From Contact to Gang Recruitment:

Breaking Cycles of Historic Trauma

Through Strategic Interventions

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From Contact to Gang Recruitment:

Breaking Cycles of Historic Trauma Through Strategic Interventions

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Introduction

The Canadian colonial legacy began when European settlers arrived in Canada and includes legislation and policies that sought to control and assimilate Canada's First Peoples. These policies resulted in actions by the government and society that continue to have detrimental economic, educational, familial, cultural and spiritual effects on Aboriginal individuals, families, clans and communities.

The purpose of this discussion is to illuminate and describe the connection between colonial policies and programs (with a specific focus on the residential schools) and the current 'Aboriginal Gang' phenomenon in Canada. The argument will be informed by an ecological framework, examining how essential relationships have changed by colonial policy and how this has created environments whereby gang recruitment of Aboriginal youth is prevalent.

The research questions that will guide this discussion are: (1) What were the common characteristics of the Aboriginal family (broadly defined) pre-European settlement? (2) What effect did colonial policy (specifically residential schools) have on the essential relationships of the Aboriginal family and community historically? Currently? (3)What were the intergenerational impacts of colonization, including residential schools that are connected to the current Aboriginal gang situation? (4) What model of intervention is most appropriate for gang intervention? What are examples of interventions that address the environmental factors?

The Aboriginal Family Pre-European Settlement

Before European settlement, the Indigenous people of North America were the sole inhabitants of the continent. In fact, the first Europeans to land in Canada would have "encountered free, vibrant, sovereign organisation and territorial jurisdictions that were older (3000-30,000 years), more populous (60-80 million) and more variegated than Europe"[1].

Within these societies, the conception of 'family' for Aboriginal people in Canada pre-contact could have been defined as a complex combination of biological ties, clan membership bonds, adoptions and economic partnerships (e.g. hunting partnerships between communities); thus, Aboriginal families have had a broader definition that the European nuclear family model (biological unit of parents and children living together in a household), extending this unit to include grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins. In addition, often members of the same clan were considered to be close family members[2], with the rules of traditional clan membership requiring individuals to marry outside the clan to which they belonged.

Customary adoption has also been a common practice in many Aboriginal communities; for example in some Nations, a parent would agree to give their child to another childless couple in the community and in such create a special social bond between these families. In other situations, customary adoptions resulted in children being given to grandparents to raise[3]. Purposefully creating such a large extended family system resulted in families and communities representing essentially the same network of people[4] and almost all functions within the community were performed within the extended family context[5].

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[1] Tully, J. (2000). The struggles of indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In D. Ivison, P. Patton & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Political theory and the rights of indigenous peoples*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press. Page 38.
[2] Canada. (1996a). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 10.
[3] Canada. (1996a). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 11.
[4] Canada. (1996a). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 10.
[5] Canada. (1996a). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 11.
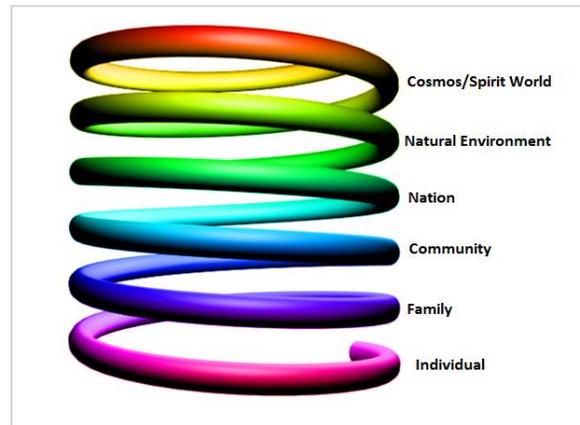
Figure 1: Adapted from LaBoucane-Benson, 2009

This conceptualization of family is grounded in an interconnected worldview that is common in Indigenous communities and nations throughout the world. The interconnected nature of family and community relationships create a sophisticated, broad and inclusive family system: "The effect of these diverse, overlapping bonds was to create a dense network of relationships within which sharing and obligations of mutual aid ensured that an effective safety net was in place[6]". Relationships were therefore the cornerstone of the family and community; Aboriginal individuals, families and communities were *bound by rules within their culture that required them to establish and maintain positive relationships*.

Often, this interconnected family-community system is represented by a spiral (Figure 1), that illustrates the manner in which the individual, family, clan, community, nation, environment and spirit world are connected. Each rung is equal in size and importance – and the space between the rungs keeps each rung separate, yet connected. In this way all people, families, nations and the natural world is acknowledged as self-governing, with the capacity to act on their own behalf; they must act, however, in ways that respect all other living beings (including spirits) ability to take actions on their own behalf as well. The space between the rungs represents the rules (that are based upon specific values) that ensure respectful connectedness. These rules are the infrastructure that ensures healthy, respectful human relationships.

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[6] Canada. (1996a). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 5.

The Cree[7] understanding of interconnectedness will be used to illustrate this concept. The Cree worldview holds that, as a result of a special relationship between the Cree people and the Creator, the People were given specific gifts. They were physical gifts such as the land, the water and the natural world, as well as metaphysical gifts, which are the rules and values that give direction to the People about how they relate to each other and to the world around them[8]. The doctrine of relationships for the Cree is known as *wahkohtowin* – a constellation of rules that provides a structured framework to guide the creation, renewal and maintenance of all human relationships. Within *wahkohtowin* is the rule of *miyo-wicetowin*, which directs the people to have good relationships with each other, both individually and collectively[9]. These rules are informed by specific values that must be realised within human relationships, such as respect, caring sharing, kindness, honesty, humility and self-determination. As long as *wahkohtowin* is upheld, the Cree spiral of relationships is sustained and the people can live harmoniously and peacefully with each other (*witaskiwin*[10]), and achieve the good, healthy life (*pimatisiwin*).

For the Cree, the teachings of *wahkohtowin* were passed from generation to generation in ceremony and through healthy relationships between the teachers and the seekers of knowledge. Role modelling, apprenticeship with knowledge keepers and living on the land (the natural world as a teacher) were used to ensure that children became adults who understood their place within the interconnected world, as well as the rules they needed to observe to ensure the survival of the people and the sustainability of the world around them.

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[7] As represented by Cardinal, H., & Hildebrandt, W. (2000). *Treaty elders of Saskatchewan: Our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
[8] Cardinal, H., & Hildebrandt, W. (2000). *Treaty elders of Saskatchewan: Our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. Page 10.
[9] Cardinal, H., & Hildebrandt, W. (2000). *Treaty elders of Saskatchewan: Our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. Page 14.
[10] Cardinal, H., & Hildebrandt, W. (2000). *Treaty elders of Saskatchewan: Our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. Page 39 and Page 80.

The Effect of Colonial Policy on the Aboriginal Family and Community System

Internal colonization[11] is "the historical process by which structures of domination have been set in place on Turtle Island/North America over the Indigenous peoples and their territories without their consent and in response to their resistance against and with these structures[12]", and can be considered in four dimensions[13]:

1. The arrival and settlement of European people brought war, pestilence/foreign disease and left Indigenous populations in ruins.
2. The overtaking of all power and authority over Indigenous territory and forcing Indigenous people into small parcels of land that were perceived to be of no use to the colonial government.
3. Treaty making and periods of cooperation between Indigenous peoples and the Canadian government.
4. The establishment of European-based governments on North American soil has resulted in the development of legislation (i.e. the Indian Act), policies of domination (i.e. Residential School policies), and the subsequent formation of colonial band councils that are controlled by the Canadian federal governments.

Although all four aspects have had dire consequences for Aboriginal people in Canada, this discussion will focus on how legislation and policies have caused chaos in many Aboriginal families across Canada, creating environments where Aboriginal gang recruitment flourishes.

The Indian Act

Colonial, and later Canadian policy has historically been informed by the early assumptions made by European authorities that Aboriginal people were at best child-like and requiring

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[11] Tully, J. (2000). The struggles of indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In D. Ivison, P. Patton & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Political theory and the rights of indigenous peoples*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
[12] Tully, J. (2000). The struggles of indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In D. Ivison, P. Patton & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Political theory and the rights of indigenous peoples*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.Page 37.
[13] Tully, J. (2000). The struggles of indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In D. Ivison, P. Patton & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Political theory and the rights of indigenous peoples*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

paternal care from a government structure, or at worst savage and uncivilized[14], requiring assimilative intervention. In 1763, "after more than 200 years of trade, warfare and social interaction, the victorious British Crown attempted to stabilize relations between Indian nations and colonists. The method chosen was a public proclamation confirming the nature, extent and purpose of the unique relationship that had developed in North America between the British Empire and Indian nations"[15]. The *Royal Proclamation of 1763* clearly distinguished which lands were designated for Indian tribes; it determined that the interest in these lands were held by the collective, rather than by individuals[16], thus acknowledging the Indian Nation as a autonomous political entity and giving rise to the tri-partide relationship between the Crown, the colony and the Indian Nation. Further, the Crown also established that Aboriginal people were under the protection of the crown[17], and only the crown could buy or sell Aboriginal lands, creating the process whereby Indian land could be purchased for settlement or development.

Between 1763 and 1876, the notion of Indian Nations as autonomous political entities began to give way to legislation that focussed on defining who was Indian, as well as the 'civilization' and assimilation of Aboriginal people. These included:

- In 1828, the first formal ***Inquiry into Indian Conditions in Canada***, lead by Darling, recommended the need for "Indians in fixed locations where they could be educated, converted to Christianity and transformed into farmers"[18].

- The ***Bagot Commission of 1844*** recommended Indians be encouraged to become farmers and tradesmen, and to facilitate this they be given education and tools instead of gifts and payments. Thus boarding schools were recommended as a way of providing training and fostering Christianity. In addition, the Bagot commission suggested that government officials have control over Band membership on reserves and therefore who would receive treaty payments. The commissioners recommended that "all persons of mixed Indian and non-Indian blood who had not been adopted by the band; all Indian women who married non- Indian men and their children; and all Indian children who had been

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[14]Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 239.

[15] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 240.

[16] http://www.ainc-inac.com/ai/scr/nt/edu/bzz/nls/ryp/index-eng.asp. Accessed March 23, 2011.

[17] http://www.ainc-inac.com/ai/scr/nt/edu/bzz/nls/ryp/index-eng.asp. Accessed March 23, 2011.

[18] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 244.

educated in industrial schools[19]" be ineligible. The recommendations made by the Bagot commission ultimately provided the basis for the development of many aspects of subsequent Acts.

- Two Acts were passed in 1850: *Act for the Better Protection of the Lands and Property of Indians in Lower Canada* and *An Act for the protection of Indians in Upper Canada Arom Imposition, And The Property Occupied Or Enjoyed By Them From Trespass And Injury[20],* in which the government first attempted to identify who was an "Indian", thus formally taking away the legal right of Indian Nations to determine their own membership. The term "Indian" was defined with the notion of race, whereby only a person of Indian blood or married to a person of Indian blood would be considered an Indian[21]. As this definition evolved Indian status and residency rights became associated with the male line.

- In 1857 An Act to Encourage the Gradual Civilization of Indian Tribes in this Province, and to Amend the Laws Relating to Indians (*The Gradual Civilization Act*) was passed to introduce the process of enfranchisement, whereby Indian men (not women) could become full British subjects who were free from the protected status of being an Indian. While this process was voluntary for a man, his wife and children would be automatically enfranchised with him[22]. The underlying assumptions of this Act were that to have Indian status was to be deemed inferior and that it is the natural desire of all people to work towards assuming a British identity. The Civilization Act was an assault on the Aboriginal psyche, as it created an environment whereby "only Indians who renounced their communities, cultures and languages could gain the respect of colonial and later Canadian society"[23]. The relationship set out by the proclamation of 1763 between the Crown, the colonies and autonomous tribal nations was thus being transformed by the Act into one of domination, control and assimilation by Canada over Aboriginal people.

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[19] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 247

[20] http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/the-indian-act-historical-overview. Accessed March 23, 2011.

[21] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 248.

[22] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 249.

[23] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 251.

- The 1860 *Indian Lands Act* centralization of control over all Aboriginal people and their lands to the office of the Chief Superintendent of Indian Affairs. This marked the official end of the aforementioned tri-partide relationship.

- The *1867 Constitution Act* gave legislative authority over Aboriginals and their lands to the federal Parliament, removing it from the provincial legislatures.

- In 1869, an *Act For The Gradual Enfranchisement Of Indians, The Better Management Of Indian Affairs, And To Extend The Provisions Of The Act 31st Victoria* set out the first provision for the election of Chief and Council on Indian reserves, with very limited power to set bylaws[24]. This enforced system of government led to the destabilization of family and clan by making them no longer the foundation of economic and political activities[25]. Aboriginal women were not allowed to vote in band council elections. Further, the Act "prohibited the sale of alcohol to Aboriginals, on the paternalistic grounds of protecting Aboriginals from themselves"[26]. The Act also included compulsory enfranchisement for Indian men, as opposed to being voluntary. Notably, only one Indian man was enfranchised between 1857 and 1876. In addition, the Act made law that if an Aboriginal woman married a non-Aboriginal man, she and any children born from this marriage would be excluded from Indian status, thus moving forward the colonial agenda of assimilation[27].

In 1876 the first Indian Act was passed bringing together aspects of the past legislation, enacting many recommendations from inquiries and commissions of the past, and moving forward an explicit agenda of assimilation of Aboriginal people into Canadian society. "The transition from tribal nation in the tripartite imperial system to legal incompetent in the bilateral federal/provincial system was now complete. While protection remained a policy goal, it was no longer collective Indian tribal autonomy that was protected: it was the individual Indian recast as a dependent ward — in effect, the child of the state"[28]. As such, the Canadian government

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[24] http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/the-indian-act-historical-overview. Accessed March 23, 2011.
[25] Tully, J. (2000). The struggles of indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In D. Ivison, P. Patton & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Political theory and the rights of indigenous peoples*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
[26] http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/the-indian-act-historical-overview. Accessed March 23, 2011..
[27] http://www.mapleleafweb.com/features/the-indian-act-historical-overview. Accessed March 23, 2011.
[28] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations Page 255.

expressed its responsibility to encourage the enfranchisement, education and civilization of the Indian people[29].

The Indian Act was in no way a fair or equitable piece of legislation. When the first Indian Act was passed it made no reference to the treaties that were in existence or were being currently negotiated[30] and there was no importance attached to the nation-to-nation nature of the treaties[31]. Almost every year after the act passed amendments were brought forward to respond to problems in the ultimate goal of assimilating Aboriginal peoples. Aboriginal people could not manage their own reserve lands or moneys and were under constant supervision of the federally appointed Indian Agent[32]. Many of the provisions were brought solely to increase the power of federal bureaucrats- specifically the Indian Agent who became a powerful figure and came to dominate all important aspects of band life[33].

In 1884 the Indian Act was amended to protect Indians from their own cultures[34], prohibiting ceremonies such as the Potlach, the Tamanawas dance, and later the Sundance. A jail term of two to six months would be given to anyone engaging in or assisting in these ceremonies. In 1918, Indian agents were given the power to prosecute anti-dancing, anti-potlatching provisions[35], acting to suppress the entire ceremony, even though it was only certain aspects of the ceremonies that were criminalized[36]. Eventually, Indian agents were allowed to conduct trials wherever they thought necessary; all forms of political protest were criminalized and the Indian agent acted as the final word on justice issues[37].

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[29] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 255.
[30] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 255.
[31] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 256.
[32] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 237.
[33] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 259.
[34] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 267.
[35] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 268.
[36] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 269.
[37] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 266.

Until the 1982 amendments to the Constitution, the Indian Act was the most prominent refection of the distinctive place of Aboriginal people in Canada. When the government attempted to repeal the Indian Act in 1969 by issuing the "white paper"[38], and again in 2002 with the First Nations Governance Act, Aboriginal people throughout the country protested and ultimately caused the demise of both attempts. The reason for these protests can be seen in the following quote from the late Dr. Harold Cardinal (Cree): "No just society and no society with even pretensions to being just can tolerate such a piece of legislation but we would rather continue to live in bondage under the inequitable Indian Act than surrender our sacred rights[39]."

Residential School Policy

As a result of the recommendations of inquiries and commission, which found that in order to assimilate Aboriginal people into British society, they required both education and conversion to Christianity. The *Constitution Act* of *1867* [40], building upon legislation, inquiries and commissions from the previous decades, adopted policies that would further the enterprise of assimilation and conversion to Christianity of Aboriginal people. The purpose of the act was to rid Aboriginal people of their identity, culture, traditions and language, thus transforming them into British subjects - most famously described as the effort to "kill the Indian in the child[41]".

The federal government opened residential institutions based upon on the "industrial boarding school" model, as the instrument to achieve this goal. At these institutions, Aboriginal children received education in arts, crafts and industrial skills, with an emphasis on labour rather than academic achievement; as a result in many of the children who attended the industrial boarding school received very little scholastic instruction despite attending school for many years.

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[38] The White Paper would have seen the global elimination of all Indian special status, the gradual phasing out of federal responsibility for Indians and the protection of reserve lands, the repeal of the *Indian Act*, and the ending of treaties (pg.238).

[39] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 236.Citing Harold Cardinal, *The Unjust Society, The Tragedy of Canada's Indians* (Edmonton: M.G. Hurtig Ltd., 1969), p. 140.

[40] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 309.

[41] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 349

The industrial model delivered a half-day curriculum followed by a half day focus on practical activities, trades and chores[42]. It was department policy to discourage graduates from returning to the reserves, instead focussing on positions with the trades and in the cities, thus assimilating Aboriginal people with the general community.[43] Within the school setting the children were made to work in the farm or orchard; a fund-raising method employed by the schools to keep down costs, but also kept students out of the classroom. In a 1916 review of a residential school's records, the Agent concluded that the school had neglected its initial purpose and that it had become mainly a "workhouse"[44]. Over time, the Federal government recognized that school policy was failing and by 1922 the industrial model was abandoned in favour of a boarding school model that became known as a residential school[45].

Residential schools were funded by the Federal Government and operated through contracted service with the different church organizations of Canada. Government policy at this time reflected the assumption that Aboriginal children would fail to succeed if still under the influence of their families and thus gave rise to the justification for: the removal of children from their communities; the complete disruption of the Aboriginal families; the re-socializing of children in residential schools and schemes for integrating graduates into a non-Aboriginal world[46]. The governments stated goal and wish was to obtain "entire possession" of Aboriginal children once they reached the age of seven or eight[47]. Accordingly, residential school policies at this time supported the passage of moving from the Aboriginal to the non-Aboriginal world in three phases: separation, socialization and assimilation through enfranchisement – which entailed a male graduate leaving behind his Indian status and becoming a full Canadian citizen[48] who is without protected Indian status. Clearly, residential schools were the most powerful instrument in

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[42] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 315
[43] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 317
[44] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 333
[45] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 318
[46] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 313
[47] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 314
[48] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 317

the government's enterprise to civilize Indians with the goal to eventually be rid of Aboriginal identity, Aboriginal tribes and the "Indian Problem".

Although the churches were contracted to provide administrative, operational and educational services at the schools, no provisions were made in the contracts to oversee/monitor/assess the quality of care and education Aboriginal children received while attending. Although Agents raised concerns, schools operated without any regulations regarding how discipline and punishment was administered at the schools (with the exception of a regulation passed in 1949 that encouraged the use of strapping); as such an environment was created where staff acted without consequence[49]. Indeed, regardless of the numerous reports filed over decades, no action was ever taken by either party to correct the substantive proof of neglect, cruelty and abuse (emotional, physical and sexual) being perpetrated on the children attending residential schools. Much evidence exists describing the mismanaged, underfunded and overcrowded conditions of residential schools, which resulted in a high death rate in students, mostly due to the quick spread of disease[50] such as tuberculosis. Poor menu planning, combined with a diet that failed to meet nutritional guidelines left the children receiving "too little meat and not enough green vegetables, whole grains, fruit, juice, milk, iodized salt and eggs"[51]. As a result, children experienced pervasive hunger and at times resorted to stealing fruit and vegetables for survival.

It was common school policy that upon admission to the school, traditional clothing was discarded and replaced with school uniforms, traditional hair braids were cut off (and often boy's heads were completely shaven), the use of traditional language was forbidden and the practice of Aboriginal spirituality and culture (deemed morally and ethically wrong) was also prohibited[52]. If children dared transgress these rules, they received punishments which ranged from shaming to physical violence. As a result, if any of the children did go home, they were unable to communicate with their family and were unaware, suspicious or afraid of customs/rituals that had historically strengthened and reaffirmed relationships between family and community members. The disconnect being created between children and their families was described in

[49] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 352
[50] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 329-330
[51] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 345
[52] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 316

1913, where Indian Agents on reserves noted a cultural gap that was creating people stranded between communities, without an identity[53]. Further, the European lecture-style teaching model employed by the residential schools had little in common with the oral, experiential pedagogy of Aboriginal people. Thus many Aboriginal children, having been accustomed to the latter struggled to learn[54] the European school curriculum - thus essentially garnering the teachings of neither Settler nor Aboriginal society.

By 1956 Federal Government policy regarding residential schools changed, acknowledging the importance that parents played in the children's development and a provision for the creation of parent school committees was established. By 1971, 180 parent school committees were formed across Canada; however they had little authority and no influence in the classroom. As time went on the government worked towards a policy of integration which would see the schools either transform in function or close all together, while at the same time expanding the role of child welfare agencies to address the children who were in need of social care[55].

Child Welfare Policies

After many years in Residential Schools, many graduates were survivors of trauma, abuse and neglect - burdened with significant psychological issues that impaired their ability to create healthy relationships with spouses and children. As a result, many entered adulthood without an understanding of the roles and responsibilities of parents, or how to care for and nurture children of their own. In many occasions, survivors who were dealing with trauma-based behaviours passed on abuse to their children; their parenting style reflecting the anger and violent discipline they learned at the hands of school staff. In some communities, this physical and sexual abuse within family units became normal behaviour[56]. In other instances, Aboriginal homes were

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[53] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 357
[54] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 320
[55] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 23.
[56] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 13.

reported to be overcrowded, with children suffering from neglect or indifference by their residential school survivor parents[57].

In these cases, Child Welfare authorities were quick to apprehend children, and again residential schools were seen by child welfare as an alternative. According to departmental memos by 1966 75% of children in residential schools were placed there due to child welfare issues[58]. It was also in this time period that churches ceased to be in control of the schools as the department took direct control in 1969[59]. Although there were almost no Aboriginal children on the child welfare caseload in the early 1950's, by the mid 60's one third of all Aboriginal children were in care;[60] The apprehension of Aboriginal children became so widespread and continuous, it is commonly referred to as the 60's scoop[61]; however in 1980-81 Aboriginal children were still grossly over-represented in the child welfare caseload and were typically (in 70-90% of the cases) placed in primarily non-Aboriginal homes[62].

The child welfare system began to change in the 90's as First Nations took control and development of their own child and family services. This led to the development of placement protocols which deemed non-Aboriginal family placement as the last resort[63]. Still the challenge of Aboriginal over-representation remains; one study reported that in 2002 there were approximately 22,500 Aboriginal children in care in Canada[64]. Another study[65] found that in

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[57] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.. Page 324.

[58] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 324.

[59] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 1 chapter 10: Residential Schools.* Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 336.

[60] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations Page 22.

[61] For the purpose of this discussion, the term 'in care' refers to children who are placed in child welfare agencies for the purpose of protecting them from neglect and abuse (cited from Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 22).

[62] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 23.

[63] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 26.

[64] Bennet, M., & Blackstone, C. (2002). Affirming and promoting indigenous knowledge and research. Winnipeg, MB: Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare: First Nations Child and Family Caring Society. Cited in Lafrance, J., & Bastien, B. (2007). Here be the dragons! Reconciling indigenous and western knowledge to improve aboriginal child welfare. *First Peoples Child & Family Review, 3*(1), 105-126.

[65] Trocmé, N. MacLaurin, B., Fallon, B. Knoke, D. Pitman, L. McCormack, M. (2006). *Mesnmimk Wasatek- Catching a Drop of Light. Understanding the Overrepresentation of First Nations Children in Canada's Child Welfare System: An Analysis of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect.* Centre of Excellence for Child Welfare. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada.

2003, 58.34% of child investigations conducted in Canada were for First Nation children. Of these investigations 52% were substantiated (this compared to 20.72% for non-Aboriginal cases). Neglect was the most common form of harm in these cases. This differs for Non-Aboriginal cases as the primary category there was exposure to domestic violence. Sexual abuse accounted for the smallest number of cases for both groups. First Nation investigations were most likely to have previous child welfare contact (79% to 59%). As for ongoing child welfare services 64% of Aboriginal child investigation resulted in ongoing services being delivered as opposed to 49% for non-Aboriginal children. 16% of Aboriginal children ended up being placed in formal child welfare care; in total including informal kinship care and areas where placement was considered it was a total of 29% of cases. This was only the case in 11% of non-Aboriginal cases.

It becomes obvious that a *straight line can be drawn that connects multiple generations of residential school survivors to generations that have been raised in government care*, as witnessed by one RCAP respondent: "Most of our clients - probably 90 per cent of them- are in fact, victims themselves of the child welfare system. Most of our clients are young, sole support mothers who very often were removed as children themselves… interesting note is that while the mother may have been in foster care the grandmother- I think we all know where she was. She was in residential school. So we are into a third generation[66]".

More recently, many Aboriginal families have migrated out of close knit communities to urban centers. This migration caused considerable personal alienation for Aboriginal people as they searched for a sense of identity in these new settings[67]. The *urbanization of Aboriginal people has transformed the issues of intergenerational trauma, and loss of culture, identity and the ability to self determine into issues of homelessness, poverty and incarceration.*

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[66] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 31.
[67] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 16.

The Intergenerational Connection between Colonization and Aboriginal Gangs

Colonized Identity

The review of colonial policy demonstrates that numerous actions have been taken by the British and Canadian governments since 1763 to assimilate Aboriginal people and therefore exterminating Aboriginal identity, ridding the colony (and later country) of the Indian Nations and the Indian problem. Residential schools were the most powerful instrument of cultural genocide and ethnocide [68], attempting to civilize Aboriginal children and convert them to Christianity. Legislated enfranchisement created within the Canadian population belief that Indian culture, language, values and spirituality were inherently inferior and the assumption that all Aboriginal people should seek to become fully transformed British subjects or fully assimilated Canadian citizen - in other words, more fully human. This proved to be another of "the most effective weapons of colonialism, in its attempt to force the colonized to internalize a value system in which they are rendered subhuman, incapable of rational thought or morality[69]". The de-humanizing process of colonisation, therefore, removes the ability of the oppressed to create meaning of their lives and their reality. Cree Elders have spoken passionately about how the colonizer has defined who they are:

> In the Indian world…you have to realise there is an Indian mind…there is an Indigenous mind...I don't like that word Indian, I don't like that word aboriginal, I don't like that word first nations - to me that's where we are running into problems. Because we have always allowed other nations, other people from foreign lands to define who we are. We never had the opportunity to define who we are…[The European settlers] had an opportunity over a hundred years to come tell us who we should be and how we should live. They have never heard our understanding of who we are. They don't know our relationship we that have with our creator and our grandfathers. They don't understand the stories and the reason

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[68] "Genocide can be defined as an attempt to destroy a national, ethnic, racial or religious group and also includes the act of taking member's children and giving them to members of another group. Ethnocide is the deliberate attempt to eradicate the culture or way of life for a people" Cited from Chansonneuve, D. (2005) *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School trauma among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Page 5.

[69] Oliver, K. (2004). *The colonization of psychic space: A psychoanalytic social theory of oppression*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

why we are here and we are put on mother earth here at this time and what our responsibilities are in this country, our responsibilities to our families and children[70].

Aboriginal people are therefore left to see themselves only through the eyes of the colonizer, eventually losing sight of the strength and worth of their traditional culture and accepting that foreign religion, competition, capitalism and individualism are superior and more civilized. Some Aboriginal people have grown to fear their traditional Aboriginal culture, having accepted that it is at best childish and delusional and at worst a form of evil. Even in the act of resistance, "the ultimate violence which colonialism does to its victims, namely that it creates a culture in which the ruled are constantly tempted to fight their rulers within the psychological limits set by the latter[71]".

Aboriginal people in Canada have been subjected to this pervasive, devastating contempt for Aboriginal identity for centuries. While there has been demonstrated resistance to enfranchisement and the abduction of children to residential schools, there has also been significant damage done to Aboriginal people's view of themselves. In addition, colonial views of Aboriginal people have survived and still exist within the Canadian collective, resulting in both subtle and more overt systemic racism that continues to attack the psyche of Aboriginal people throughout Canada. As a result of both the collective resistance and the pervasive racism, many Aboriginal people still do not feel connection to, nor shared culture with non-Aboriginal people. At the same time, they may still carry the self loathing that has developed inter-generationally, as a result of internalized psychological colonization. The result is a type of identity confusion[72] - people who feel affiliation neither to the colonist culture, nor to the traditional culture they have learned to fear or despise. *Aboriginal youth who are raised in this environment will seek out spaces where they can feel a sense of belonging; for many boys they find this affiliation within Aboriginal street gangs*[73].

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[70] This quotation is taken from a group of Cree Elders, who participated in Teaching Circle in 2007; this circle was also part of a PhD study. It is cited from LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation.

[71] Nandy, A. (1983). *The intimate enemy: Loss and recovery of self under colonialism*. New Delhi: Oxford University Press. Page 3.

[72] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 17.

[73] Grekul, J., & LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2006). *An investigation into the formation and recruitment processes of aboriginal gangs in western Canada*. Ottawa: Aboriginal Corrections Policy Unit: Public Safety Canada.

Intergenerational Traumatic Behaviour

One of the most devastating outcomes of colonial assimilative policy has been the introduction of widespread abuse; Aboriginal people have been subjected to numerous types of trauma, causing personal and intergenerational traumatic effects that have torn at the fabric of family and community connectedness. During a traumatic event, the victim is made completely helpless by an outside force"[74], and survivors of trauma report losing their sense of control, connection and meaning[75]. There are four types of trauma that have been discussed in the literature regarding residential school survivors and their families.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) occurs in individuals who have experienced significant physical, sexual or emotional trauma and manifests as on-going, debilitating psychological challenges which interfere with many (or all) aspects of the individual's life[76]. Many children, having survived horrific abuse while at residential schools, developed into adults who suffered from PTSD, which manifested as:

> "Repeated re-living of the traumatic event, which can include hallucinations, flashbacks caused by is one of the hallmarks of PTSD. Sensory stimuli, such as sights, sounds, smells or tastes associated with the event, become triggers for these flashbacks. Persons suffering from PTSD learn to maintain a constant state of vigilance to avoid anything that may cause a flashback. They may use addictions to numb themselves from sensory stimulation that could trigger recall of the initial trauma. PTSD is marked by complex biological changes, as well as severe psychological symptoms, often occurring in combination, such as depression or mental illness and substance abuse. PTSD impacts every part of a survivor's life, including mental, physical, emotional and spiritual aspects[77]".

Left untreated, PTSD can also lead to a variety of patterned emotional responses which can at times serve to re-victimize the survivors: choosing partners that are abusive, re-enactments (often

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[74] Chansonneuve, D. (2005) *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School trauma among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Page 49.
[75] Herman, J. (1997). Trauma and Recovery. New York:NY: Basic Books (HarperCollins Publishers)
[76] Herman, J. (1997). Trauma and Recovery. New York:NY: Basic Books (HarperCollins Publishers)
[77] Chansonneuve, D. (2005) *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School trauma among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Page 53. From the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual*, *4th Edition* (DSM-IV-TR), published by the American Psychiatric Association (2000).

linked to high risk behaviours such as unsafe sex or criminal behaviour), fears of authority and domestic violence[78]. Trauma survivors may also suppress, repress, deny or avoid the feelings associated with trauma, as a means of coping with the effects of trauma[79].

Intergenerational Trauma. When trauma is not resolved by an individual who was abused as a child, it can be passed on to the next generation[80], having devastating effects on the family over successive generations. Intergenerational cycles of family and community violence have emerged in the Aboriginal family system, having been introduced through multiple generations of children were subjected to abuse at residential schools, who then later passed on this abusive behaviour to their children (or extended family); the transference of parenting skills was disrupted through the residential school experience – especially as children in the schools learned the only method of control and power was through abuse and internalized these lessons when parenting their own children. Later, when children were apprehended from survivors for neglect and/or abuse, they were often placed in abusive foster and adoptive families. Residential school policies and the placement policies in child welfare have thus contributed to perpetuate the cycle of violence and intergenerational trauma through generations[81].

Disenfranchised Grief. Since the time of contact Indigenous peoples have been subjected to a persistent demand for change: to reject their traditional languages, cultures and spiritual expressions of their ancestors and to accept without prejudice those of the European colonizers. This "unrelenting pressure to change induce[d] acculturation stress[82]" and has created for many individuals, families and communities a devastating sense of cultural, spiritual and familial loss. This loss was (and is) compounded by the fact that the colonizing society has not acknowledged at critical times in history that the loss sustained by Aboriginal people was legitimate; in the past, the Canadian government created assimilative policy and took action with the belief that they

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[78] Chansonneuve, D. (2005) *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School trauma among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Page 58-61.

[79] Chansonneuve, D. (2005) *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School trauma among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

[80] Aboriginal Healing Foundation (1999). Aboriginal Healing Foundation Program Handbook, 2nd Edition. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Cited in Chansonneuve, D. (2005) *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School trauma among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Page 51.

[81] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.

[82] Couture, J. (1997). *Aboriginal behavioural trauma: Towards a taxonomy*. Saskatoon, Saskatchewan: Correctional Service Canada. Page 12

were saving the Indians from a primitive, savage reality. From that perspective, ethnocide and cultural genocide became an act of charity for the betterment of the Aboriginal people.

As a result, an environment was created where the natural reaction of grief to the loss of lifestyle, ritual, language, family structure and culture was denied to Aboriginal people by those who controlled all systems. Aboriginal people were made to feel ashamed of their identity and of traditional Aboriginal ways and therefore it was impossible to think about or verbalize the feelings of grief and loss that would have been natural and normal; the resolution of grief was further stymied by the disallowing of traditional ritual and ceremony that would have been held to help individuals progress through the grief process. This is referred to as 'disenfranchised grief' [83], which has been transmitted intergenerationally in "a continuous passing on of unresolved and deep-seated emotions such as grief and chronic sadness, to successive descendants[84]". Disenfranchised grief for Aboriginal people was therefore "grief that persons experience when a loss cannot be openly acknowledged or publically mourned[85]". The results of such grief are the intensification of normal emotional reactions such as anger, guilt, sadness, and helplessness. This feeling works to facilitate historical unresolved grief and the legacy of denying cultural grieving practices transfers that grief from generation to generation resulting in multigenerational unresolved grief[86].

The concept of historic trauma helps put the long-term impacts of residential school into a larger context, "Historic trauma refers to the traumatic experiences that are cumulative over the life span of individuals as well as across generations[87]". Historic trauma is the broadest definition of trauma and encompasses all of the aforementioned categorizations of trauma and traumatic responses. Survivors of historic trauma, therefore include the residential school survivors who endured physical, emotional and sexual abuse and/or neglect, the generations of children who survived abuse and neglect in the child welfare systems, and all of the Aboriginal people who have carried the trauma of loss, assimilation and the disenfranchised grief of their people.

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[83] Heart, M.Y.H.B & DeBruyn,L.M. (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *American Indian and Alaskan Native Mental Health Research*, 8(2), 60-82.
[84] Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004, p.2
[85] Heart, M.Y.H.B & DeBruyn,L.M. (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *American Indian and Alaskan Native Mental Health Research*, 8(2), 60-82. Page 66.
[86] Heart, M.Y.H.B & DeBruyn,L.M. (1998). The American Indian holocaust: Healing historical unresolved grief. *American Indian and Alaskan Native Mental Health Research*, 8(2), 60-82. Page 67.
[87] Chansonneuve, D. (2005) *Reclaiming Connections: Understanding Residential School trauma among Aboriginal People*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Page 40.

Earlier, an image of a spiral was presented as a symbol of the connectedness of the Aboriginal individual family and community. The spaces between the levels in the spiral are significant, in that they demonstrate the respectful space between each level that allows the individual family or community to determine their own path, in healthy relationship with each other. This space represents the rules and values 'scaffolding' that supports, upholds the spiral of healthy human relationships. Without this infrastructure, the spiral collapses on itself; the relational boundaries are transgressed and the spiral becomes a tangled knot.

Thus, for the Aboriginal family and community, the pervasive and intergenerational violence, the overwhelming grief and loss and the subsequent traumatic response has had a devastating effect on the Aboriginal family and community's sense of connectedness. When the rules of relationships are not followed, healthy boundaries are transgressed, and spiritual, psychological, emotional, physical, sexual and lateral violence occurs within families and in communities. Families who carry the burden of historic trauma often experience overwhelming feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and powerlessness.

[88]

Figure 2: Collapsed Spiral of Interconnectedness

Disruption in the Transmission of Normative Knowledge

As generations of Aboriginal children were abducted from their families to be raised in residential schools, enormous change began to be evident in Aboriginal families across Canada. Pre-contact, the family was the all-encompassing unit; a mediator between the individual and the social, economic and political spheres of a larger society[89]. Government policies that forced children to stay in residential schools with little or no contact with their families, deprived

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[88] Photo accessed on-line, April 14, 2009 at: flickr.com/photos/placidsheep/2907116298/
[89] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 16.

children of the principal agency that helps them make sense of the world[90]. Parents were also made to feel inferior; that due to their Aboriginal identity and/or the poverty they lived in, were deemed incapable to raise their children. They were made to relinquish their responsibility to interpret the world for their children[91] and withstand the shame of not being able to protect the gifts they were bestowed by the Creator[92]. The loss of connection and communication between children and their parents and grandparents, severely damaged essential family relationships, blocking the transmission of cultural, ethical and normative knowledge between generations.

Further, children did not grow up with parental role models, but rather they were raised in an environment that lacked love, kindness and nurturing by people who considered them to be inferior based upon their Aboriginal identity, customs and beliefs. Often, European values were taught using physical punishment that is now considered extremely abusive. Later on, when many Aboriginal children apprehended by Child welfare and placed in foster and adopted homes, they experienced similar circumstances - abusive foster parents who did not understand nor appreciate their Aboriginal culture, spirituality and language. It can be argued then, that attendance at residential school and later the apprehension of children into government care, resulted in generations of Aboriginal children who learned neither the rules, ethics and values of Aboriginal culture, nor those of European culture. Rather, in these hostile environments, they learned how to survive - how to steal food when they were hungry, to lie for self- preservation, keep secrets, trust no one and to shut down emotionally.

The children who were taken into residential schools, or apprehended to foster or adoptive families typically lived without the intimate contact with a trusting adult that children require to mature socially and emotionally. They were essentially deprived of traditional parenting role models and when they emerged from these schools they had no experience of a family life to draw on[93]. *These children then grew up to become parents themselves and due to the insecurity*

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[90] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 16.
[91] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 16.
[92] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 21.
[93] Goforth, S. (2003). Traditional parenting skills in contemporary life. *Healing Words. 4,* 17-19.

they felt as parents they transmitted a sense of identity confusion and learning impairment to their children[94].

Loss of Self Determination & the Meaningful Role of Men

Internal colonization in North America is the ongoing domination and displacement of Indigenous peoples without their consent[95], which has included attempts to eradicate Indigenous cultural, familial, political, educational and spiritual systems and replace them with Christian European structures of power. This included the appropriation of traditional role of men within the Aboriginal society - which included protector, provider and leader - through the intergenerational institutionalization of boys in residential schools[96], their sexual and physical victimization and their social isolation[97] from traditional family and leadership structures. This has caused a widespread confusion about the place of maleness in First Nations[98] and the value that men bring to their community. The consequences of these experiences, especially the reduced human and material resources in their lives, strongly affected the roles of males[99]. The erosion of self-esteem that Aboriginal men experience can be economic - the chronic unemployment they experience contributes to poverty, powerlessness and the abandonment of moral and social codes[100]. Men have suffered a "psychological castration for the last 100 years[101]", and as a result, they have turned to criminogenic behaviour to define their identity.

The colonization of psychic spaces, through centuries of colonial policies that deemed Aboriginal people to be child-like, wards of the state[102] also creates situations whereby Aboriginal people eventually accept that by virtue of their being Aboriginal, they lack the ability

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[94] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.
[95] Tully, J. (2000). The struggles of indigenous peoples for and of freedom. In D. Ivison, P. Patton & W. Sanders (Eds.), *Political theory and the rights of indigenous peoples*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press
[96] Mussel, B. (2004) *Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men- A Resources Guide*. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
[97] Mussel, B. (2004) *Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men- A Resources Guide*. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
[98] Mussel, B. (2004) *Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men- A Resources Guide*. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
[99] Mussel, B. (2004) *Warrior-Caregivers: Understanding the Challenges and Healing of First Nations Men- A Resources Guide*. Ottawa, ON: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.
[100] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations.
[101] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on aboriginal peoples. Volume 3 chapter 2:Family.*Ottawa:Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations. Page 54
[102] Canada. (1996). *Report of the royal commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Volume 1 Section 9: The Indian Act*. Ottawa: Libraxis: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples- Seven Generations Page 255

to solve their own problems. The development of a welfare dependency results, whereby the Indigenous people do not feel capable or hopeful that they can affect change in their reality. As Ladson-Billings (2000) states, the hegemony of the dominant paradigm is such that "it claims to be the only legitimate way to view the world" (p. 258) and therefore controls all facets of society. In the process, *the psychic spaces of many Indigenous people were co-opted, resulting in their internalization of a belief system that held them, their people and their culture as inferior and instilled the belief that they can neither care nor provide for themselves and their families*.

Historic Trauma and Gang Recruitment

Colonization has had devastating effect on the Aboriginal family and community's sense of connectedness. While there are many Aboriginal families who have been resilient, finding ways to overcome significant adversity, there are many families who have been significantly impacted by historic trauma. The reality for Aboriginal children and young adults who are raised in these family environments is that they have most likely:

- experienced significant violence;
- never formed trusting relationships with caring adults;
- have lived in multiple foster homes,
- not learned positive moral and social codes;
- experienced systemic racism;
- lived in significant poverty; and
- are completely disconnected from both Canadian and healthy Aboriginal culture.

For these individuals, feelings of hopelessness, helplessness and powerlessness are pervasive. As a result, crime and gang involvement becomes a way of acquiring:

- respect;
- power and control over their lives;
- a way to make money;
- a sense of identity;
- a sense of belonging;
- a defined role with a group; and
- an outlet for the rage they feel.

Programmatic Interventions

Connecting colonial and residential school policies to the current situation of Aboriginal youth, which propels them to seek out affiliation street gangs, is useful in that it helps Aboriginal people understand what interventions can be taken to address this issue. This section begins with a discussion of a theoretical framework that takes into consideration the historical, cultural and spiritual uniqueness of Aboriginal people, then considers three case studies of interventions in Canada that are based upon principles in that framework.

Healing and Building Family and Community Resilience

Family and community resilience can be considered synonymous with the state of connectedness of the members of the family and community (broadly defined): it is the ability to maintain connectedness to family and community, as well as the natural environment and the cosmos. The more connected the family is (internally between members and externally with community and the natural/spiritual environments) the more resilience it will realize. This perspective also prescribes that the quality of connection to the people in our lives will dictate the quality of life we achieve; from an Indigenous perspective, good relationships are founded on the rules of relationships, which are grounded in values that include (but are not limited to) respect, reciprocity, caring, sharing, kindness, humility, honesty and self-determination. Consequentially, the more the rules and values are evident in relationships within and between individuals and other environments, the more resilience the family and community will manifest.

Programmatic interventions grounded in this theory of resilience re-orient clients to an interconnected worldview, placing importance on the renewing and maintaining good relationships with their family and their community. Programs can also work towards fostering (or enhancing) a sense of belonging and responsibility to the people and world around them. Essentially, interventions can facilitate reparation of the spiral of relationships that have been fragmented or confused with trauma-based behaviour. The healing of those relationships is therefore the process of building resilience - which is to say that healing and building family resilience are essentially one and the same.

Further, there are three conditions to the building and maintaining of family and community resilience (1) reclamation of an interconnected worldview; (2) reconciliation of the traumatic effects of colonization and (3) repatriation of the power to respectfully self-determine. For

resilience to be manifested, all three dimensions of the healing process need to be engaged at many different levels: individual, family, clan, and nation (community). This framework is illustrated in figure 2[103] .
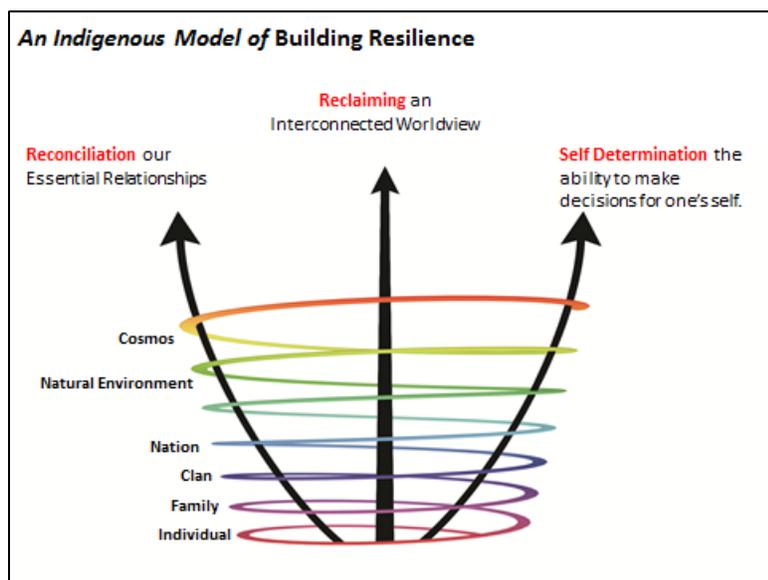
Figure 3

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

Seeking the Good Life: An Indigenous View of Healing

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

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[103] Adapted from LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation.

level from the individual to the intertribal[104]" Further, healing has been studied from many different vantage points: first as the curing or lessening of physiological ailments through the employment of herbal or spiritual remedies[105]; second as a product of the manipulation of symbols by a healer - usually through the employment of ceremony[106]; third as a therapeutic modality[107]; and fourth as a series of activities that form program curriculum[108]. These explorations all offer 'truths' about healing yet give rise to these questions: how, if at all, do these truths interact? Is there a 'bigger picture' of healing that is not captured by these perspectives? The following discussion will attempt to express a grander, more holistic explanation of healing that encompasses these and other dimensions, as they pertain to the process of recovering, renewing, "reviving, rebuilding or recreating[109]" from historical and familial/community trauma within the Aboriginal context. To accomplish this, the Cree language, culture and process will be explored to give context to this explanation and specifically define the healing process. By examining healing in a specific context, the goal is to draw out "truths" that resonate with Aboriginal people throughout Canada.

The Cree word "*miyupimaatisiiun*" has been used to describe the Whapmagoostui understanding of health[110], which "is political, [in that] health takes on a particular, and particularly charged, meaning when understood within its historical, cultural and social context[111]". This holistic, encompassing view of health infers that that being Cree is ultimately linked to Cree concepts of

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[104] Lane Jr., P., Bopp, M., Bopp, J., & Norris, J. (2005). Mapping the healing journey: First nations research project on healing in Canadian Aboriginal communities. In W. D. McCaslin (Ed.), *Justice as healing: Indigenous ways* (pp. 369-407). St. Paul, Minnesota: Living Justice Press. Page 377.

[105] Colomeda, L. A., & Wenzel, E. R. (2000). Medicine keepers: Issues in indigenous health. *Critical Public Health, 10*(2).

[106] Dow, J. (1996). Universal aspects of symbolic healing: A theoretical synthesis. *American Anthropologist, 88*(1), 56-69.
Csordas, T. J. (1983). The rhetoric of transformation in ritual healing. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 7*, 333-375.
Waldram, J. B. (1993). Aboriginal spirituality: Symbolic healing in Canadian prisons. *Culture Medicine and Psychiatry, 17*, 345-362.

[107] Lane Jr., P., Bopp, M., Bopp, J., & Norris, J. (2005). Mapping the healing journey: First nations research project on healing in Canadian Aboriginal communities. In W. D. McCaslin (Ed.), *Justice as healing: Indigenous ways* (pp. 369-407). St. Paul, Minnesota: Living Justice Press.
Schiff, J. W., & Moore, K. (2006). The impact of the sweatlodge ceremony on dimensions of well-being. *Journal of American Indian and Alaskan Native Mental Health Research, 13*(3)

[108] Waldram, J. B. (1993). Aboriginal spirituality: Symbolic healing in Canadian prisons. *Culture Medicine and Psychiatry, 17*, 345-362.

[109] Lane Jr., P., Bopp, M., Bopp, J., & Norris, J. (2005). Mapping the healing journey: First nations research project on healing in Canadian Aboriginal communities. In W. D. McCaslin (Ed.), *Justice as healing: Indigenous ways* (pp. 369-407). St. Paul, Minnesota: Living Justice Press. p. 380

[110] Adelson, N. (2000). "Being alive well": Health and the politics of Cree wellbeing. University of Toronto. Toronto:Canada

[111] Adelson, N. (2000). "Being alive well": Health and the politics of Cree wellbeing. University of Toronto. Toronto: Canada Page 9.

health; that health is about 'being alive well[112]', and is connected to the quality of social and political life. For the Whapmagoostui people, being able to pursue a Cree way of life (as defined by that community) is deeply connected to being healthy.

Similarly, the concept of healing (distinct, yet connected to health) is "historically and culturally mediated[113]" in the Cree worldview. For the Cree people, the holistic conceptualization of healing is perhaps best understood as a process; it is the practice of *seeking* 'being alive well', or as 'the good life[114]' - '*mino-pimatisiwin[115]*'. This definition implies an ongoing course of action that encompasses all facets of individual, family and community life in all dimensions – social, political, mental, emotional, physical and spiritual.

Although it has been suggested that for Cree to be healthy, they must be allowed to live a good 'Cree life[116]', many Cree people in Canada have had very little exposure to the lifestyle that the Whapmagoostui have described as a Cree life. Some members of the community have lived the worst consequences of colonization and experienced significant historical, familial and community trauma, experiences that have disconnected them from any notion of a good Cree life. Others have lived in large urban centres where Cree is a very small voice surrounded by hundreds of cultural expressions, or in Aboriginal families and communities that have, as a result of the colonial experience, lost their connection to Cree values, spiritual and cultural expression. For these Cree, if they so choose, seeking the good life requires first a reconnection to Cree culture (holistically defined) – they would be obliged to first define what a 'Cree life' is to them, in order to pursue it in its highest form.

From this perspective, seeking the good life is a process of rebuilding, realignment and commitment to a personally or collectively constructed concept of well-being. This has been described as a decolonization process by the Cree of the Hollow Water First Nation, whereby:

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[112] Adelson, N. (2000). "Being alive well": Health and the politics of Cree wellbeing. University of Toronto. Toronto: Canada

[113] Adelson, N. (2000). "Being alive well": Health and the politics of Cree wellbeing. University of Toronto. Toronto: Canada Page 3.

[114] Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An aboriginal approach to helping*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, Nova Scotia.

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

[116] Adelson, N. (2000). "Being alive well": Health and the politics of Cree wellbeing. University of Toronto. Toronto:.

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"Community healing as decolonization therapy involves articulating the principles that promote health and balance for the community, supporting people to move back into balance, basing all community systems on healthy balanced principles and taking full responsibility as a community for the journey[117]". This process of decolonization has also been described by Elder George Brertton as a process whereby individuals must first be clear what is from European culture and what is from Cree culture[118]. Once this is sorted out, the individual can consciously integrate aspects of the two cultures into their lives, from a position of knowledge and purpose.

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

> "The phrases seeking life, for life's sake, to find life, to complete, to become complete, of good heart, of good thought, with harmony and a host of related combinations, have translations in all Indian languages. These are the metaphors that Indian people use in talking about themselves, their places and their relationships. They are phrases used to begin and end communal events, in ritual prayers, in stones, in oratory, as greetings, in conversation and in teaching. They are phrases for 'remembering to remember" why things are done individually and in community[119]".

Therefore, deeper understanding of the Cree definition of the concept of *mino-pimatisiwin* and how it is realized may also illuminate principles that have transferable applicability to other Indigenous cultures in North America and perhaps internationally.

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[117] Lane Jr., P., Bopp, M., Bopp, J., & Norris, J. (2005). Mapping the healing journey: First nations research project on healing in Canadian Aboriginal communities. In W. D. McCaslin (Ed.), *Justice as healing: Indigenous ways* (pp. 369-407). St. Paul, Minnesota: Living Justice Press. Page 380.
[118] George Brerton, Cree Elder. In LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation.
[119] Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Skyland, NC: Kivaki Press.Page 46.

Understanding the process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* can be viewed from the perspective of exploring the Aboriginal approach to helping others[120]. The focus of this approach to helping is to assist others in taking responsibility for their own healing journey– their lifelong search for *mino-pimatisiwin*. In this way, healing is a process grounded in self-determination, namely that we are all personally responsible for our own health and have an active role the healing process. While an individual may seek help from different people and entities while experiencing difficulties, the ultimate responsibility for health lies within the seeker[121].

The symbol of the circle is also central to the unfolding process of seeking the good life; it represents the unity of the Cree nation[122], which is held together by the laws of the Creator – in general terms within the doctrine of relationships (*wahkohtowin*) and founded on the principles that guide the development and maintenance of good relationships (*miyo-wicehtowin*). Through the purposeful attention to the preservation of all relationships Indigenous people reaffirm and renew their capacity to care for each other and therefore ensure the health of the community (including the individuals who are members)[123]. By living within and enacting the doctrine of relationships, we can better achieve *mino-pimatisiwin*: being good to all of our relations improves our capacity to live the good life and creates opportunities for those around us to seek the good life as well.

For the Cree people and for many other Indigenous people, healing is expressed as a journey[124]: individuals may refer to their process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* as being on their healing path, a healing journey, or the red road. The concept of road or pathway is useful in this context as it puts forward the active element in the healing process - there is an implication that the individual will move, change and transform on this healing path and that this will happen over an extended period of time. "In traveling a Pathway, we make stops, encounter and overcome obstacles, seek

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[120] Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An aboriginal approach to helping*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, Nova Scotia.

[121] Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An aboriginal approach to helping*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, Nova Scotia.

[122] Cardinal, H., & Hildebrandt, W. (2000). *Treaty elders of Saskatchewan: Our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

[123] Cardinal, H., & Hildebrandt, W. (2000). *Treaty elders of Saskatchewan: Our dream is that our peoples will one day be clearly recognized as nations*. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.

[124] Lane Jr., P., Bopp, M., Bopp, J., & Norris, J. (2005). Mapping the healing journey: First nations research project on healing in Canadian Aboriginal communities. In W. D. McCaslin (Ed.), *Justice as healing: Indigenous ways* (pp. 369-407). St. Paul, Minnesota: Living Justice Press.
Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An aboriginal approach to helping*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, Nova Scotia.

answers and follow the tracks of those entities that have something to teach us. *Path* denotes a structure; *Way* implies a process [125]". In Cree culture as well as in many other Indigenous cultures, healing is therefore not an 'event'. It is a commitment to a way of life, to a way of being and becoming that will result in the best possible holistic life.

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

Correspondingly, the process of renewal becomes a critical dimension within the larger process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin*. Actualization of the good life requires a commitment to build and maintain good relationships through purposeful and regular renewal activities; for many Indigenous societies, ceremony has been and remains the primary mechanism for this renewal. The practice of ritual maintains and strengthens our relationship with the Creator (supreme power), and all aspects of ceremony purposefully draw attention to the critical core relationships with all of creation on Earth, the spirit world and the cosmos.

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

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[125] Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Skyland, NC: Kivaki Press. , p. 55 original emphasis

or her abilities. Observing this protocol therefore, reaffirms commitment to and enhances understanding of *miyo-wicehtowin* by enacting the principles of respect and reciprocity.

Achieving "the Good Life"

Describing the actualization of *pimatisiwin* (the good life) is a difficult task, as it is not commonly written about as a specific outcome; however, some Indigenous scholars have described individuals that embody the actualization of seeking the good life - mino-*pimatisiwin*. For example, Joe Couture's[126] describes the *true* Elder with (but not limited to) the following characteristics: having achieved a high quality of intuition, intellect, memory and imagination; profound and refined moral sense manifest in an superb sense of humour; a high level of achievement in spiritual and psychic capability; capacity to trust the process of life and their experiences; and the ability to adapt positively to inevitable change. Couture asserts that these characteristics are created by developing knowledge and skill in the primal experience – which in turn epitomizes the purpose of healing path – to foster an ever-expanding connection with the pervasive and encompassing life-giving, healing energy.

Couture's *true* Elders are powerful role-models and experiential teachers. While each individual is ultimately and completely responsible for his/her own search for *mino-pimatisiwin*, Elders and Aboriginal helpers[127] facilitate access to the *track* Cajete[128] described for others to follow on their healing pathway. These people will encourage seekers to reflect upon their lives, provide insight[129] and encourage a deeper spiritual connection in the search for the good life. The late Joe P. Cardinal from Saddle Lake Cree Nation illustrated this point succinctly, when he would instruct those that came to him for help: "I cannot heal you; I can only help you heal yourself". Couture describes this process as well:

> [Elders] power and personality hold the ability to shake us and lead
> us out of the current global cultural pathology, and bring us along
> into and through a healing and restructuring at a most basic level.

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[126] Couture, J. (1991). The role of native elders: Emergent issues. In J. W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on native destiny in western Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises
[127] Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An aboriginal approach to helping*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, Nova Scotia.
[128] Couture, J. (1991). The role of native elders: Emergent issues. In J. W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on native destiny in western Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises
[129] Hart, M. A. (2002). *Seeking mino-pimatisiwin: An aboriginal approach to helping*. Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, Nova Scotia.

They facilitate healing because they have a sensitivity to the larger patterns of nature, in its harsh and deadly aspects as well as in its life-giving powers, always in balance with all life-forms[130].

Thus, healing from historical and familial/community trauma means moving from a position of feeling isolated and disconnected[131] towards the recognition of total connection and oneness, where there is nothing that exists between the Creator of all and the "cosmos, the environment, all life forms and the Native soul[132]".

Healing Programs

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

Healing programs are by nature a bi-cultural construct. 'Aboriginal Healing' connotes a process of transformation based in Indigenous culture, while 'program', is a more European concept meaning "a plan or system under which action may be taken towards a goal; curriculum[133]". Coming from two quite different worldviews, there may be instances and areas within the program where reconciling the demands of each are difficult.

Archibald[134] created a comprehensive framework that included three distinct yet interconnected and interdependent dimensions and processes that are part of healing for Aboriginal people in Canada. These include de-colonization, recovery from post traumatic stress disorder and healing from historic trauma. This framework (illustrated in Figure 4 [135]) succinctly describes the

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[130] Couture, J. (1991). The role of native elders: Emergent issues. In J. W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on native destiny in western Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises, p. 209-210

[131] Herman, J. (1997). *Trauma and recovery*. New York, NY: Basic Books (HarperCollins Publishers).

[132] Couture, J. (1991). The role of native elders: Emergent issues. In J. W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on native destiny in western Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises Page 208.

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

[134]

[135] Archibald, L. (2006). *Decolonization and healing: Indigenous experiences in the United States, New Zealand, Australia and Greenland*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation. Page 28. Archibald drew from the following work:

Laenui, P. (2000). Processes of decolonization. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Reclaiming indigenous voice and vision* (pp. 150-160). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

processes that are commenced/enhanced and explored within a healing program that addresses the complex needs of the Aboriginal community.

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

Figure 4

In this analysis, three purposes of Aboriginal healing programs in Canada. The first is a process of decolonization, whereby the seeker is oriented (if the seeker is unaware) to the same Indigenous worldview as the healer by sharing "elements, principles, symbols and rhetoric[136]". This orientation establishes a common framework between the healer and the seeker[137] and therefore the predisposition[138] for healing to occur. Indeed, many healing programs begin with establishing a common understanding of and orientation to basic spiritual teachings within the culture of the ceremonialist; once introduced to this way of thinking, the participants better understand the ways in which the ceremonies and the ceremonialist can assist them. For individuals who have been disconnected as a result of colonialism, this is the first opportunity to learn about any Indigenous culture (including the one of their ancestors); for others, this first principle of healing programs reinforces their connection to their culture.

Building on this knowledge, the second purpose of the healing program is to increase participant awareness of the complexity of historical/family/community trauma, how this history has affected the overall Aboriginal community in Canada, how trauma has affected the participant's extended family, as well as how trauma has shaped current participant behaviour. This work fosters an understanding of how the past influences the present and gives context and meaning to the intergenerational and personal trauma in the individual's life. In this way, a healing program will engage an individual in a process of "eliciting and transforming narratives of trauma[139]". Key areas of this program are opportunities to learn about and remember community, family and personal trauma; to mourn and grieve losses, which include (but are not limited to) family members, culture, language and freedom and to forgive oneself and others for actions of the past.

The third and final purpose of healing programs is to provide the opportunity for participants to begin or re-commit to their healing path. Within the allocated program time, healing programs cannot actually 'heal' the participants; rather, the program is structured to provide the information, orientation and support required for a life-long pursuit of *"the good life"*, which is

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[136] Waldram, J. B. (1997). *The way of the pipe: Aboriginal spirituality and symbolic healing in Canadian prisons*. Peterbourough, Ontario: Broadview Press. Page 73.

[137] Dow, J. (1996). Universal aspects of symbolic healing: A theoretical synthesis. *American Anthropologist, 88*(1), 56-69.

[138] Csordas, T. J. (1983). The rhetoric of transformation in ritual healing. *Culture, Medicine and Psychiatry, 7*, 333-375.

[139] Kirmayer, L. J., Lemelson, R., & Berad, M. (2007). Introduction. In L. J. Kirmayer, R. Lemelson & M. Berad (Eds.), *Understanding trauma: Integrating biological, clinical and cultural perspectives*. New York: Cambridge University Press. Page 12.

achieved through the building and maintaining of healthy, respectful relationships with one's family, community, nation and the natural/spiritual world.

Case Study: The In Search of Your Warrior Healing Program

Program Overview

The ISOYW program is offered to Aboriginal men who have been incarcerated in Canada for violent offences, or who have a significant history of violent behaviour. The program has 75 sessions designed to help participants explore how violence has shaped their lives, all of which takes six to12 weeks to complete (depending upon the number of hours available each day for programming). The ISOYW program is grounded in values that inform healthy relationships (caring, sharing, kindness, respect, love, honesty and self-determination), which are learned through ceremony and ritual. The final session is a graduation ceremony and a time of celebration; participants invite family and friends, food is shared, and the participants receive certificates of completion. The Warrior Program is delivered by two trained facilitators, under the guidance and with the participation of an Elder; the typical group size is 10 - 14 participants. The ISOYW program's goals, process and outcomes are discussed in the following sections.

Program Goals

The name *In Search of Your Warrior* was chosen to describe a way of being that is meaningful for Aboriginal people: when applied to men, the idea of a 'warrior' brings to consciousness the essential male role in the Aboriginal community as provider and protector of women, children and the elderly. Therefore, the warrior metaphor provides the construct for a way of life that program participants can work towards, which includes "development of such qualities as self-possession, spiritual and psychic awareness/alertness/ attentiveness, goodness and caring, endurance, patience, resilience, capacity to fight for what must be defended and preserved in order to assure a Way of Life[140]". To achieve this, the program name further prescribes that participants embark on a path of healing. There is an implicit congruence between the notion of searching for an inner warrior, Cajete's[141] concept of the pathway of learning, and the act of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin* – the healing journey.

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[140] NCSA. (1999). *The In Search Of Your Warrior program* (2 ed.). Edmonton: Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Page 3.

[141] Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Skyland, NC: Kivaki Press.

The overarching goal or mission of the program is to help participants begin to seek the good life, which is at the core of all healer/trainer activity[142]. To accomplish this, participants must "identify and address survival requirements in a complex multi-culture shaped world[143]". This requires knowledge and skill development that will assist the participants in successfully living in both the dominant and the Aboriginal paradigms simultaneously. Ceremony is at the core of the process:

> "Ceremonies provide a "safe" place within which one begins to learn trust and respect, honesty and humour - a place where deep healings can and do occur. Ceremonies, in any alignment, lead to breakout moments and climaxes, e.g. remissions from chemical addiction, release from patterns as violated victim and/or as violent victimizer, from deep-rooted generational grief - in all cases propelling the release from pain, and moving one into repentance/forgiveness, expiation/making amends, gratefulness, overall relief, new sense of freedom[144]".

Subsequently, the program has three goals:

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

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[142] Couture, J. (1999). *The In Search of Your Warrior Program: A critical review*. Edmonton: Native Counselling Services of Alberta

[143] Couture, J. (1999). *The In Search of Your Warrior Program: A critical review*. Edmonton: Native Counselling Services of Alberta Page 13.

[144] Couture, J. (1999). *The In Search of Your Warrior Program: A critical review*. Edmonton: Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Page 16.

Underlying Assumptions

The beliefs and theoretical assumptions that guided the development of the ISOYW program are provided in Figure 5[145]. These assumptions are founded in the Indigenous philosophy of interconnectedness and include an ecological perspective of the relationships that exist within families and between families and their many environments. Further, the assumptions demonstrate that the program subscribes to the belief that by exploring, adopting and enacting traditional values and behaviours (caring, sharing, kindness, respect, love, honesty, self-determination and connectedness with the cosmos) individuals can achieve a non-violent, natural and whole life – which is comparable to the process of seeking 'the good life'.

Beliefs and Theoretical Assumptions of the ISOYW Program	
1.	Everyone is born with unique and special value.
2.	Each individual is a member of a family.
3.	People are inherently good; we are shaped by our experiences whether they are good or bad.
4.	A family is a unit; each family member makes up a part of that unit.
5.	Each member in the family affects other members, and is also affected by other members (interdependence). Health or dysfunction in individual members influences the whole family; change creates turmoil within these relationships; change may be welcomed or resisted by other members of the family.
6.	Family relationships change constantly in response to the addition or reduction of its members and the constant growth/change of each member.
7.	We do not live in a vacuum - empty and alone; rather, we are part of a number of systems such as the family, community and society at large; we affect these systems and in turn, they affect us; thus, it is important to consider the individual family member in relation to the system in which he is embedded.
8.	We all have the answers to our problems; we simply need guidance and support to find these answers.
9.	Personal change takes time and requires readiness, commitment, desire and patience.
10.	In order for healing to occur, the spiritual, emotional, physical and psychological parts of the self must be attended to.
11.	At some point, each of us has been exposed to violence - either as an observer, perpetrator or victim. Violence affects all of us in some way. We believe that every person has the potential to commit acts of violence.

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[145] Beliefs and Theoretical Assumptions of the ISOYW Program (NCSA, 1999, p. 5-6)

12.	As a community, we must begin to address and eliminate family violence.
13.	We all have a warrior within us, male and female, that provides us with strength and courage; however, through experiences, many of us have lost touch with our warrior; through traditional teachings and reflection on inner self, each of us can rediscover our warrior and move towards wholeness.
14.	Through kindness and understanding, we can proceed in our journey to meet our inner warrior.
15.	Through ceremony and spiritual rituals, we will be guided back to a more natural and non-violent way of life.
16.	It helps to keep in mind that a tradition-based viewpoint requires that an Aboriginal client, no matter how tortured his history of violence may be, be respected as a HUMAN PERSON, i.e. as one who has made 'mistakes' from which he can and must learn.

Figure 5

Program Process

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

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

Indeed, "the common denominator of all these ceremonies is you focus on the inner you and bring it to the outer you by changes of thinking, feeling and action-behaviour[146]".

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

> "In the traditional setting, one effectively learns how to become and be a unique expression of human potential. These same traditional processes, in the context of extended family and community Elders, describe a strong sense of responsibility both towards self and towards the community[147]".

The ISOYW program sessions are most commonly conducted in a circle, employing the rules and process of the sharing circle. Generally, sharing circles proceed around the circle, "one speaker at a time, the person holding the special object is the speaker and all others are to listen respectfully to that person[148]". It is imperative that speakers wait their turn in the circle to speak and have the option of not speaking if they wish. The importance of the circle was stated by one of the NCSA Warrior Facilitators:

> The foundation of this program is Aboriginal teachings and one of the first teachings you are going to get is on the value of the circle. In the circle not one person is better than the other… you hold that feather and we listen - that is the respect we give you because there is so much going on in the circle that is important[149].

The purpose of the sharing circle process is to teach participants how to both share their thoughts and feelings honestly as well as listen attentively to the stories, thoughts and feelings that others share. The sharing circle method "normalizes the experiences we share as human beings, builds

[146] Gehue, D. (2006). Traditional clan systems. Un-published Manuscript. Halifax, NS.

[147] Couture, J. (1991). The role of native elders: Emergent issues. In J. W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on native destiny in western Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises. Page 206

[148] Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing. Page 139.

[149] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

participants' confidence and teaches mutual respect[150]". It is essentially the creation of a social context [151] (Graveline, 1998) where it is acceptable to share personal experiences and the emotions that arise in the sharing process.

The ISOYW program is also essentially process-oriented; it is the connection to an individualized healing journey that is essential, as it provides a way of being that can sustain the participant after the program is completed and throughout the rest of his life. For each participant, the process of understanding and dealing with traumatic experiences is different yet critical in the overall process of connection with a healing path; the ISOYW program process accommodates the many different learning/healing styles of its participants. The program also employs a highly experiential and kinaesthetic learning approach that can produce a cathartic experience, whereby participants learn to take thoughtful and informed responsibility for their past, present and future. Often this includes moving away from the shame, guilt and fear that clouded their perspective of themselves and their family/community towards a more enlightened, compassionate understanding of how and why events happened in their lives. The process of the ISOYW program therefore provides a new framework or template for being and becoming; the completion of the program is really the beginning of a lifelong journey – the process of seeking *mino-pimatisiwin*.

ISOYW Participants

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

> "A lot of the behaviours I am referring to [of ISOYW participants]
> is the violence: beating up someone, they're going to be a bigger
> man and they're tougher and also with the alcohol abuse and stuff

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[150] NCSA. (1999). *The In Search Of Your Warrior program* (2 ed.). Edmonton: Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Page 14.

[151] Graveline, F. J. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming Eurocentric consciousness*. Halifax: Fernwood Publishing.

that was acceptable. That it was okay that they were eight years old when they started to drink. All this stuff that is going on in their life, the drug abuse, the alcohol abuse and the violence in the family - watching their mother being beaten - they figure that's just the way that life was. Not knowing that you don't hit women and violence is not acceptable[152]".

"I was out somewhere with uncles and aunts and extended family and there was a lot of drinking and violence there, plus in the community as a whole and so I thought it was okay to do that, to be like that, it was a learned behaviour[153]".

Within this context, men have developed significant issues with women, including a lack of trust for them and a belief that they do not have the same value as men and as such, do not deserve respect. These families of origin are also commonly impoverished, and/or the participants have lived in numerous foster homes; as a result many grow up envious of other children who appear to have families that love them and have the money to buy them new clothes, toys or sports equipment. Often the participants have experienced abuse at the hands of family members (including siblings and cousins) and/or people in positions of authority. Their worldview is therefore formed within situations where important personal and familial boundaries are transgressed. Further, these men have developed substance abuse behaviours very early in their lives, often as a means of coping with their reality, and they seek out friends, partners and wives who share these experiences.

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

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[152] NCSA Warrior Facilitator. Cited LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation
[153] NCSA Warrior Participant. Cited LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

including women and children. The following information was shared by Warrior participants during interviews[154]:

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

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

An ISOYW facilitator[155] also addressed issues are power and control in participants:

> "You know, us men, we have ego problems. But more so when you grow up on the street, or when you grow up in a dysfunctional family. It's all about power and control …and especially when you have been in an institution it's about power and control. If you have power and control, you have everything but if you don't have that, then you are serving someone else".

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

Finally, the men who participate in the ISOYW program most often (but not always) feel completely disconnected from Aboriginal culture, have no sense of Aboriginal identity and

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[154] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation
[155] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

demonstrate a poor sense of self-esteem. They also do not typically report any connection with spirituality of any form. When all of the issues facing these men are taken into consideration, it becomes clear how violence has shaped their lives and has become a normal part of their everyday life; within this milieu, there can be no accountability for their actions or any awareness of how destructive their lifestyle is.
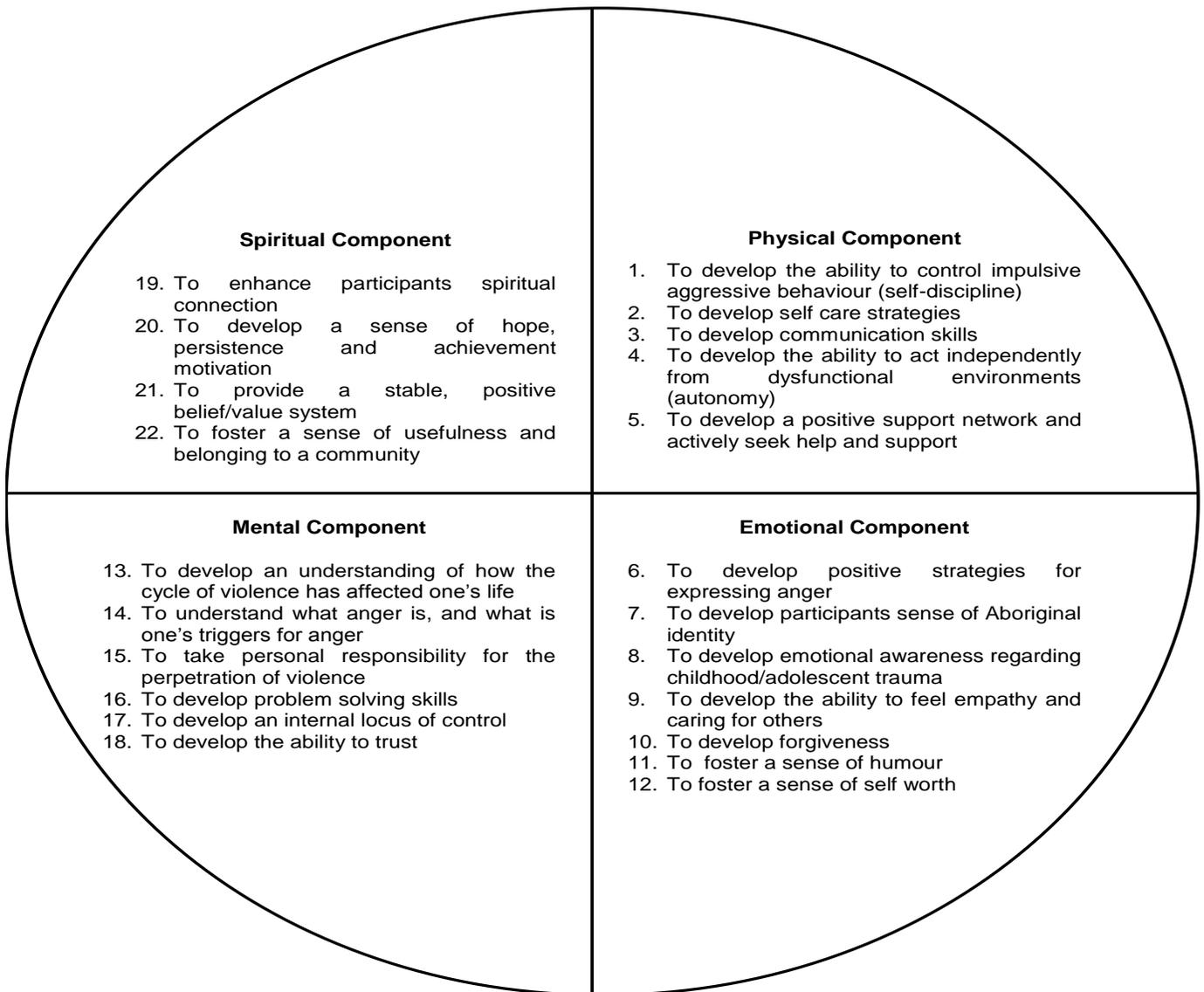
Spiritual Component

19. To enhance participants spiritual connection
20. To develop a sense of hope, persistence and achievement motivation
21. To provide a stable, positive belief/value system
22. To foster a sense of usefulness and belonging to a community

Physical Component

1. To develop the ability to control impulsive aggressive behaviour (self-discipline)
2. To develop self care strategies
3. To develop communication skills
4. To develop the ability to act independently from dysfunctional environments (autonomy)
5. To develop a positive support network and actively seek help and support

Mental Component

13. To develop an understanding of how the cycle of violence has affected one's life
14. To understand what anger is, and what is one's triggers for anger
15. To take personal responsibility for the perpetration of violence
16. To develop problem solving skills
17. To develop an internal locus of control
18. To develop the ability to trust

Emotional Component

6. To develop positive strategies for expressing anger
7. To develop participants sense of Aboriginal identity
8. To develop emotional awareness regarding childhood/adolescent trauma
9. To develop the ability to feel empathy and caring for others
10. To develop forgiveness
11. To foster a sense of humour
12. To foster a sense of self worth

Figure 6: Outcome Wheel for the ISOYW Program

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Several similarities exist between the above-stated Outcome Wheel[156] (Figure 6) and Archibald's table on the processes of decolonization, recovery from PTSD and healing from historic trauma (See Table 1). The ISOYW program seeks to begin an internal process of decolonization and historical healing for participants, through the fostering of understanding about the Canadian colonial process and how it affects their nation, community and family. Participants begin to draw connections between the historic experience of Aboriginal people and the experiences of trauma they faced as children. While the program does not explicitly address PTSD as a therapeutic construct, participants are afforded the opportunity to experience safety within the circle and ceremony, recount their childhood victimization and reconnect to people and culture. Within the entire process, mourning losses of family, friends, culture and language is begun, and the participants have the opportunity to interact with this knowledge in the context of ceremony and spirituality.

Often, participants have had pre-program contact with Elders and may have attended ceremonies or had family members that lived a more traditional way of life. Many participants spoke of past opportunities (in or out of jail) where they had to engage with culture; indeed, these interactions with aspects of culture most likely motivated them to demonstrate interest in the ISOYW program or agree to participate. However, for many participants, their understanding of their Aboriginal culture and/or spirituality was confused with other negative messages they received as children; notions of traditional Aboriginal culture were often created in a context where family/community members who were living out their own traumatic experiences, or from false/destructive messages that they received about Indians in movies and television shows. One Warrior participant[157] described his desperation to find 'Indian' spirituality, which was informed by misinformation about Aboriginal culture. When he turned to taking drugs to create a spiritual connection, the outcome was disastrous:

> "I [looked for spirituality] in the weirdest way possible through
> experimenting with drugs, psychedelic literature and I turned to it,
> I started going to the steam rooms and the saunas looking for
> cleansing that way, I tried to go on a vision quest with mushrooms
> and days of partying and not eating and get dehydrated, with a

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[156] NCSA. (1999). *The In Search Of Your Warrior program* (2 ed.). Edmonton: Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

[157] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

jacket and a mountain bike to see how long I could stay out in the bush, doing acid and mushrooms and seeing what would happen".

For this participant and many others, the ISOYW program was their first opportunity to spend an extended period of time immersed in an authentic Aboriginal world view that focused on the spiritual, relational and positive aspects of the culture. At the beginning of the program, when the first sharing circle took place, participants stated that they had heard about the ISOYW program, they were happy to take part, and that this was the right program for Aboriginal inmates – a program that was for and about them. The underlying message seemed to be that the spiritual and cultural aspects of the program made it more authentic to them and therefore their willingness to engage increased. Participant enthusiasm is described by an ISOYW facilitator[158]:

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

The ISOYW facilitators discussed at length how the program assists in re-connecting program participants with Aboriginal culture, values and spirituality; at its foundation the ISOYW program seeks to teach and re-orient Aboriginal men towards a worldview founded on Natural Law. Participants learn about the centrality of ceremony and spirituality within the Aboriginal worldview from the Elder, and this fosters an understanding of who they are as spiritual beings. Facilitators stated that at the beginning of the program, considerable time is dedicated to teaching the basic principles of Aboriginal culture, values and boundaries. Through the teaching about and participating in ceremonies, core values are transmitted in an experiential and holistic way. The ceremonies within the program are a part of the larger healing enterprise for the ISOYW participants: "Healing, for all practical purposes, is synonymous with "therapy', and with authentic "ceremony". The Warrior Program may thus be viewed as a complex or set of sub-cycles of Ceremonies within the Ceremony. It yields a Ceremony which enfolds[159].

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[158] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

[159] Couture, J. (1991). The role of native elders: Emergent issues. In J. W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on native destiny in western Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises. Page 10.

From this foundation of understanding, the participants can begin to explore and incorporate new ways of thinking and behaving. Several key changes were discussed by the facilitators. First, the participants begin to develop a healthy identity as Aboriginal men. The men develop a sense of pride in their Aboriginality, moving away from the shame they may have experienced and towards a sense of belonging within a vibrant culture. For one participant[160], attending a ceremony where he received a spirit name was a pivotal experience for him:

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

Subsequently, the participants begin to learn to trust others. This is accomplished through the participation in sharing circles. Over the course of the program, participants begin to speak about themselves and their feelings within the group. At times it is only within the safety of a ceremony (such as a Sweatlodge ceremony) that they have the courage to speak about their core issues that have caused violent behaviour. The process of ISOYW is designed to allow men to build healthy relationships with each other, under the guidance of the facilitators and Elders. One Warrior participant[161] shared how important the relationships among participants are:

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

Third, the participants begin to re-frame their beliefs about women and their relationships with other family members. The teachings about the important balance between men and women, the power women hold in their capacity for creation and the knowledge gleaned in ceremony assist

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[160] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation
[161] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

participants to develop healthy beliefs about and boundaries with women. An ISOYW facilitato[162]r describes this change:

> "At the end they are pretty open to talking with females, and realize that women have a role and that our role is very important as mothers and grandmothers… that they have to start having respect for women, for that woman who gave life to them".

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

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

> When we take [the participants] through the history of our people, especially for men - what's the first thing they did after they signed treaty - they took away their gun and they took away their horse, they took away the right for them to provide and to protect their families. What, purpose did they serve afterwards? You need to look at that. When you take a person's means of living, why they are living and what they contribute, when you take that away and you do that in a multigenerational sense… then what you have today is a situation where institutions are full of our people and they are sitting there wondering 'what put me in prison'[163].

The Elder provides teachings about the important role that Aboriginal men traditionally held within the community; the facilitators assist in this process by discussing the history of Aboriginal people, how this was lost for some communities and families, as well as how the

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[162] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

[163] NCSA Warrior Facilitator. LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

participants can reclaim their role within their families. Inherent in this role is the need to be responsible and accountable to their families and communities. Participants learn that by taking responsibility for past and present actions, they create the capacity to self-determine; that they have options in their lives and the capacity to make good decisions for themselves and their families.

Finally, participants in the Warrior program learn to become more comfortable with their emotions, dealing with the traumatic experiences of their past. They develop a sense of humour and learn to cry in front of others, admit when they are wrong, and apologize for their actions. Just as importantly, they also learn to listen in a good way to other men who are expressing their emotions. An ISOYW facilitator[164] shared the following:

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

This takes courage, as it goes against all of the training they received as children and adults. By learning to be humble people, and to be men that do not have to be in control of those around them, they are able to develop a sense of empathy for both the people who hurt them, and those that they have hurt. Rather than trying to control the people around them, they take responsibility for their own actions, moving to a position of healthy personal power. Two Warrior participants[165] shared the following:

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

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[164] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation
[165] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

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

In summary, the very essence of the ISOYW program is the creation of conscious, self-driven, personal transformation through experiential holistic learning. Transformation is a key, ongoing process: from shame to acceptance of self and others; from unconscious reaction to informed self-determination; from a perspective where there are no choices in life to a reality full of choices. This is a difficult aspect of the program, as one ISOYW facilitator[166] relates facilitator relates an instance within the group where participants were asked to reach a group decision through negotiation and consensus building:

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

Perhaps most critically, participants transform their feelings of disconnection to an experience of connection and belonging to culture, community, environment and cosmos. The ISOYW program facilitators and Elders strive to assist in the commencement of this personal transformation, which will continue throughout the participant's life. One participant[167] shared his thoughts on his own transformation:

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

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[166] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

[167] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

In the process of this transformation, participants begin to understand and take on behaviours that are inherent in a non-violent lifestyle. The ultimate outcome is therefore to assist in the adoption of non-violent behaviours through a process of empowerment. Elder George Brertton illustrates this concept: "an individual who is on a healing path is spiritually connected – feeling power and capable of doing anything. This sense of power comes from belief [faith]". This is the strength participants draw from to make significant changes in their lives. This enterprise has been described as: "The Native way concerns itself with being and becoming a unique person, one fully responsible for one's own life and actions within family and community. Finding one's path and following it is a characteristic Native enterprise which leads to or makes for the attainment of inner and outer balance"[168].

The Warrior Program and Family Transformation

Discussions with facilitators and program participants reveal that the In Search of Your Warrior program can affect the Aboriginal family in two key areas. First, the men who participate in the ISOYW program all carry past traumas that have shaped their adult behaviour. These traumatic experiences were significant in the creation of their world view, their behaviours and the values they hold. The NCSA Warrior facilitators[169] expressed ways in which the program can address these issues:

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

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

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[168] Couture, J. (1991). The role of native elders: Emergent issues. In J. W. Friesen (Ed.), *The cultural maze: Complex questions on native destiny in western Canada*. Calgary: Detselig Enterprises. Page 207.
[169] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

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

In addition, many participants are challenged to find positive people in the community to befriend and to look to for support. Often, when these men are released they have made considerable changes in their lives, but the situations they are released into are often still dysfunctional. Maintaining positive culture-based behaviour in those situations is often overwhelmingly difficult and relapse into old behaviours is almost inevitable. Through positive role-modelling, program staff help participants to understand the type of support they will require to stay on their healing journey when their sentence expires. By observing and relating with program staff, participants see *mino-pimatisiwin* in action during the program and their participation fosters confidence to seek relationships in the community with people who are also seeking the good life. Warrior facilitators[170] expand on this aspect of the program by stating the following:

> "That's why [ISOYW] works. When people that practice that way
> of life or are starting to learn it and discovering it and you are
> taking them along that road too. That's it, that's the main thing I
> find that separates [ISOYW] from any other program".

> "It was the old people, the people in the community who treated
> me good, took me back and took the time to give me something to
> be proud of in myself. In teaching that they also taught me how to
> help other people …I am giving back a little of what they gave me
> and teaching other people how to do it the same way I did it".

Second, during the program process, the participants are essentially re-parented; the program creates an extended family, whereby the Elders take on the grandparent role, the facilitators are uncles or aunts and the participants are siblings. Within this family circle, they learn new ways of

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[170] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

thinking and acting. Through experiencing a collective connection to a higher power and learning the teachings, they begin to understand the role of spirituality in the building and maintaining of good family and community relationships. Along the way, they learn to trust other people, and to trust and love themselves. One ISOYW facilitator[171] stated that the power of the program is: "that [the participants] can finally start being honest with themselves - they can start feeling good about themselves. The teaching of: 'you need to learn how to love yourself before you can love what's around you' is very true about the Warrior program. As that happens, we have then done what they've never had in their life".

The process of re-parenting facilitates participant reflection on the behaviour of their family of origin, not from the perspective of blame, but rather with understanding and compassion. By fostering compassion for their family, they can release the incapacitating shame that they feel for the mistakes they have made. They also learn that they have the power of choice as adults, the capacity and responsibility to make positive choices about how they will participate in their families from this time forward – as sons, fathers, brothers and uncles. Facilitators[172] spoke about the changes in family relationships and perceptions ISOYW can bring about:

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

> "Shame is one of the most useless emotions that we have. It serves
> no purpose other than keeping us down, an awful lot of people end
> up being shameful because they don't know, why didn't I treat my
> kids right, why did I abandon my kids, well you look at their
> childhood and that indicates how this whole process happened so

[171] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation
[172] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

> having people accept and you can't understand what you don't know. None of us do".

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

Re-parenting can be a powerful catalyst in the lives of the participants. By being treated with respect and kindness, especially when their behaviour has angered someone else, they learn to treat others with respect and kindness in return. They witness the strength of humility and the healing that occurs when emotion is expressed in a good way. Within the context of the ISOYW program they are immersed, for an extended period of time, in an environment where these opportunities happen frequently, and are reflected upon, debriefed and entrenched through repetition. This process is described by an NCSA facilitator[173]:

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

All of the ISOYW facilitators spoke of the potential of the program to have an effect on Aboriginal families intergenerationally, to break the cycle of family and community violence. One facilitator[174] described the importance of understanding family dynamics pertaining to self-awareness:

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[173] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

[174] LaBoucane-Benson, P. (2009). Reconciliation, Repatriation and Reconnection: A Framework for Building Resilience In Canadian Indigenous Families. Unpublished Dissertation

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

Conclusions About The Warrior Program

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

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

Participants in the ISOYW program are offered an extended period of time to be with Elders and facilitators who are powerful teachers on their healing journeys; individuals who can articulate and role model the decolonization/recovery/healing process[175]. The program is authentically Aboriginal, because the very foundation of the program – the staff, the traditional medicines, the ceremonies and the approach to helping are authentic. Within this context, the process of being and becoming that is offered as an insight or glimpse to the more sustaining, life-long commitment to *mino-pimatisiwin* is part of the catalytic praxis participants experience, which can result in changes to their world view, lifestyle and relationships with the world around them.

There are limitations to program effectiveness; participants must be ready and motivated to create changes in their lives. Although the program provides an environment that can and does create this motivation, it is ultimately the participant's choice whether he wants to change or not. Ensuring that each participant exercises self determines on their healing path, ultimately means that some men will not become connected to their healing path while participating in the program. The facilitators did not speak negatively about these men; from their perspective, everything happens for a reason, and people heal when they are supposed to. However, they did note that the experiences they had in the program may plant the seeds of change, which may be realised later in life. In addition, while many men who participate will reduce or eliminate violent behaviours after the program, they still struggle with addictions, which can cause issues such as re-incarceration in the future.

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[175] Archibald, L. (2006). *Decolonization and healing: Indigenous experiences in the United states, New Zealand, Australia and Greenland*. Ottawa, Ontario: Aboriginal Healing Foundation.