University of Alberta

Exploring the Connection Between Aboriginal Women's Hand Drumming and Health Promotion (Mino-Bimaadiziwin)

by

Ghislaine Goudreau

A thesis submitted to the faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science

Centre for Health Promotion Studies

Edmonton Alberta

Spring 2006

Your file Votre référence
ISBN: 0-494-13817-3
Our file Notre référence
ISBN: 0-494-13817-3

ABSTRACT

This study stems from the vision of the primary researcher, who is an urban Aboriginal woman interested in exploring the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion (Mino-Bimaadiziwin). An Aboriginal Women's Hand Drumming (AWHD) Circle of Life framework is utilized within an Indigenous Research Methodology. The primary researcher and co-researchers who are members of the Waabishki Mkwaa (White Bear) Singers hand-drumming circle designed the study and analyzed Aboriginal women's hand drumming stories. Physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual benefits of Aboriginal women's hand drumming were demonstrated in this study. Culture and social support networks are determinants of health that emerged as two key elements. Aboriginal women hand drummers who participated in this study find wholistic healing, voice, empowerment, renewal, strength and Mino-Bimaadiziwin through their involvement in hand drumming.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It was Dr. Gene Krupa's questions about Aboriginal women's hand drumming that sparked my vision in 2000. Over the years, many other professors from the Centre for Health Promotion Studies (CHPS), such as Dr. Tammy Horne and Dr. Pauline Paul, provided encouragement and support. Sue Muhlfeld, the Graduate Programs Assistant, always greeted me either at a distance or in person with open arms and made sure I had everything that I needed. Big hugs also came from Dr. Helen Madill, the Graduate Programs Coordinator who always kept me in line with her keen eye and prudent advice. She introduced me to Dr. Stan Wilson who is Cree from Opaskwayak. Although we only met through email at that time, he willingly agreed to be my thesis supervisor because of my interest in Indigenous research. He told me that he believes our rituals such as hand drumming can "awake" ancient cellular memories that have been passed on for many generations.

In 2002, I traveled to Alberta to meet Dr. Wilson and he introduced me to Dr. Cora Weber Pillwax, a Métis/Cree woman from Northern Alberta. After we spoke about my thesis ideas, she agreed to teach me about Indigenous research methodologies via distance education. I thoroughly enjoyed her course, which provided the foundation for my study. She then became my co-supervisor. Even though I have visited with Cora on only a few occasions because of the distance, I have a vivid memory of her kind and generous spirit. Once when I visited the University of Alberta, she took time away from her busy schedule and helped me carry my heavy luggage across campus.

I must also acknowledge Professor Sheila Hardy, an Anishnaabe-Kwe, who is my local committee member from Laurentian University. Throughout our regular encounters

and visits, she literally played "Mamma bear" and watched over me during the thesis. Having someone to support me both academically and emotionally at a local level meant a lot to me. Each of my committee members provided me with the guidance and support that I needed to keep me paddling during my journey. They provided me with balance in completing an Indigenous research study within an academic institution. I feel fortunate to have had an all-Aboriginal thesis committee.

Within my Aboriginal urban community, I am grateful to be part of an Aboriginal women's hand-drumming circle, "the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers." They have been a big part of my life. I was honoured when many agreed to become my co-researchers. I have always enjoyed working on projects with others where the result is something that is greater than any one person could have done alone. Many of the co-researchers have bent over backwards for this project, and I cannot thank them enough. The participants in this present study were also wonderful to work with. Each and every one of their stories was beautiful to listen to. Many other hand drummers provided insight, kindness, and their gift of hand drumming. I feel immense gratitude to the people who generously gave of their time and shared their knowledge.

This study has kept me occupied for several years. Miigwetch, to all my friends and family who have been extremely patient and supportive. I cannot express how much love I felt from you through this process. A special mention to my husband who has been my "rock" and supported me in so many ways. He helped pull me away from the study when I needed a break. At the same time, he accepted my need to do whatever it took to pursue my dream. I hope I can do the same in return.

Finally, I would like to thank the Education Department from the Algonquin of Pikwàkanagàn. In the past two years, Theresa Kohoko's caring voice, understanding, and kind words helped me along the way. Miigwetch to Child and Family Services, the Anishnaabe Team, and the N'Swakamok Friendship Centre in Sudbury for their tremendous support and for allowing me to use their facilities. I must also acknowledge my workplace, the Sudbury and District Health Unit, which believes strongly in higher education and allowed me to take a leave of absence to work on this study. Chi-miigwetch to the Anishnabe Kekendazone Centre and the Indigenous Health Research Development Program for supporting this project and believing in our traditional ways.

When I laid down my tobacco, the Creator provided me with guidance. Mother Earth was also there to help me when I needed some escape from the fast-paced world. Most importantly, my Grandmother drum, who is like my grandmothers, always provided me with the nurturing I needed. If I have missed anyone, you have been mentioned in my prayers. "Miigwetch."

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

Figures

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Background

In writing this thesis I had to work with two different paradigms, keeping both the academic institution and Aboriginal community in mind. I wanted the thesis to meet specific academic standards, but also wanted the Aboriginal community to be able to read and understand it without any difficulty. Therefore, I have used many Aboriginal terms, teachings and symbols throughout that are common to the Ojibwe community. As a result I have added an extensive glossary to describe these terms so they can be understood by everyone (see Aboriginal Glossary). Certain terms were capitalized to show respect for their spiritual connection. For the purposes of this thesis when referring to myself as the primary researcher the term "I" has been used. When referring to my community and co-researchers (members from the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers hand-drumming circle) the term "we" has been used. Moreover, it should be noted that the terms "Aboriginal", "Anishnaabe", and "Indigenous" are used interchangeably.

Locating Myself and the Research

Shortly after starting my Masters' Program in Health Promotion, I had the vision of studying Aboriginal women's hand drumming in relation to health promotion. I wanted to study something positive that would be meaningful for me and the Sudbury Aboriginal community. When I discussed my ideas with my community, they fully supported this vision.

I am an Aboriginal woman who is part of an Aboriginal women's hand-drumming circle, "The Waabishki Mkwaa (White Bear) Singers." The Waabishki

Mkwaa Singers began in 1998 in the City of Greater Sudbury (Sudbury). To my knowledge, we were the first Aboriginal women's hand-drumming circle in the city. Practicing our traditions within an urban community helps us promote our cultural identity, and drumming together in a circle is a way for Aboriginal women to support one another. I believe that Aboriginal drumming helps promote physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health, and I wanted to explore this with other Aboriginal women hand drummers.

Drumming has been an integral part of the Aboriginal culture since time immemorial. Aboriginal people consider that the drumbeat represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth (Diamond, Cronk & von Rosen, 1994; Medicine Eagle, 1991; Ritter, 1996). To date, there has been minimal documentation of Aboriginal women's drumming. In fact, in much of the historical literature, Aboriginal women are not mentioned relative to cultural activities such as drumming. However, in our oral tradition many Aboriginal women say that, traditionally, women did use the hand drum and water drum. This may not have been recognized by early male European explorers and historical writers. According to a Traditional Grandmother (personal communication, January 19, 2004), it was Aboriginal women who presented the Aboriginal men with the big drum which is now used at modern pow wows. Today, many Aboriginal women are using the hand drum and are doing so in hand-drumming circles.

In this study I explored the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion. Health Promotion is a field that I am familiar with because of my studies and my position as a Health Promoter. A guiding document in the field, "The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion," defines health promotion as the

process of enabling people to increase control over and improve their health (World Health Organization [WHO], 1986). To the Ojibwe people, health promotion is simply a new term to describe Mino-Bimaadiziwin, which roughly translates as "the good life," that they have promoted for centuries. Mino-Bimaadiziwin means to live in balance (Anderson, 2005; Garrett, 1999; Rheault, 1999).

After carefully examining Western-based research methodologies, it became apparent that the most appropriate way to explore this topic was with an Indigenous research methodology. Other methodologies often do not consider the subjective component of spirituality needed for this study. Moreover, an Indigenous research methodology respects Aboriginal cultural ways of knowing, being, and doing (Martin, 2002). Weber-Pillwax (1999) has said that developing an Indigenous research methodology increases the possibility that research conducted in Aboriginal communities "will be a source of enrichment to their lives and not a source of depletion or denigration" (p. 38). As part of the Indigenous research methodology, I asked the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers to be co-researchers for this study. Involving them in this research is consistent with the intentions of health promotion to increase community control and empower individuals to improve their health.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review

Given that there was little written about Aboriginal hand drumming and the fact that we have an oral tradition, I have added to the literature by interviewing several Aboriginal Elders and women. As Smith (1999) has mentioned, "Story telling, oral histories, the perspectives of Elders and of women have become an integral part of all indigenous research. Each individual story is powerful" (p. 144). Moreover, Elders are often well-known for their historical knowledge and wisdom, and are thus excellent resources in the Aboriginal community. For anonymity, some Aboriginal Elders and women requested that I use their Spirit names instead of their English names. One Elder requested that I simply refer to her as a Traditional Grandmother.

In examining the various components surrounding the research topic, I decided to research the history of Aboriginal women and also examined the general history of Aboriginal drumming and Ojibwe drums. I then explored more recent information about Aboriginal women and drumming. Since this study will look at Aboriginal women's hand drumming in relation to health promotion, I examined the Aboriginal perspectives on healing, health, and health promotion. Lastly, I looked at the minimal amount of literature on drumming that exists and made the connection among physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Culture and social support networks were also considered as key determinants of health.

History of Aboriginal Women

Traditionally, Aboriginal "women played a prominent part in the political and cultural life of many traditional Aboriginal societies. First and foremost, they were

honoured as the givers of life" (Royal Commission on Aboriginal People [RCAP], 1996a, p.100). Aboriginal women were equally respected in the community, existing in harmony with Aboriginal men (Haslip, 1999). Anderson (2001) has written that "what we shared was a common sense of power, a power that was not part of the European experience" (p. 57). For instance, leaders and healers could be either men or women in the Aboriginal community (Deiter & Otway, 2001).

The status of women soon became less than equal with the influence of the colonizers and Christianity. In RCAP (1996a), Aboriginal women reported that, "with the coming of colonial powers, a disturbing mind-set crept into their own societies" (p. 100). The subjugation of women to a patriarchal nuclear family and their children being sent to residential schools had a devastating effect on Aboriginal women's cultural roles, values, and traditions (Deiter & Otway, 2001). Moreover, the introduction of Canada's Indian Act in 1876 took away many rights from Aboriginal people; in particular, the rights of Aboriginal women were decimated, leaving them with even fewer rights than Aboriginal men. For instance, the Act took away the "Indian status" of an Aboriginal woman if she married a non-Aborginal man (Deiter & Otway, 2001). According to RCAP (1996a), "Policies and laws imposed by foreign governments ruptured cultural traditions and introduced discrimination against women" (p. 100). Aboriginal women had very few choices and most had to leave the reserve, losing their rights to funded education, access to land, and so on (Deiter & Otway, 2001). These laws were not repealed until 1985 with Bill C-31 (RCAP, 1996a). Bill C-31 did away with the "patrilineal" definition of eligibility for Indian Status and reinstated those who had lost their Status under the old rules of the Indian Act.

History of Aboriginal Drumming

According to Vennum (1982), our knowledge of the history of Aboriginal musical instruments such as the drum is limited because of the paucity of early descriptions of Aboriginal musical life. Early explorers and missionaries held such a low opinion of Aboriginal music that they devoted little space to it in their records, except perhaps to mention it in passing as "barbaric" (Vennum, 1982). However, beginning in the 1890s, increased scholarly attention was given to Aboriginal music. Vennum (1982) has noted that "publications, such as those of the Bureau of Ethnology and American Museum of Natural History have been indispensable in enlarging the timespan of our knowledge about Aboriginal musical instruments" (p. 30). Nonetheless, Diamond, Cronk & von Rosen (1994) have reported that Westerners studying Aboriginal music viewed the drum as a simple instrument compared to their own keyboard, string, or wind instruments.

Assimilation policies created in the late 1800s made it a punishable "Indian offence" to use Aboriginal musical instruments and in 1885, the Canadian government outlawed many ceremonies that included Aboriginal music (RCAP, 1996a). Duncan Campbell Scott, a civil servant for The Department of Indian Affairs at that time, pronounced pow wows to be "senseless drumming and dancing" (Francis, 1993, p. 98). Many non-Aboriginal people believed the drum would lead to war, so they forbade its use (Vennum, 1982). In addition, missionaries did not permit the use of sacred items such as the drum and convinced people, even some Aboriginal people, to believe that it represented evil spirits (Vennum, 1982). Aboriginal people who chose to continue to use the drum were forced to hide and use it in private. Many traditions were kept hidden, and therefore some of them forgotten, until the revitalization of these traditions occurred in

the 1960s and 1970s with the help of Aboriginal activist groups such as the American Indian Movement (AIM).

Ojibwe Drums

Since this study was conducted in Ojibwe territory, I have studied the Ojibwe drums. In Ojibwe, the drums are called *o'dewegan*. This word means "the tool that makes the heart sound" (Oginii Kwe, personal communication, January 23, 2004). While studying health promotion, Reynolds (1994) consulted a number of Ojibwe people who referred to the drum as "a living being" or "a spirit." She noted that one of her consultants referred to the drum as needing air and needing to be fed. The teaching in the Aboriginal community is that when we feed the drum and treat it with respect, we connect with it. An Ojibwe female Elder explained that it is important to have a Giveaway Feast for our drum in order to thank it for all the work it has done for the person who owns it. She also stated that with the drum "you receive a gift of healing and understanding your culture" (Elder Miin Gaboo Kwe, personal communication, November 13, 2003).

The Ojibwe drums most frequently discussed in historical accounts are the water drum, used mainly by members of the Mediwiwin Society; the pow wow drum, also called the big drum or the Grandfather drum; and the hand drum, sometimes referred to as the Grandmother drum (Burton, 1993; Elder Miin Gaboo Kwe, 2003; Vennum, 1982). The water drum is also known by the Midewiwin people as the "little boy water drum." Burton (1993) described the water drum as quite unusual in sound and appearance. He wrote that it is made of a hollowed-out log of varying width and height. A varying amount of water is placed in the drum to affect both resonance and pitch. Most water drums have a plug for releasing the water. The drumhead is made of soft leather that is

dipped in water, stretched over the top of the drum, and held on with a hoop. The water drum is still used exclusively by men and women members of the Midewiwin Society for ceremonial purposes (Elder Miin Gaboo Kwe, 2003; Traditional Grandmother, 2004; Vennum, 1989).

The big drum is mainly used at North American pow wows. "Pow wow "is a term that non-Aboriginal people use as a way to describe Aboriginal people's gatherings (Braine, 1995). The history of the pow wow is a debatable topic in the Aboriginal community. Some say it comes from the war and grass dances of the Plains Indians (Encyclopedia of Music in Canada, 2005). One version common to Ojibwe people is a story about a Sioux woman, "Tailfeather Woman," who fled from the European soldiers who were killing her people. She had been hiding in a lake for four days when the Great Spirit came to her and told her to make a drum for peace (Vennum, 1982). Once the drum was created, the Aboriginal people drummed and the non-Aboriginal soldiers stopped fighting when they heard it (Vennum, 1982). This event is believed to have happened in the 1870s, somewhere in west-central Minnesota, although the exact date is not certain (Vennum, 1982). The exact details of the first pow wow will never be known for certain, since most of the information has been passed down through the oral tradition where the story can vary depending on the storyteller.

The modern day pow wow is quite elaborate but still incorporates historical traditions. The pow wow drum is a large cylindrical wooden base covered with hide and often decorated with beads and leather. Men sit in a circle around the drum, striking it in unison with covered mallets. Many Aboriginal communities, including Ojibwe

communities, adhere to the concept that pow wow drumming is a man's role, but women may stand behind and sing (Diamond, Cronk & von Rosen, 1994; Ritter, 1996).

Prior to the coming of the big drum, Aboriginal people "accompanied their dances as well as healing ceremonies, games and even warfare with hand-drums" (Vennum, 1982, p. 56). As described by Vennum (1982), "formally each singer/drummer had his own hand-drum, which he used while he sang melodies in unison with other singers; each singer thus accompanied himself in a group arranged shoulder to shoulder in a row or semicircle facing the dancers or medical practitioners" (p. 56). The hand drums were occasionally used during larger ceremonies for ritual purposes (Vennum, 1982).

At a practical level, the hand drums are much more portable than the big drums, varying in diameter from 8 to 16 inches. Like the big drum, they are mostly round in shape, but some are octagonal. Some hand drums have animal skin stretched on one side and others have animal skins stretched across both sides. Those with skin on both sides are warrior hand drums (Traditional Grandmother, personal communication, January 19, 2004). The frame may be made of cedar, and often deer hide is used to cover the drum. The one-sided drums often have elaborate crisscrossed rawhide lacing that both stretches and secures the skin and also creates a knotted handle. Some hand drums are decorated with designs or symbols. The drumstick is often made of natural wood such as willow or cedar. Aboriginal medicines such as sage can be placed inside the head of the drumstick. According to Vennum (1982), hand drums "were used principally on the warpath and later in the war dance but also in accompanying moccasin games and the Chief Dance, a curing ceremony" (p. 41). Today, the hand drum is used during sacred ceremonies and in social circles.

Aboriginal Women and Drumming

The little literature about Aboriginal women and drumming that exists presents, according to my extensive review of literature, literature and pictures of Aboriginal men using the drum. To validate this claim, I contacted the National Museum of the American Indian at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington D.C., requesting information regarding Aboriginal women's hand drumming. The producer for the recordings Heartbeat I and II, an Aboriginal women's recording that incorporated hand drumming released by the Smithsonian Folkways in 1995 and 1998, replied that, "when we worked on the Heartbeat project we found little written on women's participation in a lot of these traditions" (H. Bass, personal communication, December 10, 2002). The reason for this may have been the result of male biases and the perceptions of early explorers and historical writers. However, Vennum (1982) does mention that Aboriginal women traditionally used medicine drums. The medicine drum he referd to is the water drum. Medicine women who were part of the Midewiwin Society used the water drum for healing (Traditional Grandmother, personal communication, January 19, 2003). Mcleod-Shabogesic (2002) has said that "women have been a part of drumming (water drums, hands etc.) 'Since Time Immemorial'" (p.19).

Elder Miin Gaboo Kwe has pointed out that "Traditionally, Aboriginal women had a hand drum all the time to sing lullabies to their babies. This helps the baby connect with its mother. They hear the mother's heart beat again. This also helps the baby become connected to the culture" (personal communication, November 13, 2003). A Traditional Grandmother has also said that Aboriginal women did use the hand drum in the past; however, they were Medicine women (personal communication, January 19,

2003). Both reiterated what was said previously about Aboriginal women not being allowed to drum on the big drum. Nonetheless, some Aboriginal women have chosen to drum on it.

In 2001, an Aboriginal women's drum group from Winnipeg that uses the big drum created a major controversy within the Aboriginal community when they were refused entry to the drum area at a pow wow (Mcleod-Shabogesic, 2002). This topic was highlighted on the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network (APTN) phone-in show, "Contact," with Rick Harper in 2002. Moreover, several questions under the heading, "Should Women Drum?" were posted on the APTN website as part of a "Contact Discussion Forum." A wide range of replies was posted from people all across Canada. Some Aboriginal people stated that women should be able to drum, while others felt it is not the women's place to drum, that their role is as protectors of the drum. However, some women stated that men are abusing the drum with alcohol and drugs, and as protectors, they feel they have a right to take it back. Types of drums were also discussed. Some Aboriginal people felt that women should not drum on the big drum but can use the hand drum.

Brooke Medicine Eagle (1991), an Aboriginal women hand drummer who refers to herself as a "Native American Métis," is offended by those who state that women should not be able to drum. To her, "the drum is a feminine form that has 'belonged' to women since the beginning of time" (p. 126); as a feminine form, it emulates Mother Earth and woman's womb (Medicine Eagle, 1991). She goes on to state that women have gifted the drum to men so that men can use it for their growth and development. In Lounsberry's (2002) dissertation, Medicine Eagle says that there were protests at her

workplace because she was a female using a drum and encouraging other women to do so. She is shocked by this reaction from men since women first brought the drum forward to them. Women are the givers of life, providing a child with its first drum--the sound of the mother's heartbeat. As Medicine Eagle claims, "The drum is used externally to continue the heartbeat as the child in the womb heard it" (cited in Lounsberry, 2002, p. 100). Medicine Eagle believes that the drum was first given to women, who then invited men to drum in order to come into harmony rather than conflict and competition (cited in Lounsberry, 2002).

Presently, there are a number of Aboriginal women's hand drumming groups in Ontario, including the Waabshki Mkwaa Singers, the White Cedar Singers, and the Ode'min Kwe Singers. Other Aboriginal women's singing groups use the hand drum and/or the water drum, such as the Kanenhi:io Singers and the Six Nations Women Singers. There are, as well, many other Aboriginal women simply getting together to sing and drum. A Traditional Grandmother believes that it is good that women have drums: "We need to move on and look ahead. We [Aboriginal women] need to have something that is going to help us" (personal communication, January 19, 2004).

Over the past 10 years in Sudbury, many Aboriginal women have begun hand drumming. Many of these women have made their own hand drums by attending a hand drum making workshop. According to a Traditional Grandmother, "women should make their own drums so they can put themselves into the drum" (personal communication, January 19, 2004). Teachings regarding the hand drum and songs are provided at these hand drum making workshops and circles. Today, Aboriginal men, youth, and children are also using the hand drum in Sudbury, as are people from other cultures.

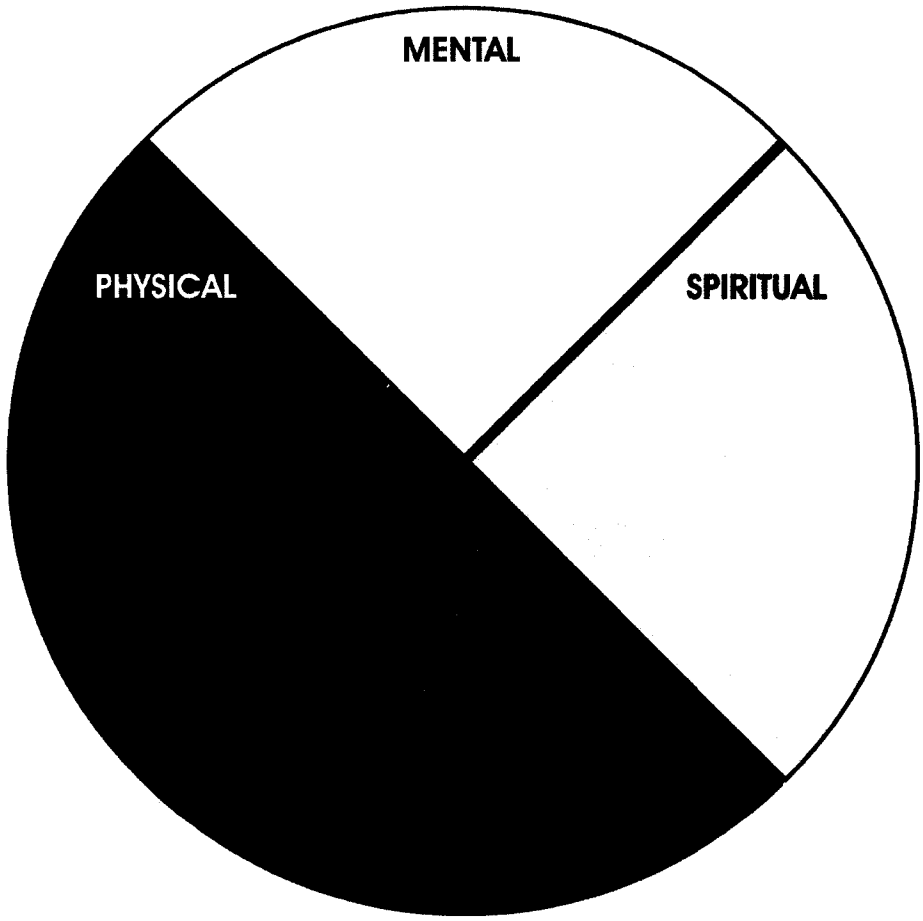
Aboriginal Perspectives on Healing, Health, and Health Promotion

Healing to Aboriginal people "refers to personal and societal recovery from the lasting effects of oppression and systemic racism experienced over generations" (RCAP, 1996b, chap. 3). Restoule (2000) has stated that "healing is a growing process which requires much energy, time and sharing on the part of all the community members" (p. 21). Rogers (2001) describes healing as bringing balance or harmony into one's life, explaining that healing is the first journey an Aboriginal person will take on the path to wellness. To move toward wellness, we must first participate in healing. Restoule (2000) has claimed that participation in traditional activities, such as drumming, is an important part of the healing process. Therefore, as Aboriginal people heal from the effects of ongoing colonization, their communities will become stronger and better able to promote health and wellness.

According to Svenson & Lafontaine (1999), the traditional Aboriginal people of Canada, although culturally diverse, share a more wholistic worldview of health than the Western world. I was once told by an Aboriginal person to write holistic with a "w," as "wholistic", to emphasize our focus on the whole being. For many Aboriginal people, the conceptualization of "health" stems from the "Medicine Wheel," also known as the "Circle of Life." Dr. Stan Wilson, Professor Emeritus from the University of Alberta says that "the 'wheel' arrived with the first white settler so it has no reference to traditional aboriginal anything" (personal communication, January 23, 2003). Therefore, he recommended using the Circle of Life for teaching or reflecting on Aboriginal concepts, such as health (**see Figure 1**). Each Aboriginal culture has its own way of presenting the Circle of Life; however, each culture contains the same basic concepts

(Svenson & Lafontaine, 1999). In one teaching, the Circle of Life describes individuals on the basis of the four elements of being--physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual. For an individual to be healthy or balanced, the four elements must be equally developed and maintained (Kinnon, 2002; Shestowsky, 1993). If certain elements are given prominence or are neglected, balance (health) is lost (Kinnon, 2002; Reynolds, 1997). RCAP (1996b) also defined what health means to Aboriginal people as being in balance with life support systems that promote mental, emotional, physical, and spiritual well-being.

Figure 1: Circle of Life



When considering health promotion in the Aboriginal community, one must consider the Aboriginal perspectives on health (Reynolds Turton, 1997). Unfortunately, minimal studies have been done addressing the health perspectives of Ojibwe people. Until Reynolds' (1994) dissertation, *The nature of health promotion within the Ojibwe culture: An ethnographic study*, "no nursing studies of the concept of health promotion within the Ojibwe culture have been found" (p. 50). The Ojibwe consultants from her study described health promotion as a way of living (p. 151). A prominent message is that the "old ways" before the arrival of the white man involved a good way of living (Reynolds, 1994). RCAP (1996b) claims that "there is considerable evidence to show Aboriginal people enjoyed good health at the time of first contact with Europeans" (chap. 3). Reynolds (1994) found six major themes that reflected the most prominent Ojibwe health promotion beliefs:

1. Health is promoted through balance of all aspects of being.
2. Health promotion results from "Living the Good Life."
3. Health is promoted by "Living the Indian Way."
4. Health is promoted by "Doing things the right way."
5. Health is influenced by the behaviors of others.
6. The health of human beings is promoted as the health of the earth and beings on the earth is promoted. (p. 145-146)

"Living the Good Life" is also known in Ojibwe as Mino-[B]imaadiziwin. Mino-[B]imaadiziwin describes the way Ojibwe people view health. As stated by Reynolds (1994), health promotion results from living the good life. Rheault (1999) explained Mino-Bimaadiziwin as the following:

> In order to have a good life one must have a goal. This goal is to be free from illness, to live to the fullest. Bimaadiziwin is based on a concept of health and good living. One must work on prevention and not only healing. It is a Holy Life. One must eat well, act well, and live physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually well. (p. 25)

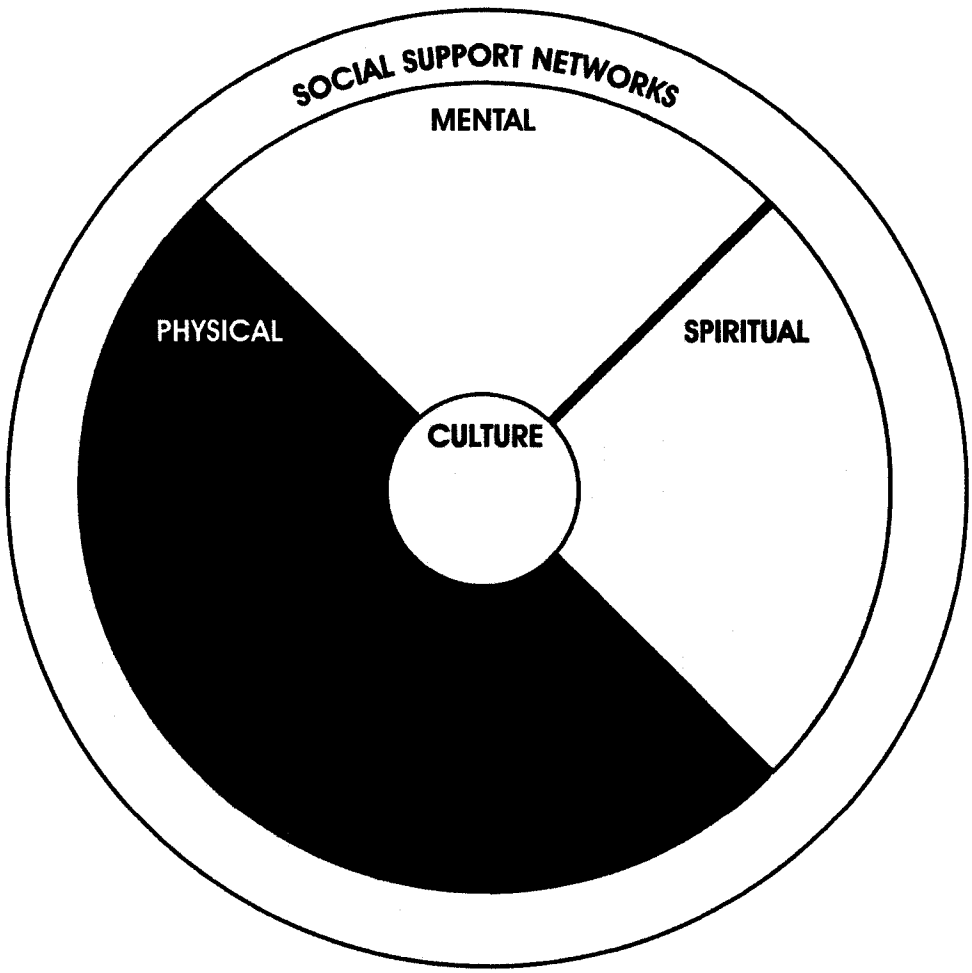
Recent health promotion research has focused on the "determinants of health" of populations, rather than of individuals. The determinants of health are factors and conditions which have an influence on the health of individuals and communities (Public Health Agency of Canada, n.d). The determinants of health include income and social status; social support networks; education; employment/working conditions; social environments; physical environments; personal health practices and coping skills; healthy child development; biology and genetic endowment; health services; gender; and culture. After examining the determinants of health, I decided that culture and social support systems were key determinants of health that needed to be examined in relation to Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion. Culture was chosen because hand drumming is a cultural practice; social support networks, because hand drumming is usually done within a hand-drumming circle where social support networks are formed.

For the purpose of this study, an Aboriginal Women's Hand Drumming (AWHD) Circle of Life framework was created to help explore the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion **(see Figure 2)**. This framework encompasses the Circle of Life elements of being—the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual, as well as culture as the core (centre) of the circle and social support networks as the outer rim. Culture is placed at the core (centre) because it is vital in promoting

physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Social support networks form the outer rim because they are the glue that keeps the hand-drumming circle together. I visualize it as representing the hands that come together to form the hand-drumming circle. Each hand that comes together in the hand-drumming circle is part of the creation of social support networks.

Figure 2: Aboriginal Women's Hand Drumming (AWHD)

Circle of Life Framework



Drumming and Physical Health

In the Circle of Life, the physical part of self recognizes and nurtures the body and the environment in relation to the cycle of life and death and all other things (Montour, 1996). This relates to the rhythm that is in nature and in every single person as well (Kaplan, 2000; Pulack, 1990). Our bodies contain internal rhythms such as heart rate and brainwaves. As Lounsberry (2002) has written, "internal body rhythms play an important role in how relaxed or tense one feels. One of the most rapid changes to occur in body rhythms is increased heart rate" (p. 37). This may be the result of living a stressful or busy life where "our inner rhythm may become one of pressure and stress" (Friedman, 2000, p. 25). Stress causes our heart rate to increase (Greenberg, 1996). Maxfield (1994) has noted that a legendary Nigerian drummer once indicated that, "when we get out of rhythm that is when we get into trouble. For this reason the drum, next to the human voice, is our most important instrument" (p.157).

Within a society that is undergoing many rapid changes, the sound of the drum brings back a sense of "coming back home" (Ash, 2001). Drumming brings back the steady beat that we heard in our mother's womb; as Medicine Eagle puts it, "we need more [drumming] gatherings where people come back to the mother, come back to the mother's heartbeat, come back to the steady heartbeat in them" (as cited in Lounsberry, 2002, p. 103). The drum can provide a steady beat for the heart to follow. Medicine Eagle has found that, "whatever the drummers do, the heart wants to follow" (as cited in Lounsberry, 2002, p. 102). Another Aboriginal woman hand drummer, Margaret Paul, from the Maliseet Reserve of St. Mary's near Fredericton, New Brunswick, also discovered that "When the drum beats, I beat, my heart goes the same way as the drum

goes" (Woodland Cultural Centre, 1990). This relates to the biological phenomenon of entrainment. Lounsberry (2002) summarized entrainment in relation to relevant drumming research as "the process created by vibrations such as with the sound of the drum in which the rhythmic movement of one object will cause another to move at the same rate and rhythm" (p. 36). Kaplan (2000) writes that "The Law of Entrainment was first discovered in 1665 by the Dutch scientist Christian Huygens who noticed that two pendulum grandfather clocks mounted side by side on a wall would find a common rhythm and swing precisely together" (p. 15).

Based on the natural phenomena of entrainment, it has been theorized that external rhythms, such as the sound of repetitive drumbeats, have the ability to realign internal body rhythms (Friedman, 2000; Kaplan, 2000; Lounsberry, 2002; Strong, 1998). Hence, slow steady drumming could possibly decrease our heart rate when we are under stress. Similarly, "Music Therapists play music of 50-60 beats a minute to effectively slow bodily rhythms because this rate corresponds to a relaxed heartbeat"(Lounsberry, 2002, p. 38). Pearsall (1998) claims that, "Our heart is the metronome of our body's biorhythm" (p. 222); as Medicine Eagle explains, "When the heart strengthens and comes into rhythm, it has such an electromagnetic energy that it entrains all the other organs and all the other parts of the body because we are electromagnetic" (as cited in Lounsberry, 2002, p. 104). It appears that the drum can be used as a tool to entrain our internal rhythms.

Moreover, when we drum in a circle, we also entrain with those around us (Kaplan, 2000). As Lounsberry says, "entrainment occurs with music between all living things and with anything that creates rhythm" (p. 16). A recent study shows that group

drumming can boost the immune system in the opposite direction of the classic stress response. Specifically, it has been shown that participating in drumming circles increases the number of beneficial macrophage cells or "killer cells" in the body, those responsible for seeking out and destroying specific disease organisms (Bittman, Berk, Felton, & Westengard, 2001).

On a broader scale the beat of the drum brings us physically into tune with the rhythms of the earth. Patterson (1995) has pointed out that the "Native worldview is based on sound, a sense of place and the rhythms of the earth" (p. 33). Lounsberry agreed when she wrote that "The voice of the drum expresses the basic rhythm patterns humans have observed over and over in nature: the changing seasons, the tides, the heartbeat—life and death itself" (p.19).

Drumming and Mental Health

In the Circle of Life, the mental part of self seeks knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (Montour, 1996). Many Aboriginal people are learning about their culture through drumming. Desjarlais (1998) has noted that "It is believed we are the drum, the drum is our culture, it unifies and reflects who we are" (Drum Philosophy: Importance, point 2). Using the Iroquois tradition, Logan (1979) has noted:

> My drum is old and full of memories of long ago, of my ancestors and of the ideas and accomplishments of my people and myself. Memories of sweetgrass, the closeness of nature, the ancient and beautiful things of the woods. My drum is full of voices... of paddles and their canoes...of lone people going through the trackless wilderness... of the far, far voices of singers...of dancers – their feathers keeping time with the beat. My drum speaks of olden times, for it is a diary of my

people. It tells of brave and solemn chiefs sitting around council fires; of powerful bodies representing strength, endurance, stamina; of lofty spirits full of dreams, dreams of childhood and of the future. My drum is a mingling of past, present and future. A treasured diary of my people is measured in the beat of my drum. (p. 17)

Thus, the drum is a teacher to all of us, teaching us many lessons (Desjarlais, 1998). We can all learn from the wisdom of the drum.

Drumming also allows the brain to rest so that it can better comprehend the wisdom of the drum. Ash (2001) has said that, "The beat of the drum is like a sweeping broom: the vibration sound waves... clearing our thoughts and mind... bringing in clarity and dispersing confusion of the mind" (p. 28). This means that the drum is able to distract us from our busy minds. Many people suffer from hypervigilance, which occurs when someone cannot turn off his or her mental activity for any length of time (Friedman, 2000). These people feel unsafe and unable to let down their guard. In relation to Aboriginal people, hypervigilance is a symptom of Residential School Syndrome (Brasfield, 2001). Drumming helps place those who are hyperviligilant in the present moment (Friedman, 2000). Also, according to Friedman (2000), "when one hits the drum, he or she is placed squarely in the here and now. Some of our stress is created from past or future thoughts of fear, worry or regret, but it is very difficult to be stressed and be in the present moment" (p. 3). Ash (2001) concurs: "the vibration [of the drum] cracks open the shells of limiting thoughts and commotions, establishing order and harmony" (p. 29).

Drumming also increases the number of Alpha brain waves (Maxfield, 1990; Neher, 1962) that can help mental disorders such as hyperviligilance (Friedman, 2000). According to Friedman (2000), "Alpha brainwaves are associated with states of

relaxation and general well-being" (p. 44). Barry Quinn, Ph.D., a clinical psychologist specializing in neurobiofeedback therapy (NBT) for stress management, has found that drumming helps even his highest-stressed clients. He has shown that a soft, slow, heartbeat type of rhythm for a brief period (20-30 minutes) reduced mental stress in war veterans by nearly doubling their Alpha waves (Friedman, 2000). Most individuals should be producing Alpha waves; however, there are a number of people who have a difficult time producing and maintaining Alpha waves in their brains (Friedman 2000; Strong, 1998). Quinn had tried numerous biofeedback techniques, but until he tried the drum, he did not find anything that successfully increased Alpha waves (Friedman, 2000).

It is also suggested that many neurobiological disorders and diseases can benefit from drumming. Lounsberry (2002) claims that, while facilitating a drumming circle with schizophrenic patients, she noticed that their agitated mental state shifted to one of calmness and joy. Furthermore, in the medical field the drum is being used to help Alzheimer's patients improve their short-term memory and help autistic children increase their attention span (Friedman, 2000).

Drumming and Emotional Health

In the Circle of Life, the emotional element of self can touch all other things through feelings (Montour, 1996). Logan (1979) explains that, "It [the drum] is a medium of release for our emotions. If we have sadness we use the drum as an outlet and we find solace. In anger there is relief and, if afraid, there is courage" (p. 17). Some people are better able to express their feelings through singing and drumming than with words (Klower, 1997). Laukka & Gabrielsson (2000) have reported that drumming can create

intended emotional responses. According to Lounsberry (2002), the drum rhythms have the ability to cover the range of human feelings. Friedman (2000) has described how hand drums are being used to assist veterans to release the emotional pain of post-traumatic stress disorder, and how the hand drum can release pent-up anger and negative emotions in at-risk youth. Drumming has been used with emotionally-drained cancer patients as well. In her article, "Drumming Up Good Health," Diane Cole (2002) writes about Robin McMurray, who had conquered chronic myeloid leukemia, but was left emotionally drained after the treatments. McMurray tried drumming, which she claimed shook up her emotions. She went on to say that drumming is a primal release that feels cleansing and spiritually uplifting.

Drumming and Spiritual Health

In the Circle of Life, the spiritual element of self believes in connections between all things (Montour, 1996). The vibrations of the drums are powerful and have the ability to awaken the spirit. Medicine Eagle in Lounsberry's dissertation refers to, "a vibration that makes my spirit alive in my physical body" (p. 105). Lakota Elder Wallace Black Elk has also explained why the drum is so sacred:

> [I]t is because the round form of the drum represents the whole universe and its strong steady beat is the pulse, the heart, throbbing the center of the universe. It is the voice of Wakan-Tanka [Creator], and this sound stirs us and helps us to understand the mystery and power of all things. (Brown, 1989, p. 69)

The drum is a powerful tool that can awaken and connect us spiritually.

The relationship one has with one's drum affects its spiritual power (Proundfoot-Edgar, 1999). The hand-drumming circle to which I belong, the Waabishki Mkwaa

Singers, always engages in a smudging ceremony before we begin drumming. We smudge ourselves and our drums, as well as our drumsticks, to cleanse away negativity, and to connect with the Creator, and our ancestors. It is often stated that drumming is a way to communicate with the spiritual world (Desjarlais, 1998; Johnston, 1982; Maxfield, 1994). Black Elk has said that for centuries our ancestors gathered around the fire to drum and connect with our ancestors (Ash, 2001). Several women in my hand-drumming circle believe that drumming is considered a way of praying (Gbe giizhigo Kwe & Nodin Bebamse Kwe, personal communication November 27, 2002).

Making one's own drum is also a way to pray and connect to the spirits. A bond is formed "when a woman works with the materials that later become her drum" ("Drum Power," 2002-2003, p. 4). We are taught that when we drum we should honour the spirit of the tree that makes the rim, the spirit of the animal hide that covers the drum, and any other elements that are part of it. As Medicine Eagle is cited as saying in Lounsberry's (2002) dissertation, the drum is a way for an animal to continue to live in the world and give a gift of healing and wholeness. As Lounsberry (2002) has reported, "I have learned to honor my drums and to thank the spirits for being present each time I play my drums" (p. 24). This increases the depth of our connection to the drum and enhances its power to help us while deepening our respect for living in balance and gratitude with All Our Relations ("Drum Power," 2002-2003). Thus, the drum reminds us we are all one; we are all interconnected spiritually.

Drumming and Social Support Networks

In the Aboriginal community, there is a strong emphasis on the group rather than the individual (Reynolds, 1994). Within a group, better known as a "circle" in the

Aboriginal community, social support networks can be formed. In the field of health promotion, "social support networks" is also one of the determinants of health. The underlying premise of social support networks is as follows:

> Support from families, friends and communities is associated with better health. Such social support networks could be very important in helping people solve problems and deal with adversity, as well as in maintaining a sense of mastery and control over life circumstances. The caring and respect that occurs in social relationships, and the resulting sense of satisfaction and well-being, seem to act as a buffer against health problems. (Public Health Agency of Canada, Key Determinants 2)

In the Aboriginal community, social support networks are built in the extended family structure. In an extended family, care and nurturing are distributed over a large network of grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, even extending traditionally to the clan system (Castellano, 2002). As noted in RCAP, "inside the web of family, norms of sharing and mutual aid provided a social safety net for every individual" (1996a, p. 62). Under the patriarchal influences of the Western concept of the nuclear family, extended Aboriginal families were disrupted. However, the notion of extended family continues to be a powerful ideal etched deep in the psyche of Aboriginal people (Castellano, 2002). This is perhaps why many Aboriginal people are drawn to the drumming circle. Aboriginal drumming circles allow them to continue to be part of an extended family, even when they are far away from their community or have been affected by oppression and/or assimilation. Aboriginal people can obtain social support from other drummers as

they would from their own extended family. In Sudbury, the hand drum has brought Aboriginal women, men, and mixed hand-drumming circles together.

My co-researchers and I belong to an Aboriginal women's hand-drumming circle called the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers. This group of Aboriginal women has supported its members through various life changes such as marriage, births, job loss, and funerals. One member of the circle believes that "the drumming circle provides a place where people are supportive" (Gbe giizhigo Kwe, personal communication, November 13, 2000) and "have similar goals and interests" (Gbe giizhigo Kwe, November 27, 2002). A circle is a supportive place where Aboriginal people on their healing journeys can share similar difficulties such as addictions, adoptions by non-Aboriginal families, effects of the Residential School System, poverty, and so on. The circle is also a supportive place where Aboriginal people on their wellness journeys can share similar goals and interests such as learning more about their culture, returning to school, having children, and helping heal the community among other areas. Stevenson (1999) has written that "It is through listening and sharing that we learn how to get in touch with our true selves" (p. 9).

Gathering together to support each other has been a traditional custom for Aboriginal women (Napoli, 2002). A member of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers has pointed out that "the drumming circle helps bring people that are feeling down, up!" (Gbe giizhigo Kwe, personal communication, December 2, 2003). Another member concurs: "the drumming circle is a place of laughter and having fun" (Babaaminose Kwe, personal communication, December 2, 2003). According to Napoli (2002), Aboriginal women continue to gather together through traditional activities to enhance their health while

creating an atmosphere of empowerment and mutual support. The Waabishki Mkwaa Singers and other Aboriginal people are taking part in hand-drumming circles as a way to create an extended family and social support networks.

Drumming and Culture

Culture is shaped by values, beliefs, norms, and practices that are shared by members of the same cultural group (Davidhizar & Giger, 1993). One member of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers claims that "Culture is our way of life, and there are many songs, ceremonies and socials that define who we are" (L. Wabange, personal communication, January 20, 2004). Ovide Mecredi, former grand chief of the Assembly of First Nations stated, "One of the reasons we have health problems in our communities is because our culture has been destroyed. So now we have to rebuild it, and that's going to take a long process" (Lessard, 1994, p.1578).

Today, Aboriginal people are in the process of reviving their culture. In the field of health promotion, "culture" is considered a determinant of health. "The Circle of Health", which is Prince Edward Island's Health Promotion Framework, has acknowledged that "a rich cultural life is seen as a contributor to the health of a population, promotion of creativity and preserving tradition" (1996, p. 17). Dufrene and Coleman (1994) have noted that cultural revitalization might be the key to solving the pressing health problems in our Aboriginal communities. Increasingly, Aboriginal men and women are practicing their cultural traditions (Buchwald, Beals & Manson, 2000). As a member of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers has said, "I think practicing my traditions and working at living by the [cultural] teachings has strengthened me all round" (Semaa Kwe, personal communication, November 17, 2000). Aboriginal men and women are

using cultural tools such as the drum for healing ("The Drum as Healer," 2002-2003). The drum is a cultural tool that we can take pride in, share with others, and pass on to our children ("Drum Power," 2002-2003).

CHAPTER 3

Indigenous Research Methodology

Research Design

This study was designed to explore the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion. An exploratory study "is typical when a researcher is examining a new interest, when the subject of study is relatively new and unstudied" (Rubin & Babbie, 1997, p. 107). Hand drumming is not new to Aboriginal people; however, its use is fairly recent among urban Aboriginal women in northern Ontario. Moreover, no literature pertaining to Aboriginal hand drumming in relation to health promotion has been found and Reynolds (1994) has also noted that the health promotion benefits of traditional activities have not been fully explored.

This research encouraged Aboriginal women hand drummers to share their stories. New knowledge about Aboriginal people must come from Aboriginal people so that the perspective of the dominant culture is not inadvertently applied to the interpretation of the results (Duran & Duran, 1995). For too long, our stories have gone untold or have been misinterpreted (Smith, 1999). To tell our stories, we need a research paradigm that comes from the Aboriginal community. The time has come for Aboriginal people to assert their own research methodology, one that honours our peoples' stories. For these reasons, this study was framed within an Indigenous research methodology, based on Aboriginal principles that are concerned with working collectively not only with the community, but with all of Creation. This has been referred to as relationality (S. Wilson, personal communication, August 10, 2005). Essentially, an Indigenous research

methodology is about relationships and creating knowledge together as part of the Circle of Life.

The circle is critical to an Indigenous research paradigm. Western research paradigms suppress Indigenous research because they are linear and do not encompass our cyclical Indigenous paradigms such as the Circle of Life teachings (Walker, 2001). Peter Menzies, an Aboriginal Services Manager at the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), agrees: "the problem is that the worldview of mainstream society, with its emphasis on measuring and quantifying, runs contrary to the holistic and esoteric principles on which the Medicine Wheel [Circle of Life] is based" (Tillson, 2002, p. 13). The suppression of Indigenous ways in research silences the sacred aspects of Aboriginal people (Walker, 2001). Spirituality is part of the Indigenous belief system and "communication with the natural world and ancestors, as well as knowing that comes through dreams, visions and intuitions, forms an integral part of Indigenous Knowledge Research" (Walker, 2001, p. 18). Therefore, a methodology that does not encompass the spiritual element may do more harm than good where the promotion of an Aboriginal person's health and well-being is concerned. According to Walker (2001), "research processes that fail to voice the sacred aspects of Indigenous experience have resulted in data which is incomplete and inaccurate" (p. 19).

Unlike conventional positivist research approaches, there is no set prototype for this research methodology (Weber-Pillwax, 1999). An Indigenous research methodology focuses on the critical processes that occur in an Aboriginal community and represents our worldviews as the basis for which we live, learn, and survive (Martin, 2002). For Aboriginal people, the process is often more important than the outcome (Smith, 1999).

Smith has claimed that "processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate" (p. 128). The present study includes our teachings, our traditions, our connection with the land, and, most importantly, our people as part of the process. Building relationships with the community and with all of Creation, sharing knowledge, and healing together are critical elements.

As primary researcher, I knew that an important first step was involving Aboriginal women interested in exploring the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion. The research process was facilitated by my membership in the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers hand-drumming circle which is part of the urban Aboriginal community represented in this study. Over the years, I have developed a trusting and respectful relationship with the Aboriginal women drummers of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers. Therefore, when I made an offering of tobacco to potential co-researchers for the present study, seven members willingly agreed. Smith (1999) claimed that it is important for "insider" researchers to build particular sorts of research-based support systems and relationships with their communities.

The co-researchers and I agreed to gather separately from the Waabishki Mkwaa hand-drumming circle so that we could continue to hand drum as well as be part of the research study. However, the hand-drumming circle was a place for research updates if these became necessary. Our meetings were called, "thesis gatherings." Before every gathering, we smudged and said a prayer to assist us with the process. At the beginning of the study, we met regularly (e.g., twice a month). Later in the process, the gatherings tapered off to once a month. Together, we discussed and formulated the interview questions, and the process of participant recruitment, data collection, analysis,

interpretations, and dissemination. The Indigenous research methodology that was followed was a working process. The overall process has taken approximately five years. For every community, the research process and timeframes will be different; however, it is beneficial to incorporate Martin's (2002) five main features of an Indigenous research methodology:

1. Recognition of our worldviews, our knowledge and our realities as distinctive and vital to our existence and survival. This serves as a research framework;
2. Honouring Aboriginal social mores as an essential process through which we live, learn and situate ourselves as Aboriginal people in our own lands and when in the lands of other Aboriginal people;
3. Emphasising the social, historical and political contexts which shape our experiences, lives, positions and futures;
4. Privileging the voices, experiences and lives of Aboriginal people and Aboriginal lands;
5. Identifying and redressing issues of importance for us. (p. 5)

In applying Martin's five features to the present study, the first feature emphasized that the research needed to be based on the worldviews, knowledge, and reality that are vital to the survival of the Aboriginal women drummers in the study. Martin's second feature relates to social mores, also known as cultural protocols. Since this study was conducted in Ojibwe territory, Ojibwe protocols were respectfully followed. Smith (1999) has emphasized that "Indigenous methodologies tend to approach cultural protocols, values and behaviours as an integral part of methodology" (p. 15). Within this methodology, our traditions such as smudging and the offering of tobacco were recognized and utilized.

Martin's third feature, the influence of social, historical, and political contexts, may easily be overlooked by a Western researcher who may not completely understand

these elements and their significance to Aboriginal people. Since all of the researchers in this study were Aboriginal women, they were able to understand the realities that shape their experiences, lives, positions, and futures. While this point deserves elaboration, it is not the focus of this study. Suffice then to say that, within the social context of this study, we know that Aboriginal women gather together in circles to support one another. We also know that historically our mothers and grandmothers have had to overcome oppressive government laws such as the Indian Act to survive, and that many Aboriginal women today are still overcoming the ramifications of past injustices. Politically, we know that Aboriginal women are affected by the patriarchal influences in their community which may in turn influence their involvement in cultural activities such as hand drumming.

Martin's fourth feature is important to the present study because it provided an opportunity for urban Aboriginal women to speak and tell their stories about the importance of hand drumming in relation to promoting health. This is a privilege today because in past research, Aboriginal women were never heard. For this reason they were often considered the "hidden half" (Almeida, 1997).

Martin's fifth feature speaks to the need to focus on issues of importance to the community. This research study allowed the Aboriginal women hand drummers in the present study to explore how their involvement in hand drumming promotes health.

Interview Questionnaire

The co-researchers and I gathered to create questions that we would ask other Aboriginal women hand drummers in relation to how the hand drumming promotes health and well-being. After much discussion in the circle, broad open-ended questions

were created based on the past, present, and possible future experiences of Aboriginal women hand drummers as well as their experience within a hand-drumming circle. The co-researchers felt the use of broad open-ended questions, would encourage participants to share their stories. They anticipated that the physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual elements that describe the Aboriginal view of health would emerge naturally from the data. An indirect approach is more compatible with the Aboriginal way of thinking and feeling (Hagey, 1988). One specific question was placed at the end to allow the participants to reiterate or augment what they believed in terms of how Aboriginal women's hand drumming promotes health and well-being. The questions created are presented below:

1. Why did you begin to use the hand drum?
2. What brought you to the hand-drumming circle?
3. What do you get from drumming with other people (women)?
4. Why are you still hand drumming today?
5. How do you see yourself and your hand drum in the future?
6. How does hand drumming promote health and well-being in your life?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Community Setting

This study took place in the City of Greater of Sudbury (Sudbury), which is located in northern Ontario in Ojibwe territory. In 2001, there were 155,219 people living in the City of Greater Sudbury and 7,020 identified themselves as Aboriginal (Statistics Canada, 2001). This amounts to approximately 4.5 percent of the population. However, it

is commonly known that Aboriginal people are underrepresented in the population statistics because they often fail to identify themselves as Aboriginal.

Participants

The co-researchers and I met and decided upon who could participate in this research study. First, we discussed the boundaries of the study, and although Aboriginal men and other non-Aboriginal people in this community also use the hand drum, we wanted to focus solely on Aboriginal women. We believe that Aboriginal women's participation in traditional activities, such as hand drumming, has been ignored for too long. We decided that the Aboriginal women participants did not have to be Ojibwe, but they did have to be of Aboriginal descent and live in the City of Greater Sudbury. Also, we wanted Aboriginal women who were part of a hand-drumming circle so that we could examine the importance of the circle and the social support networks formed within the circle.

Gathering the Stories

As primary researcher, I found Western qualitative research training in conducting focus groups and individual interviews helpful to me in the collection of data. However, it was more important to know the cultural protocols and traditional ways of the people to earn the right to collect data in this Aboriginal community. As Martin (2002) has written, "This requires a high level of skill to ensure it is culturally rigorous and meets demands for validity" (p. 5). Hence, my being an Aboriginal woman hand drummer who had facilitated several hand-drumming circles in this Aboriginal community was helpful for this study. There are many cultural protocols that I am not only aware of, but also use in my daily life as an Aboriginal person. Further, I was

fortunate to have Aboriginal women hand drummers as co-researchers who were able to provide guidance. Many of the co-researchers have been raised traditionally and have extensive knowledge of our cultural ways. When I was unsure of how to proceed with the study, I was able to ask them for advice and direction. This knowledge and support enhanced my confidence and ability to collect data in the Aboriginal community.

The co-researchers and I agreed that the best techniques for collecting data were to conduct a sharing circle with Aboriginal women hand drummers from Sudbury, followed by in-depth individual interviews with other Aboriginal women hand drummers from Sudbury. The sharing circle is an Aboriginal way of communicating. A sharing circle is similar to a focus group in that it provides "a social context where people can consider their own views in the context of the views of others" (Patton, 2002, p. 386). It is different in that it incorporates a sacred object, an opening smudging ceremony, and often ends with a prayer. The in-depth individual interviews that were employed allowed Aboriginal people to tell their stories in a private manner. These interviews occurred after the sharing circle in order to build on ideas presented in the circle. As a third element, the co-researchers also agreed to keep a journal of their thoughts and ideas regarding the thesis as well as their thoughts related to their participation in hand drumming. The journal provided an avenue for the co-researchers to share their insights into the research process as well as the impact of hand drumming on their lives.

It was decided by the co-researchers that the N'Swakamok Friendship Centre hand-drumming circle would be the ideal place to recruit participants for the sharing circle. Before collecting data at the Friendship Centre, I explained the purpose of the study to the Executive Director, the hand-drumming circle leader, and the Board of

Directors of N'Swakamok Friendship Centre and I requested permission to recruit participants. They welcomed the idea and provided me with a date to attend one of the hand-drumming circles. As the primary researcher, I attended the hand-drumming circle and shared some songs with the circle. When I sensed that the circle was comfortable with my presence, I introduced myself and the purpose of the research study. Grenier (1998) has mentioned that a group that is well briefed on the purpose of the research is more willing to participate in an interview. At the conclusion of the circle, I recorded the contact information of potential participants and provided them with an information letter describing the details of the study (*see Appendices A & B*).

The co-researchers and I also recruited other Aboriginal women hand drummers in Sudbury via word of mouth. In our Aboriginal community we call this "the Moccasin Telegraph," and from my experience, word travels quite fast in this community. Whenever I heard that an Aboriginal woman hand drummer was interested in participating in the study, I sent her an information letter describing the details of the study (*see Appendices A & B*). We soon recruited 10 participants for the sharing circle. Six to ten participants is typical for a focus group (Patton, 2003).

The sharing circle occurred on the same evening as the Friendship Centre hand-drumming circle. However, as requested by the participants, I scheduled it two hours prior to the circle so that those who wished could attend drumming afterwards. Seven participants came to the sharing circle, which was held at a central downtown location in close proximity to the Friendship Centre. Before the circle began, I offered tobacco to those who agreed to be part of the study. I then went through the consent form with the participants, which they were required to sign if they chose to participate (see *Appendix*

C). As explained in the consent form, I made it clear to them that members of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers were co-researchers for this study, and that they were involved in all aspects of the research, including analyzing and interpreting the data. Just before the circle was to begin, I asked permission to audio-record the stories shared in the circle. A co-researcher was present to take notes in case someone was opposed to the recording. Initially there was some hesitation about recording the session, but everyone did agree to it.

I facilitated the sharing circle by following the protocols of the circle that I have learned, using my Eagle Feather as a sacred object to be held when speaking. The circle began with a smudging ceremony to prepare the sharing circle to take place in a positive way. Sage, which is one of the four sacred medicines, was burned for the smudging ceremony. After the ceremony, I discussed the purpose of the study. There was no need for me to introduce myself since they all knew me from our Aboriginal community. After posing the first question, I passed the feather to the person on my left to begin the sharing. The Ojibwe people conduct their circles in a clockwise manner. Each person, as she held the feather, took her turn sharing her story in relation to the question. In the Aboriginal community, it is protocol not to disturb the person speaking. Therefore, I did not interrupt the flow of the circle unless I was asked to repeat the question. This method worked well with the Aboriginal people's concept of non-interference, and allowed the participant to speak at her own pace (Nabigon, Hagey, Webster & Mackay, 1998).

The sharing circle lasted between two and three hours with a 15-minute break at mid-point. The lengthy period of time allowed each woman to tell her story. At the end of the sharing circle, we shared a meal that I had prepared, and each participant was

presented with an Aboriginal women's hand-drumming CD as a token of appreciation. The participants were also reimbursed for transportation and childcare expenses. Over dinner there was informal discussion which supplemented the stories provided in the sharing circle. After the sharing circle was over, the co-researcher and I got together to write down our initial impressions.

After the sharing circle data was transcribed and analyzed, we recruited other Aboriginal women hand drummers for the individual interviews. When the co-researchers suggested possible participants, I contacted them personally, and provided them with an information letter. All but one agreed to be part of the study. The interviews took place at a time and location convenient to each participant. For the in-depth individual interviews, I used the combination of a semi-structured qualitative interview guide with a conversational strategy and added probes:

1. Why did you begin to use the hand drum? [**Probe:** When did you begin hand drumming? Do you remember the first time you heard the drum? Were there Aboriginal women drumming when you were growing up? When was the first time you saw Aboriginal women drumming?]

2. What brought you to the hand-drumming circle?

3. What do you get from drumming with other women (people)?

4. Why are you still hand drumming today? [**Probe**: Compared to when you began hand drumming, why do you still drum today? Have you grown?]

5. How do you see yourself and your hand drum in the future? [**Probe:** What about Seven years from now, do you see anything different in your life with regards to hand drumming?]

6. How does hand drumming promote health and well-being in your life? [**Probe**: Has hand drumming helped you learn more about your culture?]

7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

As I visited with the women hand drummers to conduct the interview, I presented each of them an offering of tobacco. We talked and established some rapport; then I proceeded to review the consent form with them which they were required to sign if they chose to participate (see *Appendix C*). Again, I made it clear to the participants that members of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers were co-researchers in this study, and that they were involved in all aspects of the research, including analyzing and interpreting the data. Before I began the interview, each participant was asked if I could audio-record the session. One participant refused, but allowed me to take notes instead. As primary researcher, I conducted all the interviews to ensure consistency in questioning, content, and style. I utilized a conversational approach to create an informal atmosphere. It also allowed me the flexibility to explore certain subjects in greater depth and enabled the participants to tell their stories. I asked the same questions as I used within the sharing circle. When they had finished answering a question, I was able to have them clarify certain statements, and I utilized probes to further explore the themes which had emerged from the sharing circle. This second source of data from the individual interviews enhanced and helped reaffirm what the circle's participants had stated.

Each individual interview lasted approximately one hour. Each participant was provided with a meal that I purchased and an Aboriginal women's hand-drumming CD as a token of appreciation. Since I usually travelled to their homes, I did not need to reimburse any of the individual interview participants for transportation. Moreover, most of their children were independent so childcare was not required. However, one participant had her young children present at the interview because they were home sick. It was challenging to get through this interview as her children kept interrupting and

demanding her attention. After each interview, I wrote down my initial impressions of the interview in my journal. I conducted a total of five individual interviews at which time saturation of data had been reached as no new information emerged.

In addition, since the co-researchers agreed to write down their thoughts and feelings about the research process, and about their hand-drumming circle experiences with the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers, I provided each co-researcher with a journal. After all the other data was collected and analyzed, I asked the co-researchers to turn in their journals at the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers hand-drumming circle. Out of the seven co-researchers, four handed in a journal.

Analyzing the Stories and Interpretations

As primary researcher, I adopted elements of content analysis to help identify themes. According to Patton (2002), "content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify themes" (p. 453). As outlined below, I completed the essential steps involved in content analysis. However, to ensure the data were analyzed and interpreted in a culturally rigorous manner, I involved the co-researchers and participants by having them provide feedback at various stages.

To begin the content analysis, I familiarized myself with the data by transcribing the sharing circle data and reading the transcript over several times. As promised, I had the participants verify the transcripts. They were given complete freedom to change, delete, or add as they saw fit. I then divided the data into complete ideas or units of thought; this is referred to as "unitizing" in qualitative research (Creswell, 2002). I then proceeded to categorize the units. After I was satisfied with the unitizing and

categorizing, I gathered with the co-researchers several times to give them the opportunity to review the material and provide feedback.

As an Aboriginal person who practices the Circle of Life teachings, I began to classify each category within the AWHD Circle of Life framework (**see Figure 2**). Martin (2002) has said that "the Indigenous researcher draws upon his/her Ways of Knowing, Being and Doing to identify and categorize data, using internal logic as criteria and referents" (p. 6). All aspects of human experience, including the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion, can be analyzed and represented in the Circle of Life. Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane (1989) agree in the following:

> The medicine wheel [Circle of Life] can be used to help us see or understand things we can't quite see or understand. . . . the medicine wheel [Circle of Life] is an ancient and powerful symbol of the Universe. It is a silent teacher of the realities of things. It shows many different ways in which all things are interconnected. Beyond that, it shows not only things that are, but also things that could be. (p. 9 & 32)

The AWHD Circle of Life framework consists of the following categories: physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, culture, and social support networks (**see Figure 2**).

In addition, I decided to create a matrix in order to view the complete ideas or units of thoughts presented in the transcripts in terms of question number [Q #], the AWHD Circle of Life framework category [C], participant [P], line number [LN], definition if needed, and quote (*see Appendix F*). It has been said that "Matrix

construction is a creative, yet systematic task that furthers your understanding of substance and meaning of your data base" (Miles & Huberman, 1984, p. 211). Although the completed matrix was 27 pages long, it proved to be extremely helpful. With all the categorization completed, I was able to identify the emerging themes.

I contacted participants of the sharing circle by phone and email for clarification and verification of the emerging themes. In addition, I gathered with the co-researchers to review the final naming of the themes. Traditionally, consensus is the way decisions are made in the Aboriginal community.

To review the placement within the AWHD Circle of Life framework, I presented definitions for each of the categories (physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, culture, social support networks) to the co-researchers. I then asked them to describe each of the categories in their own terms. Once we had a clear understanding of the various categories, I visually presented the themes within the AWHD Circle of Life framework. The co-researchers were also provided with a copy of the matrix that not only placed the categories and the themes, but also maintained the context within the transcript and provided supporting quotes from the sharing circle (*see Appendix F*). The matrix was critical to understanding the research data. Other than suggesting I change the names of a few themes, the co-researchers agreed with their placement.

One of the co-researchers transcribed the audio tapes from the individual interviews. I proceeded to unitize and categorize the transcribed data of each interview in the same way as for the sharing circle data. While doing this, I found that many similar themes emerged, along with some new ones. Each participant was presented with the themes that emerged from her interview, the placement within the AWHD Circle of Life

framework, and the matrix for final verification. According to Martin (2002), "it [data interpretation] has less to do with capturing 'truth' or drawing general conclusions, than checking and re-checking interpretation with participants" (p. 6). A few participants made minor revisions, and several participants suggested that different words be used for the themes. I proceeded to make the appropriate changes because my biggest fear in analyzing and interpreting the data was misinterpreting what the participant said or using the wrong theme.

Four co-researchers handed in journals; three were in an electronic format and did not need to be transcribed. One journal was hand written and was transcribed by a co-researcher. I proceeded to analyze the journal entries of the co-researchers by following the analysis method outlined above, contacting them by phone if I had any questions regarding their journal entries. The themes that emerged from the journals were consistent with the themes found in the sharing circle and interview data; this triangulation increased the credibility of the data. The purpose of triangulation is to obtain confirmation of findings through a convergence of different perspectives. Moreover, the verification checks with the participants and the review of the data by the co-researchers also enhanced the credibility of this study.

In reviewing the AWHD Circle of Life framework and matrix with the co-researchers, we agreed to move one theme and change the names of others into the Ojibwe language. We also discussed several themes that strongly related to all the categories of the AWHD Circle of Life framework. Through a constant comparative approach, the co-researchers and I discovered that these were overarching themes. We considered that these themes were wholistic as they were connected to all the themes and

categories in the AWHD Circle of Life framework. The AWHD Circle of Life was revised accordingly, and the external circle was added to accommodate the four wholistic themes that emerged **(see Figure 3)**.

CHAPTER 4

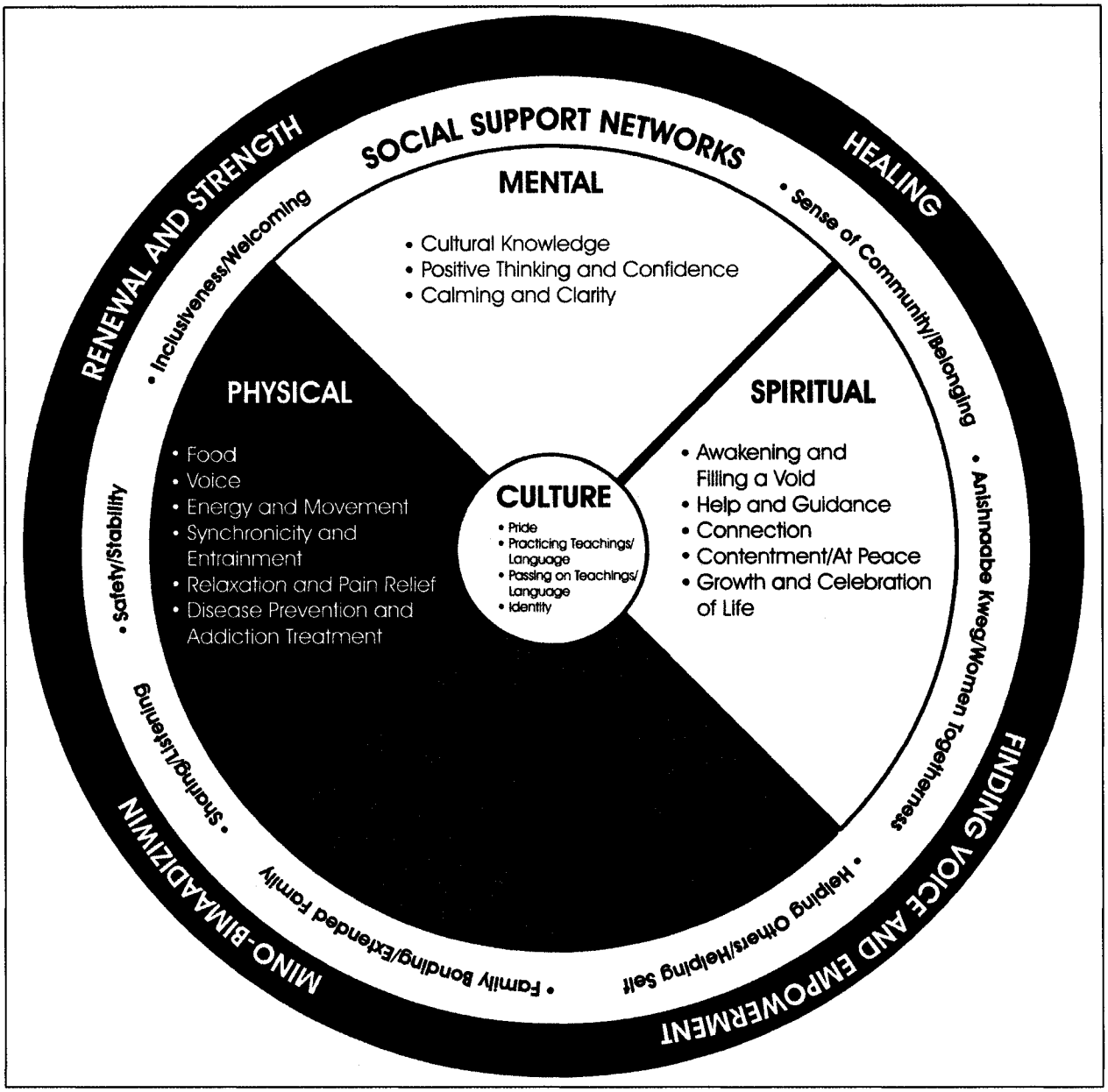
Research Findings

Honoring the Women's Stories

Characteristics of the Participants

The Aboriginal women in this study all resided in the City of Greater Sudbury and had been hand drumming anywhere from less than a year to ten years. Their ages ranged from 20 to 60 years. In order to avoid issues around the definition of "Aboriginal," I decided to utilize the philosophy of the local Aboriginal Health Centre and accepted anyone who stated she was Aboriginal, whether Status, Non-Status, Treaty, or Métis. Given the complex and sensitive nature of the issue, I did not have the women specify any exact category of identity. Aboriginal women from various Aboriginal groups participated. The co-researchers and I decided not to use one participant's input because she stated during the sharing circle that she did not own a hand drum, nor did she participate in any hand-drumming circles. However, she played an important role in the sharing circle by holding the feather for her relative who was on her Moontime.

Figure 3: Aboriginal Women's Hand Drumming (AWHD) Circle of Life with Themes



The thirty themes that emerged were placed within the AWHD Circle of Life framework along with the four overarching themes (**see Figure 3**). These themes are presented in their respective categories with quotes that are representative of the Aboriginal women's hand drumming stories in relation to health promotion. There is no particular order of presentation as everything in the Circle of Life is equally important.

Physical

The physical element within the Circle of Life framework is described by Monture (2000) as: "that part of self which recognizes and nurtures the body and the environment in relation to the cycle of life and all other things" (p. 6). Chamberlain (1998) has also said that "the physical quadrant includes learning about and respecting our bodies, our environment and developing physical skills that enable us to be active and safe" (p. 53). The co-researchers used the following words to describe the physical category of the AWHD Circle of Life framework: body, senses, and gender. The themes that emerged through the sharing circle were found again in the transcripts of individual interviews and in personal journals. These were: Food; Voice; Energy and Movement; Synchronicity and Entrainment; Relaxation and Pain Relief; Disease Prevention and Addiction Treatment.

Food

Food emerged as an important theme within the sharing circle. When discussing this topic there was always much laughter. Some participants described food as an incentive to attend the hand-drumming circle:

> "I probably went to the drumming circle because there was food [everybody laughed]." (P4: 313-314)
>
> "We have food [at the hand-drumming circle], maybe that is why they [the youth] come too, no just kidding [she laughs]." (P3: 501)
>
> "Food is so important. . . . I tell my children we will have a feast. But before we have a feast, we will have a drum birthing." (P1: 400-402)
>
> "I learned how to eat strawberries [at the hand-drumming circle]. I never ate so many strawberries in my life. That's always a good thing." (P4: 314-315)

Food is an important part of Aboriginal gatherings. Fortunately, traditional foods such as moose meat and strawberries which are often served at Aboriginal gatherings are healthy.

Voice

Hand drumming and singing go hand in hand. Many of the participants talked about using or learning to use their voice with the hand drum. Participants clearly enjoyed the experience, benefited from the physical aspects of voice production, and saw future uses for their newfound voices:

> "I had to learn how to sing, bring my voice out because before it was stuck in my throat. I had to learn how to bring that song out in a voice . . . ." (P5: 144-147)

> "I notice that, you know, when I was doing a lead or I was singing with the group, I had a very timid voice, and it was very much in the throat area. The noise that I would make, it was in the throat area, and I'd say probably about, probably six months later, I felt that my voice was getting stronger . . . ." (I2: 109-114)

> "As long as I have a voice, I have a future. I often think sometimes what I'm going to do when I get old. I'll just sing a song and someone will bring me some fish or flour, and I'll get something to eat [laughter]. . . . Just as long as I can sing a song and trade for food." (P4: 999-1004)

> "Hopefully I can sing for a long time but I know people can't sing all the time because they lose their vocals or their lungs or they can't hold the tunes that long." (P5: 1025-1027)

One is not required to sing or be a good singer for hand drumming. However, some discover through drumming that they have the gift of being able to sing.

Energy and Movement

Restored energy and the power of movement also emerged as themes from women's participation in hand drumming. It energized those who felt drained, provided stress relief for others, and prompted the desire to dance: "That drum makes me want to dance" (I1: 75-76).

> "You go there [to the hand-drumming circle] really tired but when you leave you are exhilarated again and you get re-energized--so it's good." (P5: 343-344)

> "Drumming relieves stress, increases vitality . . . it is also a physical activity, gets our hearts pounding, our blood flowing, and releases endorphins . . . ." (I3: 42,45-46)

> "I'm a full-time student, single mother and even when I'm at home I hand drum in the evening or early in the morning just to start my day and go on my way. I can say that it's a good stress reliever for me cause my kids get into it, too. They'll dance around or sing . . . . " (I5: 83-88)

Where there is drumming, there is often dance. Drumming at a steady beat seems to be a physical activity that relieves stress and restores energy to make some want to dance.

Synchronicity and Entrainment

The terms "synchronicity" and "entrainment" were found in the literature and they also emerged in this study. In a situation of drumming with many people, eventually everyone drums together; they are "in synch":

> ". . . everybody would start out with a different beat and everybody would end on the same beat . . . ." (I2: 44-45)

Not only do the drummers synchronize their beating rhythm; they also report how their body rhythm synchronizes with the drum rhythm: "We are all beating as one and the beat becomes part of our body's rhythm" (CR1: 119-120). In drumming literature this process has been referred to as entrainment. For example, a fast-beating heart can eventually entrain with a slow-beating drum. One participant reported a conversation with a newcomer to the group:

> "She said, 'as soon as you started drumming, my heart went to the beat of the drum' because her heart was palpitating when she came in because she was scared to sit there and it calmed her down." (P4: 1211-1214)

The power of drumming to entrain with body rhythms such as heart rate is perceived to be important to personal health and well-being because it can lead to relaxation.

Relaxation and Pain Relief

Participants enjoyed the sound of the drum, a sound that is so important in Aboriginal culture that it is often referred to as the heartbeat of Mother Earth. For many

the sound of the drum was a powerful force that they felt throughout their bodies, one that could promote relaxation and aid in pain relief.

> "Whether they're a small child, a man, a woman, everybody is affected by what they are hearing and feeling [when they are drumming]. How they're hitting that drum, whether it's soft or hard, whether their beats are fast or slow. It's still a part of them resonating and coming out through that drum . . . . Your body says, 'I want to surrender because this [the drumming] is so beautiful. This is something speaking my language'." (I1: 54-57, 239-240)

> "It [the hand drumming] sounded so good, so it was where I needed to be [in the hand-drumming circle]." (P7: 357-358)

> "And that vibration [of the drum beat] goes through the skin and the tissue and the organs and the bone and it goes right to the heart and it just fills the body, relaxes it." (I1: 233-234)

> "First thing I do in the morning is I drum and meditate. Because I do this, I don't need to live with pain killers." (I1: 184-185)

> "You know . . . it's [hand drumming] better than any pain reliever, medicine wise." (I2: 173-174)

The hand drummers in this study seemed to be benefiting from the described physical relaxation and pain-relief effects of hand drumming.

Disease Prevention and Addiction Treatment

Disease prevention also emerged as a theme, and drumming was perceived to be helpful in maintaining health, as well as addiction control:

> " . . . with even my family's medical history, I'm not afflicted even physically by a lot of things that my own family has. I am not diabetic, I do not have high blood pressure, I don't have any type of heart condition, there is a lot of things that, at my age, my family was afflicted with cancer, a lot of high blood pressure, a lot of heart disease, all kinds of stuff . . . I go have my yearly physical and the doctor always appears to be amazed. . . . So, I do attribute a lot of my health to the drum . . . ." (I2: 210-218)

> "I was provided with the opportunity to make my first drum and join a circle of women and started to drum and learn songs. All of this took place in a short period of time and I now believe it was meant to be that way. I was recovering from alcoholism and all this took place within the first year that I stopped

> drinking. The drum, the songs, and the women in that circle came into my life at that time to help me on that path to recovery . . . ."(CR3: 19-22)
>
> "When I am having difficulty coping with withdrawals [from smoking], I find strength and comfort in drumming and singing." (CR3: 73-74)
>
> "I have seen youth who have stopped dabbling in drugs and alcohol for that drum." (P3: 481-481)

Some of the participants credit drumming with helping them avoid diseases that are prevalent in their families, and others say the drum has helped them and the youth in their community find a new life, one that is addiction free.

Mental

The mental self seeks knowledge, understanding, and wisdom (Monture, 2000). These include developing our memory, problem-solving abilities, and skills (Chamberlain, 1998). The co-researchers described the mental category of the AWHD Circle of Life framework as thinking, intellect, brain, mind, and learning. The following themes emerged through the sharing circle, and were found again in the transcripts of individual interviews, and in personal journals: Cultural Knowledge; Positive Thinking and Confidence; and Calmness and Clarity.

Cultural Knowledge

Many Aboriginal women are searching for ways to learn more about their culture and hand drumming has provided many of them with cultural knowledge. Some participants began by learning an Aboriginal song and the learning continued from there.

> "I was learning songs--it wasn't hard. We had patient teachers that followed the tradition." (P1: 253-254)
>
> "When you sing with other people, you learn from others. There are different teachings in the songs. Personally, for myself, I don't know these things so I learn from other people." (P7: 877-879)

> "It's [hand drumming] expanded the knowledge I have of my own traditions . . . ." (I2: 230)

Many of the participants use the hand drum as a teaching tool to educate others about the Aboriginal culture. Some believe that learning may be enhanced when a cultural tool such as the hand drum is used.

> "I used it [the hand drum] for teaching purposes." (P5: 137)

> "Those kids, they understand, I think, that respect and those teachings much better through the drum than they do when trying to simply teach them something like that . . . ." (P3: 271-273)

> "I'm going to school in September and I would like to carry that [the drum] with me into the schools. . . . .We need to get them [the children] educated, and know there is a different culture, and we were the first people that were here on Turtle Island . . . ." (P7: 1080-1088)

Aboriginal people learn about their culture in different ways. They may learn from an Elder, the hand-drumming circle, or from a cultural tool such as the hand drum.

Positive Thinking and Confidence

Many of the participants credit their hand drum with helping them develop a positive perspective on life. This positive perspective may lead to an increase in confidence. The Aboriginal women hand drummers described themselves dealing with various situations:

> ". . . it [the drum] keeps me appreciating the goodness and nice stuff in the world, you have to just embrace that sometimes and not get wrapped up in the negative things because you will sink yourself." (P3: 518-521)

> "I think for myself that hand drum helps me be healthy because it helps me be positive." (P3: 1189-1190)

> "I have learned to identify my needs, for instance, when I start having negative thoughts and feelings towards others, it is time to drum and sing, and it always brings me back to feeling good about myself and others." (C3: 32-34)

> "[When I went to drum at my son's school] I was a little bit nervous when I realized how many people were there. Then I said, 'no just take it easy, just relax, and just pretend I'm in my circle of friends and drumming with them'." (P7: 645-647)
>
> "I don't know why it [hand drumming] just makes me feel that I can handle anything." (1185-1186)

A positive frame of mind from hand drumming has helped create a feeling of self-confidence in these Aboriginal women so that they are able to hand drum in front of others, or feel they can handle anything, or as one stated, "ready to tackle anything" (CR3: 69).

Calming and Clarity

The steady beat of the drum not only relaxes the body but also calms the mind. Many Aboriginal women today, such as the participants in this study, lead busy lives of raising children, working at various jobs, and/or some, attending school. All these responsibilities can lead to mental stress and worry. Hand drumming helps these women achieve mental well-being:

> "I have a stressful job--drumming relieves stress . . . . The beat relaxes our conscious mind." (I3: 43-44)
>
> "It [the drum] has been a huge, huge source on my healing path. . . . I don't worry about the big stuff . . . I don't get all hyped up, I don't go to bed thinking and worrying. There is no use in that." (P3: 1184-1187)
>
> ". . . it [hand drumming] brings me to a place where I can go within, and I can be in a very quiet place where I can hear my inner teacher, and I can sit and that calmness I know is the best medicine for me in my life because that's where I can work on being the best that I can be." (I1: 186-188)
>
> "I don't think of anything when I am drumming which is very unusual for me." (I2: 152-153)

The stress in our lives can create chaos in our minds, but the drum can help "centre" people and take them away from everything. Some Aboriginal women in this study choose to start their day with drumming so that they can be mentally ready for the day.

Emotional

The emotional part of self can touch all other things through feeling (Monture, 2000); it includes learning about emotions and how they affect us (Chamberlain, 1998). The co-researchers described the emotional category of the AWHD Circle of Life framework as: feeling(s), from the heart, and the gifts we do not see. The following themes emerged through the sharing circle, and were found again in the transcripts of individual interviews, and in personal journals: Being Moved; Humour and Fun; Happiness and Enjoyment; Coping with and Expressing Feelings; and Comfort.

Being Moved

Several of the participants described what it was like the first time they heard the hand drum. Many were overwhelmed with emotion:

> "It was the first time I heard women singing, and it was the first time I heard, I seen women holding the drum. I became extremely emotional about it and knew that, you know, that there was a sacredness to it and that I couldn't just run out and go buy myself a drum and make that happen." (I2: 69-72)

> "I remember the first time I heard women drumming and singing. It sent shivers up my spine, and I just couldn't control the tears that flowed down my cheeks. It seemed like there was something deep inside that needed to be released. I remember thinking, 'This is where it's at! I want to drum and sing just like those women'." (CR3: 15-18)

One participant expressed how she often feels emotionally moved when she is drumming and singing.

> "I often feel like crying for joy when I am singing, and I often get tears in my eyes when I am singing. My emotions come so close to the surface that if there are any negative feelings there, they are taken away." (CR1: 21-24)

Another participant described how the sound of the drum she had made impacted on her heart, which she referred to as the "sacred fire":

> "I found when I made a drum, it sounded so big--so booming; just like it hit me right in there [hits her heart]. That's where it hits right home at that beginning circle--right in that sacred fire." (P3: 328-331)

Some participants mentioned how their hand drumming emotionally affected other people's hearts:

> "And I hear them [people listening to the drumming and singing] say that is so beautiful . . . and I think my voice--oh my god as if--it must be my drum [laughter]. It's not my voice [she is laughing]. I don't consider myself a very good singer but together with the drum and my voice, it just hits everybody right here [points to the heart]." (P7: 630-634)

Being emotionally moved by the hand drum has been a catalyst for getting many Aboriginal women drumming. The strong emotions that were stirred by hearing the drum created a need in the women in this study to make their own drums. Not everybody feels the need to have a hand drum, but they can still benefit from other people's drumming and singing. The women hand drummers in this study noticed that their drumming and singing have emotionally touched others in the community.

Humour and Fun

Anyone who is part of an Aboriginal community knows that humour plays an important role in maintaining balance. Humour and having fun are particularly apparent in social circles such as women's hand-drumming circles. One stated, "we all have a good time and we laugh . . ." (I2: 131). Participants mentioned the use of humour as enabling them to laugh at their mistakes or to make others laugh in the circle:

> "I thought, I wish I can do that [drum], so my sense of humour would come out, so that I can laugh at my mistakes and boo boos . . . ." (P4: 92-93)

> "As long as I have a voice, I'll be here to make everybody laugh." (P4: 1015)
>
> ". . . women do come together and it's a good thing, we have fun . . ." (I5: 86)
>
> "I have discovered a wonderful way to socialize and have fun and could actually remember the fun the next morning!" (CR3: 24-25)

Laughter was heard throughout the sharing circle and individual interviews. For instance, when asked, 'How do you see yourself hand drumming in the future?' many sharing circle participants provided humorous replies such as:

> "Probably in my grave [lots of laughter]." (P1: 911)
>
> ". . . hopefully with my grandchildren--hopefully I'm not pushing up daisies [laughter]." (P3: 961-962)
>
> "I often think sometimes what I'm going to do when I get old. I'll just sing a song and someone will bring me some fish or flour, and I'll get something to eat [laughter]. Maybe I'll have no teeth, and someone will have to bring me something soft to eat [laughter]. . . . Be careful what you pray for. I do not want to live in a shack and sing for food [laughter]." (P4: 1000-1003, 1009-1010)

Humour and having fun help maintain an emotional balance and are therefore essential to Aboriginal circles. From personal experience I know that it is not uncommon for the Aboriginal women in the hand-drumming circle to share jokes or funny remarks in between songs. This makes the circle fun!

Happiness and Enjoyment

Aboriginal women in this study are finding happiness through hand drumming. Many are also finding happiness and enjoyment from being part of the women's hand-drumming circle. Moreover, they enjoy the happiness that hand drumming brings to others in the community, especially the children. A few of the participants mentioned their enjoyment of drumming with children.

> "When I play it [the hand drum], it makes me happy." (P2: 443)

> "I feel very happy with my group." (P2: 261)
>
> "I started with [names a certain hand-drumming circle] and no regrets because I'm really happy to be going there." (P5: 340-341)
>
> I see my kids feeling happy and content with that drum too so that makes me feel good." (P3: 1191-1192)
>
> "I think I started drumming with kids. I enjoy drumming with the children . . . ." (P3: 264-265)

Some would think that happiness and enjoyment is part of emotional well-being. However, one of the participants believes that happiness is part of mental well-being as well:

> "If hand drumming makes me happy that is part of mental well-being. . . .When I drum it makes me happy. I can only speak for how I feel when I drum and if it makes me happy then my mind is healthy and with that comes overall health and well-being" (P2: 1150-1521,1157-1159).

When the participants were contacted after the sharing circle to verify their transcripts, I asked this particular participant about happiness and mental well-being. She said, "if your frame of mind is happy first, you will feel happiness second." Regardless of which Circle of Life component is the best fit, it is apparent that the Aboriginal women hand drummers in this study receive happiness and enjoyment from their participation in hand drumming.

Coping with and Expressing Feelings

Aboriginal women in this study have used the hand drum to help them cope with and express either negative and/or positive feelings. Some have found that when they have experienced the loss of a loved one, the drum has helped them in the grieving process:

> "It [the hand drum] is important part of life because it is there to help you get through the rough times, through the good times." (P2: 949-950)

> "I really rely on that drum when I'm sad, when I'm happy, even when I'm angry sometimes. When I pick that drum up, I just feel better after I drum that song." (P3: 1172-1174)
>
> "The drum has been there to help me cope with feelings of frustration, anger, disappointment, and fear and has brought me back to a good place and to respect and accept that we are all individuals and we are all on different levels of our healing journeys." (CR3: 29-32)
>
> "The grief that I feel when I lose someone, it [the hand drum] helps me to grieve." (P3: 1176)

One participant felt the need to deal with her feelings in a more appropriate manner as a way to show respect to the Grandmother drum:

> "So when I feel angry, or I feel frustrated or something, I sometimes look at her [my Grandmother drum, as she refers to it] and I say 'oh-o. She's looking at me, you know. I better not yell too much and be more patient' when it comes to parenting because my son can be very challenging at times . . . ." (P7: 1361-1365)

The hand drum helped the participants cope with various emotions in a positive way. It has also helped one participant express her feelings in a gentle way, without words:

> ". . . it is such a gentle way of being through any emotion with the drum, having that drum sounding, and no matter what you're feeling, you can express it with such gentleness because you've got something there, right there resonating." (I1: 279-282)
>
> "It's like having feelings and not having the words to put to it. . . . For me, I pick up the drum when I'm like that and whatever it is, I don't have to put words to it. I don't have to put a language to it." (I1: 287-290)

Not dealing with or being unable to express feelings can be considered unhealthy. Fortunately, the women in this study are able to use their drums as a tool to help them release their emotions.

Comfort

Many of the participants described how the drum provides a feeling of comfort to themselves and to their children:

> "You have that Grandmother [drum] there to help you through that and give you comfort." (I1: 74-75)
>
> "It [the drum] is something that I can always count on to be there for me, and as my children grow up and move on and have lives of their own, it [the drum] is comforting during those times when I really miss them." (CR3: 75-78)
>
> "So, at the moment [when I found out I was very ill], the first thing I wanted to do was just to sing and play the drum and comfort that part of me that was just feeling vulnerable. I got so much comfort from that . . . ." (I1: 161-163)
>
> "My kids have always been around that drum, and they get comfort from that drum." (P3: 471-472)

The drum is like a grandmother to whom one can turn for comfort in times of emotional need.

Spiritual

Monture (2000) has claimed that the spiritual element of self believes in the connection of all things, and Chamberlain (1998) has added that it includes learning about and remaining connected to the Spirit World through observation, prayer, and ritual. The co-researchers described the spiritual category of the AWHD Circle of Life framework with the following words: prayer, higher power, Creator, the unknown, soul, and ancestors. The following themes emerged through the sharing circle, and were found again in the transcripts of individual interviews, and in personal journals: Awakening and Filling a Void; Help and Guidance; Connection to the Creator, the Spirit World, Mother Earth and other People; Contentment/At Peace; and Growth and Celebration of Life.

Awakening and Filling a Void

The Aboriginal women in this study described drumming as a way to awaken our spiritual connections. One participant talked about how hand drumming, "awakens our

connection to all life" (I3: 14-15). Another participant described how hand-drumming songs awoke her spirit and the spirits of people outside the Aboriginal culture:

> ". . . when I share my songs with other people, different cultures, that's how it was meant to be, that's how I feel. When I see, you know, how moved they are . . . . It's just what our songs do. It's what our songs do, you know, it gets people spiritually. I guess, sometimes people are not in touch with their spirit on a day to day basis and then when that happens they go 'Oh, my God!' They get overwhelmed sometimes because they feel their spirit. That's how I felt when I first starting hearing [drumming] songs." (I4: 143-145, 149-153)

For several Aboriginal women in this study the drum and the hand-drumming circle have helped them fill a spiritual void in their life. For some, this has led to a feeling of wholeness:

> "I felt so proud in making this drum and the connection. That feeling you get it is hard to explain. It's almost like I found that void that I was missing . . . ." (P5: 132-134)

> "But maybe I thank the Creator for patiently waiting for me to take that first step to go to the healing circle, to fill that void that I didn't want to admit was there or something." (P4: 96-98)

> "I enjoy the company of the other ladies [in the hand-drumming circle] and particularly learning from them about our culture. . . . And, there is no doubt in my mind that the spiritual void I felt is almost gone." [CR2: 110-111, 114]

> "I was ready to start drumming and singing with the women and being in that circle--that connection. I feel that wholeness now." (P5: 1316-1317)

Many in this study attributed their participation in hand drumming with a spiritual awakening or filling a spiritual void, which in turn moved them towards wholistic health and well-being.

Help and Guidance

Many people search for spiritual help and guidance and some of the participants perceived that they received this kind of support while hand drumming or through their hand drum:

> "And you can feel those spirits, and I think that was to help you, and what makes your voice sound nice. Like I said before, I didn't think my voice sounded nice. Maybe it's the other spirits coming in and helping you along the way." (P7: 900-904)
>
> "I think all the good things in my life come from that [the hand drum]. It comes from the spirits helping me on my path to do a good job."(P3: 980-981)
>
> "I keep my drum in a central area in my home so I feel like that is my grandmother watching over me." (P7: 1361-1362)

The hand drum seems to act as a spiritual helper to help the Aboriginal women on their path to health and well-being.

Connection

The Aboriginal women in this study use the hand drum, the songs, and the drumming circle to connect with the Creator, the Spirit World, Mother Earth, and to each other. One participant claimed she connected with the drum when it called out to her: "It may sound strange but it [the drum] was calling to me." (P2: 28). Several of the Aboriginal women said that drumming and singing help them connect spiritually because they are a form of prayer.

> "I believe drumming and singing is a wonderful way to pray to the Creator." (CR3: 64-65)
>
> "It [drumming] is also one of the ways of praying for their [her family's] health and well-being." (CR1: 39-40).

Some participants discussed how the spirits come around when they are drumming and singing:

> "When I sing now, I can feel the spirits now around me. I can see that with the young ones; they feel that too when we sing together because they want to sing." (P2: 149-151)
>
> "I've been to a circle where we were drumming, and the spirits were there. I think there was a trickster around the circle. . . . So it [the drumming] is so powerful that you feel these extra spirits with you in a circle. Even if there is only two

people, if there is only yourself, you're calling on other spirits with you, and those spirits are with you when you are drumming." (P7: 885-886, 895-898)

The word "connection" came up a number of times during the sharing circle, the interviews, and in the journals. When I asked the participants about the nature of the connection, they told me that it was a spiritual connection. Here are some examples:

> "They [the people I worked with] felt I had a connection with the drum that I should keep it [the hand drum]." (P3: 46-47)
>
> "I drum for the youth and for myself because I feel connected when I drum" (P5: 578-579)
>
> "I find happiness and connection with the Creator [with hand drumming]." (I3: 14)

A few of the participants shared how the drum helped them connect to someone who has passed on to the Spirit World. They also mentioned how drumming can provide those who have passed on with a safe and honourable journey to the Spirit World. This seemed to alleviate their fear of death:

> "To me, it [the drumming] is also a connection to the Spirit World--to my father, my uncle, who I was very close to, and my mother." (P3: 461-462)
>
> "It [the drumming] helps me connect with that person [deceased]. I feel like that and I feel like if I'm drumming for them, it's giving them a safe journey back to that Spirit World, back to that Western door. It is honouring that person." (P3: 513-516)
>
> "Sometimes when there is a death, you sing a traveling song to think of the travels that the person has to go on--the person that has passed away." (P7: 614-615)
>
> "It [the drumming] is a part of me too and all the important things in my life and my connection to the Spirit World. So I'm not afraid like I used to be about people dying. I think, like they are always there. My father's been gone for awhile, and I finally feel connected to him--like you know—finally! [laughter] But I finally feel him there. Sometimes I feel my mom there, sometimes my dad, my grandmother." (P3: 972-978)

Several of the participants discussed how the drumming circle helps them share an intimate spiritual connection with each other:

> "It is not just drumming, it is spirituality, and it's sharing your spirit with the women." (P1: 16-17)

> I find it's as if a veil gets lifted, and we get to see and share with each other this part of us that is very intimate, and everybody in that circle is, like, showing a bit of the healer in them." (I1: 52-54)

Becoming spiritually connected is obviously very important to the women hand drummers in this study. Using the drum, which is considered a sacred item, has helped the participants stay connected to each other as well as to the Creator, Spirit World, and Mother Earth.

Contentment/At Peace

The spiritual connection from the drum has led to feelings of contentment for several participants. When I verified the transcripts and themes with them, one defined contentment as a spiritual feeling of being at peace with herself, and the other participants agreed with this. In the sharing circle, interviews, and journals the following statements were made:

> "I get different contentment from different things, different groups but that drum has that one connected contentment, and that contentment keeps me healthy." (P1: 1144-1145)

> "It [the drumming] has been a huge, huge source for me on my healing path. Today, I think I'm a pretty solid person compared to five years ago even. I feel like the other lady was saying—I feel contentment." (P3: 1182-1184)

> "When we start out the evening just beating the drum together, I feel a certain peace and power." (CR2: 118-119)

> "It's spiritually satisfying, you know, like I always come out of drumming feeling, feeling good, like, my spirits are lifted. I'm really relaxed. It's a good thing." (I5: 156-158)

The Aboriginal women in this study have made it clear that being spiritually at peace or satisfied are feelings of contentment that they feel when they drum.

Growth and Celebration of Life

Several participants in this study talked about how the hand drum and their participation in hand drumming has helped their spiritual growth:

> "I'd say 8 years ago, I didn't know anything about the Native culture except the stuff you see on T.V. I just knew about dreamcatchers. I learned how to make them--that was my first step. Since then it's just grown because I've been searching for a long time. I'm finally feeling comfortable since I found the connection with my Grandmother drum." (P7: 1337-1342)

> "[I began hand drumming] just to help myself grow spiritually, in a spiritual sense." (I5: 3-5)

> "Over the years, my path has changed with the drum. It has expanded, it's grown because I've grown and, you know. The drum has remained the same, the spirit has remained the same, but I have grown." (I1: 82-84)

As one grows spiritually with the hand drum, one learns how to celebrate life and everything on Mother Earth:

> "When we drum, I believe that God celebrates with us in our joy and our communion with all of Creation." (I3: 24-25)

> "I drum to celebrate--Celebrate the sunrise. When I went to the sunrise ceremony, I got to see the sunrise. My drum was sitting there, and my drum got to see the sunrise for the first time. . . .When it is rainy, you celebrate water, and sing the water song." (P7: 605-607, 612)

Spiritual growth and celebrating life will help the participants from this study achieve spiritual well-being.

Social Support Networks

Participants were asked; "what do you get from drumming with other women (people)?" and the majority of the responses related to social support. Aboriginal people do many things in "circles"; drumming is one of them. A circle is a place where

Aboriginal people support one another. In health promotion terms this creates opportunities for developing social support networks. According to the Public Health Agency of Canada (n.d.), social support from families, friends and communities is associated with better health (Key Determinants 2). The co-researchers described the social support networks category of the AWHD Circle of Life framework as: friendship, circles, relationships, sharing knowledge and experience, support, groups, networking, and listening. The following themes emerged through the sharing circle, and were found again in the transcripts of individual interviews, and in personal journals: Sense of Community/Belonging; Anishnaabe Kweg/Women Togetherness; Helping Others/Helping Self; Family Bonding/Extended Family; Sharing/Listening; Safety/Stability; and Inclusiveness/Welcoming.

Sense of Community/Belonging

Drums are often played in a circle at the centre of an event or ceremony. This draws people to that circle, creating a sense of community and belonging. The Aboriginal women in this study described this as a feeling of "coming home":

> "[Drumming brings] Connection to others, support . . . . to be with people, sense of community and belonging." (P2: 763-766)
>
> "It [drumming] brings me back home, it brings me back to my childhood when we hear the drum . . . ." (P1: 419-420)
>
> "It [drumming] brings me home. It reminds me of where I belong." (P2: 450-451)

Many Aboriginal women in this study felt a sense of community and belonging when they heard the drum, and when they were part of a hand-drumming circle.

Anishnaabe Kweg/Women Togetherness

A special bond forms among Aboriginal women when they gather together to heal the wounds of common hardships with the power of the hand drum:

> ". . . there's really, really something special about being with other Anishnaabe Kwe [Aboriginal women] who, who understand the healing power of the drum."

Many Aboriginal women drum with women of other races and receive strength from these gatherings:

> ". . . drumming with other women [of various races], it's that same feeling again. You know, it's not like, it's not that it's how it should be, you know, women do come together, and women do come together, and it's a good thing, we have fun, and all that stuff, that's all part of, that's all part of gathering. But, drumming with other women is I think, you can get, you can get strength from that."(I4: 85-88)

Aboriginal women, known also as Anishnaabe Kweg, are finding ways to heal and gain strength from the hand-drumming circles they attend with other women.

Helping Others/Helping Self

Aboriginal drummers say that when they drum, they drum for their people. Hence, the drum takes care not only of those who drum but also those in the community: "It is not just about taking care of myself, it is about taking care of the people when I play the drum" (P4: 103-104). Many of the Aboriginal women in this study described how they helped others in the community by hand drumming for them, either alone or in a hand-drumming circle:

> ". . . when I drum at home, when I'm alone, I sing for the people that I know are hurting out there, family, friends, co-workers that I know that are having a rough time. I sing for them." (P2: 778-780)

> "When I'm drumming today we are helping so many people--not just me." (P4: 539)

> "I looked at the fridge today, and there is a piece of paper on the fridge I got from the kids at school when I went to do some circles out there. There is a simple

> black and white picture in pencil of a lady drumming, a girl drew on the bottom [pause], 'Thank you for coming to my school, you made me feel better than I did before [pause]'." (P4: 556-560)
>
> ". . . I hope to continue working . . . with the women and share my beliefs with the drum to help heal some of the women who have gone through hard times." (P1: 918-920)

The participants experienced reciprocal benefits; by helping themselves, they could also help others, or vice versa. As one participant stated, "You see, that healing [from drumming] wasn't just for her. It was for myself" (P4: 1209-1210). Aboriginal women in this study drummed to contribute to the healing process within their community.

Family Bonding/Extended Family

The importance of family and extended family was mentioned numerous times by the participants. One said she likes drumming in her home as a way to bring the family together. Another said, "I experience a special bond and closeness with them [my grandchildren] when we drum together" (CR3: 43-44). For other women, it was family that brought them to the drumming circle: "My sister brought me to the drumming circle. We do a lot of things together. This is one of them we ventured out into--hand drumming" (P2: 427-448). Several hoped that their family would drum together in the future:

> My future hope, because we [my family] all have drums now, is that we all drum in a circle." (P1: 915-916)
>
> ". . . I'd like to see the rest of the family be able to carry some drums and get together at family functions." (P7: 1070-1072)

Although they were not blood relatives, some women described people in the hand-drumming circles as their extended family: "It [the drumming circle] is kind of like family, I suppose . . . . I can call them [the women in the circle] my sisters" (P5: 773,

886). Family bonding and extended family from hand-drumming circles help to form a strong social support network in the lives of these Aboriginal women.

Sharing/Listening

In hand-drumming circles, much more happens than just drumming. For instance, some hand-drumming circles incorporate a sharing component. One participant explained her initial hesitation with sharing with others in a circle:

> "I remember saying this to my sister, 'I would really like to join a drum group, but I don't know about the sharing circle. I don't know if I can talk in those circles. I would like to go where I could just drum.' So I went anyway to the drumming circle and we did our sharing circle and it [drumming] goes with it [sharing]. It [drumming] is part of connecting with everybody, and the spirits, and [pause] and I don't know, it brings everything out and makes you feel comfortable, and makes them [the hand-drumming circle] feel like they're part of the family." (P5: 859-867)

Many of the participants realized that sharing as well as listening are key components to the healing that goes on in the hand-drumming circle:

> "I think I went because I go to listen to stories, especially the hard stories--got me to appreciate what I have that is so good. I think of that first drumming circle, and hearing all those stories from the different women, and where they all came from and where they've been in their life, and whatever town they came from--how far they went, and they came here to share their story." (P4: 317-322)

The Aboriginal women hand drummers who participated in the sharing circle for this study supported one another by sharing and listening to each other's stories.

Safety/Stability

If people are to reveal parts of themselves they need a safe place to do so. The Aboriginal women in this study felt that the hand drum, often referred to as a Grandmother drum, and the hand-drumming circle provided safety and stability:

> "We can be very shy when those parts of us [spiritual side] are revealing themselves, week after week, and other people will bring those things out that you didn't even know were in there but it can be safe to do that." (I1: 72-74)

> "Just going to [named the particular hand-drumming circle] was something solid, something that was a base for me too." (P7: 353-354)

Safety and stability are essential parts of Aboriginal hand-drumming circles.

Inclusiveness/Welcoming

The hand-drumming circles in the City of Greater Sudbury vary. For example, the co-researchers and I belong to an Aboriginal women's only hand-drumming circle, while other Aboriginal women in the community belong to drumming circles that include Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal men, women, and children. Inclusiveness in a hand-drumming circle and around the hand drum was particularly important to some of the women and they expressed the following:

> "We [the hand-drumming circle] get a lot of men that come, we get a lot of women, children, teens, non-Natives, Natives, and we have every race and colour. To me, it is important to share those teachings, to make that drum very friendly and to welcome everybody in. There is no exclusion." (P3: 282-285)

> "The drum circles should be all inclusive everywhere you go, and it doesn't matter if you sing it differently. It doesn't matter if you don't want to sing a lead, if you don't want to share or whatever--you should still be included." (P4: 815-818)

> "The drum doesn't know what colour anybody is, who's been bad or who's been good." (P4: 562-563)

A few participants in this study felt that the hand-drumming circle should be open to anyone. Moreover, one person felt strongly that people should not impose their ways in a circle:

> "Sometimes I feel like people are putting their own teachings, and their own way of singing, or their own way of doing that song, and it might be different from what I know, and they are sort of telling me I'm wrong. And, their telling me that's not the way you drum, that's not the way you are supposed to do it, that's not the way you are supposed to handle it. I get very--not defensive, I get very intimidated I guess, or maybe shamed. So I just put that drum down, and I feel very bad about that." (P3: 793-799)

One shared how she did not feel welcome the first time she attended a hand-drumming circle. For her, it was the drum that welcomed her, not the people:

> "When I had arrived there [at the hand-drumming circle] to be perfectly honest with you, I didn't feel very welcome. But as soon as the drums started to play, for me, it was like walking into somebody's home. It was like everything else disappeared, and it was as if my grandmother was sitting there in a chair saying, 'Honey come over here, come sit. You know, I've been waiting for you all this time' . . . ." (I1: 21-25)

Equality is part of being inclusive and welcoming and is important within the context of the hand-drumming circle:

> "We need to be kind, and courteous, and respectful, and honest, and loving to every single individual that's in that circle." (I1: 70-71)

> ". . . when I'm in the drum circle, I am just a drummer, I'm not the boss, I'm not the leader, I'm not the chair, I'm not head of the household, I'm just there to drum!" (I2: 148-159)

Each hand-drumming circle in the City of Greater Sudbury has its own protocol. Although everyone did not feel that all of the circles were welcoming and inclusive, it should be noted that most participants did feel welcomed and included in the hand-drumming circle of their choice.

Culture

According to Davidhazar & Giger (1993) culture is shaped by values, beliefs, norms, and practices that are shared by members of the same group. The co-researchers described the culture within the AWHD Circle of Life framework as: way of life, language, traditions, arts, music, ceremonies, behaviour, pow wows, gatherings, Elders. One co-researcher wrote a detailed description of culture in her journal. She described culture as:

> a living and breathing thing, it is carried within people as they walk through life,

> because it lives within a person. It is carried with them in everything they do, it is the 'way they look out into the world,' it is the way they interpret the world, it is the language, and its descriptions, and interpretation of the world around us. (CR4: 18-22)

The following themes emerged through the sharing circle, and were found again in the transcripts of individual interviews, and in personal journals: Pride; Passing on Teachings/Language; Practicing Teachings/Language; and Identity.

Pride

One of the co-researchers said that pride is the exact opposite of shame. Therefore, to eliminate feelings of shame, we need to start finding ways of promoting pride within our culture. The hand drum is a way to find pride and promote it:

> "When I first started drumming it was the connection I felt to that drum--just how proud I felt taking care of that drum and just carrying that drum." (P3: 84-85)
>
> "Teaching the youth, it was so nice to hear them sing. It made me feel proud of them, and that's why I still drum." (P5: 587-588)
>
> "The first time I heard my granddaughter sing a lead [the first verse of a drumming song], I felt like I was going to burst with pride, and watching my little grandson drumming for the first time brought tears of joy." (CR3: 44-46)
>
> "When I watch my youngest granddaughter drumming and singing, and when we do a lead for a song, she comes out and sings with a strong voice. I want to run around and tell everybody 'you should have heard my granddaughter'." (P1: 423-424)

Many of the women in this study felt proud that they owned a hand drum and were able to share it with children. They felt especially proud when the children participated in hand drumming.

Practicing Teachings/Language

The Aboriginal women in this study have learned a lot about cultural teachings and Anishnaabe language through drumming. They have begun to incorporate this knowledge into their everyday lives to promote their health and well-being. Even before they obtained a hand drum, many had prayed for that drum in a traditional way. One said:

> "I spent time praying, laying my tobacco down for that time when I was ready to maybe carry a drum and to learn those teachings . . . ." (I2: 77-78)

Traditional practices occurred during the sharing circle for this study. For instance, before the participants shared their stories, several stated their Spirit name. One participant did not hold the Eagle Feather that was being passed around the sharing circle because she was on her Moontime, so she had the person next to her hold it while she spoke. Some women will not use traditional items such as the Eagle Feather or the hand drum while on their Moontime. One participant said, "I do it [drum] just about everyday except you know . . . during my Moon[time] when I put all my [sacred] stuff away" (P2: 436-437).

Throughout the sharing circle, interviews, and journals, women shared several traditional teachings that they practiced. Many referred to caring for the drum as similar to caring for a child:

> "It [having a drum] was like caring for a little baby. I respected the drum and didn't leave it in the vehicle. I watered it, fed it, took care of it, and brought it to ceremonies, feasted it." (P3: 56-59)

> "It [the drum] is like your child; it is with you all the time. I have my drum with me all the time, and I play it." (P2: 440-441)

Another traditional drum teaching is that one should never touch the drum while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. However, one of the participants disagreed with this

teaching, and believed that the drum, being a Grandmother drum, would be there for the women when they needed it. She said:

> "The moment you drink [alcohol] you have to start thinking of that grandmother [drum]. Then when you come out with that hangover that grandmother [drum] is waiting there--just like your own grandmother. I wait for my grandchildren when they are hurting, and I hold them, and I hug them. I told the women that I worked with that have gone through some really hard times; it doesn't matter [if you have been drinking]. They say, 'but I have to wait 72 hours [before I used the drum].' A true grandmother does not tell you to come back in 72 hours when all drops of everything--not a trace [of alcohol] is in you.' No, the moment the grandmother will hold you is the time when you cry. I try and tell the ladies that, and I try and follow that teaching because that is what my grandmother told me. Come and see me and talk to me when you are in trouble. That is what our drums are--grandmother, grandmother spirits." (P1: 740-742, 745-754)

A core set of traditional teachings shared by many Aboriginal communities is the Seven Grandfather Teachings of love, respect, honesty, humility, wisdom, truth, and bravery. Several of the Seven Grandfather Teachings were referred to by the participants in the sharing circle, individual interviews, and journals. For example, several participants talked about how the drum teaches them about humility. One said:

> "I actually so appreciate that drum—it's really taught me to be humble." (P3: 1170-1171)

Several women also mentioned that the drum is a tool to help teach youth about respect, either directly or indirectly:

> "Those kids, they understand I think that respect and those teachings much better through the drum than they do when trying to simply teach them something like that . . . ." (P3: 295-299)

One participant was proud of the way her niece respected the drum, saying,

> "[I]t's just amazing to see how she [my niece] carried that drum, and how she respected her [the drum], and treated that drum . . . ." (P7: 1067-1068)

Another woman shared how her nephew handed over his drum to her, out of respect for the drum, because he was doing a lot of drugs. One participant who works with youth uses the drum to emphasize the importance of respecting other people's teachings that may be different from their own. She said:

> "I tell those young people to respect other people's teachings, and to walk gently when you are given those teachings not to offend somebody, or to tell somebody that their teaching isn't right because everybody has their own teachings." (P3: 295-299)

The Seven Grandfather teachings may vary slightly from one Aboriginal community to another. For instance, bravery and courage are used interchangeably depending on the Aboriginal community. Several participants in this study talked about courage:

> "I decided to get the courage and to walk in there [to the hand-drumming circle]. I was nervous at first because I didn't have a drum, and I'm walking into a drum group, and I didn't know what to expect." (P7: 212-214)

> "Drumming and singing provided me with the courage and strength I needed in the past couple of years when I suffered a medical condition." (CR3: 60-63)

> "The drum and the music that I sing give me courage to show my flaws in circles. It gave me courage to work out those weaknesses." (I1: 66-68)

The hand drum provided the women in this study with many teachings that they practice in their lives and in the hand-drumming circle:

> "It [the drum] taught me lots about patience, being kind, being humble about caring." (P3: 54-55)

> "We need to be kind, and courteous, and respectful, and honest, and loving to every single individual that's in that circle. The drum plays a big role in that for me." (I1: 70-72)

The teachings that surround the hand drum hold strong cultural values, and practicing them helps Aboriginal women hand drummers lead healthy lives. These teachings are

even more powerful when they are in the Aboriginal language. One participant claimed that learning and practicing the language is facilitated through singing hand drumming songs in the language:

> "I've taken [Ojibwe] language classes, and I very much struggled with pronunciation of the words but in drumming, it's nothing, I could actually do it! It also makes stringing your words together easier. The enunciations are easier, the understanding what those words mean is easier when I sing them." (I2: 254-258)

Passing on Teachings/Language

Passing on the teachings to the younger generation was vitally important to all the participants in this study:

> "I will continue drumming for as long as I can, and continue teaching the culture, and passing it on to the youth." (P5: 1019-1021)

> "I'm trying to learn everything about the drum so I can pass it on to my granddaughter. She is the reason why I went to the drum group. That's where I learned from this one very special lady how to feed, to water, and smudge the Grandmother drum. I wanted to have this knowledge for my granddaughter." (P1: 238-243)

> ". . . I guess another reason [why I began hand drumming] would be to learn these songs and pass them on to my grandchildren because right now I am starting to teach my grandchildren about culture. They have a hand drum, well, one of my grandchildren has a hand drum, so she knows what a hand drum's about but hasn't picked it up to sing so that's preparing them. I was, you know, imagining myself, later in life, going home to my reserve and teaching the kids. Teaching the kids how to sing." (I4: 10-13)

One participant felt the need to pass on the teachings of the drum to non-Aboriginal people as a way to take care of Mother Earth:

> ". . . teaching others [non-Aboriginal people] about who I am, about our culture, our traditions, and our way of life, to protect Mother Earth. All of that is part of drumming, part of singing, you know, some of the lyrics teach people how to, teach people about singing to Mother Earth and what we need to be doing." (I4: 119-122)

The attempts at assimilation imposed by the Canadian government interrupted the cultural ways and languages of Aboriginal peoples, hence, there are cultural and language gaps in the Aboriginal community. Many of the Aboriginal women in this study are trying to close those gaps:

> "It gives me such contentment to know I have given that much [hand drum teachings] to my grandchildren something I didn't give my children, but at least I'm leaving something to my grandchildren and the youth . . . ." (P1: 731-734)

> "I'm trying to teach my grandchildren before they get too old to pick up the drum. I'm trying to break that cycle. So they don't have to wait forever until they pick up a drum like I did because it wasn't in my life when I was growing up." (I4: 34-37)

> ". . . it [drumming] has helped me to learn the language a bit more. I was not raised with the language. My grandmother was a residential school survivor, and in protection of her own children, she never taught the language, so it was lost at my, my mother's generation." (I2: 251-254)

In teaching children about the traditions, several talked about the importance of giving children choices and allowing them to learn in their own way, at their own pace:

> "I try to give them [my children and grandchildren] choices but they always end up coming together. . . . So they can learn this [drumming] without me really forcing the teachings on to them." (P1: 394-395, 404-405)

> ". . . what they [the youth] learn is what they learn [from the hand-drumming circle] and what they take with them is what they take with them." (P3: 299-300)

> "For my kids I can't bring it [hand drumming] on to them or force it on to them just as long as it is there for them to learn. It's there, it's there!" (I4: 204-206)

> "I always tell women who say their child doesn't drum that they are still listening to those songs, so they are still learning them. It's nice to hear those kids walking around singing those songs even though they are not drumming, but they hear that drum." (P3: 473-475)

Through passing on the cultural teachings about drumming and the Anishnaabe language with the songs, it is hoped that future generations of Aboriginal people will know the teachings and the language:

> "When I see them [my grandchildren] drumming and singing, it renews my hope for our future as strong Anishnaabe people. I understand and try my best to fulfill my role as grandmother, and teach my grandchildren to be proud of who they are, and to keep our language, culture, and traditions alive. They will not forget. I am certain of that. Just as I have not forgotten the things that my parents and grandparents taught me." (CR3: 46-51)

Identity

Being able to practice traditions such as drumming and be part of Aboriginal hand-drumming circles allows Aboriginal people to identify with who they are. One woman said:

> ". . . when you're out there in the world sometimes in mixed company, or I often find myself in groups of non-Native people. I do feel differently, and I probably act differently, but it [the hand-drumming circle] is probably one of the few groups that I feel like I go in, and I can be totally myself, and not have to worry about observing what other people expect me to be. It is one of the places that I'm truly, truly, who I am." (I2: 132-138)

In addition, some of the Aboriginal women felt that the hand drum is part of their life and could not imagine their life without it:

> ". . . it [the drum] had to be part of my life everyday."(P2: 32-33)

> ". . . I just see it [the drum] being part of my life forever and ever. . . . I just think of it being part of my life, my healing, my health, my children's healing, their health, their ceremonies, their graduations, their baptismals, their weddings." (P3: 963-964, 968-970)

> "It [the drum] is just another extension. It has become part of my life. I can't imagine it [my life] without it [the drum] now because it is integrated in my life now." (P2: 1162-1164)

The Aboriginal women in this study identify with the hand drum and will continue to use it in the future as a way to maintain their identities and promote cultural health.

Wholistic

Aboriginal people commonly describe life as wholistic (Bartlett, 2005). The wholistic view is an Aboriginal perspective that emphasizes the interconnection between

all things (Walker, 2001). The Aboriginal concept of health is said to be wholistic because it integrates and gives equal emphasis to the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of the person (Hylton, 2002). The co-researchers and I discovered that some themes were strongly related to every category of the AWHD Circle of Life framework. We saw them as overarching themes and described them as being wholistic. These themes were Healing; Finding Voice and Empowerment; Renewal and Strength; and Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

Healing

Healing must occur in the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual aspects of a person (Nechi Training, Research & Health Promotion, 2005). Many of the Aboriginal women in the study talked about the drum being part of their healing journey:

> "I wanted to [drum], I was looking, I consider myself to be on a healing journey because I have a pretty rough past . . . ." (I5: 5-7)

> "[I]t [the drum] was very, very much tied into a big piece of my own personal healing journey and so that was probably, you know, if you're asking the question, 'Why did I begin to use the hand drum?' I knew about the drum as a healing tool by watching the women at work begin that healing and become stronger--just in how they handled the drum. So, I knew there was something to it [drumming]. Knowing that there was a piece of my own [culture], that it belonged to me at another level as a Anishnaabe Kwe [Aboriginal women], I knew that there was like some big, big doors to be opened in terms of my own healing . . . ." (I2: 77-86)

> "I went to a hand drumming workshop which was another part of the healing." (P5: 1312-1313)

> "It [the drum] has been a huge, huge source for me on my healing path." (P3: 1182)

Several participants talked about the emotional healing they receive from the drum. One said:

> "I often feel like crying for joy when I am singing, and I often get tears in my eyes when I am singing. My emotions come so close to the surface that if there are any negative feelings there, they are taken away. In this way, drumming is very healing and certainly promotes well-being. One could also extrapolate and say that singing and drumming are powerful tools to be used in the healing process of Aboriginal peoples." (CR1: 21-27)

One participant talked about the physical healing that the drum provides the body. She said:

> "There is something to Grandmother drums that will heal or begin the healing process in the body." (P1: 756-757)

Two of the women talked about how they use the drum to provide healing to others in the community:

> "I hope to continue working with the youth, with the women and share my beliefs with the drum to help heal some of the women that have gone through hard times." (P1: 918-920)

> " [A lady who had lost her husband, told one of the women hand drummers that] . . . I feel like the music and the drum brought me a healing, and I feel better about all of this here, and I feel like I've begun my mourning." (I1: 213-214)

The hand drum is clearly a tool that the Aboriginal women in this study use to heal themselves and the community at large.

Finding Voice and Empowerment

Many women spoke about finding their voice in this world. For them, it was more than just physically using their voices to sing; it was about having enough confidence to speak up and express themselves in a circle. In finding their voices, they felt empowered. For many it started out as being able to sing a "lead" (the first verse of a song) alone. They stated the following:

> "I never thought that I would sing by myself and used to panic as it was close to my turn [to sing a lead]. Although I will probably never have a strong voice, it is much better than it used to be, and I don't worry about it." (CR2: 104-106)

> "I have always had kind of a quiet voice and have often wished that my voice was more able to be heard. When I am singing, I don't have that feeling; I feel that I have finally 'found my voice' and that it can actually be heard. What a wonderful feeling that is, I can never forget how shy I was when I first joined the drum group. I remember the first couple of times that I couldn't even get myself to try to sing by myself. I was okay when everyone was singing, I could sing along, but as soon as it was my turn everything went out of my mind, and I couldn't do it. That soon passed and what a milestone in my life that was. It was the voice of the drum that gave me the strength to give voice to my being and to my place in the universe." (CR1: 42-52)

> "I find that drumming and singing has improved my self-confidence and self-esteem, and I feel comfortable speaking in front of a group of people. Before I started drumming, I was very self-conscious and lacked the confidence to share my thoughts about anything. I took my drum everywhere with me, when I first started, even out to the blueberry patch, where I could drum and sing as loud as I could." (CR3: 7-11)

One of the participants felt that she had empowered herself by reclaiming her voice as a woman:

> ". . . it [hand drumming] was about women, women reclaiming their voice. Women are very much taught to be very demure and are not noisemakers, are not really seen as the aggressor . . . ." (I2: 27-29)

Later on in the interview when discussing what one gets from hand drumming with others, this participant stated:

> ". . . what was always amazing to me through that process [drumming with others] is the reclamation of my voice as a woman because I notice that, you know, when I was doing a lead, or I was singing with the group, I had a very timid voice, and it was very much in the throat area. The noise that I would make, it was in the throat area, and I'd say probably about, probably six months later, I felt that my voice was getting stronger as I was singing, and I'd say today that when I sing, I sing from my core, from my, you know, my place of power, and it doesn't matter who's in the room, who's around, how many. I'm able to do that which is really amazing . . . ." (I2: 109-118)

Hand drumming and being part of a drumming circle helped many Aboriginal women find or reclaim their voices. They saw this as an important step toward personal

empowerment. One said, "being part of the drum group has empowered me immeasurably" (CR1: 54).

Renewal and Strength

Individuals in this study felt renewed or reborn from the drumming. They also felt stronger and better able to handle things. In a journal, a co-researcher wrote:

> "No wonder you see many babies so peaceful or even asleep at pow-wows! All of us began our lives in this way, and after I drum or hear the drum, it is like I am reborn, rejuvenated, and re-energized, and ready to tackle anything! Just like a baby who just came from its mother's womb." (CR3: 67-70)

Many women specifically identified how the hand-drumming circle provided renewal and strength:

> "In a way, it [the hand-drumming circle] is like going to ceremonies. When I come back from ceremonies, I feel so refreshed, so happy to be alive, so renewed, so able to handle whatever comes my way in my personal and family life, in my work environment, and in the larger environment. It is a sense of well-being and the ability to look at the world through fresh lenses." (CR1: 54-59)

> "I started [named a particular hand-drumming circle] also, I found it gave me strength to go through a lot of things that where happening in my life." (P7: 350-351)

> ". . .there is a strength there [in the hand-drumming circle] even if there is only two people. You feel that power between two, between two drums and two singers. If there is twelve, it is even more powerful!" (P7: 881-883)

Both the hand drum and the hand-drumming circle have provided individuals in this study a sense of renewal and the strength to be able to deal with life.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin

Mino-Bimaadiziwin is the Ojibwe term that most closely defines health. It means living a good life and treating others well. This theme emerged from the participants' descriptions of their lives as hand drummers:

> "I'm human and I'm not perfect, but it [the drum] helps me to try and do good and see good . . . . It [the drum] bring out the goodness in myself but also in other people." (P3: 981-983, 1190-1191)
>
> "I find when you're in a drumming circle, depending if you've been in that circle with those same people for a long period of time, or if it is a new group of people together. I find there is different things that I will get from it, but what the similarities are that I experience from all those circles--it is usually the best of them is coming out, the kindness, and the trueness of their heart, their spiritual side that they may not show otherwise." (I1: 46-51)
>
> "When I carry this [the drum], I thought that's what helps me to do things, and be polite, and things." (P4: 1269-1270)

The participants shared how drumming is part of the cultural way of life that is healthy and balanced:

> "The Grandmother drum is part of your way of life. If it's your way of life then you know that there are certain things that you must do. You know, to live like that, when you have a drum, already you have been walking on that road for awhile, and maybe going to sweat lodges, and the ceremonies that we have. That becomes part of your way of life, right? And, part of promoting health is promoting culture because you're already living that way, and you are already living a healthy lifestyle. But, even for people that want to learn about their culture and stuff, it's all about living a healthy lifestyle, and it keeps you healthy, keeps you balanced." (I4: 195-204)
>
> "I feel like I walk more healthy today while carrying my Grandmother drum." (P7: 1353-1354)

The hand (Grandmother) drum is a tool that helps the participants promote Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

CHAPTER 5

Discussion

The findings of this exploratory study demonstrated that Aboriginal women participating in hand drumming within an urban community perceived many health-promoting benefits when they engaged in hand drumming in that community. Some themes of the AWHD Circle of Life framework (**see Figure 3**) were stronger than others; that is, these themes occurred with greater frequency or were accorded greater importance by the participants. These themes included: Connection, Helping Others/Helping Self, Practicing Teachings/Language, and Passing on Teachings/Language. Overarching themes were those with strong connections to every area under the AWHD Circle of Life framework and these were identified as wholistic.

Today, with a fast-growing health industry, the word (w)holistic is often used and abused to market health products and services in mainstream society. However, Aboriginal people use the word wholistic in a sacred and non-competitive way when referring to health because of the unique cultural way of life they have practiced for centuries. Our cultural way of life is based on collective relationships with one another and with Creation, this is relationality (S. Wilson, personal communication, August 10, 2005). An understanding of the relationships that bind together natural forces and all forms of life has been fundamental to the ability of Aboriginal peoples to live in harmony with the land (Cajete, 2000). As the Elders commonly say, "everything is related."

The Circle of Life is a tool used by Aboriginal people to help us see how everything is interrelated and equally important. Utilizing the Circle of Life as the conceptual framework ensures wholistic interpretations (Katt, 1995). Although the Circle

of Life is divided into four equal quadrants, the Elders teach us that each quadrant is a continuum, interrelated and interconnected with one another (Bopp et al., 1989). Menzies has explained that for an Aboriginal person, "all things are interconnected, whereas mainstream tends to isolate elements" (Tillson, 2002, p. 13). Exploring the categories of the AWHD Circle of Life framework separately was not meant to disrespect the teachings and the concept of wholism that has been promoted for hundreds of years by Aboriginal cultures. The co-researchers and I explored each category individually to determine the various health-promoting benefits of Aboriginal women's hand drumming. As themes emerged from the data, they were placed into a single category; but we knew that these were not mutually exclusive categories, so a change in one category will affect the whole, and the "whole" is more important than its parts. Drumming speaks to our whole being. A co-researcher described the interconnected benefits of hand drumming in the following manner:

> When I nurture my spiritual side, I am motivated to take care of my mental, physical, and emotional well-being as well. After I go drumming, I feel more like walking and being physically active. I think good thoughts and approach my day-to-day contact with family and others in a more positive manner. If I am upset about something, instead of reacting, I take the time to think about the issue and can resolve it in a more caring and respectful way. (CR3: 36-41)

The hand drum is a tool that has been shown in this study to promote physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual balance as well as cultural and social support within the hand-drumming circle. The interconnections between themes and categories became an important focus in the interpretation of the data and were critical to developing a

wholistic category which provided an in-depth understanding of the link between health promotion and Aboriginal women's hand drumming. The wholistic themes that emerged in this study were Healing; Finding Voice and Empowerment; Renewal and Strength; and Mino-Bimaadiziwin.

All the themes that emerged are considered part of the wholistic, health-promoting nature of Aboriginal women's hand drumming. I will now discuss the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, culture, social support networks, and wholistic themes in relation to the literature review, new emerging literature, and oral perspectives from Elders and the co-researchers.

Physical

> "The drum was the first thing to come to the Native people; the drum was the gift of Creation. It is the sound of the heartbeat, the sound of the wind in the trees, the sound of [M]other [E]arth." (Patterson, 1995, p. 2)

Aboriginal people believe that everything on this earth is a gift from the Creator. As Shestowsky (1993) has noted, "Good health is viewed as a gift from the Creator. It is believed that if one shows respect for oneself and one's health, then one is showing appreciation for the Creator's gift" (p. 7). Thus it is important to respect the physical body that the Creator has given us. Most of the literature I located on the physical health benefits of hand drumming centered on body tension and being out of rhythm. Similar themes emerged within the present study when participants referred to Energy and Movement, Synchronicity and Entrainment, and Relaxation and Pain Relief.

In trying to respond to the fast-paced world of the 21st century, we need to learn how to slow our heart rate to its natural rhythm. Lounsberry (2002) has said that "many people suffering rhythmic mismatches and stressful demands may refrain from their

natural rhythmic selves in order to accommodate the external world" (p. 45). To get back into rhythm, drumming in time with our heartbeat can realign the body's natural rhythm (Friedman, 2000; Kaplan, 2000; Lounsberry, 2002; Strong, 1998). This can be done either alone or within a group.

The hand-drumming circle to which the co-researchers and I belong to sometimes begins the circle with a grounding exercise. This exercise begins with everyone drumming to a slow steady rhythm--one resembling the heart beat. Many of the members in our circle have said that this helps them relax after their busy day. Similarly, the participants in this present study expressed how the beautiful sound of the drum relaxes them. According to Lounsberry (2002) it is the sound, vibration, and rhythmic beats that help us deal with tension. One participant stated:

> [T]he vibration [of the drum beat] goes through the skin, and the tissue, and the organs, and the bone, and it goes right to the heart, and it just fills the body, relaxes it. . . . Your body says, 'I want to surrender because this [the drumming] is so beautiful. This is something speaking my language.' (I1: 233-234; 239-240)

Another participant said that drumming relieves stress and increases vitality because it is like a physical activity that gets the heart pounding, our blood flowing, and releases endorphins (I3: 42, 45-46). From a physiological standpoint, Aboriginal hand drumming provides a form of mild exercise. Exercise studies indicate that mild exercise (low intensity) does reduce tension and enhance energy (Saklofske, Blomme, & Kelly, 1992, p. 24). Hand drumming also, from my experience, can be both relaxing and energizing, depending on the pace of the hand-drumming song. Slow songs are more relaxing, and fast songs are energizing, prompting some women to dance to the drumbeat. Our bodies

entrain to the pace of the song (Friedman, 2000). Although we did not take physiological measures, our heart rates seemed to vary depending on the pace of the song. Sometimes the drumming pace varies based on the internal rhythm of the person who takes the lead.

As the body becomes relaxed and/or invigorated, individuals may experience pain relief; several participants mentioned the pain-relieving effect of drumming. Lounsberry (2002) reported that some participants in her study found that their pain was reduced and eventually disappeared as they drummed. Studies have shown that the rhythmic sound of the drum facilitates an increase in the number of Alpha brainwaves (Maxfield, 1990; Neher, 1962). Alpha waves occur with relaxation, which is also associated with pain relief (Cole, 2002; Friedman, 2000).

Some participants in the present study stated that they obtained energy from drumming. This is not surprising, given that each hand drummer creates energy through drumming vibrations that travel through the circle. The energy can be heightened as the group synchronicity increases. One participant explained that as people drum together they quickly learn to be in synch (I2: 44-45). Synchronous has been defined as: "1. occurring or existing at exactly the same time; simultaneous. 2. moving or taking place at the same rate and exactly together." (Avis et al. 1983, p. 1141). I have noticed that when someone is out of synch it can throw the whole circle off. However, as the women in the hand-drumming circles increase their synchronicity, it is likely that their heart rates and Alpha waves are affected so that their whole body responds. In the musical literature this is referred to as entrainment (Friedman, 2000; Lounseberry, 2001; Maxfield, 1992; Strong, 1998). Although most of the women in the present study probably did not think

about the actual physiological and neurological processes they experienced, they know that the beat of the drum is important because it represents the heartbeat of Mother Earth.

Other physical themes emerged that were not found in the literature reviewed in preparation for the present study. These themes included: Food; Voice; and Disease Prevention and Addiction Treatment. These themes were not surprising given their close connection to hand drumming and health promotion.

In Aboriginal cultures, food is an important part of any gathering. For many in the present study, food was a factor that encouraged them to attend the hand-drumming circle. Fortunately, the feasts or potlucks in the Aboriginal community often incorporate healthy traditional foods such as corn, moose meat, and strawberries. This is important given the high rates of obesity in the Aboriginal community, partly caused by fast food consumption. An Elder (2004) has said that "our people have gone through trauma and are filling their body with food. They are looking for nourishment" (Personal communication, January 19, 2004). Perhaps, our people are searching for the emotional or spiritual nourishment that they may be able to obtain from drumming. One participant indicated that she drums as a healthy alternative to over-eating. Another participant remarked that if we focused more of our attention on taking care of our drum, and ourselves we would not need to worry about our weight.

The participants also discussed the importance of being physically able to use one's voice. Singing is a physical skill that many Aboriginal women learn when they become involved in hand drumming. Aboriginal people today are beginning to show off their talents. Many have beautiful voices; this has been recognized in recent years by Aboriginal specific awards that are part of the Junos and Grammies, and award

ceremonies such as the Canadian Aboriginal Music Awards, and the Native American Music Awards. We have many talented Aboriginal women artists such Buffy Ste Marie, Joanne Shenandoah, and the Aboriginal women singers from various hand-drumming circles. As more of us begin to sing and drum, we may find other hidden talents. One participant said, "this is the voice that the Creator saw fit to give me, and if I wasn't meant to be heard then I wouldn't be a singer" (P2: 122-123). Even if one considers oneself to be a bad singer, it is healthy to release one's voice. While there are documented accounts of the healing power of voice, it is beyond the scope of this thesis to examine this area.

Many Aboriginal women suffer from chronic health conditions (Health Canada, 2002). Therefore, it was encouraging that participants noticed a relationship between hand drumming and disease prevention. They also found that hand drumming was helpful in dealing with their addictions. While I did not locate any literature on Aboriginal hand drumming and disease prevention, the use of traditional activities in addiction treatment for Aboriginal people has been reported (Garrett & Carroll, 2000). Stevens (1999), an Aboriginal author, has noted: "The people of Alkali Lake in Canada have demonstrated the power of these traditional ceremonies. They were able to conquer community-wide alcoholism by re-establishing their cultural ceremonies" (p. 36). A non-Aboriginal study reported that drumming has application as complementary addiction therapy, particularly for those who experienced repeated relapses (Winkelmen, 2003). Mark Seaman, the owner and operator of Earth Rhythms in West Reading, Pennsylvania, has used drumming to help people recovering from drug and alcohol addiction. He has led a drumming program at the well-known Betty Ford Clinic and noted that, "Many addicts

feel that their joy in life is over when they quit drinking or using substances" (Doyle, para. 16). Seaman shows addicts that they can have fun without being stoned. Similarly, one of the participants in the present study, who was a former alcoholic, discovered that drumming was a fun social activity that she could actually remember the next day. The incorporation of Aboriginal cultural practices has been used in addiction treatment as well as in substance abuse prevention (Hazel & Mohatt, 2001). Today, there are Aboriginal youth drumming circles in Sudbury that focus on substance abuse prevention. Hence, drumming may help reduce the incidence of alcohol and drug use in the Aboriginal community.

Mental

Only three themes emerged under this category: Cultural Knowledge; Positive Perspective and Confidence; and Calming and Clarity. The literature reviewed for this study mainly reflected cultural knowledge, and how drumming alleviates mental fatigue by calming and increasing clarity of the mind. As stated in the literature, many Aboriginal people are seeking cultural knowledge. Participants in the present study indicated similar needs and attained greater cultural knowledge through hand drumming. In learning the teachings of the drum, some are also beginning to use the hand drum as a teaching tool. Hopefully, the drum can be used to teach our youth as well as those outside our culture about our important and beautiful traditions. This may help dispel the negative stereotypes often associated with Aboriginal people.

The results of the present study showed that women obtained mental stress relief from drumming. More specifically, participants stated that drumming was a way to unclutter their minds of their busy schedules and escape the daily pressures of life.

Drumming has also helped some perceive that the little things we develop stress from are really not that important. Several participants said that they used the hand drum to meditate and centre themselves. The relaxation they experienced may be connected to what neurobiofeedback studies have shown; drumming increases Alpha brain waves and relaxes the brain (Friedman, 2000). In non-medical terms, Michael Drake, who is a ceremonial drummer of Cherokee descent, claimed in an interview with Robert Mann (2002) that drumming stops the chatter of the mind and frees us from the cage of our doubts, fears and habits. Therefore, drumming gives the overworked brain a well-earned rest. One participant explained that the beat [the rhythm] relaxes our conscious mind, which helps us regain clarity and the ability to stay focused (I3: 43, 48). Another participant stated that she does not think of anything when she is drumming which is unusual for her (I2: 152-153). This has been referred to as "being in the here and now" (Friedman, 2000); when one hits the drum one is placed in the present moment, as this participant experienced.

While one is drumming, if any thoughts come to mind, they tend to be positive. One of the participants said that she has learned to identify her needs, and when she starts thinking negatively, she knows it is time to drum again (CR3: 32-34). Moreover, being around other people who are trying to make positive changes in their lives helps create a positive perspective. Drumming circles can also increase one's confidence. Participants in this study felt more confident as a result of their drumming. Both Lounsberry's (2002) and Kaplan's (2000) results indicated that participants in their studies also attributed their increased confidence to their drumming. In a drumming circle, no one is considered a failure; drumming is something that almost anyone can do, and one's singing ability is

never criticized. As one participant said, "you never feel like you're doing something wrong, or you get the songs wrong, or you're on the wrong beat, or something like that" (I2: 129-130). Another woman discussed her sense of accomplishment after learning a difficult song. Many of the participants in the present study indicated that they have gained enough confidence to drum and sing in front of others. It is not uncommon to see Aboriginal women hand drumming in the community where the present study was completed. One participant mentioned that being able to complete a skill and have people appreciate it was also rewarding, even if those people are children.

Emotional

Many Aboriginal people, like the women in this study, described feeling emotionally moved when they hear the drum. One participant said that when she sounded her newly-made drum it "hit her heart" which she referred to as "the sacred fire" (P3: 329-331). Some participants felt especially moved when they first heard women hand drumming and singing; some were brought to tears. One said, "It seemed like there was something deep inside that needed to be released" (CR3: 15-18). This emotional connection to the drum may be because the rhythm of the drum resembles the rhythm of heartbeat that we heard in the mother's womb. Moreover, the voice of women may resemble our mother's lullabies. Being emotionally moved by the drum increased the participants' desire to drum.

The hand drum is being used by many women in this study as a medium for emotional release. As stated by Logan (1979), "If we have sadness we use the drum as an outlet and we find solace. In anger there is relief, if afraid, there is courage" (p.17). Lounsberry (2002) has pointed out that music, such as drumming, is like an energetic

massage that opens blockages, moves energy, and releases pent-up emotions. Some Aboriginal drum leaders advise that we drum through any emotion; however, others say not to drum when feelings are negative. Medicine Eagle (1991) agrees with the latter: "If you sent this [negative] energy out through the drum, its vibrations fill everyone who hears it with this same energy" (p. 127). Despite this perspective, many participants in this study felt that it is important to use the drum as a way to release emotions that are both negative and positive.

In addition, when Aboriginal people have difficulty expressing their feelings through the medium of language, they can express themselves with drumming. As Klower (1997) has noted, some people are better able to express themselves through singing and drumming. One woman in this study described how she was able to use the drum to help her express feelings. Perhaps drumming could also help other Aboriginal people deal with fears around self-expression.

The women in this study also talked about how drumming helped youth; many of the youths they work with have emotional issues. Friedman (2000) has used the drum with at-risk youth to allow them to release emotional pain in a safe and gentle way. The participants stated that the drum, also referred to as the Grandmother drum, provides emotional comfort to all who surround it. It especially helped comfort participants who were grieving the loss of friends and relatives. This study has demonstrated how Aboriginal people on their healing journey are learning to let go of painful emotions, while also learning how to have fun with the drum.

Friedman (2000) believes it is difficult to have fun and be stressed at the same time, which is why the emotional release gained in laughter and having fun is so

important to the Aboriginal circle. Humour is considered "good medicine" in the Aboriginal community. Napoli (2002) discussed humour and Aboriginal people in the following manner: "When their hearts are heavy with emotion or a situation is difficult Native people embrace humor as a way of healing. Humor helps the person feel a sense of relief" (p.1573). Poirier (2001) has also explored the Algonquin perspective of humour. Her participants described humour as vital to their survival in urban environments and felt humour played a role in healing. When the Aboriginal women in the present study gathered together, they laughed and had fun. Those who participated in the sharing circle made many jokes, and there was much laughter. Similarly, they described having fun in their hand-drumming circles. From my experience, there is always good healthy laughter in hand-drumming circles; sometimes I am having so much fun, I do not want to leave. Some participants said how they even felt comfortable enough to laugh at themselves while in the hand-drumming circle.

Spiritual

Of the four elements of being (physical, mental, emotional and spiritual), the spiritual element was discussed most frequently by the participants. This is no surprise since spirituality is central to Aboriginal people and an integral part of every aspect of daily life. From the Aboriginal perspective, spiritual needs are every bit as important as eating and breathing: It is what one participant described as sustenance. She stated, "It [the drumming] is as important as air to me" (I1: 6-7). For this reason, Aboriginal people need to feel spiritually connected; this explains why the word "connection" came up numerous times in the sharing circle, interviews, and journals. One participant said, "the drum awakens our connection to all life" (I3: 14-15). Accordingly, the participants

believe the drum can be used as a tool to connect with the Creator, the Spirit World, Mother Earth, and other members of the community. As Smith (1999) has said, "to be connected is to be whole" (p. 148).

Participants acknowledged that the drum is extremely powerful, and often special and specific to each individual. Each drum has its own spirit, and just as one is seeking a drum, it is seeking them too. One participant said, "it [the drum] was calling me" (P2: 28). Participants in Lounsberry's (2002) study were also "called" by the drum. Based on personal experience and what the women hand drummers in this study expressed, the drum can help us find our spirituality. The hand drum is a spirit being, often considered a Grandmother. Therefore, it is more than just an instrument for making music. The hand drum is a living being; it must be played to be kept alive. It makes me sad to hear that hand drums are sometimes placed away in a closet and never played. These spirits are lonely and sad. If drums are not being used, they should be given away to someone who will respect the spirit of that drum.

Patterson (1995) noted that the following prophecy made by Louis Riel has been preserved in oral history: "My people will sleep for hundreds of years. When they awake, it will be artists who will give them back their spirits" (p. 109). When we make contact with the drum, it awakens our spirits and can fill a spiritual void that we may not even have known was there. Stevens (1999) agrees: "for many years I had been starved of the Spirit and did not even know it" (p. 29). One participant in this study said, "[With the drum] it's almost like I found that [spiritual] void I was missing" (P5: 134). It is as if the drumbeat connects to our heartbeat and is able to help and guide us on our journey. Without the use of sacred items such as the hand drum, we as Aboriginal people may feel

lost and disconnected from our deeper spiritual selves. The sacred drum connects us to the spirit and gives us a spirit voice. One participant said that when she is drumming, the spirits help her voice sound nice. Drumming is a way to communicate with the spirits. Basil Johnston (1982) stated:

> Only the drum possessed the special tones that would be suitable for the audience of the spirits. There was no sound, human or natural, to compare to it. What the drum imparted neither man nor women could understand, for it transcended human comprehension, going beyond it in the form of an echo that could be heard only by spirits. It was a mystery; and therefore it was the best way for man to communicate with the Spirit World. While he drummed, man chanted, so that his petitions were borne by the echo of the drum and transformed into the language of the spirits who dwelled above and below and beyond. (p. 100)

The drum serves as a bridge between us and the spirits and helps us to send out our prayers. Black Elk believes that, "When you pray with that drum, when the spirits hear that drum, it echoes. They hear this drum, and hear your voice loud and clear" (Black Elk & Lyon, 1990, p. 149).

In the hand-drumming circle, as one person connects spiritually, others often do as well. It may even be contagious, like a rippling effect. There is a spiritual power in drumming together that cannot be achieved alone. As one participant stated, " there is a strength there [in the hand-drumming circle] even if there is only two people. You feel that power between two, between the two drums and two singers. If there are twelve it is even more powerful" (P7: 881-883). This participant reminded us that the spirits hear the calling of the drum and may come to visit the circle. She said, "even if there are only two

people, if there is only yourself, you're calling on other spirits with you when you are drumming" (P7: 896-898). Those spirits may be one's ancestors or a loved one who has recently passed on. Several of the participants talked about being able to connect to a loved one who had passed on via their hand drumming. They also mentioned that some hand-drum songs are sung to honour those who have died. For instance, the traveling song is often sung in the Ojibwe community to allow the person who has passed on a safe journey to the Spirit World. Having a tool to connect with their deceased loved ones has decreased the fear of dying among some of the participants in this study.

Drumming helps us mourn, but it also helps us celebrate. With the drum we are able to celebrate our connection to the Creator and all of Creation. Drumming is a celebration, a spiritual expression that can be shared with others who take part by listening, dancing, or drumming along. Participants described drumming as a way to connect spiritually to others, either in the hand-drumming circle, or to those external to it. One participant explained that being able to open up spiritually and connect with others is like a veil being lifted. The hand-drumming circle is a place where people are able to share their spirituality with others. Further, she said, "how often do we hear, 'we're not talking religion or politics' because of arguments, but it [the hand-drumming circle] is, it's a safe, it's a wonderful avenue to explore [spirituality] when you have that drum there" (I1: 316-319). This has allowed many participants to grow spiritually through the hand drum and the circle.

Michael Drake, in an interview with Mann (2002) has reported that feelings of peacefulness and spiritual well-being can be obtained by drumming. Several of the participants from this study described such feelings of contentment. They described

contentment as a spiritual feeling of being at peace with oneself. As Elder Lokoduq has said:

> The rhythm of the drumbeat aligns with my spiritual rhythm, which brings contentment and peace within. I've gone through many hurdles, and it feels good to come to a point of my life where I can respect and accept myself. This is just a small part of the healing journey that we as Native women need to go through to strengthen our spirits and obtain that contentment. (Personal communication, April 16, 2005)

Drumming with others also helps us achieve contentment and peace. When drumming with others and becoming in synch, the spiritual energy spreads throughout the circle. One participant said, "When we start out the evening just beating the drum together, I feel a certain peace and power." (CR2: 118-119). Spiritual items such as the drum help us as Aboriginal people to achieve peace and contentment. Elder Lokoduq explained to me that even though one may feel content and be at peace, this does not mean that one's spiritual growth is complete. To maintain such contentment and peace, one needs to keep spirituality as part of one's everyday life (personal communication, April 16, 2005).

Indigenous people around the world have always known that the drum is a powerful spiritual tool. In a study of Australian Aboriginal people, participants considered spiritual connections with ancestors as important components to their sense of well-being (McLennan & Khavarpour, 2004). When we lose touch with our spiritual ways, such as drumming, we lose touch with the Creator and all the elements on Mother Earth, and we are out of balance. It has been said that the underlying purpose of this

(spiritual) contact is to provide the Aboriginal person with direction in restoring the desired balance in his/her life (Letendre, 2002).

Social Support Networks

Drums draw communities together; the steady beat of the drum acts as a magnet that brings people together. An Elder told me, " When you hear drumming you go because that is where everybody is" (Elder Lokoduq, personal communication, April 14, 2004). This may explain the popularity of Aboriginal hand-drumming circles in Sudbury in the past 10 years. In the present study, the Aboriginal hand-drumming circles to which the urban Aboriginal women belong have helped create a sense of community and belonging. An Aboriginal study conducted in Vancouver noted the importance of community, cohesive family, clan or tribal community-building activities in the city (Van Uchelen, Davidson, Quressette, Brasfield & Demerais, 1997).

Some Aboriginal women in this study discussed the need to hand drum with others who share a common understanding and experience of issues such as racism, oppression, violence, and being separated from their community. In the Ojibwe language, an Aboriginal woman is an "Anishnaabe Kwe;" several Aboriginal women are "Anishnaabe Kweg." When Aboriginal women get together and refer to themselves as Anishnaabe Kweg, there is much more meaning in the term than the direct translation indicates. The co-researchers suggested that Anishnaabe Kweg describes how Aboriginal women support one another to become strong. Napoli (2002) has said that, "gathering together to support each other has been a traditional custom for Native women" (p. 1573). Aboriginal women depend on each other for survival, and they do this by sharing and listening to one another's stories.

The Waabishki Mkwaa Singers hand-drumming circle meets on a bi-weekly basis. Several Aboriginal women participate regularly while others come only occasionally. Those who attend regularly have said that the hand-drumming circle is like a family. It is not uncommon to hear the women refer to other women in the circle as their "sisters," even if there is no family connection. One participant said, "it [the hand-drumming circle] is kind of like family I suppose" (P5: 773). Extended families are important to Aboriginal people, and hand-drumming circles allow one to have such a family. In a study of Australian Aboriginal people, family and community relationships were found to be the basis of their culture and important to cohesion and healing within their communities (McLennan & Khavarpour, 2004).

Many Aboriginal women hand drum not only to help themselves but also their community. Helping Others/Helping Self emerged as a strong theme in the present study. Aboriginal women are natural helpers in the community, willing to help without being asked (Waller & Patterson, 2002). The Aboriginal women in this study felt that they were able to help in the community by hand drumming and sharing the hand-drum teachings. Giving to the community provides ways for Aboriginal women to help themselves. Over and over again, it was said that in helping others, one helps oneself. I have heard it said that when one drums out of love and compassion, one will receive love and compassion in return.

Aboriginal people always enjoy sharing their gifts. Many Aboriginal people have shared the gift of the hand drum with non-Aboriginal people, and many non-Aboriginal people are now using the hand drum in this community. Some participants in this study believe that the drum belongs to all people, and that everyone should be included in the

hand-drumming circles: "the drumming circles should be inclusive everywhere you go" (P3: 282). They also believe that drumming circles should be inclusive of every race, colour, gender, age, socioeconomic status, and so on. Lounsberry (2002) has stated that "the drum is an instrument for everyone, old and young, male and female regardless of culture"(p. 217). Thus, the drum has the ability to promote unity, and some say it speaks a universal language.

Many Aboriginal people believe that the drum helps unify, but some are concerned about cultural appropriation and the use of the drum without the proper teachings. I believe that if non-Aboriginal people use Aboriginal sacred items, they should learn and respect the teachings of those items. As Lounsberry (2002), who is non-Aboriginal herself, has said: "If one plays a drum of another culture, I hope it is played with honor and tradition" (p. 217).

Culture

The Elders say we must know where we come from to know who we are. Identity determines how Aboriginal People view themselves (RCAP, Vol.4, 1996, p. 534). I noticed as I began learning about my culture that those who participated in cultural practices seemed to be most healthy. Wilson (2005) stated that cultural identity and health and wellness are inseparable. Today, Aboriginal people are starting to feel good about themselves by taking part in cultural activities. Stevens (1999), the Aboriginal author of the dissertation, "The Psychotherapeutic Effects of American Indian Traditions such as Singing, Drumming, Dancing and Storytelling" has said that "the joy I felt while singing and dancing erased all the remorse, all the pain, and embarrassment about being Alaska Native" (p.32). Hence, Aboriginal traditions provide a way to express who we are

with pride. Several women in the study talked about pride and identity. One said she feels proud taking care of and carrying a drum. Many women in this study identified themselves with the drum, and could not imagine their lives without it. The more we know about our sacred items, such as the drum, the more we will know about ourselves and how to obtain, and maintain, balance.

One Elder told me that to receive a drum you have to know the teachings and songs. She said, "You have to earn the drum" (Traditional Grandmother, personal communication, January 19, 2004). The Elders have also taught us that we cannot just go and pick up someone's drum, and start using it without that person's permission. These are important teachings about respect that we must know and practice if we are to carry a drum. Respect is one of the Seven Grandfather Teachings and because many of the women in this study have been following the traditional ways for a while and know the teachings of the hand drum, it is not surprising that the Seven Grandfather Teachings emerged. The women talked either directly or indirectly about love, respect, honesty, humility, wisdom, truth, and bravery in relation to their hand drum. They also shared other healthy teachings that are practiced, such as treating one's drum like a child and refraining from drugs and alcohol when around the hand drum. Many are also beginning to sing in the Ojibwe language. From personal experience, and as one participant stated, the Ojibwe language is easier to learn by singing the words to a hand-drum song. This is important since not knowing the language of our ancestors limits our ability to understand our culture.

In Sudbury, hand drums are fairly accessible because many hand drum making workshops are held yearly. Several Aboriginal women in this community know how to

make drums and are helping others make them as well. The Aboriginal women in this study have been inspired to hand drum as a way of cultural preservation. They feel compelled to pass on the teachings about the hand drum to their children and the youth. They discussed how proud they felt in teaching, and seeing youth use the hand drum. As Aboriginal people, we want more than anything to ensure continuity of our traditional ways and Aboriginal languages, which is why every woman in this study mentioned the importance of passing on the Aboriginal teachings, and language. Patterson (1995) has written that women's role in Aboriginal society is that of protector and teacher of traditions and histories.

Some Aboriginal people today want to share the cultural teachings of the hand drum with all people. One participant felt that teaching non-Aboriginal people about hand drumming is a way to take care of Mother Earth. The Aboriginal belief is that human beings exist on Mother Earth to be helpers and protectors (caretaker) of life (Garrett, 1999). Patterson (1995) said, "Native identity is rooted in the land and in songs and stories told about the land" (p.25). Aboriginal people see the earth as sacred and have songs that will help Mother Earth. The Waabishki Mkwaa Singers sing songs about important elements of the earth such as the water song and the sacred fire song. Essentially, the drum enables us to speak up for Mother Earth and helps the community hear her heartbeat again.

Wholistic

After reviewing the overall health-promoting benefits of Aboriginal women's hand drumming within the AWHD Circle of Life framework, the interconnections among the themes and categories became more visible. The co-researchers and I discovered

themes that reflect these interconnections and represent the wholistic benefits of hand drumming. I believe the wholistic themes that emerged are key to this study; therefore I will examine each one of them individually.

Healing

Healing is a common health term to Aboriginal people, but has a different meaning from the way non-Aboriginal people use it:

> The word 'healing' is familiar to non-Aboriginal people, of course, but the idea that Aboriginal people have in mind when they use it is likely not. Healing in Aboriginal terms, refers to personal and societal recovery from the lasting effects of oppression and systemic racism experienced over generations. Many Aboriginal people are suffering not simply from specific diseases and social problems, but also from a depression of spirit resulting from 200 or more years of damage to their culture, language, identities and self-respect. The idea of healing suggests that to reach 'whole health,' Aboriginal people must confront the crippling injuries of the past. Yet, doing so is not their job alone. Only when the deep causes of Aboriginal ill health are remedied by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people working together will balance and harmony—or health and well-being—be restored. (Hylton, 2002, p. 5)

For these reasons, Elder Miin Gaboo Kwe has said, "we are all on one big healing journey because many of us have not gone through the proper stages of life" (personal communication, November 13, 2003). The healing journeys of Aboriginal people have led them to rediscover the ways of their ancestors, one of which is drumming. The hand drum is helping many of the participants in this study who are on their healing journey.

One participant said she wanted to drum because she is on her healing journey (I5: 5-7). Another explained how she prayed and laid down tobacco to help her determine when it was the right time to carry the drum and learn the teachings for her own personal healing journey (I2: 77-80). She also explained how she knew the hand drum was a healing tool in the following manner:

> Knowing that there was a piece of my own [culture], that it [the hand drum] belonged to me at another level as a Anishnaabe Kwe, I knew that there was like some big, big doors to be opened in terms of my own healing. (I2: 84-86)

There are very few Aboriginal healing rituals that take place without drumming; Aboriginal Healers and Medicine people will drum over a person to help in the healing process. The drum is a gift from nature that has the ability to heal. Some Aboriginal people have referred to the drum as a Healer ("Drum as a Healer," 2002-2003).

With hand drumming, healing takes places at the physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, cultural and social (communal) level, sometimes obviously, sometimes subtly, in ways that are beyond our understanding. Participants in this study talked specifically about physical and emotional healing from the hand drum. Moreover, the healing occurs not only with the drummers; it also extends into the larger community. Healing in the Aboriginal society is encouraged at the community level unlike, European society, which has a tendency to individualize healing (Alladin, 1999). That is how hand drumming is helping to heal and restore harmony in the community. One participant talked about using the drum to help heal the abused women she works with, and another discussed how she helped a woman deal with the loss of her husband. Much of the hand drumming in this community is social. Patterson has stated (1995), "The social music is also healing, in

that it brings people together in the spirit of one heart, one mind" (p. 107). Aboriginal women, such as the one in this study, are drumming to bring back wholistic healing and health to our Aboriginal communities. Patterson (1995) has also said that "The fact that the drum is increasingly being heard means that healing is taking place" (p. 104). I believe that the more people are involved in hand drumming, the more healing there will be in the community.

Finding Voice and Empowerment

According to Patterson (1995), many Aboriginal women have lost their voices through the patriarchal and hierarchical nature of mainstream society. Today, Aboriginal women such as the ones in this study are finding their voices and speaking their truths. Their voices are important if we are to overcome the violence, oppression, racism, and poor health conditions that many of them face.

Since my own healing journey began, I have heard the voices of strong Aboriginal women leaders such as Chiefs Roberta Jamieson and Wilma Mankiller. I have also witnessed women hand drummers who have gone from being quiet and reserved to outspoken and confident. As more Aboriginal women return to the traditions of the past, they are finding the tools to help them speak up once again and feel empowered by doing so. The hand drum is a tool that many women in this study have used to find their voice and power in this world. For many, it began with being able to sing a lead in the hand-drumming circle and progressed to being able to sing or speak in front of others. This is critical, because "throughout the colonial period, well into the 20th century, the government sought to eradicate creative Native expression" (Patterson, 1995, p. 36). Drumming and singing are ways to express the importance of our culture, and for

Aboriginal women to have a voice in this world. Thus, the process of discovering voice via hand drumming is about freeing Aboriginal women from suppression and empowering them to use their voices in a constructive manner. These women's voices are helping bring back balance and harmony to our communities.

Renewal and Strength

It has been said that going to Aboriginal ceremonies brings a sense of renewal. Perhaps it is the sound of the drum at these ceremonies that takes us back to a peaceful place like our mother's womb. One participant explained that is why one sees so many babies "so peaceful or even asleep at pow wows" (CR3: 67). After hearing the drum, we are able to feel reborn. That is the strength of our Aboriginal traditions.

As we discover the strengths in our culture, we will begin to discover our own strength. Several participants stated that when they participated in Aboriginal cultural traditions such as drumming, they became stronger and able to tackle anything. With the strength of our culture, the hurdles in our lives become easier to handle as we learn to put things in perspective and not worry about things that do not matter. We also learn to speak up for ourselves as many of us have found our voices. It is evident from the stories shared throughout this study that the hand drum and the hand-drumming circle are about renewal and strength for Aboriginal women. From personal experience, I know that after one takes part in hand drumming, one is never the same. The drumbeat goes right to the core of the soul, allowing us to be powerful, and giving us the strength to carry on.

Mino-Bimaadiziwin

> "When we live just for doing good, we transcend ourselves and fill our place in society, give the culture its spirit." (Severud, 2003)

To live a good and healthy life (Mino-Bimaadiziwin), the Anishnaabe people are given teachings from the Creator; those teachings can come to us through sacred tools such as the hand drum. Through drumming we are taught how to live the good way of life. The central purpose of the Anishnaabe people is to behave in a manner to uphold Mino-Bimaadiziwin. This depends on the harmonious relationships that occur through respectful coexistence, and learning to contribute to other living beings in a positive, constructive manner (Garrett, 1999).

Drumming moves us forward towards goodness, and seems to unlock some of the most positive qualities we have as human beings. The women in this study shared how the drum helps them "do good and see good" (P3: 981-983). They practice the Seven Grandfather Teachings, and other healthy traditional teachings. This brings goodness to their lives, and to the lives of others who take part in the hand-drumming experience, either by entering the circle, or by listening from a distance. One woman said she had noticed that in the hand-drumming circle, the best of people comes out, "the kindness and the trueness of their heart" (I1: 50). Mino-Bimaadiziwin is about thinking from the heart. That is why the beat of the drum, that has the ability to align with our heartbeat, helps us live the good way of life. Therefore, the journey that these Aboriginal women are taking with the hand drum is without a doubt moving towards Mino-Bimaadiziwin. For an Anishnaabe person, Mino-Bimaadizwin is a way of life, "the good life" and something that one works toward on one's lifelong journey.

Implications for Aboriginal Health Promotion

> "Together, we are strong and capable. We are not the sum of our disparities." (Bird, 2002, p. 1392)

Canada has a reputation as an international leader in the theory and practice of health promotion (Epp, 1986; WHO, 1986). However, Canada has also been criticized because the health of Aboriginal people in this country resembles that of people living in Third World countries (Mitchell & Maracle, 2005). By building on the similarities that exist between the principles of health promotion and traditional Aboriginal perspectives of health (Atkinson, Graham, Pettit & Lewis, 2002; Correctional Services Canada, 2002; Reynolds, 1994; Ross & Ross, 1992), we can advance health promotion principles and practice with Canada's Aboriginal population.

We already have a good foundation, as both the health promotion and the Aboriginal view of health and well-being are broader than the medical model. In the medical model, health is often defined as the absence of physical symptoms or disease. In health promotion and Aboriginal health, the word "health" is commonly used in combination with well-being or wellness as a way to avoid focusing solely on physical health (Bartlet, 2005; Reutter, Dennis & Wilson, 2001). This enables practitioners to incorporate a broader, wholistic view. In the health promotion literature, health and well-being and/or wellness includes physical, mental/intellectual, emotional, social and sometimes spiritual health. This view of health is also reflected in the Aboriginal Circle of Life or Medicine Wheel that permeates the Aboriginal health literature (Bartlett, 2005; Hylton, 2002; Kinnon, 2002; Reynolds, 1997; Shestowsky, 1993; Svenson & Lafontaine, 1999).

In recent years health promotion practitioners have been concerned with the determinants of health, which are the key elements of the population health approach (Public Health Agency of Canada, n.d.) According to Scott (2005), "both Aboriginal views and population health frameworks recognize that well-being is the result of a complex interplay between environment and person" (p. 2). The Public Health Agency of Canada (n.d.) recommends that:

> . . . we need to look at the big picture of health to examine factors both inside and outside the health care system that affect our health. At every stage of life, health is determined by complex interactions between social and economic factors, the physical environment and individual behavior. These factors are referred to as 'determinants of health'. They do not exist in isolation from each other. It is the combined influence of the determinants of health that determines health status. ("What Determines Health," para. 3)

This perspective parallels Aboriginal perspectives of health (RCAP, 1996a; Stout, 1996). Like the web of a dreamcatcher, there are many relational factors that intersect and play an equally important role in a person's health.

To build community capacity, those working in Aboriginal health and health promotion fields are moving away from dominant professional and hierarchal structures to community-driven initiatives. The WHO's definition of health promotion focuses on enabling people to take control over and improve their health (1986). To do this, we must reach out and work with communities as equal partners. Carl Quinn, Councillor and Chairman of Administration, Finance and Community Relations for Saddle Lake First Nations has said that "a limited level of health can be drawn from a health unit or

wellness centre for they are just buildings. We must extend beyond architectural structures to the community as a whole to achieve health and find meaningful solutions" (Brunet, 2003, p. 1).

Those who work in the Aboriginal health and health promotion fields also stress the importance of building community capacity by focusing on the strengths of their community as opposed to its health problems and limitations. In Western health care, the tendency continues to focus on pathology, acute care, needs, and deficits (Van Uchelen et al., 1997). While there is a need to address these areas "mapping" the strengths of communities, as Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) have suggested, enables community development workers to seek solutions from within a community that are consistent with Aboriginal approaches. Jan Kahehti:io Longboat, a Mohawk Herbalist, Healer, and Elder, concurs: "we have all the tools that we need to have that good life, and to stay in balance and harmony" ("Sage Words," 2005, p. 12).

Building on the strengths of and including the community are part of a lengthy process in health promotion and Aboriginal health aimed toward improving health and well-being in the community. In both areas there is agreement that outcomes are not always immediate. In Western health care, financial concerns and accountability to taxpayers drive the demand for immediate and measurable outcomes. However, achieving health promotion outcomes requires long-term investments of time, effort and funds. Traditional Anishnaabe people believe in promoting Mino-Bimaadiziwin or the good life as a lifelong goal that one works at every day. In living this way, we are taught to think of the health and well-being of the next Seven Generations. Therefore, we have an appreciation for long-term vision and realize that some Aboriginal health promotion

outcomes may not be seen in our own lifetime, but will enhance the lives of our community members in the future.

There are many similarities between the Aboriginal health perspective and the principles and practice of health promotion; however, there are also cultural differences and barriers for Aboriginal people. Much of the work done in mainstream health promotion does not take into account the circular Aboriginal worldview. Although health promotion strives to be wholistic, it still tends to focus on individual lifestyle factors such as healthy eating and physical activity (Bartlett, 2005; Brought et al., 2004). This one-dimensional way of looking at an issue is limiting when considering Aboriginal health. Many mainstream health promotion programs do not consider all the elements of being (physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual) within the Circle of Life framework, and this is inconsistent with the way Aboriginal people view their health. Most neglected is the spiritual element, which is central to Aboriginal people. Chapman (1986) has noted that it was rare to find a health promotion program that openly labeled a specific activity or intervention as oriented to enhancement of spiritual health. Based on the review of literature and my experience in health promotion, there have been no significant changes to date.

Healing cannot occur without spirituality. McLennan & Khavarpour (2004) have indicated that we need to recognize the power of spirituality; it can be the driving force in healing Indigenous people. Healing is vital to achieving balance and promoting health. Healing typically refers to a spiritual reconnection with the aim of improving overall well-being through reintegration of spiritual, emotional, physical, and mental elements (McLennan & Khavarpour, 2004). From an Aboriginal perspective, healing (getting at

the root cause, becoming whole) is synonymous with behaviour change, which is central to health promotion (Kinnon, 2002). It is clear that spirituality needs to be an integral part of the health promotion journey for Aboriginal people.

Although the recent focus on the determinants of health parallels Aboriginal perspectives and is pertinent to Aboriginal people, there are still many cultural differences (NAHO, 2001). Again, spirituality is neglected, and is only ever considered within a few of the determinants of health (Scott, 2005). While we can build on the Public Health Agency of Canada's determinants of health, we need to examine them within our own frameworks such as the Circle of Life or the web of the dreamcatcher mentioned previously. Perhaps reframing, as suggested by the National Aboriginal Health Organization (NAHO) (2001), or renaming the determinants of health by using our own Aboriginal languages may help integrate the appropriate elements within an Aboriginal health promotion approach.

A major cultural barrier in creating health promotion programs with Aboriginal peoples is language. While writing this thesis I frequently struggled to find the right word to use, and I now realize that English is not always appropriate when describing something in our Aboriginal community. Battiste (1998) has claimed that we as Indigenous researchers cannot rely on colonial languages and thought to define our reality: "If we continue to think of our reality in terms and constructs drawn from Eurocentric diffusionism and languages, we continue the pillage of our own selves" (p. 25). I believe that instead of using unfamiliar language in health promotion, our own Aboriginal languages need to be incorporated so that Aboriginal health promotion can be clearly defined and understood.

As Aboriginal people, many of us are becoming more familiar with our own Aboriginal languages; therefore, we are beginning to see greater use of Aboriginal words in the promotion of our health and well-being. The co-researchers who speak the Ojibwe language use *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*, which roughly translates to the "good life" to describe health. Through this research process, I learned that there was often no direct translation for health in some of the Aboriginal languages (Adelson; 2000; Oginii Kwe, personal communication, January 23, 2004). The James Bay Cree of northern Quebec talk about *Miyupimaatisiiun*, which translates as "being alive well" (Adelson, 2000). Brunet (2003) has also said that within the Cree dialect the word *Miamachuwan* expresses the concept of health, explaining that "this term extends beyond the meaning that many communities have for the word 'health' to also describe a state of well-being and a positive outlook" (p. 1). If we looked at every Aboriginal language, there would likely be a way to describe health and health promotion within them. Within the Ojibwe community, however, to increase cultural significance and meaning, we should be promoting *Mino-Bimaadiziwin*.

Bridging the gap between mainstream health promotion and Aboriginal health to create Aboriginal health promotion programs involves much more than making mainstream health promotion programs "culturally appropriate." LeMaster & Connell (1994) stated that "prior to implementation of health education interventions among Native Americans, the health beliefs and practices of the culture and health providers should be determined to address incongruities and assure cultural relevance. This type of assessment is particularly important because beliefs and traditions are so integral to the Native American culture" (p. 529). Moreover, the health promotion practitioner working with Aboriginal people should understand Aboriginal history. As Cardinal, Schopflocher,

Svenson, Morrison, & Lang (2004) have noted, "by understanding the historical experiences of First Nations people as viewed from their perspective, we realize traditional and cultural milieu is of significant importance to health and well-being" (p.59).

The key to Aboriginal health promotion is having a clear understanding of the Aboriginal perspectives and worldviews on health and well-being that focus on balance, social support networks and cultural activities such as drumming. McLennan and Khavarpour (2004) have stressed that among various factors influencing the outcome of health promotion, the relevance of the individual's community and cultural background is crucial. Understanding the ways in which Aboriginal people conceptualize health and well-being will help identify Aboriginal health promotion outcomes that we should aim to achieve (Van Uchelen et al., 1997). Such knowledge can help create specific Aboriginal health promotion strategies.

Most importantly, Aboriginal health promotion practice and research needs to focus on the priorities established and identified by members of the Aboriginal community themselves. Many Aboriginal people believe that the revival of traditional ways is one of the answers to many current health problems and a way to promote wellness (Dufrene & Coleman, 1994; First Nations and Inuit Regional Health Survey, 1999). According to Marbella, Harris, Diehr, Ignace, & Ignace (1998), the traditional health and healing practices of Aboriginal people remain an important factor in their lives. It has been shown that immersion in traditional health and healing practices can have intrinsic benefits directly connected to positive health outcomes among Aboriginal people (Walters & Simoni, 2002). Therefore, we need to focus on these strengths. Van

Uchelen et al. (1997) claim that "Identifying existing strengths reveals the indigenous health-promoting resources Aboriginal people already have within themselves and their communities. This knowledge provides a basis for contributing to well-being in ways that are consistent with indigenous views of wellness and builds on existing strengths" (p. 38). A serious drawback to framing health issues solely in terms of need is the failure to recognize the potential of Indigenous knowledge and existing strengths as resources within health-promoting strategies (Van Uchelen et al., 1997).

To date, the majority of health research has been conducted by non-Aboriginal people and has used Western research methodologies. This research has focused on diseases and dysfunction (Reading & Nowgesic, 2002) and has provided us with many statistics, but limited solutions (Atkinson et al., 2002; Oberly & Marcedo, 2004). While it is true that Aboriginal people, women in particular, have poor health (Anderson, 2005; Stout, 2005), if the negative aspects of health are continually researched and focused upon in the media, it makes it difficult for members of the identified communities to achieve wellness. Authors of an Indigenous study from Australia agree: "the images form kind of a mental map, which often conveys part of the truth about the actual conditions of a troubled community" (Brough et al., 2004, p. 216). Unfortunately, the health of Australian Aboriginal people is often depicted in stereotypical images of hopelessness, similar to the depiction of Aboriginal people here in Canada. By confining ourselves to Western interpretations of health, Canada's Aboriginal communities are in danger of losing the richness and strengths of Indigenous peoples.

As a way to promote Aboriginal health and well-being, research attention should turn away from physical health issues and move toward wholistic traditional strengths,

such as hand drumming. There is now great opportunity for change, as Aboriginal people are becoming involved in creating their own research with their own methodology. In the past decade, we have seen the emergence of Indigenous research methodologies founded upon Indigenous worldview, knowledge and protocols (Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery, 2004). According to Cardinal et al. (2004), "Indigenous methodology operates within a holistic framework that allows the world to be viewed through lenses that are different from the Western scientific approach. It attempts to encompass lived experience, the ancestral knowledge embedded in the mind, body, and spirit of indigenous people" (p. 4). This wholistic framework allows us to collectively use our traditional knowledge in the development of a methodology to explore wholistic health issues that are relevant to us; such a development is consistent with the health promotion values of community empowerment. In order to embrace Aboriginal health promotion, it is time that we, as Aboriginal people, recognized our responsibility to continue the development of methods that are embedded in our own Aboriginal epistemological lenses (Absolon & Willet, 2004) to promote health and well-being in our communities.

Reflections about the Indigenous Research Methodology

> "Aboriginal people must maintain the integrity of their traditional knowledge, but also they should draw on it as a powerful lens through which to promote health and well-being." (Stout, Stout & Rojas, 2001, p. 2-3)

Reflection was a critical element of the Indigenous research methodology and in writing this thesis. Often I sat with my hand drum or my Eagle Feather and reflected upon this study. Afterward, I wrote down my thoughts and feelings in a journal so they could be incorporated either directly or indirectly into it. Many of the reflections written in my journal revolved around the research process.

At the beginning of this study, I resisted using an Indigenous research methodology because I thought I did not know enough about it. However, with support from my Aboriginal thesis committee, the co-researchers, and the participants, this methodology allowed me, as an Aboriginal researcher, to trust my intuition and be able to work in a cyclical and non-linear fashion. Through this research process, I learned that an Indigenous research methodology is the most natural and appropriate way to explore our traditional ways in connection to health promotion.

Together, the co-researchers and I developed an Indigenous research methodology to explore the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion. This methodology included our traditional knowledge and practices. As written by Ermine et al. (2004), "In research where Indigenous people control their own agenda, the spiritual and philosophical foundations provide the platform from which the research activities unfold" (p. 16). I believe that incorporating the traditions increased the participants' comfort level in sharing their spiritual experiences. As Bruno (2003) noted, "the unique and distinguishing characteristics of Indigenous methodologies have provided guidance to Aboriginal people throughout their research practice, within the context of a belief in a Spirit World" (p. 23).

The spiritual elements that emerge may prove to be invaluable; however, we as Aboriginal researchers need to be respectful in what we write down on paper so as not to expose sacred traditions. Traditional Aboriginal people do not want our sacred practices written down (recorded) in detail for fear of cultural appropriation. For this reason, I did not go into the detail of specific ceremonies related to the hand drum. As well, I made sure to consult with the community as to what data was acceptable to use in the study. I

always told the participants to tell me if they felt uncomfortable in any way. My number one priority as an Aboriginal researcher has always been to protect the community and our traditions.

Reciprocity is an Aboriginal value that was incorporated throughout the Indigenous research methodology. We as Aboriginal researchers should know the teaching of giving back when something has been taken. When the community contributed to the research, I provided them with a gift and/or offered them some food as a way for me to say "*Miigwech* (thank-you) for sharing your knowledge." Most importantly, when this Indigenous research study has been completed, the community will not only receive the study but those involved will have an increased capacity to conduct Indigenous research. As we worked together in the various stages of the research process, the co-researchers and participants were able to observe how important each person was to the process. Each had strengths to contribute. For example, one co-researcher had done transcribing in the past and willingly offered to help transcribe for this study. Another co-researcher had strong English skills and edited the entire paper. She not only edited the paper, but was also able to examine it from a cultural perspective and provide feedback. Other co-researchers were able to provide Ojibwe language translations. As well, participants were able to provide me with valuable insights needed for the thesis. Together, we were able to create something more valuable than I would have done alone.

Within this Indigenous research methodology everyone shared and learned from each other. Essentially, the research was like a "learning circle" (Nabigon, Hagey, Webster & MacKay, 1998). A learning circle, according to Nabigon et al. (1998), is a

process that generates information, sharing, connections, builds capacity and seeks balance and healing. All people who participate benefit, not just individuals as is often the case in Western research. During the research process, I noticed positive transformations among some of the co-researchers and participants. As Weber-Pillwax (1999) has written, "Transformation is to be anticipated within every living thing participating in the research project" (p. 42). She has also said that the researcher(s) must assume a certain responsibility for the transformation and outcomes that occur in the community. One outcome occurring among the co-researchers and participants is the increased desire to become involved in more projects to promote health in the community. Therefore, I will continue to work with the participants and the co-researchers on the various projects.

In conducting this study, I believed that the research findings belonged to the community. However, it took me awhile to realize the connection between the research and all of Creation. As pointed out by Wilson (2001), a key aspect to consider in Aboriginal research is that the research does not belong to an individual or a group of individuals; it is relational. Furthermore, he has said, "as a researcher you are answering to all your relations when you are doing research" (p. 177). During this research study, I prayed, laid down tobacco, and drummed in order to connect with all my relations. As Aboriginal people, we need to acknowledge our interconnections with Mother Earth and all living forms of Creation, including the air, water, rocks, trees, animals, insects, humans and so on in everything we do, including research.

Areas for Future Research

The present study provided a comprehensive look at the health-promoting benefits of Aboriginal women hand drumming in one community. However, there are many areas that need to be explored in greater detail; for example, the spirituality of hand drumming, and the types of social support networks that are formed by participating in a hand-drumming circle. A similar study could be conducted with nearby on-reserve Aboriginal women hand drummers, and the results compared to those from the present study. Replicating the study by including Aboriginal women from the various Nations in North America or Indigenous women from around the world would increase our knowledge of the power of hand drumming and Aboriginal health promotion. To do this, it would be necessary to find out if the Aboriginal women from the various areas do in fact use a hand drum. Including the views of Aboriginal men in relation to women's hand drumming and health promotion may also provide further insight as the health-promoting benefits of Aboriginal men's drumming have not received similar attention to date.

Further areas of research could be based on the kind of drum used (e.g. the hand drum, the big drum or the water drum; for the following examples, I will simply use the word drum instead of specifying the type of drum). Comparison groups to consider exploring in relation to health promotion and drumming are: new drummers to experienced drummers; non-professional to professional drummers; and drummers who drum alone to those who drum in a group or circle. Various age groups could be examined, such as the Aboriginal drumming of children. It would also be interesting to research how Aboriginal drumming affects those who are listening. For example, when hand drumming takes place at an event, the people not drumming could be asked how the

drumming affected them. Other traditional activities to explore in relation to health promotion are traditional singing and dancing. In terms of health promotion, it would be beneficial to find out the various Aboriginal Nations' view of health promotion and the language used to describe it.

Limitations

The first limitation is that the Indigenous research methodology created for this study will be difficult to replicate. Indigenous research methodologies have many core values that can be utilized, but the processes and protocols are unique to the community participating in the research.

The second limitation is that the results of the study are specific to Sudbury Aboriginal women hand drummers. These research findings must be interpreted with some caution given the heterogeneity of Aboriginal cultures and the differences between living on and off the reserve. However, because of the root similarities (Benton-Benai, 1988) among the Aboriginal cultures and the heterogeneity of the participants in this study, it is expected that the overall findings are applicable to Aboriginal women hand drummers who live in other urban centres across Canada. Findings may be influenced by the level of assimilation of Aboriginal people. Cardinal et al. (2004) have stated that, "few people rely completely on their traditional cultural practices to meet their health needs and not all First Nation people maintain that level of traditionalism" (p. 58). Today, Aboriginal people are more likely to be bicultural than totally assimilated (Cardinal et al., 2004; Restoule, 2000). As bicultural people, many use aspects of their own culture along with Western culture to meet their needs. That is why Aboriginal health promotion strategies should be developed in conjunction with other Western practices.

Getting all the co-researchers' input at all times was impossible. If some could not come to a thesis gathering, the majority of the co-researchers had to make decisions on their behalf. While I updated all members of the decisions made either by meeting with them, or by telephone or e-mail, a third limitation is that not all participants were a part of all the decisions that were made by the group.

The fourth limitation pertains to time constraints. Conducting an Indigenous research methodology is a lengthy process that may not be feasible within university timelines for the completing of a graduate degree. It takes an extensive amount of time to build relationships and work around the community's schedule. Indigenous research practice is a reflective process that is not conducive to definite timelines.

Using a tape recorder within an oral culture also brings in an inherent set of limitations. Although most of the participants did not object to being tape recorded, it is not possible to determine the complete impact that this had on personal levels of comfort.

The sixth limitation was related to the sharing circle format. I always began with the same person; however Bartlett (2005) has cautioned that, "it is unfair to ask the same speaker to begin with each new question" (p. S23). Had I changed the leading person for each question, different perspectives may have been obtained. However, the triangulation and extensive member checking that was employed substantially reduced this possibility.

CHAPTER 6

Conclusion

Coming Full Circle

"Exploring the Connection between Aboriginal Women's Hand Drumming and Health Promotion (Mino-Bimaadiziwin)" has preoccupied me for several years. Following a vision can be difficult at times because there are many obstacles that can impede one's progress and distractions that can pull one away. I am grateful that my hand drum and the people in the hand-drumming circles, especially the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers, have kept me on the journey toward realizing my vision.

The circle was a key symbol utilized throughout this study to help illustrate the wholistic way of life of Aboriginal people. According to Bruno (2003), "the ceremonies and symbolic significance of the circle involve processes that not only promote a renewal of the spirit and all living entities, but also provide a foundation for our very being" (p. 25). In the Aboriginal community, many important healing tools such as the drum are circular to remind us that we are all related, and that we need to work together as a collective to become stronger. We become stronger in a circle because, as the Aboriginal women in the present study mentioned, we feel a sense of community and belonging; inclusiveness and welcoming; and safety and stability. It was also noted that in a circle we share and listen; and in helping others, we help ourselves. Together, a circle of Aboriginal women (Anishnaabe Kweg) supports each other like sisters. Hence, the circle helps create social support networks, better known in the Aboriginal community as an extended family.

When Aboriginal women hand drum in a circle, they work together to produce a strong rhythmic sound that promotes healing in their community, and their own personal healing. The vibration of the drum carries far and wide, and goes deep into our core and awakens our spirit. As we heal, we nurture our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual selves. Women in this study perceived many health-promoting benefits of hand drumming and the themes fitted well in within the AWHD Circle of Life framework (spiritual, emotional, physical, mental, social support networks, and culture). Although each of these categories was initially examined separately, everything within the Circle of Life is interconnected and the four wholistic themes that emerged (Healing; Finding Voice and Empowerment; Renewal and Strength; and Mino-Biimaadiziwin) are evidence of that connectedness.

Healing is a critical factor in relation to the health and well-being of Aboriginal people because it motivates us to take care of our whole being and all our relations. It is hard to believe that until the last decade Aboriginal women rarely touched Aboriginal hand drums because of various forms of oppression. Today, many Aboriginal women, such as the ones in this study, are once again finding their voices and feeling empowered. They claim that hand drumming has increased their overall strength and their ability to handle difficulties in their lives. Several Aboriginal women in this study have even felt a sense of renewal—a feeling of being reborn. Most importantly, participating in hand drumming has brought back the good life or Mino-bimaadiziwin to these Aboriginal women.

Mino-Biimaadiziwin is a traditional way of promoting health and well-being among Aboriginal people, and traditional activities such as drumming help promote this

good way of life. The vibration of the drum reaffirms our interconnection with each other on this earth. Just as the drum vibrates, so does everything in the universe. Hence, the drum keeps us healthy and balanced by connecting us to all of Creation.

During this study, Dr. Stan Wilson pointed out to me that the late Lionel Kinnunwa, a Lakota speaker had shared with him that

> the knowledge of our ancestors is right in your blood, your bones, in your hair . . . all you need to do is allow that knowledge to emerge . . . and that is why he used to say that using the drum and singing the traditional songs is important . . . it wakes up those ancestral memories. (S. Wilson, personal communication, March 6, 2005)

Perhaps the vibration of the drum helped the co-researchers, and the participants share their Indigenous knowledge about the healing, and health-promoting benefits of hand drumming.

This Indigenous knowledge was made possible because of an Indigenous research methodology that focused on the culture and its strengths. Most Western research methodologies would not be able to capture the true essences of an Aboriginal perspective. Often, they capture only part of the circle, the physical part, and do not reflect our entire being. Understanding this circular way of life is a challenge for many Western academics (Tillson, 2002) since they cannot measure or quantify wholism.

Today, Aboriginal people are not only moving away from Western research methodologies; they are also beginning to create their own Indigenous research methodologies (Ten Fingers, S60). Getting our community members involved in research and building on our strengths allow us to explore ways to promote health in our

communities. Aboriginal people must be recognized as the experts in their own health and healing needs (RCAP, 1996b). Each and every woman in this present study played an important role in making it a reality. According to Anderson (2005), health research and programs that reflect the culture and beliefs of the community are most successful.

It is inspiring to witness the revival of the traditional ways that are healthy and healing. I am proud to be part of an Aboriginal women's hand-drumming circle. When Aboriginal women (Anishnaabe Kweg) work together anything is possible. Given the positive connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion discovered from this present study, more Aboriginal women may be encouraged to become involved in hand drumming and Indigenous research projects related to health promotion. Increasingly, Aboriginal women are stepping up and accepting their responsibilities as equal and powerful members of the community. This is helping Aboriginal women build strong cultural identities. Given that Aboriginal women hand drumming is not acceptable in all Aboriginal communities, I am grateful that the community where this present study took place embraces Aboriginal women's hand drumming. In supporting the strengths in our communities, we are helping promote health (Mino-Bimaadiziwin).

REFERENCES

Aboriginal Innovations. (n.d.). *Aboriginal innovations in arts, science and technology handbook: Dreamcatcher*. Thunder Bay, ON: Lakehead University. Retrieved September 10, 2005, from http://www.schoolnet.ca/aboriginal/handbook/arts_dreamcatcher.html

Absolon, K., & Willett, C. (2004). Aboriginal research: Berry picking and hunting in the 21st century. *First Peoples Child & Family Review, 1*(1), 5-17.

Adelson, N. (2000). *'Being Alive Well:' Health and the politics of Cree well-being*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Alladin, A. (1999, April 7). Healing journey often follow cultural paths. *The Sudbury Star*, pp. 31.

Almeida, D. A. (1997, Winter). The hidden half: A history of Native American women's education. *Harvard Education Review, 67*(4). Retrieved January 26, 2004, from http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~hepg/w97almed.htm

Anderson, K. (2001). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

Anderson, K. (2005). Minobimadziwin: The good life for Aboriginal women. *Centre of Excellence for Women's Health Research Bulletin 4*(2): 8-9.

Anishnawbe Health Toronto. (2000a). *Clans*. [Brochure]. Toronto, ON: Author.

Anishnawbe Health Toronto. (2000b). *Feast and giveaways*. [Brochure]. Toronto, ON: Author.

Anishnawbe Health Toronto. (2000c). *Your name and colours.* [Brochure]. Toronto, ON: Author

Ash, S. (2001). *Sacred drumming.* New York: Sterling Publishing Co., Inc

Atkinson, J. V., Graham, J., P, Pettit, G., & Lewis, L. (2002). Broadening the focus of research into the health of Indigenous Australians. *The Medical Journal of Australia 177* (6), 286-287. Retrieved September 3, 2003, from http://www.mja.com.au/public/issues/177_06_160902/atk10444_fm.html

Auger. L. M. (1999). *Awaken your spirit on the healing journey: An investigative look into Native traditional holistic healing practices of the Ojibway in Northwestern Ontario.* Unpublished master's thesis, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

Avis, W. S., Drysdale, P. D., Gregg, R. J, Neufeldt, V. E., & Scargill, M. H. (1983). *Gage Canadian dictionary.* Toronto: Gage Educational Publishing Company.

Babaaminose Kwe, personal communication, December 2, 2003.

Barber, K (Ed.). (1998). *The Canadian oxford dictionary.* Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Bartlett, J. G. (2005, January-February). Health and well-being for Métis women in Manitoba. *Canadian Journal of Public Health 96*, Supplement 1, S22-S27.

Battiste, M. (1998). Creating power in the land of the Eagle. *The Canadian Journal of Native Education, 22*(1), 16-27.

Benton-Benai, E. (1988). *The Mishomis book: The voice of the Ojibway.* Saint Paul, Minnesota: Red School House.

Bird, M. E. (2002, September). Editorial: Health and Indigenous People: Recommendations for the Next Generations. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*(9), 1391-1392.

Bittman, B. B., Berk, L. S., Felten, D. L., & Westengard, J. (2001). Composite effects of group drumming music therapy on modulation of neurondocrine-immune parameters in normal subjects. *Alternative Therapies in Health and Medicine, 7*(1), 38-47.

Black Elk, W. H. & Lyon, W. S. (1990). *Black Elk: The sacred ways of a Lakota*, San Francisco: Harper & Row.

Bopp, J., Bopp, M., Brown, L., Lane, P. (3rd ed.). (1989). *The sacred tree*. Twin Lake, WI: Lotus Light Publications.

Braine, S. (1995). *Drumbeat: Heartbeat: A celebration of the pow wow*. Minneapolis, MN: Lerner Publications Company.

Brasfield, C. R. (2001). Residential school syndrome. *British Columbia Medical Journal, 43*(2), 78-81.

Brough, M., Bond, C., & Hunt, J. (2004). Strong in the city: Towards a strength-based approach in Indigenous health promotion. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 15*(3), 215-219.

Brown, J. E. (1989). *The Sacred Pipe: Black Elk's account of the seven rites of the Ogalala Sioux*. Oklahoma: University Oklahoma Press: Norman.

Browner, T. (2004). *Heartbeat of the people: Music and dance of the northern pow wow*. Chicago, IL: University of Illinois Press: Norman.

Brunet, S. (2003, Winter). Miamachuwan: A Vision of Health. *The Shift, 5 (*2), 1.

Bruno, S. L. (2003). Aboriginal women: The journey towards a doctorate. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 42*(02), 373. (UMI No. MQ82224).

Buchwald, D, Beals, J, Manson, S. M. (2000). Use of traditional health practices among Native Americans in primary care settings. *Medical Care, 38*(12), 1191-1199.

Burton, B. (1993). *Moving within the circle: Contemporary Native American music and dance.* Danbury, CT: World Music Press.

Canadian Health Network. (2004). *Aboriginal Peoples: Glossary.* Ottawa, ON: Public Health Agency of Canada. Retrieved June 6, 2005, from http://www.canadian-health-network.ca/.../CHNResource/FAQCHNResourceTemplate&cid=1007046

Cajete, G. (2000). *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence.* Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.

Cardinal J. C., Schopflocher D. P., Svenson, L. W., Morrison, K. B, & Lang, L. (2004). *First Nation in Alberta: A focus on health service use.* Edmonton: Alberta Health and Wellness.

Castellano, M. B. (2002). *Aboriginal family trends: Extended families, nuclear families, families at the heart.* The Vanier Institute of the Family. Retrieved November 27, 2003, from http://www.vifamily.ca/library/cft/aboriginal.html

Castellano, M. B. (2004). Ethics of Aboriginal research. *Journal of Aboriginal Health, 1(*1), 98–114.

Chapman, S. L. (1986). Spiritual health: A component missing from health promotion. *American Journal of Health Promotion 5(1)*, 38-41.

Creswell, J. W. (1998). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five traditions*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2002). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research.* Columbus, OH: Prentice Hall.

Chamberlain, B. R. (1998). *Learning Aboriginal health promotion: Six life stories.* Unpublished master's thesis. University of Saskachewan, Saskatoon, Shakatchewan, Canada.

Cole, D. (2002). Drumming up Good Health. *Intouch, 4(*4). Retrieved September 23, 2002, from http://intouchlive.com/journals.intouch/i0207j.htm

Correctional Services Canada. (2002). *Aboriginal spirituality: The Aboriginal healing movement.* Retrieved February 5, 2004, from http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/forum/rjweek/aborig/heale.shtml

Davidhizar, R. & Giger, J.N. (1998). *Canadian transcultural nursing.* Toronto, ON Mosby Inc.

Deiter, C. & Otway, L. (2001). *Sharing our stories on promoting health and community healing: An Aboriginal women's health project.* Prairie Women's Health Centre of Excellence. MB: Winnipeg.

Desjarlais, J. (1998). *Drumming and drum philosophy.* The Fort Nelson Aboriginal project. Retrieved January 5, 2002, from http://rla.sd81.bc.ca/~fnap/drumming/drumming1.html

Diamond, B., Cronk, M. S., & von Rosen, F. (1994). *Visions of sound: Musical instruments of First Nations communities in northeastern America.* Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press.

Doyle, M. *Drumming and wellness: The birthing of rhythmaculture.* Health Sounds. Retrieved March 2, 2004, from http://www.healthysounds.com/feature10.html

Dufrene, P. M. & Coleman, V. D. (1994). Art and healing for Native American Indians. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling & Development 22*(3): 145-193.

Duran, E. & Duran, B. (1995). *Native American postcolonial psychology.* Albany: State University of New York Press.

Drum Power. (2002-2003, Fall/Winter). *In the Spirit of Healing & Wellness, 4*(3), 3.

The Drum as Healer. (2002-2003, Fall/Winter). *In the Spirit of Healing & Wellness, 4*(3), 3.

Epp, J. (1986). *Achieving Health for All: a Framework for Health Promotion.* Ottawa, ON: Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

Ermine, W., Sinclair, R., and Jeffery, B. (2004). *The Ethics of research with Indigenous peoples: Report of the IPHRC to the interagency advisory panel on research ethics.* Saskatoon: Indigenous Peoples' Health Research Centre. Retrieved September 2, 2005, from http://www.iphrc.ca/text/Ethics%20Review%20IPHRC.doc

Encyclopedia of Music in Canada. (n.d.) *Native North Americans in Canada.* Retrieved April 4, 2005, from Historica: The Canadian Encyclopedia Online: http://www.thecanadianencyclopedia.com/index.cfm?PgNm=TCE&Params=U1ARTU0002542

First Nations and Inuit Regional Health Survey (1999). *A second diagnostic on the health of First Nations and Inuit people in Canada.* Ottawa, ON: Author.

Francis, D. (1993). *The imaginary Indian: The image of the Indian in Canadian culture.* Vancouver: Arsenal Press.

Friedman, R.L. (2000). *The healing power of the drum.* Reno: White Cliffs Media.

Garrett, M. T. (1999). Understanding the 'medicine' of Native American traditional values: An integrative review. *Counseling & Values, 43*(2): 84-99.

Garrett, M. T., and Carroll, J. J. (2000). Mending the broken circle: treatment of substance dependence among Native Americans. *Journal of Counseling and Development, 78*, 379-388.

Gbe giizhigo Kwe & Nodin Bebamse Kwe, personal communication November 27, 2002.

Greenberg. J. S. (Eds.). (1996). *Comprehensive stress management.* Toronto, ON: Brown & Benchmark.

Grenier, L. (1998). *Working with Indigenous Knowledge: A Guide for Researchers.* Ottawa, ON: International Development Research Centre. Retrieved September 2, 2005, from http://www.idrc.ca/fr/ev-29497-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

Haslip, S. (1999). Keepers of the culture: First Nation women as keepers of the culture: A consideration of the roles and responsibilities of First Nations women. *Journal of Indigenous Thought, 2(*2). Retrieved January 8, 2004, from http://www.sifc.edu/Indian%20Studies/IndigenousThought/fall99/Keepers.html

Health Canada (2002). *Women's Health Bureau: The Health of Aboriginal Women.* Ottawa, On: Author. Retrieved November 10, 2003, from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/english/women/facts_issues/facts_aborig.htm.

Hoxie, F. E. (1996). *Encyclopedia of North American Indians*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Hylton, J. H. (2002). *Aboriginal health and healing: A review of best practices.* A Background Paper Prepared for the Regina Qu'Appelle Health Region Working Together Towards Excellence Project.

Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2003, July). *Terminology. Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND).* Retrieved August 29, 2003, from http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/pr/info/tln_e.html

Johnston, Basil. (1982). *Ojibway cemonies*. Toronto: McCleland and Stewart.

Katt, M. (1995). *The Medicine Wheel view of retention: A study of First Nation baccalaureate nursing graduates.* Unpublished master's thesis, Lakehead University, Thunder Bay, Ontario, Canada.

Kaplan, C. (2000). The short term effects of small group hand drumming on mood, group cohesiveness and rhythm perception. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 60*(11), 5822B. (UMI No. 9949659).

Kinnon (2002). *Improving the population health, health promotion, disease prevention and health protection services and programs for Aboriginal people: Recommendation for NAHO activities*. Ottawa, ON: National Aboriginal Health Organization.

Klower, T. (1997). *The joy of drumming*. Diever, Holland: Binker Kok.

Kretzmann J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing A Community's Assets*. Evanston, IL: Institute for Policy Research.

Laukka, P., & Gabrielsson, A. (2000). Emotional expression in drumming performance. *Psychology of Music, 28*(2), 181-189.

LeMaster, P. L., & Connell, C. M. (1994). Health education interventions among Native Americans: A review and analysis. *Health Education Quarterly, 21*(4), 521-539.

Lessard, P. (1994). Aboriginal health care: How to understand and communicate better. *J Soc Obstet Gynaecol Can*, 16: 1571-9.

Letendre, A. D. (2002). Aboriginal and traditional medicine: Where does it fit? *Crossing Boundaries—an interdisciplinary journal 1*(2), 78-87.

Logan, A. (1979). *Memories of sweet grass*. Washington, Connecticut: American Indian Archaeological Institute, Inc.

Lounsberry, J. (2002). The power of the drum: A multi-cultural journey into spiritual transformations and mind-body healing experienced by eight professional women drummers. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 62*(11), 5381B. (UMI No. 3034483)

Mann, R. (2002). *Drumming our way to balance: An interview with Michael Drake.* Talking Drums Publications. Retrieved April 5, 2005, from http://www.geocities.com/talkingdrumpub/articlespage2.html

Marbella, A. M., Harris, M. C., Diehr, S., Ignace. G. & Ignace, G. (1998, March). Use of Native American Healers among Native American patients in an urban Native American health center. *Archives of Family Medicine, 7*(2), 182-185.

Martin, K. (2002). *Ways of knowing, ways of being, ways of doing; Developing a theoretical framework and methods for Indigenous re-search and Indigenist research*. Unpublished manuscript.

Maxfield, M. (1990). *Effects of rhythmic drumming of EEG and subjective experience.* Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation, Institute of Transpersonal Psychology, Palo Alto, CA.

Maxfield, M. (1994). The journey of the drum. *ReVision, 16(*4), 151-164.

Mcleod-Shabogesic, P. (2002). 8th Annual Great Lakes pow-wow guide 2002. *Anishinabek News*. North Bay.

McPherson, B. (2004, December). *Aboriginal spirituality as a determinant of health for Aboriginal youth*. Toronto, ON: Wellesley Central Health. Retrieved September 11, 2005, from http://www.ryerson.ca/~sdohyout/aboriginalspirituality.htm

McLennan, V., & Khavarpour, F. (2004). Culturally appropriate health promotion: its meaning and application in Aboriginal communities. *Health Promotion Journal of Australia, 15*(3), 237-239.

Medicine Eagle, B. (1991). *Buffalo woman comes singing*. New York: Ballantine Books.

Miles, M.B. and Huberman, A.M. (1984) *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Sourcebook of New Methods.* UK: Sage.

Mishibinijima, J. S. (2003). *The Seven Grandfathers*. Wikwemikong, ON: Mishibinijma Art Galleries Publishing.

Mitchell, T. L., & Maracle, D. T. (2005). Healing the generations: Post traumatic stress and the health status of Aboriginal populations in Canada. *Journal of Aboriginal Health, 2*(1), 14-23.

Montour, L. (2000) The Medicine Wheel: Understanding "problem" patients in primary care. *The Permanente Journal, 4*(1). Retrieved September 2, 2005 from http://xnet.kp.org/permanentejournal/winter00pj/wheel.html

Nabigon, H., Hagey, R., Webster, S., & Mackay, R. (1998). The learning circle as a research method: The trickster and windigo in research. *Native Social Work Journal, 2*(1), 113-137.

National Aboriginal Health Organization. (2001, October, 22*). Strategic Direction for an Evidence-Based Decision Making Framework at NAHO*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Napoli, M. (2002). Holistic health care for Native women: An integrated model. *American Journal of Public Health, 92*(10), 1573-1575.

Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute. (n.d.). Nechi Beliefs. Retrieved July 31, 2005, from http://www.nechi.com/discover/missionst.php

Neher, A. (1962). A physiological explanation of unusual behavior in ceremonies involving drums. *Human Biology, 34*, 151-160.

Oberly, J., & Macedo, J. (2004, October). The R word in Indian country: Culturally appropriate commercial tobacco-use research strategies. *Health Promotion Practice, 5*(4), 355-361.

Oginii Kwe, personal communication, January 23, 2004.

Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs. (2005). *Aboriginal affairs: Glossary of terms*. Toronto: Author. Retrieved September 10, 2005, from http://www.nativeaffairs.jus.gov.on.ca/english/faq/glossary.htm

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Poirier, M. A. (2001). Humour is good medicine: The Algonquin Perspective on Humour in their Culture and of Outsider Constructions of Aboriginal Humour. *Dissertations Abstracts International, 39*(01), 61. (UMI No. MQ52362)

Prince Edward Island Health and Community Services System (1996). *Circle of health: Prince Edward Island's health promotion framework.* Prince Edward Island: Author.

Proudfoot-Edgar, C. (1999). *It is the drum that calls and holds us in the circle.* Retrieved January 5, 2002 from http://www.shamanicvisions.com/writings_folder/artofSC.html

Public Health Agency of Canada. *Population health approach*. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved June 6, 2005, from http://www.phac-aspc.gc.ca/ph-sp/phdd/

Pulack, D. (1990). Rhythm, myth and spirit. *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music, 18*. Retrieved April 6, 2005, from http://cjtm.icaap.org/content/18/v18art5.html

Restoule, B. M. M. (2000). Healing in Ojibwa First Nation Communities: Investigating The relationship among acculturation, health and identity. *Dissertation Abstract International, 60*(10), 5251B. (UMI No. NQ42971)

Reutter, L. I., Dennis, D. N., & Wilson, D. R. (2001). Young parents' understanding and actions related to the determinants of health. *Canadian Journal of Public Health, 92* (5), 335-339.

Reynolds, C. L. (1994). The nature of health promotion within an Ojibwe culture: An ethnographic study. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 55(2), 370B. (UMI No. 9418231)

Reynolds Turton, C. L. (1997). Ways of knowing about health: An Aboriginal perspective. *Advances in Nursing Science, 19*(3), 28-36.

Rheault, D. R. R. I. (1999). Anishinaabe Mino-Bimaadiziwin. *Dissertation Abstracts International, 37*(6), 1635. (UMI No. MQ40486)

Ritter, J. (1996). "Conversations with a Lakota drummer." *Percussive Notes* 34(4): 46-48.

Rogers, B. (2001). A path of healing and wellness for native families. *American Behavioural Scientist, 44*(9), 1512-1514.

Ross, J, & Ross, J. (1992). Keep the circle strong: Native health promotion. *Journal of Speech-Language Pathology and Audiology, 16* (4), 291-301.

Royal Canadian Mounted Police (2003). *Native spirituality guide*. Ottawa, ON: Author. Retrieved January 23, 2005, from http://www.rcmp.ca/ccaps/spirit_e.htm

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996a). *People to People, Nation to Nation: Highlights from the report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People.* Minister of Supply and Services Canada.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (1996b). *People to People, Nation to Nation: Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People. Volume 3: Gathering strength:* Minister of Supply and Services Canada. Retrieved July 14, 2005, from http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ch/rcap/sg/sim3_e.html

Rubin A. & Babbie E. (1997). Problem formulation. In *Research methods for social work* (2nd ed., pp. 90-118). Pacific Grove, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company.

Sage Words: An Interview with Jan Kahehti:io Longboat. (Winter/Spring, 2005). *In the Spirit of Healing and Wellness, 6* (1), 12.

Saklofske, D. H., Blomme, G. C. & Kelly, I. W. (1992). The effect of exercise and relaxation on energetic and tense arousal. *Personality and Individual Differences, 1,* 623-625.

Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Diabetes. (2000). *Diabetes 2000: Recommendations for a strategy on diabetes prevention and control in Saskatchewan.* Regina: Government Printing Office.

Scott, K. (2005, March). Editorial: Population health: Risk and resistance. *Journal of Aboriginal Health, 2*(1), 2-3.

Semaa Kwe, personal communication, November 17, 2000.

Severud, T. (2003, October 4). Bimaadiziwin, "A Good Life." *Canku Ota (Many Paths) An Online Newsletter Celebrating Native America 97.* Retrieved September 8, 2004, from http://www.turtletrack.org/Issues03/Co10042003/CO_10042003_Good_Life.htm

Shestowsky, B. (1993). *Traditional medicine and primary health care among Canadian Aboriginal people*. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Nurse Association of Canada.

Smith, L. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. London & New York: Zed Books; Dunedin: University of Otago Press.

Statistics Canada. (2003). *2001 Aboriginal population profile: City of Greater Sudbury*. Ottawa, ON. Author.

Steinhauer, E. (2002). Thoughts on an indigenous research methodology. *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 26*(2), 69-81.

Stevens, S. G. (1999). The psychotherapeutic effects of American Indian traditions such as singing, drumming, dancing and storytelling. *Dissertation Abstracts International*, 37(02), 694. (UMI No. 1392464)

Stevenson. J. (1999). The circle of healing. *Native Social Work Journal, 2*(1), 8-21.

Stout, M. D. (1996, July). *Aboriginal Canada: Women and health - A Canadian perspective.* Retrieved April 1, 2003, from http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/cansua/papers/canada/english/indigeab.html

Stout M. D., Stout, R., & Roja, A. (2001). *Thinking outside the box: Health policy options for NAHO to consider, roundtable report*. Ottawa, ON: National Aboriginal Health Organization.

Stout, M. D (2005, Spring). Healthy living and Aboriginal women: The tension between hard evidence and soft logic. *Centre of Excellence for Women's Health Research Bulletin, 4*(2), 16-20.

Svenson, K. A., & Lafontaine, C. (1999). *The search for wellness*. First Nations and Inuit Regional Longitudinal Survey. Ottawa, ON: First Nations and Inuit Regional Health Survey National Steering Committee. Retrieved September 2, 2005, from www.naho.ca/firstnations/english/pdf/key_docs_1.pdf

Ten Fingers, K. (2005). Rejecting, revitalizing and reclaiming. *Canadian Journal of Public Health 96*, Supplement 1, S60-S63.

Tillson, T. (March/April 2002). Acknowledging Native healing traditions: Medicine Wheel offers sacred approach to treating addiction. *The Journal of Addiction and Mental Health, 5*(2), p. 13.

Traditional Grandmother (personal communication, January 19, 2004).

Walker, P. (2001). Journeys around the Medicine Wheel: A story of Indigenous research in a Western University. *The Australian Journal of Indigenous Education.* 29(2) 18-21.

Weber-Pillwax, C. (1999). Indigenous research methodology: Exploratory discussion of an elusive subject. *Journal of Educational Thought*, 33(1) 31-45.

Wilson, S. (2001). What is an Indigenous research methodology? *Canadian Journal of Native Education, 25*, 175-179.

Woodland Cultural Centre. (1990). *Sound of the drum: A resource guide*. Branford: Woodland Cultural Centre.

World Health Organization (1986). *The Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion*. Geneva: Author.

Vennum, T. (1982). *The Ojibwa dance drum: Its history and construction.* Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press.

ABORIGINAL GLOSSARY

Aboriginal: "The term "Aboriginal" has come into common usage since 1982 when protections for Aboriginal and treaty rights were incorporated into the Canadian Constitution. 'Aboriginal' was defined as including Indian, Métis and Inuit peoples of Canada, although the boundaries of membership in these collectivities remains subject to various definitions" (Castellano, 2002).

Anishnaabe: Is an Algonquian word that many Aboriginal people use to describe themselves. The plural term Anishnaabeg loosely translates as "the people first put down by the Creator in this land"(Browner, 2002, p. 34).

All Our Relations: Is an Aboriginal saying that refers to our relationship with all of Creation, and to the Spirit World.

Assimilation: "Before Confederation and up through the first half of the twentieth century, the policy of the Government of Canada towards the First Nations was assimilation. It was thought that the quickest route to 'civilizing' and 'converting' the indigenous population was to forcibly remove indigenous children from their homes and communities and place them in residential schools. There was considerable variation in how the schools operated, but in many cases the children were forbidden to speak their mother tongues, their cultures were condemned as barbaric and their spirituality as heathen" (National Day of Healing and Reconciliation Petition, 2001).

Bill C-31: "The pre-legislation name of the 1985 Act to Amend the Indian Act. This Act eliminated certain discriminatory provisions of the Indian Act, including the section that resulted in Indian women losing their Indian status when they married non-Indian men. Bill C-31 enabled people affected by the discriminatory provisions of the old Indian Act to apply to have their Indian status restored" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000).

Circle: Is a prominent Aboriginal symbol used to represent the inseparability of the individual, family, community and world (Hylton, 2002).

Circle of Life: This is also known as the Medicine Wheel, which was originally a ceremonial circle of stones placed on the ground and others places, and has been used by Aboriginal people for thousands of years (Dufrene & Coleman, 1994). The Circle of Life is a metaphor, or a symbol, used among Aboriginal people for teaching or reflecting Aboriginal concepts (Chamberlain, 1998). Many Aboriginal people's conceptualization of health stems from the Circle of Life teachings.

Clan: The clans of a Nation are often the animals and other creatures that inhabit the region. "Your clan is with you from the day you are born. It is said that your clan walks with you and looks after you" (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 2000a, n.d., para. 3).

Clan system: The Creator decided that the people needed a system—a framework of government to give them strength. Traditionally, the Ojibway Clan System was created to

provide leadership and to care for these needs. There were seven original clans and each clan was known by its animal emblem, or totem. The animal totem symbolized the strength and duties of the clan. The seven original clans were given a function to serve for their people. They were: crane, loon, fish, bear, martin, deer, and bird. (Benton-Benai, 1988).

Colonization: "Is viewed as a means by which an oppressor group gains and maintains control over another group which becomes known as the oppressed. The colonization of North American Aboriginal people took shape by tearing apart communities and attacking the fundamental values systems which were intrinsic to the growth of their society" (McPherson, 2004, p. 4).

Dreamcatcher: Aboriginal people traditionally made dream catchers from thin red willow sticks that were tied in a circle with sinew. Sinew was then woven inside the circle to create a web. Stones or beads were also woven into the webbing, leaving enough room for an opening at the core of the circle. Feathered fringes were attached to the sides of the dream catcher. A dream catcher was hung over a child's bed to prevent bad dreams from reaching the child's restful mind. During the night, bad dreams were caught in the webbing while good dreams were allowed to flow through the center of the web. The morning sun warmed the stones or beads, melting bad dreams that flowed off the feathers. Dream catchers are still made and used today by people of all ages (Aboriginal Innovations, n.d). The dreamcatcher can be used as a symbol or framework in which the web represents the interconnectedness among all things.

Drum birthing: A ceremony to bring the spirit into the Grandmother drum. (Elder Lokoduq, personal communication, September 11, 2005).

Eagle Feather: Is a sacred symbol or object that is widely recognized and used in ceremonies. The eagle, representing the medium through which Aboriginal people can identify and appreciate the significance of the Creator's spirit among them, holds high esteem and honour. This honour and esteem extends as well to those who carry a feather or a claw of an eagle. In any sharing or healing circle, the Eagle Feather is a prominent feature. It is also widely used to energize, and lead the participants into many cultural activities and ceremonies (Royal Canadian Mounted Police, 2003).

Elders: The persons who are most knowledgeable about physical and spiritual reality, the teaching and practice of ceremonies, and the nuances of meaning in Aboriginal languages (Castellano, 2004). Elders are respected for their wisdom within Aboriginal society.

Eurocentrism: "It is the superiority of Europeans and their descendants over non-Europeans, founded on a false polarity between 'civilize' and 'savage' and 'centre', and 'marginalized' peoples" (Battiste, 1998, p. 22).

Feasts and giveaways: Feasts and giveaways are an important part of Aboriginal life. They are held throughout the year to acknowledge the help received from the Spirit World, our relatives and ancestors, and other members of the community. Feasting gives

us the opportunity to honour all those who have helped us, to feed them, and express our respect for what they have done for us (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 2000b).

First Nation: An Indian band or an Indian community functioning as a band but not having official band status. The term First Nations does not include Inuit or Métis (Barber, 1998). "A term that came into common usage in the 1970s to replace the word "Indian," which many people found offensive. Although the term First Nation is widely used, no legal definition of it exists. Among its uses, the term "First Nations peoples" refers to the Indian people in Canada, both Status and Non-Status. Many Indian people have also adopted the term "First Nation" to replace the word "band" in the name of their community" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000).

Great Spirit: Is synonymous with Creator and God.

Healers/Medicine Men or Women: People born with a natural gift for healing (Deiter & Otay, 2001). They are chosen by the Creator and taught at an early age how to use their gifts. They learn all the medical plants and what they are used for by observing and learning from others who have knowledge of the medicines (Auger, 1999).

Heterogeneity: Refers to the fact that there are people from different Aboriginal Nations, First Nations and groups within a community.

Indian Act, 1876: "This is the Canadian federal legislation, first passed in 1876, that sets out certain federal government obligations, and regulates the management of Indian reserve lands. The act has been amended several times, most recently in 1985. Among its many provisions, the act requires the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development to manage certain moneys belonging to First Nations and Indian lands, to approve or disallow First Nations by-laws" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000).

Indian: "The term Indian may have different meanings depending on context. Under the *Indian Act*, Indian means 'a person who pursuant to this Act is registered as an Indian or is entitled to be registered as an Indian'. There are a number of terms employing the term 'Indian' including Status Indian, Non-status Indian and Treaty Indian. The term 'Indian' was first used by Christopher Columbus in 1492, believing he had reached India" (Ontario Secretariat for Aboriginal Affairs, 2005). This term is not used by some Aboriginal people because of its past use with negative connotations.

Indian status: An individual's legal status as an Indian, as defined by the Indian Act.

Indigenous people: This is a more global term to refer to the original inhabitants of many countries. The terms "Aboriginal" and "Indigenous" have been used interchangeably, and are meant to convey inclusion of all Aboriginal people (University of Saskatchewan, 2003).

Laying down tobacco: It has been said that traditional tobacco was given to us so that we can communicate with the Spirit World (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 2000c, para. 6).

Many Aboriginal lay tobacco down, on the earth or in the water to ask for guidance or to give thanks, "Miigwetch."

Medicines: These include all things that heal. These can be internal to oneself such as laughter, tears, communication; or they can be external such as words one hears, behaviours or actions that help one (Shestowsky, 1993). Many plants have medicinal properties; the sacred medicines are sage, tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass.

Métis: "People of mixed and European ancestry who identify themselves as Métis people, as distinct from First Nations people, Inuit or non-Aboriginal people. The Métis have a unique culture that draws on their diverse ancestral origins, such as Scottish, French, Ojibway and Cree" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000).

Midewiwin society: A spiritual healing medicine society that originated among Ojibwe people. "Membership in the Midewiwin involved many years of dedicated study. To enter the society, the initiate has to undergo a long period of instruction to master the herbal knowledge and philosophy handed down by elders. . . .The Midewiwin today has a significant membership in the upper Great Lakes region and has spread from the Ojibwas to neighboring Indian people"(Hoxie, 1996, p. 428). They gather as the Three Fires Midewiwin Society. The movement is grounded in the original teachings, ceremonies and prophecies of the Mediwiwin Society. The ceremonies hold the Aboriginal community together through shared beliefs, and their continuance assures the survival of the Anishnaabeg language and unique way of life (Browner, 2004).

Moontime: This term describes a women's menstrual period. For Aboriginal people, all life is directly linked to the cycles of the earth and the moon. Like many other cultures, Aboriginal people believe that a woman's menstrual cycle follows the cycles of the moon (Canadian Health Network, 2004). Many traditional Aboriginal people also believe that a woman is powerful when on her Moontime. Therefore, she is not to go near sacred items such as the Eagle Feather because she may take away their power.

Non-status Indian: "An Indian person who is not registered as an Indian under the Indian Act. This may be because his or her ancestors were never registered, or because he or she lost Indian status under former provisions of the Indian Act" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000).

Off-reserve: "A term used to describe people, services or objects that are not part of a reserve, but relate to First Nations" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000).

Offering of tobacco: In the Aboriginal community the offering of tobacco is like a contractual agreement that contains a spiritual element. Tobacco is one of the four sacred medicines, and when a person accepts the tobacco he/she is accepting the responsibility of the task asked not only for himself/herself but for his/her community, the elements of the earth and his/her ancestors.

Ojibwe: The Ojibwe people of the Great Lakes region are also known as Ojibway, Ojibwa, Chippewa, or Anishnaabe, and are commonly characterized as Eastern Woodland Indians (Reynolds Turton, 1997). The Ojibwe people are spread over a thousand miles of territory from southeastern Ontario westward across the upper Great Lakes country of the United States and Canada as far as Montana and Saskatchewan (Hoxie, 1996).

Oral Tradition: The handing down of beliefs, legends, and customs from generation to generation by word of mouth or practice (Auger, 1999).

Patriarchy: The domination of society by men.

Pow wow: A term that non-Aboriginal people used in the past as a way to describe Aboriginal people's gatherings (Braine, 1995). Today a pow wow is an event where Aboriginal people of all Nations come together to celebrate their culture through the medium of drum and dance (Browner, 2004).

Protocols: The way respect is demonstrated towards people, including ancestors; the physical environment including Mother Earth, the plants and animals; and all that is sacred (Ten Fingers, 2005).

Reserve: "Land set aside by the federal government for the use and occupancy of an Indian group or band" (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 2000).

Residential schools: In 1849, "Church and government leaders had come to the conclusion that the problem (as they saw it) of Aboriginal independence and 'savagery' could be solved by taking children from their families at an early age and instilling the ways of the dominant society during eight or nine years of residential schooling far from home" (RCAP, 1996a. p. 15). Residential schools began to close in 1969; the last one closed in 1988.

Sacred Objects: Many Aboriginal people collect objects that have special significance to them. These are often elements from the earth such as a rock or a stick, a feather or a special herb. These special objects help raise the person's awareness about their spiritual connection to the earth. The objects can help a person pray, deal with stress or assist people in a circle in sharing their stories (Bopp, Bopp, Brown & Lane, 1989).

Seven Grandfathers: Many Anishnaabe people use seven basic principles to guide how they live. These teachings are known as the Seven Grandfathers. They are in Ojibwe and English: Nbwaaksawin/Wisdom, Zaagidwin/Love, Mnaadendmowin/Respect, Aakdehewin/Bravery, Gwekwaadziwin/Honesty, Dbaadendizin/Humility, and Debwewin, Truth (Mishibinijima, 2003).

Seven Generations: Aboriginal Elders teach us that whatever major decisions we make, we must do so keeping in mind the health and well-being of the next seven generations.

Sharing Circle: An Aboriginal way of communicating. A sharing circle is a way to bring people together for the purpose of teaching, listening and learning. The facilitator of the sharing circle needs to be familiar with the various protocols of a sharing circle. Often the circle begins with a smudge and a prayer. A talking piece, such as an Eagle Feather, is passed around to direct the communication. The circle is often closed with a prayer.

Smudge/Smudging "A 'smudge', refers to the smoke that is used to cleanse ourselves. It is meant to get rid of negativity or 'bad spirits' that might be around us" (Canadian Health Network, 2000). A smudging ceremony is often done at the beginning of a gathering or ceremony with the burning of one, or several of the sacred medicines (sage, tobacco, cedar, sweetgrass) in a bowl or shell. People often rub their hands together in the smoke, and then bring it to their bodies for cleansing.

Spirit Name: Traditionally a Spirit name was given at birth. Aboriginal people today who do not have a Spirit name will go to an Elder or Healer with tobacco to request a name to reclaim part of their lost identity. The name fits the person's characteristics, and can be chosen as an analogy to a tree, animal, plant, fish, water, or air (Auger, 1999). "When we receive our Aboriginal name, we know who we are in Creation. We are able to identify ourselves when we communicate with the spirit of each thing in Creation. An Aboriginal name is important for a good beginning, strong prayers and the good life. A Spirit name is important for personal protection against sickness and disease" (Anishnawbe Health Toronto, 2000d, para. 1-2).

Spirit World: A non-physical world where spirits live.

Teachings: Teachings are lessons to be learned from all beings including humans, plants, animals, spiritual helpers and so on. Teachings are a way of life for Aboriginal people. They are passed down from one generation to the next through symbols, stories, songs, drumming, and ceremonies.

Traditional/Tradition: The translation of traditional for Aboriginal people means a way of being, of life, of living. Thus, the traditions are still being practice today in everyday life, and are not just something of the past. Diamond, Cronk & von Rosen (1994) state "Anglophones often use the word 'tradition' within the parallel 'frozen' paradigm, connoting something of the past, something which is no longer practiced" (p. 50). When Aboriginal people talk about their traditional ways, they are not proposing to go back to teepees, and a hunting-gathering lifestyle. They are talking about restoring order to daily living in conformity with ancient and enduring values that affirm life (Castellano, 2004).

Turtle Island: Is the English translation of the name given to the American continent we stand on. It comes from the Creation story of the Algonkian and Iroquoian people (Canadian Health Network, 2000).

Western: The term "Western" refers to a mind-set, a worldview that is a product of the development of European culture, and diffused into other Nations like North America

(Ermine, Sinclair & Jeffery, 2004). It is often used interchangeably with the terms, "dominant," "white," and "European."

Wholistic: This term embraces a 'whole of life' view including physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual realms (Saskatchewan Advisory Committee on Diabetes, 2000).

APPENDICES

Appendix A

11/2/2003
INFORMATION LETTER
(Sharing Circle)

Ghislaine Goudreau

Aanii (Hello),

I am doing a thesis study called *Exploring the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion.* I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. This study is a requirement to complete my Master in Science in Health Promotion Degree from the University of Alberta. My thesis committee members are:

Dr. Stan Wilson, Professor Emeritus
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta

Ms. Sheila Hardy, Associate Professor
Honours Bachelor of Social Work
Native Human Services program
Laurentian University

Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax, Professor
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta

Members of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers have agreed to be co-researchers for this study. All researchers will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants and have signed a confidentiality agreement.

Study Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the use of the hand drum and its impact on urban Anishnaabe women. The results may help more urban Anishnaabe women understand the impact of hand drumming on their health and well-being.

The Sharing Circle: If you agree to be part of this study, you will be taking part in a sharing circle with approximately 6-10 other Aboriginal women hand drummers. The sharing circle will be held at the N'Swakamok Friendship Centre and will last about 2 to 3 hours. Food will be provided as well as bus tickets and childcare if needed. The sharing circle protocols will be based on the primary researcher's experience with facilitating circles over the past five years.

Confidentiality: Participation in this sharing circle is entirely voluntary; if you wish to withdraw you may do so at any time even if it is not your turn to speak. I will be taking notes and audio-recording the sharing circle so that I do not miss any important information. I will be transcribing the recorded material. Your comments will be kept anonymous; your real name or other identifying information will not be used in the data or in any publications. The transcribed data with no names or identifying information will be analyzed and interpreted with the co-researchers of this study. After the analysis and interpretation is complete I will collect all the material that was distributed to the co-researchers. I will keep all the information provided in a locked cabinet for at least five years after the study. After five years I will destroy the data.

Benefits and Risks: You may benefit from participating in this study by having the chance to contribute to the knowledge about the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and their health and well-being.

You will not be exposed to experiences that result in direct or indirect harm, although there is a small risk that discussing your experiences may be emotionally distressing. I will provide a list of resource people to contact if you need to discuss your issues further.

Research Results: Once the data has been analyzed and interpreted, you will be provided with a copy to review and make changes if needed. This will give you an opportunity to ensure that we have interpreted your data accurately. Also, you will receive a copy of my thesis once it has been completed.

The results of this study will be shared with the Sudbury Aboriginal community as well as other interested communities. There is also a possibility that the study may be published in the form of a journal article.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please call me at .

Miigwetch (Thank you),

Ghislaine Goudreau

_____ _____

Participant initial Investigator initial

Appendix B

11/2/2003
INFORMATION LETTER
(Individual Interview)

Ghislaine Goudreau

Aanii (Hello),

I am doing a thesis study called *Exploring the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion.* I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. This study is a requirement to complete my Master in Science in Health Promotion Degree from the University of Alberta. My thesis committee members are:

Dr. Stan Wilson, Professor Emeritus
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta

Ms. Sheila Hardy, Associate Professor
Honours Bachelor of Social Work
Native Human Services program
Laurentian University

Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax, Professor
Department of Educational Policy Studies
Faculty of Education
University of Alberta

Members of the Waabishki Mkwaa Singers have agreed to be co-researchers for this study. All researchers will comply with the University of Alberta Standards for the Protection of Human Research Participants and have signed a confidentiality agreement.

Study Purpose: The purpose of this study is to explore the use of the hand drum and its impact on urban Aboriginal women. The results may help more urban Anishnaabe women understand the impact of hand drumming on their health and well-being.

Individual Interview: If you agree to be part of this study, you will be taking part in a one-to-one interview. The interview will be held at a time and location convenient for you and will last between 1 1/2-2 hours. Food will be provided as well as bus tickets and childcare if needed.

Confidentiality: Participation in the interview is entirely voluntary; if you wish to withdraw you may do so at any time. I will be taking notes and audio-recording the interview so that I do not miss any important information. I will transcribe the recorded material. Your comments will be kept anonymous; your real name or other identifying

information will not be used in the data or in any publications. The transcribed data with no names or identifying information will be analyzed and interpreted with the co-researchers of this study. After the analysis and interpretation is complete I will collect all the material that was distributed to the co-researchers. I will keep all the information in a locked cabinet for at least five years after the study. After five years I will destroy the data.

Benefits and Risks: You may benefit from participating in this study by having the chance to contribute to the knowledge about the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and their health and well-being.

You will not be exposed to experiences that result in direct or indirect harm, although there is a small risk that discussing your experiences may be emotionally distressing. I will provide a list of resource people to contact if you need to discuss your issues further.

Research Results: Once the data has been analyzed and interpreted, you will be provided with a copy to review and make changes if needed. This will give you an opportunity to ensure that we have interpreted your data accurately. Also, you will receive a copy of my thesis once it has been completed.

The results of this study will be shared with the Sudbury Aboriginal community as well as other interested communities. There is also a possibility that the study may be published in the form of a journal article.

If you are interested in participating or have any questions, please call me at

Miigwetch (Thank you),

Ghislaine Goudreau

_____ _____

Participant initial Investigator initial

Appendix C

CONSENT FORM
Sharing Circle/Individual Interview

Title of the Project: Exploring the Connection Between Aboriginal Women's Hand Drumming and Health Promotion

Principal Investigator: Ghislaine Goudreau
Thesis Supervisory committee: Dr. Stan Wilson, Dr. Cora Weber-Pillwax, Ms. Sheila Hardy

Please read each item and then circle your answer.

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	Yes	No
Have you read and received a copy of the attached information sheet?	Yes	No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in taking part in this research study?	Yes	No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	Yes	No
Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or withdraw form the study at any time? You do not have to give a reason.	Yes	No
Has the issue of confidentiality/anonymity been explained to you?	Yes	No
Do you understand that your anonymity cannot be guaranteed?	Yes	No

This study was explained to me by: Ghislaine Goudreau

I agree to take part in this study.

_____ _____
Signature of Research Participant Date

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator or Designee Date

Appendix D

INTERVIEW GUIDE
(Sharing Circle)

Aanii (Hello),

I am honoured that you are here for the sharing circle today. Miigwetch for agreeing to share your experiences as an Aboriginal woman hand drummer. In case you don't already know, my name is Ghislaine Goudreau, and I am doing this study as part of my Master of Science in Health Promotion Studies at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of this study is to explore the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion. My hope is that more urban Aboriginal women will understand the importance of their traditions such as hand drumming.

Before coming to the circle you have signed the form indicating your understanding of the research study, including your consent to participate in this sharing circle. You also understand that I will be taking notes during the circle, and it will be audio-recorded. You are free to leave the sharing circle at any time and/or request that the tape be turned off. Please remember that all discussion here today/tonight is confidential.

Does everyone agree with tape recording the sharing circle?
Does anyone have any questions?
Is everyone ready for the interview?

I will now begin with the questions. As the feather is passed around each one of you will have a turn to reply to each question. We will start with the first question and go around the circle and then proceed with the next question and so on. The protocol is we are not to interrupt the person speaking.

1. Why did you begin to use the hand drum?
2. What brought you to the hand-drumming circle?
3. What do you get from drumming with other women (people)?
4. Why are you still hand drumming today?
5. How do you see yourself and your hand drum in the future?
6. How does hand drumming promote health and well-being in your life?
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Miigwetch (Thank you) for taking the time to talk to me about your hand drumming experiences. Your willingness to share your experience may be helpful to other urban Aboriginal women. Please remember it is important that we all respect the confidentiality of the circle. The information shared is for research purposes only, where no one's identity is revealed. Also, I have names of resource people in case someone needs to speak with someone about an issue that came up tonight.

Appendix E

INTERVIEW GUIDE
(Individual Interview)

Aanii,

I am honoured that you are participating in this interview. Miigwetch for agreeing to share your experiences as an Aboriginal woman hand drummer. In case you don't already know, my name is Ghislaine Goudreau, and I am doing this study as part of my Master of Science in Health Promotion Studies at the University of Alberta.

The purpose of this study is to explore the connection between Aboriginal women's hand drumming and health promotion. My hope is that more urban Aboriginal women will understand the importance of their traditions such hand drumming.

Before the interview you have signed the form indicating your understanding of the research study, including your consent to participate in this sharing circle. You also understand that I will be taking notes during the circle, and it will be audio-recorded. You are free to stop the interview at any time and/or request that the tape be turned off. Please remember that all discussion here today/tonight is confidential.

Do you agree with tape recording the interview?
Do you have any questions?
Are you ready for the interview?
I will now begin with the questions.

1. Why did you begin to use the hand drum? [**Probe:** When did you begin hand drumming? Do you remember the first time you heard the drum? Were there Aboriginal women drumming when you were growing up? When was the first time you saw Aboriginal women drumming?]
2. What brought you to the hand-drumming circle?
3. What do you get from drumming with other women (people)?
4. Why are you still hand drumming today? [**Probe**: Compared to when you began hand drumming, why do you still drum today? Have you grown?]
5. How do you see yourself and your hand drum in the future? [**Probe:** What about Seven years from now, do you see anything different in your life with regards to hand drumming?]
6. How does hand drumming promote health and well-being in your life? [**Probe**: Has hand drumming helped you learn more about your culture?]
7. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Miigwetch for taking the time to talk to me about your hand drumming experiences. Your willingness to share your experience may be helpful to other urban Aboriginal women. I have names of resource people in case you need to speak with someone about an issue that came up.

Appendix F

TWO PAGE EXAMPLE OF THE MATRIX

Units	Q#	C	P	LN	Quote
Voice (Theme)					
To find voice	1	P	P5	144-147	"I had to learn how to sing, bring my voice because before it was stuck in my throat. I had to learn how to bring that song out in a voice. . . "
	2	P	P7	356	" A place [the circle] to go let your voice out . . . "
Finding Voice	3	P	P1	710-712	"I really got a lot out of it [the circle]. . . . I learned how to sing stronger--I used to sing very weak . . ."
	5	P	P4	999-1004	"As long as I have a voice, I have a future. I often think sometimes what I'm going to do when I get old. I'll just sing a song and someone will bring me some fish or flour and I'll get something to eat [laughter]. . . . Just as long as I can sing a song and trade for food."
Using voice					
	5	P	P4	1015	"As long as I have a voice I'll be here to make everybody laugh."
	5	P	P5	1025-1027	"Hopefully I can sing for a long time but I know people can't sing all the time because they lose their vocals or their lungs or they can't hold the tunes that long."
Sound					
To hear the heartbeat of the drum	1	P	P7	194	"I just love to hear that heartbeat of the drum."
	1	P	P7	213-215	"I didn't have a drum and I'm walking into a drum group and I didn't know what to expect. After the first night, being there, it was just amazing--just hearing the drum."
Hear the drums, shakers and other	2		P7	356-358	". . . hear the drums, the shakers and all the other women singing. It sounded so good, so it was where I needed to be . . ."

women					
Food	2	P	P4	313	"I probably went to the drumming circle because there was food. I learned how to eat strawberries. I never ate so many strawberries in my life. That's always a good thing."
	4	P	P1	400-402	"Food is so important. . . . I tell my children we will have a feast. But before we have a feast, we will have a drum birthing."
	4	P	P3	501-502	"We have food [at the hand-drumming circle], maybe that is why they [the youth] come too, no just kidding [she laughs]."
Controls appetite	4	P	P4	534-535	"Just go sing a song instead of eating."
Food	5	P	P4	1000-1004	"I often think sometimes what I'm going to do when I get old. I'll just sing a song and someone will bring me some fish or flour and I'll get something to eat [laughter]. . . . Just as long as I can sing a song and trade for food."
Helps deal with Weight Issues	6	P	P4	1198-1201	"It's now funny to say I drummed just so I didn't have to snack but that was important for me yesterday."
	6	P	P7	1344-1346	"I used to worry about my weight and now it's like I don't need to worry about that. I just have to take care of myself and take care of my drum and I don't have to worry about that [my weight]."
Energy					
To be energized	2	P	P5	344-343	"You go there really tired but when you leave you are exhilarated again and you get re-energized--so it's good."
	4	M	P5	584	"Even though I was tired doing it [drumming], we did it and it felt good."
(Substance Abuse Prevention)	4	P	P3	481-482	("I have seen youth who have stopped dabbling in drugs and alcohol for that drum.")