

**DECOLONIZING THE ACQUISITION OF KNOWLEDGE: Exploring VISION as a
method for acquiring knowledge by examining the ‘Vision of Wepison’ and the well-being
it has bestowed upon community**

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	4
CHAPTER ONE	
Introduction (Who am I, and why am I doing this work?)	7
CHAPTER TWO	
Ewāpahtehkāwisiyân, My Vision Story	19
Ceremony as Guidance	22
Living out my Vision	24
Gathering Knowledge	27
Observation: Watching and remembering what they did and said	27
Language: Understanding what they said	32
Practice: Learning by observing and doing	35
CHAPTER THREE	
Studying within the IPK Doctorate Program	52
Decolonizing the Acquisition of Knowledge	56
Cree Worldview	59
Kweyaskātisiwina/Weyasôwātiwina, Ethics	67
Knowledge Review	70
Other Motion Therapies	79
Tanisi anima ekih pe ispayik ote nawe, Historical Interference	85
Grounding my Vision	88
Methodology	91
Inviting Participants into the Circle of Understanding	94
Data Collection and Recording	96
Analyzing the Data	99
Limitations	101
CHAPTER FOUR	
The Findings of the Study	105
Part 1: On Investigating Vision	105
Part 2: Investigating Swing Therapy for Life Transitions	112
Part 3: Investigating Swing Therapy for the General Public	126
Testimonies	
Part 4: Researching Traditional Cree Lullabies	134
CHAPTER FIVE	
Conclusions and Recommendations	141

Definition of Terms	147
References	149
Appendices	153

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CHAPTER ONE

Awîyina nîya? Kekwâya ôma kâtoskâtamân ekwa Tânikih?

Introduction: Who am I, and why am I doing this work?

Hâw Niwâhkomâkanak, Kahkîyaw kitatamiskâtinâwâw. Acîyawes nika nehîyawân. Kinwesek ekwa ôma masinahikan kâ atoskâtamân. Kâ acimostâtinâwâw kekwaya ôma eyokohk kinwesek kâ otamehikweyân. Mâka pita nikawehison ekwa nikâ acimon tânite ohcîyân ekwa tânite ekih nihtâwîkitwâw nimosomipan ekwa nohkomipan. Eyokota kwayâc kanistaweminâwâw. Ekwa etokwe ahpo kanistohtawinâwâw tanihki ôma atoskewin eyokohk kâniciminikoyân.

Ekwa ôma kâwîyih acimoyân, môya nikakeh peyakwemison. Môya anima eyokosih kîyânâw nehîyawak esih nistohtamahk pimâtisiwin. Kahkîyaw kekway anima ewâhkomakahk ôma ôta asiskîy ekwa mîna kahkîyaw ayisîniw wâhkôhti. Mâcika mihcîyit ayisîniw wîyista ômîyiw otacimowin, môya kî't'sk nîya. Ahpô ayisk nitisânak wîyistawâw kamôsihtâwak nitacimôwin. Nitapâhteyimon nikâ nânitaw kîtemîyik niwâhkomâkanak.

Awîyina Nîya?

Nimosom, Sâpaci kâkîsihkâtiht, (asinîy wacîy nâpew), niki acimostâk, ôhkoma, nicâpan'pan, esa e-ki petâpâsot mistatimotâpânâskohk ote ohci wâhyaw wâpanohk. E-ki pewîcewât weyitisânah mâka esa atiht epe nâhnaketwâw misôwete. Kitôsâkahikanihk e-kî ohtohtet nicâpânipan, Marie Louise Macemuttaw e-ki sihkâsot, (my cousin Gloria Cardinal thinks her last name was misspelled or perhaps even reversed and should read 'Mâhtaw-Mâcew, which means 'Gifted Hunter') ekwa e-ki kihcôwîkimât nimosômipana Louis Cardinal. Nohkom, ekota ohci e-

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My Relatives, I greet you all. I have been working on this book for a long time now. I will share with you what it is that has been keeping me busy all this time but first I must tell you who I am, who I am related to and where we come from. This way you will know what I am about and you will understand the work that holds me.

The story I am going to tell, it doesn't belong to me alone. In our Cree epistemology and philosophy, we see the world as interconnected. Everything is related. Everyone is related. And there is no “objectivity” in my work or in story, for I cannot be an objective person – I think, feel and perceive the world through my own Nehîyaw lens. This story belongs to those that are mentioned here, especially perhaps my siblings, as I share our family's history. With humility, I ask you to accept me and the work I am doing for our people.

My grandfather John Baptist Cardinal (Mountain Man) shared a story with me about his grandmother, my great grandmother. He said she came from the east on horse and wagon with many of her family members, who each stopped and married along the way to Alberta. She was Saulteaux. My great grandmother was born in Calling Lake, Alberta. Her name was Mary Louise Macemuttaw, (my cousin Gloria Cardinal thinks her last name was misspelled or perhaps even reversed and should read 'Mâhtaw-Mâcew, which means 'Gifted Hunter') she married Louis Cardinal of Desmarais, Alberta, my great grandfather. I remember my great grandmother Mary Louise because she lived to be 102 and I remember visiting her when I was small. She was laying down on her bed and she reached her arms out to me when I arrived. I crawled into bed with her while she held me. I felt comforted by her love. I remember feeling her frail, skinny body next to mine, while she spoke Cree with my grandmother. From this union, my grandmother Adelaide Cardinal was born. She lived a very long life too, she was 98 years old when she left the Earth in April 2015. My mother was Matilda Auger; she married my father Patrick Auger in 1962. My father's parents were Philomene Young and Joseph Auger, born in Desmarais, Alberta. Unfortunately, I didn't get to know them because they had passed when my father was still a young man, but the land they lived on in Desmarais remains as it was, across Blue Bird Island. My Uncle Julian and my Auntie Julie were instrumental in my dad's life when he came out of the Aberhart Hospital in Edmonton in 1961 when he met my mom, Matilda Cardinal. My father had suffered six years in that hospital from tuberculosis and survived on one lung for the rest of his life thereafter. My parents had eight children in total. I am the fifth born. My Christian name is Darlene Pearl Auger. My Cree names are Pitāpan meaning 'The Light is Coming' and later I received the name 'Mikisew Mekwan Iskwew' meaning Eagle Feather Woman. I have two children, the eldest is Fawn Serene Auger (Wapanacahkos or Morning Star)

and the youngest is Kîstin Mavis Auger-Supernault (Whirl Wind or Little Tornado). We are of Nehiyaw (Cree) and Nahkawiyiniw (Saulteaux) or Anihtinâpe ancestry. Our family was informed by the late seer and medicine man, Mr. Dave Gihu, that we belong to the Wolf Clan people from the east. I have always felt a strong spiritual connection to the Wolf but I have much to learn about this clan.

My mother told me that I was born at the St. Martin's Hospital in Desmarais on April 14, 1966. My mom's cousin Suzanne Houle named me Darlene Pearl and I was given my father's last name Auger. Even though we were traditionally a matrilineal society, colonial laws of patriarchy were fast being applied to us Cree folk in Wabasca/Desmarais, Alberta, Canada. We were not given a choice. We lived in a log cabin by the lake, which is called Stony Point in Desmarais (Kâsiniskâsik). At this time we lived together with my parents, my grandmother Adelaide, my Aunty Alvina, and my seven siblings. It was crowded comfort. We only spoke Cree.



Left to right: My sister Lorna; Me as baby; My sister Marlene – 1966 in front of our log cabin in Desmarais, Stony Point.

When I was five, we moved to Wabasca, off the reserve, to a place on a cliff by a lake. My childhood years were great for the most part. My father had several trades; among them, he built canoes and he was a great musician – he played a sweet fiddle. My mother kept a good, clean, warm comfortable home and worked at the local elementary school as a cook's assistant. I saw her and heard her laugh every day at school and that was a great comfort to me.

I remember a story my mom shared with me about her days in Indian Residential School. She told me she was there for three years but that she didn't attend classes; she helped her mom who worked in the kitchen with the nuns.

During my childhood years, I remember I had built a little house on the cliff going down to the lake by carving rooms and furniture into the hard dirt of the earth. In the house, I had a kitchen, a hallway with a sitting area, a bathroom and a bedroom. Across from the seating area, I had built a baby swing, where I would put my baby doll and I would sing to her while I sat pushing the swing gently to and fro for hours upon end while looking out into the lake. I had learned how to make the little swing for my baby doll from watching my dad make one for my baby sister Karen when she first came home from the hospital.

I miss my little baby sister Karen. She was so kind. She died at the age of seventeen in a car accident. She knew she was going home as she had shared that with my older sister the night before.

I used to swing her when she was a baby but mostly I was outside playing, being a carefree child. I often played alone but sometimes my best friend and neighbour Edna would join me – she had built her own little house in the dirt a path away, down the lake from her place, and we would visit each other, having tea in our little dirt kitchens. Many times, I would come to play in my house and find that someone had trashed it. My stuff would be strewn all over in the trees down to the lake. I would cry. I would go tell my mom who would tell me not to worry so much about the mess and go fix it all up again. She would give me an old broom and some other trinkets I could have for my new place. I share this with you because this experience taught me a good lesson in forgiveness and moving forward and that holding anger towards anyone takes up more energy than focusing on building something even better. I learned to have patience, persevere through the challenges and maintain personal integrity.

In school, I was picked on by other girls and would often come home crying to my mom. She told me again and again not to allow other people's actions to defeat me or change my kind spirit. She would tell me to pray for those that had hurt me instead of trying to get back at them in anger. She told me that people hurt others because they were hurt by someone and did not know any better. She also told me that one day they will see my kindness and come to respect me. As difficult as this was to do, I listened to my mom and came to know that she was right. Today these girls (now women) do respect me and I still love them. I learned many lessons from this experience about being loving and kind, humble and respectful. I learned about the sacred power of love and compassion.

As I got a bit older I found that I loved to canoe. Sometimes I would paddle out alone and go gather duck eggs in the reeds across the lake or lay myself down in the canoe and allow myself to be rocked gently to and fro by the water's gentle waves. I would look at the artistic creations of Creator in the clouds and sometimes fall asleep, only to find myself wading on some shore. This was my sacred space and time and I loved it.

I share this here because when I first put myself into the big healing swing, it was the same feeling I had experienced in the canoe – the weightless, peaceful, nurturing love of being gently rocked.

I learned many things during that time. I learned that I was keenly sensitive to the energies around me and that I often required quiet solitude; that there was a great spirit and I was protected by something greater than myself; that I loved deeply and had a great compassion for people, animals and plants; that I loved to sing, laugh and dance; that I loved to explore and experience life; that I had a big soft heart and how hard that can be in a sometimes callous world and how to quell fear with love. As a child, I was not aware that others were any different.

In my youth, I was introduced to drama through a school program set up by Lakeland Family and Community Services out of Slave Lake, in the hopes that youth involvement in drama might decrease the number of suicides in our community. I always say it saved my life because I had lost friends to suicide. I loved drama and I went on to take part in summer youth theatre programs and then became a part of Petâpik Theatre Company, a local youth theatre group.

Through the sharing of personal stories, we developed plays that we performed for the community. Until then, I do not think we realized that, as youth, we had a voice!



Left to Right – Karen Yellowknife, Sylvia Cardinal, Me, Christina Gullion, Jane Heather (her back), Mary Sinclair and Margaret Sinclair. Petapik Theatre in Wabasca, AB., 1985.

When I was eighteen, I attended my first sweat lodge ceremony in Wabasca. Before that I do not recall going to any ceremonies, except as a very small child I once went to a tea dance. Right after high school graduation, I entered college. I studied Early Childhood Development. This is where I learned about child development and the importance of childhood play in the learning of culture and language and for gaining a healthy sense of identity and emotional/mental stability.

I moved to Edmonton when I was twenty to attend the University of Alberta. I was interested in becoming a drama teacher. I had had a few years of learning about the use of drama and theatre to share stories and heal from trauma and I wanted to impart this learning unto others. Drama saved my life and I wanted to give back. A couple of years into my studies, my sister passed

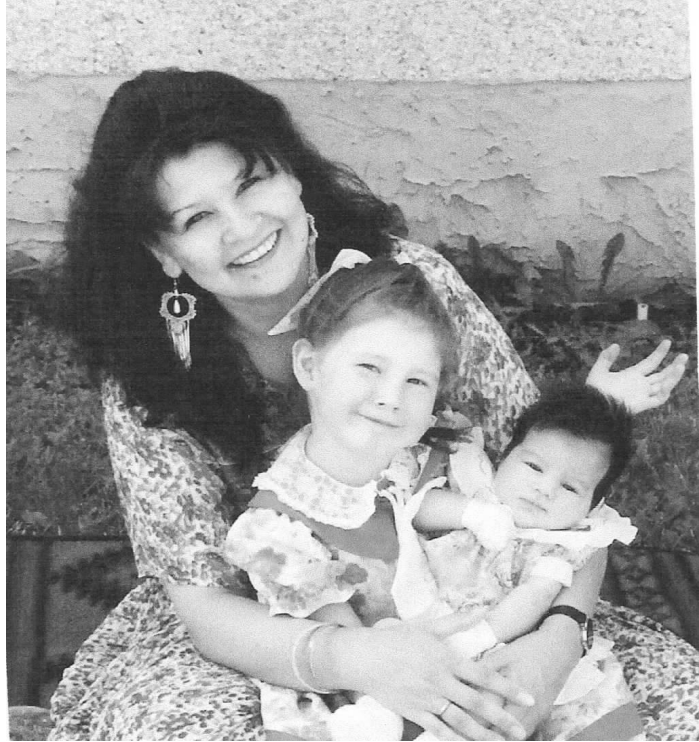
away and my father wanted me to move back home. I suppose he needed all his children to be nearby during our time of grief. While at home, I got a job teaching Cree at Mistassiniy School, the very school I had graduated from four years before. I was twenty-two. I loved the kids. I loved teaching Cree but I felt too confined by the political walls of mainstream academia. I wanted to share more of the Nehîyaw world with my students. I was not allowed to go above and beyond the curriculum that was set before me. This, along with the ever-persistent degree of what looked like apathy, but was maybe hunger, stress, grief, trauma and or any number of other factors that caused students to come to school unready to tackle the curriculum set before them, was frustrating for me and I became increasingly concerned for the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual welfare of the children.

A couple of years later, I moved back to Edmonton with a new passion. I wanted to become a psychologist. I wanted to connect with people on a more personal level and I wanted to help them heal from trauma. I went back to the University of Alberta into the Faculty of Arts as a Psychology major and a Drama minor. I wanted to understand human behaviour and the workings of the mind; most of all, I wanted to help people heal from their pain, understand and love themselves. For the next ten years, I studied Psychology part time at the University of Alberta, while working part time at a daycare to make ends meet. My years of study were challenging. English was not my first language and I was not confident in my writing and speaking abilities. Over time, I became more and more aware of how different my own Indigenous mind perceived the world compared to my non-Indigenous cohorts. This weighed on me heavily as there was no place for Indigenous thought in a colonial academy. I found that in the first few years, I had to first translate the English lessons into Cree in my mind, then decipher

their meaning into a way I could relate, before I could make sense of what I was being taught. It took me twice as long to read texts and write exams. It was very frustrating and exhausting.

During these years, I had two baby breaks, the first in 1991 when Fawn was born. Fawn's father passed away a year after that and I found myself single parenting, working and going to school. Looking back now, I really don't know how I did this. I was twenty-five when I was pregnant with Fawn. An Elder (Denny Auger) from back home gave me and my unborn child our Cree (Spirit) names. He named me Petāpan (The Light is Coming, in reference to the sunrise) after a name he held and he named my daughter Wāpanacāhkos (Morning Star). In Nature's way, she comes before me. After this I began to attend more ceremonies within and around Edmonton. My first spiritual teacher was the late Vera Martin, who had a Medewin Teaching Lodge just outside of Poundmaker's Lodge in St. Albert. I was schooled in the laws of the Medewin for several years until Vera moved back out east where she was from. Those of us women that were trained by her continued to gather in ceremony for several more years after that, holding one another as sisters. Those years were precious to me as Fawn was still a baby and the support I had with those other women was exactly what I needed at that time. Then I started to fast for four days each year. This became a way of life for me; it grounded me within my own cultural regime.

Five years later in 1996, at the age of thirty, I had Kîstin. A year later her father and I separated. It was a very difficult time in our lives but we persevered. I continued to go to school and to work. I also completed four years of sundance while in my thirties.



Me and My Children, Fawn, three years and Kistin, two months

Throughout my years of sometimes part-time and sometimes full-time employment, there are a couple of positions that had a real impact on me and this research. In the early 2000s I was working for the Public Health Agency of Canada as a Program Consultant for the Aboriginal Head Start Program. One of my duties was to visit Aboriginal Head Start centres across Alberta. I noticed that all the centres lacked in culturally appropriate resources for Cree children's play and learning. This proved to be challenging for the staff and affected me a great deal. I wished I could develop resources for language and cultural acquisition. I finally graduated with a degree in Psychology in 2002, at the age of thirty-six. It took me ten long years to complete my undergrad degree.



My graduation from the University of Alberta in 2002, BA in Psychology, Drama Minor

The other job that had a great impact on me and this research was in 2011-13 when I worked as the Alberta Regional Liaison for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. During this time, I recorded hundreds of statements from Indian Residential School survivors. I became vicariously traumatized by the stories I heard. This experience taught me the power of story and the importance of validation, compassion and love to heal trauma and create awareness for education.

CHAPTER TWO

Ewāpahtehkāwisîyân - My Vision Story

Neso Kihci Mitatahtomitanaw-peyak askiy, etakwākihik, kihteyayak eki ôhpinātwāw ospwākanôwāwa mîkôwāhpihk, niki wāpāhteyikāw'sin misiwepison, ekwa ekota wāspisiw kihte ayisîniw namôya pepesis. Ekospi ohcih ninatonîyin nistohtamôwin, ekwa pîyisk nitehtîyin poko ka asonamākîyân nikiskinahamākosôwina, meskoc ote nikān kicawāsimisinawak weyistawāw tan'sitohtahkwāw. Eyokohci ôma kāmasinahamān.

In the Fall of 2001, I experienced a spiritual vision. The vision came to me in a large tîpî during a pipe ceremony during the first Indian Residential School Healing Gathering. I was an Employee of Nechi Training, Healing and Research Institute, as the National Addictions Awareness Coordinator, at the time. As per Nechi's policy for all staff, we would act as volunteers for any event being held on our grounds and coordinated in concert with Poundmaker's Lodge. On the fourth and last morning of the event, I decided to join the elders in the early morning pipe ceremony. It was a beautiful day; the sun was coming up and the fog was lifting as I arrived on the grounds. I went into the tîpî and sat to the left of the door, which was facing east. To my right were a few PML clients and about seven male elders, including the late Joe P. Cardinal and the late George Bretton. I remember thinking how beautiful they looked sitting there all together with all their pipes. There was an elder from British Columbia who has also since passed; one from Saskatchewan and I believe the rest were from Saddle Lake, Kehewin and northeastern Alberta. Some of those elders are gone now and I miss seeing them. While the elders were singing their final song with their hand drums, like someone had expanded a picture on a cell phone screen, I saw a huge baby swing in front of me. The ropes were tied to

two tripod poles, north to south. I saw an adult in the swing swaddled like a baby in a blanket. I heard a grandmother speak to me, seemingly from my right shoulder and she said to me, “poko kawepitihtwāw asīyiniwak,” and then the image vanished. The entire experience seemed to take place within a flash of a few seconds and then it was gone. People were then shaking hands with the elders and leaving the tîpî, the ceremony over. I, too, crawled over to shake hands with the elders and exited the tîpî. I then sat outside of the tipi for a while, catching my breath. I had a weird sensation throughout my whole body. In his book *Nicolas Black Elk* (2009), Steltenkamp quoted the Elder Black Elk describing the feeling of receiving a vision which he calls “the queer feeling” throughout his book. It is indeed difficult to explain. To me it felt like a lag or an open gap between my spirit and my body where time sat still and it took a moment for me to reconnect with my body and my mind. I still have not found the English words to suitably describe the experience.

I thought about the vision and message all that day. I talked to myself, trying to figure out if it really happened, if I saw what I saw, if I heard what I heard. By the end of the day I really needed to debrief with someone. I had to share it to make sense of it; that is how I am. I figure things out by getting them out and putting them in front of me or having someone else give me feedback or by hearing myself, I begin to understand. However, I was tortured by the practice that we have today not to share sacred visions, but I couldn’t hold the weight of it alone. In the evening, as people were breaking camp and saying their goodbyes, the late Joe P. Cardinal and his wife Jenny were sitting around their camp visiting with people by their fire. As I walked over I noticed Ruth Morin and Leona Carter sitting together; these two ladies were then the CEOs of the sister organizations of Nechi Institute and Poundmakers Lodge. I thought to

myself, “perfect, I will ask if I could share my vision with them.” I went to my car to get tobacco. My father had taught me about offering tobacco when I was young; he asked me for it when I asked him for something, like medicine or spiritual knowledge or to make me something of spiritual significance. I came back and offered it to the ladies to request of them to hear me. I cried as I shared what I had seen and heard. I don’t know why I was so emotional and I could hear other women with me, many of them. I was also keenly aware that I probably sounded crazy but it didn’t matter in that moment. Ruth gave me a hug and told me that it is not for nothing that I saw what I saw and that I heard what I heard; she said *ewāpāhtekawisīyin* (I was being shown something); that perhaps I am supposed to do something for the grandmothers, to help. She went on to say that I should listen to what I was told to do and do it and not be afraid, that I will receive the help I need. When she told me that, I felt like someone put a house on my head. I couldn’t make logical sense of it. I had a million questions running through my brain: how am I supposed to do that? Where am I going to build a great big swing? What adult in their right mind is going to let me wrap them up like a baby and swing them in a big baby swing? I am a single mom! I am going to school part time and working full time! Where am I going to find the time to do anything else? My plate was already full! And why me? I am too young to do what I considered to be the sacred healing work of an elder, and I felt like I didn’t know anything! None of it made any human sense to me.

Ceremony as Guidance

I didn't do anything other than to continue to take care of my children, work and complete my studies. I had plans for my future. In the summer of 2002, I graduated with a degree in Psychology and I started my home-based consulting business doing community-based research and project and program development, but I couldn't shake the feeling that I had something else very important to do. I kept hearing the grandmother and I kept seeing the vision over and over again in my mind's eye. I couldn't be at peace. So, I sought the advice of a friend I considered an elder, Vincent Steinhauer. I respected him and all he told me was that I knew what I should do. It was then that I decided that I needed to fast, to ask for clarity and guidance from Creator and the sacred grandmothers and grandfathers. This would be about my seventh fast since I started fasting in my twenties, and I went with knowing that I would surrender to the vision and I would trust that whatever I was to do would be made clear to me.

During my fast, I had several spiritual experiences and insights, points of connection and clarity. I think my question "why me?" was being answered. I experienced pieces of puzzles falling into place, as childhood memories flooded my brain. I remembered being rocked by the water as I lay in my father's canoe and I remembered the little playhouse I had built with the baby swing in it. These and other spiritual experiences I had as a child and a young woman were shown to me so that I could feel okay about the work ahead. One day while sitting outside my fasting hut in mediation, I was shown a full rainbow hoop. At first it was very far away from me and I could barely make it out as it was glowing with white light. When I asked "what is that?" I was immediately beside it. It was a huge rainbow hoop. The bottom part of the hoop was swinglike as it held babies, maybe about seven or eight of them. They seemed to be in communication with one another but paid no attention to me. It was as if I was not there. The energy I felt there was

these little light beings were waiting for something or someone. As fast as I arrived there, I was gone and sitting back in front of my hut. When I completed my fast, I knew what I was to do.



Painting by Lana Whiskeyjack of a vision I had during my fast in 2003

Living out my Vision

Kim Anderson, in her book, *Life Stages and Native Women*, 2011, Anishinaabe author and ethnobiologist Basil Johnson describes the life stages as the four hills of life, which progress from infancy to youth to adulthood to old age” (pg.7) and Anderson continued “a person cannot proceed to the adult stage until he or she has received a vision particular to his or her life’s purpose. Visions are achieved through fasting and isolation, where the individual has the opportunity to seek communion with his or her inner self” (pg.8). As for me, my vision came to me during a pipe ceremony and I later went to fast to gain clarity and guidance on how to live out my vision.

In the fall of 2002, I talked to Ruth about setting up a big adult-sized swing for healing at the second healing gathering for Indian Residential Schools, at Nechi Training, Research and Health Institute (Nechi) and Poundmaker’s Lodge (PML) Ruth welcomed it and I gathered all the materials that I would need to do this work. In the early morning hours of the first day of the gathering, I drove out to Nechi and PML. When I arrived there, the sun was rising and the fog was lifting, just as it did the year before. I remember seeing the late Joe P. Cardinal walking across the wet grass towards his camp and as I drove by him, he signalled for me to stop, so I did and opened my window. He told me that he wanted to talk to me, that he had something to tell me and that he would come to see me later at the *tîpî* where I was setting up the swing. It seemed he was in the middle of something, perhaps getting ready for the pipe ceremony; unfortunately, we never had the chance to visit. To this day, I still wonder what it was he wanted to tell me. People later told me that he did in fact come to sit outside of the *tîpî* every now and then throughout the four days but I was extremely busy as person after person came to be swung.

People were lined up outside my tipi from sunup till sundown. I did not take any breaks. I did not even eat except for a bit of fruit someone brought to me.



Me, the first time I swung people in a Tipi at PML/Nechi - 2002

I was so spiritually in tune that I could not even eat although I made sure to keep myself hydrated. I did not feel hungry at all. I felt almost like I was in some kind of a trance; it was like this for me for the first few years every time I did this work with the swing. It was almost like I needed to fast. All I knew to do was to treat every person with the utmost love and kindness and gentleness. I prayed for people and I found myself singing a song that I had heard only twice during my fast. I later gave an offering of tobacco, prints and sweetgrass to Leona Makokis for that song and years later I learned that the song belonged to the auntie of one of my co-doctorate candidates (Dale Steinhauer). When I sang that song, I could feel spirits enter the space to be present for the person in the swing, sometimes many of them. I was keenly aware that a spirit grandmother was with me. I could feel her, and people in the swing also mentioned to me that they, too, felt her. When people woke from their rest, they seemed to be in a bit of a daze, and when they stood on their feet, it took a bit to get their balance. I wondered what was happening

to people; it wasn't until years later that I realized a healing energy was moving through me and it comes through me like a whirlwind and so I think that perhaps it might also enter the person in the swing the same way. People reported to me many different experiences: some received physical healing from ailments they had been suffering; some received emotional healing from issues they had been dealing with for years; some people had very profound spiritual insights to questions they had; and some received clarity on complex issues. I felt so humbled by the miraculous healing that was taking place but I knew for a fact that I was not at the heart of it. The credit can only be given to Creator and to the grandmother and to the other helpers that come to be with their relatives who were in the swing. At the end of the four days, I wondered if I would do this again; I did not know how long Creator and the grandmother wanted me to do this or for whom. I thought perhaps it was meant specifically for the former residential school students, those that had missed out on childhood nurturing. However, I was invited to come again the following year and the final year of this gathering. After the fourth year, I wondered again if now I had completed my task, but it was not so.

Gathering Knowledge

Observation: Watching and remembering what they did and said

As I set out to live my vision, it quickly became clear to me that I had to learn as much as I could about the traditional Cree baby swing because it was my only physical point of reference. I started to seek out female elders who could share with me some knowledge about the baby swing. An old woman, Sophie Bruno, from Maskwacis, Alberta, shared with me a story about how the baby swing came to the people from spirit world:

When our people still lived in tipis and followed the animals
through each changing season, a young woman was
left to care for several nursing babies, during the people's
fall hunt.

Not only did the young woman care for the babies, she nursed them all
and cared for other children, elders, as well as her regular
chores around the camp.

After several days, the young woman grew very tired.

One evening as she tried to put the babies to sleep,
one started to cry, then the other and another.

Exhausted from the days before,

She, too, began to cry.

And as she cried, she prayed.

She prayed to the sacred grandmothers to help her to
put the babies to sleep
so she could rest.

While she wept with the babies,
a grandmother spirit appeared before her
and told her to stand up.
The young woman stood up.
The grandmother handed her a bundle
and told her to use the materials in the bundle
to build swings for the babies.
The young woman took the
bundle
and the grandmother taught her and helped her
to make the swings for the babies.
Then the grandmother told her:
when you put your babies in the swing,
I will come and sit and swing the babies
so that you can do your work.

This origin story of the baby swing reveals so much about why this ancient practice is so revered to this very day. Grandmothers and mothers alike still believe that the sacred grandmother spirit comes to swing the babies. In my research, I heard many stories about how the swing j seems to keep swinging and swinging, seemingly on its own, when the baby is in there sleeping. I asked Sophie if she knew the name of the sacred grandmother that appeared to the young woman in the story. Sophie said her name: Nōtikiw Okāwîmāw Asiskiy, Old Lady Mother Earth or

Grandmother Earth. Sophie also told me that she would perhaps be the equivalent to the Sacred Mother Mary of Jesus in the Christian faith.

One teaching came after another, sometimes directly from spirit (dreams, visions, inner knowing, personal communication in meditation), sometimes from various elders and often from memories of childhood, things I grew up knowing. My mother had bestowed upon me many teachings about the management of the baby swing. Mostly she informed me on how to take proper care of the swing but not necessarily why I was to do what I was to do. For example, she was strongly averse to letting the swing sit open after the baby was taken out. She would sternly tell me to make sure that I put the swing away, folding it into a ball to one side of the rope and placing a blanket over it so that it was securely put away and closed. She didn't tell me why I should do this. It wasn't until years later that I made the connection with other such observed systems of protocol. I am referring here to the guidelines around feasting. We are told by our elders to put all the food away once we are finished eating. It is not good to leave the food out. The same guidelines are observed for ensuring our beds are made after we wake and for clothes, toys and other items to be put away when we are done with them. This regulation lies within the respect we have for our relationship with spirit. As a Cree person, we believe we are part spirit, part human, and that we are always in constant communion with both entities within our being. There are certain acts our ancestors have taught us that call directly on spirit when we wish to be in communication or in the presence of spirit. For example, when we wish to have spirit present at our feast, we will call upon them and we will leave food out for them. This act of leaving food out is recognized by spirit as an invitation to come and feast, and they will come. Today, we are not careful how we act and move in the world. We do things carelessly. We leave food out, we

leave our beds unmade, we leave the baby swing open. We have forgotten that we are part spirit and that spirit watches us and desires to be with us, looking for every opportunity to come and share in our daily life. The problem is that when we are careless, we invite spirit blindly. We do not know which spirit we have invited because we have forgotten ceremony; we don't know how to call upon them and we act in a way that offers an open invitation. Potentially this could come with a risk that the spirit may not be a good one. Then we leave ourselves vulnerable and open to spiritual interference. Sometimes we hear noises in our home, dishes rattling, things being moved from place to place, footsteps, and we become fearful. I remember my father telling us kids as we were growing up, "nâkatemisok kîsi waskawîyik," be careful how you move. To leave the swing open would invite a spirit to come swing. Then we put our baby into the swing. The spirit mingles with the child's spirit and the child awakens and perhaps starts to show signs of unease. We take our baby to the doctor. The doctor takes all the physical tests possible to try to locate the cause of the baby's symptoms. The tests come up negative for any illness because what your baby has is not a physical ailment but perhaps a spiritual leach. Spiritual leaches can be easily removed by knowledgeable ceremonial or medicine people, through smudging, prayer, sweat lodge, other ceremonies or special doctoring. A spiritual ailment requires spiritual medicine.

A woman, Betty Gladue, from British Columbia, shared with me this teaching in 2006 at the Knowing our Spirits Conference in Edmonton, Alberta.

"Do you know why we put that stick at the head of the swing," she asked me.

"No, I said, "I assume it's to make more room where the baby's head lies."

She said, “Yes, that is true but what you are doing is creating a spiritual doorway here.” She pointed to the head of the swing and outlined the triangle shape the stick created with the rope. “You see,” she said, “when the baby’s body rests in the swing, his or her spirit goes home to the spirit world to gather those things that they need to live in this world.”

I said, “Oh, wow, like what kinds of things?”

“Like humour,” she said and she laughed and the few of us that were standing around there all laughed with her.

This brings me to another teaching that came to me directly from spirit. When babies are born, they come, but they put only one foot on Earth and they leave one foot in the spirit world. They do this because it is said that they have not yet decided whether they will stay here or not. During this time, when they are carried as a sacred bundle, they must have that opportunity to go home as much as they need to. Perhaps it is like Betty said, they need to gather the things they need to live here. The tie on the swing that secures baby in the swing is also representative of a mother’s prayer. The mother, as she ties her baby in for their sleep, knows that the baby’s spirit will travel home and she prays for the safe return of the little spirit to the human body that she birthed as her child on Earth. These teachings are all about the spiritual and physical welfare of the child. Darlene Kappo of Sturgeon Lake shared with me this teaching that also ensures the spiritual well-being of the child while they swing:

I had a dream. The moose came to talk to me. He laid out a big moose hide on the ground and we sat down. As he spoke, he drew on the hide, sharing many teachings with me about the responsibility that animals have over the care and protection of us humans. He went on to tell me

that he himself has the responsibility to protect us from spiritual warfare. He said we put our medicines in moosehide pouches to protect the medicine so it lasts and will help us for a long time. Traditionally the entire swing was made of moose, the cradle, the rope and even the hooks. This is not the case today, and so you need to make sure you have some moose hide on your swing for the protection of whoever is in there.

I found this teaching very interesting as I thought back to the baby swing my dad had built for my little sister and he had used moosehide to connect the swing's rope to the wall.

I began to understand that within the ontology of my Cree people, there is no separation between this world and the spirit world, and from this premise we parent and raise up our children – miyo ohpikihinawasôwin. This will become clear to you as I share the knowledge I have gained.

Language: Understanding what they said

Growing up in Wabasca/Desmarais, I used to hear old people say “enaha awasis enitonahk otisi” (look, that child is searching for their belly button). Our Cree (Nehiyaw language) contains rich cultural wisdom like sparks of knowledge. When we introduce ourselves in Cree we say “Nistisîhkâson.” The morphology of this word lends much insight into the philosophies and practices of our people. Let's break it down: *Nitisîh* = my belly button and *Kâson* = a prefix that means behaving or acting like. So the word Nistisîhkâson, which is an introduction word, actually says: my name Darlene is... behaving like my belly button. So I started to question who or what is my belly button and who am I? What does my belly button have to do with who I am? Why would I introduce myself in this way? What is the significance of my belly button? So I went

back to what I remembered elders in my childhood saying, “eyi naha awâsisis enitonahk otisîh” (look, that child is looking for their bellybutton) and in my observation of these children, I could see that the children were not still, they were in constant blind search of something, unaware of what they wished to find as they dug through bags, cupboards, drawers, holes, pockets and boots. They had lost something but didn’t know what. They had lost their belly button. They had lost their connection to spirit. They were out of balance within themselves and harmony with the world.

The belly button, located in the centre of our bodies, is the physical and literal telling of a severed connection of earth mother and child. To further understand the child who looks for their belly button, we must look to the cosmology, epistemology and ontology of the Nehiyaw being.

We have come to understand our cosmological constructs through the oral telling and retelling of our origin stories and through linguistics, more specifically, morphology. As a child, I was very sensitive to spirit. I always felt that my space was shared by someone other than my physical self. Sometimes I would see things I found remarkable, feel things so deeply, or become very inquisitive about a thought I had and I would go ask my dad. I don’t know why I went to my dad and not my mom. I can only imagine that my dad was probably more visible to me as I spent my days outside and so did he – building canoes, stretching furs, cutting up meat, while my mother was mostly inside tending to home, cooking, sewing or washing clothes. My dad would answer me directly but not provide me with any explanation or detail. For example, in sharing with him an experience where I felt someone was with me or I heard someone talk to me, he had simply and casually said, “ah kikweme etokwe,” while pointing with his lips towards the sky. This

translates to “ah it’s probably your twin” and I would go away, not yet understanding fully what it meant but knowing now that I had a twin in the spirit world that was hanging with me and talking with me.

When it came to sharing my dreams, I went to my mother. She had a way with dreams, a gift of dreaming events and occurrences before they happened. If she dreamt of someone’s passing, she would get very disturbed by this knowing and would often tell us that her gift felt like a curse because she could not do anything about the premonitions. I saw the pain in her eyes many a time and I felt deeply for her. As a result of her dream gift, my siblings and I would share our dreams openly with her. She would often interpret them for us, not in detail but offer us a sense of direction, as it related to us, in our present. I loved sharing my dreams with my mom and I have always, still to this day, been a big dreamer. I have very vivid, colourful and recurring dreams. I truly miss being able to go to my mom for dream understanding. My sisters will sometimes come to me now when they have dreams – it seems that I have somewhat acquired my mother’s gift, albeit not to the extent and strength to which she carried it. However, I do love the whole world of dreaming. In fact, when I was studying Psychology in my undergrad degree, I took up courses in Philosophy that related to dreaming and I volunteered my time for dream research with Dr. Kuiken at the University of Alberta. I digress. My dad told me once, “epawâmîyin,” which means I have a dream spirit. Through my dreaming experience, I have come to understand this as having guidance from the dream world or Spirit World. I share my upbringing with you to help you understand the supportive context of my learning environment that creates my ontology – the nature of my reality and my epistemology – how I know what I know. So, I knew there was the physical me (nîya) and there was the spirit me (nikweme) and or

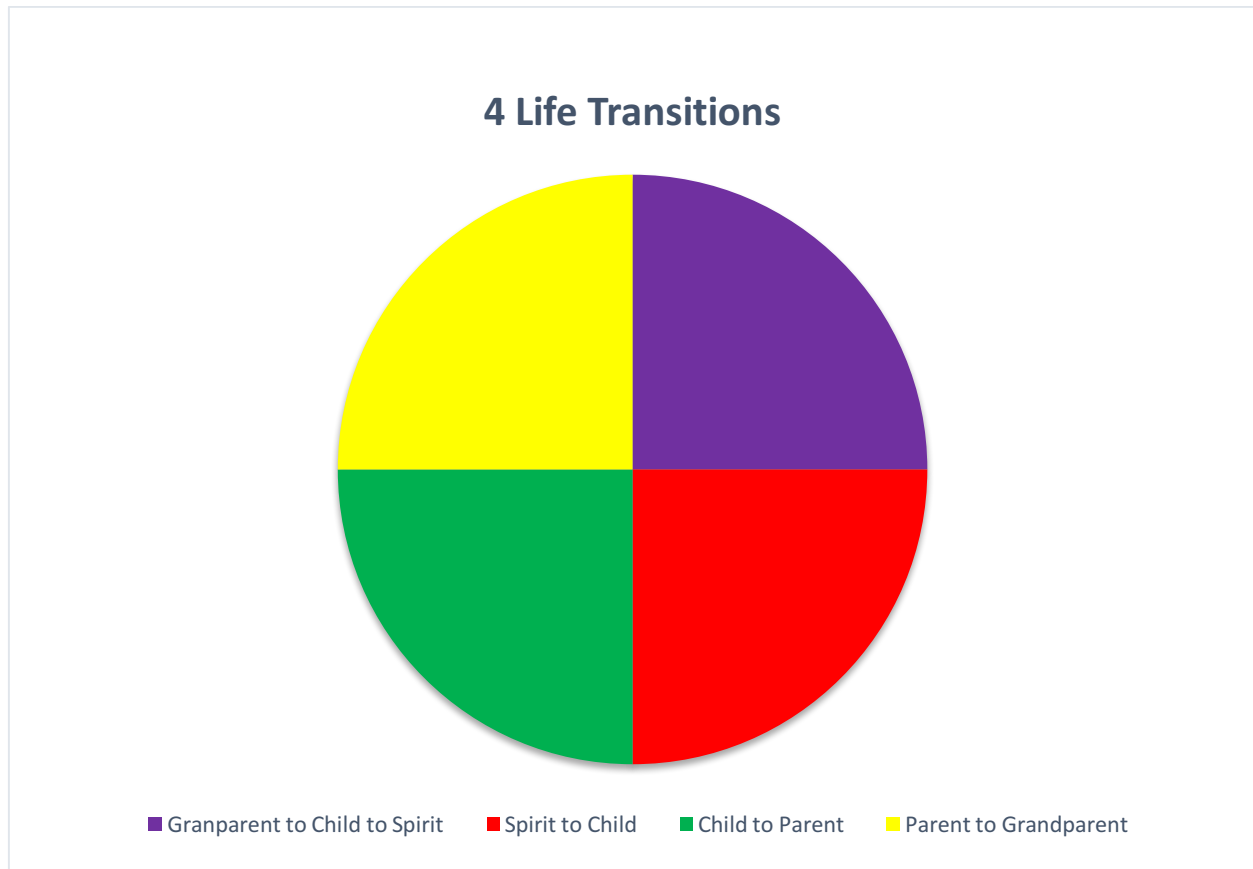
the dreaming spirit (nipawâm), all belonging to my present state of being. Therefore, I am both human and spirit at the same time. My human self is connected to my spirit self through dreams and intuitive guidance – the feeling of knowing that I share my space with another entity that loves me and guides me and communicates with me. This communication is felt rather than physically heard. It is felt in the centre of our physical being – in our belly button. We often say that we have a gut feeling when we have an inner knowing – a spiritual guidance. From this premise, I postulate that the theoretical belly button the elders of my childhood spoke of, is spirit.

Belly button = Spirit

Further analysis of the practices and ceremonies observed around birthing, care of placenta and the umbilical cord supports this premise and gives credence and validity to the traditional parenting practices of waspison (moss bag) and wepison (swing), which we will explore later in this chapter. First let's look at the physicality of the belly button as the point of severance of the umbilical cord that feeds and grows the baby in the womb of the woman, in order to understand the depth of this significant point in my research.

Practice: Learning by observing and doing

In the last fifteen years of observing people who come to the swing for healing, I have noticed that those going through a particular life transition keep coming back. My dear friend Beverley Hope (née Bagnall) and I conceived and recorded the *4 Life Transitions* of a person's journey on this earth plane, as depicted on the following illustration:



The Four Life Transitions

It is imperative that I share the mechanics of this theoretical paradigm first, in order to grasp the true meaning of how the term “life transition” is being utilized here to support my theory of Belly button = Spirit. Perhaps we even need to go a little further back into the Indigenous philosophy of life. New life asks us to explore the values and laws surrounding good child rearing. There are seventy-two Nehiyaw Values as expressed by Carl Quinn during an in-class presentation (2014) where he shared with us the forty-four Sacred Nehiyaw Laws that pertain to how we are to live as human beings on Earth. We will take a look at some of these laws further on in this chapter. The value that I want to highlight here that supports my premise is *Children are Sacred*. This value stems from the belief that children are gifts from Creator; that they come

to us from the spirit world; that they do not belong to us; and that they are on loan and we are merely to be good guides and models on how to be a good human.

1. We start in the red section or the southeast section of the graph. In our women's pipe ceremony (which I am not going to get into here), we are taught that those little ones coming from Spirit World are coming in from this direction. It is in this direction where we find the lead grandmother spirit who takes care of the little ones that are making that first transition from spirit world to human world. She holds one end of the spiritual rainbow swing while the other end is held by Grandmother Rainbow Woman in the centre direction.

Learning this knowledge was extremely validating for me and my work as a Swing Therapist (wiwipson therapist) and was a pivotal moment in my journey as a researcher, student, a healing facilitator and as a spiritual being having this human experience. It was one of those moments where I felt a huge sense of relief that perhaps I am not crazy after all. As human beings we have this nagging flaw of self-doubt that enters our brain at the best of times. I suffered much from self-doubt and to this day it finds its way into my psyche every now and then. However, the more I learn, the more validated I feel in my spiritual knowledge, in my vision and in my work. With this knowledge in tow, I am more confident that what I am doing is good and right and spiritually alive and well.

This first transition from Spirit to Child is a personal journey that will end at about age two. It begins when spirit enters the physical form while still in the womb and ends when that little baby

can walk solidly on its own two feet. This is the time when the elders say the little one has decided to stay. Before they can walk on their own, they are in complete dependence of those around them to carry them around and take care of their every need. During this period we carry the most sacred bundle we will ever carry in our lifetime because this little one who is coming from Spirit World is still very much spirit, not having yet had their soles touch the Earth.

This first transition from Spirit to Child is the most magnificent and most sacred phenomena of nature. The little spirit (acahkos) is said to have made a decision to come and experience life on the earth plane, in order to become a more enlightened being. Spirit can only experience life through the five physical senses of the human body and so she chooses her path of learning. With her path of learning in sight, she chooses the best possible parents who will provide for her the lessons she will need to reach her goals of enlightened learning and being. She also chooses where she will live and whether or not she will have brother and sisters that will aid in her journey of learning. When all is ready, she will come through the womb of the woman (her earth mother). She will be wrapped tightly in her acahk akohp (spirit blanket) or placenta and will be rocked gently to and fro by the water spirit. In this constant gentle motion, she is developing a brain and a body, which will become her human self. She can hear the heartbeat of her mother, the swishing of the water and the rhythms and sounds of her mother tongue. It is for these reasons that we are taught as young mothers to wrap our babies tightly and place them into waspisonah (moss bags) to replicate the spirit blanket, swing our babies to replicate the water's rocking motion and sing lullabies to our babies with rattle and drum to replicate the mother's heartbeat, the swishing of the water and the sounds of our language. We do this to help those

little ones to make this transition comfortable, warm, nurturing and loving. This is in accordance to Natural Law.

2. We now go the southwest section, the green part of the graph, where the child goes through their second life transition, from Child to Parent. Often, when I am teaching this transition, I am asked “what about the adolescent?” I respond, “In our ancient practices of childrearing, we have ‘rites of passage ceremonies’ that are defined by natural changes that occur within the biology of the child. This transition from Child to Parent happens when the young girl has her first moon (menstruation). From this point forward, because she has the power to create life, she is considered a woman, a parent.” This transition happens in an instant as the young woman is taken into a moon lodge for the duration of her first moon, where she is taught by older women all she needs to know about being a woman, and a parent. Once she is done her moon lodge, she is welcomed into the community as a woman and treated accordingly.

The adolescent or teenager is not recognized or valued in a traditional community, as this only serves to bring confusion to the growing mind. Instead, her years of childhood are left behind as she embarks on her new journey as a woman. Traditionally, her first task will be to go live with an elderly woman or couple to help them with their daily routines of living. She does all the work the old woman can no longer do while she is being taught her responsibilities in the role of woman.

3. In the third transition, depicted by the colour yellow in this graph, the Parent becomes a Grandparent. This transition is marked by age. Even though she may not have birthed children of her own and therefore may not have biological grandchildren, she is seen and recognized as a grandmother in the community by all the small children who call her kohkom. These children may be her siblings' grandchildren or other grandchildren. This transition ends when the woman passes her childbearing years.

This transition, like all the others, is a difficult one. As the woman ages, she loses her sacred ceremonial time with grandmother moon. Her waters cease and she grieves her ability to create life within her being. The joy in this transition comes with the arrival of grandchildren as they bring back to her the sacred gift of spirit and new life.

4. In the fourth and final transition, depicted by the colour purple, the grandparent begins to revert back to being a child. She starts to lose her ability to walk, eat solid foods, see and hear, and to lose hair, weight and height, getting smaller and smaller in her stature and depending more and more on others to take care of her. Just like the baby, she needs to be carried again. She is making her way back home to spirit world. She is getting ready to complete her earth walk.

I remember when my grandmother Adelaide asked me one day if I could please find her a young woman to come and live with her now. She was getting tired. She wanted a daily helper with the household chores of cooking and cleaning, doing laundry and shopping. I felt very sad for her when my mother had to tell her that young girls no longer go to live with old women because

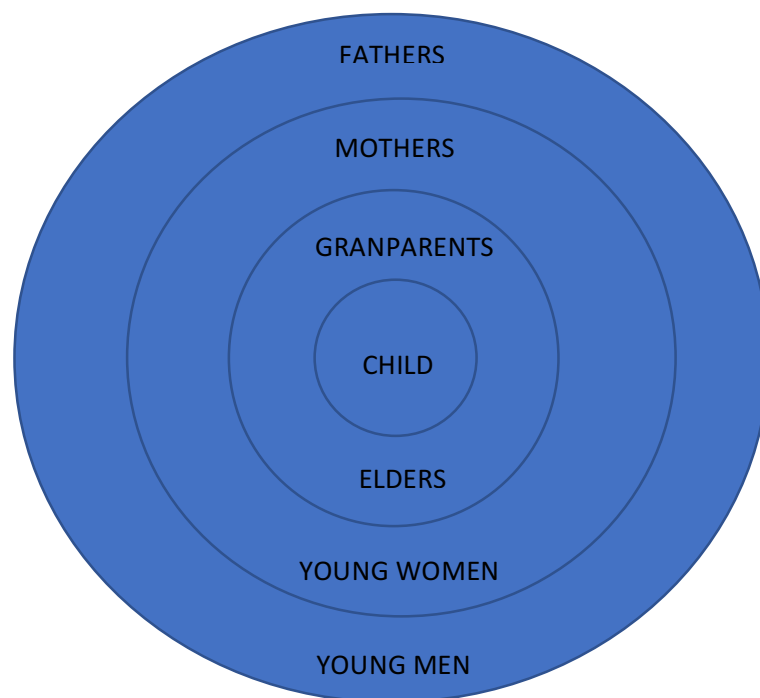
they go to school now or they work for a living. She couldn't understand. In this fourth and final transition, it is difficult for our old folks to give up their independence. They still want to give to life. They still want to be productive beings in the world. Our traditional cultural ways of being, learning and sharing offered a very good and effective way for our old ones to teach the young ones while the young ones helped them with daily chores of living.

At the root of traditional parenting is the knot of interconnectedness and interrelatedness of all things and beings and branching out from this, the kinship systems and community (calm-unity) efficacy that hold the values and ethical guidelines of raising healthy balanced children. These teachings have been passed down through oral methods, such as storytelling, visiting and ceremony, which I have honoured and harnessed in this study as a valid methodology for acquiring knowledge.

In 2014, I attended a session at a Cree Language Conference at the Blue Quills First Nation College in St. Paul, Alberta, where Kevin Lewis presented *Miyo Ohpikinahawasowin*, which means Good Childrearing in Cree. Kevin touched on many different aspects of traditional parenting, such as identity, collective genius, learning by listening, observing and doing, living harmoniously within natural law and order, and working together. These Cree child-rearing practices have been passed down since time immemorial but have not been documented, yet still hold valuable teachings and guidance on today's practice of raising children.

In the early part of my work as Wiwip'son therapist, I was co-facilitating a workshop with my friend Beverley Hope (née Bagnall), who was at the time working with youth and had developed

a program, appropriately named in ceremony as Shakes the Dust in reference to how horses shake the dust of their backs to indicate the power one has over what they carry or choose not to carry on their backs – that we all have the personal power to shake the dust of our backs and start again. While Bev and I were giving a presentation, we developed the following model as a visual aid to help explain the relationship one age group had to another age group within the community and the role each of them played within the community. Later, during my doctorate research I found this same model depicted in Kim Anderson’s book, *Life Stages and Native Women* (2011).



Traditional Indigenous (Cree) Community Structure Pre-Colonization

This model clearly illustrates the value that is placed on Children within the community. The value says, Children are Sacred. The role and responsibility one has, to the child in this

community, creates balance and well-being as an entity in and of itself. Essentially, the community cannot survive without the children.

Children are held in the centre of the community. The value holds strong because the people believe that the child is a direct gift from Creator and that he/she is the greatest natural resource for the peoples' future survival as a human race on Earth. The child will receive all the teachings on how to be a good Nehiyaw being. The child will learn the language, the ceremonies, the laws, the ways of survival, being and knowing and the ways of learning and teaching. As children are believed to have come from acahkohk (Spirit World or Star Nation), they bring with them an all-spiritual knowing. This is their gift to the Earth. Their role is to bring a new, beautiful, loving, sacred life force to the people to remind us of our spirit. I have heard elders say that children bring epimâcihtâtaw wekowâw (the spirit of life to their home).

In the second ring around the children are the elders and or grandfolks. They sit around the children for number of reasons. Naturally, they are the primary teachers of the children. They teach the children how to be a good human being for they know best what a good human being is, having lived the longest. Having gone through all four major life transitions, they have acquired the most knowledge and gained the most wisdom. They are the best teachers for the children for they have an all-human knowing. The children and the elders only have a short time to exchange their gifts with one another. The new ones are arriving and the old ones are getting ready to go back home. The little ones bring life to the elders and the elders ground the children on Earth, teaching them all there is to know about being a good Nehiyaw being. Elders are deeply valued and honoured by the young ones and the children are deeply valued and honoured

by the elders. They need each other as they reciprocate their gifts to one another to provide community efficacy.

For purposes of clarity, I want to point out that elders or grandfolks are NOT to be mistaken for primary caregivers, but are only the primary teachers. In fact, in the traditional Nêhiyaw community structure, there are no primary caregivers for the children because everyone looks after all the children in the community. All the children belong to the people equally. This theory and practice can be further uncovered through the study of Nêhiyaw kinship structures, which I am not going to examine here. Children are raised with a salient knowledge of their kin and their relationship to them. It is not unusual for a Nêhiyaw child to greet grandparents (including those who are the siblings of the grandparents), aunts and uncles (including in-laws), first, second, third and fourth cousins (including cross-cousins), nephews and nieces (often older than themselves), by their relationship to them rather than by their actual name. This is considered respectful. Everyone, then, has a special relationship to the child and treats them accordingly. For example, a child can roam around freely in the community without necessarily informing the parents of where they are going or where they may end up. As the child becomes hungry at one home, the child will be fed and cleaned up. If the child should get in trouble at someone's home, then the child can be appropriately disciplined there without any repercussions. This was the norm, the unspoken law, that all children belong to everyone and so the responsibility of everyone was to keep children safe, well and learned. This law worked well because parents of the child rarely had to discipline the child, leaving them to love and nurture their children, creating a strong loving bond between them. As a single mom, I sure would have appreciated the

extended family when my children were growing; I hated to discipline my children with one hand and then be loving and nurturing with the other hand. How confusing that is for a child.

Within the third circle we have the young women, the mothers. The young woman and mother's role is to keep the home fires burning. She takes care of the children's and elder's daily needs. She does what needs to be done every day, which could include small game hunting or trapping, picking medicines, gathering food, preparing food, cooking, sewing, washing, cleaning and birthing babies. She builds the home with the help of her sisters, the other young women in the community. In this way, the tîpî can be seen as the women's lodge (even though every lodge is shared equally by man and woman) and she can house children, elders and her man.

Traditionally we were a matrimonial society and so children followed their mother's line of kinship.

In the fourth and final ring of this traditional Nêhiyaw community structure, we have the young men, the fathers of the children. They have two major roles. They protect and provide for the women, the elders and the children. Their tasks are enormous. Being able to provide for and protect requires having the proper supplies and materials required to be successful in these endeavours. They must be working continuously, tirelessly, to ensure that the entire community has everything, every day, to live a good comfortable life. Without the provisions and protection, the community could potentially fall apart. On this I have a story to share:

I had been invited to Onion Lake, Saskatchewan, for a community gathering at the community hall (arena). Elders would be presenting to the people and I was asked to come share some of

the teachings I had learned at that point about wepison and traditional upbringing of children. I agreed to go and I felt honoured and humbled by the invitation. Just before it was my turn to go up and speak, I realized that I had completely forgotten to bring everything I needed to make a presentation, my laptop, my flip chart and markers, and so I quickly had to think about what I could do. I could tell the story, of course, but I wanted to make it interesting. Whenever I present, I draw pictures. I'm a visual learner and I find that a lot of other Nêhiyawak are, too. Then my drama skills kicked in. Aha, I thought, I will have audience participation! So, I explained to the people my predicament and asked them to humour me by participating in a role play. They agreed!

I introduced the idea of a traditional Nehiyaw community structure and how we will need everyone to work together to make it work. First, I called up all the children in the room. They all came running to me and I asked them to sit on the floor. They sat and soon I saw them playing and interacting with one another while I spoke about the teachings of the little ones coming from Creator and the value we held that these children are sacred. Then I asked the elders, the grandfolks, to come sit in a circle around the children. I saw younger folks pulling chairs over for the elderly to sit in a circle around the children. As I began to talk about the role of the elderly folk in this community structure, I could see that some of the children were sitting on the laps of their elders, probably their kohkoms or mosoms, comfortable interacting with them. Then I asked the young women to create a circle around the elders and they came. They created a great big circle around their elders. And while they were getting comfortable I shared teachings about their role as strong young women in the community, minding the home fires and tending to the needs of the elderly and the children. Then I invited the young men to come and

wrap a protective layer around this community and bring all the provisions that would be required for everyday living for all the children, elderly and women. There was an absolute hush in the room, as the one young man stood up and looked around to see where he should sit. Everyone stared at him. It was the most hair-raising experience I have ever had since my days of conducting workshops. It was almost like, all at once, spirit had entered the room and we were all being shown the missing component within our current reality in Nêhiyaw community. Everyone felt it, we could see it and feel it in everyone's eyes and body language. It was truly divine and sad. As we tried hard to recover from the discomfort this exercise was creating, several elderly men stood up, grabbed their chairs and went and sat with that young man, assuring him that he was not alone in his role and responsibilities as a man. Once again, we were all moved by this scenario and once again, we realized that THIS is also our current reality! Old folks are taking the role of young men, providing the protection and the provisions that children need. When the circle had settled into its new scene, I carried forward. I took about six people out of the circle and I asked them to come in as the Government of Canada and the churches and go right into the centre of the circle and take the children away. Reluctantly they agreed and once again we were shown the dynamics of our current reality. The men felt powerless to do anything because there were too few of them so they could not stop the intruder. The women stood up, stood guard over the elders and the children. They, too, were not strong enough to stand up to the tactics of the government and churches. The children were taken. The people were no longer sitting in neat circles, they were all enmeshed with one another. There was a silence and a deep dark sadness over the people. The young man cried and he made us all tear up. I went to him and I asked him what his tears were about and he told me that he failed his people. We told him that this is not the burden of one but because he was the only young man in

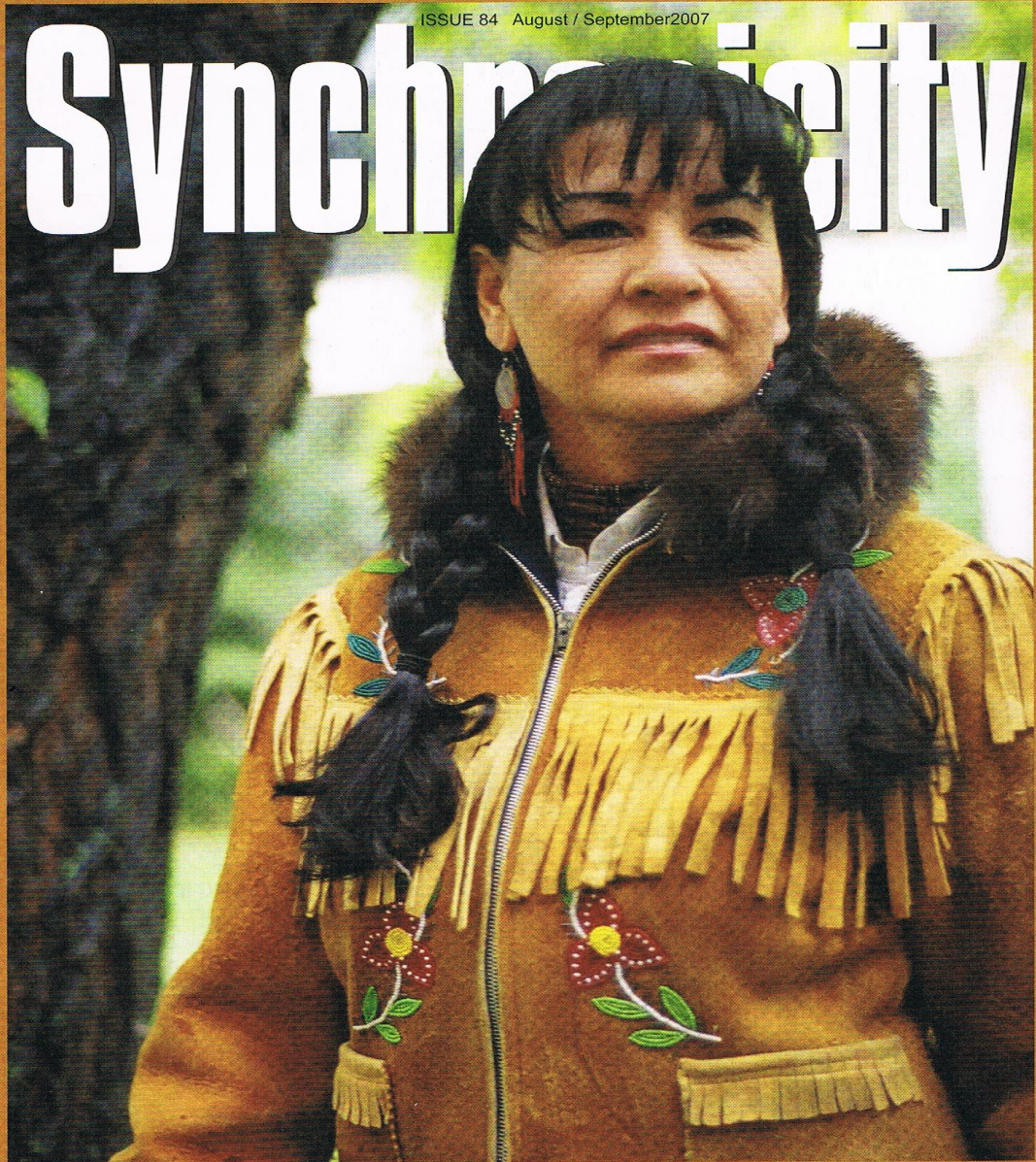
the room that day, he felt overwhelmed by the magnitude of his responsibility. And so it is for all of us, separately, alone. We no longer operate like a Nehiyaw community should or did. What happens to a community that holds the value that children are sacred when all the children are taken away never to be returned as they left. What happens to the child who is not valued and taught all the ways of being a good Nehiyaw being? What happens to the elder who desperately wants to pass along his teachings to the child before he goes back home to Spirit World? What happens to the woman who has no one to build a home fire for? What happens to a man who cannot protect and provide all his people need to live a good life?

I did not expect this exercise to be as profoundly powerful as it turned out to be for everyone. Spirit was moving through that room and directing the role play that day. In fact, when I think about it, it still feels very surreal to me. We all learned so much. Afterward, a lady that worked at one of the community organizations came to tell me that she had recently written a proposal to get some funding for young women's programming but after this eye-opening experience, she said, "I'm going to look at developing a men's program instead, I think we really need to strengthen our men to take up their rightful place again." I thought about this long after I left the community and I realized that we are living in our communities with open wounds that have no provisions or protection to support healing. I wanted to help. I wished I could do more.

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An article was written about my "Swing Healing Therapy" work in Synchronicity (Fall 2007).

It has been sixteen years since I received the vision and I am still being invited to swing people for healing. I have since traveled across Canada and in 2012, I was invited to Switzerland and in 2016 I was invited to be the keynote speaker at the Worlds 1st Traditional Indigenous Knowledge Conference in Brisbane, Australia. I have not advertised the healing swing or what I do; people have learned about the swing through word of mouth; through the indigenous way of oral storytelling or the moccasin telegraph as we call it.

There is a funny story about this that I would like to share here. I received a letter in the mail one year from an organization in northern Manitoba. The letter read, “We are sending this letter to all the Darlene Augers in Alberta. If you are the Darlene Auger that does the healing swing, please contact our office immediately.” I could not believe it. After reading this letter, I thought perhaps I should have a website and I finally had one developed in 2014 by a young university student (Caylie Gyrna).

This work has now grown, like a tree, with many branches; people want me to teach young mothers how to build a swing for their babies in their homes, which I have done; I have had daycares asking me to come help to set up swings for their infants, which I have done; and hospitals have requested infant swings in either their Aboriginal family room, which I have set up or their pediatric wing (this has not happened yet, challenged by standards of safety, but there is interest); treatment centres have talked with me about setting up swings for their clients; doctors and nurses have called to have discussions with me about the healing benefits of the swing; and numerous organizations and conferences invite me to come and speak to audiences about the swing and, most often, to set up the swing for healing. Schools have invited me to speak to teachers about utilizing the swing as a “nurturing time out” for students; our children need much nurturing and love. I have swung thousands of people and presented at over one

hundred venues. I now believe that I will continue to do this work as long as people need it and it helps them, Creator and the grandmothers willing. I am constantly humbled by the magnitude of the healing that comes from being swung and I continue to learn about its properties, benefits, effects, power, abilities, spirit and sacredness. Once a simple nurturing parenting practice that I have now transformed into therapy for adults and children alike, the swing has become a profound healing agent and is widely accepted within Indigenous communities everywhere. The old practice has become new yet maintains its traditional nurturing sacred loving essence. I always say:

“This is the work I do for Creator.”

The therapeutic practice, now known as “Wiwip’son – Indigenous Therapeutic Swing” or the healing swing was born out of a spiritual vision. It is built like a baby swing, except it is much bigger to fit and carry adults. After a couple of years sharing this healing with people everywhere, I realized the need for a large frame that could be dismantled and carried easily. At first, I sought to have one made and I visited with a couple of engineers, but the cost was huge and I could not afford to do it. Eventually I settled on a hammock frame that my cousin Allen Beaver purchased for me in trade for providing the healing therapy at a conference he was organizing. To this day, I still use that same frame. It has been good.

CHAPTER THREE

Studying within the IPK Doctorate Program

Throughout my research with elders and community (mostly mothers and grandmothers) I have been given many teachings about the baby swing that are based upon Indigenous philosophies (seeing), epistemologies (being), axiology (values), methodologies (ways of doing, protocols and practices), pedagogy (teaching) and ontology (knowing) and I very much wanted to formalize my education.

15 years ago, as I was experiencing my vision of wîwîpson in the fall of 2001, the Doctorate Program at Blue Quills College was being developed by the first four graduates of Iyiniw Pimatisiwin Kiskeyitamowin (IPK). I heard about it through the moccasin telegraph and I immediately applied. My application was turned down because there was a need for the four female graduates to develop the program before new students could be accepted. The program took the group ten years to design. In 2012, I applied again and I was accepted and I was excited! Looking back now over my learning from 2001 to 2011, those years prepared me. I was now ready to begin my doctorate in 2012. I knew why I wanted to pursue a doctorate degree. It was clear.

Kekwaya ôma kâtoskâtaman ekwa Tanihki?

Mistahih kinehiyawininaw, kinehiyaw mamitonehcikaninaw, kinehiyaw osehcikewina, ekwa kinehiyaw pikiskwewina eki mîyo apacîhkôyahk mâmayisk ekîh takosihk mônîyâw ôta ôma asisikiy. Osâm kekâc kahkîyaw ekîh wanihtâyahk kinehiyawewinaw, kekâc kiwanihonaw. Nawac moniyâw'nâhk kitâtisinaw. Osâm etikwe ohcih ôkih kiwâpiskiwâhkômâkanawak

ekihkwe kāsîyahkwāw kinehîyaw pimātisîwinaw. Ekîh nitawehtahkwâw nawac takakwe mônîyâweyahk. Māka môya ohci kaskihtāwak. Kinistawemākanawak mistahih ekih eyinisitwāw. Ekih mamitoneyimikweyahkwāw, ekosi kinākatemikonawak. Osām kîyānaw nehîyawak ewîcîh atoskemāyāhwāw atayôhkanak, kimosôminawak, ekwa kôhkominawak, ekwa emit'sahamahk kimāmawohtāwîyinaw otasôwewina, kîyāpic kāmashawātisîhaw. Māka poko kahkamehtamahk ekwa kātoshkātamahk kinehiyâwewinaw ekwa ôte nîkân kâ-asôwinamawâyahkwâw kicawâsimisinawak ekwa kosisiminawak.

Our Nehiyaw (Cree) ways of being, thinking, knowing, ceremonies, languages and practices were good and useful to us as Cree people before the era of colonial contact. Because we have nearly lost our Cree way of being and speaking and doing, we have lost who we are as Cree people. Many of us have chosen to assimilate into the western world of the colonist. Through assimilation practices and laws, the colonist wanted to eradicate the Indian but they were not successful. Our ancestors were smart and they looked after us in the way they dealt with the colonizer. They took care of us through the treaties and in the way they involved ceremony to ask for spiritual guidance and knowledge. As Cree people, we have always maintained connection and relationship with our ancestors, our grandmother and grandfathers in Spirit World. We also follow Creator's Laws of Nature in the way we live our lives here on Earth. This is our strength. We must persevere, we must work hard to maintain who we are as Nehiyawak (Cree people) so that we can pass along these good ways of being to our children and our grandchildren.

What I know from my own upbringing is that we were often taught parts of teachings, usually the practical piece, but the teaching or the spiritual law behind it was missing. I call these “half teachings.” The problem lies in assimilation – we are a nation of people that has lost almost entirely our own way of being and knowing and we have come to depend on the colonizers’ way of being and knowing. Our traditional Indigenous knowledge systems span beyond the physical plane. We are a spiritual people and we understand that knowledge can come through dreams, visions and ceremonies as well as by listening, observing and doing. Our learning is not confined to the book or an institution; our learning is based on the land, on natural law, our relationship to our ancestors, our ceremonies and our languages.

The problem is that we live in a world where acknowledgement and validation for Cree ways of being and Cree ways of healing is next to none. As Cree scholars, we must clear a path for our future generations to have a sacred space and place for the Cree spirit to thrive, to be acknowledged and validated so that we can contribute equally to the world. We have so much to offer our white, yellow and black relatives.

Miskamahkih kinēhīyawewinaw, poko kanīpawestamahk, ekwa kestanaw ote nīkān
kamāmitonemāyahkwāw kosisiminawak. Ispeh nikā ayiwāk mōniyāw māmitoneyihcikan
apacihayahkih, ekota kakiskeyihtenaw tānisih kesih kiskinahamākosīyahk kiyānaw Nehīyawak
ōma asiskiy. Kanistohteyinaw tanisi etakih tekaw ohih osihcikewina; nikamowina;
wanisesōwina; pawātamōwina; pisiskōwak; maskihkīya; keyōhkewin; ekwa kahkīyaw kekway
kā kikiskinahamākawāyahk kestanaw kāhkam asowinamākīyahk. Nikā wehkāc
kawanikiskisīyahk.

When we find our way back to who we are as Cree people, we must stand up for our children and grandchildren of the future in the way that our ancestors stood up for us when they deliberated on the treaties. If we can imagine a time when we no longer need to utilize the white man's way of thinking, doing and being in this world, then we will know how we must learn to be as Cree people again on this land. We must understand the weight of our ceremonies, our songs, our fasts, our dreams, our visions, animals, medicines, visiting. Everything we learn, we must pass along so we will never forget who we are. Our elders have told of prophecies that are now coming to pass. An example is that the young ones will dream and have visions of old ways of knowing as shared by Therese Cardinal from Saddle Lake, Alberta, at a conference in 2003, where I was invited to speak about a vision I had experienced. Part of being Indigenous is having the belief and understanding that knowledge comes to us in many ways, such as through visioning and dreams, ceremonies and stories, not only through the world of academia.

It is important to rebirth, reclaim and rejoice in one of our own and old Cree models of learning and understanding. Many of our elders are going back to Spirit World, so we must rely on the knowledge they have left behind and the knowledge we gain directly from Spirit World and we must pass the knowledge we gain on to the next generation through our own ways of teaching and parenting our children. We must keep the good seeds and grow them for our future. There is a Japanese saying, "the seeds of the trees I grow today, I will never see grow tall, but I must plant them anyway so my children and grandchildren will benefit from their shade and fruits." If for no other reason than this one, this research is important because I have a responsibility to pass along the knowledge I have gained through the vision I received, to tell and retell the story

for the benefit of the future. The vision must continue to breathe, to have life, because I was told “*The people need to be swung.*” I feel it is my responsibility to gain an understanding of this vision, live it out, learn from it and pass the knowledge forward.

Decolonizing the Acquisition of Knowledge

Tāpwe ci kāhke asôwinamawikawiw awîyak kiskeyihtamôwin kîsikohk ohci? Ka kiskisomikawîyahk Nehîyaw ohpikinahawasôwina ekwa Nehîyaw nātawehôwin tawapahtamahk?

Can vision be the carrier of knowledge needed to remind us Cree people, of our good traditional parenting practices and teach us a way to bring health and well-being back into our communities?

Tānihki ôma kiskeyihtamôwin Kā kihcehtamān

Wîyah keyāpic epimātisîyahk, poko kotakak asiskiy ayisîniwak takakwe nistohtāhkweyahkwāw. Poko tāhkameyihmahk takiskanahamôwāyahkwāw. Wîya kestanaw Nehîyawak peyitos esih mamitoneyihmahk, petos esih pikisweyahk, petos esih pimātiseyahk. Poko kestanaw kamîyo kanawāpimikaweyahk ota oma asiskiy kākîy pakitinikawîyahk.

It is very important for the world to understand that we as Nehiyawak are of sound mind, body, spirit and heart and we must stand in our light and shine as a beacon for others to find their truth and harmony – for to be Nehiyaw, as some elders say, is to be “Newo – Iyiniw” a four part being; still others like Skywoman in Makokis’ Doctorate Dissertation on Cree Leadership, says

“we are called Iyiniwak” healing beings, as she believes that we were put here on Turtle Island, to facilitate healing (p.191). Hence, we have a very special gift to share with our white, yellow and black relatives of the world.

It is my hope that this understanding and knowing will encourage Indigenous people everywhere to develop a healthy relationship with spirit and easily accept that knowledge can come in many different forms. Through the investigation of the vision of wiwip’son, we will be reminded of appropriate Indigenous parenting practices that are still relevant and beneficial today and that something old can be transformed into something new for the healing benefit of all. Also, it is very important for us Cree folks to educate other societies of our ways of knowing, being and healing, according to our Creator’s Laws.

We, as Indigenous peoples of Canada, are not the labels that have been placed upon us; WE ARE NOT drunks, lazy, dirty, poor, dumb, thieves, savages, uncivilized; WE ARE resilient, strong, determined, courageous, honest, truthful, respectful, humble, harmonious and wise people and we are healing from attempted genocide of our people. WE WILL STAND once again with honour and dignity.

To quest for a vision is an important aspect of who we are as Cree people of Turtle Island. In this study, I have investigated the importance of “visioning and dreaming” and the value we place on these activities as knowledge gifted from Spirit World to help us on our Earth walk. This study examines closely the vision of wepison (as it is called in my region of Alberta by Woodland Cree) that I received and how this has now become a very well accepted form of

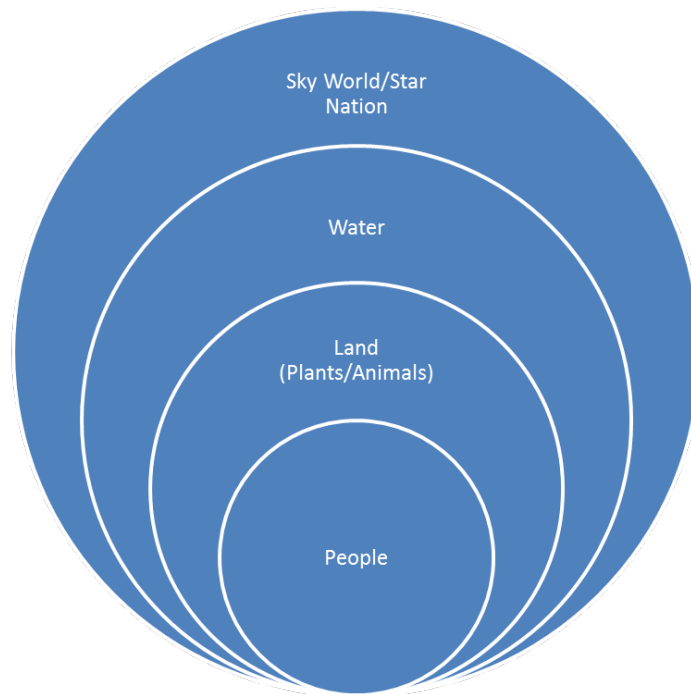
therapy (named wiwipison or wewepison). The Cree spelling of the name is in honour of the Plains Cree elders from Saddle Lake who first welcomed and supported the vision and the therapy. Because this healing model is based upon a traditional Cree parenting practice, the baby swing, it was helpful to investigate the beneficial effects the baby swing has had and continues to have on the healthy development of Nehîyaw babies, and it was my only physical point of reference as I set out on my inquiry.

It is important for me to do this research because we need to share with the world who we are and what we are about. Our work will enrich the world and will give our future a healthier, happier world of equality to grow in, to become healthier, stronger, wiser and kinder people, to once again inhabit our Cree laws and the Laws of our Creator.

We must document our findings because then our children's children's children's children's children's children's children's children will know a little more about who they are and how to be in the world as Cree Nehiyaw peoples as Creator intended.

Cree Worldview

To set the stage we must first understand Cree ontology – the way in which we view the world. It is important for the reader to know my philosophy and how it prescribes my ontology.



Cree Worldview

All beings of Earth, including the sky beings (Grandfather Sun, Grandmother Moon, the stars), the waters and the water beings (oceans, lakes, wetlands, mammals, shellfish, and all other finned creatures of the waters), the land beings (mountains, rocks, plants, four-leggeds, crawlers, winged and serpents) and us the human beings, are all related. Everything is interconnected. We are one family. All beings of the sky, water and land can survive independently from each other and vibrantly without humans (the two-leggeds); however, humans cannot survive without any

one of the other levels of beings. From this humble place of knowledge, we have an active awareness that we do not have dominion over anything on this Earth. Harnessing this perspective then provides us the humility and confidence to live harmoniously with all of nature. We live according to Natural Law, observing the cycles of all living beings. We respect and honour nature's way of being. We learn from our brothers and sisters, the land, water and sky beings, how to be one with our Mother Nature. In *My Heart Soars* (1974), Chief Dan George reflects on this way of being and knowing in his eloquent "Words to a Grandchild":

Perhaps there will be a day
you will want to sit by my side
asking for counsel.
I hope I will be there
but you see
I am growing old.
There is no promise
that life will
live up to our hopes
especially to the hopes of the aged.
So I write of what I know
and some day our hearts
will meet in these words,
if you let it happen.

In the midst of a land
without silence
you have to make a place for yourself.
Those who have worn out
their shoes many times

know where to step.
It is not their shoes
you can wear
only their footsteps
you may follow,
-if you let it happen.

You come from a shy race.
Ours are the silent ways.
We have always done all things
in a gentle manner,
so much as this brook
that avoids the solid rock
in its search for the sea
and meets the deer in passing.
You too must follow the path
of your own race.
It is steady and deep,
reliable and lasting.
It is you,
-if you let it happen.

You are a person of little,
but it is better to have little
of what is good,
than to possess much
of what is not good.
This your heart will know,
-if you let it happen.

Heed the days
when the rain flows freely,
in their greyness
lies the seed of much thought.

The sky hangs low
and paints new colors
on the earth.

After the rain
the grass will shed its moisture,
the fog will lift from the trees,
a new light will brighten the sky
and play in the drops
that hang on all things.

Your heart will beat out
a new gladness,
-if you let it happen.

Each day brings an hour of magic.

Listen to it!

Things will whisper their secrets.

You will know
what fills the herbs with goodness,
makes days change into nights,
turns the stars
and brings the change of seasons.

When you have come to know
some of nature's wise ways
beware of your complacency
for you cannot be wiser than nature.

You can only be as wise
as any man ever hopes to be,

-if you let it happen.

Our ways are good
but only in our world.
If you like the flame
on the whiteman's wick
learn of his ways,
so you can bear his company,
yet when you enter his world,
you will walk like a stranger.

For some time
bewilderment will,
like an ugly spirit,
torment you.
Then rest on the holy earth
and wait for the good spirit.
He will return with new ways
as his gift to you,
-if you let it happen.

Use the heritage of silence
to observe others.
If greed has replaced the goodness
in a man's eyes
see yourself in him
so you will learn to understand
and preserve yourself.
Do not despise the weak,
it is compassion
that will make you strong.
Does not the rice

drop into your basket
whilst your breath
carries away the chaff?
There is good in everything,
-if you let it happen.

When the storms close in
and the eyes cannot find the horizon
you may lose much.
Stay with your love for life
for it is the very blood
running through your veins.
As you pass through the years
you will find much calmness
in your heart.

It is the gift of age,
and the colors of the fall
will be deep and rich,
-if you let it happen.

As I see beyond the days of now
I see a vision:
I see the faces of my people,
your son's sons,
your daughter's daughters,
laughter fills the air
that is no longer yellow and heavy,
the machines have died,
quietness and beauty
have returned to the land.
The gentle ways of our race

have again put us
in the days of old.
It is good to live!
It is good to die!
-This will happen.

Once we understand our ontology and our philosophy as Cree people, we begin to understand the true meaning of Natural Law. For everything that is, in this world, there is an interconnectedness to all other things. We are all part of the whole. What happens to one affects all others. It is the Law of Nature to maintain harmony and balance among all things.

As Nehiyaw people of this land, Turtle Island, we have always lived according to this great Law of Nature. The Cree Laws that we live by are congruent to the great Law of Nature, despite the popular notion that we were non-civilized, lawless creatures. Guest Lecturer and Elder Carl Quinn (2014) shared with our doctorate class, the following thirty-two of the forty-four Laws:

1. Sâkehtok = Love one another
2. Wîcehtok = Help one another
3. Mîyowâhtamok = Be joyful
4. Sôhkâtisik = Be strong
5. Tapâhtemok = Be humble
6. Kistemitok = Be respectful
7. Kitimâkinâtok = Be compassionate
8. Nesotohtamok = Listen (neso = two; listen with two ears)
9. Manâcehtok = Hold one another sacredly – Be gentle with one another

10. Tapahcemok = Speak humbly
11. Nistohtamok = Understand (nisto = three; listen with three – ears, mind, heart)
12. Papeyâhtik = Be calm and careful – Be with ease
13. Wâwehtamok = Plan and be prepared
14. Kakeyâmpik = Settle down; Be silent; Meditate – Be still
15. Âhkameyimok = Perservere; Endure
16. Nâkateyimisok = Be mindful of self; Self-awareness
17. Kiskinowahamâtok = Teach one another
18. Manâpekiskwek or Manâkiskwek = Take care in how you speak; Watch your tongue
19. Pakiteyihtamâtok = Forgive one another (from head and heart)
20. Mamâhtakosik = Talk with Spirit, with knowledge and wisdom
21. Sasipîhkeyihtamok = Be patient; Have faith and conviction
22. Kiskinowâhamâsok = Teach yourselves
23. Saseskwek = Use careful language in prayer; Be careful what you ask for
24. Wâwetaskok = Be peacemakers
25. Kakekehtakosik = Speak with diligence and clarity, selection and choice
26. Wicehisok = Help yourselves
27. Sîhtoskâtok = Support one another*
28. Wâpikwanewewik = Have a positive outlook; Take care of your appearance
29. Kiskinowâsâpohtamok = Be observant
30. Iskwewewik = Be womanly (live by roles and responsibilities of a life-giver, child-bearer and mother and a carrier of the bundle)
31. Monahaskwewik = Dig for medicines

32. Napewewik = Be manly (live by the roles and responsibilities of being a provider and protector of life and a speaker of the bundle)

In his sharing of the laws, Carl asked to pay attention to the first four laws; to notice that the first sounds of each word made up the word *Sawîmiso*, which means Bless Yourself ☺

There is a star by Law 26 because I wanted to mark that this law was not one that Carl shared with us that day in class, but one that I know exists and is very strongly held in my community of Wabasca, especially when a person passes away. Everyone comes to sit with and feeds the family, supporting them through their time of grief and loss. These laws make up my worldview, as does my upbringing. These laws guide my study.

Kweyaskātisiwina/Weyasôwātiwina (Ethics)

The Research Ethics Policy at Blue Quills University is tied to our life values of LAND, LANGUAGE, CEREMONY and NATURAL LAW. As Nehîyaw peoples, we learn these ethical ways of being, doing and believing by living in harmony with Natural Law. We believe we have SPIRITUAL responsibilities to adhere to protocols in ceremony and to honour, respect and treasure the relationships we build with others. In conducting research (seeking knowledge), we look to our elders (knowledge keepers), as those who have the longest living human experience on Mother Earth and have earned the respect and love of our communities. We offer gifts and protocol to our knowledge keepers (participants) requesting humbly of them to share their knowledge with us. We also respect them by giving them the opportunity to discontinue their participation in the research at any given time.

Gathering knowledge was done in the most natural and comfortable environment and knowledge keepers benefit from being part of the research through sharing stories, songs, nurturing relationships, comradery, laughing, creating, building together, visiting. Permission was sought to record their voices and recording is stopped when requested. All knowledge (data) gathered was presented back to the knowledge keepers (participants) so they could review, change, delete or add to it as they wished. Knowledge is collectively owned and as researcher I have a responsibility to use this knowledge with the same intention as it was shared – to share it in a good way and hold it in trust for future generations. As research assistants and co-creators of new works, the knowledge keepers are given credit for their participation and contribution.

As I set out to conduct research with my fellow beings, I had a responsibility to adhere to the following seven ethical principles of building and maintaining good relationships. The reason why I did this research is simply and greatly because I LOVE MY PEOPLE (SAKIHITOWIN) and I believe that our culture needs to be revived in a huge way so we can stand and confidently share our ways of being, learning and knowing with the rest of the world, our brothers and sisters. I am very passionate about this because I have experienced other ways of being and knowing in my travels to different parts of the world albeit through my experience of colonization. I am deeply moved and humbled by the great WISDOM (KAKEHTAWEYIMOWIN) and depth our Cree Language, ways of being and knowing and I feel blessed. I want others to know and feel this blessing. It matters a great deal to me that this research was gathered with the utmost respect of our cultural protocols of requesting traditional knowledge. It was very important that shared knowledge not be misconstrued by my own interpretations as much as humanly possible, for to be HONEST (KWAYASKATISIWIN) and

TRUTHFUL (TAPWEWIN) will honour the next seven generations to come by giving them the gift of ancient knowledge as it was given. The knowledge gathered herein is not mine to keep but to share for future benefit. I acknowledge and RESPECT (KISTEYIHTAMOWIN) those that have walked and experienced and gained this knowledge before me, and who have passed it along to me. Gaining this knowledge has given me the COURAGE (SOHKEYIHTAMOWIN) to pass these teachings along with HUMILITY (PIMAMEYIMOWIN and Kweyaskātsiwina/Weyasôwātiwina (ethics) tied to our life values of LAND, LANGUAGE, CEREMONY and NATURAL LAW.

Knowledge Review

To effectively inform the thesis, we must first lay the foundation of the works of others in the field of “visioning and motion healing.” I purposely call this section “Knowledge Review” instead of the western academic standard “Literature Review,” which is limited to reviewing written documents. It is my belief that I can acquire knowledge from many different sources, some of which are not qualified in the world of academia and seen more as esoteric processes, such as dreams and visions, stories and ceremonies. However, these ways of gathering knowledge have been the processes since time immemorial for Indigenous peoples and still to this day, these oral traditions live on and have successfully been passing knowledge from one generation to the next. An oral story cannot die if it continues to be told because it is stored in memory and passed on over many generations; however, a book can be destroyed and if the pages of its book are not stored in memory, then it is lost forever. From this premise, the oral tradition holds more validity, in my opinion. Elders have been passing along knowledge for thousands of years before and after colonization. The following notes captured by Lana Whiskeyjack, a doctorate colleague, at a writing retreat 6 of us ladies had in the rocky mountains of western Alberta, are words shared by Elder Jimmy O’Chiese, during a surprise visit to our cabin one evening.

Jimmy Ochiese visit March 6, 2017 at Big Bear Cabin – Entrance Ranch, AB, CANADA

Attendance: Darlene Auger, Ida Moore, Yvonne Saddleback, Carol Pa, Lillian Gadwa-Crier, Tina Northwest Pine and Lana Whiskeyjack, including Rocky (the Cabin owner), Pat (Elder’s Helper) and Jimmy O’Chiese (the Nahkawayiniw Elder).

Jimmy Ochiese Teachings

Anshinabe = anihtinaape (kaa nihtiniht naapew) and (eyaape = rope or otisiyaape = umbilical cord) – the lowering down of man from the stars on an umbilical cord.

While living on this land we are now retreating at, Ochiese Chief and a woman from YTC came to visit him in August 2008 with offerings to ask him to come teach at Yellowhead Tribal College. Remember the time in 2009 had to pay to get into the park. In 2006 he was fighting to gain access to the park to pick medicines and practice their ceremonies.

He began sharing about land based teachings and what he knew, why did he know, he wasn't a teacher. His family were runners, nakahkawayiniw, and came here to keep the teachings alive. Darlene's grandmother, Mary Louise Machemuttaw, was also from this tribe of people and may have been with them when they travelled here from the east. Anishnabe were lowered from the stars by the umbilical cord, that's what anishnabe means. He talked about the difference between the language he could tell the difference from those who survived the flood and those who came after the flood. The name of the people before the flood are 'ayisiniwak' and 'nehiyawak' was after the flood. For example, the drum before the flood was 'pahakamahikaakan', and now today it is 'mistikwaskihk'.

Wiwipison mena wiipison – the people were brought down on that umbilical cord to the tipi. The tie come down into the tipi that signifies the umbilical cord that is connected to the swing, the children are kept there because they are not yet grounded on the earth. They are still stars and spirit until they're 2 years old and the walk out ceremony is held in their honor.

The Creator took a bit of the sun's fire and put it into human and that's why the body is warm because we are connected to the sun.

The big dipper represents the seven brothers, and the little dipper represents the seven sisters, and they came down to the 14 poles of the tipi. The men are the right side and the women are the left side (closest to our heart) and when they come into the ceremonial lodges they cross (women sit on the right and men on the left) making an "X" that is why the 'x' was used to sign the treaties.

The first parents were: Mother Maskwa Iskwew (Bear Spirit) and Father Ayisiniw (Human of the Earth) There were 5 men and 5 women created from this union.

The aspen is our bones (and male), the rock (waciy) is our brain (and female), connected to the pipe. The berries, mihkomena, are our blood that is connected to our blood memories. So, whatever happens to us in the past is present in the future. The plant medicines are our organs. The strawberry is our heart, the

plantain is our palms our hands and souls of our feet. We were created by the mother earth, and we leave back to mother earth that is why she is called kikawiyinaw askiy.

Cypress hills was where the first helper came from. Creator gave him the tools to make man but he wasn't given all the teachings to make man. So, the first helper came down to grab earth to make something, and the Creator asked him "what did you make?" and the first helper said, "I don't know." He asked him three times, and then finally the helper said, "lizard." That is why nikocitan "I will try.", which is not a good word because the first helper was impatient and bbuilt something he knew nothing about. We cannot be impatient.

In 1871, Treaty 1 in Manitoba, was 'male' signing with a 'female', the Queen. Education is a treaty right. We need to have interpretation our version of the "X" and the treaty. X is the balance between man and woman. The treaty is our agreement because as long as the sun shines, the grass is green and the rivers flow (the water of the womb) as long as we are here. As long as the women are giving birth. As long as they exist the treaties will never be broken as long as we keep those teachings and connections. The moniyaw has never asked what the interpretation was of the treaty and why the X was used to sign the treaty. So, they broke the treaty because they never asked to understand that X.

The year 2015 was the end of the Big Dipper, the time of male leadership, and beginning of the little dipper, the time of the women, female leadership. Now the woman (premier Rachael Notley) and INAC minister, Carol Bennett, is signing new policy to transfer education with prime minster Justin Trudeau. It's up to us women now to enforce the treaty for our children's education.

The constitution and our sovereignty was the 'Staff', the 'Pipe' is the treaty. They stopped the White paper in the 1970s. The feather used to stop the Meech Lake Accord. Now they found a way to pass legislation, another way to dismiss the treaty made, by transferring education to our provinces. We signed the treaty with the Crown NOT the provinces.

The prophecies that were written in the stones and that he has heard, are coming to be and it scares him and wishes he hadn't read them. The ones in Peterborough, ON, CANAD and in Chief Mountain, USA. We have reminders carved into the mountains, the face of Nehiyaw, there is even a child and a women.

Ahcahkpimawatisowin – when humans came from the stars. It reminds us of our spiritual way of life and our connection to our ancestors - nistmeyimakanak. We are suppose to live a spiritual way of life. That is why we need to teach our children where they came from and their rites of passage. That’s why he is starting a land based school here.

All of his people were born on the reservation. In 2007 they opted to get their birth certificates. All children were born by midwives, who knew all the medicines; even to turn a breech baby in 15 minutes. Women during the time of their first moon learn about midwifery. The umbilical cord was always put away, even a male. If their otisiy wasn’t put away, they at 50 years old would be looking for it all the time.

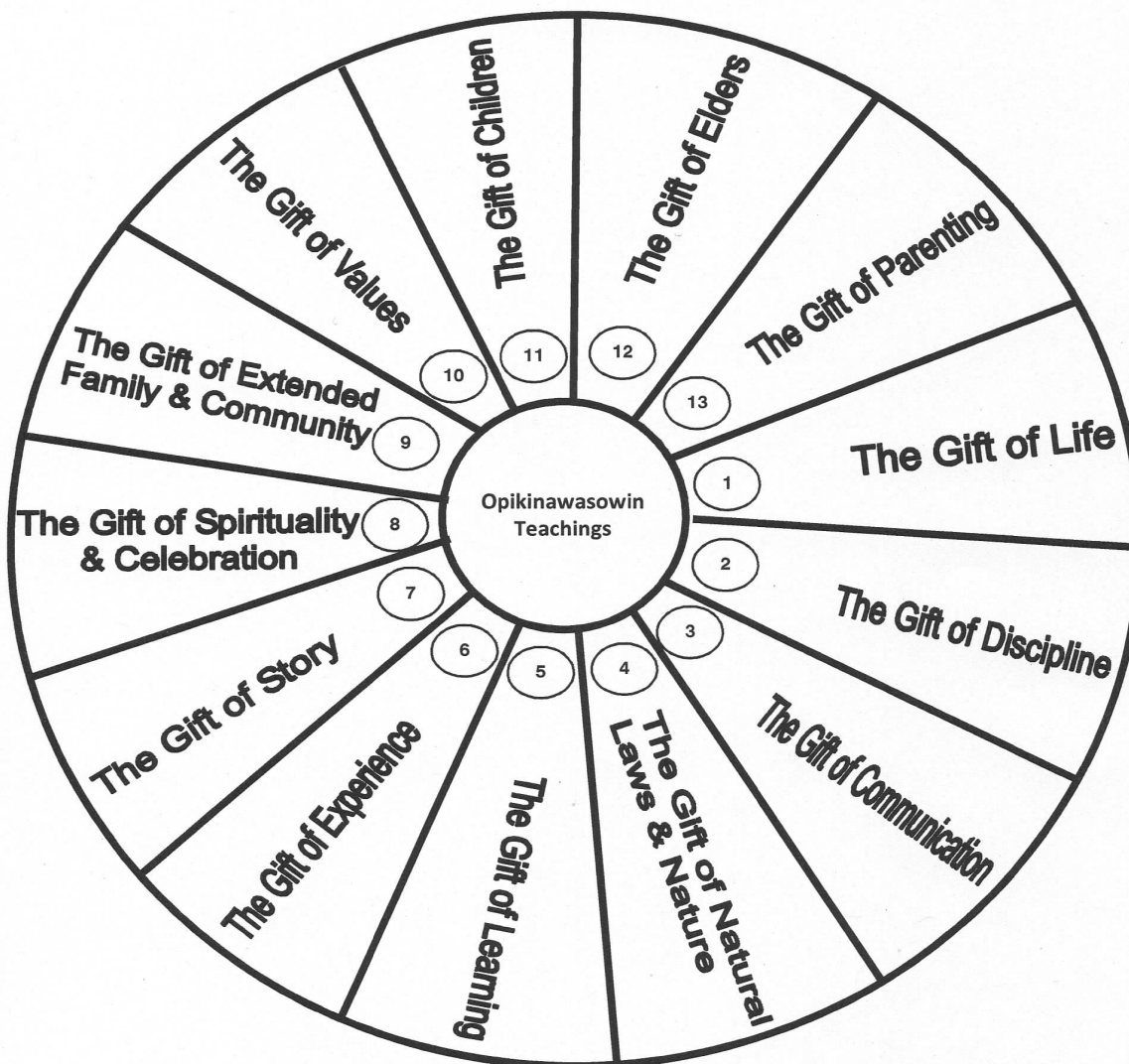
The macimanitow – the first helper who went against the Creator still works here, with alcohol and drugs. Jimmy doesn’t believe doesn’t believe in ‘bad medicine’ because all the medicines comes from the earth, and how could something the Creator makes be something bad? The Creator gave us free will to choose and that’s when the macimanitow could influence or work through us.

In his political career, Jimmy O’Chiese worked with Harold Cardinal as the Elder coordinator.

These teachings shared by Elder Jimmy O’Chiese are full of rich knowledge on many different topics. Jimmy touches on some profound and comprehensive values, beliefs and practices that pertain directly to ‘miyo-ohpikinawasowin’ (good child rearing) and ‘ahcahkopimatisiwin’ (a spiritual way of life) that supports this dissertation. These old and extremely valuable teachings are difficult to find, let alone in literature, but even within our own Indigneous communities today. There is, however, some literature on traditional parenting practices and programs that are worth exploring and support this study, especially as I look to the future development of traditional parenting resources for both parents and children. In her Master’s thesis titled *Opikinawasowin: The Life Long Process of Growing Cree and Metis Children* (2010), Leah Marie Dorion uncovered thirteen teachings on traditional parenting methodologies from her

interviews with seven elders throughout Saskatchewan. Utilizing the model of a wheel, Dorion categorized the teachings depicted in the graph below. (pg.51).

OPIKINAWASOWIN TEACHINGS WHEEL



Opikinawasowin Teachings Wheel by Leah Marie Dorion (2010)

One of these branches of teachings pertains directly to spirituality, vision and dreaming as a valid acquisition of traditional Cree knowledge, “The Gift of Spirituality and Celebration.”

‘The Gift of all Life Teachings wheel’ suggests that it is important to teach children that they are spirit and human both and that their connection to spirit is their connection to the source – the Great Spirit or Creator. It is important for children to know where they came from and that they are sacred beings. Dorion stated that “it is understood that all newborn children are spiritually pure” and furthermore that “Parents were taught to treat all newborn children in a loving and gentle manner because the child has just experienced the powerful journey from the spiritual realm into the physical world. To teach them about our Creation story will help them to develop a strong sense of identity as a Nehiyaw being, grounded in Nehiyaw Philosophies.” Dorion also wrote that “in the teachings it is important to teach children about the place of the Kitchie Manitou in bringing forth all of life and to help them see life as a Gift from Creator.” She quoted Elder Elsie Sanderson: “the Cree interpretation of Creator is a kind loving being.” It is important that children grow up with a sense of safety and security in a kind loving parenting figure that watches over them and allows them to freely explore life without fear of judgement.

Understanding their life as a gift, children learn to accept death as a mere transition from this world to the next. Dorion quoted Elder Sanderson again: “I remember the old people used to refer to all newborn babies as travelers; they would say, “takohtew – which means he or she has arrived. This is understood to mean that our spirit never dies, it just moves on.” Within this category of teachings, Dorion investigated the depths of the meaning of the gift of life. She explored “All Life has Purpose” with the elders in her study. Elsie Sanderson shared with Dorion the concept that all life has a purpose and it is a traditional way to teach children about how to

relate to the world: “It is believed that all children come into this world with a higher purpose to fulfill and a gift to share. Elsie reminds us that it is our role as parents to help our children discover and fulfill their life’s purpose and as parents we do this through careful observation of our children and by praying for understanding to be revealed to us from Creator. Elsie goes on to say that we must be careful not to interfere with the life path of all beings, both human and non-human.” When children first arrive into the world, we as parents, grandparents and extended family members, will greet and welcome the child into our family circle, letting the child know who we are in relation to them and what our role might be in their life. For example, I might say to my newborn relative, you are my niece and I will teach you to sew. In Dorion’s paper, the concept of Wahkohtowin is another important teaching that children receive immediately after birth: “Wahkohtowin teaches about our family’s relationship with all of creation.” This important teaching validates the child’s belonging to family and to the rest of creation as well. These teachings are embedded within our Cree language. For example, we refer to the sun as our grandfather and the moon as our grandmother – these are our relatives as depicted by our creation stories. Within our traditional kinship structures there are laws of wahkohtowin that we must teach our children to abide by, to keep family efficacy and harmony. For example, no one is ever called by their name but how they are related to you: nohkom (my grandmother), niseemis (my sister), nohtawesis (my uncle on my mother’s side) or nisis (my uncle on my father’s side). It is also very important for children to know their bloodlines so there are no intermarriages. This is a way to keep the community safe from bearing children with deformities, as deformities in children have been seen when the bloodlines are too similar. Dorion continued: “it is important to teach children about the validity and beauty of visions, prophecies and dreams. In traditional parenting practices, there is a respect for dreams and visions as a significant aspect of human or

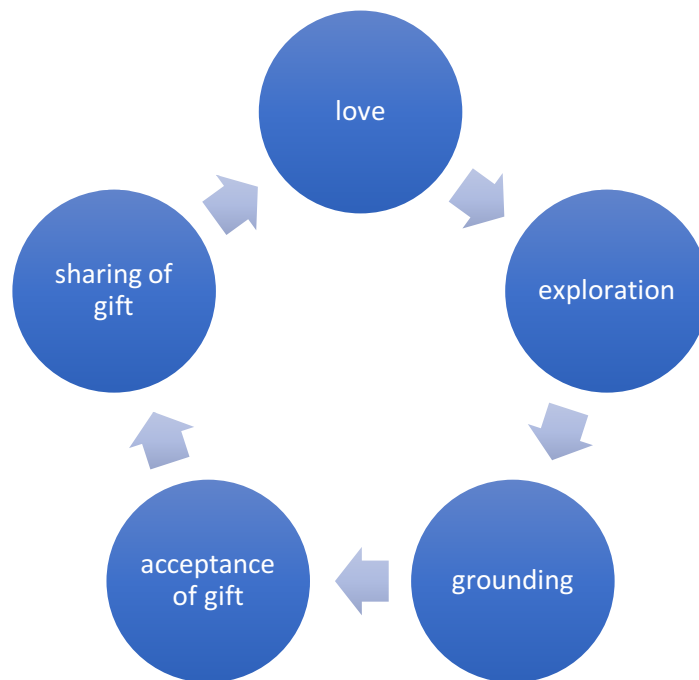
self-development. From earliest life, children are exposed to a whole set of beliefs and responses to all sorts of dreams. Parents are taught to encourage children to share and analyze their dreamtime experiences. It is understood that dreamtime is an accessible source of power and wisdom that can be very helpful for children. Elsie Sanderson recalled how accepting her family was of guidance and information that was transmitted through her dreams, and she was never discouraged from talking about her dreamtime.” Dorion claimed: “In traditional society, the role of the Dreamer in the community had an important status and played a key role in maintaining the well-being of the community members. In Cree culture, much is learned by our people through spirit.” As an example of this, Cree Elder Sarah Whitecalf is quoted in Dorion’s paper: “the porcupine spirit taught Cree women the gift of porcupine quilling through dreams”. Similarly, I have heard that the women’s jingle dress dance came to a woman in her dream. Dorion consulted Cree Elder Louis Bird, who shared “Cree people often slept in nests high up in the trees to encourage dreaming and if they made a nest over a fast, flowing water, they would have a special type of dream, because of the power of water in facilitating dreaming. Dreamtime and visionary experiences are considered a reliable and accurate source of knowledge for our people. From a Cree perspective dreams are vital to obtaining knowledge essential for survival.” Dorion pointed out that we are never alone in the Ohpikinawasowin teachings because the spirit world is waiting to help us and they can reach us more effectively through our dreamtime. This statement is echoed in her account of James Burns’ powerful story in which he credited spiritual guidance for saving his life: “four old white haired Elders visited him in a dream and instructed him to get doctored traditionally.” Burns continued: “they told me exactly what to do. I even had to go buy a belt to put on to keep myself together.” Within my own home environment as a child, dreams were openly shared and analyzed; as mentioned, my mother had a gift for helping

us to understand and decipher the wisdom that came through our dreamtime. I have always loved and appreciated this part of my upbringing.

In their book *Supporting Indigenous Children's Development* (2007), Jessica Ball and Alan Pence offer insight on a program they designed with community partners and the University of Victoria's School of Child and Youth Care. They outline five success factors that can be transferred to other communities who have an interest in developing the program. I am especially interested in Chapter 3, which explores The Collapse of Objective Knowledge, Generating a Living Curriculum, Elders Involvement and Cultural Healing, Bridging the Generations and Generating Curriculum in Community; and Chapter 5 on The Power of Community and Developing Models of Culturally Appropriate Child Care. Word has spread and now over sixty communities have implemented the program to support the healthy development of young children. This is what one reviewer said: "The book's heart is the stories, told in multiple voices, of seven university-tribal partnerships. It illustrates a mutually respectful community development process drawing on the richness of cultural knowledge rather than simply imposing a university model. A timely contribution to strategies for action worldwide and to educational theory applicable in cross-cultural settings" (Elizabeth Jones, Faculty of Human Development, Pacific Oaks College, California).

The common denominator and success factor of these two examples of traditional Indigenous child-rearing and healthy child development programs is relationship: of the connectedness of all things and societal structures and laws, such as that of kinship and the roles and responsibilities

one has within the society or community of which they are born and raised. I have created the following model to depict the social development of an Indigenous child through to the senior years. With Creator's pure LOVE the child enters and the elderly exit the world.



The Traditional Indigenous Model of Social Development

Love – We come with love; it is all we know. We trust that the world loves us and we perceive the world through loving eyes. We behave accordingly without fear.

Exploration – We explore the world around us. With reckless abandon, we seize every moment of breath on learning about the environment in which we live. We learn by listening, watching and doing. In Indigenous societies, children are allowed the freedom to be; to explore; to

experience the fall; to climb and to win! The land teaches the child everything the child needs to know. We are connected and related to all things,

Grounding – The realization of our connection to all things and our relations upon the earth grounds us to our humanness and to the land of which we are born. We pass through the rite of passage into adulthood and we accept our responsibility as care takers. We care for the children, our relations and our mother earth.

Acceptance of Gift – We become aware of our attraction to certain things, places, people, situations, materials, and we are nurtured and strengthened to develop our gifts. We are an important part of the whole. We have a gift to offer. We begin to understand we are of spirit and human both.

Sharing of Gift – Once we have honed our gift, we are compelled to share it, to pass it forward so that it continues to benefit others long after we have left the world. We do this with love – having found peace in the human experience of our soul. Nothing of what we learn belongs to us. We give back what has been loaned.

I developed this model to give credence to LOVE as the beginning and the ending. Every spirit comes into this world with LOVE; requires LOVE to succeed, to accept and to share and finally to have peace with oneself and the world. In psychological training, we are taught the nature/nurture theory which maintains that we are born with some things (love and trust = nature), and we are taught some things (learned fear and mistrust = nurture). A pure

unconditional LOVE is the foundation of wellbeing. LOVE is also the foundation of the moss bag and the swing, as these nurturing methods keep the child safe, loved and protected. In western society today, we have created policies that deny this critical energy and medicine to our children within our institutions. We do this out of fear. Where there is fear, there is no LOVE; where there is no LOVE, there is no health and wellness. Love is the medicine of the soul and of the spirit. As Socrates said, “Heal the soul first and the physical body will get well.”

Dr. Bruce D. Perry and journalist Maia Szalavitz in their book; *Born for Love: Why Empathy is Essential and Endangered* (2015) argued that “empathy, the ability to recognize and share the feelings of others, is a crucial human quality that underlies much more than love, friendship and parenting” (p.4). It is important for those of us who work with children daily to note what can build love and compassion within our children especially as we witness the progressive harming of children by children, today.

Dr. Perry looks at the workings of the human brain to determine the organization of stored knowledge that accumulates over generations. He stated that anything that compromises the development of the neocortex like a head injury, neglect, or alcohol will directly result in lack of control over the lower, more primitive parts of the brain (impulse/frustration), and a person will be challenged to self-regulate. Knowledge is organized from bottom (brainstem) to top (neocortex), meaning that fundamental and physiological activities like body senses are harder to change while more adaptive parts of the brain hold knowledge such as language, which is easier to change. Emotional knowledge is stored in the limbic brain under the neo-cortex and knowledge of motor activities are stored under the diencephalon part of the brain. Dr. Perry’s

work allows us to see that the human brain is plastic and can be reprogrammed. Reprogramming of the brain happens over time utilizing different forms of therapy over a consistent period.

Other Motion Therapies

Other current therapies that hold similar methods may also provide some insight into the beneficial effects of the Indigenous swing or Wepison. Extensive research has been done on osteopathic therapy, cranio-sacral therapy, sensory integration therapy and how and why these therapies work. This knowledge will inform part of the “why and how” the swing therapy works as well because the Indigenous swing therapy can be seen, in part, as a motion and sensory integrated therapy.

Sensory Integration Therapy

Sensory integration therapy is based on A. Jean Ayres' theory of Sensory Integration. Ayres' Sensory Integration (ASI) is a theory that describes (1) how the neurological process of processing and integrating sensory information from the body and the environment contribute to emotional regulation, learning, behaviour, and participation in daily life, (2) empirically derived disorders of sensory integration and (3) an intervention approach. “Sensory integration theory is used to explain why individuals behave in particular ways, plan intervention to ameliorate particular difficulties, and predict how behaviour will change as a result of intervention” (p. 5). Sensory integration theory originated from the work of Dr. A. Jean Ayres, an occupational therapist and psychologist, whose clinical insights and original research revolutionized occupational therapy practice with children. Dr. Ayres wrote "Sensory Integration is the organization of sensations for use. Our senses give us information about the physical conditions

of our body and the environment around us. The brain must organize all of our sensations if a person is to move and learn and behave in a productive manner" (p. 5).

The neurological process of sensory integration is a "particular way of viewing the neural organization of sensory information for functional behavior" (p. 325). It is studied by occupational therapists as a foundation for occupational performance and participation and by psychologists on a cellular level as Multi-Sensory Integration (MSI).

As a theory, Sensory Integration is "a dynamic and ecological theory that specifies the critical influence of sensory processing on human development and function" (p. 793). "It contributes to the understanding of how sensation affects learning, social-emotional development, and neurophysiological processes, such as motor performance, attention, and arousal" (p. 792).

As an intervention approach, it is used as "a clinical frame of reference for the assessment and treatment of people who have functional disorders in sensory processing" (p. 325). The theory includes a framework for assessment and intervention and is most commonly utilized by occupational therapy practitioners in their treatment of children with sensory integrative or sensory processing dysfunction.

People with Sensory Integrative Dysfunction experience problems with their sense of touch, smell, hearing, taste, sight, body coordination and movement against gravity. Along with this might possibly be difficulties in movement, coordination and sensing where one's body is in space. According to proponents of sensory integration therapy, Sensory Integrative Dysfunction

is a common disorder for individuals with neurological learning disabilities such as Autism Spectrum Disorder, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), and sensory modulation dysfunction “Sensory Integration Therapy”).

In the early 1990s, the Upledger Institute, a medical research facility, conducted some research utilizing what they called a “floating table.” Autistic children were put onto this table-like swing as a form of therapy, daily for twenty minutes at a time. After a period, these children showed signs of decreased stress levels, increased concentration levels, a more peaceful disposition and improvement in recall and retention. The swing-like floating table therapy improved learner readiness in autistic children. In 2013, *Autism Speaks* recounted a study done by Farber researchers, who used two measures (tests): Sensory Integration Fidelity Measure and the Goal Attainment Scale. Thirty-two children were split into two groups. One was a control group, while the other received regular care plus three hours a week of sensory integration therapy, which included a floating (swinging) table. The report revealed that those who received the extra three hours of sensory integration therapy did better in the tests, in self-care and in social situations: "The rationale is that by changing how sensations are processed by the brain, we help children with autism make better sense of the information they receive and use it to better participate in everyday tasks," said lead researcher Roseann Schaaf.

<http://www.autismspeaks.org/science/science-news/study-finds-sensory-integration-therapy-benefits-children-autism>.

Osteopathy:

The word Osteopathy is derived from two Greek words meaning bone and dysfunction. The founder of Osteopathy, Dr. Andrew Taylor Still, chose this name to highlight how the structure of the skeleton is vital in correct function of the body's systems, and that misalignment of bones can cause dysfunction. Dr. Still established the first Osteopathic College in 1892 in Kirksville, Missouri, and since then Osteopathy has spread around the world. Osteopathic manual therapy focuses on the assessment, diagnosis and treatment of disorders of the body's structure, whether it is related to the pelvis, peripheral joints, visceral organs, nervous systems, venous system or spine. Osteopathic manual therapists use manipulations to the joints or organs and gentle oscillatory movements to correct biomechanical dysfunctions that are related to neuromusculoskeletal complaints. In addition to this they will also provide advice regarding exercise, diet and lifestyle to augment the body's own healing capabilities. By restoring proper mechanics to an area, the osteopathic manual therapists allow the normal flow of fluids and improves function, which will help to reduce pain and encourage normal activity for that patient. Osteopathic manual therapists believe that abnormal functioning of one area of the body can cause symptoms to present elsewhere in the body in the theory of "Tensegrity." When the body is balanced, there is no excessive stress anywhere in the body, but when the body becomes out of balance this can be amplified to other areas. Osteopathic manual therapists regard the whole of the body as greater than a collection of all its parts. They acknowledge the body's inherent ability to heal itself and seek to support that process by removing any obstacles that impede it. For this to happen, osteopathic manual therapists specialize in individualized patient's management, which includes educating the patient about their condition and how they can adjust their lifestyle to allow themselves the best possible chance of recovery or optimal management.

<http://osteopathyalberta.com/what-is-manual-osteopathy/>

Craniosacral Therapy:

Craniosacral therapy (CST) is a form of body work or alternative therapy using gentle touch to manipulate the synarthrodial joints of the cranium. A practitioner of craniosacral therapy may also apply light touches to a patient's spine and pelvis. Practitioners believe that this manipulation regulates the flow of cerebrospinal fluid and aids in "primary respiration." Craniosacral therapy was developed by John Upledger in the 1970s as an offshoot of osteopathy in the cranial field, or cranial osteopathy, which was developed in the 1930s by William Garner Sutherland.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Craniosacral_therapy

Brain Gym:

Brain Gym® International is committed to the principle that moving with intention leads to optimal learning: "Through our outstanding instructors and movement-based programs, we empower all ages to reclaim the joy of living." The Brain Gym® educational model is utilized to:

- promote play and the joy of learning
- draw out and honour innate intelligence
- build awareness regarding the value of movement in daily life
- emphasize the ability to notice and respond to movement-based needs
- encourage self-responsibility
- leave each participant appreciated and valued
- empower each participant to better take charge of his own learning

- encourage creativity and self-expression
- inspire an appreciation of music, physical education and the fine arts

<http://www.braingym.org>

Set apart from the rest, Wiwipson (swing), the Indigenous Nurturing Therapy as an Indigenous healing modality, embraces the spirit and the interconnectedness and relationship to all nature. We are all synergistically part of the whole that is greater than the sum of its parts. The essence of wellness is a harmony among all parts. Spirit can be Medicine and Medicine can be Spirit. In fact, when we go to a medicine man for healing, it is our spirit that is first observed and taken care of. Bringing spirit back to alignment and wellness will systematically bring all the rest of the being (emotional, physical, mental) into balance and harmony. Our elders have always maintained that harmony = health.

Ote Nāwe – In the Past

Kayās ohci, mistahi ekîh pekanawāpimikawiyahk kîyānaw Nehîyawak. Mistahi masinahikana kipewîmikowinaw; tayiskôc nawac kîyanaw mistahi kiminihkwanaw; nawac mistahi môya kitatoskânaw- kikihtimikanānaw; nawac kîyānaw kikitimākisinaw; kitwasimisinawak kiwanihānawak; kimipayisônaw; kitāhkosinaw ekwa nawac kîpa kipunipipimātinaw. Tānihki oma? Tanisisi ôta esîh takosineyahk?

Social science researchers have long been investigating the low rate of Indigenous people's education and employment status and contribution to the western world economy as well as the high rate of incarceration, addictions and afflictions, poverty, children in care, abuses, infant

mortality, suicides and death. Health Canada reports always indicate disproportionate numbers associated with Indigenous people in all areas of health. Why is this? How did we get here?

There are several huge factors at play, beginning with the systematic statutes that have attempted to destroy our lands, livelihood, languages, traditions, ceremonies and parenting practices: the colonization of our lands in the early 1400s, the making of the Indian Act in 1876¹, the forced assimilation of children into Indian Residential Schools from then until 1996, the Sixties Scoop², and the current taking of children into the foster care system, and the continued incarceration of our people.

Tanisi anima ekih pe ispayik ote nawe (Historical Interference)

Traditionally, as Native mothers, we put our babies into Wâspisonah (decorated moss bags) to keep them warm, dry and secure and we put them to rest in small hammock-like cradle swings that usually hung from corner to corner above Wepisonah (our beds), to be rocked gently to sleep with softly hummed lullabies. These simple, yet profound practices not only nurtured our babies but ensured their mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well-being.

The forced assimilation of Indigenous children into the Indian Residential School (IRS) System³ within Canada, that abused and used Indigenous children under the guise of education, is now a

¹ The Indian Act of 1876 gives the Government of Canada control over Indigenous people, including their lands, resources, education, health, band administration, wills and Indian Status.

² The Sixties Scoop was coined by Patrick Johnston to describe the taking of Indian children from their homes and communities, by the provincial governments, and placed into non-aboriginal foster homes for adoption. <http://www.firstnationsdrum.com/2009/03/the-sixties-scoop-how-canadas-best-intentions-proved-catastrophic/>

³ The Indian Residential School System of Canada was the government of Canada's way to "kill the Indian" in the child. Under the guise of Education, the government commissioned the churches to run the schools and administer this assimilation project. The schools were opened from the late 1800s to the late 1900s for a period spanning over 100 years in total. Parents were forced to send their children to the schools otherwise they would

shameful truth that is at the forefront of our minds. Through the court ordered mandate of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike, government and churches, new Canadians, the young and the old people of today, are all listening and learning. Finally! This dark chapter in Canadian history has long been ignored. Besides the great loss of culture and language, the IRS system eradicated traditional parenting practices that have been passed through the generations for hundreds and hundreds of years. Children in IRS were institutionalized, not parented, not loved, not nurtured and not valued and so they in turn did not learn to parent their children. Two and three generations have passed since the IRS began its wrath upon the native people of this country.

We are now rising to the occasion of moving forward, as painful and devastating as it has been on us all. I say us, because I, too, like most other Native people, have been marked and scarred by this devastating blow to our Cree ways of being and knowing. However, it has been proven impossible *to kill the Indian in the child* as was the initial objective of the IRS of Canada, because here we are. Andrew Stobo Sniderman in his 2013 Maclean's Magazine article on Mark Abley's *Conversations with a Dead Man: The Legacy of Duncan Campbell Scott*, postulated that "Scott is commonly and wrongly attributed with uttering the goal to "kill the Indian in the child" (a phrase that belongs to an American military officer), but rightly associated with the expansion of the Indian residential school system in the 1920s and 1930s".

We now have the challenge of learning to accept what has been, make amends for our future generations and work towards building a better tomorrow. We must learn to walk side by side

be imprisoned. Children were brutally abused physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually. Many children died in these schools. It was written into Canadian law that parents could not obtain legal counsel or action against the government or the churches. In some cases, parents and children never saw each other again.

with our white brothers and sisters, contribute our Indigenous ways of knowing to society and positively impact the lives of those sacred little ones who have yet to arrive. We can do this through education (creating awareness and rekindling old knowledge) and skill development. Commissioner Justice Sinclair said that “Education got us into this mess and Education will get us out of it” (*The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, 2011). In 2015, ninety-four calls to action were recommended to the Government of Canada by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission directly related to righting the wrongs made by Canadian settlers to the Indigenous people of this land.

Creating awareness about the impacts of colonization will incubate understanding of why we are the way we are now. In reclaiming our traditional ways of knowing and gathering knowledge, including traditional parenting methods of swaddling and swinging our babies, our children will grow up to be spiritually, emotionally, mentally and physically healthier beings who can truly sustain who they are in the world as Indigenous people. By passing onto our children our ancient and authentic ways of seeing, learning, knowing, communicating, working and being in the world, we revitalize “Iyiniw-ism”⁴ and we take up our rightful place in this world, once again. As Indigenous people, we have always maintained a strong connection to our ancestors through ceremony, land and language and it is this way of knowing and being that has kept us alive and strong. Decolonization will assist us in moving forward in an authentic way, through learning ancient indigenous ways of acquiring knowledge in spiritual experiences like visions and

⁴ Iyiniwism – An English suffix “ism” is added to the Cree word “Iyiniw” which means an Indigenous person. Therefore, this new made-up Creenglish (Cree and English put together) word “Iyiniwism” reflects “that of being indigenous.”

ceremonies, through speaking our languages and relearning traditional methods of parenting our young. We can and will become a strong, healthy nation, once again.

Grounding my Vision

I share these life lessons with you because I have come to realize how very integral they are to my ability to carry my vision forward in a good way. I know now that I was being prepared all along for this very important work that I do, for the sacred grandmother spirit that showed to me the big healing swing and told me that people need to be swung. I am who I am because of the experiences I have had and the lessons that I have learned along the way. As researcher, I can maintain wholly who I am as a Nehiyaw Iskwew, understanding my work from a spiritual place, honouring all my experiences as educational milestones of learning. My compassion for people developed as a child and allows me to be grateful for the work that was given to me. My spiritual journey afforded me the open mind to accept and honour my vision.

I call my vision a “seed” because I did not give birth to it, it was brought to me, and for the past fifteen years I have been nurturing it and growing it. It is important for me to first acknowledge Great Spirit and Grandmother Spirit as my number one sources of reference, for without this vision, this knowledge that comes to me from a spiritual place, I would not know my work, its importance, its benefits, its healing agents, its beauty and grace, its life-giving nature and, most of all, I would not know myself, my strengths, challenges, faith, patience, courage and bravery, kindness, fears, love, wisdom, gratitude and my spirit’s joy. To qualify this reference, we will look at some literature on visioning and dreaming within in the Indigenous paradigm. Dreams

and visions have long been held as sacred insights from Spirit World that are bestowed upon people for a reason. There are ceremonies like the fast where people go into the bush, sacrificing food, water and the comforts of home, to pray and meditate, to cleanse and break from the physical, enter the spiritual realm to receive knowledge directly from spirit. This vision seeker returns with the knowledge that is then shared with community to create harmony, health and well-being for all. Visioning has, and remains, a very acceptable and valid method for acquiring knowledge that cannot be gained from anywhere else. In the book written by Michael E. Steltenkamp, *Nicholas Black Elk*, Elder Black Elk recalls a vision that he had as a young man that seized his whole being until such a time he could manifest his vision onto the world and then, and only then, did he feel content and at peace in his life. It is the belief that if a vision is bestowed upon you, you must live it out for the good of all, otherwise it will hold you captive, making it difficult or nearly impossible for you to continue your life's path. After my vision, I was advised to do exactly as the vision ordered, because it was my responsibility to do so. I have listened. I am living out my vision for the benefit of all. Dreams also hold the same kind of honour in the Indigenous psyche in that they offer insight or premonition to a future happening so people can prepare for what is to come. This knowledge that comes while our bodies rest is thought to be a window to the spiritual realm; so clear, so pure, so free from physical form, its sacred message cannot be ignored.

I am in the centre of my research. I am not an objective scientist. Searching and gaining knowledge in the topic of my research has been a lifelong journey – my interest to gather the stories of others who have had vision comes from my own experience of having vision. Knowing and understanding how it has impacted my life and others, I am interested to understand how the

visions of others are manifested into community and what impact that has had on our communities. I want to share with others the testimonies of the people who have utilized the healing swing as a form of therapy for their own healing journey so that this healing agent continues to live on and help others long after I am gone. I am also developing a culturally relevant early childhood resource so that Nehîyaw children learn the ways of Cree parenting practices through play, reading stories and singing songs in their language.



Me with my big healing swing, Wîwîpson, 2011

Methodology

I ask myself, how did you learn what you learned about being Nehiyaw while you were growing up? And my answer is simply this: I listened, I watched and I did the task until I learned it.

Indigenous research procedures will be employed as we rely heavily on our elders to share their knowledge, beliefs and practices around traditional parenting and healing methodologies, much of which have not been documented and or literarily archived.

Therefore, I create a space for “experience” for all aspects of my research. What is important to me as I sit with knowledge keepers is their abstract account of their experience, the rich detailed description of their story. I am interested in capturing memories and personal experiences and passing them forward. For this reason, I chose to utilize story or what has now been labeled Narrative Inquiry as a methodology for my research.

Narrative Inquiry

Narrative inquiry is the interdisciplinary study of the activities involved in generating and analyzing stories of life experiences (e.g., life histories, narrative interviews, journals, diaries, memoirs, autobiographies, biographies) and reporting that kind of research. (Schwandt, 2007, p. 204)

Indigenous people have been gathering knowledge and transferring knowledge through story since time immemorial. Story telling or oral teaching is one of our Indigenous ways of exploring, finding and sharing what we experience in the world. As Cree people, we have been passing along values, laws, practices such as ceremony, parenting, kinship and other ways of being and knowing in the world through story. These stories have been stored in memory and recited orally through many generations and they are still alive! Many books that were written generations ago are now gone, because paper burns or

disintegrates back into the earth, but stories continue to live if they are passed on.

Therefore, this method of searching, collecting and transferring knowledge is Indigenous Inquiry.

Indigenous Inquiry

Margaret Kovach (2009), in her book *Indigenous Methodologies – Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*, wrote that Indigenous Inquiry is making room in methodology for life, for the unexpected, for the path that emerges rather than the one initially planned. She went on to say that stories are who we are. They are both method and meaning. Stories spring forth from a holistic epistemology and we are the relational glue in a socially interdependent knowledge system. In listening to the research stories of others, it is evident that research stories reveal the deep purpose of our inquiries (p. 108).

Most recently, narrative inquiry, or narrative research, is a research methodology that is growing in acceptance and practice in such disciplines as nursing, medicine and law, and especially organizational studies, therapy in health fields, social work, counselling and psychotherapy, and teaching (Clandinin, 2007, p. xi-xii). Like other methodologies used by social science researchers, narrative inquiry asks questions about and looks for deeper understanding of particular aspects of life experience. These include an elementary school teacher's ongoing efforts to modify the spitting behaviour of an autistic student (Borden, 2009), and a graduate student's investigation of how to change her process of online discussion posts so that this writing facilitates learning and discovery (Porteous Jones, 2009).

One way that narrative inquiry is unique in its study of life experience is the emphasis that it places on *narrative* or *story*. Narrative researchers base their inquiries on different theoretical

and philosophical views of how people live and think narratively. Moreover, what “narrative researchers hold in common is the study of stories or narratives or descriptions of a series of events” (Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 4). We would add to this the possibility of studying a constellation of images. There are diverse ways that researchers study these stories or sets of images (e.g., *see* Pinnegar & Daynes, 2007, p. 5; Chase, 2005) Taken from:

http://www.edu.uwo.ca/Narrative_Inquiry/faq.html

Throughout my research, I gathered story after story from numerous sources to help me gather the knowledge to understand my vision and share it with others by putting it into practice, thereby creating a new story and passing it on to others who pass it on to others so that it continues to live on into the future. It is not this paper that will ensure its survival but the telling of the story, held in memory and passed forward, that will truly sustain the knowledge.

Inviting Participants into the Circle of Understanding

Indigenous protocols of accessing knowledge were strictly adhered to as part of the rigour of conducting research utilizing this Indigenous method of research. Relationships had already been built with the people who became the co-researchers/participants for this study.

Participants or co-researchers had the option to be named or to remain anonymous, but most of them chose to be named. There were four separate parts to the study all pertaining to the topic of wepison, wewepison or wiwipison (the Swing), as follows:

Part 1: Investigating Visions

Part 2: Investigating Swing Therapy for Life Transitions

Part 3: Investigating Swing Therapy for the General Public

Part 4: Researching Traditional Cree Lullabies and recording a CD to go into the Children's Cultural Education Kit for Learning Traditional Cree Parenting Methods

Each part of the study utilized different research participants. In total, there were 104 participants.

For the first part of my research, I asked two people, who have experienced a vision that they then manifested for community well-being, to participate by sharing their story. The two people who shared their visions with me are Georgina Woodward-Faye and Vincent Steinhauer.

For the second part of my research, three women were chosen according to their life stage (transition period), and they were asked to keep a journal of their process. Two of the three women have agreed to have their full or first name only published for this research. One chose to remain anonymous.

For the third part of my research, the swing-healing sessions, all ninety participants were accepted as they came to the swing, wherever I was offering the therapy within Canada. They were asked to complete a short demographic questionnaire and include their testimony of their swing therapy experience.

In addition, I created a Cree Children's Traditional Parenting Kit, which includes a tîpî, a swing, a baby doll in moss bag, a CD of Cree Lullabies and four little story books on teachings of the tîpî, the swing, the moss bag and the belly button. In total ten women worked with me on this project. Debbie Houle produced the CD. In the collection of songs, I had three women who contributed a lullaby on the CD (Sherryl Sewepagaham, Violet Naytawhow, and Lillian Gadwa who had her daughter Angelin sing on the CD) and three other women (Debbie Houle, Laressa Pawlowski-Weinlick, and Amanda Lamothe) who helped with music production. I commissioned Margaret Cardinal to make the little tîpî's for me and share the tîpî teachings with me and Muriel Lee helped me to sew the little swings. This kit was developed as a gift or giving back to community. Ten kits were ordered by Kit Tas Kee Naw Tribal Council (KTC) even before I had the prototype finished. In fact, KTC partnered with me on finishing the four little books and it was children from their schools that illustrated the books. In addition, I had about ten other orders from community people who wanted the kit for their children at home. This

speaks to the urgency of the requirement of culturally relevant resources within the school system.

Data Collection and Recording

I am fortunate that I can speak my Cree language as this has proven to expand my opportunity for gathering this knowledge. The language itself provides a lot of insight into the traditional beliefs, practices, protocols and values in many different areas, such as that of parenting and well-being. As much as possible I utilized the Cree language in my data gathering sessions.

To give my research depth, I chose to employ four methods of collecting the stories:

- Personal Recorded Interviews
- Written Journals
- Questionnaire
- A Children's Cultural Education Kit

Part 1: Investigating Vision

- Personal Interviews: (*see* Interview Guide in Appendices)

I interviewed two people (one male and one female) for this section of the research. I asked three simple questions:

1. What was your vision?
2. How did you manifest this vision within community?
3. How has this vision benefitted the people in the community?

I was aware through the moccasin telegraph that these two individuals had had a vision and have incorporated that vision into community. I offered proper protocol of tobacco and a gift in my request to have them participate in my research. I allowed the participants to share their story as they wished and gave them the time they needed. Interviews were recorded and transcribed. Transcripts were reviewed by the two participants, who were asked to clarify some of the information gathered. Transcripts were summarized and analysed.

Part 2: Investigating Swing Therapy for people who are going through a Life Transition

In the fifteen years that I have been offering this therapy to people, I have found that it is mostly women who are going through one of the four life transitions that seemed to be attracted to and benefitted most from the Swing Therapy. So, I hand-picked three women who were each going through a particular life transition.

I asked each of them to come for a swing therapy session with me at my house for thirteen moons – one Cree calendar year. I also asked them to keep a journal of their process and progress. Only newborn babies go through transition 1 and so it was not possible for them to participate in this research. For transition period 2, Child to Parent, I first had chosen a young lady to participate but upon talking with her mom about it a couple of times, the invitation was left hanging and so I moved on and soon found another young lady whose auntie was very keen on having her come but her father was not supportive and so that left me searching again. Then suddenly two young ladies both started coming at the same time (fall 2016). I asked them to come for the final six months of my data collection period and they agreed. They both signed consent forms, were offered tobacco and a gift and the study was explained to them and their

parents. After each having three visits, one of the young ladies stopped coming. I tried to contact her parent but received no response. I carried on with the second young woman for another session and then I closed the data collection due to my own time constraints. This young woman chooses to remain anonymous. She was twenty years of age. I call her Paige M.

For transition period 3, Parent to Grandparent, Lisa X, age 51, came to swing thirteen times and therefore had at least thirteen entries in her journal. Lisa also had entries between her swing sessions where she reflected on her healing progress.

For transition period 4, Grandparent to Child to Spirit, Muriel Lee, age 70, was chosen because she speaks good English and can also write well. However, I did not ask Muriel to come thirteen times as originally planned because she informed me that it would be difficult for her to come see me as often as once a month and so I told her that if she could come at least six times within a year, then I would be happy with that. She came to swing four out of the six times and therefore had at least four journal entries. However, Muriel also wrote in her journal continuously revealing intimate portrayals of her healing journey.

Part 3: Investigating Swing Therapy for the General Public

I created a simple one-page questionnaire that recorded the testimony of participants who came to the swing for therapy. For approximately two years, each person who had a healing session in the swing, in differing locations, was asked to complete a short questionnaire that included a testimony of their experience. I gathered ninety completed questionnaires that also doubled as consent forms. *See the Questionnaire (Appendices).*

Part 4: Researching Traditional Cree Lullabies and recording a CD to go into the Children's Cultural Education Kit for Learning Traditional Cree Parenting Methods

I hosted a couple of gatherings at my home in Edmonton with women who brought a lullaby to the development of the CD. Together we lifted the pipe to request guidance and protection for a good working relationship and a good production of the CD. We ate and sang together and then went separately into the studio to record. This process took fifteen months from start to end. This CD is one part of a kit that I have developed for children to relearn traditional parenting methodologies that have been eradicated by colonization and the Indian Residential School System in Canada, through play.

All recorded data was kept in a secure place for the duration of the study for all four parts of the research. In keeping with Indigenous respect for reciprocity and protocol, all participants, except for the ninety who came to swing throughout the year, received tobacco and a gift for their time and knowledge sharing. For participants in Parts 1 and 3, participants signed a consent form.

Analyzing the Data

Quantitative Data – Ninety questionnaires (only the demographics portion of the questionnaire was analysed using a simple counting method).

Qualitative Data – two recorded interviews, ninety testimonies and three journals.

Knowledge gathered from interviews and questionnaires and journals were all analyzed differently, as follows:

The two Interviews on Vision were audio recorded. I listened to the recordings once to remind myself of what was said. Then I listened for the second time for the story – the experience as it was told while I transcribed the entire recording. I listened for the third time to make connections between the stories, seeking to find commonalities among all participants. I listened for the fourth time to create conclusions, to answer my research question about vision as a method for acquiring knowledge.

The ninety testimonies were compiled and summarized for the healing benefits that participants reported.

The three journals were brought to me at the end of the thirteen moons when I closed data collection at the end of April 2017. I remember when I received them I felt so humbled and honoured. I was receiving a gift, indeed. The first time I read the journals, I read for pure interest and I read quickly. I was so excited to read about the journeys of these wonderful women who came to swing. The second time I read with more tranquillity, mindful of my inquiry about the healing benefits reported. As I read I found that parts of what was being shared moved me and I made notes about what I was feeling and thinking and questioning. At this point, I went back to the participant and asked the questions that came up for me and I noted responses. The third time I read the journals, I read for any connections or themes occurring between each of the participants and made note of them. The fourth time I read to create conclusions to answer my research question about the benefits of living out my vision.

Kip'skākôwina (Limitations)

Lack of published research:

Due to the lack of documented research on visioning and dreaming and ancient Indigenous parenting practices and healing, we must rely heavily on oral teachings from our elders that are still with us today or through the messages we hear in stories that have been passed down through the generations. This kind of qualitative research cannot be scientifically standardized, objectified or quantified in the systematic scientific rigour of western models of research. This method of collecting data may be seen as a limitation in the world of academia but has always been a valid form of gathering knowledge within Indigenous education systems. Evaluating, assessing, and disseminating knowledge within the Indigenous worldview has long been practiced through our stories, ceremonies and other seeking and knowledge-gathering methods such as visioning and dreaming.

Limits on audience perspective and understanding:

Academics schooled only in the western European epistemology, philosophy, axiology and methodology will be limited in their understanding of Indigenous world views and thereby may have some catching up to do on our Canadian Indigenous (specifically Cree) history first before they can make an educated critique of this work. I had the same struggle through my years at University of Alberta while completing my undergrad degree in Psychology. Although I had been schooled in European academia most of my life, I am still Indigenous, with an Indigenous spirit and with an Indigenous perspective. I cannot be an objective observer even if you ask me to be because I cannot be anything other than what I am, Nehîyaw Iskwew (a Cree woman) with

a sound mind, spirit and body. While studying for my undergrad degree, I do recall doing well on my Philosophy papers because my professors saw my Indigenous perspective as a unique perspective. On the other hand, there are many non-Indigenous anthropologists, since the beginning of English and French writing in Canada, who have misinterpreted Indigenous ways of knowing and being in the world because their interpretation come from their own way of knowing and being in the world. Nothing can be expected, as we are subjective beings influenced by our own filters of knowledge and beliefs.

The Cree (Nehîyaw) belief that “sharing sacred visions and dreams is taboo”

This belief may prove to be a limitation in gathering data, as people may not want to share openly their visions or their knowledge of visions and dreams. The belief is that sharing these kinds of spiritual gifts can instantly kill the power of the vision, leaving the seer with nothing. This then would mean that the community loses out on the benefit of manifesting that vision for the good of all. This would not be good. This law may stem from the fear surrounding the banning of ceremonies in the early 1800s. Perhaps our forebears were taught to be silent to save our knowledge from being desecrated.

Factors that have affected the overall outcome of my research, limiting the study’s full potential for success were few:

Funding:

Because there were four major parts to this research, funding was a challenge. I started data collection by questionnaire for the swing therapy with both my regular clients and the three

women going through transitions in the fall of 2014 without any funding. I received funding to produce the CD in December 2014 and began working on that piece in January 2015 and completed the CD in December 2016. This piece would not have been possible without the funding I received; however, I did end up covering costs that went above and beyond the budget, such as the CD release gathering and promotion of the CD. I started the three interviews on Vision in September 2016 and received funding from National Indian Brotherhood (NIB) to cover some research expenses, including travel, hospitality, tobacco and gifts.

Consistency of research participants:

A lack of consistency with participants may hold less validity in the overall outcomes for the individual healing sessions. Of the three women I asked to come swing every month for thirteen moons, only one came diligently. I was surprised that I could not harness one young woman for the second transition period. I worked with about four young women until I found one that could make the commitment of coming every month. By that time (November 2016), two young women made the commitment to participate in the research; however, I only could stretch out the data gathering period until end of April, giving each of them only a six-month period. One of the young women came four out of the six times and she did not provide me with her journal at the end of the project and the other young woman came four times and sent me her journal entries. For the fourth transition stage, It was difficult to find an older woman who could read and write (to journal) and make the time commitment and travel required. I found her in the summer of 2016 and she came for four sessions within thirteen moons (months) and delivered her journals to me at the end of the project. Asking elderly women to participate in a research study held its challenges for varying reasons because is not always as simple as offering proper protocol.

Research conducted in Indigenous communities in the past has left little cause for desire to participate in any research, nor have participants seen the benefit of such research. I was hopeful that this would not be an issue for me because I have developed good trusting relationships with several elders, mentors and knowledge keepers over the years; however, the commitment I was asking was not always possible for different reasons, such as travel costs, time and scheduling.

Environment and location:

Parts 1, 3 and 4 of my research rarely took place in the same location. However, because it is the *process* over the *physical environment* that is more important in the therapeutic piece of my research and because the process always remains the same, I was able to maintain a level of validity. The location changes because I often travel to different locations to provide this therapy to numerous people across the country and abroad but the process is the same. When part 3 of the research began, all participants were asked to complete a one-page questionnaire and write a testimony of their therapeutic experience in the swing, wherever the session happened to be taking place: at my home, at a conference or in the space of an organization. These sessions took place across Canada. When working with the three women who journaled, this took place in my home private practice Swing Therapy space. This worked well for me but it may have proved challenging to get there for some of my participants. The co-researchers for the development of the CD of Cree Lullabies gathered at least twice (once at my place and once at the producer's studio) to lift pipe and feast and sing together before recording, but this may not have been enough time for practice and sharing of the histories of the lullabies that were brought forward. One participant opted out of the project due to the time commitment.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Findings of the Study

There are several different pieces of research, each with separate findings:

Part 1: I listened to the recorded interviews, transcribed the interviews, then summarized the interviews and added my own thoughts.

Part 2: I reviewed and analysed the questionnaires and testimonies I collected over the last two years. I reported on basic calculations for demographics and I included thirteen testimonies to provide a good sample for this study.

Part 3: I read through the journals of the participants who came to swing over a period of nearly eighteen months starting in the summer of 2015 and ending in the spring of 2017 and reported on those findings, simply looking for benefits reported.

Part 4: I have included a photograph of the entire kit and its contents as part of this report.

Part 1: Investigating Vision

Interviews were conducted and audio recorded with two people who had experienced Vision and manifested their vision into community for health and well-being. Three questions were asked:

What was your vision?

Did you manifest your vision into community?

How has it benefitted community?

1. The first interview with Vincent Steinhauer was conducted in early October 2016. Here is what Vincent reported:

There are three types of visions. Firstly, there are sleeping visions – these are vivid recurring dreams that happen over time, usually with a strong message for the dreamer. Secondly, there are awake visions – these are visual and or audio experiences where one can clearly see and hear spirit, usually with a strong message to the visionary. Thirdly, the vision is manifested in a real situation where once it happens you ask yourself, did that really happen? Reality as we perceive it is in direct union with a supernatural event. When you act on your vision you are given more visions. I believe visions are messages from the spirit world and when you follow your vision then the spirit world then knows it can work with you to their bidding.

I had a recurring dream. We were in the sweat lodge. I had the splasher but I didn't know what to do. This little man came in. He was dressed like... he had a long coat, he had a hat on, like a witch's hat. He said his name was "Kawacin" (laughs), Kawacin. He started to sing. He grabbed the splasher from my hand and started splashing the rocks. And he started to jump up and down on the rocks. And it got cold; it didn't get hot. The sweat flaps started to lift up, like that, eh, like it was going to fall apart. So we all had to hold it down. Boy, that year we had a forty-day cold snap. Like, within that week. For forty days in didn't go, I think, above -30. Like, vehicles were freezing up. I think that was in 1977 or 78. That would be about the right time (laughs). Kawacin. And that's the song he sang, "kawacin," he just kept on screaming it louder and louder. He was quite the dude (laughs).

So now I run my sweat, it's the same kind of sweat but I don't ever sing that song. Yeah, but there was uncles there that were still alive and some that had passed on, there was a mixture.

Darlene: So you learned how to run this sweat from this dream that wouldn't stop?

Yes, from that little old man.

Before my dad passed away, (crying) he was getting me ready to run the Fast. And I wasn't sure if I was ready to or not, and so about week before I prayed on it and I fell asleep and I had a dream. I dreamt I was in a tîpî with the pipe bags and we were going to start on how the ceremony starts. I told the cistemawiyiniw to hit the drum. So, he took the drum and pound it four times. The door flew open and four old men walked in: Robert Smallboy, Raymond Harris, Peter O'Chiese and Joe P. Cardinal. They came in and they shook hands. I got up and I told Peter: You sit here. He said, Nope, I came to help. At this point they were all gone. They told me to carry on as you know how. So, I did. That was a sign to keep going with that. I made some changes to the Fast that year from the way that my dad had done things, that I was being criticized for, but I kept those old men came in mind and I didn't worry about it. That was a powerful dream. I had added a feast, too, for those people that had gone on and done those ceremonies. By adding the feast, when I lift the pipe, I ask those four guys to come and I don't worry about it.

So those are two vision-like quality dreams that I have acted on. I do them.

Darlene: Was there a pause in time before you acted on your visions? A time where you were unsure of carrying it out?

Well sure. In the first dream of the little old man, I was fourteen years old. I didn't start running that sweat until I was twenty-five. But the other one was more immediate because I had no choice but to do it. And they work, they work out. I was going to tell you three but now I can remember the other one.

Darlene: Can you say a bit about how manifesting your dream visions impacts or benefits the people in your community?

Not all people are sensitive to receive this spiritual energy. Some are more sensitive to it, but when you get it and do what the vision tells you to do, then you help yourself and others.

Otherwise if you're one of the sensitive ones they just keep bugging you.

2. The second interview with Georgina Woodward - Faye was conducted in early April 2017. Georgina's transcript was lengthy and so I asked her to create a summary of her interview:

Visions and dreams received during ceremony are different. Ceremony makes them special, unique and important. When I follow through with the instructions received from visions and manifest that vision in the physical world, I am gifted and blessed in return. Gifts and blessings arrive in various ways and are always connected to the energy and purpose of the vision: a greater depth of understanding about life, my purpose and place in it, increased capacity to communicate with the ancestors, strengthened relationships with all my relatives, people, nature, etc. Years ago, an elder told me that I read tea leaves, which at the time I did not know how to

do. I began peering into tea cups looking for symbols and practicing how to interpret the information I was receiving from those symbols. After the elder's death I was in a fasting ceremony and was told to read tea leaves for the people. I was assured that my ancestors, the grandmothers and grandfathers, would help me do the readings. Together we have been successful in that regard. Word of mouth and serendipitous circumstances have allowed me to read for a lot of people over the years. My professional background in counselling and psychotherapy, combined with the ways that the ancestors give me information about people I read for, has been a wonderful combination. I feel blessed to have been a part of being of good service to others. Through the readings, I am provided with very private information about people. Thankfully the information fades from my memory and I forget a great deal of the details, even forgetting who I have read for. Thus, I am spared the burden of carrying the weight of other people's issues whilst also maintaining confidentiality. From time to time I meet up with people I have read for, and even though I may not remember them, they assure me that the reading was helpful. I am greatly encouraged with the knowledge that my brief encounter with people has had a long-lasting benefit. When the ancestors and I help people, it is a sacred thing. It is this foundation in sacredness that I find in juxtaposition with how the material world operates. Establishing a suitable system of fair exchange for the readings has not been easy. My time and ability to hear the ancestors and interpret the symbols I see in the tea leaves is worth something. But what value shall that be? I prefer to barter exchange with people, their service or product for mine. When barter is not an option I charge a dollar amount. When I am prompted by spirit I gift the reading and ask the individual to pay it forward. Money attached to sacred things has been corrupted by cultural appropriation. I have unresolved issues regarding this matter because it is a complex one. Following through with the instructions received from visions is not

always easy. Staying true to the path that the ancestors have set for me through my visions has required a lot of diligence and faith. However, as I stay the course I find that I am blessed with messages from spirit to encourage me. The more I stay focused on the sacred the more blessed my life becomes. Manifesting a sacred vision in the physical world is a beautiful thing.

Summary of findings for Part 1 on Vision:

Vincent cites three different types of visions one can experience:

1. A visual showing in awake time
2. An audio telling in awake time
3. A re-occurring and/or vivid dream in sleep time

In Vincent's account of his visions of the third type, a reoccurring and or vivid dream in sleep time, he is visited by spirit beings. In the first instance, a little old man named Kowacin comes into the sweat and teaches Vincent by example how to run the sweatlodge ceremony. Because Vincent was a young man at the tender age of fourteen, he does not immediately act upon the vision. It is not until his late twenties that he begins to run the sweatlodge Ceremony on his own, the way the little old man spirit taught him many years previous. To this day, Vincent runs the sweatlodge ceremony the exact same way. He even recalls the Cree words of the song, but has forgotten the melody. Many people over the years have attended and participated in Vincent's sweatlodge ceremony and he has a following of people who regularly come to make offerings in this ceremony for their healing and that of their families. It has been good.

In Georgina's case, her vision-like experiences are more of the second type, whereby she was guided by spirit through human communications at different points in her life, in her ability to read for the people. She intuitively hears instructions on what she should do with her gift of knowing and how to share her gift for the benefit of others. In the past ten years that Georgina has been reading tea leaves, she has heard many testimonies on how she has helped others.

In both cases, Georgina and Vincent believed strongly in what they were shown and heard and they listened; they did as they were guided to do and their gifts and work has benefited many people over many years. Validating one's vision and manifesting it into community is one important way that we as Indigenous people can help to heal ourselves and our people. There are stories passed down through the generations that tell us we must listen when spirit speaks to us; we must do as we are told, otherwise our lives will be difficult and peace will escape us.

Johnston, in Anderson (2011), described how the law of non-interference comes into play when one is fulfilling a vision: "Individuals are to live out their vision according to the laws of the world and customs of the community, but at the same time, no one is entitled to interfere with the vision of another. In old age, individuals are to take on the teaching role, because by living through all the stages and living out the visions, men and women know something of human nature and living and life. Their wisdom will be respected and adhered to, providing they have lived out their vision" (p.8).

I believe we all have the capability to catch a vision and live it out. Although we live in a very different time than our ancestors, the three examples of the benefits that come from living out a vision provided here are a testament to the ongoing relationship we have with our ancestors in the spirit world.

Part 2: Investigating Swing Therapy for Life Transitions - Journals

I begin my presentation of results with the youngest participant in this part of the research, which correlates to the second transitional period of life – the time when the girl transitions into a woman. This participant chooses to remain anonymous, so I am calling her Paige M. for the sake of this study. Paige came from November 2016 to April 2017 and she always came with an offering of tobacco and ribbons. I offer her journal entries in full and I give my summation at the end.

I feel comforted by just knowing that Darlene saw some sort of future for me, considering that I didn't see one for myself. I wish I had more to write but I am not one for journaling and I am awful at expressing myself.

I've been lacking on journaling while I do sense a new soul or even a new person inside of me. I can't help but think that going to a therapist every Friday is the reason for that. I do believe that since I've gone to the swing, certain aspects of me have changed in a way, such as calmness and social ability.

Going into this I did not have a lot of expectations. I was slightly ignorant in thinking that this would do nothing for me. However, I do now have a more open mind about the next few sessions. While nothing life-changing happened, about halfway through, I could've sworn I heard "Paige, I'm sorry you must go." I had no idea how to interpret that. During the rest of the session, I started to fall asleep. Then I would wake up with shivers even though I wasn't cold. Nothing else

happened. Then I got out of the swing when we were finished. I didn't think I changed in any way or acted any different. Afterwards, my mother and I left and she said she noticed a slight shift in my social confidence. I'm really looking forward to sessions that come.

Paige was a shy, petite young lady with a beautiful smile that she didn't share freely. She was quite guarded but willing and kind. As she continued to come over the next six months, she started to open up, like a flower, blossoming, and her eyes shone with a hopeful light and desire for well-being. By the end of our time together, Paige seemed lighter and brighter and shared her smile more freely, returned hugs and love. Her mother had shared with me that Paige was a non-believer in spirit. However, I truly felt that Paige was touched and moved by spirit while she took part in the swing sessions. Her whole demeanour had shifted, from hard and cold and scared to soft, warm and loving. She seemed excited for her future.

Transition Period #3 is journaled by Lisa X. Lisa started her thirteen sessions in March 2015 and finished in March 2017. I summarize her account of swing therapy experiences, her joys and challenges and offer some quotes from her journals, as follows. Lisa always came to the swing with offerings of tobacco and ribbons and was very honoured and excited to be a chosen participant in my research.

I feel nervous, excited and a little scared. I don't know what to expect, other than knowing I have been waiting a very long time for this, eternities it seems, and now here I am ready to swing, to feel cared for, nurtured and loved. I bring tobacco to honour the old ones and the ancient ways of being. The knowing is in my cell memory or DNA; that's the old ways and I love it. As I settle

into the swing, I am gently guided and immediately relax. I am so cozy and warm, like a butterfly in a cocoon. I immediately drift off to sleep, lulled away by the gentle back-and-forth motion, like waves on a clear lake. Where I go I do not know. Time has no presence in this place. I only know that I am safe. I am healing the physical body and it is so warm. When I awaken it seems like an instant, yet some time has passed, how long? One hour, two hours? I don't know. The only thing I know is that my mind is as clear as a pane of glass, an ice-covered pond, crystal clear and so very calm and peaceful. There is no separation of out there and in here. There is only peace, joy, love, humility. I want it to last forever and it does because that moment in time can always be felt again.

Lisa always signed every journal entry with her Cree name, Nôtikew Tipiskâw Pîsim.

Lisa was walking with crutches when she first started the swing sessions. She had broken her ankle very badly in a fall. Her right leg tibia was broken and the right ankle on both sides. Two titanium plates and 48 titanium screws held her ankle together.

Off I go on my crutches to physiotherapy the next day and the physiotherapist hands me a cane and says, "Okay, walk now, you are ready!" and I'm like "What!?" She says, "Yup, go ahead" and off I went. That is the healing power of the grandmothers of the swing.

Over the course of the next few sessions, Lisa acknowledged her fiftieth birthday as a great sense of loss of her childhood and feelings of abandonment resurfaced as Lisa fought to stay at peace within her own self.

During the swing, I am in that space between awake time and dream time. I am feeling deep feelings of abandonment (I was adopted as a newborn) and I didn't want the swinging to stop as I didn't want to feel alone or unwanted or unloved. I kept hearing mom, mom, mom, over and over again, echoing in the distance and never heard or answered. It was a lonely feeling, yet I knew I was safe. I had reverted to infancy to a time when I couldn't even talk or understand words. So, I awake and I feel loved. Whole, complete and balanced.

Lisa journaled about a retail business that she had to release due to her injury; unable to work and meet the financial demands, Lisa rested.

I take cultural and elders' teachings very seriously and now realize that not everyone does unfortunately because the teachings of love, honesty, truth, humility, bravery, respect and wisdom are what I strive for. So, now I let go and I let God and I am gently guided to Pîtâpan (Darlene). I am nurtured, cradled and loved in the swing, all cocooned and snug. I don't fall asleep as there is a foreign energy that I am aware of and recognize and I am on alert. I can feel the soothing motion of liquid in my brain, back and forth, reconnecting ancient DNA that is the frontal lobes and refiring the brain neurons to the pituitary gland to the place beyond addiction and beyond trauma, that place of pure spirit, pure knowing and pure love and light. It's a gentle healing that occurs, not harsh or sudden at all. Compassion and empathy from another are completely powerful and truthful teachers. I am so blessed and thankful to be guided here.

Lisa recalled a dream, a nightmare, where she is sternly told by the sacred grandmothers to “stop dragging that little girl everywhere!” Lisa comes to realize that this little girl they speak of is her and the dream is forewarning of days to come – of her accident, her broken ankle. Lisa acknowledged her “knowing self” and her “listening self”:

Engulfed in liquid and oxygen, I am healing and being healed from past and present traumas. I awake from the swing feeling relaxed and so refreshed, renewed and reborn. It is an experience like that of being in other ceremonies where bringing life into this world is a ceremony. The grandmothers have spoken, they have told me that my leg will heal and it will not bother me later in life. What a gift.

Lisa shared the turmoil of life’s challenges that create negative thoughts and behaviours within her home environment and she prays to the grandmothers for guidance while in the swing. In her journal entry after her swing session, she shared her revelations:

Family is number one. Money is food, shelter and clothing. I have no desire for material matters. Life is a gift. I am decolonizing, I want to think Cree. I want to speak Cree. I have so much hope and renewed optimism and determination. I am humble and grateful. This is a good life that I have chosen. I feel empowered as a woman, more and more each day.

About midway through her thirteen moons, Lisa drew a four-direction diagram where she placed herself in the west gate (“the wall—break through”) and stated that she started her journey on the swing in the north direction facing south. She wrote this entry in her journal:

I am making progress and moving closer to the path that I have chosen for myself. My headache is gone and I feel relaxed and calm. I am moving toward insightful realization of self, of being a woman, an Iskwew, a strong Cree woman.

This is the complete entry that Lisa made in her journal after her seventh swing session:

I joined Darlene's swing today with heavy feelings of mother's guilt. I brought tobacco, ribbon, and a little gift with soup and bannock to enjoy afterwards. The tobacco and ribbon offering is for my children today that they be healthy and blessed and protected. After a beautiful sage smudge, I was fanned with a white swan wing fan. The feelings were tremendous, serene, calm, safe, loved. All negative was brushed away. I laid down in the swing with much anticipation and excitement! I love the feeling of being nurtured. As I laid down intense feelings of guilt began to wash over me and the tears cleansed my soul. You see my four older children (I have eight children) struggle with addictions and those hungry ghosts and although I have been in recovery for over twenty-two years now and I role model a sober lifestyle, it hasn't changed for them. This is where my mother's guilt stems from and the intergenerational trauma and abuse from my mom being in residential school. I am a motherless mother, the old ones say, in terms of not having the nurturing and healthy role modeling I needed as a child. My chaotic childhood (under age two) with alcoholic parents was mayhem and as a result I have been diagnosed with PTSD. So I swing to return to the centre of my core, to heal the pituitary gland, to see my life's journey and path and purpose with clarity and vision and love. I fell into a deep sleep all snug and warm. There was like a vortex, a doorway, that I went through and it was so gentle, although moving

very, very quickly through the universe. I woke up smiling. It was a wonderful little healing journey. I felt like a falling away of stuff off me., I was spiritually cleansed with a clear vision and purpose re-found. The old ones said that the kids are protected and safe and yes there will be angst in their lives, yet to remember that they chose me to be their mother in order to have their own journeys and life lessons and experiences and that it's not about me and I need not interfere in their walk on this earth. Not in a mean way-- this was relayed to me in a gentle, kind way and I get it. The journey continues for myself to that crossroad and I am venturing closer and closer and am standing right there (she draws herself standing in the centre of the four directions) This gives me an immense feeling of hope, understanding, forgiveness, of self and the ultimate gift of self-awareness: "nisâkîhison," to love myself unconditionally. The other thing is that I feel more and more beautiful each time and there is a real sense of clarity involved.

Notikew Tipiskaw Pîsim.

This was her final entry:

I am so overwhelmed with humility, a deep sense of gratitude and a whole bunch of happy! Although not the easiest of journeys, the gentle nature of Wîwîpson Therapy has guided and rocked me to the core, the inner knowing, and I feel so much love and reverence for the spirit of self that I never cradled before. I weep tears of joy, happiness, feelings that have eluded me for so long. I just love this life and I love you! Notikew Tipiskaw Pîsim.

Lisa started her Wîwîpson Therapy in March 2015 and finished in March 2017, two years later.

Lisa came for fourteen sessions in total. We had agreed on thirteen sessions over thirteen moons;

however, life happens and due to a number of unforeseen incidents, the sessions took longer than we anticipated and we lost count, adding an additional session for the sake of love – Lisa loved to be swung! Lisa's healing journey started very gently on her physical self while she worked through a painful physical injury. Then the healing was gently moved into her spiritual self, while she worked with her daughter through some very deep issues. She was asked by spirit to trust her own strengths and abilities as a mother and to move through and awaken to her own joy and of self-love. Then Lisa was moved into an emotional healing when she lost her business. She was forced to look at herself, face some fears, learn her triggers and boundaries and strengthen her coping strategies and understand what is important to her. Lastly, Lisa moved into her higher self, gaining simple wisdom and humility as she underwent mental and psychological healing, opening her mind to new possibilities of a change in career, reaching outside her box and comfort zone and embracing her life's purpose to serve others. Lisa's journey was magical, as though she was taken around the medicine wheel, in the order that it naturally flows, from the East (Physical) to the South (Spiritual), to the West (Emotional) and to the North (Mental). In the end, Lisa talked about being the centre of the circle, in the centre of her being, in the power of her own self, standing firmly like a tree, rooted and flexible to move in any direction she so desired. She understood she had free will and choice over her own life; she was not stuck in her pain and, in the end, she felt free.

Transition Period #4 is journaled by Muriel Lee.

Muriel started her six sessions in April 2016 and finished in May 2017. Muriel, too, like Lisa, always came to the swing with offerings of tobacco and ribbons and was also very honoured and excited to be a chosen participant in my research.

To approach an Elder or Healer is to present tobacco and prints. I did my protocol at each swing session.

Muriel Lee is an elder from Maskwacis; she is seventy years old but as spry as a young chick, very youthful and agile, bubbly and fun! Muriel came to me about four years ago to offer me tobacco to ask me if we could trade lodges. She wanted to offer me the moon lodge in return for Wîwîp'son Therapy. I was surprised and I felt totally humbled and honoured. Creator works in my life in such profound ways. A year before, I had been talking with a woman in Wabasca (Tracy Cardinal) who was looking for someone who could conduct moon lodge ceremony for young women. I offered my help to locate someone that would be willing to go to Wabasca and train women to conduct the Moon Lodge ceremony for the young girls up there; I had no such luck. Then along comes Muriel – wow!! Muriel and I have since been training together; she comes with me when I go work in communities utilizing Wîwîp'son Therapy and I have gone with her when she conducts the moon lodge ceremony. Muriel is learning much faster than I am; she is very keen to get started on utilizing Wîwîp'son Therapy as part of her practice as a Reiki practitioner. Much of our training is hands-on practice, learning by doing, the old-fashioned Cree way. However, we are challenged to also look within our own shadows and heal our own wounds in order to be there for others, doing grandmothers' work. I need to take my time learning the Moon Lodge; this is something I cannot rush through. I take my time to learn everything Muriel is teaching me and I gauge my spirits flow and comfort, growth and humility. I feel like I am taking a giant leap and I want to be sure I land on solid ground – It may take me another few years to run this lodge completely on my own. Muriel, on the other hand, is ready

now to work on her own – she has earned the right to carry the medicine involved in Wîwîp'son Therapy, which in its essence is that of love. When doing this healing work for people, there can be no fear, no anger present there, only pure, unconditional love. Now we focus on Muriel's participation in my research. I summarize her account of swing therapy experiences, her joys and challenges and offer some quotes from her journals.

Muriel always came to her session with a question or a problem. This helped me as a facilitator to direct her prayers, her questions to specific helpers, grandmothers.

In Muriel's first journal entry, she introduced herself at length in the old traditional way and then she continued about how she and I met and how long we have known each other. She explained briefly the process by which she came to be involved in my research and the information I gave to her beforehand about the objectives, guidelines and expectations of the research.

After Muriel's second swing therapy session, she wrote the following entry in her journal:

Issue I brought to Darlene: Sexual Abuse – I experienced much sexual abuse as a child. I have dealt with it as much as I can. It no longer shames me and I recognize the dynamics of this abuse. However, I was ashamed about having sexual feelings towards crippled people. I didn't understand this. I have never told anyone but I brought this to Darlene. After my swing session, Darlene told me: "Muriel, you were terribly violated as a very young child." She went on to tell me that she saw the man who did this to me; he was an older man, he had his back to her and was wearing a cowboy hat. After that I knew that my body was trying to tell me something my

mind could not. My journey changed after learning what happened to me. Darlene was also shown my difficulty to stay with one project from start to finish and this is indeed my pattern. What contributes to this pattern is that as children we were not allowed to make mistakes and as children we could not be wrong. As a result, I would never finish what I started. These afflictions came from the churches and the schools. It took a long time for me to unravel this and now I do not start anything unless I plan a time schedule. I know now when I do something, I am going to get it done. The hardest mindset to change was not feeling worthy or good enough – that is slowly changing.

Muriel gained a lot of insight in the lull between sessions; she took the time to reflect on what she was told from my communication with spirit during our session and she integrated the learning into her everyday work of decolonizing her mind and healing her broken heart. In another journal entry, Muriel wrote:

I got into the swing and the feelings of love, compassion and specialness immediately overcame me. I felt peace and I felt safe. These are feelings that come to me each time I swing. When I swing, it is the only time I truly live in the moment as I am in the care of the sacred grandmothers. I am very accepting of what comes out of my swing experience. Darlene sometimes receives messages of what happened to me as a child or later in life. This information helps me to know how and where to help myself. I want to stress that the issues I bring to the swing, I bring to the grandmothers, not to Darlene herself. In our culture, certain individuals are chosen to be servant leaders. These people are given the gifts of seeing, hearing and sensing the presence of spirits who are assigned to work with them in a special way to help people –

esawemikawisicik. Some do their work in a sweat lodge or other ceremony; Darlene was gifted to conduct the swing ceremony. The answers we seek come through Darlene. She is a facilitator. It is important to know and acknowledge this fact. In this way, the servant leader must be respected but not to be put on a pedestal. I wanted to explain this.

I brought two issues to the grandmothers today: 1) Concern about a close member of our family who is incarcerated; and 2) My hearing loss – I want to have my hearing back. On the matter of the first issue, the grandmothers said that it was none of their business. They said the incarcerated person is in a cocoon-like state and his process cannot be disturbed. On the second matter, the grandmothers said that I should study the anatomy of the ear as they see there is a disconnection in the nerves. They said to sit with the sound of mosquitos to awaken the nerves. I am also to allow a bee to sting me so that its medicine will be transferred into my body. This, too, will aid in the repairing of nerve damage in the ears. I am to also work on forgiving my ex, Gordon, for abusing me so badly to the point I lost my hearing (each time he drew to hit me, I must have turned to protect my face and my ears took the hard blows). I will regain my hearing! Darlene saw two grandmothers beside me, helping me. This is how the swing therapy helps me – I am learning very quickly to trust the swing. I would have healed this trauma on my own.

In Muriel's next session, she recorded the following:

Darlene tells me that I have been in my head too much and she is right; my brain doesn't shut down, does not even slow down. She also told me that forgiveness is not a mental task, that is the work of the heart and that I am trying too hard to WILL forgiveness. Darlene gently advises me

to be gentle, kind and loving to myself – this is very hard for me to do. Patience and gentleness are given to those honourable ones and I never got it and I am ashamed of believing that I don't deserve these good ways of being treated. This must be the way those who were violated look at themselves. But I never knew a process has been in place to think of myself as undeserving.

In her last entry, she summarized her swing therapy experience as a whole:

This experience is like the icing on the cake! I have been on a healing journey since 1992. I have seen therapists and psychologists. I have also attended countless workshops since that time. Then I began my sweat lodge journey in about 1997. I have been in ceremony all my life but more with the idea: this is my problem, here is my tobacco, prints and money – now heal me! In 1997, I went with all my protocol, all my heart and soul, and the healing began. In about 2008, I heard about this lady who is doing a swing ceremony at a place where I go to sweat. The minute I saw the swing, I knew that is how I wanted to serve the Creator. That is how I encountered the swing. I believed in the healing swing and my belief in it has never wavered. This is the reason, very simplified: First Nation people have been relying on Whiteman therapeutic modalities to heal their trauma; while these modalities can help immensely as they have helped me, there is a part of our broken souls that only the spiritual grandmothers and grandfathers can heal! My healing from early childhood abuse is an example of this truth. This is why I believe so much in the healing benefits of the swing. Thank you for asking me to be a part of your research project! Ay hiy. M.L.

This is the first time in all my sixteen years of providing swing therapy to people that I have had someone come four to fourteen consecutive times and keep a journal of their process and progress. The participants' account of their own growth and healing over time has taught me a number of important things, as follows:

First, each person has their own spiritual helpers that come to be with them and help them each time they come to swing and I can communicate with them when I am in a meditative, prayerful and mindful state. Some people have more than one helper.

Secondly, there seems to be a kind of teeter-totter effect or maybe a back-and-forth, swing-like effect that takes place in the healing. For example, Lisa's entries show two steps forward in her health and well-being but then there always seems to be a step back, and then another two steps forward and then another step back. There is a continual forward motion in the growth but it is slow, kind and gentle, as depicted by Muriel's account of her healing progress. Everyone has their own healing rhythm and speed.

Thirdly, the time lapse between sessions does not stop the healing because the reflections help to create realizations and gain insights into self and where the healing is needed or headed.

Fourthly, everyone loves to be nurtured and the swing sessions are never long enough. This mindful, loving, compassionate, kind and gentle nurturing is, I believe, what we all need as spirit/human beings, in order to be well in this world. It is Creators first medicine – LOVE and it is a necessary medicine for our body, mind and spirit. It is the food that nourishes us while we

are here on our mother earth. I am beginning to understand why the grandmother said “the people need to be swung!

Part 3: Investigating Swing Therapy for the General Public - Questionnaires

In total, ninety questionnaires were collected from people who participated in swing therapy across Canada, from Quebec to British Columbia, over a two-year period.

Demographics:

I wanted to get an idea of who was participating in the swing therapy sessions. Here is a brief description.

1. Ranges of age of participants:

14 and below	1
15 to 35	48
36 to 55	30
56 to 70	10
70 plus	0
No response	1

Most participants were young, between the ages of 15 to 35 (48 out of 90) which is more than half the total population. A third of the population was between the ages of 36 to 55 (30 out of 90). Only a few, 9%, were between 56 and 70. There were no people over 70 years old that participated in this study.

Nearly 87% (78 out of 90) of the population is working or college age. It makes sense that this is the population I would capture in my study because I was mostly setting up my swing therapy sessions within employment organizations or educational institutions.

2. Identity of participants by Nation

Yellow or Asian	1
White or Caucasian	21
Black or African	1
Red or Indigenous	67

The majority of participants self-identified as Indigenous or belonging to the Red Nation (67 out of 90) or 74% of the entire population group. There were 23% (21 out of 90) who identified as Caucasian or belonging to the White Nation.

Most times, I was set up in an Indigenous organization or educational institution; hence, the figure for the majority.

3. Stage of life

Child/Youth	10
Parent	58
Grandparent	20
Chapan (Great Grandparent)	2

I asked the question as a relationality question to determine what role the participant plays within their community. The greatest number of participants (58 out of 90) or 60% are parents. This means that they are in their child-bearing years even though they may not yet have children of their own. This is the second life transition in the Life Transitions Wheel on page 31.

4. Indian Residential School survivors

Yes	10
No	79
No response	1

In this study, only ten participants were former Indian Residential School (IRS) survivors. However, had the participants been older, this figure would surely be greater as the schools closed in the mid 1990s and those people are now over fifty years of age. Seventy-nine or 88% of the participants reported that they never attended Indian Residential School.

5. Cree or another Indigenous language

Yes	38
No	51
No response	1

More than half (51 out of 90) or 57% reported that they could not speak Cree or another Indigenous language. This means that the majority self-identified Indigenous participants do not speak their native tongue.

6. Type of healing received in swing therapy

Spiritual	20
Emotional	5
Physical	5
Mental or Psychological	6
All the above	21
Spiritual and Emotional	6
Spiritual and Physical	5
Emotional and Physical	2
Emotional and Mental	1
Spiritual and Mental	4
Spiritual, Physical and Mental	1
Spiritual, Physical and Emotional	4
Spiritual, Emotional and Mental	6

The highest number (21 out of 90), almost 24%, reported that they received all four types of healing, during their swing therapy session: Spiritual, Emotional, Physical and Mental or

Psychological. Slightly less are the number of participants, 20 or 23% who claim they received Spiritual Healing during their swing therapy session. Some, either 4, 5 or 6 individuals (4% to 6%) claim to have received either Emotional or Physical healing separately or both Mental and Psychological and Spiritual and Physical or Spiritual and Emotional or all three of Spiritual, Emotional and Physical or Spiritual, Emotional and Mental healing. Testimonies of participants will give credence to their specific responses.

According to the data collected; the profile of the person who took part and benefitted from the swing therapy the most is an Indigenous female parent between the ages of 15 and 35 who has never been through the IRS or the foster care system and does not speak her native tongue.

Testimonies

The Testimonies of participants who took part in Swing Therapy sessions over the past two years, as part of this study, are reported below:

1. *I like this experience, it was something new for me. It was relaxing, it put me to sleep. I would try this again. It made me feel better about myself and my family. This was a new experience for me, I liked it a lot.*
2. *I really enjoyed this. It was very relaxing ☺ This was my first time. I feel a whole weight has been lifted off my shoulders. Thank you.*

3. *My experience on the wîwîp'son therapy was amazing! I feel much lighter emotionally. I felt secure in the swing. This helped me to move on and accept the great loss I've experienced in August. I don't feel that anger anymore. I feel that you have brought back my positive being. I have never been to a wîwîp'son therapy before and I feel that this is what I needed to heal my heartache. I feel that you have lifted a lot off me. It also felt like you took the tension off my back. Listening to your voice, it put me to bed. You have a very beautiful voice. Thanks so much for the healing and praying you have done for me, I am truly grateful. PS I feel very sleepy ☺.*
4. *For my experience, I felt like someone else was pushing me on my right side as well. I felt as if I had no worries, no nothing. I felt like I had someone put hands at the bottom of the swing and my back was tingling upwards. I fell asleep. I felt like everything I was worried about floated away. I feel better. Relieved, no stress. My headache stopped and my body stopped hurting. My body was twitching. I like this a lot; I feel so much better... like I can do anything. I feel confident and just smile. Still tired though.*
5. *I felt safe while I was in the swing. It felt like there was one person pushing me and it felt like someone was standing by my feet watching me. Words can't explain how I felt. I feel a whole lot better. My mind is not jumping around anymore and my body is not sore. I felt a lot of spirits pushing me in the swing. Thank you.*
6. *Laying in the swing is something! Something out of the ordinary... It was almost as if I were asleep but I can hear her voice floating around me. I was seeing water and trees,*

pine trees and I could smell muskeg. One image kept coming back to me, my baby. I felt happy to see him and sad. I can see his eyes but I can't make out what his intentions are/were. I remember thinking about my mosom; they're making room for him. I can't tell if I'm happy, sad, but I know I accepted what I seen. Her voice was carried with the wind, very faint in the distance, a rattle, it was clear where I stood. I was aware of where I was; It's where I want to be. Just one thing was unclear to me; how do I get there?

7. *When I first got in, I was so excited. I went in and got smudged, I felt relaxed and started feeling the love, peace and safe. It was an awesome experience. When I lay in the swing, I felt safe and loved. When she started wrapping me up I felt so content and safe. I thought this is how nosisim feels when he is in his swing, safe, happy, loved and protected. It didn't take me long to fall asleep. I'd feel like I was being lifted twice then I'd put myself back. Then the third time I succumbed and fell into a deep sleep. I don't believe I dreamt or no one came to tell me anything but I just felt the love! <3 Safe.*

8. *I felt very peaceful. I was in an altered state. I felt like I was asleep, yet aware of my surroundings. I felt presence around me. I felt wind blowing around me (I am eyotin – my grandmother wind gave me her name), I always feel her presence. I became very aware of sore shoulder on my right side but it feels better now. I found Darlene's singing very beautiful and soothing. It was a very beautiful, soothing experience. I feel like the healing will continue on. Thank you so much.*

9. *This was an amazing spiritual experience which brought me closer to the power and beauty of sakihtowin (love) and reinforced the power of our Cree laws and how we need to live the laws on a daily basis. This was also amazing in the way of being a woman... the power of womanhood, especially when living our teachings of natural law. It reinforced the responsibility we have to live in wellness. This was so safe and strengthened me spiritually, emotionally, mentally and psychologically, Hiy Hiy <3.*
10. *I felt unconditional trust of these women to take me to a place that would help me on my healing journey. I had confidence in Darlene and Bev to help me get past resistance. A very powerful ceremony that has provided me with clear direction for the next leg of my journey. Megwetch, Megwetch, Megwetch.*
11. *This was my first experience in the swing. I was curious as so many people praised it therefore I booked a session and it was amazing! Being cradled at my age brought me back to my mom and kohkom's memories of them wrapping me in their arms to heal and protect me. As I was in the swing. I prayed, talked to my kohkoms asking for help, to give me strength and energy and protection for me and my family who are going through difficult time with the loss of our son who was taken tragically at the age of twenty-four. He was also a brother, a nephew, grandchild and friend to so many.*
12. *The experience is very spiritual and psychological for myself. The worries and anxieties that I feel around my place in this world were put at ease by the visions you told me. I do not fear the idea of being lost in the cracks of the world without making a true impact. I*

feel blessed that the grandmothers are by my side through this path of mine. I am very happy to know I am a warrior ready to fight for the voices that cannot be heard. Another fear that was answered was my fertility; being seen as an Eagle with a baby has created a great sense of comfort and responsibility as a fly so close to the Creator. Thank you so much, Lots of Love. Xoxo.

13. *This is my second time in Darlene's swing and it is always a blessing. My experience was very healing. It wasn't easy, the journey I was taken on, but I have been preparing to heal at a deeper level the emotional trauma that I have experienced and carrying for the past twenty-five years which has affected me spiritually, emotionally, psychologically and has impacted me physically I am sure but I am in good health. I was taken on a journey that felt very hectic, showing me many places: river by the mountain, with a grandmother there to be with me, to up in the cosmos, back to earth through different times, Asia during the dynasty, in a crystal cave in Atlantis, then I fell in the wave of water floods but then a grandmother pulled me out and told me it was not my fault. Then I went to a field where someone was killed or executed and was mourning them, like a funeral. Then I saw flowers in a field and I was walking in tall grass with the sun shining and now there were more grandmothers who looked ancient and some were tiny and some looked like trees. When what they showed me was hard and caused anxiety, they would say 'it's not your fault', 'trust you, it's not your fault, trust you.' One grandmother had hands like branches and would sweep my body of the difficult emotions and soothe me. I would come back to the field beside the river and mountains with the grandmother dressed in white and a head dress like a bird's (eagle or hawk) head. Each time there were more in my circle.*

Animals: the bear, the wolf, a fox, a deer with big antlers, a frog, my Hawk, flowers, fish in the river. They whisked me away across the planet throughout history of difficult memories and they soothe me: 'it is not your fault, trust you.' Then I ran back to the circle as a child and ran into the grandmother in white's arms. The other little grandmothers would sit and share a story or wisdom with me. Sometimes they would hand me something but I couldn't always see what it was. I kept seeing a very old knotted tree in the forest almost in a swamp and I wanted to go into the tree and feel the cool earth. I would then be whisked away for more journey and I saw myself as a baby being held by a grandmother who sang to me and when I returned to my circle in the field, it was peaceful and calm and sunny and the circle was full, with a man or grandfather beside the grandmother. They were all smiling and happy that I made it back. I felt like I could rest and just be. I think I did some healing I needed to do and was finally ready for. It was hard but very beautiful. I feel protected and loved and acceptance. Thank you.

Hawk Woman. Xo.

Part 4: Researching Traditional Cree Lullabies and Developing a Children's Cultural Education Kit for Learning Traditional Cree Parenting Methods.



The five-foot tipi



A closer look inside the tîpî reveals the kit's contents: a swing, a baby in a moss-bag, four books and a CD.



Books (drafts): Teachings on Wepison, Teachings on Waspison, Teachings on the Tipî, Teachings on the Belly Button and a CD of Cree Lullabies.

Children learn through play. They imitate their environment and act it out. As adults, we must be acutely conscious that we are ALWAYS modeling: what we do and say, the child will say and do; how we behave; cope with stressors in our life; relate to others or to them, the child will follow suit. The child is like a sponge, soaking up everything in their environment, learning to be

a human being. Remember the child is a spirit coming from a spiritual plane and what he or she learns in their environment will stay with them throughout their lifetime.

It is very important for us as Nehiyawak to model being a good Nehiyaw. One of the ways we can do this is by providing our children with age-appropriate resources for play learning. Due to the near eradication of our traditional Nehiyaw parenting methodologies and practices, we have to train our little ones from a very young age how to be a good Nehiyaw parent. We can provide culturally relevant toys for them to role play being a good Nehiyaw parent. This is the reason why I wanted to build this little cultural parenting kit.

The kit is a five-foot tîpî. Inside of it is a baby swing. Inside the swing is a baby doll in a moss-bag. It comes with a CD of Cree Lullabies made by Cree women from Alberta and Saskatchewan and four little story books on the teachings of the tîpî, the baby swing, the moss-bag and the belly button.

The kit can be utilized within a school system to provide teachers with a culturally relevant resource kit that will teach children from K-12 about traditional parenting roles and responsibilities from a very young age, while also teaching them Cree language reading, writing and singing.

Grades K-3:

Children will learn about traditional Cree ways of parenting through play. There is an abundance of knowledge gained from research on child development that states that children learn about

their environment through PLAY. Children at this stage learn through observing, exploring, experimenting and role playing what they experience. For this grade range, the tîpî with swing inside simply needs to be set up in the play area for free play learning. The doll in its moss-bag can be placed inside the swing. The storybooks that accompany the kit can be read to the children by the teacher. Through the stories, children gain an understanding of roles of parenting and taking care of the baby. The CD of Cree Lullabies can be utilized to teach the children how to sing the lullabies. Eventually the children will learn to sing these lullabies to their baby while they swing them.

Grades 4-6:

Children from grades 4 to 6 can read the stories on their own. The tîpî and the swing should be set up for them in the play area. At this stage of development, children learn by doing, by practicing what they are taught. Teachers can lead the children through the wrapping of babies into their moss-bags and placing them gently into the swing inside the tipi. The CD of Cree Lullabies can be utilized to teach the children the lullabies and in no time they will be singing on their own as they wrap and swing their babies.

Grades 7-9:

Children from grades 7 to 9 are gaining more responsibility and can be taught the tîpî teachings through the story book on Tîpî Teachings with lesson plans and an experiential activity of setting up the tîpî properly and building the swing inside the tîpîas well as learning how to properly wrap a baby into the moss-bag. The CD of Cree Lullabies can be taught to the children and in a

short time they will have these little songs memorized. The children can read the books easily and interpret its meaning. Numerous lesson plans can be developed from the four books.

Grades 10-12:

Students from grades 10 to 12 are nearing their adult time and this kit can be utilized to teach them about the responsibilities of parenting, the spiritual philosophies around child development, the roles and responsibilities of keeping a healthy home fire, moss-bag teachings, swing teachings; belly button teachings and tîpî teachings. This group can also be taught the Cree lullabies so they can sing to the babies they have within their own family groups.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

We are not alone in this world. We are still very much both human and spirit and, just as we experience this world with our human senses, we can experience the spirit world through our spiritual senses through our belly button, our visions and or our dreams.

As a child growing up in Wabasca/Desmarais, I was blessed to have all the experiences I had that taught me to be who I am today. I was blessed with the kindest mother in the whole wide world and the humblest father, who both loved me, and provided for me and guided me through my childhood years, the best they knew how with what they had. My childhood was not without the negative impacts that we all face as a colonized people but I have chosen to accept those growing pains as my greatest life lessons – those experiences have made me strong.

Although I did not feel that I did well in academia during my high school days, I persevered through college and university and earned a degree in Psychology and Drama, and this is one of my proudest achievements other than parenting two children. I had plans to become a psychologist and return to my home community of Wabasca but I believe that Creator had other plans for me when I received the spiritual vision of the swing, which abruptly took me down a different path, albeit still in the helping profession.

The grandmother said that “people need to be swung.” I have ventured out into the world, like the hunter who goes out on a hunt looks for tracks, to investigate what has been left behind by our ancestors.

My sixteen-year search for this knowledge has taken me to many places all over the world and I am grateful for the cultural worldview that I have acquired. These experiences have not only opened my mind but have provided me with a legacy to leave behind. The Doctor of Iyiniw Pimatisiwin Kiskeyihtamowin (IPK) program at the University Nuhelotine Thaiyotsi Nistameyimakanak Blue Quills could not have come at a better time in my life. To have the opportunity to study within my own cultural paradigms, ways of being and knowing in Nehiyaw, has been one of my greatest joys in my life. I am happy to be alive and Nehiyaw at this time in our history. I am happy that I listened with my spirit ears and acted upon my vision for the benefit of others. I am happy to share the knowledge that I have gained in the way that my ancestors would have been proud of.

Vision is one of the ways in which we acquire knowledge directly from spirit. There was a time in the not-so-distant past that our people took part in vision quests. The visions caught by people were manifested into community for the benefit and well-being of all. This is a practice that is still alive but hidden due to past colonial attacks and bans on our sacred ceremonies. We must let go of our fear and stand in the love and light needed to stay connected to our ancestors and to our spiritual helpers, who are always standing by, waiting to assist us. The two visionaries that I interviewed both believed in their visions, manifested them into community and have witnessed the benefits for the people they work with.

Upon acquiring a deeper understanding of the power and manifestation of visioning and dreaming, validated by the benefits of wepison, the baby swing, and wîwîp'son, the healing swing, it is my hope that the future will continue to not only hold a valid place for this form of knowledge acquisition in our society today, but also continue to utilize wîwîp'son (the big swing) as a form of therapy. As I was completing my research on wîwîp'son, four schools within Alberta (LaGoff School in Cold Lake, Kehew Elementary School in Kehewin, Pakan School in Goodfish Lake and the School in Frog Lake) became interested in having the swing in their schools and four of them purchased the training and the swing kits, which are now housed within their school's sensory rooms, or what I like to call "wellness rooms." Then the Oskî Ohpikinâwasiw Kamik (OPK) school, which is located in my own hometown of Wabasca/Desmarais or Bigstone Cree Nation, invited me to come share a brief on my wîwîp'son therapy and how it is beneficial to children. I co-presented with John Walker, a well-known occupational health therapist I met at the wîwîp'son training session in Kehewin, Alberta. In the sixteen years since my vision and conducting this research, this is the first time that my own community has invited me home to share my work on wepison. A month before graduating from this program, I received a call from OPK School again and they would like to purchase Wepison Therapy and training and sign a 1year contract with me to come to their school to provide swing therapy to the children twice a month. I feel very honored! This validation from my own people, my own blood relations, means more to me than graduating from this program with a doctorate degree. This sacred holding and lifting from my own community has fulfilled my vision. Now, I must pass it forward.

It is important to teach our children our ancient parenting practices of love, compassion, self-regulation and respect, which are taught through moss-bag and swing practice. It has also become important to me to train other women to do this work with me; to become Wîwîpson Therapists so we can have a far greater reach in the healing of our people. In addition, I make the following recommendations for current and future generations:

Recommendation 1: Decolonize your mind and know who you are.

Take responsibility to research your family's history. Know where you came from. Take pride in your self-identity as an Indigenous person – remember we are both human and spirit. The spirit visions and the human acts on the vision; this is the way of our ancestors and this is who we are as Nehiyawak.

Recommendation 2: Heal and grow yourself.

Take responsibility and accountability for your own healing, utilizing teachings and techniques that have long been held by our Indigenous ancestors and that were effective for thousands of years before colonization. A healthy Nation is a strong Nation. As a Nation, we have always believed in enlisting the help of our ancestors to live in a good way; let us once again build our collective muscle.

Recommendation 3: Acknowledge and celebrate our ways of knowing and practicing.

Validate wepison (swing) and wâspison (moss-bag) as necessary parenting practices for our baby's healthy growth – they need the crossover motion for successful balanced development of the brain and the nervous system, especially in the first few months of their life.

Recommendation 4: Acknowledge wîwîp'son as a healing therapy.

Wîwîp'son is based on Indigenous epistemologies and Indigenous nurturing/healing methodologies, along with other Indigenous healing modalities. Let our healing methods stand on equal footing with other such mainstream therapeutic models. We know our ways are good; let's validate them, celebrate them and share them with the rest of the world. We have much to contribute!

Recommendation 5: Install Wîwîp'son Indigenous Nurturing Therapy into the mainstream.

Institutions (schools, daycares, treatment centres, hospitals, offices, etc.) for children and adults alike can provide a nurturing moment throughout the day to reconnect with spirit, to keep whole and in harmony with all nature, to be learner-ready, peaceful and balanced.

Recommendation 6: Share your knowledge with kindness.

TEACH: Develop and provide culturally relevant resources to help our children learn LOVE, COMPASSION, and TRADITIONAL INDIGENOUS PARENTING METHODOLOGIES. These resources should be easily accessible to current educational institutions and childcare organizations as well as the home.

Recommendation 7: Get other therapists trained.

The more therapists we have who can learn about Wîwîp'son Therapy as a healing modality, the more reach we will have in helping our people be healthier individuals, families, communities, nations. We have so much healing and helping to do!

Recommendation 8: More research needs to be done on the effects of Wîwîpson Indigenous Nurturing Therapy on the brain and how it can help to heal trauma.

Chapter 6 - Definition of Terms

kawecîhitin Kanistohtaman ohih pekiskwewina kâpacihtâyân ôtah

Vision, Visioning, Vision Quest

A spiritual awakening. An experience whereby one is bestowed a set of instructions or knowledge from the spiritual realm either through a dream, an intuitive insight, an audio element or a visual element.

Indigenous Worldview

We are all related. Man is related to all creation; all creation is alive; I am no better or more powerful than the rest of creation. The Earth is my mother and she takes care of me; therefore, I must take care of her; I do not possess power over her. We strive to live in harmony with all our relations – the animals (the winged, the finned, the four-leggeds, the crawlers and the swimmers), the one-leggeds (plants), our grandmothers and grandfathers (the stars, moon, sun, rocks, waters, air, fire) and the two-leggeds (people of all Nations).

Natural Law

There is a natural order in our world, this we call the Law of Nature. Everything in the world is interconnected. With spirit, animals, plants, sun, moon, stars, we learn to live in harmony and in ceremony with all living beings, which we call our relatives. As people, Creator's last creation, we depend on our relatives, the plants, animals, and sky beings for our survival on Earth.

Therefore, as Nehîyaw people, we govern ourselves accordingly, to live in harmony with all of Creation. The Earth does not belong to us; we belong to Earth.

Creator's Laws

We were given forty-four laws to live by. In this dissertation, some of these laws are reviewed as they relate to vision and well-being.

Cree People (Nehiyawak) of Turtle Island

There are numerous tribes of Cree people across Canada, each of which speak at least one of the five dialects of Cree: Western/Plains Cree (Y), Northern/Woodlands Cree (TH), Central/Swampy Cree (N), Moose Cree (L) and Eastern Cree (R).

Cree – Nehîyaw Laws

Cree Laws are based on kinship structures and maintaining good relations with all our relatives.

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Personal Communications and mentorship (2002 to 2017):

My late grandmother Adelaide Cardinal, My late mother, Matilda Auger, My late grandfather John Baptiste Cardinal; the late Emily Hunter of Goodfish Lake, AB; Ruth Morin of Saddle Lake, AB; Theres Cardinal of Saddle Lake, AB; Jenny Cardinal and her late husband Joe P. Cardinal of Saddle Lake, AB; Darlene Kappo of Sturgeon Lake, AB; Colleen Chief and her parents Rosie and Paul Chief of Onion Lake, SK; Betty Gladue of British Columbia; Elsie Paul of Kikino Metis Settlement, AB; Cecile Crier of Maskwacis, AB; Sophie Bruno of Makwacis, AB; Kenny Roan of Maskwacis, AB; Julianne Nanooch of Fox Lake, AB; and the late Peter O'Chiese of Onoway, AB.

Recorded Interviews:

Vincent Steinhauer, Edmonton, AB – October 2016

Georgina Woodward-Fay, Edmonton, AB – April 2017

Appendices

1. Questionnaire – survey for wîwîp'son therapy participants
2. Informed Consent for wiwipison therapy over two years for 3 Ladies in Transition
3. Personal Interview Guide on VISION

Wîwîp'son Therapy
Experiential Testimony

Provide Name OR leave Blank: _____ **Date:** _____

Age Range: 14 & Under _____ 15-35 _____ 36-55 _____ 56-70 _____ 70+ _____

Nationality: Asian (Yellow) _____ Caucasian (White) _____ Black _____ Red _____

Life Stage: Child/Youth _____ Parent _____ Grandparent _____ Cāpān _____ N/A _____

Are you a former Indian Residential School Student: 1. YES _____ 2. NO _____

Were you ever in Foster Care/ Child Welfare System: 1. YES _____ 2. NO _____

Do you speak Cree or another Indigenous Language: 1. YES _____ 2. NO _____

If you had to choose what kind of healing you feel you received, please check any or all boxes below:

Spiritual ☐ **Emotional** ☐ **Physical** ☐ **Physical** ☐

On the remainder and on the back of this page, Please write your experience. This is your personal testimony – there is no right or wrong answer – it is important to be very honest and detailed. This testimony is part of Darlene Auger's Doctoral Research Project on the Vision of Wîwîpison. Thank you so much for taking the time to do this. If you have any questions – please call me at 780 915-2395☺

INFORMED CONSENT

Wîwîp'son Therapy

Thank you for being part of this important research. This form is part of the process of *informed consent*. You are such a gift to this research, I thank you for sharing in this project. Kinaskomitin.

Title of Project: Wîwîp'son: A Healing Method brought through a VISION from our ancestral grandmothers.

Principal Researcher: Darlene Auger, BA Psych, IPK Doctorate Candidate

Purpose of this Study:

There are pressing issues that need attention as we look for solutions for our next generations. We have a collective opportunity to address

- Healing Methodologies based on Traditional parenting/nurturing practices
- The loss and regathering of ancient and effective parenting techniques that are still relevant today
- The spiritual welfare of People

What is expected of me:

- You will be participating in 13 swing healing sessions over the next 18 months, starting spring 2015 to fall of 2016.
- You will be asked to record your experience in a journal which you will hand in to Darlene Auger, Researcher, at the end of the cycle. It will belong to you and will be returned to you once analysis is complete.
- You will be asked to complete a questionnaire at one point in your cycle.
- To honor our protocols for working together, you will be offered a gift and tobacco and a pipe will be lifted so that our work together remains sacred, protected and guided by Great Spirit.

<i>Signature (written consent)</i>	<i>Printed name</i>	<i>Date</i>
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Your signature on this form indicates that you 1) understand the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and 2) agree to be a research participant.

Questions/Concerns

If you have any further questions or want clarification regarding this research or you have concerns about the way you've been treated as a participant, please contact:
Principal Researcher: Sherri Chisan, email sherric@bluequills.ca
University of Nuhelelot's ne thaiyots'I Nistamemakanak Blue Quills: Research Department 1-888-645-4455

A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and the researcher has kept a copy of the consent form.

PERSONAL INTERVIEW GUIDE

Visioning

- 1. What are your thoughts and beliefs about having a VISION AND or a DREAM?**
- 2. Have you ever had a spiritual VISION or DREAM that moved you to action? Describe and Explain.**
- 3. Did you physically manifest (make happen) the vision or dream or parts thereof? Why or Why Not? Describe and Explain.**
- 4. How has this manifestation taken effect? Explain.**
- 5. How do you now feel looking back at it all now? Explain.**