever since I was a young person, our grandfather use to talk to me a lot. At that time I did not understand too much what he was talking about. I wish today he was here to talk to me. For us what our traditional life was not passed on. Our ancestors know how powerful life and how respectful and how good it was in those days. Now that modern society and education started to come into society when the Native people try to fit into society. Lots of times when I talk about that I say that we don't belong there. Lots of us are losing our inherent right to who we are and what we are. With regards to healing, the Native person is

powerful in that they are recognized and saw the future and how the next generation was going to live.

Five or six generations back Anishinawbe people never sought a modern society doctor for nothing, headaches, toothaches but if you misuse those things you can do a lot of damage. Our ancestors never passed it on. That is why it is hard for us today to learn. The healing part of it takes a great deal of patience, a great deal of wisdom and knowledge to perform those kinds of things. Most of all it takes patience. It is very hard, people think it is easy. The important thing is to try and understand who we are; we lose a lot of great things in our life because of the lack of understanding. The part of being educated and being smart, some people think if your educated your smart but you don't have to be educated to be smart. Native people are very smart, they have common sense, they are surviving people but today everything is going very fast that they do not see the important parts. They miss those things. A person takes his time and that is why a lot of people say you're late but they are not late there is a good reason to be late. Some people think they are lazy. Anishinawbe people respected things to do them properly.

As far as answering questions, it is good to listen when a person is talking. A person will tell a story and a person can answer ten questions if you listen but people want a question for an answer. When I am teaching I like to sit down with a person and talk outside in the bush. All our teachings were written on the sand, they were wiped out after. Today people exaggerate on things, they read books and try to be an Indian that way. That is false. If you want to learn something about the Native ways go to the bush for four days without water and food and after the second night you start to hallucinate and have your vision, that is when you

find out. It is important to listen to things, if you think about it and listen very carefully.

Ceremonies is a term for what society used, long time ago it was in the form of prayer. It is so simple the sacred part of it. If you want to be a sacred person you learn how to respect even the ground that you walk on, the water, the willows those are the things to respect. You don't go around making fun of things.

When I talk about the easy way out a lot of people know it is hard to be Anishinawbe. Especially the Anishinawbe. People who want to learn things fast upset the universe. Even for me when I talk sometimes I miss the whole concept of what I am talking about. I feel that it is important for a person to take the time to listen. Lots of us in regards to our spirituality do not recognize who we are and what we are as we have to learn to accept what our natural instincts are and what the balance of life is. If we can not understand that we are going to have a hard time.

There are people out there who are jealous of me. I feel that this is going to be difficult on me. This is why I talk about all things. If a person cannot understand the balance of life, take for example, in the man and woman the sexual desires are natural. There is nothing wrong that, if a person respects what he does in life, then he knows there is nothing wrong. There is nothing wrong with having children out of wedlock; there is nothing wrong with that. Today's society does not respect each other, there is incest and sexual abuse, then a lot of times people cannot accept this but they know there are consequences. As far as taking time to understand they don't. I went through a hard time but I don't have to hurt people, all I have to do is be honest. I tell people I am not a perfect person no better than you are. Some

people will say, 'what are you doing?' Well I am soul searching. 'Why?' Because it is important. These kinds of visions are important to look for and know what to expect.

The best way to deal with these issues is to have a place to go for a week and retreat and talk about these issues. To talk about why we have eyes and ears. We talk about everything, our feet and hands. A lot of people would think this is not important but it is, that is why it is important to understand our obligations and responsibilities throughout this life, it is a great thing our grandfather had. We should learn how to make sacrifices.

For you those questions are important for me they're not. It is important we understand who we are and what we are doing. Life is so precious we could be two years old, twenty five years old or eighty years old. Life is short. As a Anishinawbe person all that was taken away from us so that we cannot understand or comprehend. Modern day society is going so fast, a lot of people don't understand. It is important to take the time to think and listen. Some people get mad because I don't communicate with them but what am I doing? I am trying to figure things out. It is important that I share my teachings, the experiences I have in the sweat lodge. People criticize me, I know that they do. Sometimes people come around asking questions. Sometimes I feel questions are not important. For a person that is curious these questions are important, but a curious person does not want to be steered in the wrong direction. Honesty is the best policy that is why I try to do my best and treat people good. I joke around a lot, there is no perfect person. I can't walk on the water. Everybody makes mistakes. It is not us to judge one another; it is not us to do that.

There is so much going around, how do you help these people? A long time ago our people knew how to deal with that, now society protects those persons and we cannot exercise

our way. Our people are highly educated and they don't look for understanding from spiritual people. I know a lot of young people who are educated and sitting at home collecting assistance.

When people ask for direction I don't tell them all because if I tell them too much they don't remember anyway. Everything is important especially understanding our nature, once you learn how to balance your life what you think and what you feel.

I never say no but I know that it is important to share. If you cannot accept what another person is saying and if you can take the time to understand what the other person is trying to say. When a person is going to commit suicide, we are not going to stop a person from committing suicide.

Some of the medicine people want to make a reputation for themselves but it is not about that. We are suppose to do these things out of the goodness of our hearts. I cannot tell people you are not suppose to do this, you are not suppose to do that. Any person can come to pray. It is for sharing and we should be sharing from each other's culture. It is very important these things take place. Don't complicate things, learn from small things.

Interview # 5

The interview took place outside while sitting on a picnic table, around us a grove of trees kept us shaded from the sun.

When we look at it (healing) in our language and our language tells it as such, a broad definition of our connectedness of who we are, and what we are, where we are going, where we have been yesterday, today and tomorrow. It's the wholeness of who we are with our

surroundings. It's our consciousness, it's our subconsciousness. It's all based on spirituality. It's the connection of all the three entities of self and how self fits in with what is all around them. The force that keeps everything in synchrony is based on spirituality. It is not a renaissance or a revitalization, it is just a continuation of who we are as Anishinawbe and Moshkigo (Cree) people.

Healing in itself means that we've become balanced with the rhythm of who we are and the rhythm of our being with our surroundings. When the eagle flies he goes circling way up in the sky. You can't see the mouse in his environment and when he jumps out the eagle sees the mouse and swoops down and grabs the mouse. As long as everything stabilizes on Mother Earth when the Eagle's up there looking down it is in synch. As soon as the mouse strays from his pattern he becomes imbalanced and becomes food for the eagle. It is in our imbalance with our surroundings that we turn into that mouse and become feed for the external forces that are around us, alcoholism, our imbalance with our community. Healing is the need for balance with all that is around us, in particular ourselves.

It goes back to the drum, and the drum is played at ceremonies. They may use a hand drum in sweat or they may use the water drum; but it is the drum. It is the vibrations from that drum that sets to bring us together. Now the vibrations that we receive from that drum can be very positive or very negative, depending on our being; and also the vibrations that are set off from that other person. Young people are earnest but are confused; they are like the mouse, when it runs out the eagle may miss the mouse but it can be picked up by some cat or some other animal. Elders are very quiet. Sometimes you may sit for days with a teacher. I would go and visit my adopted grandfather and I would sit there for three or four hours with him just

sitting, that was part of my teaching you see. He would see me coming and he would look at my face and see my eyes and see my body manners and everything else. He would pick up on my body language. He knew at that particular time that words weren't going to do me any good. That I just had to be. At times some of his teachings were and the only words that he would say, he would ask me "are you putting your tobacco down?" And I'd answer him yes or no. And that's all he would say. That might be after an hour or two hours of just sitting having tea with him. Sometimes our teachings in itself are just small, learning how to slow down and reunify yourself with your environment and your grandfathers and grandmothers and aunties and uncles, or your cousins, your brothers and sisters. When Anishinawbe or Moshkigo people come into an environment like the Wabshkgeeh (White) environment we have a tendency sometimes to forget who we are and it's natural, these are barriers that are put up in our life, the little holes that run out of or run back into. My grandfather told me you are a Moshkigo (Cree), you were born a Moshkigo and when you die you are going to be Moshkigo and you never forget that. And that's who you are and that's why God made you that way. The best thing is to be the best Anishinawbe, Moshkigo you can be and that means accepting your responsibilities that were given to you. You can still function in the world of development society and reinforce that identity and that makes you that much stronger a person. They are given to you, all these other things. Do not forget who you are. If you remain that constant that makes you that much stronger of a person which is again part of our holistic teaching of being the best person, responsible person you can be.

In our culture we don't self-serve. The ones that are self-serving are the ones to be very careful with, they have superficial honour. The ones that are not self-serving are the

ones that have that deep honour, that lasting honour, that reverence. My adopted grandfather reached a spiritual realm that was far beyond any mortal that I know. He was well respected and lived a very, very humble dedicated life to his people. He didn't have a car, a big house and all the other things that we attach to greatness. His whole life was built on humility and his respect came from those that defined him as being brave and honoured. And they travelled for miles to see him, from different countries to come and see him. They came from Europe and from Asia and from outside of the continent to see this man from North America. He would never stand up and say I am a great man.

There's no vocabulary in our language to say that I have power over you, that I am greater than you. The whole philosophical basis of our culture is based on our language. We take our language as such; it's not structured to self serve. The language is the philosophy of the culture. You can't self-serve with our language. In our prayers, we do not ask for individual blessings; we ask for pity. When the Elders speak in their Aboriginal language they ask for pity from the Creator because we are pitiful beings. You know we have to be pitied and pity is to be humble. That whole area of accessing Elders is in itself debatable. Like the question you asked earlier on who is the Elder. We have Elders in our community and there is an element of Christianity that is based on absolution. They may have been the most deviant type of unconditional person in the community for years and then get Christianity, go to the church and ask for absolution and walk out with the perception that they are squeaky clean. That 'I am an Elder now and I should be respected.' But they haven't made amends to the people in the communities. A lot of people in the community are aware of past behaviour and because someone has sprinkled water on them or they have gone through some type of

absolution all of a sudden now should this person be respected? The whole area of reconciliation never occurred with that particular person. I think it is adding to the frustration with the young people in our communities today. It is a double bind and a double standard.

Interview # 6

We met early in the morning and drank hot apple tea. Before starting the interview we had smudged with sage. I had given her the beaded pouch as a gift and she commented that she would bring it with her on her travels. The first question took the longest to answer, there was a long pause before she answered and asked again what the question was and prior to answering she rephrased the question to ensure the meaning was correct.

The way I see it - it is through our ceremonies, when we are going to the sweat lodge, when we are having a sacred circle, when we are fasting. You're actually doing it, that is where the healing takes place. The healing is with the grandmothers and grandfathers, they come because you are asking for that help. Healing is forgiveness. When you first begin you don't understand, we never had that opportunity when we were younger. It takes time to get the meaning.

In Northern Manitoba I was at the sweat lodge, a woman was sitting next to me and she saw me light up. I felt it. She could visually see that. Some people would see them (spiritual entities) and some people wouldn't. It depends on what stage of your development.

There was an Elder who was given a really sacred ceremony by an old woman before she died. At that time there was no woman for her to transfer this ceremony to and because that Elder was at a certain stage in his journey in the traditional way, the old woman gave that ceremony to that Elder. She told him one day you will know when to transfer the ceremony.

When we were there he transferred that ceremony to her, the woman that came to that lodge. It was with the water, like a cleansing. The praying and smudging because in order to communicate with the grandmothers and grandfathers we have to cleanse ourselves first, so that we could get our healings. We have to take care of our humanness. It was water that was used to begin that. It was a healing ceremony with the hands. One hand is open to hold the Creator and the other one was the one used for healing. When you reached where that person is sick you feel it with your hand and concentrate on that area. So Peggy and I were partners. He had us partner up because we had to really know what we were doing. Afterwards when we were asking each other where was it in me that you needed to doctor? In me she had to doctor me here. (touches her shoulder and back) and I said yeah that's where I have had a lot of problems over the years. And with her it was over here (touches her stomach area). And she said she's been suffering really badly and I said that is where I saw it. That is the kind of doctoring we learned; there we were given.

When you go to the ceremony it is only the beginning of healing, you never get total healing through a healer. It's like ten percent. The other ninety or eighty percent is entirely up to you. Every person has the gift to heal but it is up to the individual to continue healing, when you go to the medical profession they only do the initial part there, the rest is up to you.

When I want to find out about a person (Elder/healer) I observe the way they live because they will set an example. Their actions will speak louder than their words. Sometimes they have really good words and it's true understanding I could feel it. But then maybe I'll see them up to something that is not right. If an Elder is speaking, I'll see them disrespect that or maybe I'll see a child will be there and that person was not kind.

There is good and bad in everything. You know not like you are judging, it's just how my spirit feels good with your spirit and usually your intuition will tell you. You got to trust your feelings.

Some leaders are asking about the traditional ways. What I found, are they really listening to the direction that is being given? They'll seek it, but they won't follow it. I was listening to them and he said if you take the word Tikenagan (Cradle Board) and what that means. There is teachings all around that. But they're not following the teachings, they are using the Western way. If they would concentrate on the teaching of that, everything would be done the right way but they're not doing it that way. It's just like the word Menobimahdizawin (a good life), the same thing, they didn't go on with the words that they are teaching. Another example is when somebody has an emblem on their leather things and it is a bear, these things are Grandfathers and Grandmothers that are connected, they're not following it. They are too far out in the Western world to even make that connection.

When the Elder first came we gave tobacco and offerings for presents and the first thing that she taught me was to take the tobacco and put it here (in the palm) and go outside. I have to learn how to do that everyday. She came back and she'd say are you putting your tobacco out? And I'd tell her my feelings about it. And she would say continue. She was there to encourage me. One day, someday, when it's time the meaning will come because you have to have that connection. And that connection will come. So that is the basic one you have to know before you even go on with that journey. It has taken me years to do that. It's taken me a long time. But that's the one that I think is very important to do. Because when you put your

tobacco, you have it in all the ceremonies; get to know that one and then a meaning will come to you. You have to continually practice it. Then you make it work, you got to live it.

What you can do with the knowledge that you have acquired in the Western way of learning, now you can go back and tell them that this is the Indian way and you have to pay attention to us now because we have our own way. I hate to say facilitate but what other word to use? We have our own way. Our people don't believe in taking depressants which are drugs. But right away they give in, 'oh this person is so depressed you better give them anti-depressants. Then it prevents them from participating with us on the spiritual part and the physical part and the mental part and the emotional part so that's why now you say no, no, no this person has to come, we have to bring that person to healing, to a sweat or whatever.

In terms of trusting Elders, it is something that just happens. It is through your own observations. To be with that person and spend time and do what you have to do, give them tobacco and just listen. When you go to an Elder you give whatever you can and it's not so much the Elder but the tobacco that's connecting with the grandmothers and the grandmothers are coming through you so that is why you just give as much as you can.

COMMENTARY ON INTERVIEWS

Elders view healing as a way of life which goes far beyond attending a ceremony or reading about it in a book. From their perspective, balance demands self examination. The primary teachers are from the natural and spirit world. The knowledge is imparted through direct experience and reflects the customs of family, community and Elders.

The outcome of what was shared during the interviews was markedly similar. Although not described in the interview, the backgrounds of each Elder was diverse and their work extended to different areas of Northwestern Ontario, across the provinces and into the United States.

It was never spelled out point by point 'how to heal,' rather the Elders spoke of the traditional philosophy of Native people and its accompanying values. Within the context of that discussion, healing was described as a way of life which involves prayer, ritual, communication, consultation with Elders and self care. Primarily it is finding and keeping one's balance with the mind, the body and spirit. *And a way of life being it's holistic, physical, mental, emotional and spiritual, it takes in the whole spectrum of life* (Interview # 1).

To do this the Elders made reference to the necessity of taking time to listen, to learn and to go fasting or vision seeking. Traditional healing ceremonies such as the sweat lodge and the sacred circle are mentioned as sources of healing where the spiritual presence of one's ancestors can assist those in need.

The use of stories was a key part of relaying how Native people come to know a spiritual way of life. Diversion from the close relationship to the Earth was seen as a source of disruption of personal wellness and to the Native people as a whole. There was mention of the language and its significance to healing. *When we look at it (healing) in our language and our language tells it as such, a broad definition of our connection of who we are, and what we are, where we are going, where we have been yesterday, today and tomorrow* (Interview #4). The issue of identity pointed to the necessity of knowing and accepting one's Native ancestry, one's language and to know one's ability.

Reference was made to the life cycle and how the journey of one's life is a teacher. The connection to creativity was made, although not expanded on. In addition the place of love, that is universal and unconditional love was made. *Last week I was at a meeting, I sat there and did not say much. One lady told me I had a very nice presence about me - I think what she felt was the love that I had for those people, that is what is really important to bring when someone asks me to come and listen* (Interview # 3). Medicine and healing were viewed as having a close connection to the plant life and animal life. The power of example was viewed as an integral part of learning. These were reoccurring concepts throughout the interviews. The underlying theme from the interviews was that Native people are a 'spiritually based people' and communicate on that level. *We're going to get that life back, but we have to be not afraid to go out and look at those things and step outside ourselves, our people have to get back into that rhythm of cycle* (Interview # 2).

The Elders went on to state that healers and Elders are able to communicate on a higher level. Their credibility is established through experience, example and the ability to care. All of which require extensive training, indepth spiritual discipline where risk and sacrificing were the norm. There was never an expectation for glory but rather a desire to seek humility and a greater place to care and accept the humanness of others. Those that are self serving were understood as being misguided. It was evident that the Elders were aware of the existence of such persons and encouraged checking out the credibility of people before participating in their ceremonies and to trust one's intuition when deciding where to go and who to trust. *It is good to reference check. How do they treat their families? How do they treat their Elders? How do they present themselves in the community?* (Interview # 1).

The door to social workers with Native ancestry and an interest in Native healing ceremonies is open but with the understanding that the points of departure and outcome may differ significantly from that of an academic experience. This is not to assume that the two cannot interact. The basic tenant of the Elders is to know one's spiritual self and from that one would then have a defined ability to see clearly and be in a place of true humanness. *We have to take care of our humanness. It was water that was used to begin that (Interview # 6).* The basic values and traditions of the Native people are viewed as ever important which begins with the words respect and life.

The Elders felt strongly that although these teachings have been given, it will be some time yet before Native people will have gained back what was interrupted. The healing and learning process are parallel and therefore required patience.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

OUTCOME OF THE HEALING OUR OWN WORKSHOP

The week long workshop with Kathleen WestCott-Emerson was instructive, experiential and cathartic or in Native terms 'healing'. Each person made an item for personal use such as a dreamcatcher, medicine bag, cloth doll, quilted blanket or coverings for sacred items such as eagle feathers and drums.

Understanding of the individual's relationship to spiritual forces including those who have passed on into the spirit world and the power of the natural world were recognized as crucial parts of self-discovery and self-awareness. Individuals were encouraged to listen to the voices of their ancestors or spirit people and the natural world. In that communion, a person is able to find resolve from inner turmoil, pain and conflict.

It was acknowledged that psychiatric institutions and western medicine misinterpret the ability of North American Indians to have visions and vivid dreams as a personality disorder.

Native woman at this gathering had an opportunity to begin to reclaim their ability and to express their spiritual gifts with and amongst each other. The level and depth of sharing was considerable and centred on being a Native woman, motherhood and Native ancestry. The same Native values and principles identified in the literature review and from the interviews with Elders were present in the circle including caring, kindness, respect, and sharing, and

noninterference. Individuals were provided an opportunity to learn, to exchange, to nurture and to be nurtured. From that supportive atmosphere evolved a strong sense of unity. From the evaluations one person wrote, "I will always keep this week close to my heart and will pass what I learned to people who I live and work with."

Parallel to the personal sharing, Native healing through sewing, beading and leather work occurred. Trauma was given symbolic meaning through the various times that were constructed. Caring was felt from the circle as people listened as each person shared the meaning behind what they were making. Many found the courage to bring voice to what had been silenced. It was through this experience that many of the participants were able to reclaim ancestral gifts of craft work and connect to a vital cultural healing process.

Westcott-Emerson's role as facilitator was instructive. The skill demonstrated continuously was the ability to listen. Westcott-Emerson was judicious in the amount of time spent talking and listened with every part of her being. When she did talk it was slow, well thought out and with evident humility. A strong message of safety was communicated at all times. The workshop was conducted with respect and honour. Feedback from the facilitator was affirmative of individual feelings, reactions and perceptions. Re-occurring tenets were to trust your instincts, and to learn to relate to your own sense of timing and actions based on your ability, not on another person's dictation or persuasion. This included teachers, parents, partners, employers, etc.

There was an absence of professional, age and cultural barriers which was facilitated by Westcott- Emerson in her willingness to talk openly about her healing process. It was

apparent that healing does not have to be outside of oneself nor is it foreign to the rich heritage of Native women coming together.

The acceptance and willingness to have both children and men participate was unique in that recognition was given to their presence as valued participants. For the children to observe the craft work and sewing augments their understanding of tradition. In addition, the children are recognized as individuals with independent spiritual entities and capable of their own development. Having men present at women's gathering is also customary as male energy is needed to balance the female energy which is considered powerful in ceremonial settings.

Tradition is closely guarded by Elders who will seek the most competent to instruct and continue the teachings. The facilitator was one of those individuals who reflected in her words and actions the influence of the Elders and the involvement with ceremonies. This was evident in the use of the sage and sweetgrass in the circle. Her presence was calm and gentle which stemmed from resolution of inner conflict and past trauma resulting from Native healing. From this experience it was apparent she had great respect for traditional healing ceremonies. This was demonstrated by the mindful consideration of Native protocol throughout the week.

As the workshop came to an end, people went away in harmony with one another and feeling whole within themselves. The experience was beyond an information exchange typical of a workshop, but rather paralleled a healing process which was intertwined with human relations and extended to the spirit world and natural world.

Participants from the art therapy workshop continued to meet weekly for over a year afterwards. Observations made from the follow up were as follows:

- 1) **The presence of an Elder solidified the group by providing a nurturing atmosphere similar to the workshop. In the absence of an Elder, the level and depth of sharing was limited.**
- 2) **Children and extended family members such as grandparents, aunts, and on occasion friends continued to participate. Children would form their own circle adjacent to the larger group.**
- 3) **Reconnecting to family members was aided. As an example, a woman who had been searching for her biological family made contact during the workshop through another participant. The woman continued to bring her daughter and granddaughter to the sewing circle as a means of reconnecting with their cultural roots.**
- 4) **Food continued to be a part of the gatherings. Two weeks after the workshop ended a traditional feast was prepared and served.**
- 5) **Identification of issues related to parenting, family and personal histories, urban living, and loss of loved ones were recurring themes.**
- 6) **Humour prevailed when Elders attended as they retold stories of their lives.**
- 7) **Elders acknowledged the importance of craft work and commented on the good feeling that came from the group.**
- 8) **There was a continuous exchange of gifts amongst the participants such as fabric, jewellery and beads.**
- 9) **Employees at the Counselling Unit struggled with the process and were distant towards each other as well as the researcher. Conflicts frequently arose which in all**

appearances were small. There was an absence of understanding of Native protocol as the councillors were non Native or had not been raised in the Native community.

- 10) Those who had been through Western treatment facilities for chemical dependence/codependency demonstrated the same types of behaviour expected in that setting, i.e. expression of hostility, swearing, confrontation etc. The learning of protocol from the Native perspective was a first step to relearning what was absent as a result of acculturation.
- 11) The sewing circles were functional and inexpensive. It did not cost anything to attend and children participated. There was no expectations on attendance or participation. On occasion people would come to sit and drink tea and listen without sewing or talking.
- 12) Learning and teaching were closely related. One woman brought a cover from a tikenagen that she bought at a garage sale and remade it for her son's grass dance outfit with the aid of another woman.
- 13) Sharing was primarily done in the form of telling of stories including dreams, visions and personal experiences with healing.

The challenge in organizing the Workshop was not in unifying participants but among the permanent staff service providers. Staff councillors were in continuous conflict. The calmness that was present during the sewing circle was absent in the day to day work environment at the Unit. The Elders have said it is their circle that has to be well and healed

before they can fully continue the healing process to the people they serve. It is that exchange that is desirable; anything less may be compromising the healing process.

The time when Native social workers are asked to locate smoked deer hide for a workshop or prepare traditional food marks the movement toward the return of the cultural roots of the family and the community in the helping profession of social work. The trademark as a social worker in this setting was a cast iron pot and sewing bag and the hospitality known and utilized as characteristic of the family and community. In meeting the challenges it has been told to the younger generations by the Elders to *get all the education you can but not at the expense of your language or your culture* (Couture, 1979). The student placement experience provided the opportunity to see where culture is not compromised but rather strengthened by past customs and traditions.

TWENTY CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL HEALING PRACTICES

The following represents recurring themes identified as having inherent value for Native people within the framework of traditional Native healing ceremonies.

Atmosphere of Acceptance

A particularly profound aspect of the traditional healing ceremonies was the atmosphere of acceptance. Those who conducted traditional healing ceremonies had a deep level of intuitive skill and transmitted a message to participants of total acceptance as well as

confidence in the person to overcome what ailed them be it physical, mental or emotional. The time spent in the traditional healing ceremony be it two or four hours or four days was time to be together, to accept one another and to accept oneself. A person is given time to be still, to listen, observe, feel, absorb. In that space, people have found a peaceful and supportive environment amidst confusion, doubt and fear. This is not to say traditional healing ceremonies provide immediate cures or answers but a person leaves with a clear perspective on what exists in terms of spiritual strength and what direction to take.

Personal and Cultural Identity

The cultural identity of an individual including where a person is from and who their people are was shared at traditional healing ceremonies. This starting point of informal conversation allows those attending to become familiar with each other. Individuals find common ground with others be it a shared homeland, language, or family. Over a period of time the spiritual and cultural ancestry of an individual is unfolded providing a basis for learning aspects of identity which otherwise may have been tarnished from racism, assimilation and other negative life experiences.

The literature review identified that the search Native people undertake is to reestablish cultural and spiritual practices in their lives. (Beendigen, ONWA, Proctor, Waterfall). This involves rediscovering and reconnecting with their spiritual and cultural past. Montour (1993) identified the need for restoration of cultural wholeness and cultural identity. This was in keeping with Edwards et al., (1994) who found that the cultural context of a group activity to be a community unifier centring around social, cultural and religious activities.

Those people searching out their spirituality found assistance at the traditional healing ceremonies under the care and direction of Elders and Medicine people. There is strength in discovering that one's spiritual identity that dates back approximately twelve thousand years on this continent. The Elders interviewed recognized identity as an important aspect of healing. *The important thing is to try and understand who we are, we lose a lot of great things in life because of a lack of understanding* (Interview 4). Two Elders spoke of their grandmothers who were mindful to point out that it was critical to know who they were as Native people and what that meant. *My grandmother's teachings were 'you were born into this world Anishinawbe. And when you leave this world at the end of your life you are going to leave it as an Indian person. So you better learn that there's a certain way of life that you have and it can't be changed* (Interview 2). One Elder clarified that it was in the absence of a spiritual life that a person finds themselves in difficulty. *Lots of us in regards to our spirituality do not recognize who we are and what we are as we have to learn to accept what our natural instincts are and what the balance of life is, we can not understand that we are going to have a hard time* (Interview 4). It was stated that the spiritual and cultural foundation of a Native person was the basis for a strong person. *The best thing is to be the best Anishinawbe, Moshkigo you can be and that means accepting your responsibilities that were given to you. You can still function in the world of development society and reinforce that identity and that makes you that much stronger a person. They are given to you, all these other things. Do not forget who you are. If you remain constant that makes you that much stronger of a person which is again part of the holistic teaching of being the best person, responsible person you can be* (Interview # 5).

Based on this information and from the observations at the traditional healing ceremonies it can be stated that the development of a spiritual and cultural identity provides an immense source of strength and power for Native people in the process of healing.

Time as Illusive and Fluid

The traditional healing ceremonies attended such as the sweat lodge and others did not follow an agenda where at 10:00 AM there is a break or at 5:00 PM everything comes to an end. Healing ceremonies, purification and transformation demand freedom of time constraints. Once the ceremony begins the requirement is to accept the process. Limits on time at traditional healing ceremonies were virtually non-existent. Those in attendance were given as much time as needed to regardless of the number of people present to share what they needed to. Tears are never rushed, they are honoured in traditional healing practices.

Perhaps the greatest need for Native people is the opportunity to grieve in a supportive, caring environment where there are no conditions or limits. Healing occurs individually and often does not fit within the framework of a two hour appointment at weekly intervals. According to the Elders, a determining characteristic of a credible Elder or Medicine person is someone who took a life-time to learn what they needed to know and who takes their time with people. This spiritual preparation was described extensively by Beck et al. (1992) and Perrone et al. (1991).

Prior to a traditional healing ceremony, there is a settling in period which allows others to prepare for the ceremony and also to become comfortable with one another. It is during this time when people will approach the Elder or Medicine person regarding their purpose for

coming. Others sit at the sacred fire and wait. The transition from the beginning of the ceremony to the actual ceremony and the ending is a gradual process. There is no rush to get started, and never a rush for completion. People do not leave immediately afterward. Instead they linger over a cup of tea accompanied by food such as bannock and fruit. In a ceremony all sense of time is lost and time becomes abstract. Five hours can pass as a thirty minute interval and one minute can feel like an eternity. Space and time are transcended. The Elders have stated the ceremonies have remained the same as they were and have passed from generation to generation. There is a security in that. Native people have commented that going to a traditional healing ceremony feels like returning home after being away for a long time.

The passage of time is key in the healing process. For example, during the fast in Gull Bay, little else was done in the three day time frame but pray, meditate and reflect. The willingness to commit the time marks the first step toward healing. One Elder remarked, *Native people are very smart, they have common sense, they are surviving people but today everything is going so very fast that they do not see the important parts. They miss those things. A person takes his time and that is why a lot of people say you're late but they are not late there is a good reason to be late. Some people think they are lazy. Anishinawbe people respected things to do them properly* (Interview 4). It is this customary respect for time that marks the traditional healing process because prayer and ritual are never rushed.

For the Elders, the very passage of time itself is the teacher and the healer. In reference to his teacher, one Elder stated: *At times some of his (the Elder's Elder) teachings were and the only words that he would say, he would ask me 'are you putting your tobacco*

down?' And I'd answer him yes or no, and that's all he would say. That might be after an hour or two hours of just sitting having tea with him. Some times our teachings are just small, learning how to slow down and reunify yourself with your environment and your grandfathers and grandmothers and aunts and uncles, or your cousins, your brothers and sisters
(Interview 5, p.65).

The research of Nelson et al. (1984) identified that when working with Native people time differs from Western practices. The Native concept of time allows freedom for tasks to be completed when most fitting with the situation rather than being designated into a structured time frame which is most often foreign to the Native person and to the community.

Circle of Caring

Healing ceremonies are predominantly a group activity where participants sit in a circle. A unity amongst the circle develops as people share their experiences, prayer and pain. A collective strength is often found amidst the sharing. The support and caring continues outside the ceremony as the closeness experienced inside the ceremony develops and transcends into daily life.

In the traditional healing ceremonies people shared their personal histories and were given the support needed and affirmation. A person is never alone on the journey towards healing. Strength comes from the circle and always from each other.

Riel (1990) called for the reestablishment of tradition and culture as primary guides in achieving a system of care for Native people. Caring was identified in the Healing Our Own Workshop at the Healing Our Own Counselling Unit as a factor which promoted a high

level of participation. Much evidence exists that there is a healing strength found in the circle of caring within the traditional healing ceremonies.

Protocol

The traditional healing ceremonies attended with the exception of the women's circle were not restricted based on gender, age or cultural background. There was, however, a very established protocol. For example, the seating arrangements and participation imparted order, particularly as aging family members were honoured. Consideration for the distinction of each group reflected the fabric of traditional community life. It could be identified that the protocol existing within traditional healing ceremonies are a source of generational healing where lost customs of the community are reestablished. Young people who attended traditional healing ceremonies and the art therapy workshop observed the respect bestowed onto their family members and to the Elders.

To illustrate the scope of protocol, the researcher may draw upon the lengthy time that it took to go through the necessary steps in securing the interviews with the Elders. This included the offering of tobacco, the delivery of gifts and the waiting. Eight months later the interviews were conducted. Another illustration of protocol and the relevance to traditional healing ceremonies came from the comments the Elders made in determining the legitimacy of Healers and which was established in part by the ability of such people to respect and respond appropriately to the protocol at a community level.

Protocol is interactive and reciprocal. In the art therapy workshop adherence to the Native spiritual customs of traditional healing ceremonies was influential in developing a

culturally based environment, namely the presence of and respectful use of sacred medicine; the presence of a circle, the sharing of food and recognition of Elders.

Native people are discovering through attending traditional healing ceremonies an opportunity to rebuild what had been devastated through the residential school, adoption and the foster care system and separation from family members through death. They are finding the connection within traditional healing practices. Having observed and experienced directly the protocol at various ceremonies new ways of relating to one another are developed based on respect and care. One is told *leave your ego at the door when you come, leave the politics behind, you are Anishnawbek when you come into this healing ceremony*. It is the distinctiveness in Native protocol within traditional healing ceremonies which lends itself to the rebuilding of families and communities.

Unconditional Acceptance and Love

A strong love towards one's family and community, particularly towards the Elders and the children, is a traditional way of life for Native people. The literature review and the interviews with the Elders identified that the ability to demonstrate love was interfered with as a result of prolonged forced attendance at a residential school, mandatory relocation of communities and assimilation (Waterfall, 1992; Redhorse, 1990). The presence of love and acceptance was a constant element throughout the traditional healing ceremonies. Honour was given to each person, to their humanness. From that level of acceptance people were able to share what had been kept hidden for years.

The Elders and Medicine people demonstrated in their teachings the importance of each stage of life from birth up until death. The message given was that we are all equal because we go through each stage of life.

Because the teachings of the Anishinawbe way, the way of life is that love is what makes humility. We love people no matter what because the teachings tell us that. The basic teaching about the universe is that the sun comes up every day from the east and then it finishes its journey in the west as the earth runs around. Because we are told that our brother is the sun and we walk with our brother the sun every day in love, in unity, in balance, in equality with all whom we meet during the day (Interview 1).

Alcohol abuse and family violence has hindered the ability of Native people to nurture one another, an ability which historically was an intricate aspect of personal and community development. The ceremonies provide a place to share with each other in a way that was exempt from shame or misunderstanding. Freedom from isolation and depression was found. It was noted in the art therapy workshop that Native people are self critical, self blaming and suffer from low self-esteem resulting from the years of imbalance and deprivation of nurturing. Residential school resulted in a detachment from the bonding that traditionally occurred between family members. Ceremonies provide a place of restoring and fulfilling those unmet needs and as a result are able to nourish the family.

The characteristic which draws people to the Elders was identified to be love. *One lady told me I have a very nice presence about me, I think what she felt was the love that I had for those people, that is what is really important to bring when someone asks me to come and listen (Interview 3).*

Respect and Kindness

Kindness and respect were phrases used throughout the prayers and teachings of the Elders at the ceremonies. In addition, the respect and kindness was observed in the actions of the art therapist at the Workshop.

The one expectation that stood out is that everything at a traditional healing ceremony was to be treated with respect and kindness. The ground rule in the art therapy workshop was to respect each other and to treat each other with kindness. The foundation of the healing process is intertwined with the respect. For example, prayers and rituals are carried out in a manner that pays homage to all aspects of Creation. As one Elder stated, *If you want to be a sacred person you learn how to respect even the ground that you walk on, the water, the willows, those are the things to respect. You don't go around making fun of things* (Interview 4). When requests are made to the Spirit world it is done with kindness. The reverence Elders and Medicine people have for life and for humanity is mirrored by their actions whereby the simplest tasks are done with reverence. In addition, the traditional teachings and legends shared by the Elders augment these customs. As told by one Elder, *For us, our traditional life was not passed on. Our ancestors know how powerful life and how respectful and how good it was in those days. Now that modern society and education started to come into society when the Native people try to fit into society. Lots of times when I talk about that I say that we don't belong there* (Interview # 4).

Respect and kindness demonstrated by the Elders in traditional healing practices is a primary source of respect given to individuals who have been outcasted by the larger society or within their own Native community. With regard to those who have experienced

exploitation and abuse, this depth of respect has a moving effect. For example, those who may have lost all touch with self start regaining respect for themselves. The kindness and respect demonstrated throughout the traditional healing practices are internalized. The kindness a person feels becomes part of the healing process. Over time a person begins to view herself as sacred.

Self-Directed Healing

A person is not told at a traditional healing ceremony *you must do this or you should do this*. The Elders would reflect on their experiences in life and share what had been passed onto them. Traditional customs and values of Native people are shared, people are told *this is what your grandmothers and grandfathers did years ago*. Native people are not forced to attend ceremonies, they are not forced to heal. Options are made available for them and there is freedom of choice to search out a path to healing that is best suited for the individual. People are given the freedom to decide for themselves when and how they will journey into a healing process. The search people are on to regain what previous generations were denied is according to one Elder the first generation with the power of choice (Interview 2). Healing was identified as an inherent right, not a condition where eligibility is based on a set criteria (Interview 5). According to the Elders the soul searching and fasting are important. *We have to step outside of what we know. There is a risk involved when you go out on a vision quest. You have to sit there in the rain, you have to sit there in the dark, you have to sit there in doubt. But you go away and you pray and you cry. You ask those things in Creation that you have a humble prayer and they might hear you* (Interview 2). The Elders encouraged people

to find their own path for healing. *If you want to learn something about the Native ways go to the bush for four days without water and food and after the second night you start to hallucinate and have your vision, that is when you find out. It is important to listen to things, if you think about it and listen very carefully (Interview 4).*

The ability for a person to continue on the path to healing was viewed as essential. *When you go to the ceremony it is only the beginning of healing, you never get total healing through a healer. It's like ten percent. The other ninety or eighty percent is entirely up to you. Every person has the gift to heal but it is up to the individual to continue healing, when you go to the medical profession they only do the initial part there, the rest is up to you (Interview 6).*

The ability to choose individual direction towards healing was identified in the art therapy workshop. The facilitator affirmed the ability of each person to trust her instincts and follow their intuition particularly around the selection of Elders and healers.

Observation and Intuition

Native Elders and medicine people are observant and intuitive (Krueger et al. 1993). From their observations they assess where a person is emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. This was described in one interview by an Elder who described a visit with his spiritual advisor. *He would see me coming and he would look at my face and see my eyes and see my body manners and everything else. He would pick up on my body language. He knew at that particular time that words weren't going to do me any good. That I just had to be (Interview 5).*

Native people are also extremely observant and base their selection over who they trust and where they will go for help based on these observations. When the Elders were asked what determines the ability for someone to conduct ceremonies, the response was based on observation of the individual in terms of their respect for community members and care for the family.

Native people have had to adapt to a foreign environment. The ability to trust one's instinct and to navigate oneself by using observation and intuition has been tampered with and devalued. The exposure to Elders and Medicine people who have complete confidence in their judgment had a lasting impact on people. This was amplified by the experiences in ceremonies and accompanying spiritual development. Individuals become confident in their vision and trust their instinct. The process of healing sharpens a person's ability to gain spiritual insight and to see through a spiritual and cultural world thus interpreting and understanding life from that basis. Having done so, individuals have a greater competency in day to day living (Gunn, 1986).

Use of Self

Elders and medicine people who work with Native people in a healing capacity rely primarily on their own experience, knowledge and ability. When teaching or passing on personal stories, a message is given to assist understanding. Information shared encompasses a range of life experiences from birth onward.

Traditional teachings are being retaught and reintroduced within the setting of a ceremony into Native society. Information given at a traditional healing ceremony does come

from years of practice and experience. The ability to heal an individual involves the sharing of medicines the healer has gathered and prepared. It requires interaction and mediation with the spirit world and is often accompanied by the sharing of the Elder's personal space and time.

In the literature review, one Elder described how she prepared herself physically, mentally and spiritually prior to interaction with a patient. Her ability lay in utilization of her entire being (Krueger et al. 1989). This reliance of the self and use of the senses was observed in the traditional healing practices.

Reliance and Closeness to the Natural World

Creation stories reflect a commitment from the natural world for health and protection. That kinship to Mother Earth involves a deep love and respect which continues today (Interview 1, p. 49). Most of the ceremonies occur outdoors and the medicines for healing are sought out and picked, cleaned, and prepared. In addition, men, women and children are left alone in nature to seek and understand the power of nature. The earth is both a healer and a teacher. *The Creation has a duty to perform for us and we, likewise, have a duty to perform for Creation (Interview 2).*

This close relationship with the spirit world is ongoing with Native people within the healing circle and from that a person acquires a fearlessness of death and respect for life. The spirit world is sought as a source of healing and protection. The natural world is the place of learning. *When I am teaching I like to sit down with a person and talk outside in the bush. All our teachings were written in the sand, they were wiped out after (Interview 4).* The healing experience is not separate from the rest of one's existence. For example, the spirit

world is sought for direction, connection and insight. This is done when people go to ceremonies and when they go fasting outdoors for days at a time without food or water. It is there that one forms a relationship with the natural or spirit world and begins to communicate on that level. The connection and interaction between the Healer and the spirit world was also described in the literature review (Beck et al., Brown, Kruegar).

The Use of Silence and Listening

Silence is an essential aspect of healing. Throughout the traditional healing ceremonies and in particular the vision quest there is an absence of verbal communication. The silence over time provides people with the ability to become aware and develop clarity of what they are personally struggling with and searching for.

Silence existed at traditional healing ceremonies and the Elders spoke of it during the interviews. There is an acceptance of nonverbal communication. When something is said, there is an absence of analysis or feedback. As one Elder stated, *It is good to listen when a person is talking. A person will tell a story and a person can answer ten questions if you listen but people want a question for an answer.* He went on to state *I feel that it is important for a person to take the time and listen* (Interview 4). This same level of listening was demonstrated in the art therapy workshop by the facilitator who did not interrupt or cut anyone off regardless of how long they spoke.

Cleansing and Purification

It was observed throughout the research that traditional healing ceremonies provided release from emotional pain and physical illness. Through use of prayer, medicine and mediation with the Spirit World, the ceremony was a synergist in guiding individuals through a complete process of emotional and physical cleansing. As one Elder described in the interview, *It was with the water, like a cleansing. The praying and the smudging because in order to communicate with the grandmothers and grandfathers we have to cleanse ourselves first, so that we could get our healings. We have to take care of our humanness* (Interview 6). The releasing that occurred involved a mental clearing often in the form of grief. The realization of the impact on unresolved grief and internalized emotion was identified in the literature review (Shawanda, 1993; Waterfall, 1992). The experience of cleansing emotion through traditional healing ceremonies was also described by the facilitator during Healing Our Own Workshop.

Sharing

Historically for Native people, sharing is a tradition and a way of life and survival. This tradition was demonstrated time and time again at the ceremonies and during visits with the Elders.

One Elder that was interviewed explains, *Some of the medicine people want to make a reputation for themselves but it is not about that. We are suppose to do these things out of the goodness of our hearts. I cannot tell people you are not suppose to do this, you are not*

suppose to do that. Any person can come and pray. It is for sharing and we should be sharing from each other's culture. It is very important that these things take place (Interview 4).

The respect Native people have for Elders and medicine people is reflective of the generosity given with the sharing of knowledge, wisdom and strength. As one Elder stated, *In our culture we don't self serve. The ones that are self serving are the ones to be very careful with, they have superficial honour. The ones that are not self serving are the ones that have that deep honour, that lasting honour, that reverence. My adopted grandfather reached a spiritual realm far beyond any mortal that I know. He was well respected and lived a very, very long humble dedicated life to his people. He didn't have a car, a big house and all the other things that we attach to greatness (Interview 5).*

Throughout the duration of the research, stories were shared by Elders which were humorous, rich with knowledge and insight and reflective of Native values. The knowledge base of Native spirituality is thousands of years old and is found in the traditional healing practices and from the Elders.

Those attending ceremonies shared hand sewn blankets, delicate Native craft work in recognition and gratitude for the assistance received from the Elders and healers.

Integrity and Credibility

For Native people, the integrity and credibility of Elders and Medicine people are important factors in determining the validity of traditional healing ceremonies. The Elders interviewed pointed out that this was demonstrated in terms of how consistently well they treat their family, their community and their old people. The literature review indicated that the

ability of a spiritual person was based on their connection to the natural world (Beck, 1992; Brown, 1978; Krueger et al. 1989).

Credibility of Elders and Healers is measured by a demonstration of competency as people find results and satisfaction from the assistance they receive. Trust is given to those Elders and medicine people who are repeatedly consistent in demonstrating integrity in their work by adhering to the traditional values and teachings contained in the Native culture. It was observed throughout the research process that Elders who were recognized by the community as credible were peaceful, authentic, self-determined and patient. They conducted themselves in accordance with the teachings and direction that is given to them. They are confident in themselves and with what they were doing. There is a high level of participation and responsiveness to those Elders and medicine people who have these traits. For Native people, these characteristics are critical in levelling out the confusion and sense of internal chaos resulting from various forms of abuse.

Self Actualization

Traditional healing practices provide an environment for personal healing that involves in-depth soul searching. As a result people find direction which allows for progressive growth on a spiritual and emotional level. *Healing is found through an inner journey through one's past and expelling pain is an important part of healing. The healing person has a high degree of self knowledge or self awareness. As stated by an Elder, it is the point of departure for genuine caring for society and others* (Longboat, 1992).

Individuals move toward greater understanding of themselves and achieve a commitment toward continued personal and spiritual development. As one Elder explains, *One day, someday, when it's time the meaning will come because you have to have that connection. And that connection will come. So that is the basic one you have to know before you even go on with that journey. It has taken me years to do that. It's taken me a long time. But that's the one that I think is very important to do. Because when you put your tobacco down, you have it in all the ceremonies, get to know that one and then a meaning will come to you. You have to continually practice it. Then you make it work, you got to live it* (Interview 6).

Traditional healing practices promote slowing down, centring and accepting what has happened, and with an acquired confidence meet the challenges of daily living. Healing is identified in the literature review and from the interviews with Elders as finding physical, emotional, mental and spiritual balance. Individuals who were otherwise immobilized from past experiences find themselves capable of moving toward change and are able to commit to taking care of themselves at a physical and spiritual level. As stated by one participant in the Healing Our Own Workshop evaluation, *I will not put anyone else's needs before mine and will think about myself as well. As a Native person I will not tolerate any intolerable behaviour as I did in the past. I know that I am a good person and I did not deserve what was done to me as a child. Going through this healing process will help me* (Healing Our Own Workshop Participant).

Change as an Inevitable Process

From continued attendance at traditional healing ceremonies, a person finds peace and acceptance from the past and a readiness to move forward. Prior to attending a traditional healing ceremony a person makes an offering of tobacco and asks for help from the Elder and hence from the spirit world. From that request a process of personal evolution begins. *The way I see it, it is through our ceremonies, we are going to a sweat lodge, when we are having a sacred circle, when we are fasting. Your really doing it, that is where the healing takes place. The healing is with the grandmothers and grandfathers, they come because you are asking for that help. Healing is forgiveness. When you first begin you don't understand, we never had that opportunity when we were younger. It takes time to get the meaning (Interview 6).*

There is a stripping of ego where a person becomes vulnerable and masks are removed. The outcome is the attainment of honesty. The process is lengthy and exhausting requiring complete availability and willingness to not only start but to complete the journey as well. Healing requires forgiveness and reconciliation and that is where the change occurs, particularly with those victimized by alcoholism, violence and racism. From the evaluation of the Healing Our Own Workshop one woman wrote, *Some of the gifts I received from this were forgiveness. I feel that a lot was given to me from each woman/person who spoke about themselves to everyone of us. I feel grateful and I think that these gifts were given like sharing, crying and acceptance will always be with me.*

The Healing Arts

Artistic expression is prevalent throughout the traditional healing practices. It was found in the songs, story telling and drumming and employed all of the senses. Lewis (1978) and Cardinal et al, (1991) identify the relationship between healing and creative process within Native spirituality.

Creativity was not restricted to a premeditated design. As one Elder pointed out, *And they have the sacred songs, those spiritual songs, all of those things are part of the strength, a spiritual strength* (Interview 2). The creative process for Native people is an expression of the spiritual interaction vocalized through singing and story telling. It is also demonstrated in the beading, painting, leather work, etc. There is a symbiosis which results from communicating with the spiritual forces and is felt throughout the experience of creating. One Elder explained, *For me Native healing is a holistic thing, it involves your everyday life including your career. People use different terms but they are the same when you think about it. It requires one to be more communicative and to listen to each other. The main thing for me is to work with the creative art. That is my life* (Interview 3).

The outcome of the art therapy workshop was a heightened understanding of the relationship Native people and in particular Native women have with their personal awareness, spiritual development and creative process. The collective memory of Native people who have walked this land for centuries is now being found as Native people recover and reclaim the songs and the language of the past. Contained within are the ancient teachings and wisdom of those who were here long ago. Connecting with the knowledge base is understood as a necessary key to surviving the future. One Elder told the women in the Healing Our Own

Workshop, if you're having difficulty with your bead work or your sewing is not working, ask your grandmother to show you. Wait and be patient. She was referring to the spiritual grandmothers. In the same Workshop the facilitator encouraged participants to slow down long enough to hear the voice of the Spirit World. It is in the quiet that a person develops the creative side and in doing so gains insight through sewing, writing, drawing and sculpting. A person becomes centred as a result of the creative process. There is a harmonious engagement with the natural work which provides respite from daily stressors.

Relationships

The outcome of attending traditional healing ceremonies was the development of substantially meaningful relationships beginning with oneself, the Creator and with the Elders.

It was observed that the Elders have a helping relationship with an individual and would overtime extend the relationship to one of close friendship characterized not by need but by equality. The literature points out that there has been a generation of lost parenting because of the residential schools and the adoptions during the 'sixties sweep'. As a result of the healing that occurs from the traditional healing practices, individuals regain the ability to trust themselves and others. Waterfall (1984) suggested the need to restore sensitivity at a feeling level amongst social workers. One Elder commented that the rest of society has lost their sense of touch with each other and are outside themselves. Traditional healing practices allow people to relate to one another on a personal level where the ability to be close is developed.

Language

Language is viewed by one Elder as a critical link to healing because the language reflects the philosophy of the Ancestors. *When we look at healing in our language and our language tells it as such, a broad definition of our connection to who we are, and what we are, where we are going, where we have been yesterday, today and tomorrow. It's the wholeness of who we are with our surroundings. It's our consciousness, it's our subconsciousness. It's based on our spirituality.* The Elder went on to state, *The whole philosophical basis of our culture is based on our language. We take our language as such; it's not structured to self-serve. The language is the philosophy of the culture. You can't self-serve with our language. In our prayers we do not ask for individual blessings, we ask for pity. When the Elders speak in their language they ask for pity from the Creator because we are pitiful beings* (Interview 5). The language is the thread of the past which links the conscious and subconscious aspects of Native people together. The dream visions which Native people receive where the ancestors come to instruct, guide and assist individuals do not speak English. The prayers, the songs and the traditional teachings of the Elders are most often presented during the ceremonies in the Native language.

Laughter

Native people are familiar with the sound of laughter as many of the old people are masters of humour, particularly in their ability to retell a story and pointing out in exaggerated form the absurdity of a given situation. It is believed that the healing power of laughter is one of the strengths that has served as a means of coping and surviving the many hardships

experienced over the years. For the women who attended the art therapy workshop, laughter prevailed and served as a release from the tremendous level of intense sharing that occurred among the participants. In between long silences, anguish and release of pain came the wave of laughter.

To further illustrate how humour is linked to the healing process, following the completion of a traditional healing ceremony people would visit with each other. It is during this time that joking occurs and often times continues long into the night as stories are shared and events retold. This kind of humour is subtle and breaks down barriers, eases tensions and in the course of events verifies the closeness of the group.

A ROLE FOR TRADITIONAL HEALING PRACTICES IN SOCIAL WORK

The final research question endeavoured to identify how Native traditional healing practices may be included in social work practice in a respectful manner.

While it has been demonstrated that traditional healing practices are of importance to Native people, it is critical in safeguarding the integrity of these practices to recognize what is authentic and credible from the Native perspective. Literature sources indicated that there is risk of ignorance when considering use of sacred ceremonies. The Healing Our Own Workshop participants discussed the financial, spiritual and sexual exploitation that occurred by 'Medicine Men' from other areas of the U.S and Canada.

Social workers can facilitate the use of traditional healing practices by becoming familiar with the Native community and more importantly by developing relationships with

those Native people who are respected and recognized for their work as healers and Elders. This recommendation is in keeping with the suggestion made by Elders when asked how social workers can assist in the healing process. However, social workers in attempting to integrate the use of traditional healing practices with their practice must be cautioned against improvising. Respectful consideration needs to be given to understanding the importance of Elders and healers. Their skills cannot be duplicated or fabricated. For example, it was demonstrated in the Healing Our Own Workshop that the presence of Elders strengthened the circle and in their absence conflict arose.

It is not enough to place traditional healing practices in the peripheral of social work practice when working with Native people. The literature review demonstrated the lack of effectiveness of standard professional social work and the need for traditional healing practices. This can be realized through the formation of policies and program development that shift service provision to provide necessary resources for the utilization of traditional healing practices for Native people. The wisdom of the Elders must be considered as paramount in providing guidance to understand appropriate ways that traditional healing practices can be used in social work practice.

Personal and cultural identity is one of the first characteristics identified. Social work practice delves into an exploration of the needs of the client and from that basis constructs a design for the client to change. The greatest change for the Native person is in one of self perception. It is not the social worker nor the therapist who can achieve this. It is cultivated in the ceremonial realm. In that context, the Native client will fully internalize the extent of his or her identity.

Time was described as illusive and fluid. Traditional healers and Elders and the ceremonies they performed provided ample time for those that were in need. Social workers are frequently faced with high case loads and are stretched to meet administrative tasks. This limits time for direct in-depth interaction with clients. Ceremonies are an important resource for Native people where Elders and healers are not rushed nor controlled by time.

In the area of program and policy development there needs to be a sensitivity in terms of providing flexibility at the management level. For example, if a client is going to partake in a ceremony the social worker must factor in that if they are told to be there at seven o'clock in the evening, the ceremony itself may start at eleven o'clock that night and not end until the first break of day. This requires policy development that is flexible in setting regulations at the institutional level and in regular working environments.

Caring was identified as a characteristic of traditional healing ceremonies. The social work profession has been identified by its own members as the caring profession. However, standard social work practice adheres to the need for the practitioner to remain professionally objective. Extensive use of personal experience is discouraged. There is a depth of caring that is present in the traditional healing practices amongst the people which is valuable to the Native client. A genuine caring person is quickly received in Native circles more readily than the skilled practitioner who is emotionally detached from his or her work. The ability to communicate and express a genuine message of care determines the level of responsiveness a Native person may have towards a professional. The social work professional has a formal method of client interaction consisting of interviews, assessments, counselling sessions and task-oriented activities related to achieving change. Traditional healing ceremonies differ from

the formal aspects of social work practice. What is required is an acceptance that activities are at times loosely structured and may appear chaotic to the outside observer.

Unconditional love and acceptance identified in the twenty characteristics poses a challenge to the social work profession. Practitioners work in the mind set of the initial client assessment. Elders and healers see beyond immediate circumstances or prevailing behaviour patterns and personality traits. They look to the heart of a person. They care on that basis. What social work can learn from traditional healing practices is the power of acceptance. The norm for social work practitioners is to form a professional opinion of an individual and to express this either in written form or verbally. Elders do not delve into the detail of a person's existence. It is the strength of the people that continues to be expressed. Information relating to the individual may not be discussed. This is important for the social worker to understand who by way of professional calling may be motivated by instrumenting change when working with a Native client. Change occurs, in due process, through a healing journey and may be completely out of the hands of the social worker. While the social worker is instrumental in acting her role as a facilitator, the change occurs within the context of interaction with the Elders and the traditional healing ceremonies.

Respect was the strongest recurring theme in the traditional healing practices recorded throughout the research process. It was the one word that came up the most in the literature review and in the interviews with the Elders. It is through respect for the culture that social work may consider the benefit of allowing a Native client the opportunity to pursue healing as a primary means of addressing the client's issues.

The concept of client self-determination for social work practice is brought to new heights given the spiritual realm of healing. Social work is based on empowerment. It is through realizing the viability of traditional healing practices that the Native client may be provided these resources as an integral part of support services offered by organizations that service Native people.

Observation and intuition are skills not unfamiliar to standard professional social work practice skills. The observational skill and intuitive ability of the Elder or Medicine person exceed human understanding and escape even the trained eye of the social worker. Native people respect and respond to what a traditional Elder sees and feels. On the other hand, feedback a professional may have to offer is often treated with arms length interest. The information such as a formal assessment, evaluation, or treatment plan are often met with uncertainty. In the presence of an Elder, there is a distinct willingness for feedback and direction. This is crucial to social work practice as it sets the stage for reframing how a social worker perceives what the issues are and how the situation should be approached. Use of self is an important tool for social work practitioners. Traditional healers and Elders use their mind, body and spirit in the work that they do. If transcended to the context of healing ceremonies and Native cultural traditions, the relationship the social worker has with the Native client would alter from one of detached objectivity to almost family- like rapport. This

challenges the ability of the professional to relate to the Native client on a substantially equal level.

Social work practitioners must realize that Native people are selective in revealing what is within. Through the traditional healing ceremony led by the Elders, deep rooted emotional pain is uncovered. Social work is a profession where positive change is a desired outcome of the client worker interaction. For Native people, contact and interaction with Elders and ceremonies is the point of departure for significant change.

Social work practitioners can learn to appreciate that for the Native client, relationships require time and trust to develop as well a commitment to continue. Termination is a phrase known to social work as the ending of the helping process. For Native people there is no end to healing. The commitment Elders and healers make is for life. 'Termination' puts immediate barriers up for the Native client. Those life-long relationships that evolve in the healing process assist in developing the trust and willingness to care for oneself, family and community.

Native people have historically proved their sustained emotional strength, however the severity of the impact of the residential schools goes far beyond famine or war and hits at the integrity of the family. This has left emotional scars that are now being recognized by the Native community. Therefore, the healing process is absolutely essential. The requirement is a long term commitment of personal healing and of relationships. One consideration for social workers is to decrease the limits of a treatment process from short term intervals of one month or three months to long term and open ended.

In the context of the actual traditional healing practices a client is not in 'therapy.' Conversely the individual is placed on level ground as an Aboriginal person. The direction provided is spiritually and culturally based. Intervention by a social worker from a hierarchical positional may not be accepted. Helping is viewed as a non-hierarchical activity.

Prior to European contact, there was no need for healing unless it was medically related. The challenge for social work is to consider the validity of traditional healing practices as an appropriate strategy for Native clients given the debilitating impact of colonization. Elders and medicine people are very capable of working effectively with the Native person who has been victimized by sexual abuse, family violence and alcoholism. Native people are in a state of transition and are attempting to utilize the past customs to ensure that a whole and healthy future will exist for the coming generations. It is critical to consider with great care the need to have available in the centre of social work services the traditional healing practices as a direct means of addressing the needs of the Native client.

SUMMARY

This research has clearly established that the survival and continuation of traditional healing practices plays a critical role in the well being of Native people. In consideration of the literature review, the experience of the Elders, the outcome of the Healing Our Own Workshop and the characteristics of traditional Native healing ceremonies, it can be stated that culturally specific social work practice which is inclusive of traditional healing practices is a desired goal.

The twenty characteristics of traditional healing practices identify thematic principles that exist within traditional healing ceremonies. The roots of these principles stem from Native beliefs and customs. Thus, their usage and interpretation should not be limited to isolated concepts. Rather, these twenty characteristics can be viewed as fluid and interrelated.

The Native custom of teaching and learning demonstrates respect to each individual by encouraging each to interpret the information and to draw independent conclusions. Direction is made independent from outside influence. This Ojibwe researcher encourages each reader of the thesis to do so. However, in order to accommodate both worlds and the standard format of a masters thesis I offer the reader these suggested recommendations.

The first recommendation calls for social worker practitioners to learn directly from the Elders. This learning must be part and parcel of the theoretical foundations of social work practice. Opportunity for integration of knowledge must be provided. Much like the experience from this research during the interviews and from prior years of mentoring with Elders, it is imperative that social workers have a similar opportunity for learning. Social work students must have direct personal contact with Elders in order to fully understand and appreciate Native customs, values and ethics associated with traditional healing ceremonies. Elders impart guidance to future generations and it is only through them that Native traditional healing practices can be fostered.

The second recommendation is to make traditional healing ceremonies accessible as a primary means for Native people to engage in traditional healing practices. The entire process of healing must be respected and given essential culturally-appropriate resources. It

is not sufficient to have the traditional healing ceremonies at the peripheral of practice as an appendage to other means of helping. To achieve this, service organizations must be made more cognizant of and sensitive to Native values, customs, beliefs and spiritual practices. Only then, social workers will be in a position to be more responsive to emotional, physical, mental and spiritual needs of Native people.

The research affirms the recommendation of Nelson et al, (1985) to uncover Native ways of helping and in doing so to allow greater opportunity for the community to utilize natural support systems. This has particular relevance for northern social work practice where it is evident that there are knowledgeable Elders who are supportive of the healing for Native people. This research supports the development that has taken place in Indian country in terms of reestablishing traditional healing ceremonies in the communities.

Future progress in this direction requires incorporating holistic thinking and a shift towards working within a cultural climate. This requires the willingness and acceptance of Native spirituality as a critical component of social work practice with Native people. To operate from a purely academic or intellectual basis contradicts Native customs and beliefs.

The request that the researcher puts forth is to maintain the integrity of the customs of the Native people with respect to Native healing practices. For social work practitioners to engage successfully with Native people it is imperative to understand Native protocol and to maintain the respect that exists by Native people for Native healing ceremonies.

The great opportunity for social workers is to become more familiar with the twenty identified characteristics of traditional healing practices and to foster utilization of these characteristics in a way that demonstrates their interrelationship and interdependence. Native

people have a collective history and the journey of healing has been both a community experience and a private one. This research has identified the substantial contribution traditional healing practices can have in healing the human spirit for the Native person, family, community and Nation as a whole.

APPENDIX A

NATIVE HEALING

INTRODUCTORY LETTER AND CONSENT FORM

April 1994

**327 Simpson Street
Thunder Bay, Ontario**

February 1994

Boozoo!

My name is Alice Sabourin, I am an Obijbwe woman from the Heron Bay First Nation. At this time I am working on a Masters Degree in Social Work at Lakehead University. The area of study is in Native healing. The purpose of the research is to document traditional healing ceremonies in a manner that will identify how and why these ceremonies are of value to Native people and how traditional healing ceremonies may be included in a respectful manner within social work practice. I understand and respect the importance of the sacred knowledge and have designed the research to ensure that knowledge will be protected the utmost.

I am requesting to meet with you and listen to what you may want to share on Native healing ceremonies. This would be part of my learning as I am searching to understand what healing is for the Native people and how this relates to my future work as a social worker. Although I have a few questions in mind I am open to just listening and learning.

I would ask permission to use a recorder as I would want to listen again and again to what is being shared, however at any time upon your request I would turn the recorder off. In addition I would not print your name or give your identity unless you would want this to be included in the final thesis.

It would be an honour to meet with you and I have sought your help to ensure the studies have meaning. In doing so I may be breaking the oral tradition of our people or that I may misinterpret the teachings. The greatest risk is that what is contained as sacred in thousands of years of our history may not be reflected in a written document.

The benefits will be in strengthening Native communities through encouraging traditional healing. Secondly, Native people will be recognized and acknowledged for their unique gifts as healers and third, Native organizations and workers will have information to assist in their effort to bring healing to families and communities.

The completed thesis will be made available at the University library or the Department of Indigenous Learning. If you would like to have a copy of our discussions I would be able to mail it to you. Meegwetch for your help and kindness

Alice Sabourin

CONSENT LETTER

I _____ am an Elder from _____.
I have read the letter which explains the work Alice is doing on Native healing and have agreed to spend time with her. She has asked to use a tape recorder which I have agreed to but may ask to have it turned off at any time.

I understand that my time will be of a volunteer nature and that the confidentiality is ensured as the tape will be destroyed upon completion of the thesis, and that my name may be included only on consent. I also have been told that the information will be available at the University through the Department of Indigenous Learning or the University library.

Signature of Elder

Date

_____ I would like my name added to the thesis

_____ I would like to have a copy of the interview

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW GUIDE WITH NATIVE ELDERS

OPENING COMMENTS

It is an honour to be here. I am pleased that your sharing will be part of my learning. I have a good feeling about what I will learn from you today and I trust that this will not be left as a dusty book on a shelf or as something to misuse or sell but rather as something from which others may read and learn from. It is not always our way to ask questions so I've taken some time and really thought about and prayed for what I need to understand and bring to others who may be interested in Native healing. What came to me are only touchstones for us this afternoon. I wrote down only what I felt as important and in a good way so not to disrespect the sacred knowledge of the Anishnahbeg. In knowing the way of Anishnahbeg learning, I also understand we may find ourselves in a different direction which is also good. I am here as a learner and trust this is very important for myself and others who may share this knowledge at a later time. I say meegwetch for your willingness to be part of my learning. May we begin?

- 1) There are many terms I have heard over time when the people are discussing Native spirituality and ceremonies, I have used the term Native healing where others would say Indian religion, the Red Road or Good Indian Medicine.
Pause ... wait

COULD YOU TELL ME WHAT YOUR UNDERSTANDING OF NATIVE HEALING IS AND IS THIS THE SAME AS THE OTHER TERMS?

- 2) When the Native people want or are having a rough time or in need of help, they are now turning to the traditional healing ceremonies. pause ... wait

IS THERE AN EXPERIENCE OR A STORY YOU WOULD LIKE TO SHARE WHICH MAY EXPLAIN WHAT THE HEALING CEREMONIES ARE ABOUT?

- 3) When I was younger maybe eight years back and first attending the ceremonies I was so interested and eager to learn I would go to anything I was invited to or heard about. On this particular winter night I went to a sweat lodge out on the Fort William Mission. Some of my mother's friends from Eagle Lake came to that ceremony. We were all visiting around drinking tea. When the time came to go in the two visitors from Eagle Lake did not join the rest of us. One of the men I've known for a number of years told me quietly, "do not go to just anyone's lodge, find out about the person who is conducting the ceremony." They left and I continued to partake in that ceremony. I have heard similar words over the years from different people. (pause) wait.

I'M WONDERING IF THERE ARE WAYS IN WHICH YOU OBSERVE ANOTHER PERSON OR WHAT YOU MAY WANT TO KNOW BEFORE YOU WOULD ENCOURAGE ANOTHER PERSON TO GO TO THAT PLACE FOR HEALING OR TO INVOLVE YOURSELF IN THAT TRADITIONAL HEALING CEREMONY?

- 4) One of surest questions I am asked if I tell another Native person that there is a

ceremony being held. That question is, "who is holding the ceremony?" When I give the name of the person, the reaction is either very positive and the person will try and come and maybe ask for a ride or directions. If they have not heard of the person they may ask questions about where they are from, who they are staying with. Depending on who is leading the ceremony there may be a quietness and even a direct statement that they do not participate in that person's ceremony. I find that Native people are in spite of their ability to tolerate and accept many people, are careful about who they choose as teachers and helpers in the traditional aspects of Native spirituality and especially if it has to do with personal healing. pause
... wait

I AM WONDERING WHAT IT IS THAT BUILDS TRUST IN AN ELDER TO THE POINT WHERE NATIVE PEOPLE WILL GO TO GREAT LENGTHS, TRAVEL LONG DISTANCES, BRING THE MOST PRECIOUS OF GIFTS AND OFFERINGS TO ATTEND THEIR CEREMONIES AND FOLLOW WITH GREAT EARNESTNESS THE TEACHINGS AND GUIDANCE THEY RECEIVE?

- 5) I have heard of, seen and been part of beautiful things happening all over our country for the Native people who are learning the language and gaining back the traditional culture. In the different gatherings Native people share the healing journey that they are on. We still see on the news the tragic losses of our Native people, for example the suicides in the North. There is still suffering in the communities. pause ... wait

ARE THE ELDERS ASKED BY THE LEADERS AND ORGANIZERS TO HELP OUT IN TIMES OF CHANGE OR GREAT TURMOIL TO ASSIST IN THE HEALING OF THE NATIVE PEOPLE?

- 6) I heard many different Native people say "that Elder is a really good teacher." When I have listened to another person tell their story of healing, they often speak of the Elders involvement in their life and how this was important to them. Pause... wait

IS THERE AN EXPERIENCE YOU HAVE HAD OR A STORY TO TELL WHICH WOULD HELP ME TO UNDERSTAND HOW THE ELDER'S HAVE BEEN ABLE TO GUIDE NATIVE PEOPLE AND THE COMMUNITY TOWARDS HEALING?

- 7) As Native people leave the university's who have degree's in social work they are recognized as being what we call 'the helping profession.' Many others like myself are interested in the traditional healing ceremonies as a way to keep ourselves well and to help the Native people. pause ... wait

**WHAT CAN WE AS NATIVE SOCIAL WORKERS IN THE 'HELPING PROFESSION'
BRING TO NATIVE HEALING?·**

This brings to a close the last of the touchstones for our discussion. There were many things that I have raised and I want to thank You for your patience. If there is anything you would like to request of me or know about the work that I am doing, I am here and willing to answer. The words in which you have shared will stay with me for a long time, and again, meegwetch.

APPENDIX C

NOTES FROM NOEL KNOCKWOOD

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