**University of Alberta**

# Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families

by

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Dedicated to Allen and Gabriel Benson

# Abstract

Although there is a vast body of literature on family resilience, very little represents research from an explicitly Indigenous paradigm. This research process included an Indigenous research path and a case study informed by Indigenous worldview. The data collected in both informed the findings presented here and contributed to the creation of the final model for building resilience in Indigenous families. The results demonstrate how self-determination in research, service delivery, organizational leadership, spiritual connection and individual, every-day practice can be a powerful expression of freedom, liberty and humanity. The case study maps how the self-determination of an Aboriginal organization, resulted in the creation of a program that assists violent Aboriginal men reconcile their traumatic histories, reconnect to an interconnected worldview and repatriate their responsibilities as men within a strong, healthy Aboriginal society.

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It truly takes a whole community to finish a PhD.

# Table of Contents

# List of Tables

# List of Abbreviations

**Names:**
Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA)
In Search of Your Warrior Healing Program (ISOYW)
The Correctional Service of Canada (CSC)

**Samples and Methods:**
Teaching Circle of Elders (TCE)
Sharing Circle on Healing (SCH)
Sharing Circle on Self-Determination (SCSD)

# Chapter One: Prologue

## *Learning Through Relationship*

*My research in the area of Aboriginal family resilience began over 15 years ago, and is rooted in the life-changing experiences I have had in ceremony. Before I begin describing the research process, I want to be explicit about "where I was at" when I began my doctoral studies and be honest about the relationships that helped to shape the spiritual, methodological and relational space I inhabited, before and early on in the process. Clearly, this section is for those readers who may ask questions such as "Who is she?", "Who were her teachers?" and "In what context is this project situated?"*

*I will answer these questions by disclosing aspects of some important relationships, to portray the contexts that have shaped my understanding of Indigenous research and why I have chosen this particular process for my dissertation research. The description of this journey illustrates how I have gained knowledge as a result of and as a function of important relationships in my personal and professional life, as well as in ceremony.*

*My Mother, Elsie LaBoucane (nee Harmatiuk) is Ukrainian-Canadian, with both parents originating from the Bukovina region of Ukraine. My father, Terry LaBoucane is of mixed ancestry; his father was Métis, whose family history has been traced back to a French fur trader who came to Canada, through the Métis Red River community in Manitoba and eventually to the Laboucane settlement in Alberta, which was later renamed Duhamel. My paternal grandmother, Grace LaBoucane (nee Lawford) was English, her father a doctor*

*in the very large Smoky Lake region in the 1900's. I was raised in St. Paul, Alberta. At the age of 17 I moved to Edmonton to attend the University of Alberta, moving back to St. Paul to work at the Boys and Girls Club once completing my undergraduate degree.*

*At a community ceremony soon after, I was told by an Elder whom I had just met that he was my dad's cousin, as he drew a family map on his hand to demonstrate the connection he and I had. He ended our conversation by stating "it's about time your family was here [at the ceremonies]". I was shocked. Until that time, I had no idea that I had close relations in Saddle Lake First Nation – it just wasn't something that was discussed in my family. Although I had been teased and ridiculed as a child by Euro-Canadian class mates for being an Indian, I had only a vague idea that my family was 'part Native' – but the details of that connection were a mystery.*

*Soon after, I was invited by my mentor, friend and role model Sharon Steinhauer to attend a Sweatlodge ceremony that her husband, well known Cree Elder Mike Steinhauer, was offering at their home in Saddle Lake First Nation. The connection I felt during that ceremony led to my regular attendance at Mike's weekly Sweatlodge ceremonies and completion of my first fasting ceremony. I then became a regular helper at Mike's twice a year fasting ceremonies – part of the cooking crew who provided three meals each day for the Elders, helpers and visitors to the fasting camp and prepared the berry offerings for the ceremony each night. I learned so much from these ceremonies: Cree protocol, ceremonial songs, teachings, the story of the reclamation of ceremonies by a core group of*

*Cree men in Alberta and Saskatchewan and the Cree creation story. These teachings were reinforced ceremony after ceremony through repetition and participation. Helping with the ceremony preparation and cooking taught the importance of being in service to community, humility, how and why we do things the right way and the enjoyment and camaraderie that occurs between women who work together. Being in the kitchen also afforded many opportunities to hear the Elders' informal conversations – the stories they shared were full of history, humour and insight. I met so many people within that ceremonial community and felt a deep sense of connection and gratitude; I also hoped I was making at least a small contribution to the ceremonies and by extension, to the healing others realized through their own participation.*

*Participation in Mike's ceremonies was indeed a transformative time in my life – the beginning of my healing journey. Although my circumstances and location eventually changed, resulting in my inability to continue regular attendance at Mike's ceremonies, my employment at Native Counselling Services of Alberta for the past 14 years has afforded opportunities to continue my learning/healing journey and apply this knowledge in my work. For example, as a Director of a Young Offender Open Custody Facility, I was able to build regular opportunities within the program to connect Aboriginal youth with Elders, ceremonies and cultural activities, as well as create and implement a case-planning model for the facility that was grounded in the medicine wheel teachings. In addition, I have been involved in NCSA's In Search of Your Warrior Program for men and Spirit of a Warrior Program for women, which are founded*

*in an Aboriginal worldview and employ a holistic framework of trauma healing. My involvement has included the development of curriculum, program implementation, facilitator training and program evaluation. I believe that any successes I have achieved in these tasks have been a result of my commitment to walking on a traditional learning/healing path. I also continued my spiritual journey during this time by Fasting, Sundancing and attending other ceremonies.*

*Later, upon taking a position as a researcher for NCSA, I had many opportunities to work with highly skilled Aboriginal leaders and philosophers in many different projects. The mentorship of the late Dr. Joe Couture during the Costs-Benefits Research project with Hollow Water First Nation (Couture, Parker, Couture & LaBoucane, 2001) contributed significantly to my understanding of Aboriginal community-based research. Joe role-modelled the critical position and function of respect protocol within the Indigenous research process and how ceremony can inform and transform the research process. Joe and his wife Ruth taught me how good relationships beget good research. Joe was so clear on the place of humility in life and learning (often saying that we know nothing and have nothing to contribute until we are at least 50 years old); indeed although I frequently found it torturous to keep quiet and often failed miserably, it remains one of the most important teachings of my life. Listen. Don't interrupt. Hear. Learn. Even after his passing on, I have read and re-read many of Dr. Joe's published and unpublished documents, which are rich with insight and personal stories and are effective bridges between Indigenous and Western worldviews.*

*Later, I was also afforded the opportunity to work for five years with the late Dr. Harold Cardinal on an Aboriginal Rights Research Project. Harold was my hero, mentor and friend. An important figure in Canada's history, he taught with kindness, a great deal of patience and humour. It was from Harold that I first heard of the Cree concept of Wahkohtowin, and it was with his encouragement and enthusiasm that I considered how the doctrine of relationships would inform an Aboriginal model of family resilience. He and his wife Maisie, along with Maggie and Don Hodgson and Allen Benson, were my key support group, helping me undertake the ceremonial research process with Dave Gehue and attending the first ceremony when I asked permission to do the research. When I doubted that I should be the person to do this work, Harold was adamant that I was chosen for it and had a responsibility to continue. And when Harold was very close to passing on into the spirit world and in a great deal of pain, he made the considerable effort to tell me how happy he was that I was doing this research, apologizing that he had been too sick to attend ceremonies and help me to deconstruct the information I was getting - but I was not to worry – he would be helping me in those ceremonies on the other side. How could I have possibly been so lucky?*

*For the past 15 years, I have also had the good fortune to be able to call Maggie Hodgson a friend and mentor. An international leader in the area of addictions, Maggie is a thoughtful teacher and role model of the importance of reconciliation – in the broad context of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal relations, as well as in my every day life. It was Maggie's commitment to reconciliation that*

*helped to form my understanding of the vital role of repairing and rebuilding relationships in the healing process. She has offered support, advice, praise and critical feedback so often and in so many ways, having a significant influence on my work and life.*

*Finally, much of my work in research and administration at NCSA has been within the context of my marriage to the CEO, Allen Benson. During this time we have attended ceremonies, listened for hours to Elders' stories, co-led research projects and hosted meetings, gatherings and ceremonies at our house. I have learned about the contemporary Aboriginal family in the context of being a wife and mother in a family that is actively pursuing a bi-cultural lifestyle – one that is grounded in an Aboriginal worldview and successful in Canadian society. All of my mentors have also had strong connections to Allen, which has brought to bear other opportunities for learning that would have otherwise not been possible. Thus, I acknowledge the essential role this relationship has had in my healing and learning journey and in my research on Aboriginal family resilience.*

*Therefore, when I was ready to begin my dissertation research in 2001, I had a personal understanding of Cree ceremony, teachings and protocol. In considering how the research would unfold, I wanted to find a meaningful way to incorporate my albeit basic traditional knowledge into the research process, as well as purposefully learn more about teachings specific to families through the enactment an Indigenous way of knowing. In the process, I hoped to gain more insight into Indigenous epistemology and science philosophy by working with Elders and ceremonialist. This became my Indigenous research path, and my*

*work commenced with ceremonialist Dave Gehue, with the support of my Indigenous advisory group.*

*In addition, my work with the In Search of Your Warrior (ISOYW) program for over a decade has inevitably influenced my understanding of the intergenerational effects of trauma on the Aboriginal family, and led to my interest in the connection between healing and family resilience. Through my experience with ISOYW, I knew that program participation helped men to connect to their healing journeys, become more engaged in Aboriginal spirituality and choose non-violent lifestyles; however, there had never been a systematic collection and analysis of participant/facilitator information regarding whether the adaptations that these men were actualizing would positively affect their families or communities. Therefore, I proposed that I use Native Counselling Services of Alberta and the ISOYW program as a case study to explore the role of community-based healing programs in building family strength and resilience.*

## *One Person in Two Solitudes: The Research Path(s)*

*The research path that I chose for my doctoral studies transformed as the process unfolded. When I began, my goal was to incorporate assumptions that exist in both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing in a complimentary and unique manner, specifically through the integration of different ways of knowing, theory and method which reside in diverse disciplines, in order to answer complex, multi-dimensional questions regarding Aboriginal families. I envisioned a single course of action that had elements of both traditions. Certainly, the*

*doctoral process is grounded in the Western scientific tradition; it requires the candidate to submit to a rigorous sequence of examinations created by the learning institution, in order to demonstrate the capacity to continue through the research process, contribute new academic knowledge and ultimately earn a Doctorate of Philosophy. Within the Indigenous scientific tradition, there also exists a process whereby the student must demonstrate commitment and capacity in order to access protected information and gain the privileges and responsibilities inherent in this information. This process, while not well known in the academy, involves apprenticeship with a ceremonialist and knowledge keepers, requires a long-term commitment to the learning process and includes specific rites that must be completed successfully in order to earn specific knowledge.*

*Looking back, however, I realise that this plan was flawed. It is impossible to include only some elements of the PhD process, as I was required to commit to the process in its entirety in order to attain my degree. Further, the Indigenous process is equally demanding – the knowledge I sought mandated a nonnegotiable commitment to ceremony and to a ceremonialist. It is now clear to me that I have walked both of these challenging paths separately and simultaneously. I found myself at times focussing only on the Western tradition (extensive forays into relevant literature and studying for three intense months for my comprehensive exams come to mind), at times focussing only on ceremony and seeking traditional knowledge, and at other times trying to hold both in my mind to resolve a dilemma that had halted my progress on either path. I now believe that these*

*processes and ways of knowing are best experienced as parallel paths, wherein neither sphere of knowledge is diminished. Therefore, the combination of prayer/ceremony/meditative reflection (providing the innerscape research) and the qualitative case study approach which is informed by an Indigenous worldview, including interviews, sharing and teaching circles and participant observation (providing the outerscape research) forms the holistic methodological framework for this project.*

# Chapter Two: Introduction

Paulo Freire (1970, 2000) suggests that our vocation and purpose in life is to become fully human, a process he called humanization. For Freire, humanization is a process of regaining the freedom, justice and liberty that has been denied to people through the dehumanizing process of oppression.

Western research has historically been a dehumanizing enterprise, which is evident in the scientific literature that explicitly states or implicitly implies that Indigenous peoples are without legitimate history, knowledge and society (Smith, 1999, p. 26) and are therefore arguably not fully human. Scientific and societal understanding of Indigenous peoples and cultures have largely been formed by the interpretations of the colonizer, creating a belief in the Western world that Indigenous people are fundamentally savage, violent or child-like and their societies, unsophisticated and primitive (Smith, 1999; Fanon, 1959; Said, 1978; Loomba, 1998; Cardinal, 1969; Cardinal, 1999). Further, Western domination in science has left very little space for Indigenous ways of knowing within the cannons of research methodology and therefore have created a certainty within Western societies that Indigenous peoples were neither scientific nor intelligent.

Freire theorized that there is an "intimate connection between education and the process of becoming more fully human" (Roberts, 2000, p. 1) when the learning process is reflective, critical, dialogical and praxical. In this way, actively seeking knowledge through a liberating research process can be a humanizing endeavour that repatriates freedom. Many scholars, both Indigenous and not, have

recently adopted humanizing research processes; Indigenous theory, philosophy and method are now being carefully explored within the academy and Indigenous voice made central within the planning, implementation and writing-up of research findings. This collaborative, participatory research movement is part of the humanizing learning process that is currently transforming scholarship.

I believe that this research project is a part of the humanizing research movement. The Elders, the organization, the program chosen for the case study and the participants of research have all been involved in a learning process of transformation and are arguably reclaiming their humanity. Creating a spiritual connection through ceremony and discussions with Elders, ceremonialists and key informants has indeed been a critical part of my life long journey toward becoming fully human. At all levels of this project, learning and transformation were accomplished through relationships with people, groups, organizations and communities, as well as with the spirit world. In this dialogical process, the participants and I have named the issues, solutions and processes encountered. Some participants have used names and concepts that originate in Indigenous language and thus evoke Indigenous philosophy and culture. Having the capacity to name reality is a humanizing process (Freire, 2000; Smith, 1999) and it affords the opportunity to determine how that reality is managed or transformed. In this way, self-determination in research, service delivery, organizational leadership, spiritual connection and individual, every-day practice can be a powerful expression of freedom, liberty and humanity. This project sought to give voice to the humanization process of the participating people, organizations and Elders.

## *Seeking Humanization While Walking in Two Solitudes*[1]

The learning I sought in this research process was indeed a journey towards humanization; I desired a transformational experience that would reveal the larger truths about the connection between healing and building resilience in Indigenous families. I wanted to engage in a process that would build upon my life experiences in research, program delivery and ceremony, thereby connecting my past with my present and projecting it into the future through purposeful knowledge seeking and the subsequent surfacing of research findings. I chose to include two separate research endeavours, which I refer to as (1) Indigenous research path and (2) a case study informed by Indigenous worldview. The data collected through both approaches informed the findings presented here and also contributed to the creation of the final model for building resilience in Indigenous families.

The Indigenous research process I undertook was grounded in my relationship with shake tent ceremonialist[2] David Gehue and the group of people who were involved in the considerable work that is involved in putting up a ceremony. The process included my participation in a series of ceremonies, whereby I sought knowledge about traditional family relationships, structure and rules. The process included acquiring new knowledge through ceremony, integrating this knowledge into my life and then reflecting upon this experience in terms of how my life was transformed by these actions. The general questions that were posed while in ceremony and in discussion with the ceremonialist were:

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[1] (Ermine, 2005)

[2] Dave has recently authored (with Joyce Atcheson) and published a book about his ceremonial work entitled: "Voices From the Tent". See http://voicesofthetent.com/index.html

What was the original family information given to the Aboriginal people in the land now known as Canada? How can this traditional knowledge build family resilience in modern-day Aboriginal society?

This spiritually-grounded research process was deeply humanizing; through prayer, meditation, ritual and ceremony I was afforded the opportunity to learn more profoundly what it means to be a human being within the web of relationships that exists in the universe. I believe that humanization is thus the acquisition of deepening insight into our interconnectedness – with this knowledge we better understand ourselves and the other people and beings that surround us. Learning through spiritual connection is a deeply personal experience that is accomplished in the innerspace (Peat, 2002), transformed into changed beliefs and action in the outerspace and then influences change in family, community and nation. In this way, the humanization of the individual contributes to the humanization of the collective.

On a parallel track, I also completed a strength-based case study. Strength-based research embraces capacity and capacity-building approaches remedies issues that have emerged as a result of deficit-based research (Maton, Dodgen, Leadbeater, Sandler, Schellenbach & Solarz, 2004). Rather than exploring the ways that problems or disorders develop, strength-based research helps us to understand how abilities, competence and healthy development occur; rather than indirectly blaming the victim for the situation they are in, strength-based research works to empower groups who have been disempowered as passive victims; and as opposed to isolating, pathologizing or castigating individuals and families that

are experiencing issues, strength-based research supports them in acknowledging and building on existing capacity. The strengths that are typically identified for families and communities:

> "encompass varied instrumental, relational, structural, and cultural characteristics such as providing useful roles, facilitating meaningful relationships, setting valuable goals, using adaptive decision making processes, providing culturally proscribed norms that regulate behaviour in healthy and purposeful ways, and facilitating a positive sense of belonging to a valued community." (Maton et al., 2004, p. 5)

Perhaps most significantly, the idea of focusing on strengths, capacities and positive aspects of populations who are experiencing difficulties deeply resonates for many applied researchers because it reflects a perspective that fosters hope, action and advocacy – which can create a humanizing research experience. Believing that all people have a wellspring of strength that can be identified, accessed and enhanced helps us believe that our work can make a substantive difference in the communities we work with, serve, and to whom we are committed. For researchers who work at the boundaries of research, action and advocacy, and particularly those individuals who are invested in social research within their own community, the solution-focused nature of strengths-based research allows us to apply our skills for the common good more explicitly in the communities with which we identify.

The case study I completed focused on the building of resilience in Aboriginal family, in connection with the resilience of the individual, community and nation. The project maps the self-determination of Native Counselling Services of Alberta, the development of the In Search of Your Warrior Program and the effect the program has on Aboriginal families and communities. The

findings illuminate the connection between the self-determination of an Aboriginal organization – the freedom to name the issues that Aboriginal people face and create interventions that are contextually and culturally specific – and the creation of an opportunity for Aboriginal men who have suffered significant childhood trauma and perpetrated violence on the families and communities to connect to a healing journey. The transformation the men realized through program participation ultimately has a profound effect on and therefore contributes to the resilience of their families and communities. The process of humanization through the pursuit of freedom, the re-connection to an Indigenous worldview and the acceptance of responsibility to act, is evident in the voice of the all of case study participants – the CEO, program facilitators and program participants (violent Aboriginal men in federal incarceration).

Although the Indigenous research path and the case study were pursued separately, the findings from one process inevitably enhanced my understanding of the findings of the other. In particular, the experiential Indigenous research brought to the fore the importance of ceremony within the In Search of Your Warrior Program – that through ceremony the participants would have the same opportunities I had in retrieving family information and that knowledge would assist in their healing process. The deeper insight I gained regarding the principles of Natural Law[3] (care, sharing, kindness, respect, honesty and self-determination) through ceremony intensely affected my understanding of how this knowledge could transform the lives of the ISOYW participants. I believe these examples are

[3] In the Cree context, Natural Law is the constellation of rules, guidelines and consequences that are part of the gifts the Creator gave to the Cree people (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000). This law also represents the core values (some of which are stated above) of the Cree culture,

an application of Freire's (2000) conceptualization of humanization: increasing my understanding of my own humanity helps me to understand the humanity of the participants in my research. This concept is further described by Desmond Tutu, who explains the African concept of 'ubuntu': "We believe that a person is a person through another person, that my humanity is caught up, bound up, inextricably, with yours" (Tutu, 1999, cited in Tutu Foundation, 2008). That is to say my understanding of the participants' healing process could only be realized through the lens of my own. In this way throughout both the Indigenous research and case study process, I was and remain a researcher who is "historically positioned and locally situated [as] an all-too-human [observer] of the human condition" (Bruner (1993), p. 1 cited in Lincoln & Denzin, 2000).

Thus, the purpose of my research was to employ an Indigenous worldview in a strength-based study to better understand the process of building Indigenous family resilience. The primary research question that guided the entire research process was: Is there is a framework of resilience that is specific to the Canadian Indigenous family? This question was informed by three sub-questions:

- Sub-question 1: what was the nature of relationships in Indigenous families pre-contact?
- Sub-question 2: how have relationships in Indigenous families been renewed in the face of historical and contemporary adversity?
- Sub-question 3: can culture-based community programs assist individuals to learn how to develop positive family relationships? If so, how?

It was my hope that a framework of Indigenous family resilience would emerge from my research, which could be employed in future research leading to programming and policy that can promote the strength, connectedness and resilience of the Canadian Aboriginal family.

## *A Note on Terminology*

Throughout this discussion, the terms ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Indigenous’ are used interchangeably. The term ‘Native’, is used whenever referring to organizations (such as Native Counselling Services of Alberta) or literature written during the period when that term was most popular.

# Chapter Three: The Indigenous Research Path

In this chapter, I will describe the Indigenous worldview and the how my understanding of Indigenous research has informed the research path I have taken in my dissertation research.

## *Theoretical Foundations for Indigenous Research*

The Indigenous episteme, or way of knowing, is informed by the philosophical belief in the interconnectedness of all aspects of the natural, physical and metaphysical world (Cajete, 2000, Colorado, 1998; Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000; Bastien, 2004), as well as connections between inner (referring to the soul or spirit within an individual) and outer worlds (Ermine, 1995). From this paradigm, knowledge is mediated, made accessible and real through building and maintaining relationships. All knowledge is therefore personal knowledge (Goulet, 1998) that is created by the learner through connection, engagement and participation (Bastien, 2004). The Indigenous way of knowing is essentially an experiential learning model (Couture, 1991), whereby "knowledge is not so much stored as data in the brain but is absorbed in the whole body"[4] (Peat, 2002, p. 66). Couture (1991) further describes this learning model:

> Traditional Native holism and personalism as a culturally shaped human process of being/becoming, is rooted in a relationship with Father Sky, the cosmos, and with Mother Earth, the land….This relationship with the land/cosmos is personalized and personal, and marked by a trust and a respect

[4] This can be compared to the philosopher Polanyi's (1958; 1998) 'tacit knowledge' – a knowing that is not passed on through books or verbal instruction, but is learned by direct experience through the whole of one's body.

> which stems from a direct and sustained experience of the oneness of all reality, of the livingness of the land. (p. 207)

The assumption of interconnectedness gives rise to three other principles that have guided this research. First, as a product of the reciprocal relationships that exists between beings (including spirits) throughout the cosmos, reality is dynamic and constantly changing, as opposed to fairly stable and consistent (Klein & Jurich, 1993). This is characterized by a world that is in a dynamic, circular flux in which human beings participate directly; one "does not seek to control or to hold on to stability within this flux with analytical ideas, laws and concepts. Instead they seek balance, harmony and relationship" (Peat, 2000, p. 278). From this perspective, Indigenous science is not in search of a definitive truth within finite categories, but rather is an attempt to better understand the essence of things, as a function of their relationship to the knower (Cajete, 2000). At the same time this interaction provides opportunity for the knower to learn about him/herself in the process; thus all knowledge about self is gained as a result of relationships with others.

Second, Indigenous philosophy holds the expectation that all things will eventually change, adapt and transform "in both predictable and unpredictable ways, thus requiring human vigilance and adaptation" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 46). Transformation is a key principle in Indigenous science, signalling the importance of context in how our understanding of the world around us is formed. If all things are indeed in a state of constant change, what we know about them will change as well and be dependent upon the context in which the information was gained.

Third, learning through relationships requires conscious, careful attention to the building and maintaining of relationships with the world around us by enacting the principle of renewal. Humans are responsible for all of their relationships, and as such are required to continually renew these relationships in a good way. Renewal is accomplished through actions that demonstrate respect; in many Aboriginal cultures this includes the observation of protocol within respect relationships, participation in ceremonies that renew alliances with the spirit world and following cultural laws that help people, families and communities preserve good relationships with each other.

## *Indigenous Research Approach and Methodology*

> Indigenous research, according to Indigenous researchers, is a ceremony and must be respected as such…It is the knowing and respectful reinforcement that all things are related and connected. It is the voice from our ancestors that tells us when it is right and what is wrong. Indigenous research is a life changing ceremony. (Wilson, 2003, p. 175)

The concept of learning through inner reflection and meditation is a cornerstone in Indigenous science methodology and is described by Ermine (1995): "In their quest to find meaning in the outer space, Aboriginal people turned to the inner space. This inner space is that universe of being within each person that is synonymous with the soul, the spirit, the self or the being" (p. 103). The outer and the inner spaces are viewed as being intimately interconnected, one informing the other; prayer being an instrument of knowing, extracting "relevant guidance and knowledge from the inner-space consciousness" (Ermine, 1995, p. 105) that is then applied in the outer space. This exploration of existence is

therefore a subjective venture, whereby Aboriginal people "place themselves in the stream of consciousness" (p. 104), or within the life force that connects all living things, in order to gain knowledge of the world around them. In this way, "all knowledge flows from the same source: the relationship between the global flux that needs to be renewed, the people's kinship with the other living creatures that share the land, and the people's kinship with the spirit world" (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 41).

The importance of the inner exploration through dreams and vision quests (Ermine, 1995), and prayer (Colorado, 1988) implies that the value of spirituality and spiritual practice in the Indigenous research process is paramount. Colorado (1988) describes this dimension of research as "the hallmark of Indian science" (p. 54). The practice of spiritualism, through ceremonies, prayer and ritual therefore becomes the technology (Cajete, 2000) of Indigenous science, which is employed in systematic ways.

In the Indigenous episteme, understanding the world around us results from an interplay between our innerscape and outerscape experiences. Peat (1996) describes innerscape experience as thought and intuition, but it can also include prayers, visions and dreams and what we experience in the outer world, "through various instruments of investigation and experimentation" (p. 2). The Indigenous research presented here is founded in the Indigenous philosophy of interconnectedness, embracing a subjective, holistic epistemological stance. The pursuit of knowledge in Indigenous science can be described as a highly individualized journey. The relationship of the researcher to what is being

researched (Creswell, 1998) is intimate and personal (Goulet, 1998), as knowledge can only be gained experientially, through the interaction of the body, mind and spirit of the researcher and environment(s) around him/her. “It is an experience in context, a subjective experience that, for the knower, becomes knowledge itself. The experience is knowledge” (Ermine, 1995, p. 104).

Cajete (2000) describes this as a process of learning through examining relationships which are “not just physical, but psychological and spiritual, in that it involves dreams, visions, knowing and understanding beyond the simple objectified knowledge of something…. It is inclusive of all the ways that humans are capable of knowing and understanding the world” (Cajete, 2000, p. 75-76). In this way, the research project was designed to be comprehensive and inclusive; all available data (to the best of my ability), including individual (researcher and participant) experiences, the accumulated/intergenerational knowledge of the community, metaphysical information (both collected by researcher or shared by participants), and any other pertinent information available from the environment (that I could respectfully use to inform the research process) was collected as data and considered in the development of the model presented here (Deloria, 1999).

### *Miyo-wicehtowin:* Have Good Relationships

Throughout this Indigenous research process, the most important guiding principle was my understanding of the Cree concept of *miyo-wicehtowin*, the law that requires that I build and renew good relationships with the people with whom I worked. From this teaching, I understood that nothing was more important in

this knowledge-seeking process than situating myself as the humble seeker and focussing on my relationship with those who took the time to teach me. I demonstrated my humility and respect to these teachers by observing respect protocol to the best of my ability.

Purification is a part of preparing to ask for knowledge (Kenny, 2000). I smudged[5] and meditated before each conversation either by myself, with the person I was talking with, or as a part of the larger group that was attending the ceremony. In doing so I wished to evoke a spiritual dimension to the relationships from which I would acquire knowledge. For every ceremony I participated in as a seeker of knowledge, I offered items as a part of the respect protocol; I believe that the offerings that I made were received in the spirit in which they were intended. Observing protocol was the bridge or door to the knowledge I was seeking. During the Teaching Circle of Elders (TCE) that was held at my house in November, 2007, the Elders responded to the offering of respect protocol, describing what it meant to them to receive it:

> I am very grateful for the offering that is placed upon me. It is a high honour and respect when you give an offering when you are seeking and asking for – in that way I pray with this offering for guidance to speak about the proper things that are needed here for our people. So that is how I take this offering. I work for the Creator. For me I just want to say that part – I respect this and I thank you for that proper protocol. (TCE, 2007)

In my work with Dave Gehue, the Mi'Kmaq ceremonialist, not only was respect protocol required, but I also needed to attend ceremony and ask permission to seek knowledge in the subsequent 48 ceremonies. This first ceremony was a test of my good intentions, and during that time the boundaries of what I was to do

[5] A purification and prayer ceremony that includes the burning of sacred medicines.

with the knowledge I received were made clear. In addition, the serious consequences of contravening these boundaries were also described. My commitment to gathering this knowledge within the structure of Natural Law was made and the process began.

During the Indigenous research process, respect protocol was also the process of acquiring informed consent. When the protocol offering is accepted, it signifies a profound commitment to the knowledge seeker. The CEO of NCSA, when addressing the Teaching Circle of Elders, stated:

> In the [non-Aboriginal] world, people have to sign a paper to give permission to record on camera. In the traditional way when we make an offering and an offering is accepted – people don't understand that that is our consent – traditionally. I think it one of the differences of our laws – when we do research in Indian country or when we ask a question of an Elder – when they accept an offering, that's giving consent to give knowledge. (TCE, 2007)

The Elders responded in affirmations:

> It's very important to do that – to make that gesture to give a gift and to receive a gift. In this case – the gift of knowledge and the sharing of that story…. When protocol is done, like in this case, it is opening the door for that relationship – to be open and of giving – sharing. And that's what is very important in our traditions – more important than me signing a piece of paper. Because a paper is a paper to us – it is something that was brought to us – it was foreign. In our way this is what guides us. I think you have done the proper thing – we are willing to share as much we can with respect to the questions that you have brought before us. (TCE, 2007)

In their response, the Elders further clarified the role of the respect protocol in Indigenous research; the spiritual dimension of the offering brings a strict requirement of accountability both to the knowledge seeker (who must use the knowledge in the appropriate ways) and to the teacher (who after accepting tobacco must follow through on his/her teaching obligation). In this way respect is

further made real by the spiritual connectedness between the seeker and the teacher, as well as between the individuals and the spirit world. The Elders described the serious of this commitment:

> I have many times accepted one cigarette and traveled a couple hundred of miles because of that cigarette. Not knowing what was on the other end – only I know my commitment was when I took that cigarette. It is an unwritten thing – you have made a commitment to it and you follow up on it. And when you finish that ceremony or what ever is required of your service – only then is the commitment complete. (TCE, 2007)

In summary, this project demonstrated four aspects to the offering of protocol that were observed during my research project: protocol surrounding entrance to the ceremony, the asking of permission to seek knowledge within the ceremony, the acquisition of informed consent of the teacher and the unity of the ceremonialist and the knowledge seeker in the research process.[6] Thus, respect protocol provided the strict ethical framework within which the ceremony of learning can occur.

## Concentric Circles of Ceremony

The Indigenous research process has been indeed a life changing ceremony. (Wilson, 2003) This process began when I was 23 years old, at the Sweatlodge ceremonies offered by Mike Steinhauer in Saddle Lake. That introduction to Cree ceremony resulted in the completion of the first of my many fasting ceremonies. That first fundamental decision to commit to Cree spirituality resulted in a series of life opportunities and choices that has resulted in my work

[6] This is a modification of the three aspects of protocol put forward by Couture, Parker, Couture & LaBoucane (2001).

at NCSA, my particular family life and the opportunity to pursue the Cree and other Aboriginal teachings in earnest throughout this PhD process.

I believe that the traditional knowledge I gained was a product of ceremony, and one which led to more ceremony and deepened my knowledge and appreciation of ceremony. The process of actively seeking knowledge within ceremony was a hard-learned lesson. I did not begin attending Sweatlodge ceremonies with the purpose of becoming an active seeker of knowledge; rather I was attracted to the sense of belonging that I felt within a supportive spiritual community and soon understood how ceremony needed to be a core activity in my healing path. After a while, it became apparent that the knowledge I was gaining about myself and the world around me was reinforcing and enhancing my healing journey, and in turn, the healing work that I did deepened my understanding of the knowledge I received. In this way I saw myself completing circles of understanding, always coming full circle back to an original idea, but this time seeing it with new perspective and greater understanding. This has happened many times in my life, as I have revisited concepts that I thought I intimately understood, to realise that with different insight, I now saw a more profound dimension and/or connections to other notions as well. After more than a decade on this healing journey I began to understand the uniqueness of traditional knowledge and that the pursuit of this knowledge would become my life-long journey.

## Real Knowledge is Personal Knowledge[7]

The central research questions in this Indigenous research process were:

1. What was the original family information given to the Aboriginal people in the land now known as Canada"?
2. How can this traditional knowledge build family resilience?

These questions, put forward in the shake tent ceremony with Dave Gehue, were the questions that I held in my mind during the fasting ceremony I completed in June 2007 and were the topic of many discussions before and after ceremony with Dave and others who were present. As a result, much of the information that I received was about the roles of mothers, fathers and grandparents in the raising of children, the purpose of the gender-specific and nation-specific rights of passage ceremonies and how Natural Law informs family structure, roles and behaviour. For example, I learned in ceremony that imbuing a strong identity in children is a primary role of mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts and uncles; this is accomplished by teaching children information that is specific to his/her clan and his/her nation. In essence, it is a process of orienting children within what Dave Gehue called 'the organized spiritual matrix' to which they are born, as well as teaching them to follow the rules of Natural Law so that they may be resilient individuals within resilient families.

It soon became apparent that in order to integrate this knowledge into my reality and understand the influence of clan affiliation, I needed to recover my own clan connection through ceremony. Now that the ceremony is completed, I

[7] (Goulet, 1998).

am learning how this affects my family life and strengthens my connections to my family and community. This process of learning, acting and reflecting has resulted in the deep incorporation of the teachings into my reality, which has in turn transformed my thoughts and behaviours. This learning style has elements that exist in experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1984) which posits that knowledge is formed by way of transformative experiences; the learner acquires concrete and abstract experiences and then transforms these experiences into knowledge through reflection and active experimentation. Throughout the Indigenous research process, the experience of ceremony gave way to important information, which I in turn attempted to integrate into my life (active experimentation) and then reflected upon how that integration affected my outlook and behaviour. This process provided a critical framework for considering the building of family resilience and my understanding of the experiences of the research participants. Indeed, early on in this research process, the late Dr. Harold Cardinal advised that the most laborious part of doing this type of research is unpacking the information that is received in ceremony. I believe that he was referring to the life-long experiential learning process of acting (attempting to integrate the teachings in my life), reflecting upon how these actions have affected my life and then translating this information into knowledge that can be shared with a wider audience.

## Reporting My Findings

> "So to write, for one thing, requires keeping in hand an immense oral 'reference bibliography'. i.e. the stories, legends, prophecies, ceremonies, songs, dance, language and customs of the People. To so write also requires that the qualitative dimensions of these sources be expressed and conveyed with integrity, e.g., the non-verbal of the storyteller and the ceremonialist – and that is virtually impossible. And, although Elders have declared that the "…time has come to share the secrets …" its achievement remains most awkward, if not painful" (Couture, 1991, p. 203).

The results of this research process are most evident in the changes I have realised in my life. However, this knowledge seeking has also informed a category that has emerged in the case study: how a reconnection to an interconnected worldview is vital to the process of building Indigenous research. This information is deeply personal but helps in understanding the process of reclaiming this connection, the role of the Elders and ceremonies in this process, and how/if programs or services can be enhanced to include these experiential family-resilience opportunities for clients. These experiences (ceremonies and conversations) have also assisted in the understanding of how traditional values such as the principles of Natural Law are still practical in contemporary society, illuminating that "Traditional values are dynamic and can be and are being re-expressed in new forms" (Couture, 1991, p. 203).

The findings from the Indigenous research process are integrated within the definition of resilience that has emerged, and have served to expand upon the conclusions I have made from the findings of the case study. The findings of this research process, however, will not be reported in a separate section of this discussion, as they would be reported out of the context in which they were acquired and made real. Rather, I have chosen to include these findings in the

conclusions wherever they can be situated within an appropriate circumstance, which can bring to bear the spirit within which they were understood.

## *Demonstrating Rigor in Indigenous Research*

While articulating the outerscape methods in a precise, organized and systematic manner is a relatively straightforward process, innerscape research does not lend itself as readily to such articulation. Methodology in Indigenous science, while including methods that may appear unorthodox in Western science, is nonetheless extremely systematic (Cajete, 2000). This process of research is often referred to as a journey (Bastien, 2004) or pathway. As Cajete asserts, "Learning involves a transformation that unfolds through time and space. Pathway, a structural metaphor, combines with the process of journeying to form an active context for learning about spirit" (Cajete, 1994, p.55). The metaphor of pathway also implies that research is not necessarily a linear process, but rather a purposeful one that can go in many directions and gather a plethora of information. In Indigenous science, it is not just the end result (findings) that is important, it is all of the experiences, relationships and personal insight gained or created throughout the journey (Cajete, 2000).

Rigor is therefore demonstrated in this research through proposed systematic methods including observance of cultural protocol and the logical progression of meditation, ceremony and ritual which was supervised by Mi'kmaq healer Dave Gehue. There were, of course limitations to this research as well; at times I felt woefully inadequate and not sure if I was doing everything 'in the

right way’; I found myself often asking for guidance and acknowledging that even though I felt insufficient, that events would unfold as they should and I would receive the information I was meant to have. Therefore the quality of the information I gained is linked to my ability to absorb and integrate what I was being taught. At times this was immediate, while other times it was a very slow, sometimes emotionally painful process.

# Chapter Four: Case Study Approach Informed by Indigenous Worldview

My initial research design was to employ a synthesis of the assumptions of Indigenous, resilience, human ecology and systems theory for my dissertation research. This proved to be too broad and actually served to disrupt the research process, as I struggled to create the synthesis during the initial research phases. I am thankful that I began with human ecological theory, as there is significant convergence between Indigenous and human ecological theory, and it led to the rich exploration of spiritual and intellectual environments that are grounded in Indigenous theory. Eventually it became obvious that the best path forward was not only to separate the Indigenous research path from the case study path, but to also find ways of ensuring the case study methods were adapted to include cultural protocols and principles that were appropriate for the research participants. This included the employment of the principles of respect and reciprocity founded in the Indigenous worldview.

The purpose of this chapter is therefore four-fold: first, to discuss the development of family resilience and ecological theory in the academic literature, including the most common conceptualization of family resilience; second, to discuss the similarities and differences of ecological theory and Indigenous theory; third, to describe how an Indigenous worldview has informed the case study methods employed in this research process; and finally, to provide a detailed description of the methods that were used for the case study.

### *Connections between Indigenous and Ecological Theory*

There are many ways in which Indigenous philosophy and theory parallel human ecology and family ecology theory. General systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968) was the forerunner in Western scientific theory to address the interrelatedness of systems, focussing on holism rather than on mechanistic, reductionistic models (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993), dynamic rather than static realities (Strauss, 2002) and the importance of context and feedback when considering systems (Berks, Colding & Folke, 2003). Systems theory has also been credited as a unifying science for natural, physical and social sciences, as the same basic principles can be applied to systems in all fields (von Bertalanffy, 1975; cited in Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993). In the study of families, systems theory has guided research into three core areas, namely "How family processes should be understood; the relationship of family systems to other systems; and how systems change" (Whitchurch & Constantine, 1993, p. 330).

Human Ecology theory builds on the principles of systems theory, with a specific focus on the interrelationships between humans and their environments, in that 'life and environment are inseparable parts of a greater whole" (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993, p. 419). In human (family) ecological research, holism directs researchers to consider how families (family members) affect all facets of community[8], natural environment, macrosystems[9] (Children, 2001), and

[8] The community systems referred to include the symbiosis of the interrelationships between the family and cultural, social, religious, political (Badir, 1993), economic and physical environments.
[9] Macrosystems are the "values, laws, conventions, customs and resource" (Children, 2001, p. 11) that are inherent in a culture.

chronosystems[10] (Bronfenbrenner, 1994), and how they affect us individually and collectively.

For systems theory and human ecological theory, adaptation has also been identified as a key process of both humans and their environment as a function of the relationships between them. "Adaptation is behaviour of living systems that changes the state or structure of the system, the environment or both. Humans do not simply adapt to the environment but also modify the environment to reach desired outcomes" (Bubolz & Sontag, 1993, p. 433).

Family ecology, an aspect of human ecology, employs principles of human ecology within a family-specific context; the family is viewed as an "energy transformation system that is interdependent with its natural physical-biological, human-built and social-cultural milieu" (Bubolz, 1993, p. 419). Family ecology concerns itself with the study of family member interaction as a sub-systems of the family system, as well as the symbiosis of the interrelationships between the family and cultural, social, religious, political (Badir, 1993), economic and physical environments.

Bubolz (1993) describes how family ecology theory combines assumptions from general systems theory and from human ecology, in a family specific manner. Family resources, for example, are a combination of energy (what a system requires to do its work) and information (which is an inherent function of the system), which are transformed to achieve family goals. In addition, adaptation is considered to be a normal behaviour in a system; the

[10] Chronosystems mark the changes that occur, or do not occur over time. (Bronfenbrenner, 1994)

feedback loop intrinsic in the family system provides information for families to create a response. The environment can either act as a stressor or mediator for the family; families can "adapt to their environment but also modify the environment to reach desired outcomes" (p. 433).

In Bubolz's model of family ecology theory, the family has attributes including physical, emotional and interpersonal needs, values, resources, goals and artefacts. These interact with different environments in order to undertake family processes. The processes the family ecosystem undertakes are the transformation of information and energy for adaptation. "The outcomes of the functioning of the family ecosystem are conceptualized in terms of quality of life of humans and quality of the environment" (p. 349). Families are therefore, in a state of constant change; as a result of the influence of all aspects of the family ecosystem, the family is effecting change in society and society is effecting change in the family. From this systemic perspective, "the individuals who make up the environment must constantly adapt and change…The family environment is not static" (Badir, 1993, p. 8).

Within the family ecological model, problem-solving is a natural, rational process that families must undergo, as a result of their interactions with their environment (Badir, 1993). Families must also employ resources from the psycho-social, physical and cultural environments to manage challenges and changes, "formed by the underlying culture and by family experiences and nurtured by family tradition, [traditions, celebrations, family times and routines]

are strengths that not only mark change, but provide stability to family life" (Badir, 1993, p.3).

Therefore, the centrality of the assumption of interrelationships between humans/agents and their environments and the consequential dynamic, adaptive nature of reality is central to human ecological theory (Visvader, 1996; Young, 1991; Bubolz & Sontag, 1993), family ecology theory (Bardir, 1993; Bubolz, 1993) and systems theory (von Bertalanffy, 1968), demonstrating that there exists a shared ontology among systems, ecological and Indigenous theory that could be stated as: 'all things are related and therefore effect change in one another'.

### *Difference between Indigenous and Ecological Theory*

The fundamental difference between Indigenous philosophy and the Western philosophy is the epistemological stance taken; this will be demonstrated by contrasting a definition of holism with that of interconnectedness. The ontological principle of holism, which holds that "reality may be best understood by the interrelationships among its constituent parts" (Klein & Jurich, 1993, p. 51) infers that we must study the relationships between agents (e.g. humans and environments) in order to understand the properties of the agents. The epistemological assumption made here is that the learner will maintain a certain objective distance from the agents under study throughout the research process; indeed the relationship under study is between two external agents that the learner is observing and coming to know.

The principle of interconnectedness in Indigenous theory, however, advises that we enter into the relationship with what we are studying in order to develop a personal and subjective understanding of the agent. Knowledge of the agent and all of reality is therefore an individual interpretation that is contextually dependent; the properties and behaviours of the agent can and will change as a result of the reciprocal relationship it maintains with its environment and as a result of the relationship with the learner.

Further, if systems theory, ecological theory and Indigenous theory all ascribe to the principle that 'all things are related' – the definition of 'things' would most likely be contested between the paradigms. The Indigenous understanding of interconnectedness includes the human connection to all aspects of the cosmos, including the spirit world and the spirit of inanimate objects. Joe Couture, a well known Cree Elder and academic, quoted an anonymous Indian: "There are two things you have to know about being an Indian. One is that everything is alive. Two is that we are all related" (1991, p. 206). This simple statement depicts complex Indigenous philosophy succinctly; it signals that the spiritual dimension and spirituality of reality is real and we have a continual responsibility to our reciprocal relationship with it. Indigenous philosophy instructs that the metaphysical is part of our lived reality, whether we are hunting, working, playing or learning. From this perspective we must be mindful of how we engage with our surroundings, as everything has a spiritual dimension to it. The Indigenous paradigm calls us to include ceremony and spiritual mindfulness as an aspect of research, first, to ensure that our relationship with the spirit of what we are

studying is proceeding in a respectful way, and secondly as a means of better integrating the knowledge we receive. It also implies that we can only know something if we understand the spiritual dimension of that knowledge.

Within the human ecological theory literature, spirit and spirituality are considered in a significantly different manner. Of the references to spirit that were identified, many referred to the study of Indigenous peoples' Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) and how that information can be used to resolve conservation issues and promote stewardship (Schaefer, 2006; Pierotti & Wildcat, 2000; Drew 2005; Huntington, 2000). In TEK, the primary focus is not the study/connection to the spiritual aspects of nature, but rather to understand how the TEK borne from spiritual connection can be employed 'scientifically'. There is an implicit assumption that traditional knowledge is not acquired through scientific method, but rather is:

> knowledge gathered from undertaking several different pursuits, such as hunting, medicinal collection, preparation for spiritual ceremonies, or maintenance of a household economy. These pursuits are generalized activities found in many traditional societies and characterize ways in which indigenous peoples interact with the natural world." (Drew, 2005, p. 1287)

I argue that the process Indigenous peoples have employed to attain TEK include Indigenous research methods derived from Indigenous theory (information generated through the spiritual connection of a people to the land and all beings that inhabit it). In contrast, employing TEK as data in conservation and stewardship research is ecological science.

Other references were theoretical arguments that called for the acknowledgement of spirituality within human ecology (Steiner; 1995; Young,

1991). Steiner (1995) argues that what began as objectivity in human ecology and then shifted to subjectivity must now change further to include "an expanded idea of reason, one that is capable of grasping the essential relations…Such a comprehension of reason involves a kind of religious meaning, provided that 'religious' refers to the attachment of something superior to which we try to establish a correspondence" (p. 39).

Cheetham (2000) argues that ecological science is too positivistic and requires a paradigm shift. Discussing the dogmatic nature of positivism, he warns against a scientific cosmology that seeks to understand everything and to find the ultimate truth of the world through extreme theoretical abstraction, where "the individual as such has no autonomy, no place, no meaning" (p.70). He calls for ecologists to embrace a more contextual, fully engaged cosmology that accepts the presence of mystery - that aspect of reality which cannot be known definitively. He speaks of our need to know God, in as much as that which can not be known is the "spark of divinity in all things" (p. 70).

In human ecology, it then appears that this paradigm is most concerned with the study of the spirituality of humans, as it relates to and affects the people under study (Young, 1991), or the need to embrace the divine in order to avoid the pitfalls of positivistic ideology (Steiner, 1995; Cheetham, 2000). While authors such as Steiner and Cheetham are embracing the notion that belief in a higher power has a place within human ecological theory and research, there appears to be no evidence in the human ecological literature that this paradigmatic change or revolution (Kuhn, 1996) has actually begun; I have found no evidence that

ecology, as a scientific discipline, has embraced the metaphysical in any substantial way other than as another external object that requires objective study. Further, the prescribed changes have fallen significantly short of the concept of engaging consciously and wholly with the spiritual dimension(s) of the world as an aspect of scientific rigor.

## *Two Perspectives on Resilience*

The previous section explored the differences between ecological and Indigenous theory. It follows, then, that the way family resilience is perceived will differ depending upon the theoretical lens through which one is gazing. This section will explore the development of the scholarly understanding of family resilience, as well as how an Indigenous worldview can inform our understanding of family resilience.

### Current Scholarly Conceptualization of Resilience

Individual resilience, for many family- and child-focused scholars, refers to a "process encompassing positive adaptation within the context of significant adversity" (Luthar, Cicchetti et al., 2000, p. 543). In addition, there are two important conditions that must be met in resilience, namely "the exposure to significant threat or severe adversity; and the achievement of positive adaptation despite major assaults on the developmental processes" (Luthar, Cicchetti et al., 2000, p. 543).

When considering family resilience, Patterson (2002a) states that family resilience "is similar to family regenerative power, particularly when good outcomes follow significant risk situations confronting a family" (p. 237). Family

resilience describes a dynamic, emergent, fluctuating process, whereby over time families demonstrate more or less resilience depending upon the situation, rather than a static or constant trait (Patterson, 2002a; Luthar, Cicchetti et al., 2000; Conger and Conger, 2002). In this way, *resilience* is a process that is differentiated from *resiliency*, which is a personality trait (Masten, 1994; Luthar, Cicchetti et al., 2000).

In order for a family to demonstrate resilience, there must be exposure to adversity. Patterson (2002a), differentiates between normative demands ("typical life cycle and societal changes affecting everyone" (p. 238)) and non-normative family demands, which are those severe, unexpected traumatic events which are over and above the expected stressors, and include situations such as natural disasters and death. However, even normative stressors may be difficult to manage for a family who has many other stressors upon it. For example, having a baby is a normative stressor for most families; however, for a family of five living in poverty, the added demands of another baby may have a cumulative effect, and lead to a "pile-up of family demands" (McCubbin and Patterson, 1983).

In the face of adversities, families employ protective factors in the resilience process. Johnson (1995) refers to these protective factors as the family's "inherent strengths to challenge and triumph over adversity and, in doing so, [the family] emerges stronger and more confident" (p. 3). Johnson goes further to describe the changing nature of these protective factors:

> "Resiliency mechanisms evolve and are anchored in the family's development over time as a supportive and functioning system, they exist as contributions from each members unique resiliency traits and they are

> tempered (and perhaps modified) each time the family system encounters adversity." (p. 3)

Finally, the outcome of the experience of adversity in the process of family resilience is an adaptation of the family. Adaptation, as defined by Patterson (2002b), can be viewed as "a process of restoring balance between capabilities and demands" (p. 352); that is, the family changes in some way to accommodate the stress it is encountering, yet preserves the family unit. Adaptation is therefore viewed as the central process in the family's capacity to overcome significant stressors (Boss, 2002). Discussion regarding how the research undertaken here was intended to enhance this understanding of resilience, particularly from the Indigenous perspective, is included in the conclusion of this section.

## Family Stress, Coping, Adaptation and Management

The most current scholarly understanding of family resilience has its roots in research that was conducted over 50 years ago. Rueben Hill (1949) proposed the ABCX model of family stress and the post-crisis model of adjustment which was founded in general systems theory and structural functionalism. Hill began with the assumption that the family is a closed system with an impermeable boundary and the system returns to a state of equilibrium after a crisis.

Based upon these assumptions, Hill suggested that that there were three key variables that determine whether an event would cause crisis in a family: (A) the degree of hardship the situation presented; (B) what resources, experience, flexibility and structure the family had available to deal with the situation; and (C) the way that the family perceived the event (whether they saw it as a threat to the

family or not). Finally, the model defined the crisis, or (X) as "those situations which create a sense of sharpened insecurity or which block the usual patterns of action and call for new ones" (p. 9).

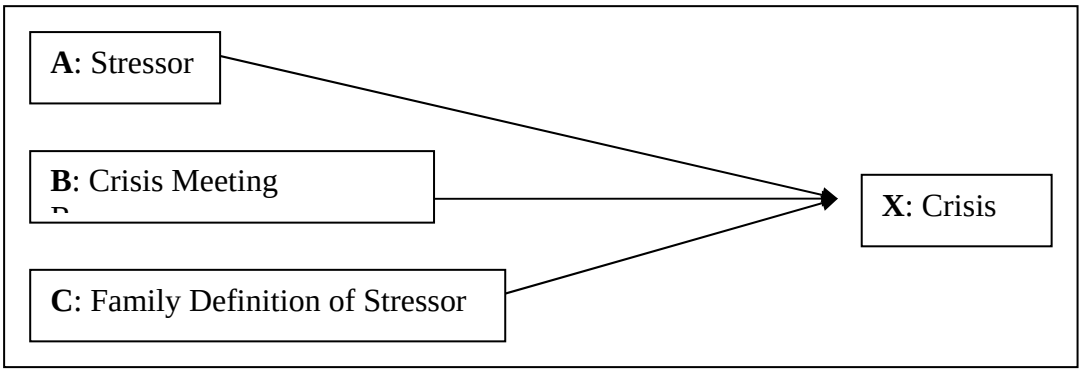



***Figure 1. Representation of Hill's ABCX Model of Family Crisis***

Post-crisis, Hill used the roller coaster model of reorganization (Koos, 1948) to describe the process, which included four phases: crisis, disorganization, recovery and readjustment. Following on the assumption that the family is a closed system, Hill indicated that crisis affected all aspects of the family. Hill also stated that no single factor can account for how a family adapts; rather many interacting factors account for the degree of success a family will achieve in response to a challenge. Family adaptability (the ability of a family unit to adjust to a change) was measured in the family's:

> flexibility and willingness of family members to shift social roles if necessary, the acceptance of responsibility by all family members in performing tasks, the presence of habits of collective discussion and control, and a repertoire of crisis meeting devices build out of previous successful experiences with trouble. (p. 18)

Hill finally concluded that the most salient factor in predicting successful readjustment is previous history with crisis.

Hansen & Hill (1964) moved from the original position of the family as a closed system, cautiously embracing the family as an open system, as a descriptive tool only, with the four criteria first suggested by Allport (1960). The first criterion is the need for material and energy exchange within the system. Hanson and Hill emphasize that there is both reactive and interactive behaviour within the family unit and between the family and the community. The second criterion of the open system is the return to homeostasis, in order to maintain the system and to find ways of resolving the stressful situations. They are especially guarded about this concept, stating that while there are many studies documenting the homeostatic nature of the family, "re-equilibrium is not essential in family life" (p. 792), and looking for equilibrium can cause researchers to misidentify family behaviour.

The third criterion is that the system increases in order over time, which accounts for families achieving an enhanced level of reorganization after a crisis, because the crisis "stimulates and encourages an enhancement of personality and of the family as a unit" (Hansen & Hill, 1964, p. 789). The fourth criterion of an open system is the transactive relationship between the individual, family and community. An individual family member's influence on the family system must be considered, such as the negative effects of blaming one another for the stressor and the positive effect of clear roles among family members on stress managing behaviour. Thus, "families in which roles are clearly defined function better than those where there is uncertainty of expectations" (p. 811). The community response to the family under stress should also be considered, such as whether the

community accepts or rejects the family as a result of the stressor. Hansen & Hill further argue that "researchers must not only view the community contexts as independent variables to which the family reacts, but also seek for the dynamic exchanges between community and family during the course of family activity under stress" (p. 800).

In the discussion of these criteria, Hansen and Hill (1964) argue that viewing the family as an open system should sensitize researchers to the family's ability to act creatively and with initiative to crisis and possibly become better than before the crisis, rather than to merely react to situations and adjust. They assert that the family can be "described with systems concepts, but it does not necessarily display the characteristics of the system" (p. 792).

In 1973, Burr begins by rejecting the definitions of the family system put forward by Hansen & Hill as well as other scholars who defined the family as a semi-closed system. He views the family social system as "an organization consisting of intricately related social positions that have complex sets of roles and norms, and that the system exists to accomplish a wide variety of objectives such as reproduction, socialization and emotionally intimate interaction" (Burr, 1973, p. 200).

Burr's (1973) contribution to family stress theory is the clarifying of assumptions, definitions and relationships between variables in the model. He defines the stressor event as anything that changes some aspect of the system and produces some degree of crisis. He defines the B variable as "the variation in a family's ability to prevent a stressor event … from creating some crisis or

disruptiveness in the system" (p. 202). He describes B's relationship to A and X, in that the higher the family's vulnerability to stress (lower crisis meeting resources), the more crisis the stressor event will cause in the family unity. Finally, Burr describes the C variable as "the subjective definition of the severity of the change caused by the stressor event" (p. 202). It is Burr's position that the way a family defines the severity of the stressor will make the family more or less vulnerable to the stressor. The C variable therefore influences the B variable, which in turn influences the relationship between A and X.

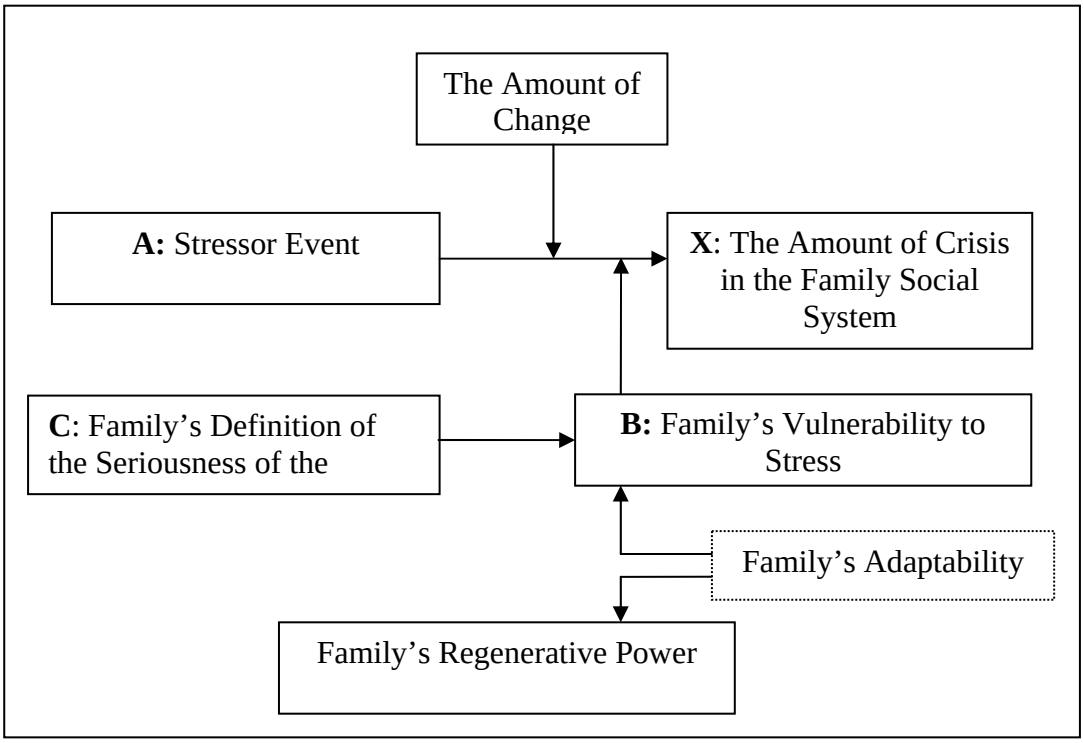



***Figure 2. Burr's Modification of Hill's ABCX Model (McCubbin, 1980, p. 856)***

Burr notes that Hansen (1965) adds to the ABCX model by introducing the regenerative powers of the family as an influential variable on the re-organizational capacity of the family after a period of crisis. He finally presents a

model demonstrating eight intervening variables that influence family vulnerability, as well as thirteen variables that influence family regenerative power.

In 1979 McCubbin focused on the coping mechanisms that indicated that families proactively worked internally at strengthening the family unit, "at procuring community and social supports and, in some cases, at diverting, reducing or eliminating the source of stress" (p. 238). This research launched a new perspective in family stress theory: a shift from crisis to coping, and from "why families fail, to why families succeed" (Boss, 1987, p. 701).

McCubbin (1979) found that coping behaviour can be classified as a dimension of the B variable, or what Hill described as the family's crisis meeting resources. Coping behaviours, following on Burr's conceptualization of family stress theory, reduce the amount of change a stressor causes a family, decrease a family's vulnerability to a stressor and increase their regenerative power. This research also highlighted the importance of interpersonal relationships (specifically close friendships with individuals outside of the family unit) that provide support and increases the family's regenerative ability. Community also influenced the family's ability to manage stressors. Collective support groups can have a positive influence on the family's regenerative capacity; however, adherence to clearly defined community norms and expectations can also decrease family vulnerability. Finally, the family working specifically to decrease the effects of a stressor, either as a group or individually, was the third aspect of coping behaviour investigated.

In 1983, McCubbin & Patterson put forward the Double ABCX Model, which combined all of the previous pre- and post-crisis research into one operable model, demonstrating the process by which a family experiences and then reorganizes as a result of stressors and crisis. This model identified the pile-up of demands (aA), which were defined as "the cumulative effect, over time, of pre- and post-crisis stressors and strain" (Lavee, McCubbin & Patterson, 1985, p. 812). It also incorporated the advances in family stress research to include resources that are actively engaged as a result of crisis, such as coping strategies and family meaning, as influential in the processes of adaptation. McCubbin & Patterson (1983) also included the notion of family coherence, or the way the family views the entire situation, as affecting how the family will adapt. Finally the model expanded the notion of the way in which families adapt by demonstrating varying levels of family re-organization, from poor reorganization (maladaptation) to reorganization that is better than before the crisis (bonadaptation).

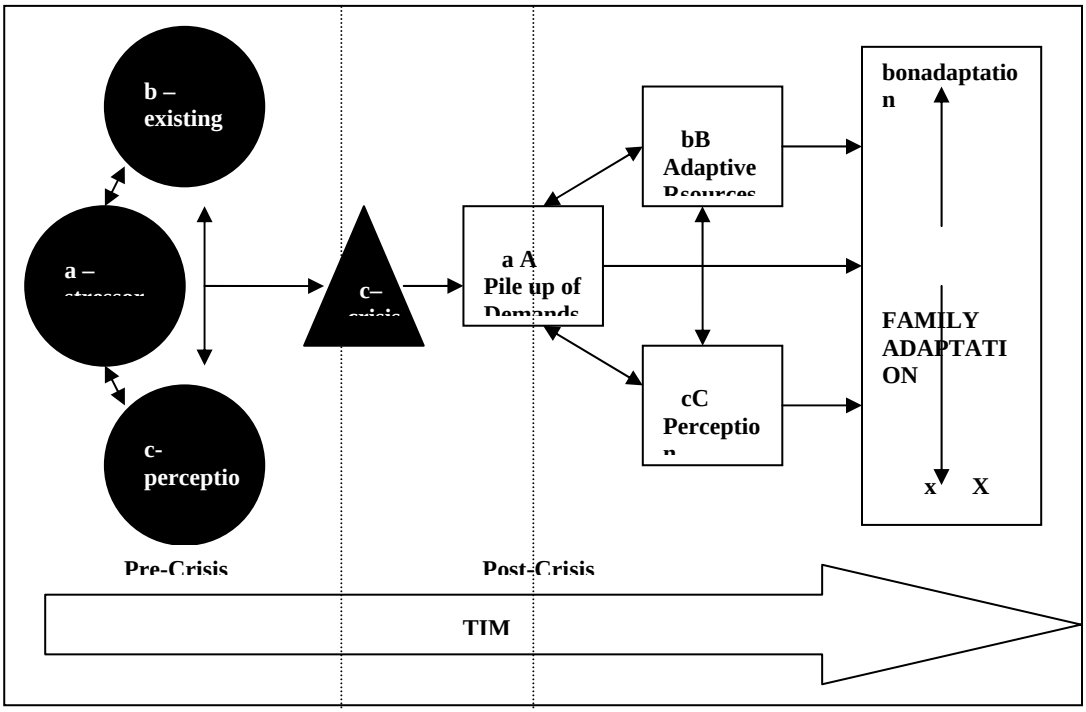



Figure 3. The Double ABCX Model (Lavee et al., 1985, p. 812)

## The Emergence of Family Resilience Models

In the late 80's, family scientists began to make the connection between coping resources and family strengths. For example, Boss (1987) states that the family's resources are "sociological, economic, psychological, emotional and physical assets on which the members can draw in response to a single stressor event or an accumulation of events" (p. 702). This statement follows on the more optimistic paradigm of family research, which focuses on family strengths and the invulnerability of the family.

Boss reflects upon her work in family stress research which focuses on the family context as influential in how families manage stress, as well as family

meaning regarding the situation, primarily in the pre-crisis phase (an adaptation of Hill's ABCX model). As a result of numerous studies she posits that the reason why some families are more successful than others "lies in the meaning that the event has for the family and the individuals within it" (Boss, 1987, p. 719). Boss goes further to indicate that the stressor event does not have a direct influence on the family, but rather, "it is the perception of the event, as mediated by internal and external contexts that determines whether the family will cope or fall into crisis" (p. 720). In Boss's contextual model of family stress, the external context that influences family perception includes historical, economic, development, constitutional, religious and culture indicators. The internal context includes the sociological, psychological and philosophical indicators.

Concurrently, Hamilton McCubbin focused more on the post-crisis side of the family stress model, analyzing the coping resources and appraisal that affects family re-organization and well being. With Marilyn McCubbin (1988), he also developed a typologies model based upon identified family strengths and established patterns of functioning to explain how families adjust and adapt. Joan Patterson (1988) developed the Family Adjustment and Adaptations Response Model, which is grounded in the Double ABCX Model, but focuses the process in which the family balances demands on the family unit with its inherent capabilities to meet those demands. Important to this model is the meaning the family gives to the situation (and to the family itself) which will influence how the family either adjusts to normative stress, or adapts to crisis.

Finally, McCubbin, McCubbin, Thompson & Thompson (1995) introduced the Resiliency Model of Family Stress, Adjustment and Adaptation. This model is a convergence of all family stress theory research conducted over the past forty years, with a conceptual framework of resiliency that had been used in psychological studies primarily with children (Garmezy, 1991) and Holocaust survivors (Antonovsky, 1987). These concepts were easily applied to the family unit in the context of family stress: stressors and risk, resources and protective factors; and resilience and bonadaptation.

McCubbin et al. (1995) state that their Resiliency Model is an:

> …extension of these earlier models, emphasizes the family's relational processes of adaptation and the family's appraisal processes involving ethnicity and culture that facilitate the family's ability to institute new patterns of functioning and achieve harmony while promoting the well-being and development of its members". (p. 5)

This model is divided into two phases – adjustment and adaptation. In the adjustment phase, established patterns of functioning are employed; they interact with stress appraisal and resources to create the family's problem solving and coping skills. The result is either bonadaptation or maladaptation. In the event of maladaptation, a crisis occurs and the family is forced to take on new patterns of functioning (adaptation phase). These patterns are influenced by five levels of stress appraisal (situational appraisal, family paradigm, family coherence and family schema), and two levels of resources (family resources and social support). The resulting new problems solving and coping mechanisms assist the family to adjust successfully.

At around the same time, Burr & Klein (1994) proposed a change to the entire manner in which stress theory is conceptualized, from the positivistic linear model (the single and double ABCX models) to a post-positivistic "critical-emancipatory and ecosystemic approach to family stress theory" (Burr & Klein, 1994). Inherent to Burr & Klein's model is the need to move away from a causal model, as there are too many intervening variables in the family system to delineate actual causality. In addition, they advocate on behalf of the study of patterns and processes in the family system and its interaction with the environment, as opposed to studying specific variable of family functioning. They also assert that research with the family should identify principles of family functioning that can inform practice and help families deal with stress.

The most recent model of family stress theory has been developed by Boss (2002). In this model, she states that family stress theory needs to go back to Hill's original four variable model, but that it should be used in a more contextual manner, stating that "Ridding ourselves of the ABCX model is not the solution, but we must rid ourselves of its linearity and its progression towards unnecessary complexity in new adaptations" (p. 34). In addition, following on a point of view she asserted in the 1980's, Boss still focuses on perception, appraisal and meaning as the most important variables in the family's ability to manage stress. Boss cautions against the use of concepts of "resilience" (focus on the family's ability to withstand a stressor) and "coping" (the family's adjustment to a stressor) in her model, as they focus on the family's adjustment, rather than the family's capacity to rebel and get rid of the stressor, or society's responsibility to make changes to

decrease external stressors. Boss recommends the use of the term "managing" as a desired outcome of the family stress process.

Finally, Froma Walsh (2003) employs a "developmental perspective on stress, coping and adaptation" (p. 53) in her conceptual framework of family resilience. Walsh views family resilience from a developmental, relational perspective; fostering resilience in families (through therapeutic intervention) promotes healing, transcendence and growth in the family. Walsh argues that spirituality plays an important part in our belief systems, which ultimately affects the resilience of the family by affecting how the family views and copes with crisis. Walsh further focused on the therapeutic aspect of spirituality, which helps to foster a positive value system, gives a sense of purpose, builds community supports through ritual, inspires family members, and prompts change and growth through adversity.

In conclusion, current understanding of and research into the process of family resilience is founded on family stress theory, first proposed over 50 years ago. Scholarly discourse has focused on how stress, coping and adaptation interact within very simple to very complex conceptual models.

## *Case Study Approach*

A case study is not a method, but rather a strategy or an approach to doing social research (Schwandt, 2007). Robert Stake (1995) defines the case study as "the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activities in important circumstances" (p. xi). It is therefore

different from other approaches in research, because the focus of the inquiry is not on the interaction of a set of variables, but rather on the unit of analysis or case specifically. The primary purpose of the case study is to first understand the case (Stake, 2006), by undertaking its detailed examination. A case can be defined as an integrated system (Stake, 1995) that is a:

> Specific and bounded (in time and space) instance of a phenomenon selected for study…. Cases are generally characterized on the one hand by their concreteness and circumstantial specificity and on the other by their theoretical interest or generalizability. (Schwandt, 2007, p. 27)

Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) offers three classifications of cases. First, the extreme case is significantly different from typical cases within the phenomenon under study. He argues that the "atypical or extreme cases often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied" (p. 229), and are therefore useful in providing a thicker description of that which is being studied. Second, a critical case is identified by having "strategic importance in relation to the general problem" (p. 229). Critical cases fall into two sub-categories – they can be an example of a case that is most-likely to occur (which is useful in attempting falsification of an idea or theory) or an example of a case that is least likely to occur (which is useful in verification of a hypothesis or proposition). Third, a case can be classified as paradigmatic, because it "highlight(s) more general characteristics of the societies in question…. It operates as a reference point and may function as a focus for the founding of schools of thought" (p. 232).

Case studies are undertaken when the case that is chosen is of special interest (Stake, 1995) and is concerned with how and why phenomena occur, as

opposed to the quantification or enumeration of events (Yin, 1998). Case studies generate knowledge of the particular and are useful when researchers are interested in understanding "issues intrinsic to the case itself" (Schwandt, 2007, p. 28) for theoretical elaboration, as well as analytical generalization.

Stake (1995) also identifies three different types of case studies. An intrinsic case study is one where the goal is to learn only about the particular case chosen – the case has intrinsic value to the researcher. An instrumental case study is undertaken when understanding the case will lead to a more enhanced understanding about something else. The case becomes an instrument for learning about something it is connected to. Both the intrinsic and instrumental case studies are single-case designs (Yin, 1998). Finally, a collective case study involves multiple cases that have been chosen because they have a connection to each other. Coordinated case studies are undertaken for each of the cases, and the findings are used collectively to better understand that which connects them.

Yin (1998) expands our understanding of cases by providing an alternative method of classification by analysis. He defines a holistic case study as having only one unit of analysis – the case; however, if the investigation requires data collection and analysis of a main unit and subunits, this would be defined as an embedded case study.

## Generalization and Transferability of Findings

Bent Flyvbjerg (2006) has written comprehensively on the strengths and application of the case study approach. He argues that in general, researchers do case studies not solely in the lofty pursuit of proving something; rather a case

study is undertaken in the hope of learning something new. Flyvbjerg (2006) also goes on to argue that case studies are more useful in the enterprise of understanding human behaviour compared to the development of higher level theories and predictive hypotheses; he states that case studies allow for:

> the development of a nuanced view of reality, including the view that human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found at the lowest levels of the learning process and in much theory…. Predictive theories and universals cannot be found in the study of human affairs. Concrete, context dependent knowledge is, therefore more valuable than the vain search of predictive theories and universals" (p. 223-224).

Many researchers, however, have written about the usefulness of case studies in the pursuit of generalizations, citing the attempt to link research findings to a larger populations as being "about the rational for transferability" (Ruddin, 2006, p. 800), or about how valid research findings are in any other instance. Transferability and validity in case study research exists, as long as the researchers claim only that the "analysis holds in comparable cases" (Ruddin, 2006, p. 800). This type of generalization is context-driven, in that it is important to look at the mitigating factors of each case, before applying the findings from another. Therefore, case studies are most useful in producing "concrete, context-dependent knowledge" (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 223) that is carefully transferred.

Further, Yin (1998) states that making generalization from cases studies is "not a matter of statistical generalization (generalizing from a sample to a universe) but a matter of analytic generalization (using single, or multiple cases to illustrate, represent or generalize to a theory)" (p. 239). Ruddin (2006) refers to this type of generalization as based upon case inference, as opposed to statistical

inference, stating that “we do not infer things from a case study; we impose a construction, a pattern of meaning onto the case” (p. 800). Flyvbjerg (2006) further argues that the case study method is specifically useful in theory testing; the in-depth study of a case provides a rich opportunity to uncover data that would lead to either falsification of a theoretical proposition or hypothesis or proving the theory with thick description. Therefore, case studies provide opportunities for understanding, in detail, how real-life situations unfold in the context in which they are situated; these findings can be related to theory, hypothesis or other quantitatively driven research approaches (Flyvbjerg, 2006).

Clearly, the inherent strengths of the case study method also reveal the limitations; cases are not randomly chosen, nor is there usually a sample of any significance (even in multiple case studies) from which one can draw statistical inferences. Case studies are so connected to their context that it is impossible to disconnect the findings in order to create over-arching theory. However, a case can be made for strong ethical reasons for pursuing case study research. Flyvbjerg states:

> from both an understanding-oriented and an action-oriented perspective, it is often more important to clarify the deeper causes behind a given problem and its consequences than to describe the symptoms of the problem and how frequently they occur. (2006, p. 229)

Finally, case studies are often criticized for their inherent subjective bias; the researcher chooses the case for specific reasons, and these reasons can pre-suppose the findings of the research. Essentially, the researcher finds what she set out to find because she chose a case that would ensure these findings. Flyvbjerg

(2006) points out that the "alleged deficiency of the case study and other qualitative methods is that they ostensibly allow more room for the researcher's subjective and arbitrary judgement than other methods: They are often seen as less rigorous than are quantitative, hypothetico-deductive methods" (p. 234). However, issues of bias and subjectivity are relevant for all research; it is a commonly held view that it is impossible to conduct research without making assumptions that affect the outcome of the research – whether the research is qualitative or quantitative in nature (Haraway, 1988; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Gaventa & Cornwall, 2001). Therefore, it is most important to disclose bias within the context where finding of research are reported. This act of situating the researcher within the context of what is being researched while reporting research findings is part of acknowledging that all research findings are partial perspectives – in that they are inherently influenced by the researcher's experiences and interpretations (Haraway, 1988). Stake (2006) refers to this as the ethical responsibility to identify influences on interpretation of the case (cited in Watts, 2007, p. 206) to ensure full disclosure of the partial perspective.

## The Case Study for this Dissertation

The case study process was chosen because it allows for the concentrated inquiry into a specific case, which is a "specific, unique, bounded system" (Stake, 2000, p. 436) to illuminate subtleties that would not be attainable using other methods. It is in part a phenomenological undertaking, as I sought to better understand the experience of both the participants in the ISOYW program and the leadership of NCSA in the process of self-determination – to see the process

through their eyes (Bernard, 1994). For example, by exploring and providing a comprehensive description of what the program experience means for the men who participated, I was able to derive more universal meaning regarding "the essence of structures of the experience" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 13; cited in Creswell, 1998, p. 54). By describing the Indigenous research path separately from the case study, I bracketed my experiences in healing, and described them separately from those of the program participants. In the conclusion, I used my personal transformational experience and that of the research participants to inform the development of the model for building family resilience.

The case study presented here has also taken a grounded theory approach, as one of the stated goals of the project was to generate a model or theory that was grounded in the context of the Aboriginal people in Canada (and specifically the Cree people of Alberta), and informed by numerous research participants, to describe the process of building family resilience. Using a modified grounded theory approach to analysis, categories and subcategories were generated and relationships between the categories explored. Therefore, the project could be described as a phenomenologically-informed case study, which employed a modified grounded theory system of analysis to produce a substantive theory.

I have chosen a single-case design, which is the In Search of Your Warrior Program, designed and delivered by Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA). The case study is an *embedded* study (Yin, 1998), as it includes sub-units of analysis such as the program participants, program facilitators and aspects of NCSA that are connected to the program, as well as the primary unit of

analysis, which is the program. The boundaries of the case were not obvious at the beginning of the case study, but were drawn after the data was collected, and included data collection and analysis at multiple levels. Multi-level analysis allowed for triangulation or convergence of findings between what participants, facilitators and administrators reported.

Further, this case study design lends itself to what Stake (2000) describes as an *instrumental* case study, as the case will be examined "mainly to provide insight into an issue…. [The case] plays a supportive role and facilitates our understanding of something" (p.437). The purpose of the case (the program in question) was to assist in the understanding of the phenomenon of building resilience in Indigenous families through the study of participant transformation as a result of participation in the program. Indeed, understanding how and why participants make positive changes in their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, was important in understanding the bigger issue of how positive relationships can be fostered within Indigenous families that are struggling to maintain interconnectedness with each other, their community and the cosmos. The case study of the In Search of Your Warrior program provided insight into how individuals, families and communities can regain and enhance their connections to each other and with the broader nation and spirit world; the purpose was not to make grand generalizations about programs, but rather to investigate if and how a program that employs an Indigenous theoretical framework (based upon the principle of interconnectedness) can affect change in the interconnectedness of

individuals, families and communities, and whether this interconnectedness can inform our understanding of Indigenous family resilience.

The sample for the case study included seven men who were participating in the In Search of Your Warrior Program and were residents at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre. In addition, I interviewed four In Search of Your Warrior program facilitators, as well as two program administrators.

### *Additional Key informant Interviews*

In addition to the case study, I also collected data from key informants in the areas of resilience, healing, pre-contact family structure/function and self-determination. The purpose of this aspect of the research project was to collect additional information that would 'fill in the gaps' in my knowledge regarding the historical and contemporary Aboriginal family, as well as further explore concepts that had arisen in the case study. In addition, these discussions assisted in drawing connections between the information gained through the Western and Indigenous research paradigms. This sample included Elders, ceremonialists and Indigenous leaders and key family informants. The methods employed to collect data from additional key informants included conducting interviews, facilitating sharing circles and listening to a Teaching Circle of Elders. (See Table 1 for details on the type of participants, method, dates, samples and purpose.)

### *Other Approaches*

The following general approaches also informed the research project. First, the project was collaborative in nature (Piquemal, 2000; Minkler, 2004) founded on the relationships built between the researcher and participants,

community advisors and academic advisors. My goal was to involve Aboriginal individuals who were engaged in this area of study or practice in meaningful, appropriate ways throughout the research process, which included those who were research participants, as well as individuals, who provided advice and guidance (or both). I was fortunate to have an informal community advisory group[11], with which I was in regular contact, seeking advice about the process, nature and scope of the research. This group of individuals shared important life and work experience that helped to shape the research questions that I posed and the way that I answered them. The same type of relationship was pursued with my academic advisors[12], as their leadership in the dissertation process was also paramount and greatly appreciated.

Collaboration was also important during the process of data collection in both for innerscape and outerscape research; it would have been impossible to complete either without developing and maintaining personal relationships with Elders, leaders, program staff, and other key informants in the field. I also relied on members of my community advisory committee, academic advisors and key informants to vet drafts of sections of the dissertation; their feedback was invaluable and contributed to the quality of the final product.

Second, this project employed multiple qualitative research methods; the specific methods that were employed are: literature reviews, interviews (formal

[11] While for the purposes of this dissertation they will be referred to as an advisory committee, a formal committee was not struck. Rather, this is a supportive group of Aboriginal scholars and mentors who agreed to 'see me through' this process. Their commitment to me and my research is greatly appreciated and invaluable.

[12] While this is the more formal advisory structure in the dissertation process, this group of individuals and their commitment to my process has been equally invaluable.

and informal), participant observation and focus groups/sharing circles which will be further explained in the methods section.

## *An Indigenous-Informed Research Process*

> In order to survive in the 20th century, we must really come to grips with the White man's culture and with White ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The white man has many good things. Borrow. Master and use his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general Cultures, between the basic values of the Indian Way and those of Western civilization – and thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. For, to be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had to do this before. In so doing we will survive as Indians, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so. (Declaration made by Elder Louis Crier, Cree Nation at an Elders gathering organized by the Indian Association in 1992; cited in Couture, 1991, p. 205)

The concept of Indigenous-informed methodologies is relatively new within academia; although Indigenous peoples have argued that there has always existed a scientific, rigorous way of knowing in Indigenous cultures evidenced by the survival of the people (Cajete, 2000; Colorado, 1998; Ermine, 1995), Western science has only begun to explore what these methods, approaches and scientific paradigms may be and recognize them as a scientific enterprise. In her landmark publication, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2000) discusses the interaction between Indigenous people and Western science, proposes a process of decolonizing the way research is done and discusses Indigenous methodologies and strategies for the future. Smith argues that contextualizing research in a meaningful way requires an inclusive, collaborative research approach:

> Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology. They are "factors" to be built in to research explicitly, to be thought about reflexively, to be declared openly as a part of the research design, to be discussed as a part of the final results of a study and to be disseminated back to the people in culturally appropriate ways in a language that can be understood. (2000, p.15)

Therefore, when engaging in research that includes Aboriginal people, families and communities the most important aspect of research methods is that they are consistent with the Aboriginal worldview.

Through a commitment to learn and understand Indigenous philosophy, I have conducted my case study research in a manner that was informed by the Indigenous worldview, which influenced the way I conceptualized resilience and the methods that I chose to inform the research questions. Throughout the case study my goal was to collect data in a way that reflects my understanding and commitment to my connectedness to the people, environment and spirit world around me. To accomplish this, I embraced and was guided by the principles of respect, kindness, caring, sharing, honesty and self-determination in all research relationships throughout the research process. In this way, the primary vehicle for learning throughout this research project was the relationships I built with individuals who informed the research question. These important relationships required building, maintaining and renewing throughout the project in order to ensure learning was happening in a good way.

In many instances, relationships with the research participants began years before the project was underway; the interviews and discussions conducted for the project were with people with whom I have relationships founded on mutual love, respect and friendship. From such a solid foundation, the data collected was rich, thick in description and valuable. In other instances, specifically with the men who were participating in the In Search of Your Warrior Program, I took care to ensure that I initiated the relationships from a position of respect, shared my

expectations regarding their involvement in the project transparently, and set clear, healthy boundaries regarding the nature of the relationship. Protocol, ceremony and ritual were important aspects of developing respectful relationships with program participants and the resulting data collected was also in-depth and informative.

I believe I have emulated Smith's perspective throughout this research process; my understanding of Cree protocol, as well as the beliefs and values inherent in an interconnected worldview, guided my decisions, actions and activities. The primacy of developing, maintaining and renewing good relationships in this project also reflects the Cree principle of *miyo-wicehtowin*: the requirement to ensure that we possess good relationships "with one another individually or collectively" (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 79). In order to achieve *miyo-wicehtowin*, I needed to deeply understand respect protocol, which is a part of *wahkohtowin*: the Cree doctrine or constellation of rules that guide relationships.

When I was not working with a Cree person or attending Cree ceremony, (such as with the Mi'kmaq ceremonialist) my understanding of cross-cultural protocol between Canadian First Nations was employed. In addition, within this dissertation, I attempt to discuss the Indigenous research process and the Indigenous-informed case study transparently and in a language that is accessible across academic and community boundaries.

## *Methods Employed*

The process for this project began with the acquisition of ethics certification from the Research Ethics Board for the faculty of Agriculture, Forestry and Home Economics (renamed Agriculture, Life and Environment Sciences) at the University of Alberta. Certification was granted May 26, 2006. Between June 2006 and June 2008, I completed the case study and collected additional information on the specific topics that arose during the case study process. The methods I used include conducting a series of interviews, facilitating sharing circles and attending a Cree Elders' Teaching Circle. The method of data collection, sample, and description of participants is described in Table 1. In addition, the purpose of each sample is included to provide evidence of methodological coherence – a "congruence between the research question and the components of the method" (Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002, p. 12), clarity and transparency of data collected, as well as to enhance the transferability and dependability of the findings presented in this research project (Bruce, 2007).

**Table 1: Links Between Data Collected and Research Questions**[13]

| Participants Involved | Collection Method | Date(s) Data Collected | Sample | Purpose |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| ***Primary Research Question:*** Is there is a framework of resilience that is specific to the Canadian Indigenous family?<br>Sub-Question #1: what was the nature of relationships in Indigenous families pre-contact?<br>Sub-Question #2: how have relationships in Indigenous families been renewed in the face of historical and contemporary adversity?<br>Sub-Question#3: can culture-based community programs assist individuals to learn how to build positive family relationships? If so, how? | | | | |
| ***Case Study*** | | | | |
| In Search of Your Warrior Program (ISOYW) Participants | Formal, semi-structured interviews (2 per participant) | November 2006 – January, 2007 | 7 participants | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• The participants from the ISOYW program provided first-person accounts of their experience in the program and their perspective on changes that they realised as a result of their participation. |
| ISOYW Facilitators | Sharing Circle | January 2007 | 3 participants | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• The ISOYW facilitators provided their perspective of the course curriculum, what the program outcomes are (for participants and their families) and how culture informs the learning/changes realised by the participants. |
| ISOYW Facilitator | Informal, Semi-structured interview | January 2007 | 1 participant | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• The ISOYW facilitator provided additional information on facilitator perspective of the course curriculum, what the program outcomes are and how culture informs the learning/changes realised by the participants. |
| ISOYW Group | Participant Observation | December 2007 | 1 group | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• Provided opportunity to observe ISOYW group process (including circle process), depth of sharing by all |

[13] Table adapted from Bruce, 2007, p. 55.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | participants and the de-briefing of the mask activity in particular. |
| Native Counselling Services of Alberta CEO (Also administrator of ISOYW) | Informal, semi-structured interview | January, 2008 | 1 participant | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• To collect information regarding how the ISOYW program is situated within the larger context of NCSA and within the criminal justice system, how and in what context the program was developed and how the program outcomes contribute to healthy families and communities. |
| Literature Review | All available documents | June – November, 2007 | Documents that have been prepared regarding the program, including program evaluation, the program manual and publications about NCSA (internal and other research). | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• To collect information regarding how the ISOYW program is situated within the larger context of NCSA and within the criminal justice system, how and in what context the program was developed, what are the actual sessions, what are the stated program outcomes and whether or not the program is considered successful. |
| ***Other Key Informants*** | | | | |
| Elders (on their experience of resilience in their families) | In-depth interview | December 2007 | 2 participants | To inform sub-question 2:<br>• The Elders interviewed gave their first-hand experiences of living in contemporary Aboriginal families and spoke about the adversities they personally experienced, as well as how they survived them. |
| Key Informants on healing processes and resilience | Sharing Circle | May, 2007 | 5 participants (3 new participants, 2 who are represented in other categories of research participants) | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• The participants spoke about their perspective of family resilience within the Aboriginal community, their description of the healing process, the connection between healing and resilience, |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | the role of culture and spirituality in the healing process and building family resilience. |
| Key informants on Indigenous self-determination and healing | Sharing Circle | February, 2008 | 7 participants (6 new participants, one who is represented in other categories of research participants). | To inform sub-question 3:<br>• The participants spoke about what is self-determination for families and communities, how self-determination is manifested, as well as the role of self-determination in family and community healing. |
| Key informants on Cree language, culture and doctrine | Teaching Circle of Elders | November, 2007 | 4 participants (Cree Elders) | To inform sub-question 1:<br>• The Elders spoke about Cree teachings/sacred principles and how they inform the Cree perspective on law and family/community relationships.<br><br>To inform sub-question 2:<br>• The Elders spoke about how the inability to transfer this sacred knowledge has resulted in a break-down in family structure and the long-term consequences that result from now following the sacred laws. |
| Ceremonialist | In-depth Interviews | June 2006 – June 2008 | 1 participant | To inform sub-question 1:<br>• A portion of these interviews centred on the clan system that exists in North America, the role of the family within the clan system and descriptions of select clans to illustrate how the system worked.<br><br>To inform sub-question 2:<br>• The remaining portion of the interviews focused on the role of ceremony in the healing process for Indigenous families, a description of the rules by which |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | families must abide, as well as the consequences of not following the rules. |
| Literature Review | A comprehensive review of the literature. | 2004-2008 | Literature on Cree worldview, families and laws.<br><br>Literature on colonialism, the adaptation of the Canadian Indigenous family as a result of colonialism; the strength and issues facing the contemporary Canadian Indigenous family.<br><br>An unpublished document provided by the ceremonialist regarding information on the clan system. | To inform sub-questions 1, 2 and 3 on the topics covered in this project, including the pre-contact family, how the family has changed/adapted as a result of colonization and how the Indigenous family resilience is fostered and built. |

## Semi-structured Interviews

The style of interviews varied between research participants. Interviews conducted with In Search of Your Warrior (ISOYW) participants were formal, semi-structured (Bernard, 1995) and based upon a predetermined interview guide, (See Appendix B) yet allowed for significant variation and for participants to "express themselves in their own terms and at their own pace" (p. 209). I conducted two rounds of interviews; one at the beginning of the program and one

close to the end, after the mask-making session and ceremony were completed. My interview guide was also revised and strengthened between interviews to accommodate new concepts that were introduced and needed to be expanded upon. All of these interviews were recorded digitally and transcribed. More detailed descriptions of the interview process and the context of the research conducted around the ISOYW program are provided in Chapter Six.

The on-going discussions I had with Dave Gehue (the Mi'kmaq Ceremonialist) between 2004 and 2008 were unstructured, open-ended (Fontana & Frey, 2000) in-depth interviews (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) which could be described as "conversations with a purpose" (p. 80). Indeed, I often felt like I did not even know the right questions to ask, and a better strategy was to let Dave's perspective on the topics guide the development of the conversation. Later on when reviewing my notes, I would see that he answered both the questions I asked and the ones that I didn't, but should have. These interviews were immensely satisfying, interesting and rich in information. None of our conversations were recorded (on Dave's request) but I was allowed to take notes and even use my laptop to do so. He also patiently repeated himself when requested, and I was therefore able to ensure my notes were detailed and correct.

Similarly, the interviews I conducted with two Elders regarding their experiences within the contemporary Aboriginal family were both qualitative and in-depth. These interviews could also be characterised as purposeful conversations that were directed by the participants. In one instance, I presented tobacco (to respect Cree protocol) to the Elder to request information on

Indigenous family resilience; she accepted it and then began talking (in English). I did not ask a single question during the four hour interview, but instead sat riveted in my chair as she spoke passionately about the struggles she withstood in her family and the important people who helped her through the adversity. I received more rich, valuable information that day than I could have planned and asked in a structured interview schedule; this interviewing style is described by Bernard (1995) as getting "the [participant] on to a topic of interest and get out of the way. Let the [participant] provide information that he or she thinks is important." The interviews with the Elders were digitally recorded and parts were transcribed. Therefore, in the interviews with the Elders and the ceremonialist, I was able to set the focus of the interview and the participants determined the content (Bernard, 1995), without any '*a priori* categorization' (Fontana & Frey, 2000, p. 653) that might have limited the information I received.

The final interview I conducted was with an ISOYW facilitator who could not attend the sharing circle for facilitators. This open-ended, semi-structured interview was guided by questions that I used for the sharing circle, as well as many others that arose as a result of the sharing circle. This interview was digitally recorded and transcribed.

## Sharing Circles and Teaching Circles

For this dissertation research, sharing circles (which in the research context can be thought of as focus group informed by an Indigenous worldview) were employed often and with great success. The circle is a powerful symbol of the connection between First Nations people and the creator in many Canadian

Aboriginal communities: it is “at once a statement of allegiance, of loyalty, fidelity and unity by both the nation and its people” (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 14). By collecting data through the facilitation of a sharing circle, these ideals are evoked during the collection process. A sharing circle (sometimes referred to as a talking circle) differs from a focus group in the rules of engagement; participants sit in a circle configuration and speak in an orderly fashion, either moving clockwise or counter-clockwise around the circle (Hart, 2002). When an individual is speaking, it is inappropriate to interrupt. Graveline (1998) describes the power of this method, in that the listeners are expected to sit quietly and actively listen, to “pay each other full attention and to take responsibility for maintaining focus on what each speaker is sharing” (p. 138). This method, which is equally valid in therapeutic and research environments, invites individuals to speak until they have nothing left to say, and provides participants with the feeling of being heard: “Through respectful listening we are better able to enter into another’s experience through their words” (p. 138-139). Sharing circles are an excellent method for collecting very rich data, as the circle format allows for learning from others, discussion of concerns (Fitznor, 2002), lateral thinking and a high level of engagement in the conversation.

Sharing circles were used in three instances. For the ISOYW facilitator sharing circle, I invited the facilitators to lunch at the NCSA head office board room and to participate in a circle about the program. This group was comprised of two men and one woman, all with at least three years of facilitation experience at Native Counselling Services of Alberta in the ISOYW program. After we ate

the soup and bannock I prepared, I facilitated a formal circle whereby I would ask a question, and then each person took a turn answering in a clockwise direction. The circle continued until I had asked all of my questions and the facilitators felt like they had shared all of the information about the program they felt necessary. The ISOYW Facilitator circle lasted 2.5 hours. Facilitators indicated that they would like to remain anonymous; therefore quotes from this group are attributed to an 'ISOYW Facilitator'.

The Sharing Circle on Healing (cited as SCH throughout this discussion), however, proceed quite differently. The five participants that contributed to the SCH were chosen for their work in the field of healing in the Indigenous context; this included four "elite" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995) individuals with extensive national and international experience in addictions recovery, traditional healing and youth programs that promote healing. In addition, two participants were accomplished ceremonialists (one being Dave Gehue) and all participants had both extensive personal and professional experience in Aboriginal healing processes. The participants in the sharing circle – four men and one woman in all – were of Treaty Indian or Métis background, and all identified as Aboriginal.

To begin the sharing circle (which was held at my house), I prepared and served stew and bannock before the circle and ensured other food and tea were available throughout the circle. I began by facilitating the circle in a formal manner, but after two or three rounds the conversation became quite free-flowing; there was much engagement and excitement about the topic and everyone was having fun and laughing. Participants also challenged each other on ideas that

were presented, and the conversation on the ideas would continue until an agreement was reached. While the formal circle format was forgone, the lengthy discussion that ensued was both enjoyable and fruitful. The roundtable was digitally recorded and transcribed. The participants indicated that they would like the data collected to be attributed to 'a participant in the SCH', with the exception of Dave Gehue, who will be identified when quoting or using information that he offered. This arrangement with Dave is in keeping with the commitment I made to him at the beginning of our research relationship.

The Sharing Circle on Self-Determination was held in conjunction with a meeting of the International Indigenous Council in Hawaii, another elite group of participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1995). I approached the members (who meet only twice a year) to participate in a sharing circle as a part of the data collection for my PhD research. This was done without making a formal traditional offering as the protocol for each person was so different, there was no expectation that I understand or observe it for everyone. I did, however, ensure that there was a large breakfast available before the sharing circle and that I hosted them in a way that I felt conveyed respect and appreciation. The members include Indigenous leaders in the field of health, healing, self-determination and reconciliation from Canada (3 participants), Australia (1), New Zealand (1), and the United States of America (2). All but one participant identified themselves as an Indigenous person in their country (Mohawk, Carrier, Cree, Gungalu, Maori and Cherokee); there were six men and one woman who participated in this sharing circle. I facilitated this sharing circle according to the rules detailed above. Although there

were some instances where participants spoke out of turn, I made every effort to bring the discussion back to the sharing circle process. The circle took three hours to complete.

Finally, a Teaching Circle of Elders (cited as the TCE throughout this discussion) was arranged primarily for a BearPaw Media production regarding how the Cree worldview informs a Cree system of law. I was present for this video shoot because I am the Director of Research and Communication for NCSA (which includes BearPaw Media) and because the video shoot was transpiring in my living room. The Cree Elders that participated were Freddie Campiou, William Dreaver, Issac Chamakees and George Brertton.

The circle began with the presentation of protocol including tobacco, sweetgrass and hides; our purpose was to convey our deep appreciation to the Elders for coming to teach us, and formally request their consent to share their knowledge with us for the purposes of producing a video. The Elders spoke at length about the importance of the protocol, and how oftentimes Elders want to share information, but when protocol is not observed they are unable to pass on critical cultural knowledge. They were also grateful to us for the time and effort we took to observe protocol. Then, the CEO of Native Counselling Services of Alberta introduced the area of focus and referred to a flip chart with Cree words pertaining to natural law, family law and the consequences of not observing these laws. The Elders took turns discussing these words and how the concepts provided the foundation of Cree law (which is essentially a law of relationships).

When it became obvious that the conversation had a direct correlation and could inform the research I was undertaking for my PhD, I presented additional tobacco (request for consent) to the Elders to ask for permission to include the knowledge they shared in the research process. They gave permission and after a short discussion, the Elders decided that for this research project they would like to be acknowledged as a part of the teaching circle, but that the information they shared was to be attributed to the TCE, rather than to any one Elder in particular. I was then permitted to ask additional questions of the Elders that were directly related to this project. The circle (including lunch and breaks) took eight hours to complete.

The teaching circle described here was different from the sharing circles I described above, in that this circle was not formally facilitated nor does it adhere to the rules of the circle. The Elders were asked questions at the beginning, and then proceeded to talk amongst themselves about the topics and anything else they thought was relevant. They often asked for clarification regarding whether the information they were sharing was meeting the needs of the questioner. They did not talk in order around the circle, but rather spoke when they felt they had something to contribute. In addition, two Elders preferred to speak in Cree, and the other two assisted by translating to English the key concepts and illustrations that the others shared. Unlike a sharing circle (which can be used for healing and therapeutic purposes), a teaching circle such as the one described here is used primarily for the transmission of important cultural information.

### Participant Observation

During the case study, there were several opportunities to engage in participant observations, including sitting in the circle with participants and facilitators during the ISOYW program as well as participating in pipe ceremonies at the beginning of the program and in the graduation ceremony for ISOYW participants at the end of the program. This provided "first-hand involvement in the social world" (Marshall & Rossman, 1995, p. 78) of the ISOYW group, specifically the interaction between the facilitators and the participants and the type/amount of sharing that occurs within the ISOYW program. My role as participant observer can be placed upon the continuum created by Junker (1960; cited in Hammersely & Atkins, 1996). Firstly in the role of participant-as-observer, when I actively participated in the ceremonies, speaking when it was my turn, and secondly in the role of observer-as-participant, during which time I sat in on key program circles but did not share my experiences with violence or participate in the actual sessions with participants. I did not take notes in either the ceremonies or the sessions. I made brief notes after the sessions, which helped to revise my question guide for the second round of participant interviews.

## *Sampling*

For this research project, two distinct non-probability sampling techniques were employed. First, for the case study, sampling was purposeful, seeking data from pre-defined groups (Trochim, 2001) with a finite number of possible participants. For this reason, saturation could not be the end point for data collection; rather, I sought the maximum amount of data from a fixed number of participants. These pre-defined sample groups included the ISOYW participant interviews (seven of

the 11 participants agreed to be interviewed), the ISOYW facilitator sharing circle and interview (all NCSA facilitators were interviewed) and the CEO of NCSA.

Second, I sought to expand on the information that was shared in the case study to better understand the categories that emerged as a result of first phase of data collection (which is further described in the analysis section). This required expert sampling (Trochim, 2001) for elite participants (Marshall & Rossman, 1995), whereby I purposefully sought out additional key informants who were experts in the field of Cree philosophy and law, healing, self-determination or trauma recovery. This second round of data collection served to increase the validity of the findings in the case study, by corroborating with, expanding upon, or providing a different understanding of the concepts that emerged in the case study.

## *Analysis*

Data collection in this project was an inductive process whereby code identification, labelling and integration were data-driven (Boyatzis, 1998) and emerged as a result of working extensively with the raw data. In addition, I enacted an iterative process, moving back and forth between data collection and analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers, 2002), beginning with the case study, then seeking specific information as categories emerged from the data or I ascertained that there was specific information I required in order to answer the research questions and to provide the fullest possible picture of building family resilience in Indigenous families. In this way I

ensured “congruence among question formulation, literature, recruitment, data collection strategies, and analysis” (Morse et al., 2002, p. 10).

In this section I will describe the way in which I familiarized myself with the data, how I demonstrated sensitivity to the data, and the method I employed to accomplish Miles & Huberman’s (1994) three essential activities of data analysis: data reduction, data display and drawing conclusions and verification.

## Pre-Analysis: The Grounding-In Process

In this phase of analysis, my goal was to sit with the data for an extended period of time, in order to deepen my engagement with the data and therefore my understanding of what the participants were conveying. The extensive interaction with this data is evidenced by the fact that I listened to all ISOYW participant interviews three times; the ISOYW warrior facilitator sharing circle twice, the sharing circle on healing and resilience six times, the sharing circle on self-determination and healing twice, the Elders’ teaching circle three times and the Elders’ interviews twice each. As all recordings were digital, I was able to listen to them on a portable play-back device (my iPod) while driving to and from work, doing yard-work and walking/running.

I had three goals during this pre-analysis phase: to become very familiar with the content of data in preparation for coding; to pay attention to the way that information was being shared, particularly the emotion and/or passion that was often conveyed while speaking about personal or spiritual matters; and to allow time to reflect on the information shared, in order to better integrate the knowledge. This extensive time with the data, combined with my long-standing

relationship with the Elders, the ceremonialist and many of the participants in the sharing circles and teaching circles, and my long-term engagement with the In Search of Your Warrior Program resulted in a deep sensitivity to the experience of the research participants (Grafanaki, 1996). The pre-analysis phase built upon this sensitivity, ensuring that I had really heard and understood the participants and was sufficiently grounded in the data. I then felt comfortable moving into the data reduction stage.

## Data Reduction

According to Miles & Huberman (1994), data reduction "refers to the process of selecting, focusing, simplifying, abstracting and transforming the data that appear in written-up field notes or transcripts" (p. 10). The primary process used in this phase of analysis was the coding of transcripts from the interviews, sharing circles and the teaching circle conducted for the case study and from the additional key informant data collection. The coding process I employed was a modification of the constant comparative method created by Glaser & Strauss (1967) and elaborated upon by Glaser (1978), Strauss & Corbin (1990) and Scott & Howell (2008). The constant comparative method is a widely used analytic strategy in qualitative research, as it allows for the constant redesign and reintegration of theoretical notions in the process of theory building, during the explicit coding and analysis of data (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). In this research project, I employed this analytic method in the generation of a model (small scale theory) for building resilience in Indigenous families, through the analysis of case study (and other) data.

The coding process for this project had two dimensions: open and selective coding (Glaser & Straus, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Open coding was the strategy employed for all of the case study data; during this process the goal was to group similar data together to form categories (Scott & Howell, 2008). All data from the case study participants were analyzed line-by-line and as many categories as possible were identified; during this process, incidents are compared to other incidents, which gives rise to a wide range of categories. Open coding was continued until coding was completed for all transcripts collected from people involved in the ISOYW program.

The next step was selective coding (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Scott & Howell, 2008), which was employed for all of the additional key informants who provided important information on specific topics including the sharing circle on healing and resilience, sharing circle on self-determination, the interviews with ceremonialist Dave Gehue and the Elders' teaching circle. Selective coding advanced the coding process from comparing incident to incident, to a process of comparing incidents to the properties of the categories that were formed (Glaser & Strauss, 1967); in this research process, selective coding involved comparing incidents with the properties of the categories defined in the case study. In doing so, the properties of the categories became better integrated (related in many different ways), resulting in a unified whole. This process also assisted in understanding the relationship between the individual categories, and identifying which were more over-arching categories (Core Categories) that subsumed smaller and closely related subcategories. During the selective coding process, I

was also careful to look for contradicting information, which would enhance my understanding of the categories that were beginning to emerge.

Throughout the open and selective coding processes, I also wrote many memos regarding ideas that would emerge as a result of reading and coding the transcripts. These memos represented the first synthesis of information during the analysis process, and contributed to the refining of the core categories. Glaser & Strauss (1967) instruct that writing memos is a critical aspect of the constant comparative method of analysis, as it "taps into the initial freshness of the analyst's theoretical notions" (p. 107) and helps to resolve any conflicts that may arise in the coding process. Memos for this project were written in the margins of the transcripts.

After analysis was completed and I felt I had developed solid categories with rich description within the categories, I then turned to the literature (reports, other research findings, etc.) to corroborate or enhance my understanding of the findings that emerged from the data.

## Data Display

Data display is described as "a visual format that presents information systematically, so the user can draw valid conclusions and take needed action" (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p. 91). The goal of the display is to create a systematic method of presenting a condensed version of the full data set, in a way that it can be viewed all at once and allow for "careful comparisons, detection of differences, noting of patterns and themes, seeing trends and so on" (p. 92). A

data display matrix or network can also provide a clear audit trail that demonstrates dependability of findings (Bruce, 2007).

To display the data collected for this project, I constructed tables for each core category that emerged from the case study and was enhanced by the additional informant data. As the display tables were constructed as a part of the constant comparative data analysis method, the tables focus on demonstrating the process of identifying sub-categories from the data, the relationships between them and how this resulted in the development of core categories and ultimately a central process of building resilience in Indigenous families. The tables are a variation of the conceptually ordered displays described by Miles & Huberman (1994). These tables are provided in Appendix A, to be read after the presentation of the case study findings.

## Conclusion Drawing and Verification

Finally, conclusions and interpretations were made by generating meaning (Miles & Huberman, 1994) from the coded data and data display tables that were created. While creating the tables, themes (later called sub-categories) that arose were clustered (Miles & Huberman, 1994) together to create the core categories. The core categories that emerged (repatriation of self-determination, reclaiming an interconnected worldview and reconciling past trauma) led to the identification of the central process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990): building family resilience through healing. The categories and central processes were then used to create a conceptual map (Glaser, 1978; Giske & Artinian, 2007) that depicts the resilient

family and the process of building family resilience, which could then be used to explain the process of building family resilience to others.

Verification of findings will be discussed in three dimensions. First, credibility refers to the process of establishing that the findings presented in this research are believable and faithful to the context and perspective of the individuals the research represents (Trochim, 2001; Lincoln & Denzin, 2000). In developing this model, I believe that I began the project with a significant grounding in the research area, which enhanced my sensitivity to the creation of appropriate codes categories that emerged and the defining of properties within the categories (Giske & Artinian, 2007). This provided theoretical sensitivity (Galser, 1978) that resulted in the translation of the raw data into categories and a central process that would be meaningful to the participants in the study.

This project also employed a purposeful multi-method approach in order to achieve what Denzin & Lincoln (2000) call "triangulation, [which] reflects an attempt to secure an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon in question" (p. 5). In the process of triangulating data, I sought convergence (Yin, 1998) of information from many different sources. Within the case study research, rigor is demonstrated by the explicit triangulation of findings in the different levels of data collection and analysis. Themes that emerged in the analysis of facilitator interviews were compared and corroborated with themes that emerged in the analysis of participant data. These themes were also checked against the findings in the interviews with individuals involved in the administration or higher level work around program implementation.

Further, additional data was acquired regarding resilience, connectedness and self-determination. This multi-method approach provided another opportunity for triangulation, by searching for commonalities between the findings of the case study and those from the other data collection opportunities. Although the sample sizes in each aspect of the research were relatively small, the quality, diversity and depth of the data collection were sufficiently robust to adequately inform the research questions.

In addition, information was gathered in ceremony that helped to better understand or expand upon the findings in the case study. This became another unexpected aspect of data triangulation; when convergence between the innerscape and outerscape research was achieved, I felt confident that the findings that were emerging had validity within my holistic theoretical framework.

The collaborative, relationships-based nature of the project also assisted in the validating of research finding. Sections of this dissertation were vetted by different people who have been involved in the project as participants and advisors; this was a form of 'checking back' to ensure that my interpretations of data resonated with participants and that the findings I presented had validity and potential usefulness to the people who informed the study.

Second, transferability refers to "the degree to which the results can be generalized to other contexts" (Trochim, 2001, p. 162). This study includes data that was collected for the case study, as well as supporting data from sources across Canada (Sharing Circle on Healing and Resilience) and internationally (Sharing Circle on Self-Determination) that expanded my understanding of the

core categories and central process as they emerged. This approach enhanced the generalizability of the findings, as it drew from a larger population of Indigenous people and included expert knowledge and corroboration of the case study findings.

Further, in June, 2008 I was invited to present the preliminary findings of this research for a round-table discussion on building resilience in Aboriginal communities in New South Wales, Australia. Using video conference technology, I presented the project method and the Indigenous model of building family resilience. Feedback I received during the question and answer period substantiate that this model has relevance for Indigenous people locally, nationally and internationally. In addition, the final model developed here was presented at Curtin University in Perth, Western Australia (December, 2008); I received exclusively positive feedback about the applicability of this model to Aboriginal families, communities and programs.

Third, I believe the confirmability (Trochim, 2001) of this study is clearly demonstrated in the methods and analysis descriptions, as well as the data audit tables that are provided in the Appendix A. These tables offer a condensed version of all of the data and the relationships between the data, demonstrating how the core categories were created. Further, the population, sample and methods are explicitly described. With this detail, the study should be replicable in other settings and the findings possible for others to corroborate.

# Chapter Five: A Cree Context for Understanding the Canadian Indigenous Family

Sharing this knowledge today, we want to answer the question you have of course. But he was reflecting on the fact that one of the reasons he has agreed to this process – is because it will benefit our children. The young people in the future will have something of reference of the Elders' knowledge and understanding. It is probably the most important reason we are here. This is not of a personal nature. We are thinking of the future generation, of the children, of those that will not have access to old men like this. So that they have strong ties to the language and to the clear understanding of who we are and what the creator has given us, here on Turtle Island. (TCE, 2007)

There has been much scholarly, literary and fictional writing that describes Indigenous peoples who have lived for thousands of years in the territory now known as Canada. However, the report from the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) (Canada, 1996b), arguably is the most comprehensive body of knowledge of pre-contact and early post-contact Canadian Indigenous families. Volume 3 Chapter 2 entitled "The Family" reflects knowledge collected from hundreds of Aboriginal people across Canada, including a discussion of how Aboriginal families were affected (and continue to be affected) by Euro-Canadian culture, legislation, policy and law. For this reason, I used the RCAP report extensively in my research.

However, while it is my goal to produce an Indigenous model of building family resilience that can resonate for Indigenous people in Canada, it would be impossible to discuss the pre-contact family structure for every Nation that existed in Canada in this research project. Therefore, I have chosen to focus on the Cree people in Alberta/Saskatchewan to illustrate how the worldview of the Cree

informed their values, family rules and structure. This provided the data collection process with more realistic boundaries and was particularly appropriate for me, as all but one of the Elders that I have befriended and work with are from the Cree Nation.

To accomplish this, texts such as "Treaty Elders of Saskatchewan: Our Dream is that Our Peoples Will One Day Be Clearly Recognized as Nations" (Cardinal & Hildbrandt, 2000) and Makokis (2001) provided a detailed synthesis of the knowledge and oral teachings regarding family function, structure and networks that exist within Cree communities in Saskatchewan and Saddle Lake Cree First Nations in Alberta. These two publications are particularly helpful in this project, as they explicitly acknowledge the employment of an Indigenous worldview in the research process; the Cree scholars used Indigenous research assumptions and methods to produce findings that resonate with Indigenous people.

In addition, for this project, I sought knowledge from Cree Elders whom I have known for many years (who wish to remain anonymous), and in November, 2007 I attended a full day Teaching Circle of Cree Elders (TCE) with Freddie Campiou, William Dreaver, Isaac Chamakees, and George Brertton (who stated that they would like the information they shared to be attributed collectively to the Teaching Circle of Elders, and is thus cited as TCE, 2007). Therefore, the first goal of this chapter is to reflect and report on the information that exists in the literature today on the Cree family, then expand on or further illustrate these concepts with evidence borne from this project.

From this Cree-informed foundation, the second goal of this chapter is to make connections to the information that has been collected that is of a more general nature about the Indigenous people in Canada before the arrival of the Europeans. Sources for this information include data from the RCAP report, as well as knowledge I had gathered in working with Mi'kmaq ceremonialist Dave Gehue, with whom I spent many hours in conversation and attended numerous Shake Tent and Sweatlodge ceremonies that he led. Dave also supervised my Fasting Ceremony in which I participated in June 2007, specifically for this project. In addition, Dave gave me a fifteen page unpublished manuscript he authored entitled "Traditional Clan Systems" (Gehue, 2006).

Finally, the third goal of the chapter is to discuss how the process of internal colonization (Tully, 2000) has affected the Indigenous family structure and functioning. Again, I will present information that exists in the literature on Indigenous families in general, as well as provide a Cree context to how the family structure has been altered, which will include data collected for this project. By employing this strategy, I intend to provide a broad, comprehensive description of the how the Canadian Indigenous family in general has transitioned from pre-contact to the present day, as well as a very specific example of how that transition has occurred for the Cree.

### *Iyintoweyesawewina* – Natural Law

Before European settlement, the Indigenous people of North America were the sole inhabitants of the continent. James Tully (2000) writes that the first Europeans to land in Canada would have "encountered free, vibrant, sovereign

organisation and territorial jurisdictions that were older (3000-30,000 years), more populous (60-80 million) and more variegated than Europe" (p. 38). Within these societies, the conception of 'family' for Aboriginal people in Canada pre-contact could have been defined as a complex combination of biological ties, clan membership bonds, adoptions and economic partnerships (e.g. hunting partnerships between communities). This conceptualization of family is borne from and clearly demonstrates the principle of interconnectedness in the Indigenous paradigm, creating a sophisticated, broad and inclusive family system: "The effect of these diverse, overlapping bonds was to create a dense network of relationships within which sharing and obligations of mutual aid ensured that an effective safety net was in place" (Canada, 1996b, p. 5).

For the Cree people[14], their worldview holds that all aspects of creation are subject to the same Natural Laws that were given to the people by the Creator: they are referred to in Cree as *Iyintoweyesawewina* which literally means in English: "natural/common - laws/collection of ideas" (Makokis, 2001, p. 94). These laws are further described as one aspect of the sacred gifts given to the People:

> *'Iyiniw miyikowiswina'* (that which has been given to the peoples) and *'ininiw saweyihtakosiwin'* (the peoples' sacred gifts) are generic terms that are used to describe gifts deriving from the peoples' special relationship with the Creator, whether those gifts are material in nature (land) or metaphysical (as in the case of laws, values, principles and mores that guide or regulate peoples' conduct in all their many relationships). (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 10)

[14] In this section, the Cree worldview will be referred to in the present tense – which refers to the worldview that, from the Cree perspective, has existed for Cree people since their creation. By writing in the present tense, it embodies the past, present and future (consistent with the Cree cosmology) as opposed to describing this perspective in the past – implying that it does not exist anymore.

Natural Law could also be described as the manifestation of the Cree paradigm, which teaches that all values, beliefs and social rules that exist within Cree society are founded in Cree spiritual beliefs. At the core of these laws is information on how to live harmoniously and respectfully on this earth:

> Everything is sacred. That is how we respect the land everything the creator put here. For us as human beings we have a part in it. We have to fit into that - not to dominate it, not to manipulate it and use it just for ourselves but to respect it for what it is. If you don't you are making a sin on yourself it will come back to you. There is so much power, that everything can be wiped out here. (TCE, 2007)

In emphasizing the sacredness of all of creation, the TCE called to mind how the act of breaking these rules – *pastahowin* – results in severe consequences for the individual and his/her family for many generations, known as *ohcinewin*. The TCE likened *pastahowin* to the Christian understanding of sin, further emphasizing that the understanding and observing the tenets of Natural Law and *pastahowin* are paramount to living a good life:

> That word *pastahowin*. It is a big word in our understanding of our behaviour as human beings. And if a person was to understand how that affects them personally, they would heed that word, they would respect that word and they would try to change their behaviour. Because that goes a long ways – it jumps from generation to generation if a person makes that sin. It will jump to their children and grandchildren, if that person does not address it through a ceremony to deal with the behaviour that is offensive, to the creator's law and the creator's teaching. We are talking about ethics and moral behaviour. (TCE, 2007)

Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) note that from this perspective, the Cree family life and all relationships that exist within the family, community, nation and cosmos are guided by the values and strict doctrine derived from natural law. They further explain that the most overarching law that govern all relationships is

*wahkohtowin* – the primary, critical collection of laws ensuring that all people live with each other and within the entire cosmos in peace and harmony (*witaskewin*) thus ensuring the survival of the people. Harold Cardinal (2001) elaborated on the teachings of *wahkohtowin*:

> What I would call the doctrine of *Wahkohtowin* speaks to the laws that we have as nations that govern the conduct of our relationship with each other and with all things in life. There are laws, there are teachings that go with how, for example, if you are a fisherman with what your duties are to the fish you take, what relationship you have to respect if you are going to continue to be able to feed your family from that fish. How that relationship is two way, our laws teach us that because not only are we related to that particular species but that species is related to us. (p. 15)

This doctrine of relationships is founded on the principles of possessing good, respectful relationships (known as *miyo-wicehtowin). Miyo-wicehtowin* unequivocally directs the Cree people to always strive for the best relationships possible, through an enactment of respect for all living things. All of these laws or teachings "constitute the essential elements underlying the First Nations notions of peace, harmony and good relations, which must be maintained as required by the Creator" (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 15).

### *Witisanihitowin* – The Laws that Govern Family Relationships

The healthy, vibrant family, interacting within the larger connected community was the basis for all economic, social and political activity for Aboriginal people in the past; Aboriginal families were charged with rearing children who understood their responsibilities and had acquired important skills, knowledge and self discipline (Canada, 1996b) to ensure the social, economic and political success of the broader community. Therefore, all family members

(immediate and extended) have a vital role to play in child development. For the Cree people, within the doctrine of *wahkohtowin,* there exists a constellation of laws that specifically governs family relationships (known as *witisanihitowin).* These are rules of conduct that create strict boundaries between individuals based upon their familial position, fostering healthy and interdependent relationships. Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) state that "these laws are comprehensive in that they contain detailed codes of behaviour, setting out what is prohibited, what is encouraged, the values that are to be respected and following in each set of relations" (p. 34).

Within these laws arise the roles of men and women, in relationship to the people around them. Harold Cardinal (2001) describes the way in which *wahkohtowin* and subsequently *witisanihitowin* informs the Cree understanding of relationships:

> *Wahkohtowin* tells me as a father how I am supposed to relate to my kids, children, my grandchildren and it also teaches my kids how they are to relate to me as their father. *Wahkohtowin* as a doctrine tells my wife how she should relate to her children and how her children should relate to her. It teaches my wife as a grandmother how she should relate to her grandchildren and it teaches her grandchildren how to relate to her as a grandmother and I as a grandfather. It teaches all of us within a family as individuals what conduct we should have to one and other, how we should govern our conduct with others being our cousins, our uncles, our aunts. (p. 16)

Therefore, each individual will behave differently depending upon the position they hold at any given moment. Their position in family and community and their related roles are framed by the values and rules contained in the doctrine of relationships. This is keenly demonstrated when describing the role of women within traditional Cree culture. A woman can be a daughter, mother, wife, sister,

aunt and grandmother at the same time, and will have a different role and responsibility to family members, depending if they are her child, grandchild, sibling, in-law or spouse. The laws of *witisanihitowin*, therefore provide boundaries of respect, as well as rules of behaviours that inform the Cree roles and responsibilities within the family.

The most clearly articulated of these relationships is that which exists between mothers and other family members. Mothers are the primary care-givers and are often described as 'keepers of the fire". Skywoman, an Elder interviewed for Makokis (2001), expands on this responsibility by describing the women as the sole owner of the lodge, or home. It is the woman's responsibility to know how to make her home and keep the fire burning within that home. The home fire is therefore a symbol of the spirit of the family that resides in the home. The woman ensures that the lodge and its fire and similarly the family and its spirit are nurtured; "by nurturing the fire, she nurtures her children, her spouse and her extended family that lives within her lodge" (p. 129). By tending to the fire, the woman ensures physical, emotional and spiritual warmth and harmony exist within the family unit (broadly defined). Being the keeper of the fire is also a metaphor for being the keeper of the rules – of doing things the right way. Makokis's interviewee describes the role of the woman as being a teacher of the rules to the children, as well as supporting her husband by reminding him of the rules when necessary. In summary, the woman is responsible for creating the environment whereby children can be raised to be productive, active members of society who are connected in responsible, respectful ways to others around them.

The role of the women as mothers is founded in her responsibility to keep the fire and further shaped by the relationship between the mother and her child. Mothers therefore are primarily responsible for creating lodge and life experiences for children that will ensure they learn the tenets of natural law, including the most basic principles: harmony, respect, caring, kindness, honesty, sharing and self-determination. Further, Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) state that according to the doctrine of *wahkohtowin*, mutual respect is the principle that governs the relationship between a Cree mother and child, "which entails the reciprocal duties of nurturing, caring, loyalty and fidelity" (p. 34). Clearly, Makokis and Cardinal and Hildebrandt have presented evidence of the central and important role Cree women hold in child development; their findings help to understand women's position within the family in relationship to other family members.

Information about the role of the Cree man in the family as father, uncle, son, grandfather and in-law was not well articulated in the literature. Interviews conducted by Makokis (2001) touched briefly on the role of men as a function of their relationship to women; her findings illustrate the political and spiritual leadership that men provide within the extended family, clan and society in the context of balancing the leadership role that women held within the home. The role of the men in the context of child development or in relationship to their children however was not discussed. Further, the role of the extended family members was not comprehensively reported on in the literature reviewed. Makokis (2001) did find that within the clan grandparents assist in teaching the children and are the story tellers (p. 125).

Interviews with Dave Gehue provided some additional common information regarding the Aboriginal people in Canada. Dave asserts that generally, women are the primary care givers for children (both boys and girls) until the age of ten. At the age of ten, mothers ensure girls learn about their roles and responsibilities as women within the family, clan and nation, and that they partake in the appropriate rights of passage ceremonies. The relationship between fathers and children is equally important, if slightly more distant for the first nine years. The laws that govern the relationships between fathers and young children are those of respect and protection. Fathers are the ultimate guardians of children; their utmost concern is for their safety and wellbeing. At the age of ten, fathers take on the primary teaching of their sons (with the support of uncles, grandfathers and other men in the community), helping them to better understand their roles and responsibilities as future men within their family, clan and community. Fathers arrange for the right of passage for boys within the clan and nation.

Grandparents (biological and from other families) also participate significantly in the rights of passage of individuals through the stages of life: these include birth, granting of spirit name, puberty, marriage, elderhood and death (Gehue, 2006). Although the rituals associated with these stages of life are usually grounded in the practice of the nation (i.e. Cree Nation) there are also specific rituals and ceremonies that are exclusive to the clan and ensure that children can identify their clan and practice the clan-specific rules.

The information collected about Cree families, as well as Canadian Indigenous families in general, describes a family structure whereby adults in the community form mentoring, protective relationships with children. Combined with the very strict rules around relationships between family and extended kin members, a powerful system exists to ensure that children mature with a strong sense of self worth and eventually become contributing members of the community. Parent relationships with children are therefore of utmost importance within the family and community; mothers, with the support of fathers, are the essential teachers for their children, ensuring that their children understands Natural Law.

## The Clan System

The second important set of laws that govern family and community relationships were those associated with the complex systems of clans. Very little information exists in the literature about the Cree clan structure, and during this research, the Cree Elders who participated did not speak about the Clan system during their discussions with each other (TCE) nor when I interviewed Elders about their family experiences. The only source discovered in a review of the literature was the PhD dissertation of Leona Makokis (2001); as a result of her interviews with Cree people from Saddle Lake, Alberta, she described how within the clan structure everyone had a specific role that was essential to the survival of the families, clans, communities and the people in general. The late Elder Mike Steinhauer spoke of the centrality of the clan system in traditional Cree culture:

> Every clan has a leader as a head chief. The clan chose someone who was outstanding. Within those clans there was harmony, understanding, acceptance

> and healthy communities. Each clan relied on their own, their education, their way of life. Each clan had their own medicine people and hunters. They were teachers of their own clan. (Makokis, 2001, p. 133)

Another Elder in the same study spoke about the interdependence of the clans within Cree society in the past: “Family units had a head spokesperson as their leader. They would form a part of a large council. They worked collectively and worked for the common good” (Makokis, 2001, p. 133).

Therefore, while it is not clear how strong knowledge of the clan system is in Cree society today, Makokis establishes that there was in fact an active clan system in the past that was an important social and political structure. Makokis described the clan system as the framework that promoted the interdependence of people, families and communities. The clan system sustained a more consensus-based, inclusive form of decision making within the community and also established important boundaries between families, resulting in rules that prescribed the ways families interacted within a clan.

While the specific rules may differ from clan to clan, the clan system ensures that individuals and families had a sense of belonging to the greater society and knew their place within society. This is demonstrated by the prohibition of inter-clan marriage; Makokis explained that for the Cree, the clan system makes certain that incest or marriage of people who are close family members does not ever occur, by prescribing that people of the same clan do not marry as they are considered spiritual siblings.

In a more general context, Chansonneuve, (2005) describes how in pre-contact Aboriginal families and communities in Canada:

> Most Indigenous cultures were matrilineal with descent traced on the female side of the family. Clans were comprised of extended families descended from a common female ancestor. They generally consisted of a woman, the Clan mother, and her daughters or a group of sisters, together with their husbands and children. (p. 19)

In addition, throughout this research, much data was collected about the clan system in conversations and ceremonies with Dave Gehue. Dave asserts that at one time a strong, vibrant clan system existed throughout the world on all continents, and that clan knowledge remains available for all people to retrieve through ceremony (Gehue, 2006). Gehue (2006) further instructs that clans are named after animals that are native to the ecosystem to which the people belong, including birds, fish and mammals. The teachings of the clan are connected to the animal spirit for which the clan is named, and these teachings can help families to better understand who they are in relation to the world around them. The clan affiliation calls to mind the connection between the people and the ecosystem in which they are situated, further entrenching the interdependence of all living things. Dave stresses therefore, that clan knowledge is still critically needed, as it assists individuals in knowing who they are, what their unique gifts are, and how those gifts must be used. Both Gehue and Makokis emphasize that clan affiliation is a key aspect in identity development and imbuing self awareness and self worth in individuals; Gehue stated that:

> The mother of their children has double responsibility. She is the keeper of knowledge concerning the clan; she also has a duty to make available knowledge of the father's clan system. So the child is educated equally on both sides; one of our beliefs is knowledge is power. As you might notice knowing this information eliminates identity crisis within the child. They know who they are, where they come from and the clan systems so they can pass the information to generations in the future. (Gehue, 2006, p. 12)

Regardless of whether children identify with their mother or father's clan, all children are taught to honour and understand the clan of the other parent as well (Gehue, 2006). Clans are comprised of several families within a community, and the same clans often exist in different communities and nations. For example, there are people who identify as members of a 'Bear Clan' throughout Canada, and therefore the Bear Clan exists in many different Aboriginal nations. All members of the Bear Clan consider each other to be family relations regardless of whether they are Cree, Iroquois or Anishnabe.

In conclusion, the literature and evidence presented here on the Cree people illustrate how the survival of families, communities and nations of Aboriginal people has depended upon the success of a sophisticated interconnected familial and societal system. In this way, the pre-contact Aboriginal family system served as a mediator, providing context and codes of conduct between the individual Aboriginal person and the larger communal, economic and political arenas (Canada, 1996b, p. 11). It is not well documented, however, to what degree the traditional family structures of Aboriginal people still exist in contemporary society, how knowledge that has been maintained influences the day-to-day lives of Aboriginal families or how it has (or has not) contributed to family resilience in the face of historical adversity.

## *Adaptation of the Canadian Indigenous Family System*

Some young people now ask how such a thing could have happened in Canada. The answer seems to me fairly straightforward. When a state arrogates unto itself the power to deny to a group of individuals the existence of their humanity, it gives itself absolute power to do as it wants with those individuals. When a state is able through its laws to say certain human beings are not persons under the law, it removes those persons from the civil and human rights protections extended to

those it does recognize as persons under the law…Canada created such laws because its courts and its citizens viewed Indians as primitive savages, its actions were sanctioned by its legal system and by it citizenry.[15] (Cardinal, 1999; p. XV)

## Colonization and Domination

The European colonial enterprise began with the first contact of European intruders with Indigenous people. James Tully (2000) describes the process as internal colonization, which is:

> The historical processes by which structures of domination have been set in place on Turtle Island/North America over the Indigenous peoples and their territories without their consent and in response to their resistance against and within these structures." (p. 37)

He also provides a framework for understanding how the colonial enterprise has affected Indigenous societies and puts forward four dimensions of internal colonialism. First, the arrival and settlement of European people brought war, pestilence/foreign disease and left Indigenous societies in ruins. As a result, Tully asserts that Indigenous populations in North America were reduced from several millions of Indigenous people pre-contact, to about a half million people post-contact.

Second, Tully argues that the establishment of European-based governments on North American soil has resulted in the development of legislation and policies of domination as well as the formation of colonial band councils that are controlled by the Canadian federal government. According to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP) Report (Canada, 1996a), after 1871 the government policies, driven primarily by economic expansion and

[15] This passage is part of Harold Cardinal's 1999 introduction to the second edition of "The Unjust Society", first published in 1969.

ideology, were employed to marginalize and control Indigenous peoples. The Canadian government used the Royal Proclamation of 1763 and specifically the stated obligation to 'protect' Aboriginal people, to formalize and justify a strategy of domination (Canada, 1996a), which has resulted in the on-going marginalization and external control of all aspects of Aboriginal life in Canada.

One of the most destructive policies implemented by the Canadian Government was the forceful removal of up to five generations of Aboriginal children from their families and communities and their placement in church-run boarding schools (Canada, 1996a). According to an Assembly of First Nations publication (1994) the residential schools were responsible for cultural devastation of Aboriginal societies that included the loss of family, connection, language, identity, trust, confidence, spirit, morality and control.

The residential school policies also severed the connection of Aboriginal children with their families (and subsequently with their cultural and spiritual identities), and damaged the cohesiveness of Aboriginal communities (Corrado & Cohen, 2003). There is also overwhelming evidence of physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual and sexual abuse perpetrated by school personnel on Aboriginal children at residential schools (Canada, 1996a; Fournier & Crey, 1997), contributing to distressing challenges for many Aboriginal families, including incest, alcoholism, substance abuse and family violence, inappropriate policies and poverty.

Additionally, policies of assimilation further affected the spiritual foundation of Indigenous society. What began with the 1884 prohibition on

potlatch and the Tamanawas dance on the West Coast, led to the banning of the Sundance Ceremony of the plains Indians, as well as other ceremonies of Aboriginal people in Canada (Canada, 1996a). During the data collection process for the RCAP, Chief Alfred Scow describes the harmful affects of these policies:

> This provision of the Indian Act was in place for close to 75 years and what that did was it prevented the passing down of our oral history. It prevented the passing down of our values. It meant an interruption of the respected forms of government that we used to have, and we did have forms of government be they oral and not in writing before any of the Europeans came to this country. We had a system that worked for us. We respected each other. We had ways of dealing with disputes. (Canada, 1996a, p. 292)

The third dimension of internal colonialism is the overtaking of all power and authority over Indigenous territory and forcing Indigenous people onto small parcels of land that were perceived to be of no use to the colonial government. The former Indigenous property was then made available to the waves of immigrants to Canada and subsequently used for capitalist gain. As a result, Indigenous communities and families have been forced to continually adapt, moving from a land-based self-governed society, to experiencing years of assimilative demands, whereby the family and clan could no longer be the foundation of economic and political activities. For many communities, families became disempowered structures, which at times could neither prepare their children for the future, nor sustain themselves financially nor physically. The RCAP (1996b) report concluded that "Aboriginal families have undergone all the stresses that any hunter-gatherer or agricultural institution undergoes as it is

plunged into an urbanized, specialized and industrial or post-industrial world. There are huge demands on its adaptability" (p. 18).

The fourth dimensions are marked by Treaty making and periods of cooperation between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government. Tully (2000) states that "in the early stages and again in the present, where Indigenous resistance has been effective, usurpation and appropriation have often been preceded or accompanied by treaty-making" (p. 39). In this way, Indigenous resistance has been at times effective in re-shaping the process of internal colonialism.

Expanding on Tully's dimensions of internal colonization, Oliver (2004) drawing from the body of work by Frantz Fanon, asserts that in addition to the physical, political and economic colonization, oppressed peoples have withstood the colonization of their psyche or psychic space, as well. In making this argument she states: "One of the most effective weapons of colonialism is its attempt to force the colonized to internalize a value system in which they are rendered subhuman, incapable of rational thought or morality" (p. 30). The de-humanizing process of colonisation, therefore, removes the ability of the oppressed to create meaning of their lives and their reality. During the Teaching Circle of Elders (TCE), they spoke passionately about how the colonizer has defined who they are:

> In the Indian world…you have to realise there is an Indian mind…there is an Indigenous mind...I don't like that word Indian, I don't like that word aboriginal, I don't like that word first nations - to me that's where we are running into problems. Because we have always allowed other nations, other people from foreign lands to define who we are. We never had the opportunity to define who we are…[The European settlers] had an opportunity over a

> hundred years to come tell us who we should be and how we should live. They have never heard our understanding of who we are. They don't know our relationship we that have with our creator and our grandfathers. They don't understand the stories and the reason why we are here and we are put on mother earth here at this time and what our responsibilities are in this country, our responsibilities to our families and children. (TCE, 2007)

Indigenous peoples with colonized psyches are therefore left to see themselves only through the eyes of the colonizer, eventually losing sight of the strength and worth of their traditional culture and accepting that foreign religion, capitalism and individualism are superior and more civilized. Further, Indigenous people are not allowed to share the stories of colonization and how their culture has been forcibly, and at time cruelly been changed. Some Indigenous people have grown to fear their First Nation culture, having accepted that it is at best childish and delusional, and at worst a form of evil. The TCE illustrate this point:

> The laws that the governments have established do not correlate with our understanding of our responsibility and our obligations to our creator and our families. So that is where we are running into problems – the creation of alcohol, drugs, the needle – everything that we see in society today that people are using. We see the jails being filled up because of that behaviour. It was brought over and our children are caught in that. Because we didn't have the opportunity to teach our children the values we talk about – these concepts – it was stopped – it was blocked – it was manipulated and turned into something. Our people were demonized. By the churches, by the government. By saying our Elders were not important, our teachings, our ways were not important. That's what created the mess today. We have those teachings, we have those understanding. [We have] the stories about the origins how we were created, how we were given this land. [We] can tell stories about before the white man first came here. There is history – [we] know those stories. The truth you can say. What the history really is in this country. The truth from our perspective. (TCE, 2007)

Finally, the colonization of Indigenous psychic spaces means Indigenous people accept that by virtue of their being Aboriginal, they are inferior intellectual beings, not capable of higher forms of thought and lack the ability to solve their

own problems. The picture drawn by the colonizer of the savage, primitive (Said, 1978) child-like (Nandy, 1983) and unsophisticated Indigenous person is internalized by the oppressed. The development of a welfare dependency results, whereby the Indigenous people do not feel capable or hopeful that they can affect change in their reality. Even in the act of resistance, "the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims, namely that it creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter" (Nandy, 1983, p. 3).

In the Cree context, the Cree Elders in the TCE spoke emphatically about how the actions of the newcomers [European law makers and settlers] had a detrimental effect on Cree society, and specifically on the behaviours of the Cree people. The Elders gave a specific example of Tully's (2000) second dimension of internal colonization, by describing how the Canadian government committed a fundamental breach of the Treaty agreements and therefore a transgression of the Natural Law that was evoked by the pipe ceremonies performed at the time of the Treaty signings. The TCE stated that:

> Regarding the law – Canadian law – as it is – is only made by one side – one party. When the newcomers came to our land – they shook hands – they said they agreed to live with us. They agreed to live in peace and harmony. They had an agreement – they lifted the pipe and made a treaty. Then he went his way and Indians stayed on the land. He started writing laws and using the paper to make things his way. An Indian person should have been there looking over that paper and seeing what it said. How that law affected Indian people, because we are half of that agreement that was made. It takes two people to make a treaty. Those treaties…that relationship is the relationship we are in today. Everything that the law is doing is affecting us but we have no say. They are not living up to their agreement – because of that there will always be disagreement and conflict.

> We have a relationship with the Whiteman – a *wahkohtowin*. If they were to listen to our side, our law and rules about relationships, behaviours in the community and societies – we would have a stronger, healthier society. Their own children are being affected the same ways as we are. Because we don't follow the rules anymore.
>
> They are lying to the creator when they do that. There was three parts to that agreement because the creator was part of the treaty. It is all connected. The protection that this country is under based on that agreement by our ceremonies and our people. When we lifted the pipe – there was the Creator, the Whiteman and the Indian. Because they are breaking their agreement, the protection of the country itself is becoming more at risk. (TCE, 2007)

From this fundamental breach of relationship between peoples – a *pastahowin* – the Elders believe that there will be serious consequences – *ohcinewin* - for generations to come. In addition, it interfered with the passing of vital information from generation to generation. Many young adults and youth today do not know their culture of origin and have only the information they have received from the popular media in understanding who they are and where they come from. At the heart of this issue, the Elders feel that Cree youth today have no idea what Natural Law is, and therefore do not live the doctrine of *wahkohtowin*. They illustrate this issue with a specific example:

> A lot of what we are taught is centred around behaviours, relationships and the sacredness of life. The teachings that we have are so important to the humanity – to society – for this society to continue to exist as it is. We are confronted by behaviours that were spoken about by the old people when they were raising him [pointing to the oldest Elder in the circle] as a child – they warned him in advance, years in advance, about what was coming down the line. Foreign stuff – they talked about alcohol, drugs, the kinds of things we see in society that our people are using as a result of losing their values, their morals, their ethics and so forth. He talked about the young people today switching that time frame. It was predicted that young people today will be awake at night running around doing all kinds of things and in the day time they will be sleeping all day. They are reversing their time on earth. It is being influenced by the dark side – the negative – the bad spirit. That is their time on this world – at night – they are given that time to do their thing, I guess. The good spirit is the day time, when the sun is out – that is good energy. In that respect, these kids are influenced by

> the dark side and that is what is causing a lot of these problems today. They were warned and they were being told that they have to listen to what we are telling you – about how to live, how to behave, how to conduct yourself in this world. (TCE, 2007)

The Elders concluded that it has had a detrimental affect on the peace and harmony of contemporary Cree society:

> Ever since the Europeans have come to live with us – things have changed. No longer can we go to the creek to drink water – everything has been poisoned. The animals have been infected and they pass it on to us. The future doesn't look very good. It's a reality of where we are with pollution and everything else. When we talk about *wahkohtowin* and *witaskewin* – it is a lot. In the beginning it was supposed to be that harmony – but how can you have harmony when one party is more dominant – and this dominance is creating conflict for us. (TCE, 2007)

In conclusion, the historical breach of the sacred Treaty agreements, which resulted in the loss of understanding of the basic respect rules of relationships, has resulted in significant change in the relationships in Cree society, including the structure and formation of the Cree family.

## Adversity and Adaptation of the Canadian Indigenous Family

Although it is now generally accepted that original Canadian Aboriginal societies employed a holistic interdependent lifestyle, (Clarkson, Morrissette, & Regallet, 1992), as a result of European contact and colonization, the definition and role of the contemporary Aboriginal family has changed. Significantly, the ban on traditional ceremonial practices left a large void in Aboriginal family life, interfered with the socialization of children and cut away the foundation of the Aboriginal way of living. Traditional ways have been subverted and some have disappeared completely. While some Aboriginal people have adopted the

mainstream notions of religion taught through the residential school system, others have integrated Christian and Aboriginal spirituality, and others lead lives devoid of any spiritual beliefs. Another segment of the Aboriginal population chooses to live according to their Aboriginal spiritual teachings, some believing that portions of their traditional ceremonies and ways may have been permanently lost. In some communities, these differing spiritual beliefs have caused significant turmoil in communities, with traditionalists and Christians clashing over the legitimacy of traditional spirituality or Christians fighting with each other over the veracity of each others denomination.

As a result of decimated Indigenous populations, the undermining of Indigenous societies and the forced removal of children from the interconnected family unit and their placement in residential schools, the Aboriginal family predictably became vulnerable to the next wave of colonial intervention policies targeted at the Aboriginal family. Beginning in 1950 (Fournier & Crey, 1997) many Aboriginal children have been apprehended from their families of origin and placed in non-Aboriginal foster care by government Family Services (Hudson, 1997). Fournier & Crey (1997) noted that: "Only 1% of all children in care were Native in 1959, but by the end of the 1960's 30 to 40% of all legal wards were Aboriginal children, even though they formed less that 4% of the national population" (p. 83). Aboriginal families were deemed inadequate due to their impoverished living conditions, including children being cared for by grandparents who were seen as too old for this responsibility (Fournier & Crey, 1997). The nuclear model of the family was being forced upon Aboriginal

families through Family Services actions, even though it did not fit within the interconnected, broad and inclusive form of the pre-contact Aboriginal family.

Evidence has revealed the dysfunction of many of the foster homes where Aboriginal children were placed; homes where children faced physical, sexual and emotional abuse or were exploited as labourers (Fournier & Crey, 1997). In addition, the rate of apprehension was so overwhelming in some Aboriginal communities that almost an entire generation of children was removed (Johnson, 1983); other Canadian First Nation communities saw their Aboriginal children adopted into non-Aboriginal families in the United States (Fournier & Crey, 1997, p. 88) and lost contact with them completely. Most adoption records are still closed, with a few complicated bureaucratic exceptions, thus preventing reconnection between birth families and lost children.

Child Welfare services have been slow to examine the "political neglect, paternalism and institutional colonialism" (McKenzie, Seidl, & Bone, 1995, p. 1) that underlies its policies and procedures. While many Provincial family service agencies have attempted to move towards a more culturally appropriate model of service provision with programs and services that seek to preserve the Aboriginal family unit, the alarming rate of removal of children from Aboriginal families continues today. This is illustrated by the total caseload (new and existing cases) of the Alberta Ministry of Children's Services, cited by Desmeules (2003): "[there were] 5891 Aboriginal [child welfare] cases in September 2002, which is 42% of the child protection caseload" (p. 3), which is representative of a typical month. Further, in 2002, Bennett & Blackstone reported that at that time there

were approximately 22,500 Aboriginal children in care in Canada (cited in Lafrance & Bastien, 2007, p. 113).

Perhaps most importantly to the intergenerational Aboriginal family unit, the ability of many Aboriginal people in Canada to be good mothers, fathers, grandparents and role models was seriously challenged as they "came out of these schools with no experience of family life to draw upon" (Goforth, 2003, p. 18). Children in these families may have identity confusion and learning barriers which stem from their parents' insecurities around their own identity and responsibilities as parents (Canada, 1996b).

The residential school phenomenon and the rate of apprehension of children from child welfare created destructive and dehumanizing messages about Aboriginal societies; that they were not capable of raising their own children and that they were inferior to European culture (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998; Stout and Kipling, 2003). The cumulative effect over time has been dire for the Aboriginal individual, family and community, contributing to the further demise of the family as a nurturing and mediating unit and the loss of cultural identity of Aboriginal people. The results have been disastrous, as evidenced by a Correctional Service of Canada study (Trevethan, Auger, Moore, McDonald & Sinclair, 2002) which found that approximately two thirds of Aboriginal inmates in the Canadian federal correctional system had been adopted, placed in foster/group homes or were survivors of residential schools at some point in their childhood, the dissolution of the traditional family unit clearly being

a prominent factor in these findings. These similar findings were also highlighted in the RCAP (1996) report.

In summary, the demand for change placed upon Indigenous societies has led to significant turmoil and suffering; Tully (2000) states that:

> [The cumulative effects] for the vast majority of native people in Canada have been to reduce formerly economically self-sufficient and interdependent native societies to tiny overcrowded reserves, inter-generational welfare dependency, sub-standard housing, diet, education, and health facilities, high levels of unemployment, low life expectancy, high rates of death at birth, and predictably, following these conditions on or off reserve that undermine their wellbeing and self-esteem, high levels of substance abuse, incarceration and suicide for native peoples. (p. 39)

The adaptation of the Cree family is a powerful example of the effects of colonization on the Indigenous family and society. From a Cree worldview, the inability to teach *wahkohtowin* to successive generations of Cree children has resulted in many significant issues within Cree society. The Elders in the TCE spoke about how many negative influences were brought into the Cree society by the newcomers, influences that have wreaked havoc within Cree families:

> When the alcohol came into the community that's when everything fell apart – in terms of *Wahkohtowin*. People put aside or did not understand the rules then. They did not know how to relate because of alcohol. The alcohol destroyed that thinking and understanding. Because they would do anything. Go with their cousins. Have relationships with close relatives they were not supposed to. That's what [another Elder in the circle] was saying – they don't even know who they are related to and [some people] have to ask years after to find out. They would link up how they are related by blood line. The old people [who still knew the rules] told them – you are not supposed to take a wife close by here - you got to go out far away. They were mindful of that. The alcohol ruined that – community. It was not entirely the fault of the people – it was also the fault of the alcohol. People were crossing the lines of natural law. This is why kids get sick – they are crossing these lines. Same thing with the animal world – they do not cross those boundaries. (TCE, 2007)

The interruption of teaching the doctrine of relationships (*wahkohtowin*) and the importance of possessing good relationships (*miyo-wicehtowin*) has caused a breakdown in the harmony of Cree society. The Elders described how harmonious living and peaceful coexistence (*witaskewin*) (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2000, p. 80) within and between families has been compromised by negative influences:

> If somebody builds a house next to your property that's *witaskewin*. There's a lot of confusion today. Today people don't love each other like they should. Young people follow this pattern. People fight too much, they don't use *witaskewin*. My feeling is that we shouldn't be disagreeing so much. If we want to teach our young people we have to love each other. Greet each other everyday – that's *witaskewin*. If we don't… our young people won't either. That's how I see it. We have to greet each other as native People. Young people will follow us and there won't be fighting. We have to go back to our old ways as Native People. We have to go back to being more loving. That's how I understand it. (TCE, 2007)

As a result, the Elders believe that Cree society is living the consequences (*ohcinewin*) of this contravention of Natural Law (*pastahowin*). They gave several examples of how these consequences during their discussion, including this one:

> As we grew up us, we were brought up in different ways to respect everything and everyone. One of the things they used to caution us not to laugh at others because of impaired speech or whatever – how they were born to this world. Today young people ridicule these kids. What we are saying is that they are breaking the sacredness of respect and overstepping that boundary by ridiculing that person. …When you do that, those words [concepts] that we talk about is that not only do you in English terms sin, but you can also sin your children to come. If you do that, one day your children or your grandchildren will be born that way to remind you of that mistake you made. These words [concepts] we take them to heart and a lot of the teachings. We still feel that fear, from doing these things because we want to protect our families, our loved ones and the ones to come – so that we watch what we do in this world so that we don't overstep that boundary between physical and spiritual. (TCE, 2007)

In addition, the Elders warned of the severity of the consequences of breaking the rules:

> Because of this *pastahowin* – people making too much sin. [If you commit] one sin during this time here on earth – it is ten times over there [in the spirit world]. In other words it is ten times harder to deal with it over there – you have to deal with it here [on earth] before you pass on. People don't realise the harm they are causing themselves by not addressing it. If we were able to give our teachings and to put it in a way – structured or whatever – to be lived by – things would change. (TCE, 2007)

The Elders also stated in many ways that these consequences are being borne by current Cree families; it manifests itself in children being born with disorders and serious issues:

> When you look at the western way of teaching in comparison – today they have so many name for children that are born under alcohol…FAS, FASD….To us here we know that's what we are talking about – *pastahowin*. That's what it is all about. If a parent deliberately takes drugs or alcohol and decides to have a child it is *pastahowin*. The child will inherit that. It is a violation against natural law. (TCE, 2007)

The Elders were also clear that Cree families are usually unaware of the concept of *ohcinewin* and therefore do not know how to resolve the issue (through ceremony and commitment to leading the good life). The Elders were careful to note that people are not to blame for not knowing the doctrine of *wahkohtowin*, and that people require help in order to reconnect with its principles:

> That role and responsibility of each individual person in the family, the community and society – that role and responsibility is not easily understood. The children don't understand our relationship with mother earth. There has to be a mechanism in place to bring back those teachings to young children. If you don't understand your role, how is it your fault? Without parents and grandparents, they are growing up without the teachings – that's why they are in institutions [prisons]. If they were made to understand their role and responsibility – it would make a big difference. Parenting – that is a big piece of the puzzle that is missing. Parents don't know how to raise their children in the right way. (TCE, 2007)

In addition, many Cree families who are in crisis and living out the consequences of *pastahowin* do not have access to the supports and structures based in *wahkohtowin* that would assist them through the crisis. The Elders in the TCE described this situation and how Western interventions often cause more harm than good within the Cree family and society:

> These processes that we understand traditionally in our culture – they are already there – the processes exist in our system – our old way of living. How to deal with families, how to help families, how to help persons restore themselves back into the community and family. The white system teaches about separation, isolation, removal, condemning, judgemental, conditions. All of this language does not help restore the family to what it should be. Because ultimately it is the parents responsibility to raise their children. That kinship was available to a family that was raising children and if they ended up being alone, they could turn to extended family to help raise the children. The structure and the way the system is working today – it is almost opposite of that. It teaches a person to be more bitter, spiteful, cynical about society and life. What is the use [of trying] when your children are taken away? You get angry and blame the system. The system, the social workers – they are all enemies. The mentality of the person is really becoming an illness – because they do not have any back up, they have nowhere to go – they get angry. So what do they do? They give up, they break the law. It's a vicious cycle – it doesn't work. (TCE, 2007)

In conclusion, the Cree context provides a concrete example of how the disruption of Indigenous culture has had adverse effects on the family and its ability to survive and thrive through historical change. The Cree concepts of *pastahowin* and *ohcinewin* help us understand the intergenerational effects of colonization on the Canadian Indigenous family from the Cree worldview.

## Intergenerational Effects of Colonization on the Canadian Indigenous Family and Community

It is now a widely accepted fact that the on-going strategy of domination by the Canadian Government over Canada's Indigenous peoples has caused significant psychological, social and spiritual trauma within the Indigenous individual, family and community. Research regarding human trauma helps us to understand how two interconnected types of trauma have affected Indigenous populations in Canada.

First, since the time of contact Indigenous peoples have been subjected to a pervasive demand for change: to reject their traditional languages, cultures and spiritual expressions of their ancestors and to accept without prejudice those of the European colonizers. This "unrelenting pressure to change induce[d] acculturation stress" (Couture, 1997, p. 12), and has created for many individuals, families and communities a devastating sense of cultural, spiritual and familial loss. This loss was (and is) compounded by the fact that the colonizing society has not acknowledged at critical times in history, that the loss sustained by Aboriginal people was legitimate; in the past, the Canadian government, with full support of its legal system and constituents, took colonial political action with the belief that they were saving the Indians from a primitive, savage reality (Cardinal, 1999). From that perspective, replacing and destroying Indigenous culture wholesale becomes an act of charity for the betterment of the Aboriginal people.

This created an environment where the natural reaction of grief to the loss of lifestyle, ritual, language, family structure and culture was denied to Aboriginal people by those who controlled all systems. Aboriginal people were made to feel

ashamed of their identity and of traditional Aboriginal ways, and therefore it was impossible to think about or verbalize the feelings of grief and loss that would have been natural and normal; the resolution of grief was further stymied by the disallowing of traditional ritual and ceremony that would have been held to help individuals progress through the grief process. Yellow Horse Brave Heart & Debruyn (1998) refer to this as 'disenfranchised grief', which has been transmitted intergenerationally in "a continuous passing on of unresolved and deep-seated emotions such as grief and chronic sadness, to successive descendants" (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p.2). The combination of disenfranchised grief and its intergenerational transmission is also referred to as historical intergenerational grief (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998).

Second, Kirmayer, Lemelson & Barad (2007) in a discussion of the historical understanding of trauma state that intergenerational transmission of trauma occurs in the interactions of children with parents, and extended family across generations, and can include whole communities affected by collective trauma; this phenomenon is commonly referred to as 'historical trauma', which links "current social and mental problems to the effects of colonization and policies of forced assimilation" (p. 10). This conceptualization of historic trauma creates the context for the current realities within Aboriginal communities, revealing the tangible manifestation of Canadian Aboriginal disenfranchisement. Compared to the non-Aboriginal Canadian majority, Aboriginal people remain more likely to live in poverty, have poorer access to clean drinking water, are more prone to chronic diseases such as tuberculosis, diabetes and heart disease,

are more likely to leave school before graduation and are less likely to be employed (Canada, 2007).

Within this framework of historical trauma and intergenerational historic grief in Aboriginal societies, it becomes easier to understand circumstances in Aboriginal families, including the high numbers of families involved with government child protection services (Desmueles, 2003), and the high incidences of domestic and community violence within the Canadian Aboriginal populations (Canada, 2006). As a result, many Aboriginal people are wrestling with many current losses as well; loss of family connection, identity and the frequent death of family and community members.

In addition, individuals, who have sustained physical, sexual or emotional trauma as children, as a result of being raised in families affected by historic trauma and disenfranchised grief, may also be suffering from complex Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder, commonly referred to as PTSD (Herman, 1997; Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). PTSD occurs in individuals who have experienced significant trauma and manifests as on-going, debilitating psychological challenges which interfere with many (or all) aspects of the individual's life. Indeed, for some Aboriginal families, the behaviour of family members has come to be shaped by trauma, in that "they are acting it out at personal and cultural levels and recreating trauma as a way of life" (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p.3). In this way, the physical, emotional, sexual and spiritual trauma that has occurred one or more generations ago is recreated in the successive generations, creating intergenerational cycles of trauma.

In summary, it becomes clear how disenfranchised grief, historical and personal trauma have interacted to create a complex web of pain, grief and loss; indeed "these layers of present losses in addition to the major traumas of the past fuel the anguish, psychological numbing and destructive coping mechanisms" (Yellow Horse Brave Heart & Debruyn, 1998, p. 68-69).

## Historic Trauma and Trauma Response

Based upon an ethnographic case study of a Coeur d'Alene Indian family living in Idaho, Aaron Denham (2008) submits that there are significant variations in the way that individuals experience and intergenerationally transmit trauma experiences; that there is in fact a range of lived realities within the contemporary Aboriginal family experience. Although most trauma literature focuses on description of historical trauma with an implication that intergenerational family dysfunction and family members with significant mental health issues are an unavoidable consequence, Denham (2008) found that:

> Despite a multigenerational history of repeated traumatic experiences and highly vivid oral histories that effectively transport these experiences into the present, members of this four generation family exhibited few of the Western notions of dysphoria and psychopathology that many professionals or researchers may anticipate. (p. 392)

Denham's research focused on the Indigenous family's use of traditional story telling, which shed light on how these trauma narratives served to promote hope, family resilience, a sense of Indigenous and family identity and good mental health in the family members. In the process, he was able to distinguish between the historical trauma (the conditions, experiences and events that have affected a family intergenerationally) and the 'historical trauma response', which

refers only to the constellation of behaviours that occur as a result. “Accordingly, the subsequent manifestation of or reaction to historical trauma, which varies from expressions of suffering to expressions of resilience and resistance are appropriately recognized as the historical trauma response” (Denham, 2008, p. 411).

Kirmayer, Lemelson & Barad (2007) argue that trauma is, “not a natural category but a culturally constructed way to mark out certain classes of experiences and events” (p. 4). How individuals cope and react to trauma is dependant upon their perceptions, in that “no event, however traumatic, contains inherent meaning. Rather, such meaning is constructed by those exposed directly to it and by others more removed from it” (Lifton, 2007, p. xx). This perspective on trauma gives way to understanding the whole range of resultant behaviours, from the most dysfunctional to the most resilient. It frames the historic trauma as an agent that can cause a breakdown in the social functioning of an entire society, which causes one generation to exhibit symptoms (responses) of historical trauma, which in turn become the agents that traumatize the successive generation (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). However, symptoms of historical trauma can include behaviours that are resilient in nature, and work to build community. These factors that contribute to family resilience must be better understood and fostered in Aboriginal families through culturally appropriate intervention.

# Chapter Six: Healing Process and Renewal

Healing is a concept with broad application within Canada's Indigenous community. It can refer to an individualistic process, an economic development initiative within a community, or the work of ceremonialists; thus it is helpful to think of healing as a movement in Canada that embraces a "cluster of ideas, activities, events, initiatives and relationships that happen at every level from the individual to the intertribal" (Lane, Bopp, Bopp & Norris, 2005, p. 377).

Further, healing has been studied from many different vantage points: first as the curing or lessening of physiological ailments through the employment of herbal or spiritual remedies (Colomeda & Wenzel, 2000); second as a product of the manipulation of symbols by a healer - usually through the employment of ceremony (Dow, 1986; Csordas, 1983, 2004; Waldram, 1993); third as a therapeutic modality (Lane et al., 2005; Schiff & Moore, 2006); and fourth as a series of activities that form program curriculum (Waldram, 1993). These explorations all offer 'truths' about healing yet give rise to these questions: how, if at all, do these truths interact? Is there a 'bigger picture' of healing that is not captured by these perspectives? The following discussion will attempt to express a grander, more holistic explanation of healing that encompasses these and other dimensions, as they pertain to the process of recovering, renewing, "reviving, rebuilding or recreating" (Lane et al., 2005, p. 380) from historical and familial/community trauma within the Aboriginal context. To accomplish this, the

Canadian Cree language, culture and process will be employed to give context to this explanation and specifically define the healing process.

## *Seeking the Good Life*

> 'If the land is not healthy, how can we be?' No words can summarize more succinctly the essence of what it means to be healthy for the Whapmagoostui Cree. The mention of the land and its conditions signals a broadened perspective on health that permeates not just one Elder Cree man's words but the outlook of this entire book. Shaking loose any suppositions of a natural or universal definitions of health, I take as a given that health is interpreted, idealized and enacted in various ways. (Adelson, 2000, p. 3)

In her book *Being Alive Well: Health and Politics of Cree Well-Being*, Adelson (2000) describes a definition of health specific to a Cree community in Quebec: a definition that moves past the western notion of 'being free from illness', thus embodying the notion of Cree well-being in the most holistic conceptualization possible. Her careful ethnography employed the Cree word "*miyupimaatisiiun*" to describe the Whapmagoostui concept of health, which "is political, [in that] health takes on a particular, and particularly charged, meaning when understood within its historical, cultural and social context" (p. 9). Adelson suggests that being Cree is ultimately linked to Cree concepts of health; that health is about 'being alive well', and is connected to the quality of social and political life. For the Whapmagoostui people, being able to pursue a Cree way of life (as defined by that community) is deeply connected to being healthy.

Similarly, the concept of healing (distinct, yet connected to health) is "historically and culturally mediated" (Adelson, 2000, p. 3) in the Cree worldview. For the Cree people, the holistic conceptualization of healing is

perhaps best understood as a process; it is the practice of *seeking* 'being alive well', or as Hart (2002) described it, 'the good life' - '*mino-pimatisiwin*[16]'. This definition implies an ongoing course of action that encompasses all facets of individual, family and community life in all dimensions – social, political, mental, emotional, physical and spiritual.

Although Adelson suggests that for Cree to be healthy, they must be allowed to live a good 'Cree life'; however, many Cree people in Canada have had very little exposure to the lifestyle that the Whapmagoostui have described as a Cree life. Some members of the community have lived the worst consequences of colonization and experienced significant historical, familial and community trauma, experiences that have disconnected them from any notion of a good Cree life. Others have lived in large urban centres where Cree is a very small voice surrounded by hundreds of cultural expressions, or in Aboriginal families and communities that have, as a result of the colonial experience, lost their connection to Cree values, spiritual and cultural expression. For these Cree, if they so choose, seeking the good life requires first a reconnection to Cree culture (holistically defined) – they would be obliged to first define what a 'Cree life' is to them, in order to pursue it in its highest form.

From this perspective, seeking the good life is a process of rebuilding, realignment and commitment to a personally or collectively constructed concept

[16] The differences in spelling between Adelson (2000) using *'miyopimaatisiiun'* and the spelling that I have employed *"Mino-pimatisiwin"* may be due to the geographical/dialectical difference between the Cree in Quebec and the Cree in Alberta. I have used the latter version, as it is the same spelling that was told to me from a Cree speaker, and it was also used by Hart (2002).

of well-being. This has been described as a decolonization process by the Cree of the Hollow Water First Nation (Lane et al., 2005), whereby:

> Community healing as decolonization therapy involves articulating the principles that promote health and balance for the community, supporting people to move back into balance, basing all community systems on healthy balanced principles and taking full responsibility as a community for the journey. (p. 380)

George Brertton, an Elder from the Saddle Lake Cree Nation, also described healing as decolonization, whereby individuals must first be clear what is from European culture and what is from Cree culture. Once this is sorted out, George suggests that the individual can consciously integrate aspects of the two cultures into their lives, from a position of knowledge and purpose.

Thus, whether one is engaged in realigning one's worldview or is deeply connected to the Cree worldview, learning about and seeking the good Cree life underlies all aspects in life (health, education, etc), thereby shaping all thoughts and behaviours. Cajete (1994) states that this is a common pervasive principle in many North American Indigenous cultures:

> The phrases seeking life, for life's sake, to find life, to complete, to become complete, of good heart, of good thought, with harmony and a host of related combinations, have translations in all Indian languages. These are the metaphors that Indian people use in talking about themselves, their places and their relationships. They are phrases used to begin and end communal events, in ritual prayers, in stones, in oratory, as greetings, in conversation and in teaching. They are phrases for 'remembering to remember" why things are done individually and in community. (p. 46)

Therefore, deeper understanding of the Cree definition of the concept of *mino-pimatisiwin* and how it is realized may also illuminate principles that have

transferable applicability to other Indigenous cultures in North America and perhaps internationally.

Michael Anthony Hart (2002) has described the concept of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* from the perspective of exploring the Aboriginal approach to helping others. He argues that the focus of this approach to helping is to assist others in taking responsibility for their own healing journey– their lifelong search for *mino-pimatisiwin*. Hart helps to expand our understanding of an Indigenous philosophy of healing related to self-actualization, namely that we are all personally responsible for our own health and have an active role the healing process. While an individual may seek help from different people and entities while experiencing difficulties, the ultimate responsibility for health lies within the seeker.

In their discourse on the centrality of the circle in Cree worldview, Cardinal and Hildebrandt (2000) further elaborate on the how the process of seeking the good life unfolds. They explain that the circle represents the unity of the Cree nation, which is held together by the laws of the Creator – in general terms within the doctrine of relationships (*wahkohtowin*) and founded on the principles that guide the development and maintenance of good relationships (*miyo-wicehtowin*). Through the purposeful attention to the preservation of all relationships Indigenous people reaffirm and renew their capacity to care for each other and therefore ensure the health of the community (including the individuals who are members). By living within and enacting the doctrine of relationships, we can better achieve *mino-pimatisiwin*: being good to all of our relations improves our

capacity to live the good life and creates opportunities for those around us to seek the good life as well.

For the Cree people and for many other Indigenous people, healing is expressed as a journey (Lane et al., 2005; Hart, 2002): individuals may refer to their process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* as being on their healing path, a healing journey, or the red road. The concept of road or pathway is useful in this context as it puts forward the active element in the healing process - there is an implication that the individual will move, change and transform on this healing path and that this will happen over an extended period of time. “In traveling a Pathway, we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, seek answers and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. *Path* denotes a structure; *Way* implies a process” (Cajete, 1994, p. 55 original emphasis). In Cree culture as well as in many other Indigenous cultures, healing is therefore not an ‘event’. It is a commitment to a way of life, to a way of being and becoming that will result in the best possible holistic life.

The process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* as a conceptualization of holistic healing is the truest enactment of the core assumptions and values of the Indigenous paradigm. Pursuing the good life is deeply connected to the assumption of the interdependence of all aspects of life. Living by the rules set out by *miyo-wicehtowin* infers that *mino-pimatisiwin* is only achieved individually when it is shared with those around us. When one facet of community life is in turmoil, it affects and disrupts the process of *mino-pimatisiwin* in all of its facets. By caring for the others, we enhance our own healing journey.

Correspondingly, the process of renewal becomes a critical dimension within the larger process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin*. Actualization of the good life requires a commitment to build and maintain good relationships through purposeful and regular renewal activities; for many Indigenous societies, ceremony has been and remains the primary mechanism for this renewal:

> …. Elders made contracts with the powers and spirits and energies of the world to enter into relationships with the plants, the animals, the winds, the sun, and the movement of the heavens. In the world that lies between the Sky Kingdom and Mother Earth, The People renew these relationships through their ceremonies that help maintain harmony and balance in the world. (Peat, 2002, p. 174)

The practice of ritual maintains and strengthens our relationship with the Creator (supreme power), and all aspects of ceremony purposefully draw attention to the critical core relationships with all of creation on Earth, the spirit world and the cosmos.

Further, renewal of relationships within the process of *mino-pimatisiwin* requires the observance of cultural protocol – the enactment of the values of respect and reciprocity. The laws of *Miyo-wicehtowin* – 'good' relationships therefore require that the process of renewal be done in a respectful manner and that the seeker always give something of him/herself when asking for something. This is illustrated in the presentation of a "gift" to a ceremonialist when asking for help. The gift is a type of sacrifice the individual (seeker) makes; it demonstrates that the request is important, that the seeker understands that s/he must give something up to receive help, and that the seeker respects the skills the ceremonialist possesses. The presentation of the gift is also a demonstration that

the seeker understands that those skills are difficult to obtain, and acknowledges the time and effort that the ceremonialist has dedicated to the development of his or her abilities. Observing this protocol therefore, reaffirms commitment to and enhances understanding of *miyo-wicehtowin* by enacting the principles of respect and reciprocity.

## *Achieving "the Good Life"*

Describing the actualization of *pimatisiwin* is a difficult task, as it is not commonly written about as a specific outcome; however, some Indigenous scholars have described individuals that embody the actualization of *mino-pimatisiwin*. For example, Joe Couture (1991) describes the *true* Elder with (but not limited to) the following characteristics: having achieved a high quality of intuition, intellect, memory and imagination; profound and refined moral sense manifest in an superb sense of humour; a high level of achievement in spiritual and psychic capability; capacity to trust the process of life and their experiences; and the ability to adapt positively to inevitable change. Couture asserts that these characteristics are created by developing knowledge and skill in the primal experience – which in turn epitomizes the purpose of healing path – to foster an ever-expanding connection with the pervasive and encompassing life-giving, healing energy.

Couture's *true* Elders are powerful role-models and experiential teachers. While each individual is ultimately and completely responsible for his/her own search for *mino-pimatisiwin*, Elders and Aboriginal helpers (Hart, 2002) facilitate access to the *track* Cajete (1991) described for others to follow on their healing

pathway. These people will encourage seekers to reflect upon their lives, provide insight (Hart, 2002), and encourage a deeper spiritual connection in the search for the good life. The late Joe P. Cardinal from Saddle Lake Cree Nation illustrated this point succinctly, when he would instruct those that came to him for help: "I cannot heal you; I can only help you heal yourself". Couture describes this process as well:

> [Elders] power and personality hold the ability to shake us and lead us out of the current global cultural pathology, and bring us along into and through a healing and restructuring at a most basic level. They facilitate healing because they have a sensitivity to the larger patterns of nature, in its harsh and deadly aspects as well as in its life-giving powers, always in balance with all life-forms. (1991, p. 209-210)

A second manuscript, by Walter Lightning (1992), translates a document written in Cree syllabics by the late Elder Louis Sunchild. The text of the document reflects traditional Cree teachings regarding the development of the *compassionate mind* – arguably, the actualization of *mino-pimatisiwin*. In many ways, this document is an instruction manual for holistic learning and healing, implying that in order to develop the compassionate mind, one must adopt a holistic perspective of self, take care of oneself in specific ways and avoid negative influence.

The Elder often implicitly refers to the interconnection between the body, the conscious and sub-conscious mind, feeling and spirit. In the process of analysis and translation, Lightning refers to this as engaging the total *consciousness* of the individual in the learning and healing process. In addition, the text calls to mind the holistic effect negative influences have on the individual

in all domains of existence. The Elders that assisted in the translation of the text were "concerned about the totality of those things and the connectedness of those things, and the fact that the domains do not exist independently, so that a negative influence existed in all domains" (1992, p. 78).

Through his description of the compassionate mind, Elder Sunchild shines light on the process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* and how its actualization might be described. The research Lightning completed on this text helps the reader to understand the multiple layers of meaning that are embedded in the text, therefore providing important instruction for those seekers who have just begun their journey, as well as those who are already more deeply connected. Thus, healing from historical and familial/community trauma means moving from a position of feeling isolated and disconnected (Herman, 1997) towards the recognition of total connection and oneness, where there is nothing that exists between the Creator of all and the "cosmos, the environment, all life forms and the Native soul" (Couture, 1991, p. 208).

## *Healing Programs*

If healing is a process of seeking the good life, then searching for and receiving help from ceremonialists and healers, attending therapy and healing programs are some of the activities that an individual, family or community pursues as part of their healing path. Aboriginal healing programs are a relatively new phenomenon in Canada; introduced in the 1970's, they have focused primarily on treatment for addictions, dealing with individual and collective trauma.

Healing programs are by nature a bi-cultural construct. 'Aboriginal Healing' connotes a process of transformation based in Indigenous culture, while 'program', is a more European concept meaning "a plan or system under which action may be taken towards a goal; curriculum[17]". Coming from two quite different worldviews, there may be instances and areas within the program where reconciling the demands of each are difficult.

Linda Archibald (2006) put forward a comprehensive framework that included three distinct yet interconnected and interdependent dimensions and processes that are part of healing for Aboriginal people in Canada. These include de-colonization, recovery from post traumatic stress disorder and healing from historic trauma. This framework (illustrated in the table below) succinctly describes the processes that are commenced/enhanced and explored within a healing program that addresses the complex needs of the Aboriginal community.

[17] Miriam-Webster Online Dictionary; accessed June 19, 2007 at http://mw1.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/program .

| Laenui's Process of Decolonization | Judith Herman's Three Phases of Recovery from PTSD | Healing from Historic Trauma |
|---|---|---|
| Sociopolitical process | Personal journey | Personal and collective journey |
| Rediscovery and recovery: renewed interest in history, culture, music, art and literature, both traditional and modern; contributes to a recovery of pride | Safety: creating a safe environment, establishing trust in self and therapist | Personal and cultural safety: creating a safe environment; establishing trust; increasing knowledge and understanding of Indigenous and colonial history and its impacts; renewing interest in traditional culture, healing and spirituality |
| Mourning: an essential phase of decolonization is lamenting what was lost, a process that may include anger. Mourning can also accelerate the process of rediscovery and recovery, and the first two phases can feed each other | Remembrance and mourning: reconstructing and recounting the abuse story (events and feelings); integrating traumatic memories; mourning traumatic loss | Remembrance and mourning: speaking about and grieving personal losses and experiences of abuse, as well as those within the family and community/people (intergenerational impacts). Continued learning and building connections with culture, traditions, spirituality |
| Dreaming: fully exploring one's culture and traditions while building visions of the future | | Dreaming: fully exploring one's culture and traditions while building a personal vision of the future |
| Commitment: making a personal commitment to working toward change | Reconnection: reconciling with oneself and relearning personal strengths; reconnecting with others | Connecting: affirming and rebuilding relationships within the family and community; developing new relationships |
| Action: the decolonization process culminates in proactive action in the spirit of self-determination | | Giving back in the spirit of self-determination: contributing to family and community |

**Table 2. Decolonization and Healing (Archibald, 2006, p. 28)[18]**

I argue that Archibald's work illuminates three purposes of Aboriginal healing programs in Canada. The first is a process of decolonization, whereby the

[18] Archibald drew from the following work: Laenui (2000) and Herman, (1997).

seeker is oriented (if the seeker is unaware) to the same Indigenous worldview as the healer by sharing "elements, principles, symbols and rhetoric" (Waldram, 1997, p. 73). This orientation establishes a common framework between the healer and the seeker (Dow, 1986) and therefore the predisposition (Csordas, 1983) for healing to occur. Indeed, many healing programs begin with establishing a common understanding of and orientation to basic spiritual teachings within the culture of the ceremonialist; once introduced to this way of thinking, the participants better understand the ways in which the ceremonies and the ceremonialist can assist them. For many individuals who have been disconnected as a result of colonialism, this is the first opportunity to learn about any Indigenous culture (including the one of their ancestors); for others, this first principle of healing programs reinforces their connection to their culture.

Building on this knowledge, the second purpose of the healing program is to increase participant awareness of the complexity of historical/family/community trauma, how this history has affected the overall Aboriginal community in Canada, how trauma has affected the participant's extended family, as well as how trauma has shaped current participant behaviour. This work fosters an understanding of how the past influences the present and gives context and meaning to the intergenerational and personal trauma in the individual's life. In this way, a healing program will engage an individual in a process of "eliciting and transforming narratives of trauma" (Kirmayer, Lemelson, & Berad, 2007, p. 12). Key areas of this program are opportunities to learn about and remember community, family and personal trauma; to mourn and grieve

losses, which include (but are not limited to) family members, culture, language and freedom and to forgive oneself and others for actions of the past.

The third and final purpose of healing programs is to provide the opportunity for participants to begin or re-commit to their healing path. Within the allocated program time, healing programs cannot actually 'heal' the participants; rather, the program is structured to provide the information, orientation and support required for a life-long pursuit of *mino-pimatisiwin*, which is achieved through the building and maintaining of healthy, respectful relationships with one's family, community, nation and the natural/spiritual world.

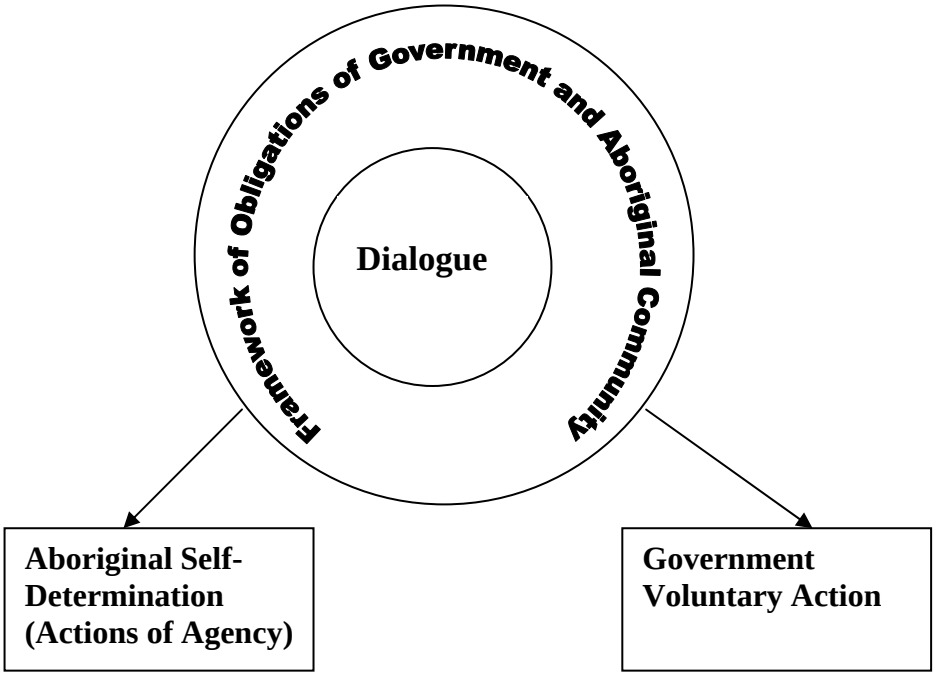
# Chapter Seven: A Case Study on Self-Determination, Healing and Building Interconnectedness

## *Introducing a Model of Self-Determination*

The purpose of this chapter is to explore how the Aboriginal community in Canada asserts its right to self-determine within the colonial structure, which results in the development of healing programs that are founded in an Indigenous worldview and are created to address the specific issues that have arisen as a result of internal colonisation (Tully, 2000). Further, it will include a discussion on how this assertion of self-determination of the People, through the actions of organizations and healing programs, subsequently promotes and builds resilience in the Aboriginal individual, family and community. Relating this chapter to the overall research enterprise, the goal is to further inform the research question: how can community programs assist individuals to learn how to renew family relationships, promoting positive adaptation?

To accomplish this, a model of self-determination[19] will be employed, which is illustrated in the diagram below.

[19] This model is based upon a discussion that took place at the Aboriginal Working Group meetings during the Trudeau Foundation Summer Institute at Acadia University, June 2006. Working group members included Dr. James Tully, Dr. John Borrows, Dr. Roderick A. McDonald, Sophie Theriault, Robert Lee Nichols, Kate Hennessy, Dawnis Kennedy and Patti LaBoucane-Benson. It is employed here with much gratitude to the individuals who participated in the discussion.




This diagram demonstrates that when self-determination is framed from the perspective of mutual obligation, a generative space is created for meaningful dialogue between the colonizer and the colonized. Within this space, Aboriginal people, organizations and community leadership as well as government bureaucrats and elected officials can see the field anew (and consider a different paradigm from which to understand the situation at hand), deconstruct colonial structures, reproblematize the issues at hand and create opportunities for self-determination of the people/organizations involved[20]. By focussing on the obligations of all concerned, as opposed to the rights of Aboriginal people versus the goals of the colonial state, it is possible to shift from 'what is the Indian Problem and how do we solve it' to 'what is the

[20] The concept described in this paragraph is a result of the discussions of the Aboriginal Working Group at the Trudeau Foundation Summer institute at Acadia University, June 2006. Working group members included Dr. James Tully, Dr. John Borrows, Dr. Roderick A. McDonald, Sophie Theriault, Robert Lee Nichols, Kate Hennessy, Dawnis Kennedy and Patti LaBoucane-Benson.

nature of the colonial problem and how do we reflect and act on it'. This shift of paradigm asks 'what is the inherited horizon' – and calls into question the form of problematization. From this perspective, not only is another paradigm possible, it is very real and it exists. Often it is impossible to see the other world because our vision is blocked by the 'black box', which is the dominant way of looking at the situation. By seeing the field anew (opening or unpacking the black box) we see opportunities for a resurgence of Aboriginal freedom and capacity for self-determination in a variety of manners.

This model of self-determination is animated by the case study I have chosen for my dissertation research. In the first section of this chapter, I will demonstrate that Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) has actively resisted internal colonization by creating spaces for self-determination within the structure of Canadian domination and "by exercising freedom of thought and action with the aim of modifying the system in the short term and transforming it from within in the long term" (Tully, 2000, p. 50). The organization has accomplished this by accepting the obligation that Aboriginal people and agencies have to resolve their problems and developing creative approaches to address Aboriginal-specific issues that have been created by internal colonization. Within this space, NCSA has engaged in ongoing dialogue with members of the colonial state; the outcome of this relationship building has been the development of programs and services that assist Aboriginal people in reversing the effects of the colonial enterprise. Links

will be made in this section between the self-determination of NCSA and the fostering of resilience in the Aboriginal individual, family and community.

In the second section, I will focus specifically on the In Search of Your Warrior (ISOYW) healing program, as one area where NCSA has developed a creative, effective program that addresses community violence, an intergenerational legacy of internal colonization. In addition, the outcomes of the ISOYW program will be discussed, particularly from the perspective of how the program assists in building individual, family and community resilience.

Finally, Section Three will include a discussion of how the assertion of self-determination and the development of healing programs within the context of an on-going dialogue with the state have contributed to the transformation of the way in which the state delivers programs for Aboriginal offenders throughout Canada.

## *Section One: Native Counselling Services of Alberta's Self-Determination*

> The history of Native Counselling Services of Alberta involvement in adult corrections extends back indirectly to 1963, when the first Native Courtworker position was established with the fledgling Edmonton Native Friendship Centre. As the perceived need for Native Courtworkers grew, the service was separated from the centre and while operating under the Métis Association of Alberta, became Native Courtworker's Service of Alberta…The organization was independently incorporated under the Society's Act and the name changed to Native Counselling Services of Alberta. (NCSA, 1988)

## Case Study Process for Section One

For this part of the case study, conducted from December 2007 to April 2008, I conducted several interviews with the Chief Executive Officer of Native Counselling Services of Alberta (which will be cited: CEO, 2007). Appropriate protocol was observed to both request and give thanks for the interviews. This section also required an in-depth review of the research literature that has been published *on* NCSA, as well as documents published *by* NCSA. After preparing this chapter, the CEO and other long-term and/or senior staff at NCSA then reviewed the entire case study and provided feedback for revision.

### *Taking Back Responsibility*

The over-representation of Aboriginal people within the justice systems of Canada and Alberta is well documented, and has been an on-going issue for decades (Canada, 2004; LaPrairie, 2002). Aboriginal people in Canada currently comprise 2.7% of the total Canadian adult population, yet made up 9% of the incarcerated inmate population in 1984 and 11% in 1989 (Nielson, 1993). According to the most recent data published on-line by the Correctional Service of Canada[21] states that 16.7% of all federally incarcerated people in Canada are Aboriginal. The problem has been significantly worse in the prairie provinces and territories; for example, in 2003/04 in Alberta, 39% of people admitted to

[21] published by Correctional Service of Canada on the Aboriginal Initiative Website: http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/pblct/qf/01-eng.shtml (Accessed April 22/08).

Provincial prisons and 28% of people admitted to Federal prison were Aboriginal[22].

It is within the context of a growing over-representation of Aboriginal people in an increasingly complex milieu that Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA) was formed in 1970 with the mandate to gain fair and equitable treatment for Native people in the criminal justice system. NCSA's flagship program was its courtworker service, which offered Aboriginal people assistance in navigating the complex justice system. The courtworker program was developed in response to the difficulties and disconnection that Aboriginal people experience when involved with the justice system, such as not understanding legal terminology, Aboriginal fear of the police and the court system, English as a second or third language, systemic discrimination of Aboriginal people within the justice system and a lack of understanding of the realities of Aboriginal people by officers of the court (Nielsen, 2006). Clearly, the Canadian criminal justice system was not meeting the needs of the Aboriginal people it was dealing with; the NCSA Courtworker program, and soon many other Aboriginal courtworker programs in other provinces, began working to address these longstanding systemic issues.

NCSA is considered a groundbreaking organization (Neilsen, 1993) and one of the first to assert its right to provide services for Aboriginal people and define the way in which these services would be delivered. NCSA is also reported to be the first to deliver Aboriginal-specific criminal, youth and family courtwork,

[22] (Adult Correctional Services in Canada, 2003/04. Published by authority of the Minister responsible for Statistics Canada © Minister of Industry, 2005 http://www.statcan.ca/english/freepub/85-211-XIE/0000485-211-XIE.pdf ) (Accessed April 7/08)

parole, probation, institutional liaison and Elder services, as well as the first to run an Aboriginal young offender group home, minimum security work camps and a community correctional centre (Nielsen, 1993).

Since 1970, NCSA has continued to change to meet the needs of the Aboriginal clientele it serves, expanding into the following areas:

- family and community wellness programs (including in-home family support, delivering the Family Life Improvement Program, facilitating Family Group Conferences; gang intervention and prevention services);
- knowledge generation and dissemination (BearPaw Research, BearPaw Media, the Aboriginal Resource Centre);
- employment services;
- housing and homelessness prevention (Cunningham Place, Homeward Integrated Support Services);
- alternative dispute resolution training (Peacemaker Certification Program) and
- leadership in local and national campaigns and strategies (National Day of Healing and Reconciliation; Community Solutions to Gang Violence) (NCSA, 2007).

In the process of developing Aboriginal-specific services, NCSA has defined its own unique corporate culture, with characteristics that emerge from both the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian culture. In this way, NCSA has established a bi-cultural approach to leadership, management and service delivery that has allowed the agency to "walk in two worlds" (Nielsen, 2000, p. 33) in order to meet the

needs of its Aboriginal clientele and the expectations of the criminal justice system and the funders of the services NCSA provides.

In addition, NCSA is a culturally diverse Aboriginal organization that provides services to a culturally diverse clientele. This is evidenced by staff representation from First Nations throughout Alberta (Treaty and non-status) as well as Métis populations; additionally, over 20% of NCSA staff are non-Aboriginal (CEO, 2007). Further, all of NCSA's services are status blind, in that they are available to all Aboriginal people in Alberta, regardless of their status or affiliation. In addition, a small percentage of NCSA clientele are non-Aboriginal[23].

Finally, NCSA's corporate culture has been described as "a family" (Nielsen, 1993; personal observations) which typically invokes a high degree of staff loyalty and personal dedication to the agency and their co-workers. This phenomenon is directly related to the leadership styles of both the past Executive Director and the current Chief Executive Officer. In addition to being widely respected, both leaders have demonstrated commitment to building relationships with their staff, a decentralized leadership style that reflects traditional Aboriginal leadership structures, humility, and concern for staff with personal issues (Nielsen, 2000; personal observations).

## NCSA/State Relations: 1970-1995

Marianne O. Nielsen (1993) undertook a case study of NCSA for her PhD research. Her investigation considered the agency between 1970 and 1993, and

[23] This information is taken from NCSA client statistics captured during the 2006-07 fiscal year.

examined the environmental conditions in which that NCSA operated, how these conditions affected the agency and how it responded and adapted to address these conditions. Her dissertation details how in taking back the responsibility for providing services to Aboriginal people, NCSA essentially entered into a longstanding relationship with both the state[24] and the Aboriginal community. Within the boundaries of this relationship, dialogue was initiated between the representatives of the municipal, provincial and federal governments and the leadership of NCSA. The nature of this dialogue and the tensions that arose from the dialogue can be characterized by three themes; these themes will be illustrated with the findings of Nielsen's (1993) doctoral work.

During this period, NCSA had to first prove and maintain legitimacy as a credible service organization and demonstrate the capacity to deliver services that were valuable and on par with mainstream services. As a fledgling organization, NCSA struggled against systemic racism within the criminal justice system, which held the belief that Aboriginal people were incapable of either managing an organization or delivering justice services; they described NCSA's work as "an invasion of the system" (p. 14) and viewed Aboriginal organizations as inherently unable to meet their contractual obligations. In addition, some members of the bar felt that because NCSA provided services free of charge, they were infringing on lawyers' territory and undercutting their fees. While there were individuals who supported the early work of NCSA (such as most members of the judiciary), the environment in which NCSA was working appeared to be openly hostile at times,

[24] The term 'state' is used here to describe the government agencies that NCSA has entered into contractual agreement, including municipal, provincial and federal governments.

a climate marked by feelings of distrust between some members of the justice system and the NCSA staff.

The leadership at NCSA took action to significantly diminish the distrust and racist ideology that existed in within the same agencies that provided contracts and allowed NCSA to have a space within the criminal justice system. The founder and Executive Director employed many strategies to both build positive working relationships with members of these groups who were open to the idea, as well as meet (and at times exceed) the expectations that others had of the quality of services delivered. Strategies included: finding "non-competitive working accommodations" (p. 15) to ease feelings of competition between NCSA and other justice personnel; taking an apolitical stance that did not infringe on Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal political territory; working with senior officials from justice agencies to establish trust and good working relationships that would influence their staff in the field; ensuring that NCSA was accountable for all the funds it received; having staff participate on local, provincial and national task forces; allowing external evaluations to proceed, accepting critical feedback and working to correct issues that were illuminated; adapting to the changing needs of clients and environmental changes; providing services that reflected Aboriginal culture and values; and providing substantive, on-going training for NCSA staff to ensure a high quality of service. NCSA therefore maintained legitimacy by providing a professional, skilled Aboriginal service, whereby Aboriginal people felt that they were getting a service that met their needs and the program funders felt like they were getting great service for their investment, "challenging the

negative expectations that criminal justice personnel had of Native people". (p. 1/6)[25].

The second dialogical theme that has informed the relationship between NCSA and the state concerns the expectation that the agency would conform. Nielsen (1993) documented many instances between 1970 and 1993 where NCSA experienced pressure from the state as well as other (mostly Aboriginal) political organizations to behave, structure itself and otherwise do business in specific ways. The leadership at NCSA maintained, for the most part, good working relationships with the state and other political organizations, despite these differences in opinions about how NCSA should proceed, by selectively choosing which pressure to heed depending upon the needs of the agency and the environment at the time. Nielsen (1993) termed this practice selective resistance, which was practiced by maintaining an in-between status, not wholly on the side of government, yet not wholly on the side of Aboriginal political organizations, leadership and communities. She explains, "Instead, by developing innovative structures and services, the Agency was trying to maintain a balance between the demands of the Native community and the state" (p. 2/48). By selective resistance, NCSA resisted the pressure to conform from many influences and therefore maintained the right to self-manage and self-determine.

Finally, the third theme that has informed the nature of the relationship between NCSA and the state is that of power and the dialogue around how much power an Aboriginal political body or organization should hold. Nielsen's

[25] This page number represents the manner in which the Nielsen's dissertation is formatted. It represents case one page 6.

findings illustrate how NCSA built a positive reputation and became a legitimate organization for government and communities; the Executive Director in 1991 commented that as the agency grew, it "developed political power as a by-product" (Nielsen, 1993, p. 3/8). With this legitimacy came strategic opportunities for the leadership at NCSA to take on an activist role and challenge the state in the way that it provided services for Aboriginal people. This role, however, made state representatives uncomfortable and may have caused them to attempt to exert more control over NCSA. Nielsen (1993) concluded that in the period between 1974 and 1989, while the state wanted to be seen as supporting the self-determination efforts by Aboriginal community and needed to be seen as providing Native services, the state "no longer wanted them provided by self-determined organizations. To accomplish this, funding was manipulated in such a way as to get control of the programs" (p. 3/57).

Later, in 1990–1991, this manipulation included playing the right of First Nations to self-determination against NCSA's. In a time of fiscal cutbacks in the province of Alberta, the province cut its funding for programs that NCSA provided, and then offered those funds to First Nations communities. It appears that the desired outcome was to decrease the programs, staff and ultimately power of NCSA and disperse it throughout the province (Nielsen, 1993); no one community, political organization or agency could then amass enough legitimacy to successfully challenge the state. Further, NCSA would also have less autonomy and be more dependent upon the state for survival. In response, NCSA asserted its right to self-manage, which included the following actions: controlling what and

where program/budget cuts occurred, creating a plan for assisting in the self-determination efforts of communities, increasing agency efficiency and increasing internal and external communications. Further, NCSA renewed its already significant commitment to maintaining good relationships with First Nations groups in Alberta, which helped to diminish the government's attempt to cause tension between the agency and the communities it worked with.

This plan was implemented and proved to be a very effective management strategy in a hostile environment. Finally, the agency re-asserted its commitment to build relationships with representative from the state, in an effort to re-establish a common goal.

### NCSA/State Relations: 1996 -2009

In 1996, NCSA underwent its first and only leadership change. The founding Executive Director retired and was replaced by a former Senior Manager. At this time the agency was restructured and the most senior management position became the Chief Executive Officer. The new CEO of NCSA began his leadership with a personal reflection regarding how he was going to lead, what guiding values would shape his leadership and how these values could enhance the services NCSA delivered. He also sought advice from a Cree Elder and friend for guidance on how traditional values could be further incorporated into service delivery and the way staff were managed within the agency. The CEO describes the outcome of this change:

> The most important thing that happened was a conscious decision for me to change my leadership style to make the organization much more open…also to

> ensure we have high standard for values in the organization…and then incorporating the Elders more in the organization was significant…. We include the Elders in more substantial way in the planning and delivery of services. We talk about how we value [traditional values] with staff. (CEO interview)

Further, the CEO's negotiation style has been marked by an explicit bid to self-determine within the boundaries of a healthy partnership with government agencies and other funders. He noted that NCSA was not "subservient to government"; rather, the key to successful service delivery was the development and maintenance of true partnerships, whereby both parties are respected, have an important role and are moving towards the same goal. Without a healthy partnership, the struggle between government and agency diminishes (but does not extinguish) the agency's ability to provide the holistic, culturally appropriate service required by Aboriginal people. He argued that NCSA has expertise in Aboriginal service delivery that government agencies do not. Therefore:

> No longer do we have our hand out begging for funds, we have our hand extended [as a handshake] in partnership, because we believe that we can offer services to our people that are better, more efficient and have better outcomes. That's why we do it. (CEO interview)

The CEO's argument was framed by the belief that Aboriginal people must take responsibility for resolving the issues that exist within their community. The answers to these problems must come from Aboriginal culture and be mobilized by Aboriginal people, for the outcomes to be sustainable: "We said to corrections, justice – everybody – these are our people, they are our problem. This is our problem to solve. The answers are within our community and it is up to us to find solutions" (CEO, 2007).

In addition, maintaining NCSA's legitimacy and credibility within the Aboriginal community, government agencies, and service delivery partners has been of utmost importance. The strategy for accomplishing this has been two-fold. First, the agency has been expanding to encompass a more holistic approach to service delivery, to address issues within and outside of the criminal justice system:

> Getting involved in the homelessness and housing area, participating in the homeless count, starting the Community Solutions to Gang Violence…Partnering in those things is important, because we are saying to the broader community that we value our relationship with the non-Aboriginal community and that we are a partner in the community, and we believe that social problems are all of our responsibility to solve…Our ancestors teach us that we have things to bring to the table. (CEO, 2007)

Being a good community partner increases the credibility of the agency, as it demonstrates that NCSA is capable and shares the responsibility of resolving issues that exist both in the Aboriginal community and as a part of the larger society; the agency is viewed as providing valuable services as well as participating significantly and successfully within the larger community. The CEO referred to this as the "political insulation" that helps the agency survive the difficult times that inevitably occur.

One example was the provincial government's decision to cancel the Family Courtworker Program in 1999, after over 20 years of service delivery, without any prior discussion or negotiation with NCSA's leadership. To address this issue, NCSA mobilised its staff to garner support from the people who have been impacted by the Family Courtworker Program. Staff collected over 200 letters of support from mayors, First Nations chiefs, clients and community

members; management mustered support within the provincial caucus, the criminal justice system and the officers of Family Court. The CEO reflected:

> It was an exercise of power. And we pushed back…We proved to the government that the community cared and that people were concerned that the services to community would suffer. And they recognized that we were in it for the good – not for control over the dollar. (CEO 2007)

NCSA then worked with the provincial government to have the program reinstated, without a disruption in the service to clientele. This example demonstrates how government will, in response to pressures from within the government and from select communities, test if NCSA programs are valued by its partners and clients. NCSA therefore has had to ensure that its programs remain relevant to a changing Aboriginal population and that its relationships with funders and partners are renewed constantly, and its staff is seen as providing valuable contributions to the communities that they work in.

Sometimes, however, NCSA has had to be willing to give up a program. The CEO spoke passionately about NCSA's need to self-determine the way that services are delivered. When describing the renewing of the Section 81 agreement for the delivery of community correctional services at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre in Edmonton, the following line was drawn that the CEO would not cross:

> We said we are not going to allow you to control [our] Section 81[agreement] – we are going to deliver this in our way, in accordance to the agreement and if you don't like that, take the contract, we don't want it. We were prepared to give up the delivery of that service…You have to be prepared to give some things up – if you want to keep your values and beliefs. (CEO 2007)

In the end, the disagreement was resolved in a way that reflected both the goals of the government and the need for NCSA to determine how those services would be delivered.

## Obligations, Relationship, Dialogue and the Creation of the Space to Self Determine

In conclusion, the relationship between NCSA and the state has throughout the history of the agency been marked by periods of excellent working relationships, whereby NCSA and the state are working together to achieve a common goal, and other times when the state and NCSA have been working at cross purposes, resulting in a difficult or even hostile environment. The nature of the dialogue that has arisen as a result of this relationship has revolved around the themes that have been discussed above: the need for NCSA to prove legitimacy within a changing milieu; the pressure by the state for NCSA to conform to the standards of the day and the issues the state has had with the political power that NCSA has exercised within the justice system and in the communities it serves. While these issues were at times exacerbated by pressures from other Aboriginal political organizations, NCSA's leadership employed a strategy that allowed it to "comply with and participate in the dominant institutions while refusing to surrender, to regain degrees of self-rule and control… where possible and so to seek to transform internal colonization obliquely from within" (Tully, 2000, p. 42). By employing the freedom to successfully manoeuvre within the criminal justice system through its relationship with the state, NCSA successfully asserted its right to manage its own affairs and to determine the present and future of the organization.

In the larger context, NCSA represents an Aboriginal agency that has accomplished a sustained repatriation of power (Tully, 2000, p. 42). This is possible only within a decolonized worldview; one that stands in opposition to the colonial perspective of Aboriginal peoples and Aboriginal societies, who are viewed as primitive, unsophisticated, wholly dependant on the state and therefore incapable of making informed decisions (Fanon, 1959; Said, 1978; Loomba, 1998) within contemporary Euro-Canadian society. A critical first step in asserting the right to self manage and self determine is the adoption of an interconnected world view that is a function of the relationships that connect all beings. Individuals, families, communities and societies are required to be responsible for their own actions, accountable for the consequences inherent in those actions, and respectful of the requirement of others to be responsible and accountable for their actions. This worldview then manifests itself in a system of interdependence, where government, organizations, communities and individuals are engaged in positive reciprocal relationships, and all stakeholders are actualizing their goals. NCSA's successful take over of the Grierson Community Correctional Centre (renamed the Stan Daniels Healing Centre) is an example of NCSA's assertion of the right to self-determine, the creation of space for new dialogue and the subsequent transformation of a state-run system that resulted in better services in general for Aboriginal offenders.

## The Stan Daniels Healing Centre (SDHC)

Native Counselling Services of Alberta's relationship with the Solicitor General of Alberta began formally in 1973 with the funding of the Native Courtworker Program (previously mentioned), the Native Liaison Program, which provided services to inmates in the Fort Saskatchewan Correctional Centre, and the Community Parole Supervision Program, which provided direct supervision and reintegration assistance of Aboriginal parolees in rural communities throughout Alberta. Between 1973 and 1988 there was a successful stated relationship/partnership between the Solicitor General and NCSA, "because both organizations share complimentary goals and objectives, and because there is an emphasis on cooperative planning fostered by both administrations" (Moore, 1988, p. 1).

This relationship resulted in the operation of the Grierson Community Correctional Centre (located in Edmonton, Alberta) being contracted to NCSA in April, 1988 by the Solicitor General of Alberta; NCSA then became the first private agency to operate a correctional institution in Canada (Nielsen, 2003). This was in response to five key recommendations[26] made to address the issue of over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system (Moore, 1988):

[26] These recommendations were distilled from those made in ten different reports: Indians and the Law (Laing Report) (1967); Federal-Provincial Ministerial Conference on Native Peoples and the Criminal Justice System (1975); Métis and Non-Status Crime and Justice Commission (1977); Native People in the Administration of Justice in the Provincial Courts of Alberta (The Kirby Report), (1978); Report of the Advisory Committee to the Solicitor General of Canada on the Management of Correctional Institutions (1984); Patterns of Criminality and Correction Among Native Offenders in Manitoba (1985); Justice System: Improved Program Delivery (The Neilson Report) (1985); Correctional Issues Affecting Native People (1988); Locking Up Natives in Canada: A Report of the Canadian Bar Association on Imprisonment and Release (1988); Report of the Standing Committee on Justice and Solicitor General on its Review of Sentencing, Conditional Release and Related Aspects of Corrections (Daubney Report) (1988).

1. There is a need for more Native programming delivered by Native People.
2. There is a need for more Native correctional staff.
3. There are difficulties in hiring and especially retaining competent Native staff within the CSC.
4. Native communities must be more involved in the planning and management of correctional services.
5. Native people should run their own halfway houses and correctional facilities.

While NCSA had previous experience in providing pre-incarceration services, as well as working within state-run correctional institutions, and running minimum security bush camps for the Province of Alberta, the move to running a large community correctional centre was a significant opportunity for NCSA to develop and implement policies and programs that were founded in NCSA's philosophy. The facility was originally operated in partnership with the provincial government, however in 1997 a partnership with the federal government enabled NCSA to also oversee longer-term federal inmates who have a conditional release designation, including statutory release, day parole, full parole or inmate status[27].

Of the many changes and adaptations NCSA has implemented, two will be highlighted as examples of how policy and practice at the centre has transformed within the self-determination space created by NCSA. The first began early on with the adoption of a new name for the facility itself as well as new terms for the people who worked and lived at the centre. First, the Aboriginal men who reside there were referred to as 'residents', as opposed to inmates, prisoners or offenders. The adoption of new titles was a significant step towards operating the centre

[27] This information was taken from the NCSA website, in the program section. It was accessed April 1/08, from this address: http://www.ncsa.ca/page?u=programs--corrections--restorative-justice

from an Indigenous worldview – one where the men that reside there were not named according to the mistakes they have made in the past, but rather after the place and therefore community in which they lived. Similarly, the centre now had a 'director' (replacing the title of 'warden') and staff members were referred to as 'parole officers' and 'living unit staff' (as opposed to correctional officers and guards). Creating the new names of the personnel positions was a deliberate move to transform the way that staff conceptualized their function at the centre; it signified a role change from a person who guards the prisoners to one who facilitates the successful reintegration of human beings from a very structured institutional environment into larger Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Finally, in 1992 the name of the facility was changed to the Stan Daniels Healing Centre, which better described the work that NCSA was committed to at the Centre: to provide opportunities for healing and reintegration for residents.

Second, NCSA has purposefully created and implemented programs and policies that reflect the specific needs of the Aboriginal men that reside at the centre. Programs were developed around upon the following principles:

> The effective operation of the centre relies on the belief that Aboriginal offenders require specific programs to address their social, educational, emotional, physical and spiritual needs, and that cultural, familial, and social experiences contribute to their development. Residents of the centre have the opportunity to influence their development by actively participating in the establishment of developmental goals. Healing Centre staff provide guidance, support and supervision. Stan Daniels Healing Centre offers a variety of personal development programs that address issues of grief and loss, and relationships and violence[28].

[28] This information was taken from the NCSA website, in the program section. It was accessed April 1/08, from this address: http://www.ncsa.ca/page?u=programs--corrections--restorative-justice

New program development occurred slowly, from a grassroots perspective that included the input from residents, centre staff and Elders. The best example of this process is the development of an intensive program for Aboriginal men caught in the cycle of violence. In the early 90's it became evident to staff and Elders at the centre that there was a need to better understand how violence had become so entrenched in the lives of the residents – whether they were incarcerated for a violent offence or not. Working with the Solicitor General of Canada and Cunningham Communications, BearPaw Media created the video series, *Rage: A Documentary Series About Men Caught in the Cycle of Violence*. In the process, a unique and collaborative approach was employed, whereby seven Category One Violent Offenders (residents at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre) were given the opportunity to tell their personal stories of violence, including their childhood experiences of being victims of violence, the change from victim to perpetrator, and how their violence escalated both outside and inside prison. These men were also trained to use video and sound recording equipment, as well as write and direct dramatic scenes from their childhood to better illustrate their experiences with violence.

Upon completion, it became apparent that the video series was engaging, emotionally charged and could not be distributed within the entertainment industry. Audiences were often triggered into recounting their own traumatic experiences with violence and required skilled debriefing (and even referral to counselling) after viewing it. Clearly, the videos provided a powerful, cathartic experience for viewers, creating opportunities to explore and better understand

how the pain of being a victim of violence, as well as the shame and regret of being a perpetrator of violence has influenced their lives. Couture, (1999) adds:

> The RAGE production is a convincing commentary on the possibility of basic healing, and a graphic illustration of the conditions required for its maintenance. That is to say that these words underscore several characteristic themes, such as personal turning-points, set within the raw, stark conditions of survival in prison, as well as the possibility of initiating and assuring change and growth. (p. 4, original emphasis)

It was then decided that a healing program would be developed that incorporated the videos with a view to assisting men struggling with violent lifestyles. This program would be used with violent offenders who were residents at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre, but could also be available to the wider community to prevent the incarceration of men by helping them to move away from violent behaviours. The 'In Search of Your Warrior' program (ISOYW) was designed by NCSA staff under the guidance of Elders who worked at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre. The Elders advised on the creation of the cultural and spiritual healing process that provides the essential program framework, after which Western therapeutic techniques were carefully placed into the program process. Program development also included contributions from the residents at the centre.

The program was developed between 1991 and 1995. It was piloted in 1995, resulting in significant revisions to curriculum and then became a core program at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre. In 1999 NCSA entered into an agreement with the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC), whereby NCSA would train CSC facilitators to deliver the program within CSC institutions in Canada.

Later, NCSA developed a program for violent women entitled 'Spirit of a Warrior' program, which was adopted by the Women's Unit of CSC and is currently delivered in the women's institutions. NCSA retains the responsibility for maintaining program integrity, training facilitators and participates nationally in meetings and forums regarding the needs of Aboriginal violent offenders and programming geared for such offenders. An in-depth study of this program will form the second section of this chapter, which describes how this program affects the worldview, lifestyles and families of the men who participate in it.

## *Section Two: The 'In Search of Your Warrior' Program*

*You know this person caught a fox one time and they raised that fox to be a house pet - a puppy. Every time someone would come into the house the fox would run and hide some place and it acted like a wild animal. Then one day they let him go, he went out a little bit and came back, next time stayed out longer and came back and when it had enough it stayed out there, it found itself. That fox knew it didn't belong with the family, it belonged out there. In a sense this program does that with people, they might live with an adopted family out there but when they come in here they identify themselves, they know who they are, they make that connection. (NCSA Warrior Facilitator)*

### Program Overview

The ISOYW program is offered to Aboriginal men who have been incarcerated in Canada for violent offences, or who have a significant history of violent behaviour. The program has 75 sessions designed to help participants explore how violence has shaped their lives, all of which takes six to12 weeks to complete (depending upon the number of hours available each day for programming). The ISOYW program is founded on the basic principles of Natural Law (caring, sharing, kindness, respect, love, honesty and self-determination), which are learned through ceremony and ritual. The final session is a graduation ceremony

and a time of celebration; participants invite family and friends, food is shared, and the participants receive certificates of completion. The Warrior Program is delivered by two trained facilitators, under the guidance and with the participation of an Elder; the typical group size is 10 - 14 participants. The ISOYW program's goals, process and outcomes are discussed in the following sections.

## Case Study Process for Section Two

For this part of the case study, conducted from November 2006 – March 2007, I observed protocol in requesting permission to be involved in the ISOYW program at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre. Permission was granted by both the CEO of NCSA and the Director of the Stan Daniels Healing Centre. I then sought permission from the Elder who oversees the program as well as the program facilitators. As it was important to me that the research activities would not interfere with the healing process of the men, I also had thoughtful conversations with the ISOYW facilitators about how I should proceed and strategies for the way the data collection would take place.

The ISOYW program always begins with a pipe ceremony; I was invited to attend and the Elder agreed that during the sharing circle (which he would hold after the pipe was finished its rounds) was the appropriate time to discuss the research project with the men who were participating in the program. The Elder began the circle, speaking about the importance of the program, the role and expertise of the facilitators, who I was and my purpose for being at the ceremony. When it was my turn to speak, I first briefly explained my experiences with violence in my life and what healing processes I had undertaken. I then described

my research project and why it was important to me; I concluded by inviting the men to take part in the research project.

Seven men, aged 21 to 45, (of a group of 11) expressed an interest in participating in the research project and that afternoon I had my first one-to-one interviews with each of them. Before each interview, we smudged and prayed; I asked for spiritual help in guiding the types of questions I would ask, as well as help for the men, who would be sharing aspects of their lives that were difficult to share. I also chose to have the interviews in the ceremony room at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre, as it is a respected sacred space within the centre and I wanted the laws of respect to underpin the conversations we would have. The introductory interviews had three purposes: (1) to build a respectful relationship between myself and the participants; (2) to build a basic understanding of what experiences, knowledge and attitudes the men had before the program started; and (3) to better understand the participants' experiences of violence as children and how that influenced their violent behaviours as adolescents and adults.

The second round of interviews occurred later in the program, after the mask-making exercise was completed. By then the participants have typically gained genuine awareness of themselves, how their experiences have shaped their lives, why they have become violent human beings and why their lifestyles are inappropriate. I was invited by the program facilitators to sit in the group and listen to a key sharing circle, where participants were debriefing the mask exercise and what they had learned about themselves in the process. After the session, I spoke with the seven research participants individually in the ceremony room

again; they explained what their mask meant to them, what they had learned and what they hoped to do with this knowledge in the future.

Finally, I was invited to the graduation ceremony on the last day of the program. Program participants had invited their families and/or other people important to them to attend this celebration. All participants genuinely and sometimes emotionally spoke about their experiences in the program and what they learned about themselves. After lunch was served, I was granted an opportunity to speak to the group, and I expressed my sincere gratitude to them for including me in this journey. After the program, I held a sharing circle with three NCSA ISOYW facilitators, and later on interviewed one of the other NCSA facilitators.

All of the interviews, as well as the facilitator sharing circle and the interview for the ISOYW administrator (CEO of NCSA), were digitally recorded and transcribed. I did not record any of the ISOYW program sessions, the ceremonies or the graduation that I attended. In this case study, I worked with a range of people. Explanations are provided here for clarity:

Program Participants: These are all of the men who are participants in the In Search of Your Warrior program. They are residents at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre and have a history of violent behaviour.

Research Participants: These are the seven men (from the group of program participants) who agreed to be a part of the case study.

ISOYW Facilitators: These are the individuals who deliver the program. The ISOYW program is a process designed to help men understand how violence has shaped their lives and behaviours.

ISOYW Trainers: These are individuals who train the facilitators. *Warrior Facilitator Training* is the process of preparing individuals to facilitate the program for violent men.

NCSA Administrators: These individuals are in administrative positions at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre or in other capacities at NCSA.

Ceremonies: The Stan Daniels Healing Centre is located in Edmonton, Alberta, which is traditionally Cree territory. According to Aboriginal protocol in Canada, when on the traditional land of the Cree, Cree ceremonies are performed. Therefore, all ceremonies referred to in this case study are Cree ceremonies, performed by a Cree Elder and founded in the Cree worldview. Alternatively, if the ISOYW program is being delivered on other territory, for example in the William Head Institution in British Columbia, Coast Salish longhouse teaching and ceremonies might be offered by the ceremonialist of that land. The table below (Table 3) describes the sample that was interviewed for this case study.

**Table 3: Description of Case Study Sample**

| **Case Study: In Search of Your Warrior Program** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Group of people to be interviewed** | **Method** | **Sample Size** | **Characteristics of Sample** |
| Staff / Administration | Interview or Sharing Circle | 4<br>1 | • Program facilitators (two women and two men)<br>• ISOYW Administrator (CEO of NCSA) |
| Past Participant | Interview | 1 | • Past participants who have successfully completed the program. |
| Current Participants | Participant Observation | 1 ISOYW Group | • This was an ISOYW program held at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre; the pipe ceremony, session, and graduation I attended included 11 participants and 2 facilitators and an Elder. |
| Current Participants | Interviews | 7 | • 7 of 11 participants agreed to be interviewed twice for the research project. They also allowed me to take pictures of their masks for the final document. |
| Literature Review | | All available documents | • Documents that have been prepared regarding the program, including program evaluation, past-participant evaluations, and the program manual. |

In the writing up of this case study, I did not quote specific respondents or facilitators or give them pseudonyms. All participants/facilitators expressed their wish to be anonymous. With this small sample it seemed prudent to not link individuals to quotes, to ensure that the research participants' perspective or story would not reveal their identity. Therefore, all quotes that are represented here are attributed to one of the following: an NCSA Warrior program facilitator, a program participant or an NCSA administrator. All seven program participants are represented in the quotes included in this case study.

## Goals of the In Search of Your Warrior Program

The name *In Search of Your Warrior* was chosen to describe a way of being that is meaningful for Aboriginal people: when applied to men, the idea of a 'warrior' brings to consciousness the essential male role in the Aboriginal community as provider and protector of women, children and the elderly.

> The Elders [in the program] will talk about what it meant to be a warrior in the 1800's and what it means to be a warrior now. The teachings are exactly the same but how they demonstrate that knowledge will be different… [Men] need to provide for their family in all sorts of different ways, not just going and putting food on the table and lying down on the couch with the remote. [We look at] how the buffalo sacrificed himself and using that example to provide for their family. (NCSA Warrior Facilitator)

Therefore, the warrior metaphor provides the construct for a way of life that program participants can work towards, which includes "development of such qualities as self-possession, spiritual and psychic awareness/alertness/ attentiveness, goodness and caring, endurance, patience, resilience, capacity to fight for what must be defended and preserved in order to assure a Way of Life" (NCSA, 1999, p. 3). To achieve this, the program name further prescribes that participants embark on a path of healing. There is an implicit congruence between the notion of searching for an inner warrior, Cajete's (1994) concept of the pathway of learning, and the act of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* – the healing journey.

In 1999 NCSA commissioned a critical review of the ISOYW program curriculum (Couture, 1999) by a well-known Aboriginal Elder and psychologist – the late Dr. Joe Couture. In his review, Couture offers ways of improving the mechanics and delivery of the program (which resulted in the revised program manual that is used currently). Couture also suggests that the overarching goal or

mission of the program is to help participants arrive at or seek the good life, which he argues is at the core of all healer/trainer activity. To accomplish this, participants must "identify and address survival requirements in a complex multi-culture shaped world" (Couture, 1999, p. 13). This requires knowledge and skill development that will assist the participants in successfully living in both the dominant and the Aboriginal paradigms simultaneously.

Couture also enhances and clarifies the role of ceremony within the ISOYW process:

> Ceremonies provide a "safe" place within which one begins to learn trust and respect, honesty and humour - a place where deep healings can and do occur. Ceremonies, in any alignment, lead to breakout moments and climaxes, e.g. remissions from chemical addiction, release from patterns as violated victim and/or as violent victimizer, from deep-rooted generational grief - in all cases propelling the release from pain, and moving one into repentance/forgiveness, expiation/making amends, gratefulness, overall relief, new sense of freedom. (Couture, 1999, p. 16)

Thus the program has three goals:

1. To assist Aboriginal men to better understand their intergenerational cycle of violent behaviour. This includes defining family violence; identifying the roots of their violent behaviour; considering the cultural context within which violence occurs; addressing feelings of vulnerability related to their experiences of victimization; and distinguishing between anger and rage.
2. To build knowledge and skills that will reduce and eventually eliminate violent behaviour in program participants.
3. To facilitate the participants' connection and commitment to their life-long healing journey.

## Underlying Assumptions

The introduction of the ISOYW program manual (NCSA, 1999) states explicitly the beliefs and theoretical assumptions that guided the development of the ISOYW program (See Table 3). These assumptions are founded in the Indigenous philosophy of interconnectedness and include an ecological perspective of the relationships that exist within families and between families and their many environments. Further, the assumptions demonstrate that the program subscribes to the belief that by exploring, adopting and enacting traditional values and behaviours (caring, sharing, kindness, respect, love, honesty, self-determination and connectedness with the cosmos) individuals can achieve a non-violent, natural and whole life – which is comparable to the process of seeking 'the good life'.

**Table 4: Beliefs and Theoretical Assumptions of the ISOYW Program (NCSA, 1999, p. 5-6)**

| | |
|---|---|
| 1. | Everyone is born with unique and special value. |
| 2. | Each individual is a member of a family. |
| 3. | People are inherently good; we are shaped by our experiences whether they are good or bad. |
| 4. | A family is a unit; each family member makes up a part of that unit. |
| 5. | Each member in the family affects other members, and is also affected by other members (interdependence). Health or dysfunction in individual members influences the whole family; change creates turmoil within these relationships; change may be welcomed or resisted by other members of the family. |
| 6. | Family relationships change constantly in response to the addition or reduction of its members and the constant growth/change of each member. |
| 7. | We do not live in a vacuum - empty and alone; rather, we are part of a number of systems such as the family, community and society at large; we affect these systems and in turn, they affect us; thus, it is important to consider the individual family member in relation to the system in which he is embedded. |
| 8. | We all have the answers to our problems; we simply need guidance and support to find these answers. |
| 9. | Personal change takes time and requires readiness, commitment, desire and patience. |
| 10. | In order for healing to occur, the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological parts of the self must be attended to. |
| 11. | At some point, each of us has been exposed to violence - either as an observer, perpetrator or victim. Violence affects all of us in some way. We believe that every person has the potential to commit acts of violence. |
| 12. | As a community, we must begin to address and eliminate family violence. |
| 13. | We all have a warrior within us, male and female, that provides us with strength and courage; however, through experiences, many of us have lost touch with our warrior; through traditional teachings and reflection on inner self, each of us can rediscover our warrior and move towards wholeness. |
| 14. | Through kindness and understanding, we can proceed in our journey to meet our inner warrior. |
| 15. | Through ceremony and spiritual rituals, we will be guided back to a more natural and non-violent way of life. |
| 16. | It helps to keep in mind that a tradition-based viewpoint requires that an Aboriginal client, no matter how tortured his history of violence may be, be respected as a HUMAN PERSON, i.e. as one who has made 'mistakes' from which he can and must learn. |

## Program Process

The ISOYW program is founded in holistic Aboriginal philosophy, the belief that all things are connected and that for sustainable change to occur, an individual must engage the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual aspects of self in the changing/learning/healing process. The program process includes activities and sessions that provide opportunities for such holistic learning. The process also includes daily ritual, frequent ceremony (chosen and led by the Elder), and sessions that encourage participants to explore core issues that underlie violent behaviour, such as their childhood experiences of violence, grief and loss, shame, trauma, childhood neglect and abandonment, as well as triggers for violent behaviour. Further, the participants learn about the intergenerational effects of colonization on the Aboriginal individual, family and community. In this process, the participant identifies his own cycle of violence and then can develop skills that will enable him to live a non-violent lifestyle.

The program facilitators and administrator all agreed that the most critical aspect of the ISOYW program is the ceremonies, rituals and teachings upon which the program is founded. Through participation in ceremonies, men begin the process of learning Natural Law through a re-orientation towards an interconnected worldview. They are provided with the opportunity to re-examine, reconnect and relate to their families, communities and the spirit world in new ways, and they learn the value of their relationships as well as why and how these relationships require respect and maintenance. The learning provided in the ceremonies and the relationships they build with the Elders/ceremonialist assist the participants to connect to their healing journey. Indeed, “the common

denominator of all these ceremonies is you focus on the inner you and bring it to the outer you by changes of thinking, feeling and action-behaviour" (Gehue, 2006).

Central to making this connection to all of creation, is the capacity of the individual to self-determine; to take informed responsibility for past and present actions and feel that they have the capacity to make positive decisions for themselves in the future. Couture (1991) illustrates how this sense of accountability is rooted in the teachings of Natural Law:

> In the traditional setting, one effectively learns how to become and be a unique expression of human potential. These same traditional processes, in the context of extended family and community Elders, describe a strong sense of responsibility both towards self and towards the community. (p. 206)

The ISOYW program sessions are most commonly conducted in a circle, employing the rules and process of the sharing circle. Generally, sharing circles proceed around the circle, "one speaker at a time, the person holding the special object is the speaker and all others are to listen respectfully to that person" (Graveline, 1998, p. 139). It is imperative that speakers wait their turn in the circle to speak and have the option of not speaking if they wish. The importance of the circle was stated by one of the NCSA Warrior Facilitators:

> The foundation of this program is Aboriginal teachings and one of the first teachings you are going to get is on the value of the circle. In the circle not one person is better than the other… you hold that feather and we listen - that is the respect we give you because there is so much going on in the circle that is important.

The purpose of the sharing circle process is to teach participants how to both share their thoughts and feelings honestly as well as listen attentively to the

stories, thoughts and feelings that others share. One Warrior facilitator stated that within the ISOYW circles, it is important:

> …not only for the person to have the experience of being accepted, but also having everyone else have the experience of accepting someone else who has behaved in a manner other than how they would have behaved; [it may be] against their values, but they can suspend themselves and just support that human being. That is spirituality - that is the teachings! (NCSA Warrior Facilitator)

> Warrior has taught me control you know, [to] control myself. Not really fixate on my emotions and my needs, my wants and be patient with the group, be patient with other points of view, people's ideas. (Warrior Participant)

The sharing circle method "normalizes the experiences we share as human beings, builds participants' confidence and teaches mutual respect" (NCSA, 1999, p. 14). It is essentially the creation of a social context (Graveline, 1998) where it is acceptable to share personal experiences and the emotions that arise in the sharing process.

The ISOYW program is also essentially process-oriented; it is the connection to an individualized healing journey that is essential, as it provides a way of being that can sustain the participant after the program is completed and throughout the rest of his life. For each participant, the process of understanding and dealing with traumatic experiences is different yet critical in the overall process of connection with a healing path; the ISOYW program process accommodates the many different learning/healing styles of its participants. An NCSA Warrior Facilitator shared the story of one particular ISOYW program that was offered in a bush-camp setting:

> [One participant said] the best thing that happened in that warrior camp is that he climbed a mountain by himself and he got to scream his pain. [He said]: 'I screamed and I screamed until I was too weak to scream anymore. That was healing for me'. So opportunities happened [in the program] that were unique to each person. There were all sorts of things that probably triggered that pain but he got to express it in his own way.

Finally, the ISOYW program employs a highly experiential and kinaesthetic learning approach that can produce a cathartic experience, whereby participants learn to take thoughtful and informed responsibility for their past, present and future. Often this includes moving away from the shame, guilt and fear that clouded their perspective of themselves and their family/community towards a more enlightened, compassionate understanding of how and why events happened in their lives. The process of the ISOYW program therefore provides a new framework or template for being and becoming; the completion of the program is really the beginning of a lifelong journey – the process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin*.

## ISOYW Facilitators

NCSA trains all facilitators to deliver the ISOYW program, whether they work for NCSA or for the Correctional Service of Canada. NCSA expects facilitators to come to training with an extensive and personal understanding of healing processes and traditional ceremonies (from whichever community they originate). During the training, facilitators learn about the style of facilitation or helping (Hart, 2002) that is expected when they deliver the program. Indeed, it is the responsibility of the facilitator in the ISOYW program to guide and be a role-model in a manner that reflects a deep understanding of the principles of Natural

Law on which the ISOYW program is founded (caring, sharing, respect, love, kindness, honesty and self-determination).

One facilitator of the ISOYW program describes her job in the context of facilitating a process of re-*discovery*, as opposed to *recovery*:

> Recovery implies that you had it, owned it, that was an experience and now you are trying to recover it, resurrect it, bring that back - when for many people they never had it. So assuming that people should know, or they're lazy or they aren't motivated or they're playing games is very much from our perspective and none of that has any place in the Warrior program. We are not here to judge anybody and when in doubt [we have to ask ourselves] 'what would an Elder say', or 'what would an Elder do', because they are the ones that are master counsellors, master healers. You don't often find Elders that are going to call you on your shit and probe and dig; they'll ask you questions so that you can find the answers and whatever answers you find is entirely fine with them. That's healing, that's empowering in my mind.

This perspective on program process reflects the words of Cree Elder Canipitataeo: "We must help each other. We must help each other and ask for God's help to understand each other, love each other and help each other. It is useless to confront each other, my relatives. It is better to ask for unity, to work together, to think of our grandchildren. This is the Cree way" (Canadian Plains Cree Research Centre, 1979, p. 43; cited in Hart, 2002). Both the Elder and the facilitator are referring to a process of helping that is non-confrontational and not judgemental (Hart, 2002).

Thus, throughout the ISOYW program, facilitators provide many opportunities, situations and experiences that will encourage the participants to see their lives from a new vantage point and with new perspective, which can create motivation to make changes they feel are necessary in their lives. Indeed, ISOYW facilitators must trust the process and not attempt to force change through

controlling behaviours that diminish the participants' sense of personal power and accomplishment when changes are made. As Hart, (2002) states, "Power is abused when an individual for their own gain hinders or attempts to hinder another person's learning, healing and or growth. In other words, they stop individuals from following their own journey" (p. 53). This approach to helping is also described by a Warrior facilitator: "I don't have to take ownership…If a person has a revelation and gets rid of a bunch of junk, I haven't done anything. I don't ever take credit or allow that person to give [me] credit - they did the work, because their healing is theirs".

The approach to helping described here is often counter-intuitive; when a facilitator feels they know where and why an ISOYW participant is struggling, a natural response is to intervene and attempt to resolve the problem. However, a more traditional way of helping is to provide an environment whereby participants have the opportunity to draw their own conclusions in a supportive environment. In these situations, facilitators often rely on the Elder and a connection to the Creator and spirit world to assist and guide their actions toward non-interference, as illustrated by the following statements made by Warrior facilitators:

> [On the first day of the program] you never even do introductions, you don't do anything, you don't even speak word one until the pipe ceremony has happened…You have to call the Grandmothers and Grandfathers and ask them to come - in a good way -and they will stay with you [for the whole program]. *Because you [the facilitator] don't know anything*. This isn't you, the grandmothers and grandfathers are the healers, if you open yourself, you trust in them and you give them a place for their voice. And it's not to be presumptuous and say that as a facilitator I am connected with the Almighty - it isn't at all that - it's opening the door and trusting that 'what will be, is what should be' and that we will all be safe there.

> That's the difference between Warrior and therapy; you give up the control as a facilitator. I have no control over this process, I am going to do my best to provide information and activities when it is needed, I am going to go to the grandfathers every day for help, and the grandmothers, I am going to beg them to come and help and then let the process unfold as it should.

Thus, the ISOYW healing process can be very intensive and sometimes difficult to facilitate; facilitators often find the work exhilarating, but also emotionally draining and occasionally, the participant stories can trigger facilitators' memories of their own experiences with violence or their revulsion to acts of violence. One facilitator stated:

> Well I don't judge their past…when they talk about [they things they've done] it's hard, it's really darn hard. The stories of people talking about the absolutely horrific things they have done to other human beings and animals, makes your skin crawl. But you know, every word that a person said is a gift and you [can] accept it as a gift and respect it as a gift.

Facilitators of the ISOYW program therefore require many important skills and characteristics: an in-depth, first-hand understanding of the healing process; knowledge of where they are on their own healing path; the capacity to take care of themselves emotionally and spiritually throughout the program; and the ability to motivate participants to engage in their healing journey (NCSA, 1999). Finally, ISOYW facilitators must have the capacity to draw from their own experiences on their healing journey and share those with the group. The ability to share negative aspects of oneself (within healthy boundaries) is paramount in facilitation: it role-models this important behaviour to participants and it reduces perceptions of power that are built into the facilitator's position. Rather than the facilitator assuming a relationship of superiority with the participants, they demonstrate that everyone in the circle has made mistakes and

that all people can and must learn from their mistakes. One ISOYW Facilitator (who is also an ISOYW trainer) shared an experience while training people to become ISOYW facilitators:

> [The trainer] gives everybody a piece of paper and tells them to write down a secret and then put it in the envelope. They can seal it, whatever they want to do. [You can see people] secretly writing and taping it up, some of them write in code, so if somebody got in their envelope nobody would know. One person wrote something so trivial that if somebody got into their envelope it wouldn't matter if somebody read it. [Then the trainer says] can I have your envelope, can I hold it? And some people give it willingly and the whole group is watching. He walks around slowly, nobody knows who is going to ask next, some he just takes it and tapes it up on the wall a fair distance away. He takes two and he put them in his pockets or he holds them for a while and plays with them - then he forgets whose is whose to give it back to them. Some people say 'oh I can remember which one is mine because I folded mine in the corner like that'. [He instructs the group to] pay attention to what happened inside of them and with everybody else. No one is going to read them, they can take it home and burn it or they can rip it up. [Then he says] 'when you are in a group, what you are asking people to do is rip open that envelope and share that secret with the world, God and everybody. You aren't being asked to do that and look what you went through, so have respect for what people give you and don't go asking for more. Have respect for what people can give you, that's it, nothing more'. (NCSA Warrior Facilitator)

This training is vital in creating a respect and understanding for how difficult it can be for the participants in the ISOYW program; an ISOYW facilitator can demonstrate respect and understanding by sharing parts of their own healing journey. ISOYW facilitators are therefore highly skilled guides, role models and facilitators. The success of the program is in part dependent on the level of training and awareness the facilitators have.

## ISOYW Participants

The participants of the ISOYW program are Aboriginal men who are incarcerated, usually for a violent offence and are completing part of their sentence at the Stan Daniels Healing Centre. They are most typically adult survivors of childhood trauma, who are further affected by the intergenerational historic grief and trauma that exists in their families and community. Their world-view has been developed within the context of being victimized as children and therefore feeling powerless. The development of a negative, hopeless worldview within the context of dysfunctional families was described by both facilitators and participants:

> A lot of the behaviours I am referring to [of ISOYW participants] is the violence: beating up someone, they're going to be a bigger man and they're tougher and also with the alcohol abuse and stuff that was acceptable. That it was okay that they were eight years old when they started to drink. All this stuff that is going on in their life, the drug abuse, the alcohol abuse and the violence in the family - watching their mother being beaten - they figure that's just the way that life was. Not knowing that you don't hit women and violence is not acceptable. (NCSA Warrior Facilitator)

> I was out somewhere with uncles and aunts and extended family and there was a lot of drinking and violence there, plus in the community as a whole and so I thought it was okay to do that, to be like that, it was a learned behaviour. (Warrior Participant)

Within this context, men have developed significant issues with women, including a lack of trust for them and a belief that they do not have the same value as men and as such, do not deserve respect. These families of origin are also commonly impoverished, and/or the participants have lived in numerous foster homes; as a result many grow up envious of other children who appear to have families that love them and have the money to buy them new clothes, toys or sports equipment.

Often the participants have experienced abuse at the hands of family members (including siblings and cousins) and/or people in positions of authority. Their worldview is therefore formed within situations where important personal and familial boundaries are transgressed. Further, these men have developed substance abuse behaviours very early in their lives, often as a means of coping with their reality, and they seek out friends, partners and wives who share these experiences.

This worldview (which has been developed in childhood) is reinforced and entrenched when they are living on the streets and/or in prison. All of these environments further teach men to not trust anyone, (including family members and people in positions of authority), and to seek respect through wielding power and control over others perceived to be weaker. The underlying messages they have received as boys are: to be an Aboriginal man is to be a predator; the only way to gain respect is through violence; and it's OK to disregard anyone perceived to be weaker, including women and children. The following information was shared by Warrior participants during interviews:

> It was just a way of life for me and I thought it was okay to do that and just being so selfish and self-centered in relationships.

> It's just the way that I was raised - if someone doesn't respect you, you beat it into them, you can change people with fear and violence and after everything else failed I would resort to that. People that have judged me right off the bat, whether I won or lost, they would have respect for me at the end and we would usually become friends… so it just became ingrained into my mind that I had to fight to get respect.

An ISOYW facilitator also addressed issues are power and control in participants:

> You know, us men, we have ego problems. But more so when you grow up on the street, or when you grow up in a dysfunctional family. It's all about power and control …and especially when you have been in an institution it's about

> power and control. If you have power and control, you have everything but if you don't have that, then you are serving someone else.

In addition, Warrior participants typically begin the program emotionally shut-down; they have learned throughout their childhood that is not OK to express any emotion other than anger, and that it is not masculine to cry. Further, they have been taught that to admit they are wrong or that they are ashamed of their actions is a sign of weakness and will not earn them respect. Therefore, as a result of the abuse, poverty, life on the streets and prison experience, they cannot identify nor express any feeling other than overwhelming anger or rage.

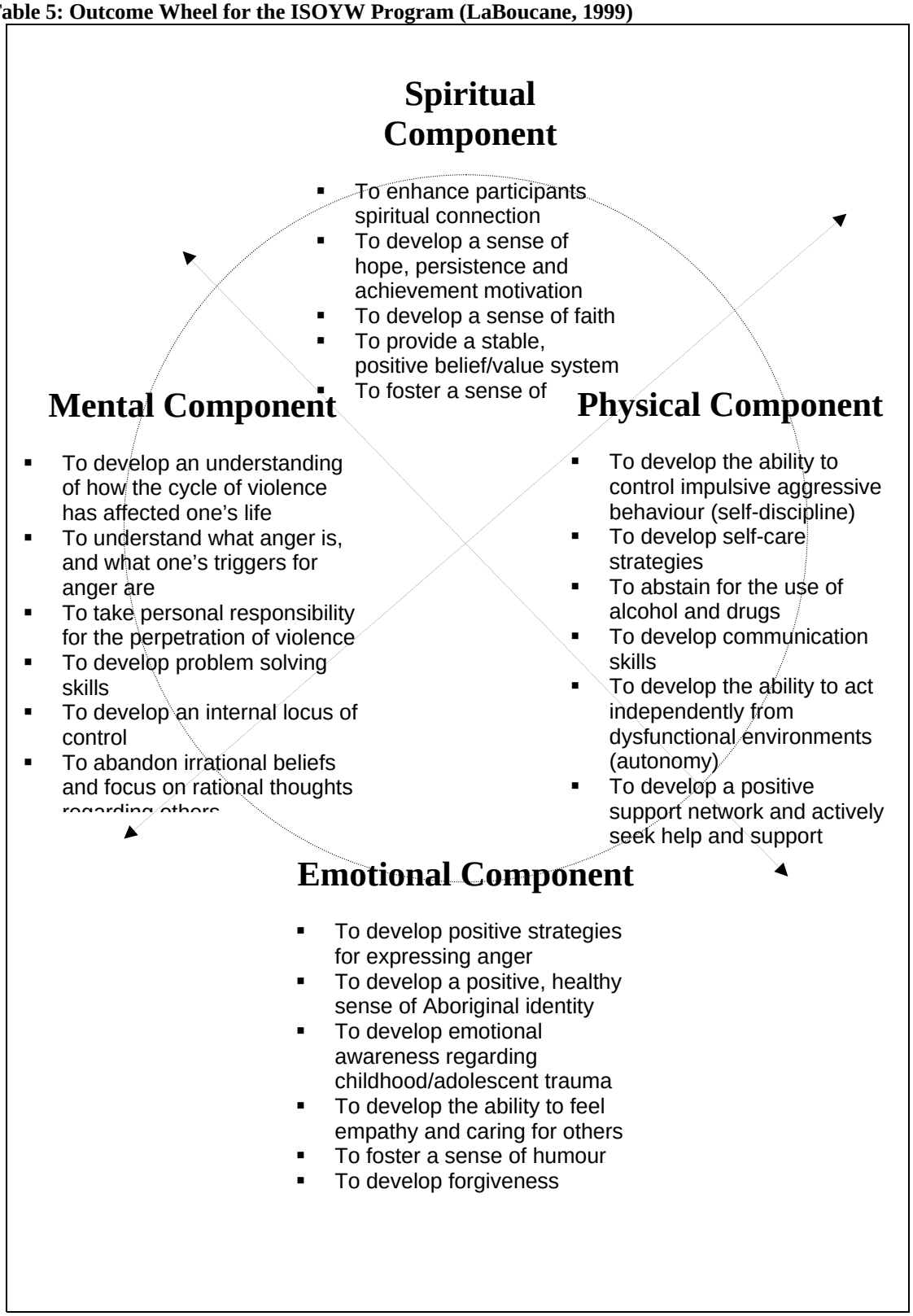
Finally, the men who participate in the ISOYW program most often (but not always) feel completely disconnected from Aboriginal culture, have no sense of Aboriginal identity and demonstrate a poor sense of self-esteem. They also do not typically report any connection with spirituality of any form. When all of the issues facing these men are taken into consideration, it becomes clear how violence has shaped their lives and has become a normal part of their everyday life; within this milieu, there can be no accountability for their actions or any awareness of how destructive their lifestyle is.

## Program Outcomes

In 1998-1999, I completed a research project for NCSA on the ISOYW program that included the development of a pre-post test that would provide information on participant change as a result of program completion (LaBoucane, 1999). Working with Stan Daniel Healing Centre staff and an Elder from the Stan Daniels Healing Centre on the project, 23 anticipated outcomes were developed

within four dimensions (illustrated in Table 5).

**Table 5: Outcome Wheel for the ISOYW Program (LaBoucane, 1999)**



Several similarities exist between the above-stated wheel of outcomes and Archibald's table on the processes of decolonization, recovery from PTSD and healing from historic trauma (See Table 1). The ISOYW program seeks to begin an internal process of decolonization and historical healing for participants, through the fostering of understanding about the Canadian colonial process and how it affects their nation, community and family. Participants begin to draw connections between the historic experience of Aboriginal people and the experiences of trauma they faced as children. While the program does not explicitly address PTSD as a therapeutic construct, participants are afforded the opportunity to experience safety within the circle and ceremony, recount their childhood victimization and reconnect to people and culture. Within the entire process, mourning losses of family, friends, culture and language is begun, and the participants have the opportunity to interact with this knowledge in the context of ceremony and spirituality.

Often, participants have had pre-program contact with Elders and may have attended ceremonies or had family members that lived a more traditional way of life. Many participants spoke of past opportunities (in or out of jail) where they had to engage with culture; indeed, these interactions with aspects of culture most likely motivated them to demonstrate interest in the ISOYW program or agree to participate. However, for many participants, their understanding of their Aboriginal culture and/or spirituality was confused with other negative messages they received as children; notions of traditional Aboriginal culture were often created in a context where family/community members who were living out their

own traumatic experiences, or from false/destructive messages that they received about Indians in movies and television shows. One Warrior participant described his desperation to find 'Indian' spirituality, which was informed by misinformation about Aboriginal culture. When he turned to taking drugs to create a spiritual connection, the outcome was disastrous:

> I [looked for spirituality] in the weirdest way possible through experimenting with drugs, psychedelic literature and I turned to it, I started going to the steam rooms and the saunas looking for cleansing that way, I tried to go on a vision quest with mushrooms and days of partying and not eating and get dehydrated, with a jacket and a mountain bike to see how long I could stay out in the bush, doing acid and mushrooms and seeing what would happen.

For this participant and many others, the ISOYW program was their first opportunity to spend an extended period of time immersed in an authentic Aboriginal world view that focused on the spiritual, relational and positive aspects of the culture. At the beginning of the program, when the first sharing circle took place, participants stated that they had heard about the ISOYW program, they were happy to take part, and that this was the right program for Aboriginal inmates – a program that was for and about them. The underlying message seemed to be that the spiritual and cultural aspects of the program made it more authentic to them and therefore their willingness to engage increased. Participant enthusiasm is described by an ISOYW facilitator:

> [ISOYW] comes from the teachings and it works because most of all it belongs to our people, it belongs to these guys, it's their spirituality, it's their culture, it's them as a people. They understand what we went through to have something like that; it gives them that pride inside - like yeah, we do have something.

The ISOYW facilitators discussed at length how the program assists in re-connecting program participants with Aboriginal culture, values and spirituality; at its foundation the ISOYW program seeks to teach and re-orient Aboriginal men towards a worldview founded on Natural Law. Participants learn about the centrality of ceremony and spirituality within the Aboriginal worldview from the Elder, and this fosters an understanding of who they are as spiritual beings. Facilitators stated that at the beginning of the program, considerable time is dedicated to teaching the basic principles of Aboriginal culture, values and boundaries. Through the teaching about and participating in ceremonies, core values are transmitted in an experiential and holistic way. Couture (1999) describes how ceremonies within the program are a part of the larger healing enterprise for the ISOYW participants:

> Healing, for all practical purposes, is synonymous with "therapy', and with authentic "ceremony". The Warrior Program may thus be viewed as a complex or set of sub-cycles of Ceremonies within the Ceremony. It yields a Ceremony which enfolds (Couture, 1999, p. 10).

From this foundation of understanding, the participants can begin to explore and incorporate new ways of thinking and behaving. Several key changes were discussed by the facilitators. First, the participants begin to develop a healthy identity as Aboriginal men. The men develop a sense of pride in their Aboriginality, moving away from the shame they may have experienced and towards a sense of belonging within a vibrant culture. For one participant, attending a ceremony where he received a spirit name was a pivotal experience for him:

> [At the Sweatlodge ceremony] I wanted to get a [spirit] name - have a naming ceremony. And that changed everything. I was named Crazy Horse, a very honourable name…Yeah, I felt like I was, I belonged all of a sudden, I got this name and not any name but it is a very honourable name and one guys have to respect.

Subsequently, the participants begin to learn to trust others. This is accomplished through the participation in sharing circles. Over the course of the program, participants begin to speak about themselves and their feelings within the group. At times it is only within the safety of a ceremony (such as a Sweatlodge ceremony) that they have the courage to speak about their core issues that have caused violent behaviour. The process of ISOYW is designed to allow men to build healthy relationships with each other, under the guidance of the facilitators and Elders. One Warrior participant shared how important the relationships among participants are:

> I am learning to trust people more you know, when we talk about stuff and it's not really bothering me to talk about it… If you want to heal and you have to be honest with yourself, honest with everybody, honest with the Creator. The Creator already knows what's happened, so honesty is a really big thing and that is what I shared in the group.

Third, the participants begin to re-frame their beliefs about women and their relationships with other family members. The teachings about the important balance between men and women, the power women hold in their capacity for creation and the knowledge gleaned in ceremony assist participants to develop healthy beliefs about and boundaries with women. An ISOYW facilitator describes this change:

> At the end they are pretty open to talking with females, and realize that women have a role and that our role is very important as mothers and grandmothers…

> that they have to start having respect for women, for that woman who gave life to them.

The Elder is of paramount importance in this area, as he provides the context for this change and facilitates the construction of healthy thoughts and actions toward their grandmother, mother, sisters, aunts, wives and daughters.

The ISOYW program empowers men with a sense of purpose and belonging within the Aboriginal community; they learn to take on the role of protector and provider. This role has been challenged in many communities, and for the participants this loss of an important role in the community is a significant issue:

> When we take [the participants] through the history of our people, especially for men - what's the first thing they did after they signed treaty - they took away their gun and they took away their horse, they took away the right for them to provide and to protect their families. What, purpose did they serve afterwards? You need to look at that. When you take a person's means of living, why they are living and what they contribute, when you take that away and you do that in a multigenerational sense… then what you have today is a situation where institutions are full of our people and they are sitting there wondering 'what put me in prison'. (ISOYW Facilitator)

The Elder provides teachings about the important role that Aboriginal men traditionally held within the community; the facilitators assist in this process by discussing the history of Aboriginal people, how this was lost for some communities and families, as well as how the participants can reclaim their role within their families. Inherent in this role is the need to be responsible and accountable to their families and communities. Participants learn that by taking responsibility for past and present actions, they create the capacity to self-

determine; that they have options in their lives and the capacity to make good decisions for themselves and their families.

Finally, participants in the Warrior program learn to become emotional human beings, dealing with the traumatic experiences of their past. They develop a sense of humour and learn to cry in front of others, admit when they are wrong, and apologize for their actions. Just as importantly, they also learn to listen in a good way to other men who are expressing their emotions. An ISOYW facilitator shared the following:

> [Participants learn] to talk openly about the things they have never talked openly about, to be able to weep openly, to be able to admit that they are wrong or to admit their shame because all of this stuff that comes out and to able to handle it not from the perspective of an observer but to be able to handle it from being a brother.

This takes courage, as it goes against all of the training they received as children and adults. By learning to be humble people, and to be men that do not have to be in control of those around them, they are able to develop a sense of empathy for both the people who hurt them, and those that they have hurt. Rather than trying to control the people around them, they take responsibility for their own actions, moving to a position of healthy personal power. Two Warrior participants shared the following:

> I take responsibility for my action, for my crime, that's what it made me realize you know, how I hurt that um, the victim, physically and mentally…and I pray for her, I always pray for her and I always ask the creator for forgiveness because you know, it's something that should never happen.

> [I get respect now] by being humble, by being on my back, by being a good man, takes longer but it is more peaceful in my mind.

In summary, the very essence of the ISOYW program is the creation of conscious, self-driven, personal transformation through experiential holistic learning. Transformation is a key, ongoing process: from shame to acceptance of self and others; from unconscious reaction to informed self-determination; from a perspective where there are no choices in life to a reality full of choices. This is a difficult aspect of the program, as one ISOYW facilitator relates facilitator relates an instance within the group where participants were asked to reach a group decision through negotiation and consensus building:

> I remember in one camp [where ISOYW was provided in tipis in the bush]. They could go fishing or they could go hiking and the group could make the decision. I remember one fellow said to me, 'this is bullshit - you're going to get somebody killed, what the hell is the matter with you people, you can't do that' …[Being responsible to make a decision] was such a foreign concept – [In prison] they were always told what to do, when to do it and that's what they did.

Perhaps most critically, participants transform their feelings of disconnection to an experience of connection and belonging to culture, community, environment and cosmos. The ISOYW program facilitators and Elders strive to assist in the commencement of this personal transformation, which will continue throughout the participant's life. One participant shared his thoughts on his own transformation:

> I was just grateful for the whole experience…I just asked the Creator to watch over my family and me and help my journey, be more productive and ground breaking but I want to change too, it [the program] has helped me change into the man I am supposed to be.

In the process of this transformation, participants begin to understand and take on behaviours that are inherent in a non-violent lifestyle. The ultimate outcome is

therefore to assist in the adoption of non-violent behaviours through a process of empowerment. Elder George Brertton illustrates this concept: “an individual who is on a healing path is spiritually connected – feeling power and capable of doing anything. This sense of power comes from belief [faith]”. This is the strength participants draw from to make significant changes in their lives. Couture (1991) describes this enterprise:

> The Native way concerns itself with being and becoming a unique person, one fully responsible for one’s own life and actions within family and community. Finding one’s path and following it is a characteristic Native enterprise which leads to or makes for the attainment of inner and outer balance. (p. 207)

## Mask Making and Participant Transformation

The ISOYW program consists of 75 sessions that are grouped into four categories: Introduction, Childhood, Adolescence and Adult & Skill Building. The session are grouped according to the chronology of a participant’s life: to first explore family of origin in depth; then to look at adolescence, where participants usually turn from victims of violence to perpetrators of violence; then look at how violent behaviours were entrenched as an adult both in the community and in prison; and finally, to look at skill building to take action to avoid violent behaviour. The sessions may be presented out of order, but generally the facilitators look at personally experienced trauma, historical trauma of Aboriginal people; participants learn about the effects of neglect, abuse and abandonment on children, as well as how behaviours are passed on intergenerationally.

This process builds up to a climax point of awareness when the family map is completed. During this session, participants draw as much of their family

tree or map as they can. They note who had issues with addictions, and the relationships between family members that were marred with physical, emotional or sexual abuse. After the map is completed, they have an opportunity to present their family history to the group. This is one of the most powerful sessions in the ISOYW program; in presenting the relationships that exist within their families, participant become aware of the context where their behaviours were formed and of the true nature of their relationship with family members. From this informed perspective, they can now move forward is addressing their violence.

Soon after, the Mask Making Session takes place. The 'mask process' begins with the participants grouping in pairs. The first participant lies down on a table and puts petroleum jelly on his face and the participant is instructed to relax and meditate while soft music is played. His partner then uses plaster impregnated gauze to create a mask on his face. Each strip of gauze is run through water to activate the plaster, and then put on the participant's face. Depending on the participant's preference, the gauze can go over his mouth and/or eyes – or not. Two holes are made for the nostrils, so that the participant can breathe.

**Table 6: Plaster Impregnated Mask Making**[29]

Once the gauze is applied to be about ¼ inch thick, the participant then lays still; when it is completely dry, the mask is removed from his face, and the participants exchange positions to make a mask for the second participant.

Often in the process of making the mask, the participant is being triggered to act violently; they are experiencing acute anxiety about another person (male) touching his face, paranoid about people around but unable to see them or know what they are doing. Many participants reported feeling vulnerable, being in survival or 'instinct' mode, and, at first being unable to trust the person making the mask on their face, as well as the others who are in the room. During their interviews, participants stated that:

> I could hear people talking and walking by me so I am trying to relax, try to meditate or whatever but it wasn't working I just wanted to get it off my face.
>
> My partner doesn't really like white guys and I am white looking, so I kinda thought he wouldn't do a very good job on the mask. Apparently I was wrong

[29] ***Picture taken from the world wide web page created by Michael Delahunt at: http://www.artlex.com/ed/Maskmaking.html***

> because he did a really good job… and I heard everybody commenting on how good job he was doing.

Gradually the participant with the plaster on his face calms down; some were able to pray/meditate on the meaning of their mask and understanding the feelings, colors or images that they were experiencing while having the plaster put on their face. Participants described this experience in the following ways:

> I had flashbacks, all the flashbacks of my past came to me and I was like, I was in my own world, I couldn't see nobody, I could hear but I couldn't see nobody, I just laid there. And I was meditating and all, my whole life just flashed before me and like I said I put on the mask and it's like I had a mask for everything; I had that mask to be happy when actually I'm not, that mask of anger, the mask of hatred. I had a bunch of - it was like a mask for everything. Even a mask like I said for happy and I don't know if I was happy because inside I was hiding. This program it helped me to release all those - yeah, it's almost like when you are taking off the mask.

> And then laying there with it on listening to music, the sacred songs on the TV there and I got into it and I started seeing the colors that I used right there [on my mask], you know I knew right then what the colors were going to signify and what they meant, I just had a really good idea about what I was going to do and what this whole thing is about.

> Well, it was about being Métis and being confused between cultures and using it, I used it as a crutch I think to rebel against society in general…My mom was very ashamed of her past and her culture and where she came from and she didn't like hearing it in my voice, so she always forced me to remedy that, got me talking white again and then I would go back up North and I would be confused and I would be a new guy again, trying to find acceptance with all my Native peers and living with [my Grandma] who was not racist, not a racist bone in her body…That was all going through my head.

Each mask takes about 40 minutes to create and dry. At the end of the session, the masks are put away for a few days. Later in the program the masks are taken outdoors, usually to the ceremony site used by the program. The mask is then left overnight outside. The participants reported how they carefully chose the place

for their mask, as well as the actions they took to secure its safety for the night; reflecting on this process they observed:

> I don't know if it's meant to be that but it is kind of like leaving yourself there overnight…So I kind of didn't realize that until I was there and leaving the mask there. It was a safe place I thought, a nice place and I had a cigarette and burnt offerings to the spirits to keep it safe or keep me safe. So that's where I left it and went back… I wasn't too sure if it was still going to be on the tree or if it's still there or whatever. It survived and I brought it back.
>
> I had my smudge on a green print wrapped with my mask on top of it and I put it up on a tree, a tree where there were other prints.
>
> So that's how I felt - like I was alone and so I looked and there was one jack pine tree that was alone and it was all in front of poplar trees and it was alone so that's where I put my mask. I pointed it facing up…because I wanted the Creator to hear my spirit and the only way is to look up and reflect it to the sun, the wind and I left a little part open when I wrapped it up too - and that's my mouth. I have to start sharing more about my situation in life, the hard times and the bad times because maybe that's the boiling point for myself.

The next day, when the mask is reclaimed, the Elder then takes the participants through ceremony, according to his/her teachings; when the program is offered on Cree territory, a pipe or Sweatlodge ceremony is usually held, keeping the masks close by (such as on top of the lodge). Finally, the mask is taken back to the program room and painted/decorated by the owner. The colors and symbols the participants choose are very personal; they stated that the decorations represent specific events, feelings, beliefs and/or spiritual imagery:

> So I put the eyes like that so it looked like on the red part because red for me is rage, my rage, right, my anger. So I didn't realize but after I put the eyes like that it looked so calm eh, you know…Peaceful, so that is what this program has given me, it's given me a little bit of a peaceful mind and some tools to help me get a better look at why I have been so angry and where that rage comes from.
>
> The grey and blue [on my mask]? Because that's how it was when I put the mask in the trees, it was shades of blue and grey and I looked up in the sky.

> …[On the inside, I painted black over the red] because before red was my favourite color - before I joined the gang. And now I hate the color. Basically that's why I painted over it, that's not me anymore.

The purpose of the mask experience is to create a symbol of the participant's self that can be cleansed by the earth and through ceremony; in the process, the participant rids themselves of the thoughts, beliefs and behaviours they no longer want – this can include their addictive behaviours and the rage they feel. The mask is in essence a symbol of the facades they have created to hide who they really are inside. Warrior participants shared the following:

> I did the mask because it feels like ever since I have been abused as a child it's like I put on a mask. To be quiet, not to tell anybody because I was ashamed of myself and because of the sexual abuse my older brother did on me and another guy. Seeing my mom get raped right in front of me. So I held everything inside, I put on a mask. And I just, it's almost like I was censored all my life, keep trying to please people, give people money, keep them happy, joke around, when actually behind the mask I was hurting.

> [I have to remember] don't put [the mask] on for so long, don't, if you are going to put it on remember that it is a mask, remember who you are inside.

The ceremony helps participants to re-claim that "vulnerable spirit self" (NCSA 1999), reclaiming and creating a positive self image. In the process of painting the mask, participants recreated the mask that they had taken off, and/or created an image of their spirit self. Participants demonstrated this understanding when they stated that:

> This program - it helped me to release all those [emotions and experiences], it's almost like when you are taking off the mask.

> After taking off the mask, you know when I started working on myself, it's like I started to come out, talk about myself so that I could feel a lot better about

> myself, talk about my past because it is something that has just scarred me for life.

## The Warrior Program and Family Transformation

Discussions with facilitators and program participants reveal that the In Search of Your Warrior program can affect the Aboriginal family in two key areas. First, the men who participate in the ISOYW program all carry past traumas that have shaped their adult behaviour. These traumatic experiences were significant in the creation of their world view, their behaviours and the values they hold. The NCSA Warrior facilitators expressed ways in which the program can address these issues:

> Nobody has given most of these people information about social skills, of how they are supposed to treat their wives, how they are supposed to treat their children, they don't have those skills because of the way they were brought up. So warrior gives them that and they start understanding and they start becoming strong.

> One of the things that we like to discuss in the group is the different roles that women have and the different roles that men have... So you talk about those different belief and value systems that I think was lost along the way through residential schools or whatever but they need to come back. You're teaching them this so that they can teach their children.

During the ISOYW program, participants have the opportunity to holistically experience an Aboriginal culture, participate in ceremony and build healthy relationships with Elders and facilitators, which has the power to transform the way participants view and interact with their family and community. ISOYW Elders and facilitators are role-models for participants, demonstrating how traditional values can be successfully applied and embodied in the contemporary world.

In addition, many participants are challenged to find positive people in the community to befriend and to look to for support. Often, when these men are released they have made considerable changes in their lives, but the situations they are released into are often still dysfunctional. Maintaining positive culture-based behaviour in those situations is often overwhelmingly difficult and relapse into old behaviours is almost inevitable. Through positive role-modelling, program staff help participants to understand the type of support they will require to stay on their healing journey when their sentence expires. By observing and relating with program staff, participants see *mino-pimatisiwin* in action during the program and their participation fosters confidence to seek relationships in the community with people who are also seeking the good life. Warrior facilitators expand on this aspect of the program by stating the following:

> That's why [ISOYW] works. When people that practice that way of life or are starting to learn it and discovering it and you are taking them along that road too. That's it, that's the main thing I find that separates [ISOYW] from any other program.
>
> It was the old people, the people in the community who treated me good, took me back and took the time to give me something to be proud of in myself. In teaching that they also taught me how to help other people …I am giving back a little of what they gave me and teaching other people how to do it the same way I did it.

Second, during the program process, the participants are essentially re-parented; the program creates an extended family, whereby the Elders take on the grandparent role, the facilitators are uncles or aunts and the participants are siblings. Within this family circle, they learn new ways of thinking and acting. Through experiencing a collective connection to a higher power and learning the teachings, they begin to understand the role of spirituality in the building and

maintaining of good family and community relationships. Along the way, they learn to trust other people, and to trust and love themselves. One ISOYW facilitator stated that the power of the program is:

> that [the participants] can finally start being honest with themselves - they can start feeling good about themselves. The teaching of: 'you need to learn how to love yourself before you can love what's around you' is very true about the Warrior program. As that happens, we have then done what they've never had in their life.

The process of re-parenting facilitates participant reflection on the behaviour of their family of origin, not from the perspective of blame, but rather with understanding and compassion. By fostering compassion for their family, they can release the incapacitating shame that they feel for the mistakes they have made. They also learn that they have the power of choice as adults, the capacity and responsibility to make positive choices about how they will participate in their families from this time forward – as sons, fathers, brothers and uncles. Facilitators spoke about the changes in family relationships and perceptions ISOYW can bring about:

> [ISOYW creates participant] understanding, really understanding without judging their parents, or their grandparents, or their aunties or uncles or their community. [Understanding] their history, understanding residential schools and colonization and understanding the effect that has on people. Helps them in some way to understand that history does not have to repeat itself, you have a choice and it's okay if you don't know.

> Shame is one of the most useless emotions that we have. It serves no purpose other than keeping us down, an awful lot of people end up being shameful because they don't know, why didn't I treat my kids right, why did I abandon my kids, well you look at their childhood and that indicates how this whole process happened so having people accept and you can't understand what you don't know. None of us do.

> Just because you have given birth or you are the sperm donor who has helped create life does not mean that you know how to [be a parent]…You can choose how to learn and who to learn from. [You can learn] the awesome responsibility of life and the gift of life. That is what you learn through the ceremonies - not just your life but everybody's life. So if a person grabs hold of even pieces of that, it spills onto their children, perhaps their brothers, perhaps their neighbours.

Re-parenting can be a powerful catalyst in the lives of the participants. By being treated with respect and kindness, especially when their behaviour has angered someone else, they learn to treat others with respect and kindness in return. They witness the strength of humility and the healing that occurs when emotion is expressed in a good way. Within the context of the ISOYW program they are immersed, for an extended period of time, in an environment where these opportunities happen frequently, and are reflected upon, debriefed and entrenched through repetition. This process is described by an NCSA facilitator:

> Because [ISOYW] gives you the tools to be able to understand how to make your spirit healthy. As facilitators we give them the courage I guess and the support to go those places where they haven't gone before, where their ego would not allow them to be that weak, to be that humble.

All of the ISOYW facilitators spoke of the potential of the program to have an effect on Aboriginal families intergenerationally, to break the cycle of family and community violence. One facilitator described the importance of understanding family dynamics pertaining to self-awareness:

> One thing that really helps with families is when we do the family tree and then they see where a lot of this behaviour is passed on and that they need to break that chain. So that they know they are going to be breaking that chain for their families that they are going to be teaching them other behaviours, like what's right and what's wrong. Realizing that the way that they grew up - some of the things that they were taught - were not acceptable. So with them knowing the

difference today, it helps them with their children because it's not going to be passed on anymore.

## *A Caveat – But Not Really*

In conclusion, the ISOYW program provides the opportunity, the time and elements necessary for motivated men to begin or enhance their healing journey. Reflecting back on Archibald's table on decolonization, recovery and healing (Table 1), the ISOYW program contains experiential holistic learning opportunities that assist participants to begin this process, which can be paralleled with the a lifelong journey of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* – the good life. For many men, ISOYW is also an opportunity for cultural repatriation; their first opportunity to immerse themselves in an Aboriginal culture and re-orient towards a decolonized and interconnected worldview, which includes personal responsibility and accountability. As a result, the participants begin a culturally informed practice of self-management and self-determination.

However, when looking through the manual, it is apparent that many sessions are cited as having been taken from other sources. Further, there is no mention of what ceremonies should be provided nor when within the program process ceremonies should be offered. The manual does not prescribe times when the Elder should speak, nor what types of information the Elder should share. Instead, the manual is organized and formatted to appear very similar to other mainstream programs that are not focused on an Aboriginal population. It is not the individual sessions that hold the power to create change, but in fact, the worldview that informs the program process that truly holds the potential for transformation. When Elders guide the program process and work with facilitators

to ensure that ceremony, ritual and prayer are appropriately and genuinely incorporated into the discovery/transformation process, a new dimension is realised in participant learning. The principles of Natural Law, which inform participant understanding of interconnectedness, are realised in the nature of the relationships they have now and will pursue in the future.

Participants in the ISOYW program are offered an extended period of time to be with Elders and facilitators who are powerful teachers on their healing journeys; individuals who can articulate and role model the decolonization/recovery/healing process (Archibald, 2006). The program is authentically Aboriginal, because the very foundation of the program – the staff, the traditional medicines, the ceremonies and the approach to helping are authentic. Within this context, the process of being and becoming that is offered as an insight or glimpse to the more sustaining, life-long commitment to *mino-pimatisiwin* is part of the catalytic praxis participants experience, which can result in changes to their world view, lifestyle and relationships with the world around them.

There are limitations to program effectiveness; participants must be ready and motivated to create changes in their lives. Although the program provides an environment that can and does create this motivation, it is ultimately the participant's choice whether he wants to change or not. Ensuring that each participant exercises self determines on their healing path, ultimately means that some men will not become connected to their healing path while participating in the program. The facilitators did not speak negatively about these men; from their

perspective, everything happens for a reason, and people heal when they are supposed to. However, they did note that the experiences they had in the program may plant the seeds of change, which may be realised later in life. In addition, while many men who participate will reduce or eliminate violent behaviours after the program, they still struggle with addictions, which can cause issues such as re-incarceration in the future.

## *Section Three: Actions of Agency and Transformation*

There have been two distinct outcomes of NCSA's successful bid to self determine within the criminal justice system. The first is that NCSA has created significant space within the system to create innovative and highly successful programs that employ an Indigenous worldview. The second is that NCSA's actions have contributed to a transformation in the way that the Criminal Justice system views, interacts with and provides services to Aboriginal people within the system. This transformation has the potential to contribute to the building of Aboriginal family strength and ultimately its resilience.

The ISOYW program remains a powerful example of how the creation of self-determination space can result in actions that can transform the way in which mainstream services for Aboriginal people are delivered. ISOYW has influenced significantly the programmatic landscape in the Correctional Services Canada; it was the first Aboriginal program to be adopted nationally by the CSC, the first CSC program developed in the Aboriginal community, and the first program to deal specifically with the needs of Aboriginal offenders. Since its adoption, CSC

has had to grapple with the program-policy disconnect that results from the implementation of a program that operates from an Aboriginal worldview into a Western, militaristic institutional system. Changes have been made within CSC to accommodate the ISOYW program, including the way that correctional staff view the place of Aboriginal spirituality within correctional programming, as well as their perspective on the programmatic needs Aboriginal offenders, thus creating opportunities for other Aboriginal programs to be developed and implemented by other Aboriginal people and agencies as well as programs within CSC.

A preliminary evaluation was completed on the ISOYW program by the Correctional Service of Canada (Trevethan, Moore & Allegri, 2005), which included an outcome evaluation of 143 offenders that completed the program over several years and compared their results with a matched group of offenders in the federal prisons that did not complete the program. The program participants attended the program at one of the following institutions: William Head Institution (British Columbia), Bowden Institution (Alberta), Pê Sâkâstêw Centre (Alberta), Stan Daniels Healing Centre (Alberta), Saskatchewan Penitentiary (Saskatchewan), Stony Mountain Institution (Manitoba), and La Macaza Institution (Quebec).

Many positive outcomes were observed in the group of individuals who had completed the ISOYW program; compared to the control group, they demonstrated a much higher potential for successful reintegration and less need for rehabilitative programming. In fact, of those offenders released into the community after completing the program, “over two thirds were not re-admitted

to a federal institution within a one-year follow-up. Furthermore, of those who returned for a new offence, significantly smaller proportions of ISOYW participants were re-admitted for a new violent offence, relative to the comparison group (7% versus 57%)" (Trevethan et al., 2005, p. i).

In other words, approximately 100 of the 143 offenders did not ever return to jail after release; of the 43 that did, only nine were re-admitted for violent offences, which is appreciably less than the control group. This outcome is considerably better than any program CSC had offered to Aboriginal offenders in the past (for example, see Robinson, 1995) and is further proof of the capacity of Aboriginal people to develop effective strategies to resolve their own issues, when allowed the space to self-determine what the issues are, how they are perceived and what actions should be taken.

# Chapter Eight: A Framework for Building Family Resilience

## *Introduction*

The purpose of this chapter is to synthesize knowledge gained through the Indigenous research path with the case study and key informant findings, with a view to putting forward a model of resilience for Indigenous families. To do this, I will build a foundation for understanding Indigenous family resilience by clarifying the terms that I use in this model and situating the concept of resilience within an Aboriginal context. From this perspective, I will present the model of resilience for Indigenous families, describe the connection between healing and family resilience and describe how reconciliation, reconnection and repatriation contribute to the interconnectedness of the Indigenous family, community and nation. Finally, I will summarize the findings by providing answers, based upon the research findings, to the questions originally posed in this research project.

## *Need for Clarity: What is Resilience?*

For the purposes of clarification, I will first put forward the following accepted definitions of three terms that are critical in this argument.

**Resilience**: *noun*. 1: the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress 2: an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.[30]

**Resiliency**: *noun.* Resilience. (Definition same as above)

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[30] Resilience. (2008). In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved June 4, 2008, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resilience

**Resilient**: *adjective*. Characterized or marked by resilience: as a: capable of withstanding shock without permanent deformation or rupture b: tending to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change[31].

Clearly, the term resilience (or resiliency) cannot be used to describe a process (as described in Chapter 2, including Luthar, Cicchetti et al., 2000), as it a noun, which is an "entity, quality, state, action, or concept".[32] I assert, therefore, that family resilience is a quality or way of being of a family. The quality of resilience can also be placed on a continuum when describing the current state of a family; a family can be in a state of low resilience or high resilience, and can also engage in a process of building resilience. Similarly, Cross (1997) indicates that the family is in a constant state of flux, responding to and influencing all aspects of the world around them; at times the family will be stronger, at times more challenged based upon the context at the time. Cross states that it is the "constant change and interplay between various forces that account for resilience" (p. 6), which supports my argument that the family can more or less actualize resilience as a result of these contextual relationships. When describing the family, we can also say it is a 'resilient family' – one that is known for its quality of resilience or its resiliency over a sustained period of time or in response to a particular event.

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31 Resilient. (2008). In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved June 4, 2008, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/resilient

32 Noun. (2008). In *Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary*. Retrieved June 4, 2008, from http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/noun

## *Defining Resilience within an Aboriginal Worldview*

The central argument of this research is that Aboriginal family resilience is synonymous with the state of connectedness of the members of the family (broadly defined): it is the ability to maintain connectedness to family, clan and society, as well as the natural environment and the spiritual cosmos. The more connected the family is (internally between members and externally with community and the natural/spiritual environments) the more resilience it will realize. During the Sharing Circle on Healing (SCH), many contributors spoke about the Aboriginal families' power to stay together and survive despite the harsh environments and circumstances they experience and "what they've been through". One SCH contributor clearly described the relationship between connectedness and family resilience:

> The families manage somehow to stick together. The dad is as childish as the kids sometimes and the mom doesn't know how to move, where to go, what to do next. But yet the family stays together. They will have eight kids and they're always together - they always have this tendency no matter where they go, if it is for treatment or school or hockey school or whatever, somebody sends them, they always get back together and I think that speaks to major love and resiliency. (SCH, 2007)

In this way, it can be argued that the strength of the Aboriginal family is the ability to stay connected despite hardship, trauma and separation, and that connectedness is central to the resilience of the Aboriginal family.

Further, in the work done with ceremonialist Dave Gehue, he further emphasized that this connectedness is deeply imbedded within Aboriginal people, as it is tied to the process of creation through an organized spiritual matrix. This

begins when a spirit chooses its parents, clan and nation seven years before birth. At conception, important information that cultivates resilience in the individual, family and society, borne from Natural Law and the laws of the clan is imbedded in every cell of the individual. This information instructs individuals on how to live respectfully with all living things; it is the code-book or blue print for respect protocol between people, the natural environment and the cosmos. From Dave's perspective, within this body of knowledge is all of the information we need to be resilient and to manifest our resilience. He describes this information as existing on a super-conscious[33] or cellular level, and it is the responsibility of the family to bring this information to consciousness through teaching children the laws of the clan and nation. During the SCH, Dave further describes this process in the following way:

> From a spiritual perspective, resiliency begins even before you enter into this realm of being the smallest cell. When you are conceived your resiliency begins before that because you choose your parents and you choose your family…You then choose the clan you are in and for every cell in your body it is imprinted - the laws of that clan is in your system… Now that's natural law and the guidelines of those clans that you have. Along with that, then you are put in a certain order in your nation, you are put at an automatic certain status because of your clan and you are respected because of that, you are not judged because of that clan. You have a certain job to do and you will do that job and no one else will step in to do that job for you. You must do it. Now lots of our people are not aware of that anymore because they have neglected or it has been driven out of them because of residential school systems, because of reserve systems, because of drunkenness, because of violence; there are a thousand reasons. But nevertheless you still have on that super-conscious level, those laws and those things that will drive you... So we have an organized spiritual matrix, right from day one. (SCH, 2007)

[33] Dave describes the conscious as the information to which we have access; the unconscious as the information that has been gathered as a result of living, but to which we do not have access (while it still influences thought and behaviour); and the super-conscious as the information on Natural Law that we possess as result of the clan and nation into which we are born (which still influences thought and behaviour).

Dave also refers to the super-consciousness as our ancient brain, referencing knowledge that is embedded in our cells that tells us how to live the good life. Information collected during ceremony tells us that by observing protocol related to respect and following the principles of Natural Law and clan rules (which are founded in an interconnected worldview), Aboriginal people are guaranteed good physical health and good family, clan and nation relationships; that is to say they will live with a high degree of individual, family and community resilience. This spiritual perspective further supports the interconnected definition of resilience and expands our understanding of how the metaphysical/spiritual supports families in the manifestation of resilience.

In addition, data collected in the SCH supported the importance of staying connected (or developing a sense of connectedness) to the natural world in family resilience. One contributor to the SCH stated the following:

> I think resiliency comes from instinctual behaviour; that's where clans come from and that's why clans exist. We forget that we are part of the animal kingdom. The Western world believes that they put themselves above everything else, the land, animals. We believe that all things are equal. [Some] communities have less time being institutionalized by [the] western world, so they are closer to the earth; they are closer to the natural world, so they are part of that natural kingdom and being equal... Our life is busy - but the minute you step out into the bush and you go out there a week, within a day or two your instinctual survival skills start kicking in, you stay out there for six months imagine how closely connected you are to all those things, your sight, your sounds. (SCH, 2007)

Similarly, Cardinal (1974) described the way of the traditional hunter and how the epistemology the hunter employed resulted in his understanding of the interrelatedness of all things living and spiritual. Cardinal's narrative

demonstrates how this knowledge of interrelationships helps the individual to better understand his place and responsibility within his reality:

> We learned early that our lives would be affected, sooner or later, and for our good or to our harm, by our every action towards our environment and nature. We also perceived that the animals around us, the trees and all other living things, affected each other, and us, by the way they lived; and we realised that in order to survive in nature we had to understand all of these things – we had to have a full understanding of ourselves, who were a part of that environment and of our fellow man." (p.1)

Cardinal (1974) also emphasizes that humans need to be "egoless and at par with every living being" (p. 3), as any thoughts or actions that create a sense of superiority over other forms of life would compromise the ability to survive of the individual and his family. Therefore, the data collected in the SCH, which is corroborated by other Indigenous scholars (Cardinal, 1974; Cajete, 1994; Cajete, 2000; Batiste & Henderson, 2000), exemplifies our essential connection to the natural world for our health and survival (in both the past and in the present) and the capacity of individuals to reclaim a respectful connectedness to the natural world. This connectedness then contributes to the individual's capacity for survival, in other words, his/her (and by extension his/her family's) state of resilience.

Finally, the case study on the In Search of Your Warrior Program also demonstrated that by re-orienting the participants to an interconnected worldview and teaching them the importance of building and maintaining good relationships with their group members and their community, participants developed (or enhanced) a sense of belonging and responsibility to the people and world around them. This transformation in the participants results in their ability to build and

renew respectful familial relationships. Being mindful of the principle of reciprocity in interdependent relationships, it is logical to expect that the transformation of the participant can influence the transformation of the family as well.

Therefore, the findings of the case study, sharing circles and spiritual work all uphold the centrality of respectful relationships that form the basis of family and community connections in the manifestation of resilience in the Aboriginal family. I argue that the mere state of connectedness has helped Aboriginal families survive the hard times; however, the more *the principles of Natural Law (caring, sharing, respect, honesty and self-determination) are evident in relationships* within the family and between the family and other environments, the more resilience the family will manifest.

## *Healing: The Process of Building Family Resilience*

While many Aboriginal families may still practice some aspects of interconnectedness, (which accounts for the fact that they have survived), the essential web of relationships has been at times fragmented or confused with trauma-based behaviour. For these families, the process of building family resilience is central to their health and survival. At the very core of this process is the renewal of respectful relationships within the family and between the family and the community, natural and spiritual environments. The goal of building family resilience is therefore to transform relationships that have been damaged by the effects of intergenerational trauma, into relationships that are founded on

the principles of natural law: caring, sharing, kindness, respect, honesty and self-determination. Similarly, the findings presented here also demonstrate that renewal and transformation of relationships are the core processes in the healing process. Referring back to the Cree notion of healing - seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* - the individual and family seek to progress from a position of feeling isolated and disconnected (Herman, 1997) towards a state of connectedness whereby the good life can be actualized by observing the principles of Natural Law in all relationships. This is to say that healing and building family resilience are essentially one and the same.

The findings of this research, which I will demonstrate are corroborated in part by other research, indicate that building family resilience – the process of seeking the good family life through the renewal and transformation of relationships – is supported by three interconnected dimensions: (1) reclamation of an interconnected worldview; (2) reconciliation of disenfranchised/historical, intergenerational and personal trauma; and (3) repatriation of the power to respectfully self-determine. For healing to occur, all three dimensions of the healing process need to be engaged at many different levels: individual, family, clan, and nation (community). This framework is illustrated in the figure below.

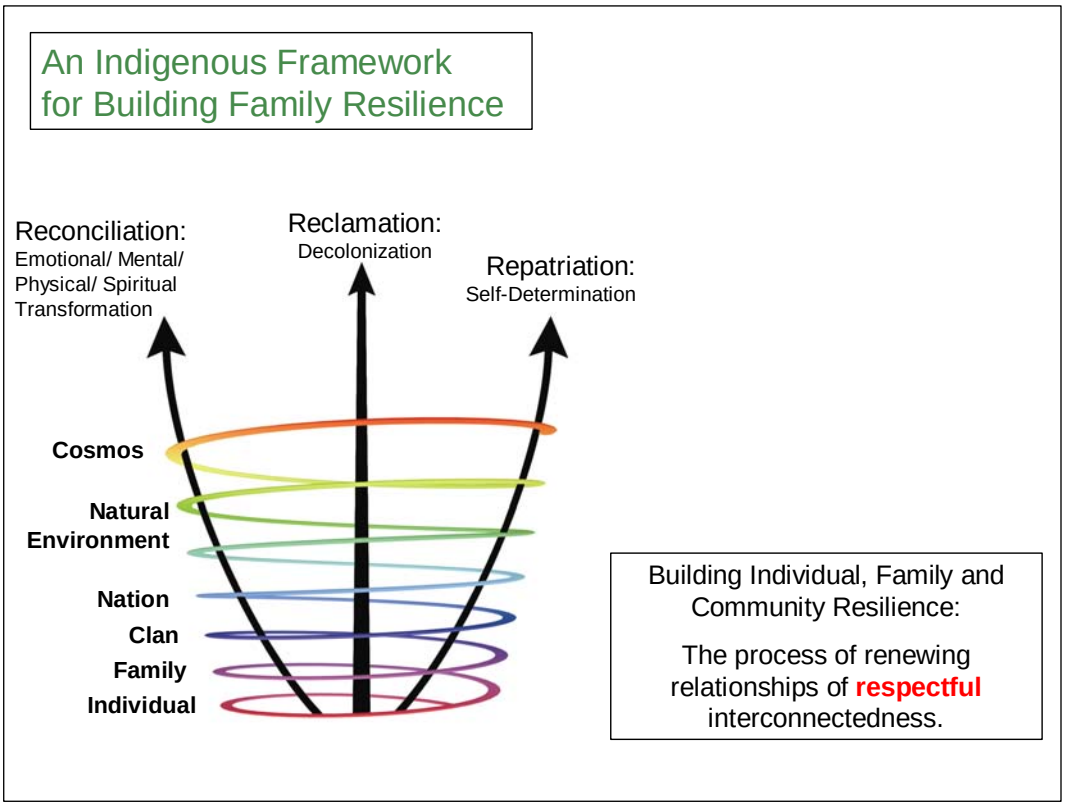


**Figure 1**

The three dimensions will be discussed below, and their interrelatedness will be made explicit through the discussion of the case study findings.

## Reclamation, Reconciliation and Repatriation

> Is this the story that we will come to tell ourselves? That we are people of persistence, adaptability and strength who have survived much and who are forging a new life for ourselves in a much changed land? It certainly is a story very different from the one found in Canadian history texts. (Newhouse, Voyageur & Beavon, 2005, p. 8)

Internal colonization in North America is the ongoing domination and displacement of Indigenous peoples without their consent (Tully, 2000), which has included attempts to eradicate Indigenous cultural, familial, political, educational and spiritual systems and replace them with Christian European

structures of power. As Ladson-Billings (2000) states, the hegemony of the dominant paradigm is such that "it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world" (p. 258) and therefore controls all facets of society. In the process of eradication, the psychic spaces of many Indigenous people were co-opted, resulting in their internalization of a belief system that held them, their people and their culture as inferior, and instilled the belief that they can neither care nor provide for themselves and their families. After many generations, numerous Indigenous people unknowingly and unconsciously occupy this colonized psychic space, acting out self-destructive behaviours without being able to articulate the conflict of being the very thing they have learned to despise.

Decolonization refers to the process of reclaiming psychic spaces and the recovery of core values that in fact *place value* upon the Indigenous person, family and nation and thus call for emotional, spiritual and "intellectual sovereignty" (Warrior, 1995; cited in Ladson-Billing, 2000). Frantz Fanon, in his work with the people of Algeria during the war of independence against France in the 1950's, describes "the radically disabling effects of racism and colonization of the psyche of the oppressed that must be counterbalanced by equally radical resistance to liberate not only physical and economic spaces but also the psychic spaces of the colonized" (Oliver, 2004, p. 31). Decolonization therefore, is the liberation of the individual psyche towards the capacity of Indigenous people to determine for themselves the meaning and value of their own lives (Oliver, 2004) and set their own future course of action.

In the case study presented here, the process of decolonization for the participants in the In Search of Your Warrior program was connected to learning about the history of Aboriginal people in Canada, colonization and the residential school legacy, within the context of how historic trauma and their families' experience with intergenerational grief, loss and violence has shaped their individual behaviour. At the same time, the program offers opportunities to connect with Indigenous Elders, traditional teachings, Natural Law and ceremony. The effect of these interrelated processes is that the participants can begin to understand the origin of the negative messages that they have internalized about being an Aboriginal person and abandon them; understand the history and context of intergenerational trauma, then let go of the anger and shame they carry from the abuse they experienced as children; and adopt positive thoughts, attitudes and behaviours from the position of understanding of the beauty that exists within Aboriginal culture and an interconnected worldview.

In the In Search of Your Warrior Program, participants are essentially taking down the walls of the black box (the colonial value system) and seeing the horizon anew[34], which includes new thoughts, attitudes and choices that were not possible within the unconscious colonized psyche. This new perspective fosters a transformation in how they see themselves within their families (now as protectors rather than perpetrators), within their communities (as providers rather than offenders) and within their cosmos (as being connected to all rather than

[34] This concept was a part of the discussions of the Aboriginal Working Group at the Trudeau Foundation Summer institute at Acadia University, June 2006. Working group members included Dr. James Tully, Dr. John Borrows, Dr. Roderick A. McDonald, Sophie Thériault, Robert Lee Nichols, Kate Hennessy, Dawnis Kennedy and Patti LaBoucane-Benson.

isolated and alone). They now have access to multiple perspectives: that of the colonized and the decolonized - what Newhouse, Voyager and Beavon (2005) describe as the post-colonial consciousness that is emerging in Aboriginal society today in the following way:

> It is a society that understands it has been colonized in many ways; a society that is aware of the implications of its colonization and that is choosing deliberately, consciously and systematically to deal with that colonization; a society that is coming to terms with what has happened to it; and a society determined to overcome its colonial past. (p. 4)

Bringing to the fore their multiple consciousnesses (Ladson-Billing, 2000) can help participants appreciate their "transcendent position allowing one to see and understand positions of inclusion and exclusion – margins and mainstreams" (p. 260). This liminal (Ladson-Billing, 2000) perspective is one of advantage, as it positions the individual on the margins of the dominant society, in that "not being positioned in the centre allows for a wide-angle vision" (p. 262). This perspective can at once incorporate multiple perspectives for a clearer vision of self and self-in-society. I argue that it is the liminal position that offers the most opportunity for personal healing, in that it provides the individual a contextual perspective that is sympathetic to those that have victimized them, as well as creates the space for self-forgiveness for past transgressions. In this way, the participants can accept that their abusers were also abused; that as a result of their traumatic childhoods they also abused others; and that by adopting new values, attitudes and behaviours they can end the cycles of violence that have plagued their families, thus creating a new reality for their children.

The liminal position could also be used to describe Aboriginal organizations such as Native Counselling Services of Alberta (NCSA), which has taken action to deal with the over-representation of Aboriginal people in the justice system. By understanding the dominant (justice) system as well as the position of disadvantage that Aboriginal people hold within the system, NCSA has used these perspectives to create agency and help Aboriginal people repatriate their capacity to self-manage. These actions arise from a belief that only through self-determination can Indigenous people reverse the devastating effects of domination; that the empowerment of Indigenous people is central to building healthy individuals, families, organizations and communities. By employing the freedom to successfully manoeuvre within the criminal justice system through its relationship with the state, NCSA reclaimed the right to manage its own affairs and to determine the present and future of the organization. As a result, NCSA has caused considerable change within the colonial structure, participating in the transformation of the way Aboriginal people are perceived, served and sanctioned within the criminal justice system.

NCSA's actions of agency include the development of the In Search of Your Warrior Program, which promotes healing of the individual through reconciling issues with grief and trauma, reclaiming a positive, interconnected worldview and developing the capacity to self-determine within a web of respectful relationships. The right to self-determine must also include the ability of individuals, families, communities and organizations to also take responsibility for their actions, therefore living the consequences for those actions. These

consequences are an essential aspect of the learning process; reinforcing behaviour that strengthens people and families and correcting behaviours that result in negative consequences.

Further, the spiral in the framework in Figure 1 is a symbol of the connectedness of the Aboriginal individual family and community. The spaces between the levels in the spiral are significant, in that they demonstrate the respectful space between each level that allows the individual family or community to self-determine. This space is the foundation of a web of healthy relationships that exists in the universe. Without this space, the spiral collapses on itself; the relational boundaries are transgressed and the spiral becomes a tangled knot in which intergeneration trauma including spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical, sexual and lateral violence occurs.

**Figure 2: Collapsed Spiral of Interconnectedness**[35]

[35] Photo accessed on-line, April 14, 2009 at: flickr.com/photos/placidsheep/2907116298/

By reclaiming an interconnected worldview that is founded on building and renewing of respectful, healthy relationships the spiral can be deconstructed, disentangled and re-oriented to include respect for relationship boundaries; I argue this is the most desirable and essential outcome of participation in healing programs and in the process of building family resilience.

## *Conclusions*

In this section, I will use the findings of the case study, additional data collection and other literature to answer the questions that were posed at the beginning of the research project. In the instances where the questions can not be completely answered, I will suggest areas/research questions for future research.

### What was the nature of relationships in Indigenous families pre-contact?

The findings of both the case study and the Indigenous research create an understanding of what pre-contact family and community life was like specifically for the Cree people and more generally for the Aboriginal people in the land now known as Canada. Clearly, the information that existed pre-contact still exists and it is still used by some Aboriginal people now.

The Teaching Circle of Elders described the interconnected nature of all relationships for the Cree people, who believe that the doctrine that govern all relationships (*wahkohtowin*) are derived from Natural Law, which is part of the sacred gifts bestowed upon humans by the Creator. Familial relationships are critically important, and these laws set out the unique and specific conduct that

must be maintained between individuals such as mother and child, brothers and sisters, cousins and other relatives, and people who are not related by family (Cardinal and Hildebrandt, 2001). The words of the Elders were corroborated by Mi'kmaq ceremonialist Dave Gehue, who spoke at length about Natural Law and how it informs clan structure and rules. Within this strict structure, children, women and Elders are safe, respected and protected. The strict incest taboos are enforced, further creating an environment of safety for children and ensuring the genetic survival of the people.

The Elders were also clear that within the Cree worldview, to transgress these strict boundaries (*pastahowin*) is to offend the Creator would gave the laws to the people; the result is severe consequences *(ohcinewin)* that are realized by the offender and the offender's children and grandchildren. Dave Gehue agrees, citing examples in the present that are proof that Natural Law was transgressed in the past; they all agreed that the only way to make amends for these transgressions is through ceremony and a commitment to living within the boundaries of Natural Law.

## How have relationships in Indigenous families been renewed in the face of historical and contemporary adversity?

The colonial history of Canada has caused major disruption in the intergenerational transmission of the teachings of Natural Law, and how the principles of caring, sharing, kindness, respect, honesty and self-determination inform the relationships we have with our family members, between families, with the natural environment and the cosmos. For many Aboriginal families, the colonial government's many attempts to replace this worldview with that of the

colonizer have resulted in “a legacy of abuse and intergenerational trauma” (Archibald, 2006). For the Elders and ceremonialist, the prevalence of psychological, physical and emotional abuse, as well as illnesses such as Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is proof that the people do not understand Natural Law; they warn us that these behaviours are causing dire consequences for their children and grandchildren. They are calling for reclamation of this traditional worldview – the building of healthy relationships within families and communities by observing the rules provided by the Creator.

### How can community programs assist individuals to learn how to renew respectful family relationships and therefore adapt in a positive manner?

The case study of the In Search of Your Warrior Program, the additional data collected and the Indigenous research completed indicates that there are three dimensions that need to be addressed in families: reclaiming an interconnected worldview, repatriating the power to self determine in individuals and families and reconciling the traumas of the past. Healing programs can include these dimensions by ensuring that they provide a forum for Elders to teach Natural Law and offer ceremonies that will assist in building respectful connectedness within families. Further, the programs can assist in the decolonization process, by teaching the history of the Aboriginal family and placing program participants’ experience within this history. Combined with opportunities to heal from their personal traumatic experiences, healing programs can assist in the reconciliation of past wrongs that were done to the participant and that the participant perpetrated on others. Finally, healing programs provide opportunities for

individuals and families to repatriate responsibility to self-determine and self-manage, within a framework of informed, respectful interconnectedness.

In addressing these dimensions, healing programs can help participants begin their lifelong healing journey - the process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin*. This journey will further reinforce then reify the three dimensions, as they learn more, act upon their learning and reflect on how these teachings have furthered their healing journey. The healing programs begin the process of transforming experience into knowledge (Kolb, 1984) and knowledge into a better family life.

## How Do These Findings Inform The Process Of Building Indigenous Family Resilience?

The building of family resilience in Indigenous families must be considered within the unique historical and contemporary context of the Aboriginal family. This context includes the intergenerational experience of the Indigenous family, the changes it has sustained as a result of colonization and how it renews itself in contemporary society that still holds on to at least vestiges of the colonial preconceptions of Aboriginal people as the primitive, childlike, unsophisticated 'other' (Said, 1978; Nandy, 1983). This context requires consideration of how the negative effects of colonization can be transformed through experiences within an interconnected worldview, to result in healthy families that are a part of a web of respectful society connections. This process of transformation in the family is healing - a process of realignment towards a collectively constructed concept of well-being. In sum, healing is also the process of building family resilience.

## *Coda*

At the very beginning of this research process, I speculated upon how research that was informed by an Indigenous worldview would compliment or differ from the models of resilience that currently exist. While it would be possible to find at least some small similarities between the Indigenous model of building family resilience that has emerged from my research and that of most other family researchers that were earlier discussed, I believe Froma Walsh's (2006) conceptualization of family resilience is most comparable to the framework I have presented. Walsh puts forward three keys to family resilience, expanded upon in Table 4.

**Table 7: Keys to Family Resilience (Walsh, 2006, p. 26)**

Family belief systems:
- Making meaning of adversity
- Positive outlook
- Transcendence and spirituality

Organizational patterns:
- Flexibility
- Connectedness
- Social and economic resources

Communication processes
- Clarity
- Open emotional expression
- Collaborative problem solving

Walsh (2006) describes a relational view of family resilience, whereby "all concepts of the self and constructs of the world are fundamentally products of result of relationships" (p. 56). A central aspect of resilience is the family belief

system that provides hope for the future, values all people and all relationships and includes a belief that the family can triumph over adversity. Walsh describes this value system as a "moral compass" (p. 72) which protects from hopelessness and despair. For Walsh, spirituality is the internalization of these beliefs, which serves to connect us to each other. She describes this as "an expansion of awareness, and with it personal responsibility for and beyond oneself, from local to universal concerns" (p. 73).

Walsh goes on to describe the organizational patterns of resilient families as "family shock absorbers" (p. 83), which assist with positive adaptation and regaining stability in the family. Strong leadership is important in this process, to ensure that children are provided the direction and nurturing required. Connectedness or family cohesion is important in family resilience, as it provides an environment whereby family members can count on each other for support and loyalty, yet still possess a sense of self, with clear boundaries and feelings of autonomy. In addition, extended family, social networks and financial security add another layer of protection for the family to withstand adversity.

Finally, Walsh (2006) also includes the way that the family communicates rules, expectations and feelings with each another as having an effect on the family's resilience. These communication patterns are especially important during crises, as they have a significant bearing on whether the family can resolve problems and if they do, whether family boundaries, connectedness and relationships are preserved or strengthened in the process. How families share

decision-making responsibilities is also a factor in family resilience, and whether decisions are make within an environment of compromise and reciprocity.

Clearly, there are obvious connections between Walsh's three keys to family resilience, and the Indigenous model of family resilience that has resulted from my research. Specifically, the importance of a belief system that fosters family connectedness, hope and adaptability is central to both models. In many ways my model expands upon Walsh's model, enlarging the scope of the concept of connectedness, to include the natural environment and the cosmos and specifically locates the person and family within a web of relationships in the universe. Indeed, the connectedness of the family is but one aspect of the spiral that demonstrates the connectedness of all living, animated and spiritual beings. In addition, the nature of those connections has a bearing on the state of family resilience; it is the difference between dysfunctional, enmeshed relationships that are affected by past traumas, and respectful relationships that are founded in Natural Law.

The Indigenous model of family resilience therefore seeks to provide a framework that is specific to Indigenous people, within the context of their specific historical and contemporary realities. From this vantage point, the model provides three key concepts that are necessary for Indigenous families to manifest resilience: repatriation of family's self-determination, reconciliation of past trauma and a reconnection to an interconnected worldview. These ideas are not radically different from those presented by Walsh, but the model explicitly draws from Indigenous philosophy and speaks to the most salient strengths that

Aboriginal families employ to overcome significant historical adversity. That is to say it rearranges Walsh's model to bring forward specific concepts, giving them a more prominent standing within the model. The importance of this model, therefore, is that it is immediately accessible for Aboriginal people, organizations and communities, informing the creation of programs and policies that are related to families and healing programs.

# Chapter Nine: Epilogue

Near the end of my dissertation process, I invited the people who supported me through this research process, some of whom had been participants, advisor or friends who provided emotional support. I asked Elder George Brertton to have a pipe ceremony for us and I held a giveaway for the purpose of offering gifts of gratitude for the help I've received. I prepared a feast for after the ceremony, and George offered some of the food to the spirits. It was a good way to bring closure to this phase of my life-long Indigenous research path.

## *Limitations*

The biggest limitation I experienced in the accounting of research findings is reporting on the information I learned through ceremony. While this information had a profound effect on me, my relationship with my family and the way that I approached significant challenges that have arose in the past six years, this learning is deeply personal and was made real within the context of my personal relationships. It has contributed to the resilience of my family in a profound way, but I find myself unable to describe this aspect of learning on paper and without relationship with the reader. I believe this is both the gift of the Indigenous research path – profound, life-changing learning, and the difficulty – the inability to describe the process in writing.

In addition, the research findings that are presented here are specific to the Aboriginal people in Canada; they are presented in the context of the Cree people in Alberta to provide a framework to discuss how Natural Law informs specific

teachings for the family and how this infrastructure affects the relationships between family and community members. Indeed, contextualizing and giving location to the data collected in this research is the foundation of the claims of comparability and confirmability of the findings. Further, the preliminary findings were corroborated and expanded upon by additional data collection from participants who represent a national and international group of Indigenous people, therefore enhancing the transferability of the model that emerged through the research process.

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# Appendix A: Audit Trail Tables

**Table 8: Core Category One Audit Trail**

| | Core Category 1: Reconnection to an interconnected worldview | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Sub-Category** | **Description** |
| **ISOYW Facilitators** | The ISOYW program re-orients participants. | The program assists in re-connecting program participants with Aboriginal culture, values and spirituality; at its foundation the ISOYW program seeks to teach and re-orient Aboriginal men towards a worldview founded on Natural Law. Participants learn about the centrality of ceremony and spirituality within the Aboriginal worldview from the Elder, and this fosters an understanding of who they are as spiritual being. Through the teaching about and participating in ceremonies, core values are transmitted in an experiential and holistic way. |
| | The ISOYW program reconnects participants. | ISOYW participants transform their feelings of disconnection to an experience of connection and belonging to culture, community, environment and cosmos. The program also transforms the way participants view and interact with their family and community, by teaching participants how to build and maintain healthy relationships. |
| | Program Facilitators role model seeking the good life. | Facilitators and Elders demonstrate living a healthy lifestyle, being non-violent and being committed to a healing journey. Participants learn to love themselves and can in turn love others as well. In the process, they are re-parented and taught the principles of Natural Law that they were not given as children. |
| **ISOYW Participants** | Participants learn to build healthy relationships. | Participants learn to trust one another in group, share their life experiences with each other, show emotion, admit they are wrong and be honest with one another. They are given the opportunity to develop healthy beliefs about and boundaries with women. |
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| **NCSA CEO** | Traditional values can inform service delivery for Aboriginal people. | Beginning in the early 90's and more significantly after the change of leadership at NCSA, traditional values were deliberately incorporated in to the way services were delivered at NCSA. Elders became more involved in the planning and delivery of services. Programs were delivered with traditional values explicitly stated. |
| **ISOYW Documents** | The ISOYW program is founded in an Aboriginal worldview. | Through ritual and ceremony, participants in the ISOYW program learn experientially the principles of Natural Law: caring, sharing, kindness, respect, love, honesty and self-determination. |
| | Families are a system of interdependence. | The programs stated underlying assumptions include that belief that humans are intimately connected to the world around us. All individuals are part of a number |

| | Core Category 1: Reconnection to an interconnected worldview | |
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| | | of systems such as the family, community and society at large; thus, it is important to consider the individual family member in relation to the system in which he is embedded. |
| | Healing must be holistic. | In order for healing to occur, the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological parts of the self must be attended to. Participant also learn to feel empathy and caring for others, as well as develop the capacity to trust others as well. |
| | The ISOYW program creates or enhances a sense of interconnectedness of program participants. | The programs stated outcomes include providing program participants with information regarding a stable, positive belief/value system, enhance their sense of spiritual connection and to learn to create healthy support networks in the larger community. The principles of Natural Law, which inform participant understanding of interconnectedness, are realised in the nature of the relationships they have now and will pursue in the future. |
| | The ISOYW program helps participants understand their family relationships. | During the family map session, participants draw their family map, noting who had addictions and the relationships between family members that included physical, emotional or sexual abuse. Participants become aware of the context where their behaviours were formed and of the true nature of their relationship with family members. They understand without judging their family. |
| **NCSA Documents** | Reintegration programs must addressed the holistic needs of Centre residents. | Residents at the SDHC are offered specific programs to address their social, educational, emotional, physical and spiritual needs, and that cultural, familial, and social experiences contribute to their development. Programs offered focus on specific areas of personal development, including grief and loss, and relationships and violence. |
| **Sharing Circle on Healing and Resilience** | Resilient families are connected families. | The strength of the Aboriginal family is the ability to stay connected despite hardship, trauma and separation, and that connectedness is central to the resilience of the Aboriginal family. Maintaining our connectedness to each other is resilience. In addition, family connection can cause resistance to healing; for example some parents won't send their children to treatment because they do not want them to divulge family secrets. Alternatively, when one person begins their healing process, other family member may become motivated to make changes as well. |
| | Connectedness is part of creation. | Connectedness is deeply imbedded within Aboriginal people, as it is tied to the process of creation, through an organized spiritual matrix. The information we need to live the good life, a connected life is stored in our super-consciousness. By following the rules of Natural Law and specifically of the clan (which are founded in an interconnected worldview), Aboriginal people are guaranteed good physical health and good |

| | Core Category 1: Reconnection to an interconnected worldview | |
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| | | family, clan and nation relationships by observing respect protocol. |
| | Spiritual connection opens the door to other connections. | By connecting with spirit and spiritual energy we learn to renew our relationship with every being around us. Spiritual connectedness builds strength in relationships. When we heal, spiritual healing energy is transferred from one person to the next, which may cause them to choose to make changes in their life as well. |
| **Sharing Circle on Self-Determination** | Building respectful relationships is essential. | Self management and self-determination must be done within the boundaries of respect for all living things around us and their right to self determine. |
| **Teaching Circle of Elders** | We are all related. | We are all related, not only by blood. All things are alive. All things that were created are related – trees, grass and rocks. We are related to everything. Everything is sacred. That is how we respect the land everything the creator put here. For us as human beings were have a part in it. We have to fit into that - not to dominate it, not to manipulate it and use it just for ourselves but to respect it for what it is. |

**Table 9: Core Category Two Audit Trail**

| | Core Category 2: Repatriation of space to self determine | |
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| | **Sub-Category** | **Description** |
| **ISOYW Facilitators** | Men have an important role and responsibility within their family and community. | The Elder provides teachings about the important role that Aboriginal men traditionally held within the community; the facilitators assist in this process by discussing the history of Aboriginal people, how this was lost for some communities and families, as well as how the participants can reclaim their role within their families. Inherent in this role is the need to be responsible and accountable to their families and communities. |
| | Men have the power to choose in all situations and the responsibility to make good choices. | They also learn that they have the power of choice as adults, the capacity and responsibility to make positive choices about how they will participate in their families from this time forward – as sons, fathers, brothers and uncles. |
| **ISOYW Participants** | Taking responsibility for their thoughts and actions. | Participants learn that rather than trying to control the people around them, they take responsibility for their own actions, moving to a position of healthy personal power. They also have the opportunity to transform unconscious reactive behaviour to informed self-determination. |
| | Making good decisions is part of | Participants have the opportunity to learn to make healthy decisions for themselves and as a group |

| | Core Category 2: Repatriation of space to self determine | |
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| | healing. | through negotiation and consensus building. |
| **NCSA CEO** | The answers are within our culture. | Aboriginal people must be responsible to resolve the issues that exist within their community. The answers to these problems must come from Aboriginal culture and be mobilized by Aboriginal people, for the outcomes to be sustainable. |
| | Political insulation. | Being a good community partner increases the credibility of the agency, as it demonstrates that NCSA is capable and shares the responsibility of resolving issues that exist both in the Aboriginal community and as a part of the larger society; the agency is viewed as providing valuable services as well as participating significantly and successfully within the larger community. This is political insulation for the agency when difficult times happen. |
| | Healthy partnerships are the key to service delivery. | The key to successful service delivery was the development and maintenance of true partnerships, whereby both parties are respected, have an important role and are moving towards the same goal. Without a healthy partnership, the struggle between government and agency diminishes (but does not extinguish) the agency's ability to provide the holistic, culturally appropriate service required by Aboriginal people. |
| **ISOYW Documents** | All answers are within us. | Two of the stated underlying assumptions of the program address this point: (1) that we all have the answers to our problems; we simply need guidance and support to find these answers. (2) We all have a warrior within all of us, regardless of whether we are male and female, that provides us with strength and courage; however, through experiences, many of us have lost touch with our warrior; through traditional teachings and reflection on inner self, each of us can rediscover our warrior and move towards wholeness. |
| | All people can heal and are responsible for their own healing | Two of the stated underlying assumptions of the program address this point: (1) A stated underlying assumption of the program is that personal change takes time and requires readiness, commitment, desire and patience. (2) An Aboriginal client, no matter how tortured his history of violence may be, be respected as a human person: as one who has made 'mistakes' from which he can and must learn. |
| | All individuals are responsible for their own thoughts and actions. | Many of the stated program outcomes in the program manual involve developing personal responsibility for all thoughts and actions and building skills to adopt a non-violent lifestyle. They include: to develop the ability to act independently from dysfunctional environments (autonomy); to take personal responsibility for the perpetration of violence; to develop problem solving skills; to develop an internal locus of control; to abandon irrational beliefs and focus on rational thoughts regarding others; and to develop |

| Core Category 2: Repatriation of space to self determine | | |
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| | | positive strategies for expressing anger. |
| **NCSA Documents** | Maintaining legitimacy | NCSA has maintained legitimacy as an Aboriginal service provider within the Criminal Justice system since 1971. |
| | Refusing to surrender | When faced with significant adversity, leadership at NCSA has taken action, manoeuvring within the government system to resolve issue that could interfere with NCSA's ability to provide services or to exist as an organization. |
| | Retaining the right to self management | NCSA's leadership has whenever possible retained the ability to make decisions that affect the future of the organization, charting its own course within the complex milieu it operates. Even when faced with enormous pressures from funders or other community members to change, NCSA has asserted its right to decide the nature and extent of the changes it has made, acting in the best interest of the organization. |
| | Transforming racist ideology within the correctional system. | NCSA took deliberate action to change the way government personnel and officers of the court viewed NCSA as an Aboriginal organization and its capacity to provide valuable services to both Aboriginal people as well as to others who work within the Criminal Justice System. In this way NCSA created a space to exist within the system. |
| **Sharing Circle on Healing and Resilience** | We choose our family. | The spiritual teaching shared in the circle include that as spirits before we are born, we choose our parents, our clan and our nation. These choices provide an organized spiritual matrix that determines who we are as human beings and what our life purpose is. |
| | We all have the power to heal within ourselves. | Within each of us is the power to heal ourselves; it is a tiny mass of energy (as spark, a flicker) that exists within ourselves. As long as we are alive, we have it and we can heal ourselves emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually. The answers to all of our problems exist within our culture, our teachings and Natural Law. Since we are born with this knowledge and within an organized spiritual matrix, the answers are within ourselves. |
| | Healing is a personal journey. | The process of healing is an individual one – we have to do it for ourselves and want to do it for ourselves. Personal healing affects the people around us and can motivate others to heal. People can also work together to heal the relationships between them, but each has to do their part. |
| | Do the right thing. | Healing is being comfortable with who you are and doing the right thing. |
| **Sharing Circle on Self-Determination** | Positive identity is essential to self-determination. | In order to exert my responsibility to self determine, I must know who I am and what my gifts are within today's context. This includes knowing my past and |

| | Core Category 2: Repatriation of space to self determine | |
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| | | my family's past; knowing how I have come to be here. |
| | We need to stop blaming. | As individuals, families and communities stop blaming others for our issues by taking responsibility, we can then take positive action to resolve the issue. We are then accountable for the consequences of that action as well. |
| | We need to make fully informed decisions. | We need to take responsibility to gather all the information we require to make decisions. From this position, we can then take responsibility for the outcomes of these decisions. |
| | Families need to teach children to be self determining. | Families are the primary vehicle for teaching children to self determine as adults. They do this by teaching children the roles and responsibilities they will need to take on as adults within their families and communities. |
| | Self-determination happens in relationships. | Self-determination needs to occur within respectful relationships with others. When relationships occur within the teachings of respect, families and communities are enhanced and thrive. We need to acknowledge that we are all different and work through those differences in a respectful way. When they are not respectful, issues arise that threaten the health and safety of people, families and communities. |
| | Nothing can completely stop self-determination. | If we are still committed to protecting our language, our culture, our ceremonies, nothing can stop us. Even when they banned our ceremonies, nothing could stop us, so I think that is the difference. Colonial systems have created barriers to self-determination, but it is impossible to stop it completely. We don't have to ask permission to self-determine; it is a choice we make. |
| | Self-determination occurs at many different levels. | Self-determination occurs in the individual, the family, the community and the nation. |
| | Create opportunities for individuals to self determine. | It is important that we create the environments in our families and communities for people to self determine. This includes giving people the space to make their own decisions and the opportunity to be responsible for those decisions. |

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| **Teaching Circle of Elders** | We are all responsible for our actions and the long term consequences of those actions. | We are all responsible to live within the rules of Natural Law. Within Natural Law, there is a constellation of laws that govern all relationships, known as *wahkohtowin*. To transgress Natural Law is known in Cree as *pastahowin*. The consequences of these transgressions *(ohcinewin)* are severe and are passed down intergenerationally, until amends are made for those transgressions. |
| | We are responsible to live beside each other in harmony. | The principle of *witaskewin*, guides us to live with others in a way that promotes harmony in our communities. To do this, we must commit ourselves to have, create or possess good relationships with all living things around us. The guiding principle in all of these relationships is respect. |

| Core Category 2: Repatriation of space to self determine | |
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| Families must teach children Natural Law. | It is the responsibility of parents and grandparents to ensure that children understand their roles and responsibilities within the family and community. This includes the principles of Natural Law and the consequences of transgressing those boundaries. |

**Table 10: Core Category Three Audit Trail**

| | Core Category 3: Reconciliation of past trauma | |
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| | **Sub-Category** | **Description** |
| **ISOYW Facilitators** | Understanding the past helps deal with issues that occur in the present. | The ISOYW program provides participants an opportunity to move past the shame, guilt and fear they carry as a result of past traumas. They can then embrace a more enlightened, compassionate understanding of how and why events happened in their lives. |
| | Role modelling is important. | Throughout our healing journey, mentors and role models are powerful guides. |
| | Healing breaks the cycle of intergenerational violence. | Participation in the ISOYW program can have an effect on Aboriginal families intergenerationally by breaking the cycle of family and community violence. This is accomplished through ceremony, traditional teachings about Natural Law and relationships, and understanding family dynamics (historically, in their family of origin and in their present-day family). |
| **ISOYW Participants** | Violent behaviours are rooted in past trauma. | The participants of the ISOYW program are referred to the program because they have very violent lifestyles. All participants described significant traumatic experiences in their families and communities of origin. These experiences include physical, emotional and sexual abuse, as well as being victims of racism. The participants also described how violence has shaped their life experiences and become a normal part of their everyday lives. |
| **NCSA CEO** | The answers are within our own culture. | Dealing with past trauma has to be done holistically. All of the answers to our problems need to come from Aboriginal culture and be mobilised by Aboriginal people. |
| **ISOYW Documents** | The ISOYW program assists participants to better understand that their violent behaviour. | One of the goals of the program is to assist Aboriginal men to better understand their intergenerational cycle of violent behaviour. This includes defining family violence, identifying the roots of their violent behaviour, considering the cultural context within which violence occurs, addressing feelings of vulnerability related to their experiences of |

| | Core Category 3: Reconciliation of past trauma | |
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| | | victimization and distinguishing between anger and rage. |
| | Trauma is the root of violent behaviour. | The program process includes ritual, ceremony and sessions that encourage participants to explore core issues that underlie violent behaviour, such as their childhood experiences of violence, grief and loss, shame, trauma, childhood neglect and abandonment, as well as triggers for violent behaviour. Further, the participants learn about the intergenerational effects of colonization on the Aboriginal individual, family and community. |
| | Healing from past trauma must be holistic. | The stated underlying assumptions of the program include the belief that the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological parts of the self must be included for healing to occur. |
| | Healthy relationships are the foundation of interconnectedness and resolving trauma. | Participants are provided with the opportunity to re-examine, reconnect and relate to their families, communities and the spirit world in new ways; they learn the value of their relationships, healthy boundaries within relationships, as well as why and how these relationships require respect and maintenance. For each participant, the process of understanding and dealing with traumatic experiences is different yet critical in the overall process of connection with a healing path. |
| **NCSA Documents** | Aboriginal offenders require programs to deal with past trauma. | The SDHC offers programs that specifically help residents better understand and resolve issues with grief and loss, intergenerational violence, and building healthy relationships. The purpose of these programs is to help residents adopt healthy lifestyles and assist in successful reintegration when their sentence is completed. |
| **Sharing Circle on Healing and Resilience** | Resilience means coping no matter what. | Aboriginal families have survived through devastating historic (internal colonization, residential schools, child apprehension) and present day traumas (inter-family violence, addictions, suicide, child apprehension). |
| | Ceremony is a part of reconciling past trauma. | Through ceremony and ritual past traumas and transgressions against Natural Law can be addressed on a spiritual level. This is essentially a recalibration of the individual, to make amends for intergenerational consequences of not observing the responsibilities and obligations set out by the creator. Ceremony can also help individuals and families reclaim their clan information and receive a spirit name. These steps are also part of the healing of past traumas – reclaiming connection to the organized spiritual matrix. |

| | Core Category 3: Reconciliation of past trauma | |
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| | Healing from past trauma is holistic. | Healing from past traumas includes emotional, spiritual, mental and physical work. Healing is putting energy in motion - using emotional and spiritual energy to resolve past issues; using that spark that is within us all to build our own fire. Spiritual intervention can open the door to allow the emotional healing work to happen. |
| | Healing is a process and a way of life. | Healing means working on your core issues that have manifested as a result of historic and personal trauma. It can take a long time, but these issues need to be addressed one at a time. It is a process of becoming comfortable with oneself. Healing requires commitment and is a life-long process. It is a process of moving from the darkness into the light. |
| **Sharing Circle on Self-Determination** | Reconnection will free us from past traumas. | There is a direct connection between being disconnected from our culture, from the land, from spirit and the use of drugs, domestic violence and murder that we see in our communities. This connection must be reclaimed, in order to free ourselves from the traumas of the past, and stop recreating them in the present. |
| **Teaching Circle of Elders** | Government policy has been a barrier to teaching children Natural Law. | There is a disconnect between Canadian laws and the Cree understanding of individual and collective responsibilities and obligations to the Creator through Natural Law. For many generations, children have been removed from Cree families and the ability to transmit the Cree worldview based upon Natural Law has been significantly deterred; children stopped learning the important teachings. Cree culture and teachings have also been viewed by Canadian government as evil, pagan and primitive in the past. The Elders attribute the use of drugs and alcohol, high rates of incarceration and transgressions of the strict clan/family boundaries in marriage to the lack of understanding of Natural Law. These transgressions have long term, intergenerational consequences. |

# Appendix B: Interview/Focus Group Guides

**Questions Guide for Warrior Participants (Interview One)**

1. To what degree do you think you had a traditional upbringing when you were growing up?
2. When you were growing up, would you say that you felt comfortable being Métis/Aboriginal/First Nation?
3. How successful do you think you have been in the white society?
4. Do you consider yourself a traditional Aboriginal person?
    a. IF YES: Why? Did you always feel that way? Who do you think is most responsible for passing on that culture to you? If you did have a traditional upbringing – why do you think you got in trouble with the law and wound up in jail?
    b. IF NO: Why? What culture do you identify with?
5. What are the values that you live by? What is most important to you?(probe deeper on those values – how they were formed etc).
6. Did you have a strong connection with particular family members when you were growing up – grandmother, aunt, uncles, cousins. Who was the most influential in your life? Why?
7. How many people in your family live what you consider to be a traditional life? How many are living hard lives (i.e. addictions, abuse etc)?

**Question Guide for Warrior Participants (Interview Two)**

1. Can you describe how you felt during the mask session – beginning when the mask was being formed on your face, taking the mask to the bush, the ceremony and then the painting.
2. PROBES:
    a. Ask about the music and meditation aspect of the mask making.
    b. Describe what place you chose to leave your mask and why
    c. Describe why you chose those colors and what they symbolize
3. What do you think the most important thing you have learned in the ISOYW program is?

**Question Guide for the Warrior Facilitator Sharing Circle:**

1. How does the ISOYW program assist Aboriginal men to connect with their healing path?
2. How does the participation of Aboriginal men in the ISOYW program affect their families?
3. How is the ISOYW program different from other programs?
4. What information do you think the participants have heard and internalized about what it means to be a man? Does the ISOYW program provide different information?

5. Do you think the IOSYW program causes transformation in participants? If so, how?

**Question Guide for the Sharing Circle on Healing:**

1. What does resilience mean for Aboriginal families?
2. What happens to us when we heal? Can you describe the healing process?
3. What is the role of spirituality in healing and family resilience?

**Question Guide for the Sharing Circle on Self-Determination:**

1. How would you define self-determination?
2. How do you work towards self-determination in your job, your family and for yourself?
3. What is the connection between self-determination and healing?