

First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, p.4

Foreword

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This issue of The Review is published in partnership between The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada and The Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research (The Centre). With endorsement from our Aboriginal Advisory Committee Co-Chairs, Dr. Jean Lafrance and Bernadette Iahtail, The Centre is pleased to sponsor the final 2010 and upcoming 2011 issues of The First Peoples Child & Family Review.

The Centre is a not-for-profit, charitable organization that is primarily funded by the Alberta Ministry of Children and Youth Services and operates arms-length from government.

Our mission is to collaboratively develop, support and integrate evidence across sectors and disciplines to provide a strong foundation for identifying and promoting effective public policy and service delivery to improve the well-being of children, families, and communities.

Under the direction and guidance provided by our Aboriginal Advisory Committee, The Centre's strategic approach is to support and increase the capacity of Aboriginal communities to identify and implement solutions in a manner that aligns with their values and culture.

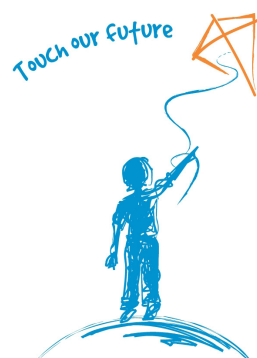
We support community-based research that builds on and respects existing strengths, local skills, values, wisdom and culture. There is much to be learned by blending research approaches with traditional wisdom and different ways of knowing as exemplified in the articles that appear in this issue of First Peoples Child & Family Review.

We look forward to our collaboration with The First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada to mobilizing knowledge and evidence through The First Peoples Child & Family Review to promote child welfare research, practice, policy and education and to advance innovative approaches within the field of Aboriginal/First Peoples child welfare.

We welcome you to visit our site for further information about The Centre at www.research4children.com.

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ALBERTA CENTRE FOR
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Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, p.5-8

Editorial

Aboriginal Victim or Valor: Understanding the Past to Change the Future

Marlyn Bennett and Andrea Auger

We live by many metaphors. For instance, it has been said many times over that in order to know where we are to go in the future, we need to understand our past. The collection of articles in this issue of the *First Peoples Child & Family Review* journal (Volume 5, Number 2, 2010) does just that. What emerges from these articles is an understanding of how Aboriginal peoples' were historically victimized and how the contemporary discourse in this issue reveals amazing strength in people who exhibit resilience and who are emerging quickly as valors in the recovery of their Aboriginal identities and evidencing what it means to be "living the good life" (Pimatisiwin or B'maadisiwin). This discovery of Aboriginal valor is aided by the collective voices and the various research efforts of the Indigenous scholars, women and allies whose works appear in this issue.

The first article, *Investigating the linkages between FASD, gangs, sexual exploitation and woman abuse in the Canadian Aboriginal population: A Preliminary Study* (pp. 9-22) by Dr. Mark Totten was co-written with the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC). Unlike most NWAC publications, this article does not focus on storytelling methods but rather utilized western, academic approaches to understanding the intersections between FASD, sexual exploitation, gangs and extreme violence in the lives of young Aboriginal women (30 years of age and younger). Through collaborative approaches, the author and NWAC, developed a network with experts on FASD, local service providers, and others dealing with Aboriginal youth involved in sexual exploitation and gangs, to identify a broad based research approach to understanding the linkages. There is little data on these particular linkages. Through an exploratory review of the literature, Totten explores the connections between sexual exploitation and FASD, gangs and FASD, sexual exploitation and gangs and how these particular issues insect in the lives of Aboriginal girls and women.

The emerging data in Totten's article indicates that many young Aboriginal women experience extreme sexual slavery and extreme violence in gangs, and that a disproportionate number also suffer from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Totten notes that "Aboriginal girls and women are significantly more likely than any other group in the country to die at a young age from suicide, homicide or serious illness" (p. 9) in addition, "they suffer disproportionately elevated rates of sexual and physical abuse as children and adults; rates of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) appears to be elevated in the Aboriginal

(particularly the First Nations) population, which is directly linked to higher rates of drug and alcohol use and addictions at a young age; and, they make up the large majority of all individuals in Canada who are involved in the sex trade and sexual trafficking" (pp. 9-10). Totten suggests that gangs (primarily organized by males) are responsible for the sexual exploitation and slavery of Aboriginal women and girls. The involvement of Aboriginal women and girls (with and without FASD) in gang activity is increasing and is directly related to their vulnerability and marginalization in Canadian society. Given the findings, Totten advocates for more comprehensive programming for FASD and gang prevention to ensure the numbers of missing and/or murdered Aboriginal women and girls does not continue to rise. Future research needs to be participatory in nature and make use of in-depth interviews and storytelling with families members of FASD youth who have suffered extreme violence and who have been sexually exploited and gang involved. In particular, little is known about gang-involved male youth who are trafficking and sexually exploiting women and their reasons for engaging in such exploitative activities.

Indigenous youth conflict intervention: The transformation of butterflies (pp. 23-33) draws upon the author's observations on why his daughter was so drawn to her Aboriginal identity unlike his experience growing up unaware of who he was as an Aboriginal person until he was in his teens. Paul Cormier's article covers the literature from the field of peace and conflict studies and the literature on violence and peace in relation to an Aboriginal context. In particular, he focuses on the effects of poverty and the resulting violence that Aboriginal people begin to feel as children through to adolescence and adulthood. A summary discussion on structural violence perpetrated against Aboriginal children in historical and contemporary education systems in Canada is also highlighted. Alternative forms of education such as that offered at Ka Ni Kanichihks, an urban Aboriginal organization in Winnipeg, focus on peace building activities, which encourages healing, and reconciliation for Aboriginal children, youth, family and community. The transformations of youth engaged in these peace building activities are compared to the transformations of butterflies. Cormier highlights Ka Ni Kanichihk, where his daughter and many Aboriginal youth and woman have transformed because it is a place where they can safely navigate and learn their culture. Ka Ni Kanichihk seek to "honour the spirit of their ancestors" by offering cultural learning in an environment

of peace. This is consistent with Indigenous traditions and offsets the structural violence Indigenous people have faced as a result of colonial domination. Through the use of Indigenous traditions, Ka Ni Kanichihk and other similar Aboriginal organizations have sought to build a culture of peace grounded in the traditions of Indigenous knowledge to ensure a place of safety that lends to rediscovery and identity negotiation for Aboriginal peoples.

Kreitzer and Lafrance take a similar approach to working with Aboriginal peoples as envisaged in Cormier's article. In *Co-location of a government child welfare unit in a traditional Aboriginal agency: A way forward in working in Aboriginal communities* (pp. 34-44), Kreitzer and Lafrance describe the co-location of a provincial family enhancement unit in Alberta within an Aboriginal organization as one of many family enhancement approaches offered under the differential response approach to child welfare.

In *Case Study of the Development of the 1998 Tribal State Agreement in Minnesota* (pp. 45-52), Evelyn Campbell highlights the effectiveness of American Indian women who strengthened the Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA) in the state of Minnesota. Through the use of historical retrieval and case study, we learn about the efforts of five Native American women who were instrumental in the creation of the Minnesota Indian Family Placement Act (MIPFA) through a Tribal Statement Agreement with the State of Minnesota. The Agreement addressed how American Indian children should be cared for under the requirements of the ICWA and the MIPFA. The ICWA 1978 was designed to protect American Indian families, their communities, and tribes against further disintegration due to the systemic removal of their children by state and county agencies. The MIPFA 1985 was passed to address the removal of Indian children from their "cultural heritage" due to being placed in non-Indian foster homes. This article evidences the way one group of Indigenous women in the United States worked to address the lack of compliance regarding these two specific pieces of legislation. Their work resulted in mechanisms for holding counties accountable and encouraging appropriate treatment of American Indian children and families in the State of Minnesota.

Wesley-Esquimaux's article, *Narrative as Lived Experience* (pp. 53-65), is a narrative reflecting the story of the history of Aboriginal peoples. The narrative considers the destructive era of contact and the colonization that ensued between the Indigenous peoples of the Americas with the earlier European settlers. These contact and colonial stories inform the present where historic narratives have been replaced by stories of inequality and continued domination. The historic processes that interrupted the lives of Indigenous peoples continue to reverberate across Canada as many harms of the past manifest inter-generationally in Indigenous communities. The hurts generated since the beginning of contact have not yet been resolved, nor does Wesley-Esquimaux posit, that they have been well represented in story telling or printed into our collective present. Wesley-Esquimaux's article primarily focuses on the realities of the past from the role of infectious diseases perpetrated against Indigenous peoples; the impact of historic trauma; the role of residential schools in the abuse of Indigenous children and families and the loss of culture and language; loss of identity and the role of acculturation in the devaluing of oral traditions; and the undervaluing of storytelling as a means of conveying every day meaning and constructing strong identities. Wesley-Esquimaux

shares intimate stories from her mother and stepfather, about their painful residential school experiences and the resulting violence many Aboriginal people experienced as a result of this history. She learned to handle the pain of these stories in a way that helps others integrate similar experiences and find peace in their hearts.

Wesley-Esquimaux expresses concern for Aboriginal youth who are confused by the dichotic "mythology" of yesterday and the reality of today. These dichotomous stories, she notes, stem from "the loss of communal cohesion and family support in First Nations across Canada" evolving out of the "non-sensical nature of the colonial domination" and "has exacerbated an ongoing and increasingly hurried descent into a cultural transition." She notes the latter has led to more loss and deeper social uncertainty for Aboriginal peoples. To stem this confusion and the loss of identity, Wesley-Esquimaux suggests a need to "artificially and/or deliberately create, co-create or re-create community and family closeness especially where there has been a loss of identity for our young, or when a community has grown too quickly, whether it is urban or rural" (p. 62). More than anything, Wesley-Esquimaux indicates that the dichotomous stories in Aboriginal communities reveal a tapestry of recovery and strength; there is a movement from victimization narratives to those focusing on resilience and pride. They have become tales of 'victorization' and wellness where the "light of traditional knowledge and historic truths are brought forth to shine and illuminate the path for a collective future" (p. 63). This can only be done through the learning and application of traditional knowledge. Aboriginal people, she notes, need to become actively engaged in 'victorizing' their own lives and further, they must take a role in re-scripting old stories of victimization so that new narratives can emerge.

Cindy Blackstock sheds light on the importance of quantitative research for Aboriginal peoples in advancing policy goals for Indigenous child health and welfare in her article entitled *First Nations children count: an Indigenous envelope for quantitative research* (pp. 66-73). In this article Blackstock outlines the broad goals of Indigenous research and then focuses on how quantitative research has been used and represented in the translation of Indigenous realities in child health and child welfare. Aboriginal research methods not only consist of storytelling and ceremony but also include scientific and numeric approaches in reflecting the Aboriginal reality. This is reflected in the work of the Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (CIS). Blackstock notes that First Nations have reported for many years that the child welfare system has been removing disproportionate numbers of First Nations children from their homes. However, without research "evidence" these claims were often minimized until CIS produced quantitative evidence supporting these claims. As a result, non-Aboriginal child welfare authorities now more seriously consider the overrepresentation of First Nations children in the child welfare system. Blackstock envisages that quantitative research can be used in an Indigenous way that invokes the spiritual, the emotional, the physical and the cognitive elements conducive in the pursuit of knowledge and important for contextualizing information and providing more knowledge pathways than typical western approaches alone can convey.

Kathy Absolon's article *Indigenous wholistic theory: A knowledge set for practice* (pp. 74-87) begins by examining how she came to write about Indigenous wholistic theory. She speaks to the application of

traditional knowledge by presenting specific elements of Indigenous wholistic theory specifically designed to help guide Indigenous based social work practice.

Indigenous Wholistic theory is rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, cultures and traditions. It is also anti-colonial and multi-layered. The theory encompasses the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical elements of being and factors in the seven generations of past and future. It is a relational and earth based ancestral concept that derives from the teachings of the land, sun, water, sky and all of Creation. It offers a multilevel strategy, circular in nature, and has been practiced for thousands of years. The word "Wholistic", as spelled, denotes concepts based on completeness, balance and is circular and cyclical in nature. Absolon is clear to state that this sacred knowledge is based in oral tradition and takes years to understand and know. It can be applied across all individual, family, community, organization and institutional levels. She provides an orientation to Indigenous Wholistic Theory through the use of the Medicine Wheel and the Four Directions (*Waabinong* – in the East; *Zhaawnong* – In the South; *Ningaabi'ong* – In the West; *Giiwedini'ong* – In the North) including the Centre of the Wheel, where all four directions come together. Through the use of illustrations, Absolon lays out each of the theoretical underpinnings of the four directions including the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical elements of Indigenous wholistic theory. The teachings of the directions are presented as a framework to inform practice. Each teaching ends with a summary of the elements in point form. This framework considers the connections and the fact that "we are all related" (p. 76). In particular Absolon notes that the dynamics of our realities are based on interrelationships and interconnections with others, all of which influences us individually and collectively. Absolon forewarns that the teachings offered in this article are much more complex than presented. It is acknowledged that understanding and learning about Indigenous wholistic theory is simultaneously complex and simple. In addition Absolon recognizes that these teachings are diverse and will differ depending on the context, teacher and Nation. Moreover, it is a living theory based on the living cultures, traditions and the worldviews of Indigenous ancestors, both past and present. It is precisely because of this connection that Absolon believes it is a theory with potential for healing our families, communities, nations, the earth and ourselves. Indigenous wholistic theory focuses on balance, harmony and *B'maadisiwin* (living the good life).

The themes of interconnectedness, interdependence and holistic elements of Indigenous knowledge, as highlighted previously in Absolon's article, are also reflected in the following article *Indigenous knowledge, community and education in a western system: An integrative approach* (pp. 88-95), written by Master's student, Danika Overmars. She believes that in order to support Aboriginal students' experiences and ensure success in the educational system, restoring and honouring Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing is paramount. Her article outlines how community based education can provide an avenue for integrating Indigenous knowledge into Western based educational systems. In understanding how to do this, Overmars provides an overview of the literature on Indigenous knowledge to help readers understand it and how it is constructed differently from western ways of knowing.

A summary review of the failings of western education in the Aboriginal population, both on and off reserve, is presented along

with statistics demonstrating the differences in levels of educational attainment, dropout rates, school problems and socio-economic concerns surrounding the educational gaps. Overmars notes that while education was a part of the oppressive history it can potentially serve as part of the solution including the integration of Indigenous knowledge into Aboriginal curriculum and meaningful community based interaction. Community based education gives communities an opportunity to provide input into their children's education. In turn, children gain experience from interacting with the community, and begin to develop meaningful relationships, which presents more access to community resources. Community based models of education allow for enhanced contact between student and elders engaging children in learning Indigenous ways specific to their community and assists in keeping Indigenous knowledge contemporary. Other advantages of community based models of education include a focus on issues that are relevant to Aboriginal students which could potentially encourage students to engage more fully in the learning process. Implementing a community based approach to education has its challenges. The nature of such an approach would require more funding to a system that is already underfunded for Aboriginal populations. There is also a concern that such an approach might be too extensive. Further, students may not be able to achieve on standardized testing, jeopardizing their ability to pursue further educational opportunities. Acquiring appropriate and skilled teachers to facilitate a community-based model of education might be a challenge along with how to train them. The diversity of Aboriginal communities also makes it unlikely that one model or template will work equally well in all communities.

Steve Koptie's article, *Inferiorizing Indigenous Communities and Intentional Colonial Poverty* (pp. 96-106), is a reflective topical autobiography. Reflective topical autobiography (an autobiographical method) belongs to the genre of testimonial research and is located within the postpositivist interpretive research paradigm. In this article Steve examines his life-work in a deeply reflective and narrative way. Steve was influenced to write from this perspective as a result of reading the works of the late Irihapeti Ramsden, an Indigenous scholar from New Zealand. Irihapeti pursued her PhD studies from what she termed a "reflective topical autobiographical journal of self-discovery" primarily to "understand how her ancestors became the poorest members of colonial New Zealand" (p.97). Koptie also uses this approach in understanding misrepresentations and misconceptions that most Canadians have about both Indigenous peoples and the true history of colonial Canada. Koptie's understandings of Canadian injustices are informed by many years of community development and healing work in northern Aboriginal communities of Ontario and out of his need to understand the pathology of colonization and the poverty experienced by Aboriginal peoples in Canada. His article is a narrative exposé written to encourage Aboriginal peoples to reflect and share their experiences through written word. It is a way of breaking the colonial stronghold that keeps Aboriginal people hostages of the past rather than as victors in the present and in the future.

Quels sont les facteurs favorisant ou inhibant la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones? (pp. 107-116) by Hélène Archambault, is a qualitative research piece exploring factors that encourage or prevent success in education of First Nations students in Québec. The first half of Archambault's paper outlines the circumstances allowing for

success in First Nations communities in Québec. In recent years, First Nations education has become a government priority in the province. In addition, there are interventions at an earlier age and communities that focus on early childhood education children have more success. Also, parents and Elders are influential and play large roles in the education of their children. The research also shows that student-teacher relationships impact educational outcomes. For example, when the teacher-student relationship includes trust, cultural respect and respect in general, First Nations children are more likely to succeed. Archambault also shows that culturally relevant and “cooperative learning models” assist in furthering education for First Nations children. The last factor in encouraging success in children’s education is First Nations control of education, including the establishment of schools for First Nations children, run by First Nations communities. The second half of this research paper considers negative determinants affecting learning of Québec’s First Nations children. Before presenting factors, Archambault provides statistics with regard to the educational situation of the First Nations population in Québec. Statistically, First Nations children have a higher incidence of learning difficulties and are grade levels behind the national average. Further, First Nations students have much lower high school graduation rates.

The inhibiting factors preventing favourable outcomes for First Nations children in Québec are broken down into three main categories: personal, academic and psychosocial. Personal factors affecting learning include different learning styles and different languages. From the academic perspective, First Nations children are less likely to succeed due to circumstances around their teachers: a shortage of qualified teachers; educators are often rotated between communities; and many non First Nations teachers do not participate in community activities. As for the psychosocial factors affecting education, the most prominent reason for failure in educational outcomes for First Nations children are the socioeconomic conditions including lack of employment opportunities, substance misuse, family violence and poverty.

In their study, *Le dépistage des retards de développement chez les jeunes enfants d’une communauté des Premières Nations* (pp. 117-123), Carmen Dionne, Suzie McKinnon and Jane Squires present quantitative data collected by utilizing Bricker and Squires’ Ages and Stages Questionnaire [ASQ]. The purpose of this research was to study Mohawk children between the ages of 29-60 months in order to gauge the pertinence of ASQ as a culturally relevant developmental assessment tool for First Nations children. Participants included 213 Mohawk children and their teachers from the Step by Step Child and Family Centre in Kahnawake Québec.

Dionne, McKinnon and Squires pursued this research because current detection tools of learning disabilities are not culturally relevant for First Nations children. ASQ however has been utilized in Western Canadian provinces and been proven successful. ASQ is a questionnaire given to caregivers or parents in order to assess children based on 5 key areas: communication, gross motor skills and fine motor skills, problem-solving and personal-social skills. For the purpose of their study, the research team sent a socio-demographic questionnaire to parents prior to the session to obtain permission and to make culturally appropriate modifications to the ASQ questionnaire and process. Once the process was underway, children and teachers

completed questionnaires. There were also teacher discussion groups to answer the following questions: are class activities conducive to the questions presented in the questionnaire?; does ASQ fit with Step by Step’s child assessment and intervention philosophies?; is the material accessible?; is ASQ relevant to Mohawk culture and the community of Kahnawake?; and does it give an general overview of the child’s development?

From the discussion group results, the teachers reported that the tool would be more effective one on one due to the noise. Another suggestion included completing the ASQ questionnaire twice, once at the beginning of the year and once at the end. On another note, teachers thought the questions better prepared them when working with students. Overall, teachers found ASQ to be a useful tool.

As for methodology with the questionnaires, the research team used Cronbach’s alphas which measures consistency and reliability of results in the five key areas and for each age group of Mohawk children, including 36, 42, 48 and 54 months. Globally the numbers demonstrated that ASQ was an effective tool to use in early detection of developmental challenges in the sample First Nations population represented by the Mohawk children at the Step by Step Child and Family Centre.

This issue of the journal bears witness to the intersection of FASD, gang involvement and the sexual exploitation and violence perpetrated against Aboriginal women, the transformation of Aboriginal youth through the lens of peace and conflict studies, and the use of various research methods that focus on narrative approaches to understanding the transformation of Aboriginal people from victims to survivors to people of valor. Through this collection of works we learned to understand the importance of storytelling and qualitative types of research approaches that provide context to the realities of Aboriginal peoples. Equally important are quantitative data collecting techniques in advancing Indigenous evidence since they highlight patterns of need and inform policy aimed at health, education and welfare of Indigenous children and youth. The importance of community based approaches to education and the peace building processes of Aboriginal organizations have been highlighted as some of the programs that are, and have been, successful in engaging Aboriginal children, youth and communities. Our allies in Québec have also provided an understanding of the factors that encourage or prevent success in education of First Nations students in Québec and how current detection tools around learning disabilities are not culturally relevant for First Nations children. They have provided further understanding about efforts to make culturally appropriate modifications to these tools. All of these articles have been aided by Indigenous knowledge and theories about Indigenous ways of being. This knowledge has helped sustain and transform Aboriginal peoples from that of victim to that of valor. This collection of articles evidence a reality that is predicated on healing and which illustrates the diversified paths and stories that lead to the ongoing valorization of Indigenous in North America.

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Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 9-22

Investigating the Linkages between FASD, Gangs, Sexual Exploitation and Woman Abuse in the Canadian Aboriginal Population: A Preliminary Study

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Mark has extensive experience working alongside Aboriginal communities on various projects. Although he is by no means an expert in Aboriginal cultures, he firmly believes that the colonization and forced assimilation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada continues to this very day, and that much work needs to be done to address systemic racism against Aboriginal peoples. Mark is convinced that privileged Caucasian Canadians (particularly men) need to share their wealth and power with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. This means settling land claims, supporting self-government, promoting healing, addressing gender-based discrimination, and ensuring that the rights of Aboriginal children and youth are protected and promoted.

^b Incorporated in 1974, the Native Women's Association of Canada is founded on the collective goal to enhance, promote, and foster the social, economic, cultural and political well-being of Aboriginal women within Aboriginal communities and Canadian society. As one of the five National Aboriginal Organizations, NWAC is a network of Native women's organizations from coast, to coast, to coast. NWAC's mission is to help empower women by being involved in developing and changing legislation which affects them, and involving them in the development and delivery of programs promoting equal opportunity for Aboriginal women.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study, prepared for the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and funded by Health Canada First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, is to provide an exploratory investigation into the linkages and to begin a journey into making the connection between FASD, sexual exploitation, gangs, and extreme violence in the lives of young Aboriginal women. Emerging data from Aboriginal gang intervention and exit projects in Canada suggest that many women experience sexual slavery and extreme violence in gangs, and that a disproportionate number also suffer from Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. Although much more research is required, preliminary data point to the importance of developing prevention strategies targeted at addressing family violence, drug and alcohol abuse, poverty, the social determinants of health and the history of colonization of Aboriginal Peoples. This work should focus on the strength and resiliency of Aboriginal peoples.

Keywords: Aboriginal women, sexual exploitation, violence, FASD, gangs, prevention strategies

Introduction

Over the last decade there has been an increase in the reporting of Aboriginal gangs and the impact on individuals, communities and youth. Some reports have described youth involvement in these gangs as reaching crisis proportions, particularly in prairie provinces, since the social impacts of gangs are directly linked to the drug trade, violence, weapons trade, sexual exploitation and the trafficking of women and girls. The impact on Aboriginal women and girls is particularly worrisome, as their involvement in gang activity is increasing, which may be directly related to their vulnerability and marginalization in Canadian society. This link is surmised by the fact that Aboriginal girls and women are significantly more likely than any other group in the country to die at a young age from suicide, homicide or serious illness; they suffer disproportionately elevated rates of sexual and physical abuse as

Acknowledgements:

This report received generous funding from Health Canada First Nations and Inuit Health Branch. The author would like to acknowledge the following individuals at Native Women's Association of Canada who provided insightful and critical feedback: Erin Wolski, Kate Rexe, Elisabeth Bastien, Jennifer King and Irene Goodwin. This report would not have been possible without their support and guidance.

children and adults; rates of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) appear to be elevated in the Aboriginal (particularly the First Nations) population, which is directly linked to higher rates of drug and alcohol use and addictions at a young age; and, they make up the large majority of all individuals in Canada who are involved in the sex trade and sexual trafficking. In addition to these indicators, there is increasing evidence that suggests gangs are responsible for the sexual exploitation and sexual slavery of Aboriginal women and girls.

While there is an increasing awareness of the involvement of Aboriginal girls in gangs, there is little published evidence to determine concrete linkages between gangs, sexual exploitation and violence. One factor that has not yet been explored, as both a cause, consequence and compounding factor of the exploitation of Aboriginal women and girls and gang involvement is FASD. The purpose of this research report is to provide an exploratory investigation into the linkages between many of the above-mentioned phenomena - to begin a journey into making the connection between FASD, sexual exploitation, gangs, and extreme violence in the lives of Aboriginal young women.¹ In so doing, we hope to develop a plan to prevent Aboriginal young women from using alcohol and other drugs during pregnancy. Reducing the prevalence of FASD requires resources to address the history of colonization. It requires that we celebrate the resiliency and strength of Aboriginal peoples.

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge and honour those Aboriginal peoples whose lives have been impacted by gangs, FASD, sexual exploitation, and other forms of violence. Although the focus of this paper is to explore linkages between these issues, we can never lose sight of the fact that individuals, families and communities experience these painful problems on a daily basis in Canada. It is of the utmost importance to

address these issues in order to create change for Aboriginal peoples and their communities.

Background

Anecdotal reports in Canada and a small number of investigations in other countries suggest that young people who have FASD may be more likely to be gang-involved and to have experienced sexual exploitation. Gender seems to play an important role in these phenomena: FASD-affected girls and young women tend to be victimized by childhood sexual abuse and experience sexual slavery in gangs, whereas men are more likely to be sexual traffickers and perpetrate other forms of exploitation on Aboriginal girls and women. Boys with FASD are reported to have experienced high rates of childhood sexual abuse as well.

A handful of studies on selected First Nations reserves in Canada suggest that the prevalence of FASD may be considerably higher than that of the non-Aboriginal population. These data must be interpreted with caution because very few suspected cases have been screened using acceptable medical assessments. A complicating factor to this study of FASD and the involvement of Aboriginal women and youth in gangs is it is difficult to disentangle the effects of FASD from the outcomes of colonization, forced assimilation and Residential Schools.² While FASD is preventable, the root causes that lead to FASD are not so simple to treat. The risk factors related to exploitation, particularly sexual exploitation in gangs, are reasons why these same women may use substances during pregnancy as a response to trauma, which is so often prevalent in their lives. Despite the limitations, this evidence does indicate the need for comprehensive programs. If we fail to implement comprehensive FASD prevention and intervention programs now, things will get much worse very shortly simply because the Aboriginal birth rate is rapidly increasing (the child and youth population in many cities and rural areas will double within the next decade). In addition to addressing the FASD issues, youth gang prevention and intervention is incredibly important because the rate at

1 NWAC is committed to the development of genuine research collaboration between researchers and Aboriginal communities, thereby promoting partnerships within a framework of mutual trust and cooperation. However, NWAC made a deliberate decision to rely on more of a western, academic approach for this FASD project. It is exploratory, does not involve opportunities for storytelling and other participatory methods with participants, and is designed to set the stage for a more in-depth assessment of FASD, gangs, sexual exploitation, and murdered Aboriginal girls and women. Should adequate funding be granted for this second phase, NWAC will employ an Aboriginal model of research, relying on respect of indigenous knowledge and worldviews, indigenous epistemology, inclusivity in the research agenda, and shared power and decision-making.

2 For example, Tait (2003a) argues that the behavioural and cognitive effects of suffering physical and sexual abuse in Residential Schools are comparable to the behavioural and cognitive effects of FASD – and in the absence of concrete evidence of a mother's alcohol abuse during pregnancy, it is entirely plausible that the trauma suffered in Residential Schools (and not prenatal alcohol abuse) is the root cause of developmental delays and other disabilities.

which Aboriginal young gang members are killing each other and committing suicide far exceeds levels of such extreme violence in any other group in Canada, perhaps in the world. Finally, it is predicted that the large number of missing and sexually trafficked Aboriginal women and girls in Canada will only rise if these issues are not addressed, as will the rate at which men murder this marginalized and vulnerable population.

Methodology

The focus of this study is on young people 30 years of age and younger who have been affected by prenatal alcohol abuse. Although prenatal exposure to drugs is a serious problem and results in significant impairment to babies, it is beyond the scope of this paper to address this issue. That being said, the research evidence is quite clear on the fact that many women who abuse alcohol during pregnancy also use drugs, and it is difficult to differentiate the negative effects of any one specific drug from that of another, or differentiate the impact of prenatal alcohol abuse from prenatal drug abuse. As well, when the infants of mothers who abuse only alcohol are compared to those of mothers who only abuse drugs during pregnancy, many similarities in developmental problems are evident. Children exposed to maternal alcohol and/or drug abuse suffer a wide range of mild to severe problems.³

The long term goal of this project is to encourage support for early detection of FASD and ultimately break the cycle of prenatal alcohol abuse within the Aboriginal population. This can be achieved in part by strengthening the networks among academia, government, Aboriginal organizations, local youth service providers, child protection agencies, educational and judicial systems, health services, police forces, and early intervention and prevention programs to promote awareness of FASD and its differential impacts. The following outcomes have been achieved by NWAC during this project: collaboration with experts⁴ and researchers in the field to scope the issue and identify a broad based research direction; collaboration with NWAC internal structures (Health Advisory Committee, Sisters In Spirit staff, Provincial/Territorial Member Associations, Youth members, and Elders) and local service providers to identify research priorities; expansion of NWAC's network of local service providers and others dealing with Aboriginal youth involved in sexual exploitation and gangs; and development of an action plan for the next phase of this project – undertaking qualitative, participatory research with high-risk youth and families in strategic geographic regions of Canada.

3 For example, see the body of work by Ira Chasnoff, widely regarded as one of the leading experts in the world on these issues.

4 By 'experts' we mean community members, grass roots organizations and professionals.

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder in Canada

Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) is the umbrella term used to describe the entire continuum of disabilities, from most severe to least severe, of prenatal exposure to alcohol. It includes the related conditions of Fetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS),⁵ Fetal Alcohol Effects (FAE), Alcohol-Related Birth Effects (ARBE) and Alcohol-Related Neurodevelopmental Disorder (ARND).⁶ FASD is the most common cause of mental retardation in North America. The physical, mental, behavioural, and intellectual disabilities (commonly referred to as 'primary' disabilities – meaning permanent brain damage that results in impaired mental function) resultant from maternal alcohol exposure are lifelong and include: skeletal abnormalities (for example, facial deformities); physical disabilities (for example, kidney and internal organ problems); cognitive impairment (such as difficulty comprehending the consequences of one's actions); and learning disabilities (such as those related to mathematical concepts).

Most children with FASD will never be financially or socially self-sufficient. They are at high risk for neglect, physical abuse, sexual abuse, violence, maternal death and abandonment. Studies with school children who have FASD indicate elevated rates of disruptive behavioural disorders at home and at school. Boys are highly likely to display early onset aggressive behavior disorders. Many appear to lack guilt, are cruel to others, and are more likely to lie and steal. Combined with other social deficits, these traits result in violent behavior.⁷

Despite these negative outcomes with many young people suffering from FASD, there are well documented success stories. Early diagnosis can identify a child's problems and support the treatment needed to maximize his or her abilities. It can also help in the identification and support of high risk women to prevent FASD in other babies. However, caution is required here because diagnoses can result in negative labeling, which can be used to predetermine negative pathways and limit growth of FASD children's potential.⁸ It is important to develop resiliency and strengths in these young people.

Secondary disabilities, which are not present at birth but occur as a result of the primary disabilities (such as brain damage), have also been thoroughly investigated. With

5 FAS diagnosis requires a confirmed history of maternal alcohol consumption; evidence of facial dysmorphology; growth retardation; and central nervous system dysfunction. It is the most severe developmental impairment on the spectrum.

6 Currently, FAE and ARBD are understood to fall within the broader term ARND. Individuals with ARND are unlikely to have the facial malformations but have central nervous system impairment.

7 Pardini, 2006; Pardini and Loeber, 2008; Nash et al., 2006; Kodituwakku et al., 2006; May et al., 2006; Good et al., 2001; Delaney-Black et al., 2000; Watt and Muenke, 2005; Fast and Conry, 2004.

8 BC Ministry for Children and Families, 1998.

appropriate interventions, secondary disabilities such as mental health and school problems can be prevented or reduced. They result from the social environment in which the child lives (Grant et al., 2006). Longitudinal studies on relatively large samples have investigated these lifelong secondary effects. Of particular relevance for this project are the findings related to victimization, violent offending and association with criminal peers. The vast majority of participants in these studies (approximately three quarters or more) have suffered long-term physical and sexual abuse as children and continue to be victimized as adults, have disrupted school experiences (suspensions, expulsions, dropping out), have problems with employment and living independently, and have mental health problems (suicide threats and attempts, psychosis, depression, panic attacks). A smaller majority (roughly two thirds) have histories of youth and adult offending behavior. The most common crimes committed are those against persons (theft, burglary, physical and sexual assault, murder, domestic violence, child molestation), followed by property damage, possession/selling of drugs, and vehicular crimes. Approximately two-thirds also have addictions problems. Roughly one-half have attention deficit and conduct problems, including 'inappropriate' sexual behavior.⁹

As a result of these serious issues, many of these young people have experienced long-term placement in child welfare, mental health and justice facilities. Many FASD babies are hospitalized for a variety of conditions. In addition, there appears to be an intergenerational aspect to FASD (although there is no evidence to suggest it is hereditary): young women with FASD are highly likely to drink during their own pregnancies and about one-third of their children are born with FASD. The children of young mothers with FASD are thus highly likely themselves to be taken into the care of the child welfare system.¹⁰

It is important to note that although FASD is a permanent, lifetime brain injury, there is a broad range of characteristics that vary from person to person. For example, the IQs of 75-80% of people with FASD are within the average range.¹¹ The severity of FASD-related problems is directly linked to the level of pre-natal alcohol consumption: mothers who drink frequently and have many drinks at one time have babies with more severe impairments compared to mothers who drink less frequently and have fewer drinks at one time. There are several protective factors which can lead to better outcomes for individuals with FASD, including early diagnosis and intervention, living in a stable home, protection from violence, and school bonding.

There are no national statistics on the prevalence of FASD in Canada, although data exist on rates in other countries. In the USA, FAS prevalence is estimated at 1 – 3 per 1000 live births and FASD prevalence is reported at 9.1 per 1000 live births.¹² Health Canada uses these rates for estimating prevalence in Canada, where it is believed that one percent of the population has FASD (about 300,000 people) (Roberts and Nanson, 2000; Health Canada, 2003). There have been a handful of studies estimating prevalence in small Aboriginal communities located in British Columbia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and in the Yukon. These studies suggest that prevalence rates are elevated in these communities, although methodological problems exist.¹³ Prevalence rates for FASD in these studies range widely from 7.2 - 190 per 1000 live births.¹⁴ FAS prevalence ranges from 0.515 – 101 per 1000 live births.¹⁵ Studies in other countries have also found higher rates of binge drinking in North American Aboriginal communities.¹⁶ These prevalence rates, both in the USA and in Canadian Aboriginal communities, are likely only the tip of the iceberg because diagnosis is quite rare and usually occurs in adolescence or adulthood.¹⁷ Although FASD disproportionately affects Aboriginal people, they suffer from many other disabilities (such as learning disabilities, physical disabilities) at a prevalence rate estimated to be double that of the non-Aboriginal population in Canada (32% compared to 16%).¹⁸

A high proportion of Aboriginal youth involved with the Canadian youth justice system have disabilities, including FASD.¹⁹ Some authors suggest that these individuals, because they cannot live an independent lifestyle, are excluded from participating in community life. Many leave their home reserve and get lost in the urban city,²⁰ where they are easy prey for exploitation and gang recruitment. One reason behind the higher prevalence of disabilities within the Aboriginal population relates to lack of access to quality health care.

What has been the role of government in addressing FASD in the Aboriginal population? In 1999, the federal government created the National FASD Initiative through the expansion

9 The issue of 'inappropriate' sexual behavior is addressed in the section on FASD and Sexual Exploitation.

10 Streissguth et al., 2004, 1997, 1996; Kvigne et al., 2004; Chudley et al., 2005; Stade et al., 2004; Brown and Fudge Schormans, 2004.

11 O'Malley, 2007.

12 Chavez, Cordero and Becerra 1988; Sokol and Clarren, 1989; Sampson et al., 1997, 1994.

13 For example, Tait (2003) argues that these studies have a disproportionate focus on Aboriginal women and their communities, and fail to differentiate the effects of prenatal alcohol use from the wide-ranging outcomes of colonization, forced assimilation and residential schooling.

14 Robinson, Conry and Conry, 1987; Williams, Odaibo and McGee, 1999.

15 Square, 1997; Asante and Nelms-Maztke, 1985; Habbick, Nanson, Snyder, Casey, and Schulman, 1996.

16 Masotti et al., 2006.

17 Sokol, Delaney-Black and Nordstrom, 2003.

18 Canada, 1995; OFIFC, 2000.

19 Murphy, Chittenden, and The McCreary Centre Society, 2005.

20 Durst and Bluehardt, 2001.

of the Canada Prenatal Nutrition Program. Since then, yearly funding has been allocated to address FASD issues in the Aboriginal population. The First Nations and Inuit FAS/FAE Initiative is delivered through the First Nations and Inuit Health Branch and the Population and Public Health Branch. FNIHB is responsible for delivering First Nations and Inuit Component programs to First Nations (on-reserve) and Inuit communities.

Aboriginal Gangs in Canada

In Canada, twenty-two percent of all gang members are Aboriginal. It is estimated that there are between 800 – 1000 active Aboriginal gang members in the Prairie provinces. The largest concentration of gang members in Canada (of all gangs) is in Saskatchewan with 1.34 members per 1,000 population, or approximately 1,315 members.²¹ Aboriginal youth gangs²² are defined as: visible, hardcore groups that come together for profit-driven criminal activity and violence. They identify themselves through the adoption of a name, common brands/colours of clothing, and tattoos to demonstrate gang membership to rival gangs. Gang-related communication rituals and public display of gang-like attributes are common.²³ Membership is fluid, there is a lack of organization and structure, and many of these gangs operate independently in small cells. Status is defined by ability to make large amounts of cash and engage in serious violence.

Aboriginal gangs tend to be intergenerational and rely on violent entry and exit rituals to protect the gang from outsiders. Aboriginal youth can be categorized on a continuum of gang involvement into one of the following groups: anti-social group; spontaneous criminal activity group; purposive criminal group; crew; and street gang. The degree of organization is defined by: the structure and hierarchical nature of the gang; the gang's connection to larger, more serious organized crime groups; the sophistication and permanence of the gang; the existence of a specific code of conduct or set of formal rules; initiation practices; and the level of integration, cohesion, and solidarity between the gang's members.²⁴

Membership commitment can be measured in a hierarchical ranking system within the gang. Often, there is not one person who directs other members, although older members have more influence compared to young members.²⁵ Leaders (also called King Pins, Bosses, Presidents or Captains) actively promote and participate in serious criminal activity. These males are generally in

their late twenties – early thirties. Veterans (also called Heavies or Higher-Ups) decide which criminal activities the gang will participate in and are considered to be faithful in their loyalty to the gang. Along with leaders, they are responsible for settling internal conflicts within the gang. Core members (also called Regular Members, Associates or Affiliates) usually have been with the gang since it started, and are experienced, proven members. Most gang leaders require prospective recruits to meet certain criteria and perform serious crimes of violence before they are allowed membership into the gang. These youth want to prove themselves and rise through the ranks; they often earn serious money for gangs. To gain entry, a recruit generally requires sponsorship. It is common for recruits to 'do minutes': survive a beating at the hands of some gang members. Strikers (also called Soldiers) are also highly likely to engage in serious acts of violence.

For marginalized, abused and vulnerable youth, there are many positive aspects of gang life. Many Aboriginal gang members talk about having a sense of family and belonging in their gangs, a safe place to hang out with friends, an identity, and a good source of income. For many youth who grow up in communities characterized by high unemployment, entrenched poverty and violence, gang involvement is a rational choice - a legitimate opportunity for employment and protection. Gangs can also provide a shelter for young people who have suffered from racism and the adverse effects of colonization (including having dysfunctional parents who suffered abuse in residential schools) to fight back against social injustice.²⁶

Physical Violence and Murder in the Lives of Aboriginal Girls and Women

Aboriginal girls and women in Canada suffer much higher rates of physical violence, sexual violence and homicide compared to any other group in the country.²⁷ Arguably, the rate of extreme violence experienced by these women is amongst the highest in the world. In the vast majority of all incidents, men are the perpetrators. An Ontario study found that 8 out of 10 Aboriginal women in Ontario had personally experienced family violence.²⁸ First Nations women aged 25-44 are five times more likely than other Canadian women of the same age to die of violence²⁹ and are roughly three times more likely to be victims of spousal violence than are those who are non-Aboriginal. In a Statistics Canada study, 54% of Aboriginal women reported experiencing severe and potentially life threatening violence compared to 37% of non-

21 CSC 2001, 2003; Totten 2008; CISS 2005; Astwood Strategy Corporation 2004.

22 For the purposes of this paper, youth includes young people aged 12 – 30 years of age.

23 Totten 2000, 2008, 2009b.

24 Totten 2009a, 2008; Mellor et al. 2005.

25 Totten, 2008; CISC 2004; Mellor et. al. 2005.

26 Totten, 2000; Kelly and Totten, 2002.

27 Statistics Canada 2006a, 2006b, 2006c, 2007a, 2007b.

28 Ontario Native Women's Association, 1989.

29 Amnesty International, 2004.

Aboriginal women.³⁰ Rates of woman abuse are even higher in the lives in incarcerated Aboriginal women: ninety percent of all federally sentenced women report having been physically and/or sexually abused.³¹

In response to the high number of missing and murdered Aboriginal girls and women, NWAC initiated the Sisters In Spirit (SIS) initiative in 2004. SIS is designed to uncover root causes, circumstances and trends of violence that lead to the disappearance and death of Aboriginal women in Canada. As of March 31, 2010, 582 cases of missing or murdered Aboriginal women and girls had been entered into the NWAC database.³² Key findings include:

- 115 (20%) of the known cases are of missing women and girls;
- 393 (67%) of the known cases are of murder (defined as homicide or negligence causing death). Only 209 (53%) have been cleared by charges;
- 21 cases (4%) fall under the category of suspicious death (incidents that police have declared natural or accidental but that family or community members regard as suspicious);
- 53 cases (9%) are categorized as 'unknown' (it is unclear whether the woman was murdered, is missing or died in suspicious circumstances);
- Over two-thirds of the cases occurred in the western provinces;
- More than half of the cases involve women and girls under the age of 31 years;
- 226 (39%) of cases involving missing women and girls have occurred during or since 2000;
- Information about family size is known for one-third of the cases: where this information is known, the great majority of these women (88%) were mothers.

Sexual Exploitation of Aboriginal Girls and Women in Canada

In general, sexual exploitation occurs when a child under nineteen years of age is sexually abused by adults; engages in sexual activity to support a friend, partner, or family member; trades sexual activities with adults in exchange for money, drugs, food, shelter, gifts, transportation, or other items; engages in commercial sex work in brothels, escort services, for pimps, pornography; and internet sex. Sexual exploitation of young people under the age of nineteen years is not employment or a chosen occupation. Many youth who have suffered childhood

sexual abuse engage in survival sex (providing sex for a place to sleep, a meal, or for a ride) after they have run away from home or child welfare facilities.

A Statistics Canada study³³ found that 25% of Aboriginal people identified sexual abuse as a problem in their community (23% for Métis peoples, 22% for off-reserve First Nations, 29% for on-reserve First Nations and 35% for Inuit peoples). In fact, three quarters of Aboriginal girls under the age of 18 have been sexually assaulted.³⁴ The incidence of child sexual abuse in some Aboriginal communities is as high as 75 to 80% for girls under 8 years old.³⁵ Of all Aboriginal people who have been sexually abused in Canada, 75% are girls under age of 18. Of these girls, 50% are under age 14 and 25% are younger than 7 years of age at the time of the abuse.³⁶

It is estimated that the majority of all sex workers in western Canada are Aboriginal (for example, 60% of all sex workers in Vancouver are Aboriginal) and that most victims of sexual trafficking are Aboriginal as well.³⁷ Prostitution (also called the 'sex trade') includes commercial sexual activities where sex is exchanged by adults for food, housing, money or drugs. Commercial sexual activities with Aboriginal youth are sexual exploitation - they are illegal. Typically, sex is traded on the street, in massage parlours, dance clubs, escort agencies, bars, trick pads, hotels, bath houses, apartments and houses. Aboriginal girls and women involved in sex work face significant physical and sexual violence and serious risks to their physical and emotional health. Most are lured into prostitution by pimps or 'boyfriends', and are forced to stay in the sex trade because of drug dependency and retaliation from pimps.³⁸

However, it is common in some Aboriginal communities and in the broader non-Aboriginal population (particularly with men) for Aboriginal girls to be stereotyped as 'willing' to take up sex work; there is a prevailing mentality of girls being 'sexually available'. Preliminary data in two Canadian Aboriginal gang intervention projects suggests that in some communities, family members introduce daughters, grand-daughters, nieces, or sisters into the sex trade. In the absence of jobs, socialization of young women into the sex trade is understood to be a legitimate way to bring money into some families.³⁹ It is important to contextualize these issues within the legacy of colonization, assimilation, poverty, and the internalized de-valuation of Aboriginal women and girls.

33 Statistics Canada, 1993.

34 ONWA and OAIFC, 2007.

35 McEvoy and Daniluk 1995; Young and Katz, 1998; The Nechi Institute, The Four Worlds Development Project, 1988.

36 NWAC, 2007; Mclvor and Nahanee, 1998.

37 Totten and Dunn, 2009a,b; Totten, 2009a,b; Farley and Lynne 2005; Lynne 2005; Farley, Lynne and Cotton 2005.

38 Sethi, 2007; Totten, 2009d.

39 Totten and Dunn, 2009a,b; Assistant Deputy Minister's Committee, 2001.

30 Statistics Canada, 2006b.

31 CAEFS, 2006.

32 NWAC, 2010.

It is important to identify that trafficking is not prostitution or sex work – it is a form of slavery. It “involves the recruitment, transportation or harbouring of persons for the purpose of exploitation, and may occur across or within borders. Traffickers use various methods to maintain control over their victims, including force and threats of violence.”⁴⁰ Sexual trafficking involves the use of threat, force, deception, fraud, abduction, authority and giving payment to achieve consent for the purpose of exploitation. It is common to confuse other forms of sexual exploitation with trafficking. For example, an adult who consents to engage in prostitution is not being trafficked. As well, trafficking involves systematic transportation and confinement. Sexual trafficking of Canadian Aboriginal girls and women is most common within the borders of Canada, particularly in the Prairie provinces. Trafficking networks are found in major cities (such as Vancouver, Winnipeg, Regina, Edmonton) and in small towns in B. C. and the Prairies. There are patterns of city triangles across provinces (for example, Saskatoon – Edmonton – Calgary – Saskatoon; and Calgary – Edmonton – Vancouver – Calgary).⁴¹ The oil rigs and mining businesses in Alberta have contributed to trafficking activity. When discarded or escaping, Aboriginal women end up in big city ‘hot spots’ such as Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, where they are at considerable risk of being victimized by severe violence and murder.

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE LINKAGES?

Sexual Exploitation and FASD

There is a robust body of literature on the sexual abuse of disabled people, although the abuse of people with FASD has not been as widely investigated. It has been reported that 83% of women with disabilities will be sexually assaulted during their lifetime⁴² and that the rate of sexual abuse of girls with disabilities is four times that of able-bodied girls.⁴³ One study of 80 birth mothers of children with FAS revealed that 95% of the mothers were physically or sexually abused during their lifetime.⁴⁴

Likewise, longitudinal studies of individuals with FASD estimate that approximately 75% of girls and women have been sexually abused and a majority of males engage in sexual behaviors that had been repeatedly problematic or for which the individual had been incarcerated or treated.⁴⁵ These behaviours include sexually inappropriate behavior (such as sexual advances and multiple sexual partners), sexually

intrusive behavior (such as exposure, compulsions, voyeurism, masturbation in public, and obscene phone calls) and sexual assaults (such as sexual touching, incest, sex with animals).⁴⁶ Although most FASD youth have a normal sex drive, problems emerge due to the hallmark poor judgment and impulsivity of many FASD-affected young people.⁴⁷ The actual incidence of problematic sexual behavior is likely much higher due to underreporting.

FASD female youth, especially those who are isolated and visibly disabled, are at particularly high risk for being sexually exploited, pimped and trafficked by older men. Although there are few published studies on the topic, anecdotal reports suggest that FASD-affected Aboriginal girls and women have high involvement in sex trade.⁴⁸ Some service providers have also indicated that often other girls pimp them out.⁴⁹

A small number of social service agencies in Canada have recently started to address the needs of FASD-affected Aboriginal women in the sex trade. For example, the Association of Community Living, in partnership with Prostitution Empowerment and Education Resources Society (PEERS), has been working on these issues through the Winnipeg Working Group on FASD and the Sex Trade.⁵⁰

Gangs and FASD

With the exception of Totten’s preliminary research, there are not any published studies on the relationship between FASD and gang involvement. However, a number of recent studies in other countries have documented the elevated rates of engagement in serious crime and involvement in violent offending by young men with FASD.⁵¹ Previous research has demonstrated that these types of serious crimes are likely to be gang-related. Arguably, FASD-affected youth, especially young men, have increased vulnerability for being recruited into gangs due to their poor judgment, being easily manipulated, difficulty perceiving social cues, heavy substance use, and difficulties understanding the link between their actions and consequences. Long-term placement in child welfare and justice facilities, combined with a lack of supportive ties to families and community are also important factors. When these youth move from their reserves to cities, they are easy targets for gangs.

46 Bonner et al., 1999.

47 BCFAS Resource Society/BC Ministry of Children and Family Development, 1998.

48 Totten and Dunn, 2009b; Clark and Benton Gibbard, 2003; Clarke, 2001; Alberta Clinical Practice Guidelines, 1999.

49 Totten and Dunn, 2009a,b; Sethi, 2007.

50 The SIS initiative is attempting to track FASD both in the missing and murdered women and in the male offenders convicted in these cases. This is extremely difficult for a number of reasons, including a lack of diagnosis and the stigma associated with this disability.

51 Pardini, 2006; Pardini and Loeber, 2008; Nash et al., 2006.

40 United Nations definition, 2005.

41 Sethi, 2007.

42 Stimpson and Best, 1991; Sobsey, 1988.

43 Razack, 1994.

44 Astley et al., 2000.

45 Streissguth et al., 2004, 1997.

A pathways approach is useful in identifying the primary mechanisms through which Aboriginal youth find themselves involved in gang activity. Some gang members are located on one primary pathway; others become gang-involved through a number of different pathways. Most of these routes into gang violence are unique to Aboriginal youth gangs.⁵² Evidence supporting the existence of these pathways comes from initial data analyses of the Prince Albert Warrior Spirit Walking Gang Project and the Regina Anti-Gang Services Project⁵³ involving a combined sample of approximately 150 youth, along with the few Canadian studies on this issue.⁵⁴ There are five main pathways: 1. The process of 'violentization', rooted in experiences of serious and prolonged child maltreatment; 2. The prolonged institutionalization of children into child welfare and youth justice facilities; 3. Brain and mental health disorders, resultant from childhood trauma and FASD; 4. Social exclusion and devaluation; 5. The development of hyper-masculine and sexualized feminine gender identities.⁵⁵

When Aboriginal children suffer extreme maltreatment and have FASD, the resultant neurological impairments likely make them vulnerable for gang recruitment. In the Prince Albert Gang Project Evaluation Study, 84% of 120 youth reported having a close family member who had a severe drug or alcohol problem and 68% had been taken into the care of child welfare facilities due to child abuse.⁵⁶ Many of these youth have the visible facial features indicative of FASD. Many lack the ability to structure their time and are easily controlled and abused by others. As a result, they are strong-armed into committing crimes that they could not formulate on their own and often take the fall for these types of crimes when they are caught. They do not realize that they are actually committing crimes when following an urge or their 'friends'.

Sexual Exploitation and Gangs

There is a dearth of research in Canada on the relationship between gangs and the sexual exploitation and trafficking of Aboriginal girls and women. In particular, very little is known about the men who are doing the trafficking.⁵⁷ Females who participate in Aboriginal gangs are for the most part treated as sexual slaves and are forced to play tertiary roles (look-out for the police, dealing drugs, sex trade work, carrying drugs and weapons). Often, they are traded amongst gang members for coercive sex. Gang crimes related to exploitation include gang rape and other forms of sexual assault, witness intimidation,

extortion, forcible confinement, controlling or living off the avails of prostitution, organized crime offences and trafficking. Most females who are gang-involved have personal relationships with male gang members: they are sisters, nieces, daughters, grand-daughters, or girlfriends. Those who don't have these prior relationships get recruited through violent intimidation. Most girls are sexually assaulted by multiple gang members as part of initiation into gangs.

Suffering chronic and repeated sexual trauma throughout childhood is also a key driver into gang life for both girls and boys. These children are most often abused by male family members or men who know them. More girls are victims, although many male youth who participate in violent gang activities report having been sexually abused.⁵⁸ For example, a majority of the 26 male gang leaders participating in the RAGS intensive gang exit program reported prolonged and severe sexual abuse by men during their childhood. Four of the five females who are participants in this same program reported that the long-term childhood sexual abuse they suffered continued throughout their adolescence and early adulthood. These four women were trafficked by Aboriginal gangs for lengthy periods of time. The average age of these gang members was 20.7 years.⁵⁹

When females are harmed, they tend to be extended family members or intimates of the perpetrators.⁶⁰ Several in-depth interviews with gang leaders who are trafficking and exploiting young women reveal an intergenerational dynamic of mothers, aunts and grandmothers having been forced to work in the sex trade and/or trafficked. It is no coincidence that these same women, along with the fathers of these young men, have suffered greatly from colonization and residential schools. Many of these young men bitterly report that their mothers were absent throughout their childhood – some having been murdered or missing for extended periods of time. Some expressed hatred for their mothers. These gang leaders seem to have learned how to sexually exploit and traffic girls in their own families at a very young age.⁶¹ Emerging data from the Prince Albert and RAGS projects support current estimates on the widespread nature of these forms of violence in Western Canada.⁶²

Anecdotal evidence from many northern communities in Western Canada suggests that there is significant under-reporting on this issue. For example, it is common for family members in such communities to identify female relatives who have gone missing. Such reports are 'unofficial' due to a variety

52 Totten, 2009a.

53 Totten and Dunn, 2009a,b.

54 Weatherburn et al. 2003; Dickson-Gilmore and Laprairie 2005; Totten 2008; Kelly and Totten 2002.

55 Totten, 2009c.

56 Totten and Dunn, 2009c.

57 Totten's exploratory research is one of the only published studies on this issue (2009b).

58 Totten and Dunn, 2009a,b; Totten, 2009c,d.

59 Totten and Dunn, 2009b.

60 Totten, 2009c,d.

61 Totten and Dunn, 2009b.

62 NWAC, 2008; Amnesty International, 2004.

of reasons, including shame, humiliation, lack of education, fear of outside involvement, fear and mistrust of the police, and family ties to gangs. Larger, systemic issues are at play here as well, such as colonization, racism and the intergenerational impact of Residential Schools.

Trafficked Aboriginal girls are hard to find – gangs usually confine them within homes or other closed environments. Prior to being trafficked, many of their lives are characterized by severe poverty, a lack of opportunities, violence, and poor health. As a result, many migrate from remote communities to cities, where their lack of job skills and city ‘smarts’ makes them very vulnerable. Some become homeless and can’t meet even meet basic needs such as food, clothing, and shelter. Many girls become isolated and lose contact with their communities; they experience culture loss. Some go to bars for friendship – where traffickers hang out. They find love in ‘boyfriends’ and street families. Traffickers approach girls who appear most vulnerable to offer jobs, opportunities, education and glamorizing city life.

Gangs, FASD, Sexual Exploitation and Extreme Violence in the Lives of Aboriginal Girls and Women

There are no published studies in Canada or elsewhere on the relationship between gangs, FASD, sexual exploitation and extreme violence in the lives of Aboriginal girls and women. Instead, as this report has demonstrated, there are anecdotal reports and a handful of exploratory studies on the relationship between sexual exploitation and gangs. Likewise, a handful of studies investigate the association between FASD and sexual exploitation. Figure One (Overlapping Cycles of Colonization, Health Determinants and Violence) provides an illustration of the potential linkages between these issues and addresses some of the gaps in knowledge. The figure demonstrates that any analysis must be conducted within the historical context of colonization, intergenerational trauma, forced assimilation, and loss of traditional gender roles. Both the ‘vulnerable women’ and ‘FASD children’ circles include factors that cause vulnerability and FASD, as well as factors that result from these issues. The women’s circle depicts the pervasive, daily experiences with systems (justice, welfare, police, employment, health, court, government, etc.) that devalue women and do not take into account the diminished life chances and resources that women have compared to men. The FASD children’s circle focuses on both primary and secondary disabilities and how Canadian society fails to support individuals with disabilities such as FASD. As well, the diagram reflects the life cycle of FASD children’s transition into adulthood, especially the fact that they themselves are likely to have FASD children.

A few studies have reported that mothers who give birth to FASD babies suffer extreme violence during pregnancy and as many as one in four mothers die within five years of birth.⁶³ For example, a five-year follow-up study of birth mothers of children with full FAS found that participants came from diverse racial, educational and socio-economic backgrounds. These mothers had untreated and serious mental health problems, were socially isolated, suffered chronic physical and sexual abuse as children and adults, and experienced significant violence during their pregnancies at the hands of men.⁶⁴ Another study investigated the prevalence of exposure to violence among a large sample (N=717) of pregnant women receiving substance abuse treatment at an inner-city treatment facility.⁶⁵ These women and their children reported high rates of exposure to physical, sexual and psychological violence – all of which had significant health consequences for the women, children, and fetuses involved. A total of 26% of the women reported having a weapon available at home, 39% of whom reported having guns. This is important because gun possession leads to increased risk for both suicide and homicide in women.⁶⁶ Male intimates are most likely to kill their female partners with these guns, and the use of illicit drugs increases the risk of homicide considerably.⁶⁷

Valborg Kvigne and colleagues in the USA have conducted the only published study on the characteristics of Aboriginal mothers of children with FASD, including intentional and unintentional injuries.⁶⁸ Their study, on the Northern Plains Indian women who have children with FAS and women who have children with some characteristics of FAS, examined suicide attempts, sexual abuse, and other serious problems. Although four of 78 mothers died, the authors do not explore the circumstances around these deaths.

Finally, research done by Drs. Ira Chasnoff and Sterling Clarren, two of the most distinguished practitioners and researchers in the world on the topic of FASD, also identifies that mothers of FASD children have an increased likelihood of dying at a young age. Their work on the women who give birth to FASD babies points to the “universal” horrific abuse these women have suffered and their lack of support systems. Their studies have not focussed on Aboriginal women. Of the women they have studied: 50% experienced physical violence during pregnancy; 33% had been sexually abused; 44% were ‘raped’; 30% had experienced loss due to violent death; 74% were pregnant by age 19; 25% had died by the time of 5-year

63 Astley et al., 2000; Tait, 2003; Velez et al., 2006; Kvigne et al., 2003; Streissguth et al., 2004; Clarren and Smith, 1978.

64 Astley et al, 2000.

65 Velez et al., 2005.

66 Sorenson and Wiebe, 2004; Paulozzi et al., 2001.

67 Bailey et al., 1997.

68 Kvigne et al., 2003.

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follow up; 80-85% had mental health issues; 35% were children of alcoholics/addicts; and 20% had FASD themselves.

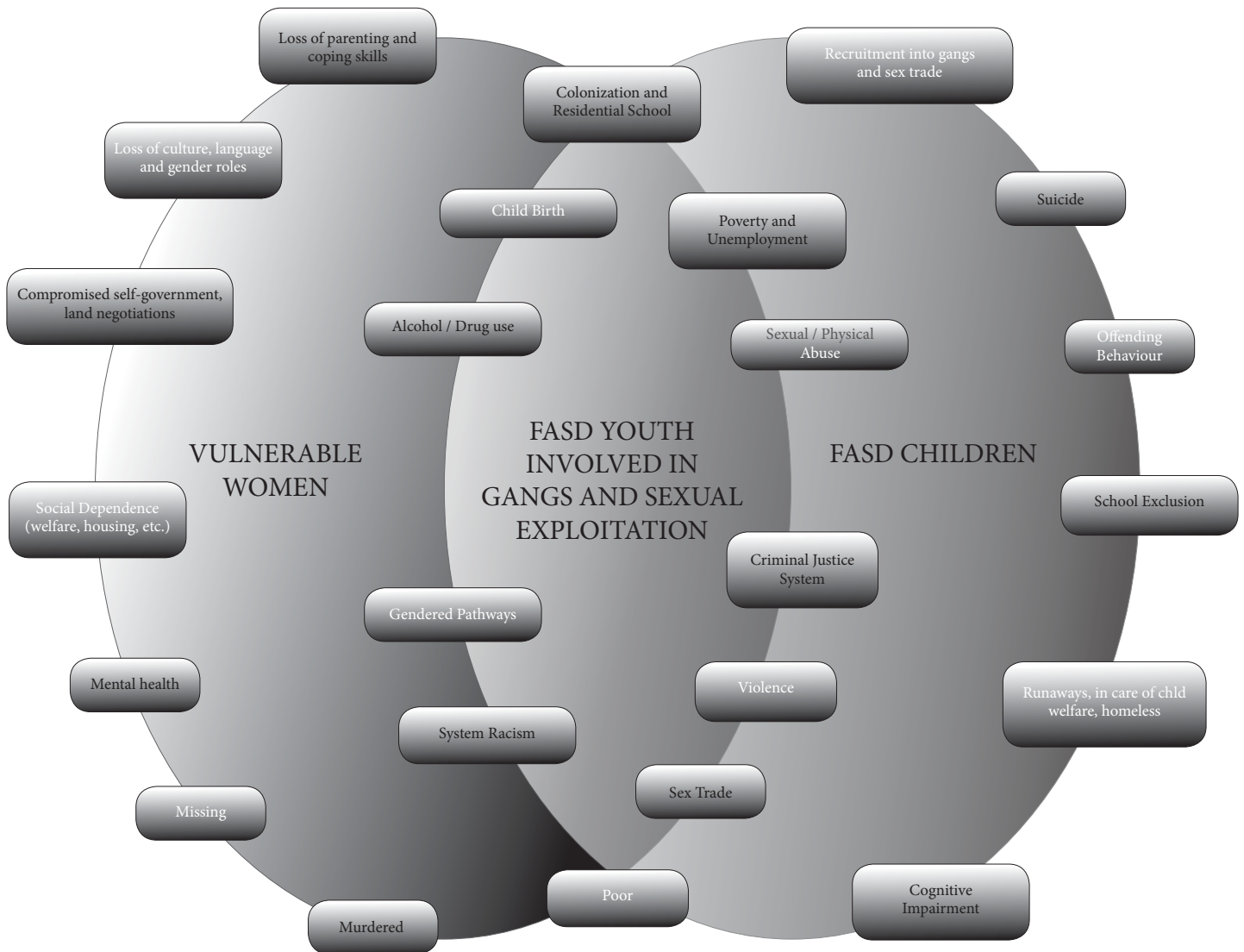
Conclusion

This paper has provided a preliminary investigation into the potential relationship between gangs, FASD, sexual exploitation and murdered/missing Aboriginal women in Canada. There are no published studies on the topic, although data exist on the linkages between some of the key variables. Due to these significant gaps in the literature, much more study is required on the relationship between these variables. It is

important that future work focus on both the historical context of colonization and intergenerational trauma, as well as focus on the strength and resiliency of Aboriginal peoples.

Future research should be participatory in nature and make use of in-depth interviews and storytelling with family members of FASD youth who have suffered extreme violence and who have been sexually exploited and gang-involved. Another area of concern relates to gang-involved male youth who are doing the sexual exploitation and trafficking. Little is known on how these young men become involved in such acts, nor do we know why they engage in such behavior. For this reason, it is important

Figure One: Overlapping Cycles of Colonization, Health Determinants and Violence



to engage male participants in order to understand from their perspective how they perceive their roles in the exploitation, trafficking and perpetration of extreme violence against women. Resources for this aspect of the investigation should not be taken from those dedicated to addressing the needs of high risk young women and their families.

This preliminary study points to some areas for policy change. First, it is apparent that coming into the care of the child welfare system is a key driver into gang life for some Aboriginal youth. One reason why Aboriginal children are so over-represented in the child welfare system is because the INAC funding formula for child welfare is significantly less than that provided by provincial ministries. This likely prevents the allocation of adequate funding to keep children in their own homes instead of removing them. As well, FASD children are highly likely to be taken into care. Second, it is clear that there are many reasons why some Aboriginal mothers use drugs and alcohol, including both socio-historical and individual factors. Programs aimed at treating substance abuse only will not work. Reducing the prevalence of FASD requires resources to address the history of colonization. It also requires that we celebrate the successes of Aboriginal peoples.

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 23-33

Indigenous Youth Conflict Intervention: The Transformation of Butterflies

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Preamble – A Snap Shot of the Aboriginal people of Canada

Indigenous peoples have been defined as traditional people, with attachments to land, cultures, and ways of life that have survived since time immemorial. They are descendants of the original inhabitants of a territory that was conquered and is now occupied by an alien and dominant culture (Burrowes, 1996; Warry, 2007, Westra, 2008). Aboriginal people are the Indigenous people of Canada. In Canada, there are three Aboriginal groups defined by the Canadian Constitution Act 1982: "Indians, Inuit, and Metis"¹ (Imai, Logan, & Stein, 1993, p. 5). It is important to note that Indian is a misnomer for the native peoples of America and Canada and many contemporary Aboriginal people find the term offensive – even though it still remains the term used in the

1 For further discussion on the subject of labels of Aboriginal people in Canada and their application see Kulchyski (2007), Warry (2007), Alfred (1999).

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to discuss the impacts of structural violence and its effects on Indigenous Peoples using Aboriginal People – The Indigenous Peoples of Canada, and the Canadian education system as the context for discussion.

Due to the root causes of conflict and the nature of violence in Aboriginal contexts being structural, working towards positive peace based on a concept of human security is the best approach to managing Aboriginal youth violence. This approach is conducive to building a culture of peace which is consistent with Indigenous traditions. Alternative methods of formal education should be considered in Aboriginal / Indigenous contexts. These methods should be grounded in the traditions of local Indigenous groups providing a safe space for rediscovery and identity negotiation between tradition and contemporary society.

The ability for Indigenous peoples to further their formal education has a profound impact on long term peace building activities. The link between education, poverty, and violence must be of primary consideration when designing peace building activities where Indigenous Peoples are involved.

Keywords: Aboriginal youth, structural violence, poverty, human security, alternative education, transformation, peace building activities.

Canadian constitution. Indian is also used to identify those people the government recognizes as having Indian status - people who live or were born on a reserve, have an identifiable band, and are recognized under the Indian Act also known as First Nations. There are also non-status Indians who are not recognized by the government because their parents or ancestors lost their Indian status (Warry, 2007).

Canada's Aboriginal population has now reached more than 1 million people. In 2006, the Aboriginal population accounted for 3.8 percent of the total Canadian population and has been on a steady rise since 1996 where it stood at 2.8 percent (Statistics Canada, 2008). The Aboriginal population is

growing at twice the rate of the general population of Canada. This is especially relevant in the Western provinces of Canada where it is predicted that by 2017, Aboriginal people aged 20 to 29 could make up almost 60 percent of some provinces. More than 80 percent of Nunavut's youth population is aged 20 to 29 and the proportion is expected to grow (Statistics Canada, 2008; Luffman & Sussman, 2007).

In 2006, over half of the Aboriginal population in Canada were children and youth. Only 21 percent of the population aged 25-64 had a high school diploma. 34 percent of Aboriginal people and 50 percent of First Nations 25-64 living on reserve had not completed high school. 14 percent had trade credentials, 19 percent had a college diploma, and 8 percent had a university degree (Statistics Canada, 2008). Life expectancy for Aboriginal men is seven years shorter than for non-Aboriginals. Suicide is two to three times more common among Aboriginal people than non-Aboriginal. 52.1 percent of Aboriginal children live in poverty compared to 23.4 percent of the general population. 46 percent of Aboriginal children in census metropolitan areas live with a lone parent, compared to 17 percent of non-Aboriginal children (Deane, Bracken, & Morrissette, 2007, p. 126-127).

In Manitoba, a province of Canada, 54 percent of the Aboriginal population lives in urban centres, 72 percent live off reserve (Statistics Canada, 2008). Aboriginal people comprise 70 percent of sentence admissions to federal or provincial custody (Deane, et al., 2007, p. 127).

In Winnipeg, the provincial capital and largest city in Manitoba, Aboriginal people represent the highest per capita child poverty rates. 80 percent of the families living in the core area of the city are Aboriginal. They live at half the rate of what is considered the poverty line for a family of four with an income of \$13,000.00 per year. The median of the general population is 40 where the median age of the Aboriginal population is 25. 48 percent of the Aboriginal population is 25 and under. The Aboriginal population increased by 45 percent between 1996 and 2006 with the largest increase occurring within the Metis community at 91 percent compared to an 8 percent growth for the non-Aboriginal population (Deane, et al., 2007, p. 127).

Winnipeg has the largest urban Aboriginal population in Canada and several low income inner city neighbourhoods have large concentrations of Aboriginal persons. The three neighbourhoods described in their paper on desistance in Aboriginal youth gangs have Aboriginal populations ranging from 39.8 per cent to 54.9 per cent. Unemployment rates are three to four times those of the city and family incomes are one third to one half the city average. In one neighbourhood 59.6 per cent of community income comes from government transfer payments (primarily social assistance) (Deane, et al., 2007, p. 127).

On average, Aboriginal people face poverty and disparity more than any other population in Canada (Anonson, Desjarlais, Nixon, Whiteman, & Bird, 2008) and the link between education level attainment, poverty, and violence (Prothrow-Stith & Spivak, 2004; McCluskey, Baker, & McCluskey, 2005), and poverty, crime and victimization (Eisler & Schissel, 2004) is no more evident, then in the Aboriginal community.

Introduction

My beautiful daughter is the inspiration for this paper. I watch as she is transforming before my eyes into a magnificent butterfly through an urban based Aboriginal organization called Ka Ni Kanichihk² that, among other types of programming, provides cultural experiences for young Aboriginal women in the city of Winnipeg. Although only nine years old, I marvel at her caring, wise, protective, and curious spirit – so much like her mother.

She has asked many times for a jingle dress (Although she wants to be a fancy dancer now) and to receive her spirit name. I'm not sure why these things are so important to her. I never even knew what those things were until I was in my mid-thirties. I wasn't even an Indian until I was sixteen³. But for her, even though she has blond hair and fair skin, she already knows she's an Indian and she knows she belongs to a clan. I know this because she tells me about the arguments she has with her friends at school - all second nations of Canada, when she tells them proudly she is Indian, and they reply, "You're not an Indian. You don't even have brown skin".

Although I've never been to "The Butterfly Club", my wife tells me how intently my daughter listens, how she asks many questions, and how the Elders like to teach her. This experience has caused me to wonder why her attitude is so different then mine and reflect on why my attitude towards teaching her Aboriginal *STUFF* is so different then my mother's was about teaching me. Clearly, our fundamental values and beliefs are similar, so why the differences?

My daughter is fortunate to have a place like Ka Ni Kanichihk within the urban environment of Winnipeg where she can go and experience Aboriginal teachings and culture. The vision of Ka Ni Kanichihk is, "to honour the spirit of our ancestors, "those

² *Ka Ni Kanichihk* means "those who lead" in the Ininew (Cree) language. Available at <http://www.kanikanichihk.ca> [Accessed 10 April 2010].

³ I was not considered an Indian under the Indian Act until I was sixteen years old. This is the year that my mother's Indian status – the thing that supposedly defines her as an Indian in Canada, was returned to her. "Prior to 1985 women who married someone other than a registered Indian lost their status under the old law. They recovered their status automatically under Bill C-31 if they applied for re-instatement. Their children could also recover their status" (Imai, et al., 1993, p. 124).

that go before” and to seek their wisdom to help guide peoples back to balance and beauty”. Their mission is “to awaken and heal the spirit of Aboriginal peoples that will guide us to our goodness, our strength, our beliefs, values, teachings, identity, and our history and to reclaim our rightful place within our families, our community, and our nations” Available at <http://www.kanikanichihk.ca> [Accessed 10 April 2010]. My experience with Aboriginal peoples is that living peacefully (in balance, harmony, and beauty) is an integral component of our world view and that of many, if not all, Indigenous peoples around the world (Ewen & The Native American Council of New York City, 1994; Mills, 1994). Aboriginal people have always practiced forms of peace building (Rice, 2009). The contemporary manifestation of this concept can be found in organizations like Ka Ni Kanichihk that provide a safe place to negotiate Aboriginal identity in contemporary Canadian society.

Culture and identity are an extremely important part of any discussion concerning Aboriginal people, youth, and violence. The stages of Aboriginal identity development celebrated through ceremony and cultural rights of passage (Simard, 2009) being experienced by my daughter at Ka Ni Kanichihk, are as unique as the diversity of Aboriginal people in Canada. Similarly, the questioning of her Aboriginal identity by her peers within the education system is also part of that journey as a young Aboriginal person in Canada. Unfortunately, this can result in an alienation from the school system for many Aboriginal youth. For example, one author identified that high school, in particular, is a major site of identity struggle where Aboriginal youth who “feel disconnected from the curriculum and the school environment, and uneasy about leaving behind peers and relatives if they achieve too much. Many report an urge to take control of their lives, even if it means taking to the road with a knapsack” (Castellano, 2008, p.7).

Programs like The Butterfly Club provide a safe space where my daughter and other female Aboriginal youth can learn and experience cultural traditions while negotiating contemporary Aboriginal identity. What Archer (1991) as cited in Adelson (2000) defined as “Aboriginality”: “the negotiation of the political, cultural, and social space of Aboriginal peoples within the nation-state” (p. 14) Aboriginality is constructed through interpretation of historical relations and present-day circumstances and, in Canada, are always linked to issues of self-determination and land rights. “Aboriginality is thus a critical political tool: an essential space of otherness that is shifting, complex, and dynamic [yet] in which Aboriginal imagination can produce an identity” (Adelson, 2000, p. 14).

In Canadian society, the structures designed to educate and create healthy Canadian citizens and protect our youth, in fact, create circumstances that contribute to the marginalization and

subsequent youth violence within the Aboriginal community – One example used for this discussion being the education system. Urban based Aboriginal organizations like Ka Ni Kanichihk play a critical role in providing a safe space where Aboriginal youth can find support, continuity with cultural traditions, and extended family that will assist them in negotiating Aboriginality while providing the opportunity for furthering their formal education.

This paper will discuss Aboriginal youth violence through the lens of oppression, structural violence, and the search for peace from an Aboriginal perspective. In discussing this controversial topic, Robbins’ (1974) summary of attitudes towards organizational conflict⁴ and its management will be applied to an Aboriginal ethnic vs. the second nations of Canada context - which I would argue aligns better with the Aboriginal worldview (Cormier, 2009). Robbins summary is explained in three philosophies: “(i) *The traditional philosophy* which views all conflicts as destructive; (ii) *The behavioural philosophy* which views conflicts as inevitable in organizations, and its existence is accepted as serving organizational goals; and, (iii) *The interactionist philosophy* which recognizes conflict as appropriate in organizations and takes the logical next step of recommending the stimulation of appropriate conflicts while seeking to prevent or resolve others” (Robbins, 1974, as cited in Thomas, 1990, p. 226). How does Robbins (1974) three philosophical views apply to the issue of Aboriginal youth violence? Can it be considered appropriate when discussing conflicts in Aboriginal contexts?

The Theoretical Challenge of Violence and Peace in Aboriginal Contexts

Similar to the butterfly that develops through a process called metamorphosis, meaning transformation or changing of shape, Aboriginal people in Canada are transforming. Indeed, one traditional viewpoint suggests that change is the only constant in life, that we are in a state of continuous change, and that change occurs in cycles or patterns (Bopp, Bopp, Brown, & Lane, 1989). The challenge is being able to see how a particular change is connected to everything else. Thus, before providing a description of youth violence in Aboriginal communities, it is necessary to first define violence and determine how these particular patterns of change are connected to everything else. For the purpose of this paper, I will limit the discussion to issues directly related to Aboriginal youth violence in Canada in terms of oppression, structural violence / conflict, and peace/non-

4 I do not differentiate, like some theorists do, between organizational conflict management and other types of conflicts like ethnic conflicts. Consequently, I draw on literature from organizational conflict and change management when discussing Aboriginal conflicts – even though they may be classified as ethnic conflicts.

violence. The following questions will guide the discussion: In Aboriginal contexts, are conflict and violence synonymous with one another? Is it possible to define violence without considering peace through the eyes of those experiencing the violence? When does conflict and/or violence require change?

2.1 *Oppression and Structural Violence*

Freire (1970) described violence in terms of oppression. He suggests that any situation where one group or person objectively exploits the other or hinders the pursuit of self-affirmation is one of oppression. These situations constitute violence, even when sweetened by false generosity because they interfere with the individual's ontological and historical vocation to be more fully human: "With the establishment of a relationship of oppression, violence has already begun" (Freire, 1970, p. 55). This Freiran concept of oppression, equated with violence, has been applied to situations of structural violence where the established rules or norms of a system, in our context Canadian society, support the ongoing unequal distribution of power that can lead to hunger, poverty, and inequality (Hodgkins, 2008). To understand this concept of structural violence and the resulting oppression, it is useful to think of it in terms of a dichotomy between direct and structural conflict: *Direct conflict* occurring over clearly articulated values between conscious, strategy-planning actors, and *Structural conflict* occurring between parties over interests embedded in social structure - parties that do not even, in a sense, know what is going on (Burrowes, 1996, p. 67).

In the field of peace and conflict studies, structural violence has been used to describe and analyze how political systems and social and organizational structures act as sources of social conflict. "Structural violence, often referred to as institutional violence, arises from social, political, and economic structures that sanction the unequal distribution of power and resources" (Botes, 2008, p. 363). This concept of structural conflict is built into social structures and appears as unequal power and unequal life chances (Burrowes, 1996). Uvin, (1998) suggests that violence in this context is a result of limiting individuals' physical and psychological capabilities, Spitz (1987) described it in terms of hunger, poverty, and inequality - what he calls "silent violence". Azar, 1990 as cited in Botes (2008) referred to this dynamic as structural victimization. This type of victimization occurs when there is "a lack of effective political participation for minorities, or the majority population's failure to recognize the identity and culture of minorities" (p. 363). Burton 1997 as cited in Bites (2008) suggests that structural violence can be found in policy and administrative decisions, economic sanctions, the workplace, and families. When these structural conditions and situations go beyond one's ability to accommodate, they often lead to physical (behavioural) violence possibly manifesting

itself socially through violent behaviour like domestic violence or child sexual abuse.

In the discussion of structural violence, the terms violence and conflict seem to be used synonymously. The difficulty begins when we begin to define conflict as necessary and positive social process (Coser, 1964; Kriesberg, 1998; Fisher, 2000). If one assumes that the majority of conflicts are managed through cooperation, constructively between the parties involved, then at some point, the relationship becomes destructive. As Fisher (2000) writes, "If this does not occur around incompatible goals or activities, and the parties work to control or frustrate each other adversarially and antagonistically, the scene is set for destructive intergroup conflict" (p. 167).

In explaining his eclectic model for intergroup conflict, Fisher (1993) makes a distinction between low intensity and high intensity intergroup conflicts. Characterized by conflicts of interest and/or values, a small number of issues, adequate individual and group functioning, and a mix of competitive/cooperative orientation, *low intensity conflicts* rely on traditional methods of dispute resolution. In *high intensity conflicts*, the sources of conflict shift to the denial or frustration of basic needs and/or struggle for power "Thus, the groups are primarily battling not for scarce resources or to propagate their values, but for their very survival in terms of identity, scarcity, freedom, and recognition" (p. 118). Similarly, in the context of hostile action, some theorists have made a distinction between physical and emotional action, and malevolent or non-malevolent behaviours. "Malevolent behaviour is designed to hurt an individual or group with little concern over the consequences for the target group or attacker. Non-malevolent hostility is action taken to worsen the position of others and to improve the position of the attacker" (Boulding, 1972, cited in Weller & Weller, 2000, p.164). In these cases, only transcendent or external influences will be effective in transforming the system back to a state of low intensity.

2.2 *Meaningful Peace, Human Security, or Just Non-Violence?*⁵

When discussing the effects of structural violence, it is necessary to identify a concept of non-violence or meaning of peace to develop an awareness of oppression or negative privilege. As I have established above, conflict and violence are synonymous in this discussion. Therefore, it would reason that the absence of conflict and violence would be a state of peace. Thus, any intervention must work towards a state of peace (Galtung, 1969). This is especially significant if peace is a

⁵ This discussion is not meant to be a lengthy philosophical discourse on the meaning of peace. My intent is to establish for readers an objective of intervention approaches based on the structural violence discussion above from the perspective of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and specifically the youth population.

precondition of progress for Indigenous peoples (Onah, 2008). So, what would peace look like in Aboriginal contexts?

Galtung (1969) made a distinction between positive and negative peace: "Just as a coin has two sides, one side alone being only one aspect of the coin, not the complete coin, peace also has two sides: *absence of personal violence, and absence of structural violence*. We shall refer to them as *negative peace* and *positive peace* respectively" (p. 183). In describing his three pillar approach to comprehensive mapping of conflict and conflict resolution, Sandole (2001) similarly describes the concepts of negative and positive peace - *Negative peace* being the prevention / cessation of hostilities and *positive peace* being the elimination of underlying causes and conditions of hostilities, including structural and cultural violence (p. 14). *Positive and negative peace* have also been described as being the absence of all direct, cultural, and structural violence, and the absence of war respectively (Byrne & Senehi, 2009). Positive peace transcends the conditions limiting human potential and assures opportunities for self-realization (Cortright, 2008).

Some authors discuss peace in terms of human security. For example, the United Nations Development Program recommended defining human security in broad terms: "Human security can no longer be narrowly defined as the absence of war. Rather, it must encompass economic development, social justice, environmental protection, democratization, disarmament, and respect for human rights and rule of law" (Annan, 2001). Gleditsch (2007) further summarized the concept as "safety from chronic threats such as hunger, disease, and repression and also, protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life" (p. 177). Burrowes (1996) defined security specific to Indigenous peoples as "recognition of their traditional rights, measures to protect Indigenous institutions that regulate resource harmony with nature, and processes to ensure meaningful participation by Indigenous Peoples in the decisions that affect their lives" (p. 140).

Boulding (2000), in her book *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History* provides a detailed discussion on the history of peace movements/cultures in the world and transforming structures that support conflict. Her book begins with a detailed description of peace as moving towards a culture of peace:

A peace culture is a culture that promotes peaceable diversity. Such a culture includes lifeways, patterns of belief, values, behaviour, and accompanying institutional arrangements that promote mutual caring and well-being as well as an equality that includes appreciation of difference, stewardship, and equitable sharing of the earth's resources among its members and with all living beings. It offers mutual security for humankind in all its diversity through a profound sense of species identity as well as kinship with the living earth.

There is no need for violence. In other words, peaceableness is an action concept, involving constant shaping and reshaping of understandings, situations, and behaviours in a constantly changing lifeworld, to sustain well-being for all. (Boulding, 2000, p. 1)

This concept of developing a peace culture is echoed in an Aboriginal traditional perspective. For example, Rice (2009), in discussing *Restorative processes of peace and healing within the governing structures of the Rotinonshonni "Longhouse People"* describes how the Rotinonshonni transformed from a perpetual state of warfare with one another to The Great Way of Peace (p. 410). This was accomplished by restoring the minds of the chiefs from violence to peace. In achieving this objective, the people would "be without fear, sadness, anger. They would be more powerful in peace than at any time when they were at war" (p. 411). Clearly, by transforming the minds of the people - bringing internal peace, one would bring peace to the nation. Sandole (2001) similarly argued this sentiment by stating, if "any one party is conflicted, it would be difficult for it to deal effectively with conflict it has with another party unless it first deals with its own internal conflicts" (p. 5). Other authors have argued the emphasis placed on restoring relationships in traditional Indigenous peacemaking (Meyer, 2002; Pinto, 2000) and the acceptance of change as a constant in life. Bopp et al., (1989) write, "There are two kinds of change, the coming together of things (development) and the coming apart of things (disintegration). Both of these kinds of change are necessary and are always connected to each other" (p. 27).

2.3 The Theoretical Challenge of Violence and Peace in Aboriginal Contexts Summarized

The patterns of youth violence and conflict resulting from structural violence in Aboriginal contexts seem to be synonymous with one another. Similar to the literature presented here, the challenge comes when conflict turns high intensity or malevolent in nature. It seems that in Aboriginal contexts in Canada, high intensity malevolent conflict is a symptom of structural conditions that influence behaviour caused by laws, policies, authoritarian practices, cultural, group, or peer norms, other perceived dysfunctional practices, and expectations of others behaviours (Weller & Weller, 2000).

In this brief discussion on peace in Aboriginal contexts, I presented literature related to negative / positive peace, human security, peace culture, and Indigenous traditional views on the subject. My assumption is that, due to root causes of conflict and the nature of violence in Aboriginal contexts being structural, working towards positive peace based on a concept of human security is the best approach to managing Aboriginal youth violence. This approach is conducive to building a culture of peace.

In Aboriginal contexts, a culture of peace is not intended to be introduced as something new, it is returning to tradition that emphasizes the ubiquitous nature of change / conflict and the restoring of communal relationships. Aboriginal cultures are collectivist in nature and emphasize the goals, needs, and views of family and community over the individual (Cheah & Nelson, 2004). As a collectivist culture, "Conflicts are conceptualized in terms of their impacts on the groups as a whole, rather than in terms of consequences for the individual. Hence, members of collectivist cultures emphasize conflict management approaches that benefit and preserve the group and that address the conflict in a holistic fashion" (Folger, Poole, & Stutman, 2001, p. 61-62).

However, it is important to consider that there is a certain amount of awareness that must also occur. A negatively privileged group must first develop awareness that *it is* negatively privileged before a social conflict between the two groups can take place and turn hostile attitudes into social action (Coser, 1964) - "It must come to believe that it is being denied rights to which it is entitled" (p. 37).

Youth Violence in Aboriginal Contexts

The intent for this paper is to discuss Aboriginal youth violence in Canada through an Aboriginal perspective. So far, I have provided some context on the subject by presenting a theoretical discussion based on literature from the field of Peace and Conflict Studies. But, what is violence in Aboriginal communities? Is there a difference between Aboriginal violence and Aboriginal youth violence? How does structural violence impact Aboriginal youth and their ability to live peacefully?

Like the life cycle of a butterfly from egg - to caterpillar - to pupa - to adult, Aboriginal people experience violence at all stages of human development from child - to adolescents - to adult - and Elder. This section will provide evidence to support the assumption that the majority of violence experienced by Aboriginal youth is a result of Canadian societal structures. These structures keep Aboriginal people in a perpetual state of low levels of education, poverty, and violence. Although there are a number of structures in Canadian society that propagate violence on Aboriginal people including the justice system (Ross, 2006), natural resource management systems (Thoms, 1996; Nadasdy, 2003), and the child welfare system (Bennett, 2008) to name a few, I will provide a specific example related to the education system for this paper.

3.1 Examples of Violence in Aboriginal Communities

The issue of violence in Aboriginal communities in Canada is complex and there is a considerable amount of academic writing on the subject. The following discussion is limited to

examples that demonstrate the pattern of education, poverty, violence, and the dramatic effect this has on Aboriginal youth.

Blackstock, Trocme, & Bennett, (2004) conducted a comparative analysis of child maltreatment cases between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal families. They summarize their findings as, "Aboriginal families face worse socioeconomic conditions, are more often investigated for neglect, less often reported for physical or sexual abuse, and report higher rates of substance abuse" (p. 901). A pervasive pattern of over representation exists from the first call to the decision to place children in out-of-home care. As a result, the number of children entering the child welfare system continues to rise. Some possible causes include poverty, unstable housing, and alcohol abuse complicated by the experience of colonization (p. 916). Similarly, Eisler and Schissel (2004) conducted a study on the complex nature of the association between poverty and victimization in adolescents. The results demonstrate clearly that poverty places youth at psychic and physical risk and the damaging effects of poverty on youth security are dependent on the day-to-day context inside and outside school. The authors suggest that "for Aboriginal youth, being poor is a substantial risk factor for being the victim or witnessing a crime" (p. 370).

Brownridge (2003) conducted an empirical investigation of male partner violence against Aboriginal women in Canada. His analysis shows that "Aboriginal women have a significantly higher prevalence of violence by their partner compared to non-Aboriginal women. Violence against Aboriginal women is more likely at all levels of severity, with the greatest disparity on the most severe forms of violence, and appears more likely to be ongoing" (p. 65). The author suggests that the impact on violence living common-law is substantially larger for Aboriginal women, and despite the perception of alcohol being largely responsible for domestic violence in Aboriginal contexts, this analysis demonstrates that "alcohol problems and partner violence are symptoms of something larger" (p. 79).

The effects of poverty and the resulting violence that Aboriginal people begin to feel as children, through to adolescents leading to violent adult relationships is clearly demonstrated in the work of Farley, Lynne, & Cotton, (2005) who conducted research on prostitution in Vancouver – one of Canada's largest cities. These authors found that of 100 women interviewed for their research fifty-two percent were First Nations women - compared to (1.7-7%) of Vancouver's general Aboriginal population, and all participants had an "extremely high prevalence of lifetime violence and post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)" (p. 242). They also found that:

Eighty-two percent reported a history of childhood sexual abuse by an average of four perpetrators. Seventy-two percent reported childhood physical abuse, 90 percent

had been physically assaulted in prostitution, 78 percent had been raped in prostitution. Seventy-two percent met DSMV-IV criteria for PTSD. Ninety-five percent said they wanted to leave prostitution. Eight-six percent reported current or past homelessness with housing as one of the most urgent needs. Eighty-two percent expressed a need for treatment for drug or alcohol addictions. (Farley et al. 2005, p. 242)

This historical pattern of violence is also discussed by Ross (2006) in his book, *Returning to the Teachings: Exploring Aboriginal Justice*. The author paints an equally compelling and tragic picture of the people of Hollow Water resulting from years of community violence:

The Hollow Water team presently estimates that 80 percent of the population of their community, male and female alike, have been the victims of sexual abuse, most often at the hands of extended family members usually for long periods of time. Just as shockingly, they now estimate that a full 50 percent of the community's population, male and female, has at one time or another sexually abused someone else. (Ross, 2006, p. 38)

This type of trauma manifests itself in various types of violent and destructive behaviour (Herman, 1997) in the Aboriginal youth population including high levels of sexually transmitted infections (Steenbeek, 2004), gambling (Schissel, 2001), sexual offenses (Rojas & Gretton, 2007), and urban Aboriginal gangs (Deane, et al., 2007). However, none are more severe than suicide. Kirmayer (1994) asserted that "Canadian Aboriginal peoples currently suffer from one of the highest rates of suicide of any group in the world" (p.3). The author's evidence suggests that over a third of all deaths among Aboriginal youth are attributable to suicide and the Aboriginal suicide rate is three times that of the general Canadian population. From ages 10 to 29, Aboriginal youth on reserve are 5 to 6 times more likely to die of suicide than their peers in the general population.

It is apparent that violence against Aboriginal people, whether committed among Aboriginal people or committed historically by forces external to the Aboriginal community (Churchill, 1997; Howley, 1980), the most intense victimization is found within the child and youth demographic - Similar to children in war zones affected by violence (Boothby, Stranz, & Wessells, 2006), the effects of trauma reaches deep within contemporary Aboriginal communities and across generations (Barnes, Josefowitz, & Cole, 2006). Anonson, et al., (2008) accurately summarized, "Aboriginal peoples, on average, face poverty and disparity more than any other population in Canada". The Canadian council of Social Development and the Native Women's Association of Canada (1991) as cited in Brownridge (2003), stated that the nature of family violence

in Aboriginal communities "transcends cultural boundaries. Its affiliation is indiscriminate ... But family violence in Aboriginal society also has its own unique dimensions. It is not simply Aboriginal women who have been rendered powerless - it is Aboriginal society" (p. 81).

Beginning with life as a child, moving through adolescents, and fighting for survival as an adult, the one common structure that has been shown to have a positive impact on poverty and adolescents is education attainment (Brownridge, 2003). Similarly, I would suggest that no public system can promote empowerment of individuals at the individual, community, and political levels (Kirmayer, 1994) like the education system. Unfortunately, there is no better example of a history of oppressive Canadian governmental policies and racist practices that manifest in "high rates of interpersonal violence, alcohol abuse and related accidental deaths and suicides reported in many Aboriginal communities" (Adelson, 2000, p. 12) than the education system.

3.2 Structural Violence in the Education System in Canada

The discussion below asserts that, beginning with Indian Residential Schools and moving to today's education system, schools have consistently been used as a tool by the Canadian nation state to assimilate Aboriginal people – to "take the Indian" out of native children (Adelson, 2000, p. 12); The effects of this approach to building Canadian citizens is that Aboriginal people do not succeed to the same degree as non-Aboriginal students.

Indian Residential Schools were developed to educate widely dispersed Aboriginal children, remove them from their parents care, and to encourage them to abandon and denigrate Aboriginal language, culture, and religious practices. This separation from parents, immigration to a new culture, second language learning, and denigration of their first language and culture placed residential school students at risk for potentially harmful psychological impacts (Barnes, et al., 2006). The devastating effects culturally, socially, economically, and personally resulting from systematic efforts to control and assimilate in Canada has been described as internal colonization (Deane et al., 2007). Barsh, (1994) as cited in Barnes et al., (2006) summarized the effects this has on Aboriginal children to this day, "problematic conditions at residential schools likely contributed to the difficulties that Aboriginal children, as a group, continue to have in education" (p. 29). It is clear that these experiences have negative influences well beyond immediate lives of former students. However, does the structural violence experienced by Aboriginal people during the residential schools period still exist today? Considering that First Nations people have only been allowed to attain postsecondary education without fear of being disenfranchised since the early 1970s

(Anonson et al, 2008), the historical legacy of residential schools seems to have survived to this day.

Statistics Canada 1998, as cited in Hards (2006) suggested, Aboriginal students are half as likely to finish high school or complete a postsecondary diploma and one-fifth as likely to complete a university degree as the general population. The Social planning Council of Winnipeg 1999 as cited in McCluskey et al.(2005) stated that “50.3% of Aboriginal youth drop out of school annually in Winnipeg, compared to only 19.5% of non-Aboriginals” (p. 335). School dropout is particularly severe in rural areas where many Aboriginal youth must leave the support of their communities to advance in education. For example, McCluskey et al. (2005) noted that in the three partnering school districts for their project “only 1 in 25 Aboriginal students who left their reserves to attend high school graduated in 1996. In the second school district, a longitudinal review of 23 Aboriginal children who entered Kindergarten indicated that only 1 made it all the way through the system. And, in the third, a residential school designed specifically for Native youth coming from a northern community failed to graduate even a single student in several years of operation” (p. 335-336). Siler, Mallett, Greene, and Simard 2002 as cited in McCluskey et al. (2005) highlighted that these issues are all “exacerbated by the fact that the Aboriginal population is growing exceedingly quickly (from 210 in the 1951 census to approximately 67,000 – almost 10% of Winnipeg’s inhabitants” (p. 335).

O’Donnell & Tait 2003 as cited in Hutchinson, Mushquash, & Donaldson (2008) identify reasons for Aboriginal non-reserve youth aged 15-19 leaving high school. They include being bored (20%) and wanting to work (15%). Among women of the same age group, reasons for permanently leaving high school included pregnancy or needing child care (25%) and boredom. For Aboriginal non-reserve people aged 25-44, family responsibilities and financial reasons were the two most cited motives – men most likely to cite the latter (24%) and women the former (34%) (p. 270).

This short discussion provides evidence to support the assertion that the Canadian education system propagates structural violence on Aboriginal people by not allowing them the same life chances as other Canadian citizens. This occurs by limiting their physical and psychological capabilities through the policies and administrative decisions that limited their ability to succeed in the school system and thereby remaining in a state of poverty and violence.

Back to Butterflies – Conclusion

I began this paper by sharing the story of my daughter and her experiences at Ka Ni Kanichihk in The Butterfly Club. As a blond haired, fair skinned, urban based Indian, she represents

one of the new faces of the Indigenous population of Canada. A population that although seems to struggles at times, is in the process of reconciling traditional Aboriginal identity with life in the modern Canadian nation state. As Adelson (2000) points out, if social suffering “derives from a colonial and neo-colonial history of disenfranchisement and attempts to eradicate a cultural history, then the proper response to that suffering must include the reconstitution and reaffirmation of identity” (P. 30).

The evidence of violence resulting from this process of renegotiation seems overwhelming. In their book, *Murder is No Accident: Understanding Youth Violence in America*, Prothrow-Stith & Spivak (2004) identify a number of factors that contribute to youth violence including social norms, culture, and expectations of others; poverty; overcrowding (number of people per square foot of housing); environmental factors like witnessing violence, victimization, fear, and anger; alcohol and drug use; glamorizing and promoting violence; adult role modelling; adolescent vulnerability; and the accessibility of guns. Evidence gathered for this paper clearly demonstrates that the Aboriginal population of Canada reflects a number of these factors. In fact, I would argue that all these factors are pervasive in Aboriginal communities in Canada.

However, despite struggling for their basic physical and moral survival rooted in the protection of identity needs (Rothman, 1997), the renegotiation of Aboriginal identity does not have to be violent. Through reflection and negotiation of cultural and political identities via ceremony, celebration, and reconnection to the elements of Aboriginal identity or what defines Aboriginal culture, non-violent changes in identity can occur (Castagno & Brayboy, 2008). An Aboriginal solution to the problem of youth violence is “manifested in the meanings associated with ceremonies or traditions that have been carried out for thousands of years and that define - at least in part - the nature of the people” (p. 944). According to Northrup (1989), this will result in changes to the structures that support violence:

If change occurs in the identities of at least one of the parties, the chances for long-term change are greatly increased, particularly if the change involves core aspects of identity that are directly related to the conflict. Such structural changes, or core changes to identity, affect the entire system; that is, change in identity results in changes in the relationship, resulting in changes in behaviour (p. 78).

Folger, et al., (2001) suggested that people choose conflict resolution strategies based on the attributions they make regarding the causes, biases in the attribution process tend to encourage noncooperative modes of conflict, and the choice of conflict strategies influences the likelihood of conflict resolution and the degree of satisfaction in the relationship. These three propositions suggest that in Aboriginal contexts, Aboriginal

people must determine the appropriate strategy to address violence based on their beliefs of the causes. Fundamentally, these strategies must address their need for security and identity, a consistent response from their environment (without which learning is impossible), both recognition and valued relationships or bonding from their social context, and most importantly, some control over their environments in order to ensure their needs are fulfilled (Lerche III, 2000). As presented in the introduction of this paper, the vision and mission Ka Ni Kanichihk very clearly meets these criteria and fills a void in the education system that the present system in Canada is clearly not meeting.

Robbins (1974) three philosophies applied in the context of Aboriginal youth violence would read: (i) *The traditional philosophy* which views all conflicts as destructive; (ii) *The behavioural philosophy* which views conflicts as inevitable, and its existence accepted as serving goals; and (iii) *The interactionist philosophy* which recognizes conflict as appropriate and takes the logical next step of recommending the stimulation of appropriate conflicts while seeking to prevent or resolve other. An Aboriginal worldview necessitates acceptance of change as constant and therefore, accepts conflict as inherent in life. However, as discussed earlier, the terms conflict and violence are used synonymously. Thus, change, conflict, and violence seem to be synonymous with one another. However, by thinking about Aboriginal conflicts in terms of high intensity / low intensity or malevolent behaviour, conflict can be viewed as appropriate and in fact, can be used when required to create learning. Here once again, an urban based Aboriginal organization like Ka Ni Kanichihk can fill this need. Clearly, the vision and mission of the organization can assist Aboriginal people in rediscovering their culture of peace.

Similar to the transformation of a butterfly, Aboriginal people are in a state of constant change. Indeed, embracing change is the Aboriginal worldview. However, like the butterfly, although the physical form changes, the essence of the being remains the same - the strength and resilience of the spirit remains eternal. The spirit of Aboriginal people remains in organizations like Ka Ni Kanichihk that are assisting the youth population to, as Senge (1994, p. 18) asserted, "move naturally towards a state of balance and equilibrium". To live Indigenous peace.

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 34-44

Co-location of a Government Child Welfare Unit in a Traditional Aboriginal Agency: A Way Forward in Working in Aboriginal Communities

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Purpose and Objective of Study

The purpose of the project was threefold: 1) to explore effective collaboration between agencies in child and family services with aboriginal families, 2) to compare and contrast differences in organizational contexts of a traditional non-government organization (NGO) and government agencies and 3) to discover new ways of providing child and family services that combine traditional worldviews and western theories of child and family practice that support Aboriginal communities. The project used Participatory Action Research methodology to create an on-going dialogue between Bent Arrow Family Support staff (local Aboriginal NGO), Edmonton and Area Child & Family Services Region 6 Family Enhancement Unit staff (government agency), both co-locating at Bent Arrow, and the Southeast Neighbourhood Centre Child and Family Services (government agency) concerning effective collaborative processes within their organizational contexts. This research is unique in that a relative equal partnership between government and non-government agencies for research purposes can be unusual. The aim of the research project was to provide the opportunity for all three groups to explore the above purpose in a supportive environment that allows for creative thinking concerning the improvement of child and family practices

Abstract

This article describes the learning that took place in the context of a provincial family enhancement unit within an Aboriginal child welfare agency. Many benefits were identified for the workers, the families, and the relationship to the community. Most notable were the positive effects on non-Aboriginal government staff who were immersed in a more traditional Aboriginal agency. Key learnings include the importance of relationship in child welfare practice, the desire of child welfare workers for greater creativity in their responses to children and families and the need for more supportive leadership in the creation of the conditions necessary for this to happen. Recommendations are made to provincial officials to assist in the creation of such an environment.

Keywords: Aboriginal worldviews, child welfare practice, leadership, learning environment, creativity, relationship building, Participatory Action Research.

within Aboriginal communities. Once enough knowledge was gathered, action plans were developed to disseminate the information to all groups involved so that implementation of the findings could begin. In particular child welfare policy-makers, senior management of the government and non-government agencies involved and child welfare practitioners will be targeted when the findings are disseminated. The project was funded by the Alberta Centre for Child, Family and Community Research, a provincial funding agency specifically looking at child, family and community research and supported by Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services, Region 6. Front line workers and supervisors were given three hours a month, for one year, to be part of the project. The facilitators for the project were two University of Calgary professors, one who had close connections with Edmonton and Area Child and Family Services as well as Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and the other who has been involved in Participatory Action Research locally as well as in Africa.

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Literature Review

Although there is much literature on effective collaboration in agencies, few focus on system management between agencies, similarities and differences between organizational contexts, working relationships (subjective components of partnerships) and outcomes (quality of service) (Horwath & Morrison, 2007). The Bent Arrow Traditional Society has offered staff the opportunity to work collaboratively in providing effective services for Aboriginal children and youth in Edmonton. We were interested in learning how this collaboration has met the challenges of dealing with philosophical differences in organizational contexts that call upon the participants to learn and accept another worldview. Creating space for future thinking around service provision is rare but a valuable process in any organization (Lafrance & Bastien, 2007). By creating space, we mean negotiating time away from work where by front line workers and supervisors could come together to look at practice issues without being distracted by work. Creating space also means providing an environment by which the participants feel safe to share their thoughts and feelings with repercussions. This research project brought together three staff groups, all of who were interested in delivering effective services to Aboriginal children and youth, to reflect upon organizational and working relationships surrounding present child and family practice. It provided a space to critically examine the inherent challenges to effective collaboration in such a setting. Ultimately we hoped to encourage the development of effective practice tools, change existing practice where needed and create new and improved levels of practice for families and youth. It allowed space for reflection on new ways of providing child and family services that combined traditional worldviews and western theories of child and family practice. It was hoped that the project would support on-going communication with these groups in order to encourage an atmosphere of collaboration and growth. In December 2003, an evaluation was completed concerning this co-location collaborative venture. This project built upon these recommendations and sought to continue exploring and implementing practice issues identified in this evaluation. These include building trust, understanding roles and responsibilities and resource issues (Indesol, 2003).

Current Child and Family Issues

Existing research suggests that there is an interesting congruence between worldviews and theories of family resiliency. However, Aboriginal oral tradition and the other theoretical literature both suffer from a lack of application in child welfare systems (Lafrance & Bastien, 2007). In fact the hope for a child welfare system that works for Aboriginal youth is strewn with overt obstacles, hidden dangers and lack of

communication. These obstacles and hidden dangers include the lack of communication about and explanatory discussions of oppression, colonialism, Euro-centrism, domination and exploitation (Battiste, 2000; Henderson, 2000). The loss of traditional ways of living through colonialism, modernization and education (Battiste & Henderson, 2000) and the impacts of systemic poverty and racial discrimination are well known and require little elaboration. Meanwhile, Aboriginal communities continue to lose their most precious resource, their children, to child welfare systems often destroying their affiliation with their people. Interventions seem to only too rarely create happy, healthy, and productive adults. Some appear well on the surface but end up not belonging anywhere or to anyone, disconnected from their communities of origin and no longer part of their adopted community (Sinclair, 2007).

The effects and implications of colonization have had, and continue to have, major impacts in Indigenous societies worldwide. Indigenous peoples have been in a political struggle to defend themselves and their resources since first contact with colonizers. After initial colonization and the industrial revolution, most surviving Indigenous peoples lost their political independence, and now only have limited control over their resources (Bodley, 2000). For centuries colonialism and the imposing states have sought to methodically extinguish Indigenous ways of being and seeing the world through policies and persecution that prohibited the practicing of spirituality, the speaking of languages, the removal of children, and essentially the way of life (; Weaver & Congress, 2009; Wilson, 2004) and this is the greatest weapon of imperialism. Thiong'o (1986) describes that weapon as a cultural bomb: something that is dropped onto a culture with devastating results. He states, "The effect of a cultural bomb is to annihilate a people's belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves" (p. 3). The entire system was imposed to "civilize" the Indigenous peoples, and allow for "progress". This was needed in order to fulfill the colonizer's mission; had Indigenous values and ways been treated as relevant and equal, the colonialist practices would have been impossible to sustain (Wilson, 2004).

Briskman (2007) outlines widely accepted values for Indigenous peoples. They include: the earth is our Mother; preservation and conservation; sharing and caring; each other's keeper; group-based society; decision-making by consensus; harmony between people, and between people and land; knowledge to be sought, acquired, given and used in a proper way; and importance of oral tradition (Briskman, 2007). Aboriginal communities that are grounded in their culture and traditions can provide a community environment that is far

more conducive to child, youth and family wellness (Blackstock, 2009; Bodor, Lamoureaux & Beggs, 2009; Simpson, 2008; Smith, Burke & Ward, 2000; Weaver & Congress, 2009). One way to ensure this can be found is in the way that services are established, administered, and delivered. The way in which organizations are established and managed has a direct impact on the leadership in human services. Indigenous-serving organizations have a responsibility to uphold the values and culture they aim to strengthen. Indigenous peoples have a long history of being spoken for, and acted upon, without meaningful discussion or collaboration from those who will directly be impacted by the service. If Indigenous human service organizations only seek to maintain the status quo and work from a mainstream perspective, there is the potential to do harm to the Indigenous population they serve. Too often, however organizations, while they are Indigenous run and focused on serving the Indigenous population, operate from a Western set of values and ways of organizing, giving into dominant norms and values. Providing an environment that is focused on Indigenous ways reinforces to Aboriginal clients the value that is placed on being proud of Aboriginal ways of being. By recognizing the colonized systems that are present in our communities, and seeking ways to work differently, organizations can contribute to decolonizing the attitudes and ways within our communities. For example, our observation and discussions around Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society showed that the agency was a group based agency with decision-making by consensus. There was a welcoming atmosphere to anyone entering the building and relationships between clients, staff and government staff was the most important part of running the agency. Not only was relationship building important but ceremonies were a part of life in the agency, often conducted on Aboriginal lands. When entering the agency, Aboriginal worldview, values and beliefs appeared in writing, visual artistic material, and eating together, both client and staff, in a lunch room area. These examples are a form of decolonizing organizations. When Aboriginal values and beliefs are implemented, organizations can create an atmosphere that will directly challenge the mainstream way of providing services. bell hooks, (as quoted in Graveline, 1998) said "even in the face of powerful structures of domination, it remains possible for each of us, especially those of us who are members of opposed and/or exploited groups... to define and determine alternative standards, to decide on the nature and extent of the compromise" (p.11). This means that as Indigenous organizations, even though living in a colonized world, and having to meet certain imposed standards for funding requirements, it is possible to change various aspects of the way in which indigenous organizations provide services and operate their organizations. This project was in no small part intended to sensitize front line, supervisory and administrative

staff to the intentions of Aboriginal people to achieve greater self-determination and to create helping systems that serve to counter and even reverse the consequences of this clash of values and worldviews.

Collaboration

Grace and Coventry (2010) define collaboration in human services as "services that plan together to address issues of overlap, duplication and the gaps that exist in service provision, each working towards the same outcomes" (p. 159). Due to similar situations described above effective collaboration between agencies with similar goals is being recognized as an important way forward when caseloads are stretched to the limit, resources are minimal and communication between agencies is increasingly difficult to maintain (Grace & Coventry, 2010; Ragan, 2003). Grace and Coventry (2010) point out the benefits of a co-location model "it not only benefits those directly exposed to increased contact with others, but because co-location can result in a range of benefits for clients and the service delivery system alike" (p. 160). These benefits include: "1) convenience to service users; 2) enhanced client outcomes; 3) enhanced inter-agency knowledge; 4) improved inter-agency communication; and 5) reduced costs and increased efficiency" (p. 60). Understanding the organizational contexts of agencies and their similarities and differences can enhance our understanding of successful collaboration between agencies. Horwath & Morrison (2007) provide a framework for collaboration and integration in children's services, identifying issues and ingredients for effective collaboration. They identify different levels of multiagency collaboration: 1). "communication (individuals from different disciplines talking together); 2) co-operation (low key joint working on a case-by-case basis); 3) co-ordination (more formalized joint working, but no sanctions for non-compliance); 4) coalition (joint structures sacrificing some autonomy) and 5) integration (organizations merge to create new joint identity)" (pg. 2). They identify important components of collaboration to explore including 1). Pre disposing factors or the history of agency relations and informal networking; 2) mandates, such as legislative directives and funding specifications that encourage and offer direct collaboration. A shared recognition of the need to collaborate is important as well as political support and incentives and shared meaningful goals; 3) appropriate membership and leadership is important including addressing power issues among agencies and having effective leadership that encourages others to commit to this type of partnership; 4) policies and lines of accountability within the partnership. There may be a need to change the physical location in order that the partnership can work effectively as well as a commitment to sharing resources for the partnership; 5) the processes of the

partnership include values, interdisciplinary training, trust, role, clarity and communication. Often in partnerships, people bring their different values and philosophies. This can bring about tensions regarding practice but can also be an avenue for growth. Understanding and talking about these different worldviews is important and time needs to be given to reflect on these similarities and differences and 6) "effective communication is a key component for establishing trust" (pg. 12) and without this component a lack of understanding of others' roles or mistrust for other professional's perspectives can destroy partnerships. These processes are extremely important to explore and this research project allowed staff the opportunity to explore these components in relation to their work in child and family services. Co-location can support Howarth & Morrison's (2007) framework for collaboration. As Grace and Coventry (2010) state: "co-location is best understood as one of many potential strategies that can be used to further the complex and sophisticated work that is inter-agency collaboration. In the physical realm, co-location can help to construct user-friendly space. Politically, it can contribute to service system reforms towards integration and pragmatically, local issues can be addressed. In short, benefits can be achieved for clients, service providers and the service system alike, without causing the difficulties that traditionally accompany a full-scale merger or amalgamation of services" (p. 161). To further the co-location model, Ragan (2003) describes how co-location has turned into a service integration centre of many government and non-government agencies in one building so that clients can access a range of services without going to many different agencies.

Research Methodology

Introduction

The research methodology used for the project was a qualitative methodology called Participatory Action Research (PAR). By using this methodology, researchers are able to create an environment by which workers are able to dialogue and critically reflect upon issues concerning their work. PAR allows for groups of people to come together and has clear rules around power and safety. The methodology requires a non-hierarchical approach to research which in turn can produce a safe environment by which all co-researchers and share their thoughts and feelings without repercussion. Ideally, the findings are disseminated and action plans are then implemented in order to change the situation for the benefit of all. It is concerned with the dialogical process of knowledge production. "It is coming to recognize our own knowledge while valuing the knowledge of others in mutually respectful dialogue, coming to share openly while openly sharing with others" (Pyrch & Castillo, 2001, p. 384). According to Lincoln (2001) PAR

emerged as an alternative to social science research that lacked the ability to address persistent social problems such as "racism, maldistribution of social, economic and material goods... illiteracy, crime, environmental degradation, resource waste and ineffective public education practices" (p. 124). Riecken, Strong-Wilson, Conibear, Michel and Riecken (2005) support this thinking. In their study concerning health and wellness with Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal youth, they used PAR because it went beyond conventional research, promoted equality of relationships and had "openness to multiple forms of representation" (p. n.p.). Wilson (2008) introduces indigenous research methodologies through ceremony. The stages of ceremony ie. living a congruent lifestyle to research principles, preparing space to learn, working and thinking together as one and incorporating the findings into a lifestyle are conducive to the principles of PAR. McCalman, Tsey, Baire, Connolly, Baird and Jackson (2009) found using PAR with Aboriginal men's groups and youth programs to be empowering as well as action orientated. "PAR provides a way forward for implementing intra- and/or inter-community knowledge sharing and further documenting the extent to which it can support empowerment" (p. 4). Marshall & Batten (2004) found in their cross-cultural research that PAR addressed power issues more effectively than conventional research, something important to address particularly with groups that have experienced colonization. PAR allows for these issues to surface and be reflected upon in a meaningful way. The PAR process "incorporates valuable knowledge acquired from the collective experiences of the people and with the people (Fals Borda, 1988, p. 53).

Principles of PAR

Susan Smith (1997) and Dorothy Henderson (1995) give a comprehensive understanding of the principles and assumptions behind PAR. They are as follows: 1) The full participation of the people being studied in all phases of the research process; 2) A non-hierarchical dialogical consensus decision-making process; 3) All forms of knowledge are valuable including scientific knowledge, experiential knowledge and popular knowledge, culture, history and the lived experiences of the people involved in the research process; 4) Focusing, challenging and balancing power relations within the research group and focusing on the importance of empowerment; 5) Active consciousness-raising of all of the researchers, including the outsider researcher in order for a mutual educative experience to take place; 6) An avenue by which political and social action can take place. Fals Borda (1988) the father of PAR describes this type of research as 1) collective research incorporating both quantitative and qualitative knowledge gathering techniques, 2) recovery of history, 3) valuing and applying indigenous folk culture and

values and 4) the production and diffusion of new knowledge (Fals Borda, 1988).

This type of research methodology was appropriate in relation to this project for the following reasons:

1. It provided a space, not normally provided in working time, to identify effective collaboration practices between different agencies. The research group was able to look at child and family issues in relation to communities and to look at beliefs and values governing these issues. It provided continuing education and self-reflection on practice issues so important to social workers. This type of research supported the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society's philosophy, which encourages reflection (Jobin, 2005).
2. The level of reflection and dialogue was conducive to a group research experience to a greater degree than many other methods.
3. It provided the opportunity for different people to come together that would not normally happen in individual interviews.
4. The data was analyzed as a group process and offered a wide range of people the opportunity to analyze knowledge generated throughout the process.
5. It offered the opportunity to disseminate the findings that reflected the knowledge generated from the group process. Implementation of the findings will be the responsibility of the organizations involved.
6. Learning was reciprocal and an atmosphere of mutual concern, caring trust and friendship was created during the project (Lincoln, 2001).

Gaining Entry

In 2005, the authors met with Shauna Seneca, Co-Director of Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society on several occasions to plan a research project that would look at the model of co-location used by Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and Child and Family Region 6 staff as well as a regional office that was not co-located but worked with Aboriginal families. Included would be a discussion of best practice for Aboriginal families in Edmonton. The concern that more and more Aboriginal children were being taken into care (65% of children in care in Alberta are Aboriginal) was the basis for the research and both government and non-government agencies were concerned about these statistics. It was also quite clear that Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society was a strong Aboriginal agency that was successful in working with Aboriginal families in Edmonton and that the co-location of a government organization within the Society has had a positive effect on work with Aboriginal families. Once a preliminary plan

was discussed, an advisory group was created to help prepare the proposal. At this point it should be mentioned that Shauna Seneca passed away in December 2006 and Cheryl Whiskeyjack took her place in the project.

Advisory Group

The advisory group was made up of two University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work researchers; two Child and Family Region 6 managers; one supervisor (Child and family region 6 involved in the co-location project); one Bent Arrow senior manager; one executive director – Human Resource Management, Children's Services; one Board member of the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society; one social policy manager; and one research assistant in the Master's of Social Work program at the University of Calgary, Central and Northern Region. The role of the advisory group was not only to help prepare the proposal but to advise the research facilitators concerning issues arising from the research and to participate and encourage the dissemination of information after the findings were determined.

Research Group

The research group consisted of two University of Calgary, Faculty of Social Work professors, one social planner, two supervisors and six front line workers from the different agencies. The team changed over time, particularly with the government staff, due to the high turnover in jobs in government agencies. By the end of the project the research group had one supervisor, three front-line workers and two facilitators.

Knowledge Gathering

Brennan & Noffke (2001) state that the point of knowledge generation "is to further the communicative action of the members of the group; their understanding of themselves and others, the setting and their capacity to act" (p. 26). They identify three types of data collection: a) information gathered concerning the topic under discussion, b) information gathered through the group process of dialogue and interaction, and c) data concerning the action research process. Our first meeting as a group was in December 2007 and was a one day workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to establish relationships with each other, understand the PAR process and looking at the purpose and objectives of the research. The workshop was video recorded for use in a later DVD production. Following this meeting, there was movement of research group members, a few deciding that it wasn't for them and wished to withdraw. Other people were added in the next few months to replace these people.

The group met once a month for three hours at Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society for the next year. Different ways to

collect data were used including exercises challenging one's own viewpoint (map exercise), and guest speakers. Each group member was given a digital recorder so that journals could be orally recorded outside the meetings for further reflection. The reflection/action process aimed to raise the critical consciousness of the individual and group in order to define issues. By the third or fourth meeting the group identified four questions, out of ten proposed, that they could concentrate on for the rest of the research. These questions were as follows:

- What organizational factors support effective collaboration practice?
- What organizational factors constrain the implementation of effective collaborative practice?
- How has co-location made a difference with this partnership and is it possible for partnerships to flourish without co-location?
- What beliefs, values and philosophical orientations have affected the way in which child and family services are practiced in Edmonton among Aboriginal youth?

Each meeting started with the sharing of reflections from the last meeting or something group members had thought about between meetings. This is in part to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and understanding as well as creating a safe environment for people to speak their minds and to think critically about their own practice. As one participant explained: "Initially, the researchers stated that this would be a safe environment for discourse and they really have made that happen. I've never felt the need to worry about something that I've needed to say in this group, which is wonderful to hear." As the group progressed, analysing the data became part of the group process.

Data Analysis

Each meeting was tape recorded and after each meeting, transcripts were typed and sent to each group member. They were encouraged to read the transcript and begin to themize what had been said at the meetings. Both facilitators themized the transcripts during the project as well. However, due to the transcripts being quite lengthy and overwhelming for the participants, a decision was made by the group that each group member would take one transcript and themize it, thus all transcripts were themized by the facilitator and one group member. To support credibility and reliability a third person transcribed the transcripts and sent a summary to the group. Once the transcripts had been themized we planned a weekend retreat to code the transcripts at the first, second and third levels. The retreat for the group was the highlight of the project. After creating knowledge for a year they were finally able to see the

results of their work. The group looked at the summaries of the themized transcripts and then themes were identified and put up on the wall. They were then categorized under sub-themes and finally three themes emerged that represented the work of the group. The feeling of accomplishment at seeing the findings and seeing how they reflected the understanding of the group was immense and well worth the time and effort. At the retreat, the work of the group was video recorded for use in a DVD production at the end of the project.

Positives and Challenges to the PAR Process

Reflecting on the PAR process, issues of time, changing of jobs and fear were important to address. Positively speaking after a few people decided not to continue with the research process, the group felt that the research had created a safe environment by which issues could be raised. Within the space of one year, most people in the group had changed job positions, reflecting the nature of the work and movement in employment. Changing of jobs meant that some of the group members had to withdraw from the project and letters to new supervisors were sent asking for permission for the worker to continue with the project. Although committed to the end of the project, initially we said one year for the project but we underestimated the time needed and therefore the project was given a one year extension by the funder and the University of Calgary ethics committee. This one year extension meant that some of the group members had to leave the project. Another concern was the fact that the two of the Aboriginal group members were unable to continue with the project for various reasons and there was a feeling of imbalance as the balance of people from each organization was very important to the process. One person felt that being involved with the research project might jeopardize their job prospects in the future and thus decided to withdraw from the project. Nevertheless, the project had six committed group members prepared to give their time for the dissemination of information in the next few months following the end of the project.

Findings of the Research

Three major themes came out of the research process. They are 1) relationships, 2) creativity and 3) leadership. These themes reflect the similarities and differences we found when looking at Child and Family Services regular local offices and the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and the co-location project.

Relationships

Relationship is key to good social work practice. Not only is this important between social workers and clients but also important between staff, staff and policy makers and staff and managers. The time and energy for building these relationships

seems to be increasingly seen as less important in many Child and Family Services settings. Not only is more time spent on paperwork, but less time is being spent on building relationships. One group member stated: "If you don't have a relationship with people, it really is a mess, and to have a relationship with people can be quite harm reducing. That we know so what do we do about it?" There seems to be an atmosphere of fear in many government offices and in Child and Family Services at large and this fear is having an impact on the effectiveness of frontline workers with Aboriginal families. Organizational prerequisites for healthy relationships are 1) supportive peers; 2) supportive agencies; 3) support from supervisors; 4) respect for each other; 5) time spent together; 6) safe environment to challenge differences, pre-conceptions and assumptions; 7) trust; 8) openness; 9) keeping it real; 10) keep the child at the centre of the work. One group members states: "It was very clear to me, one, the importance of relationship and really getting to know the youth and you would see them, obviously three, four, sometimes five days a week and so you get to know them so well and in a short time, they didn't care whether you were from Child Welfare or what your authority was, they just wanted connection and they wanted relationship and that was true of myself and a lot of the other team members that ... The other thing was just being very connected into the community and how little we're really able to accomplish when we're working in isolation and you just can't do our job working in isolation". Some of these are happening in offices but the people feel these are eroding with more policies and regulations. It was noted that the difference between walking into an area office was very different than walking into Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society. The former gave off an atmosphere of fear and violence while the later felt more welcoming and open. It seemed that having a child welfare office within Bent Arrow helped to build relationships and maintain a positive atmosphere between the organizations.

Creativity

The present system in Child and Family Services can be very rigid at times. Behind this rigidity is a lack of recognition from senior and mid-management staff concerning the skills by frontline workers and a lack of communication to front line workers of the complexities of policy and politics that the senior management has to deal with on a regular basis. There is a need for better communication between the different levels of staff concerning best practice and more attention paid to the pressures of frontline work. One group member stated: "Many of us are overwhelmed by administrative duties that could be amalgamated and with repetitive approval levels that are a drain on precious time that could be spent with our families. We believe that such changes can benefit children, families, workers, leadership team,

policy makers and legal staff". Another explained: "I started to see a pattern evolving and the part that bothered me was that it seemed every time there was some kind of crisis that got media attention, the response invariably was to try and nail things down a bit tighter and this trend has continued leaving less and less freedom and room for creativity and room for movement... we end up depriving clients of things because of this reactive mode." Another responded to this reality: "Adapt to the specifics and doing what's right rather than just politically correcting everything." What ways can we give frontline workers the ability to be creative in their work? Are there ways to assist workers to share fresh ideas and perspectives without assuming anything new can't be accomplished? Can we respond in a more flexible fashion to the needs and strengths of communities and families? One of the more stressful situations for workers is the importance that paperwork has over relationships with families. It seems this takes precedence over building relationships with families. Workers are finding their creativity stifled by paperwork, tightening of regulations and having less time to build relationships. It was noted that in a co-location setting, building relationships was part of the everyday activities and workers felt freer to work more creatively with their clients. " This is strengthening my view around how much better co-location projects are with respect to Children's services because when you have workers and supervisors working with community agencies and the actual families under one roof or in one very small area, you get to understand the perspective of the families, the geographic location, the ethnicities that lie in that location and so if you can get a perspective that the families are coming from, then I think you automatically provide better service delivery to those families and probably help deal with their issues better". Finally, another group member states: "So I think when you're around a bunch of people who want to do different service and let's be creative, it lights a spark in your own creativity that will allow you to develop further creativity, whereas if you're in an environment that's not that conducive to thinking outside the box and trying new things, it deadens that flame because that's something that I've struggled with since I left the agency name because it is very much focused on relationship".

Leadership

There seems to be a lack of solid/effective leadership and this is attributed to an over-emphasis on cost-effectiveness rather than families. Higher management needs to be in touch with front line workers and to get their perspectives on issues and policy development. This lack of communication and interaction is creating a sense of chaos in the system and is restricting the capacity to meet commitments. According to participants, the current reality is as follows: "From our vantage point, leadership needs to shift, as it seemed to be currently clogged. We believe that this kind of change can have a positive

impact and that our leaders are capable of change when they can see the legitimacy of our perspective. We hope that our leaders will not be afraid to make such changes for solely political reasons. We believe that we can make the case that this can be an effective strategy to address some of the issues that have bedevilled the ministry for many years". One group member suggested: "Staff should invite their senior and mid-level leaders to their work; to reconnect with them and to support staff and help set the tone to better assist families...their priority should be on supporting healthy relationships and freeing up staff for more creative work." The importance of a mentor was also discussed. "Something that leads to good practice that Shawna taught me was that the ability to have a mentor and the ability to be a mentor are really critically important in this field because I think the people in our lives have an impact on us". There needs to be greater willingness to listen to each other, create a win-win environment and to get rid of the 'cover your ass' mentality. Another theme that came through was the need for leaders to be trained appropriately for their jobs and the need for wise counsel.

Co-location Model

The co-location model between one government agency and an Aboriginal agency seems to have enhanced the above findings. Certainly, the government agency staff felt that relationship was important in the Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society and government staff were invited to all relationship building activities with Bent Arrow staff. This included team building activities and regular lunches together. The non-hierarchical way that Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society ran its agency made the atmosphere in the agency freer to work together. The clients felt that when entering the building, there was a feeling of friendliness and peace. Creativity to do innovative projects were encouraged through collaboration with both agencies. The idea of the co-location model of working with Aboriginal families was seen as a positive move with Child and Family Services. Not only did it promote good relationships with clients and with colleagues but it saves time, money and serves families well. Not everyone wanted to work in that type of setting but most in the group felt it was a positive approach to practice. One group member stated: "I've only really, in terms of social work, worked with Children's Services and only worked with Children's Services for eight years with only a portion of that being part of a co-location project although I have a great deal of passion for co-location projects." Other comments: "Part of the benefits of the co-location project is seeing the families, seeing the people we work with, getting to know them, getting to know extended families, getting a real sense of what the issues are." Not only has Bent Arrow Traditional Healing Society been a co-location partner with Child and Family Services, but other co-location projects have been created and some in the

group had been part of these. One group member shares her experience: "I also agree with the whole idea of a co-location project. I think it's very cool in the differences in the way you approach practice because I've worked in the Agency name that is involved in co-location for about two years. I worked in a Traditional Neighbourhood Centre before that and back in the Traditional Neighbourhood Centre; there is a huge loss to case practice when the clients are not there. You need to see them, you need to know them, you need to know their extended families, and you need to know all of this to be able to create solid case plans. The co-location projects you can just get stuff done, people are right there, you see them daily, hourly, sometimes they're just there eight hours a day. You get so much more done so I'm really a big proponent of co-location and I don't like the whole way government offices are set up. I think we need to be very cautious as a society, that we don't destroy our ability to form relationships and our ability to interact with people on every level because that is, in essence, our humanity and if we strip that from ourselves, we lose so much more than what we've already lost. Different cultures, I think, are even secondary to the fact that we're all human; we all have the same basic needs for belonging, for nurturing and to ensure that this is intact." Co-location projects may not be the answer for all government offices but certainly the feeling amongst the group was that it was a positive change and a pleasant environment to work in.

Discussion and Implications

It was noted several times during the project that decreasing time to build relationships and work creatively and a gap in communication between frontline workers and senior management was seen to have a direct relationship to job satisfaction. One participant states: "It is interesting to me to have noted that of all of the people who have maintained themselves as part of this group over the course of the six months, Bent Arrow staff have stayed consistent, the Seven Generation staff have basically stayed consistent but the staff from the government office have all changed in the course of this project...I find a hundred percent job turnover at the office compared with limited or little turnover in the other offices intriguing". These are statistics that no organization wants to deal with. However, as the project shows, if organizations don't provide an environment that is supportive of relationship building between staff and their clients, managers and their workers and better communication between senior management and frontline workers, don't provide an environment where creativity is encouraged and don't provide wise and experienced leadership then one of the consequences is a high turnover of staff. Much attention was paid to present policies stifling good practice and the need for more flexibility. As one group member states: "It's a very interesting dynamic for me because I don't think our policies work at all for

these (high risk) kids, in any way at all. I think our policies cause more dysfunction because we are labelling them high risk and we are trying to, I don't know, nail them down, tighten up what's going on so that they are not at risk, so that they're not harmed and that may be contributing to their high risk behaviours”.

These themes are not new to social work and there is a growing awareness that work with children and their families, and in particular Aboriginal families, has to change. Good practice has been experienced by staff through the co-location project and more of these projects should be promoted. The following are recommendations for change from this project that were agreed upon by the research group members and facilitators.

Recommendations for Policy, Education and Practice Change

Issue: The importance of the relationships between social workers and their clients was the most important that arose. This was encouraging and frightening. Encouraging because the workers intuitively recognized how important this is – it is a fundamental part of social work practice. Frightening because of the extent to which they feel limited in being able to engage in such relationships that are so important to the success of their interventions. It must be stressed that their feelings are well supported by research studies that demonstrate how the relationship between the workers and their clients and between the clients and others in their lives account for 80% of the change that occurs in their lives. This leaves a minimal amount that can be attributed to various therapeutic approaches and procedures.

Recommendation: That the ministry review the extent to which policy and programs administration support the development of positive and sustained relationships between child welfare workers and those they serve, and the extent to which they can support and enhance client relationships with their natural support networks.

Issue: It seems clear that there is a significant gap between the aspirations and desires of front line staff and the constraints of procedurally oriented policy. Front line workers are frustrated by their inability to engage children and families in a relational and creative fashion.

Recommendation: That the Ministry of Child and Youth Services review policy and procedures with a view to eliminating redundancy and freeing up child welfare workers to do social work.

Issue: Front line staff continues to be fearful of negative repercussions when things go badly wrong in a specific case, especially when the media is involved. While senior management claims that the punitive responses of the past are no longer practiced, this has not yet pervaded the belief system of the workers – they are still afraid – as are their supervisors,

and managers. This is reinforced by case review process that still seem to be overly focused on finding and punishing the guilty, at least in their minds

Recommendation: While the intentions of senior management are surely sincere, managers need to take time to shift their attitude and practice from one of fear to one of support. This will call for even greater sensitivity in the handling of such situations and in de-briefing activities.

Issue: Staff has become increasingly burdened over time by the accumulation of ‘knee jerk’ responses to real or perceived crises of confidence in child welfare. This is a trend throughout all of the Anglophone countries of the world – a fear based over-reaction that give the illusion of correcting problems that are in effect too deep to be corrected by procedure alone

Recommendation: Try to resist the impulse to deal with the optical illusion of always being able to predict and prevent the death and/or abuse of a child in care or under the supervision of child welfare. Workers worry about this as well, but state that over time the accumulation of such responses make their jobs more difficult and can even create more of these kinds of situations from occurring as they spend less time with clients and more time with computers.

Issue: Professional non-Aboriginal staff continue to be largely uninformed about Aboriginal culture, values and history. They, not surprisingly, bring in the biases, stereotypes and collective ignorance to their work. This can be exacerbated by practices that are unconsciously (and sometimes consciously) racist). This cannot be addressed by the 2-day mandatory training on Aboriginal people. The Bent Arrow experience and other projects have provided some valuable learning about what happens when the work environment is changed to a more open and community oriented setting. To date such arrangements are fully dependent on the vision and force of personality of the leaders in both the Aboriginal and government sector, and are very vulnerable to administrative and organizational changes.

Recommendation: That the Ministry review the lessons learned from these experiences with a view to broadening and formalizing their implementation. It seems clear that there are important benefits to these experiences that can assist in the establishment of practices that are fully aligned with the legislative and policy intents of the government with regard to our relationships with Aboriginal agencies, families and communities.

Issue: It seems clear that the Ministry wishes to have practice governed by sound social work principles as can be implied by the implementation of such approaches as the Casework Model and the Family Enhancement approach. We were puzzled by the dearth of social workers with formal academic training in our project. We were also intrigued by the comment of one senior

manager that the considerable detail and paperwork in models such as these was necessary in part to compensate for the lack of social work training that child welfare workers bring with them. There have been some attempts and at times abortive efforts to examine the issue of training and education for child welfare practice. Most recently, this has been examined under the auspices of the Prairie Child Welfare Consortium, but with a change in players, has been left in abeyance. We have anecdotal information that the quality of staff hired into child protection services is at low ebb. One supervisor mourned that they were “scraping the bottom of the barrel”.

Recommendation: Child welfare deals with the most vulnerable group in society. The tendency to address their issues in an insular fashion does not serve the families and their children well. Nor is it fair to place individuals in such critical decision making roles without a sound clinical background and a professional discipline upon which to draw. While we were impressed with the dedication and competence of the staff who participated in this project, we were struck by some comments that arose informally that were not part of this study, but that call for some acknowledgement. We would be remiss if we did not recommend that the Ministry develop a comprehensive plan with the Faculty of Social work that would include the following dimensions:

- The inclusion of a child and family services stream at the undergraduate and graduate level in the University of Calgary Faculty of Social Work.
- A renewed emphasis on social work with Aboriginal people in academic courses and for continuing education.
- A determination of what roles in child welfare require social work preparation and which can be met by other disciplines such as Youth and Child Care.
- The development of standards of practice over time that can be met by qualified staff with a BSW at the front line level and a clinical MSW for supervisory levels.
- Executive development for senior managers in the macro areas organizational development, policy and program development, program evaluation, search methods, and state of the art reviews.

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 45-52

Case Study of the Development of the 1998 Tribal State Agreement in Minnesota

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Introduction

It is important to document North American history from the indigenous peoples' perspective. Oftentimes, American history is written from the Euro-American world view and important information is lost or misunderstood. The author of this article documented how an important piece of legislation that had a major impact on child welfare practice in Minnesota was developed under the guidance of American Indians. This paper is an attempt to capture the voices of the women who took the initiative to work for change on behalf of American Indian children in the State of Minnesota and credit their work. These unsung heroes dedicated much of their lives "saving" their children and their efforts have gone undocumented until now. This article acknowledges those accomplishments and documents their determination to move forward with important legislation which will forever change the lives of many American Indian children who are caught in the system in Minnesota.

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Abstract

This paper focuses on a recent qualitative study of the 1998 Indian Child Welfare Tribal State Agreement in Minnesota. The purpose of this study was to document the history of how American Indian women initiated legislative changes at the state level to strengthen the Indian Child Welfare law. This paper will identify the process used by these women and an American Indian workgroup and document the workgroup's recommendations for other states and tribes interested in creating similar agreements.

Keywords: Indigenous women, legislative changes, Indian Child Welfare law.

Out-of-home Placement for American Indian Children

Out-of-home placement for American Indian children began during the boarding school era (Red Horse, Martinez, Day, Poupart & Scharnberg, 2000). As early as the 1600's, Jesuit priests began "civilizing" the American Indian children by providing schools for them where they were taught Christianity (Smith, 2004, p.89). Boarding schools became formalized from 1869 to 1870, under President Grant (Smith, 2004). At these institutions, children were forced from their homes (Smith, 2004) and told not to speak their language or use their Indian names (Cross, Earle & Simmons, 2000) or practice their spirituality (Smith, 2004) and were made to change the way they dressed by cutting their hair and expected to act White (Szasz 2005). Rampant cases of sexual, physical and emotional abuse were discovered, but little was done (Smith, 2004).

The intention of the federal government was to teach Christianity to the children in order to "civilize" the population (Cross et al., 2000, p. 3). Both the government and the Christian churches had an interest in the education of American Indian children, believing that these children needed to be Christianized in order to survive in mainstream American society (Cross et al.,

2000). Therefore, federal policies that promoted assimilation were enacted and enforced to end all traces of American Indian language, religion and culture (Morrison, 2010). These assimilation policies included: the Indian Removal Act of 1830 which moved large population of American Indians to urban areas and the termination policies of the 50's and 60's, which resulted in the federal government ending the federal relationship with 61 Indian tribes (Cross et al., 2000). Boarding schools were instituted and used to assimilate American Indian children by taking them away from their tribal communities (Wilkinson, 2005; Morrison, 2010). To "kill the Indian and save the man" was the public policy behind the design and implementation of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania in 1879 (Quash-Mah, Stockard, Johnson-Shelton & Crowley, 2010, p. 896; Redhorse et al., 2000, p. 15; Wilkenson, 2005, p.53). Carlisle, founded by General Richard Pratt, was the first off-reservation boarding school. In an effort to assimilate children General Pratt proposed that the federal government take children away from their families at a young age and return them when they are young adults (Smith, 2004).

Status of American Indian Children in Out-of-Home Placement

More recently, 12.5 out of every 1,000 Indian children in the United States were in out-of-home placement, compared to 6.9 out of every 1,000 children from all races (Cross et al., 2000, p. 5). In 1974 a national survey by the Association on American Indian Affairs found that about 25% or more of American Indian children were removed from their families and placed in foster care, group homes, residential schools, other institutions or adopted (Stehno, 1982; Cross et al., 2000; Earle, 2000; Morrison et al., 2010). During 1971 and 1972 in Minnesota, one-fourth of American Indian children under the age of one had been adopted and 90% were in non-Indian homes (Carver, 1986; Earle, 2000; Redhorse et al., 2000, p. 17). National statistics also reflected this phenomenon (Redhorse et al., 2000, p. 17; Morrison, Fox, Cross & Paul, 2010). In more recent times, placement rate for American Indian children is higher than for all other children (Quash-Mah et al., 2010).

During the time period that the Tribal State Agreement was created, The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) reported in 1998, that minority children of African American, American Indian, Asian/Pacific Islander or Hispanic race or heritage accounted for 39.6% of the children in out-of-home placement. In six counties in Minnesota with high American Indian populations, the percentage of minority children in out-of-home placement ranged from 54.3% to as high as 85.1%. Four of the counties are rural: Cass (54.3%), Beltrami (75.6%), Clearwater (60.5%), and Mahnomen (85.1%). The urban counties include:

Hennepin (71.9%) and Ramsey (63%) (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 1998). In Minnesota, 11.1% of the children in out-of-home placements in 1998 were American Indian, although they only made up 1.8% of the state's children population (Kuchera, 2001). American Indian children in Minnesota continue to be placed at higher rate, at an earlier age, have more multiple placements and serve longer periods of placement than other groups (Redhorse et al., 2000).

Literature Review

Indian Child Welfare Act (ICWA)

The Indian Child Welfare Act became Public Law 95-608 on November 8, 1978. The federal law was designed to protect American Indian families, their communities, and tribes against further disintegration due to the systematic removal of their children by state and county agencies. Evidence introduced to the Senate Subcommittee in Indian Affairs in 1974, illustrated the removal of Indian children from their families was based on discriminatory practices (Sink, 1982). The ICWA is intended to provide protection for the integrity of Indian families by creating and supporting decision-making procedures that include tribal and parent involvement (MacEachron & Gustavsson, 2005). The law also requires that placement preference is given to American Indian families when an American Indian child is placed (Quash-Mah et al., 2010). Recognizing the importance of protecting and preserving the integrity of American Indian families and their duty to carry this out, Congress enacted legislation that would allow for that. Congress concluded that: "there is no resource that is more vital to the continued existence and integrity of Indian tribes than their children" (Cross, 1986, p. 283). The United States is not the only country that passed laws intended to support and protect the rights of indigenous people by focusing on cultural preservation, self-determination and the transfer of indigenous culture to indigenous children (Roberts, 2002). Unfortunately, many countries do not actively enforce these laws. Boarding schools violated many international human rights laws including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and The Convention of the Rights of the Child (Smith, 2004). Besides boarding schools, adoption practices also violated human rights laws. The United Nations defines genocide as "forcibly transferring children from one group to another" (Roberts, 2002, p.248). The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights guarantees indigenous groups the right to enjoy their own culture, practice their own language and use their own language (Roberts, 2002). The Convention of the Rights of Child provides that when the state places children in substitute care efforts should be made to preserve a child's cultural identity (Roberts, 2002).

The ICWA mandates tribal self-determination policies giving tribes and their courts exclusive jurisdiction and decision making power on adoption and out-of-home placement of their American Indian children residing on their reservation (Cross, et al, 2000; Quash-Mah et al., 2010). The legislation also allows for tribes to develop their own family and child welfare programs (Cross et al., 2000 & Roberts, 2002). However, Congress failed to appropriate any new funding for the implementation of ICWA even though Indian communities could successfully provide comprehensive child welfare and family service programs, if funded accurately (Sink, 1982).

The Indian Child Welfare Act gives tribes jurisdiction over their tribal children. The ICWA law states, "an Indian tribe shall have exclusive jurisdiction to any State over any child custody proceeding involving an Indian child who resides or is domiciled within the reservation, except where jurisdiction is otherwise vested in the State by existing Federal Law. Where the child is a ward of the tribal court, the Indian tribe shall retain exclusive jurisdiction, notwithstanding the residence or domicile of the child" (Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978). An Indian is defined as "any person who is a member of an Indian tribe, including Alaska Native and who is a member of a Regional Corporation" (Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978). Placement preferences for American Indian children is specified for adoption, "in absence of good cause, with extended family, other members of the child's tribe or other Indian families." For foster care or pre-adoptive placements preference is given to "extended family, a licensed foster home approved by the tribe, a licensed Indian foster home, an institution for children approved by the tribe" (Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978). One of the weaknesses of the ICWA was that it did not "sufficiently address voluntary foster care, pre-adoptive and adoptive placements" (Carver, 1986, p. 353). Prior to the Tribal State Agreement, the State of Minnesota attempted to reinforce ICWA law by adopting its own state law. The following section describes this legislation.

Minnesota Indian Family Preservation Act (MIFPA)

The MIFPA was passed in 1985 to address the removal of Indian children from their "cultural heritage" due to being placed in non-Indian foster homes (Carver, 1986, p.327). MIFPA strengthen the provisions on foster care by "distinguishing between voluntary foster care placements and involuntary foster care placements and requires social service agencies and private child placing agencies to provide notice to the child's tribe in cases of any potential out-of-home placement (involuntary foster care), voluntary foster care, or any potential pre-adoptive or adoptive placement" (Carver, 1986, p.345). Under state law, there is an early notice provision so that tribes may become involved before the parents rights are terminated (Carver, 1986). The law also requires the agency placing the child to identify

"extended family members" when considering placement. (Carver, 1986, p.347).

MIFPA also allows for the immediate return of the child (within 24 hours) to his or her parents whom are placed voluntarily (Carver, 1986). The federal law requires children who are eligible for membership also be the biological child of a member. This limits the number of children to be protected under federal law. The state law differs from the federal law by recognizing Indian children as those eligible for membership giving tribes the authority to define its members (Graves & Ebbott, 2006). This law shows the State's intent to support American Indian children through the preservation of their culture and the recognition that tribes are best at providing services to their children.

Under MIFPA, a county is required to provide for: 1) foster care maintenance payments, 2) social services that are ordered by a tribal court in conjunction with the placement of an American Indian child, and 3) the financial responsibility for children under tribal court jurisdiction when the county has first contact with the child (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2004).

Tribal State Agreement

In Minnesota, the Tribal State Agreement, which was initiated by a small group of American Indian women who started a grassroots movement, was intended to address how American Indian children should be cared for under the requirements of ICWA and the MIFPA. The ICWA, authorizes states and tribes to form an agreement regarding the care and custody of American Indian children, and to determine who has jurisdiction over these children in child custody proceedings (Indian Child Welfare Act of 1978). Agreements may also be revoked with notice to the other party.

The main objective of the Agreement is to set up procedures for county social workers and others to follow the laws (Graves & Ebbott, 2006). This legislation provided a framework for how to best care for American Indian children when they are placed in the state child protection system. The Tribal State Agreement created valuable safeguards to aid in the cultural considerations of American Indian children when they are removed from home and placed in the care of the state.

The Tribal State Agreement between the Minnesota Indian tribes and the state of Minnesota addresses jurisdiction; defines responsibilities; and the power of tribal courts vs. state courts over the out-of-home placement of American Indian children. The agreement included having a Compliance Review Team monitor county compliance with ICWA and make recommendations on how to work with tribes (Graves & Ebbott, 2006). The Compliance Review Team was disbanded with

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the 2007 amendment to the Agreement. It was replaced with mediation-style compliance system that has a faster turnaround (T. Yellowhammer, personal communication, October 3, 2008).

The Tribal State Agreement also defines best interest of an American Indian child as a sense of belonging to a family, extended family, clan and Tribe. This concept is enforced through the placement preference outlined in the agreement, having qualified expert witness testimony and participating in "active efforts" (Redhorse et al., 2000, p. 31). Active efforts in the Tribal State Agreement mean active, thorough, careful and culturally appropriate efforts (Redhorse et al., 2000). These efforts must include supportive services to prevent placement of the American Indian child and if the child is placed, to use active efforts to return the child to his or her family as quickly as possible (Redhorse et al., 2000). Active efforts set a higher standard than "reasonable efforts" to preserve and reunify the family.

The Tribal State Agreement specifies that placement preference for children is first with extended family, second, with a foster home licensed by the tribe, third, an Indian home licensed by a non-Indian agency, and fourth placement in a tribally approved institution. For adoption, children are to be placed with extended family first, a member of child's tribe and finally, with another American Indian family unless there is good cause to do otherwise. The Agreement defines "good cause" for not following the placement preference as if the court takes into consideration: 1) the request of the biological parent(s) or child of sufficient age; 2) the special needs of the child, or 3) suitable families for placement cannot be found (Tribal State Agreement of 2007).

A qualified expert witness needs to be involved during the placement process or termination of parental right to give testimony that the child will suffer from serious physical or emotional damage if left in the care of her or her parent or Indian custodian. The Agreement has a list of criteria for a qualified expert witness, but they do not supplant the MIFPA which defines qualified expert witness as: a member of the child's tribe who is knowledgeable of tribal customs; a lay expert witness who is knowledgeable of tribal customs within child's tribe; or a professional person who is knowledgeable of tribal customs (Tribal State Agreement of 2007).

The Tribal State Agreement defines best interest of an American Indian child as maintaining ties with his or her tribal community. Through the Tribal State Agreement, the state and tribes agree to collaborate to provide effective services to American Indian children and their families to secure and preserve an American Indian's child sense of belonging to his or her family and tribe (Tribal State Agreement of 2007).

Ten years have passed since Minnesota signed the 1998 Tribal State Agreement. The purpose of this study is historical retrieval for the purpose of: 1) documenting history; 2) acknowledging the accomplishments of American Indian women; 3) identifying the process used by the workgroup that initiated the legislation; and 4) documenting the workgroup's recommendations for other states and tribes interested in creating similar agreements. The results of this study could help practitioners working in Indian child welfare understand the importance of the ICWA, MIFPA and the Tribal State Agreement and the rationale for adhering to them.

For First Nations, there past is similar to that of the American Indians. Assimilation policies that forced children into boarding schools also existed in Canada (Thomlison & Foote, 1987). Research completed in the 1980's indicated that at least "one half of the children in care are Indian or Metis children" (p. 134). The status of Aboriginal children by 1983 was overrepresented in the child welfare system across Canada (Bennett, Blackstock & De La Rhonde, 2005). In 1984, The Child Family Services Act was amended to recognize the unique cultural needs of First Nations' people and to provide for services that take into consideration "Native culture, traditions, and the concept of extended family" (p.54). Having a document similar to the Tribal State Agreement could potentially allow First Nations' to establish procedures and safeguards for child protection services working with Indigenous children. It would hold provincial governments accountable for more culturally appropriate treatment of Indigenous children in Canada. Bennett et al., (2005) suggests that the next step for First Nations is self-governance. For First Nations to develop an agreement similar with the federal government to the Tribal State Agreement in the United States could be a step forward in self-determination, and meeting the needs of their families, particularly their children.

Methodology

Research Methodology

The methodology used for this study was a historical retrieval, case study. It included structured, in-depth interviews with five American Indians who shared a personal recollection of what they experienced during the creation of the Agreement. The narrative approach to research allows for the "systematic study of personal experience and meanings; how events have been constructed by active subjects" (Pooyak & Gomez, 2009, p. 13). This is important for the researcher because participants can reflect on their own experience, share knowledge and vision, without their responses having to fit into a specific category. It also looks at "authoring the stories of ordinary people tell" (p. 13). Morrison et al., (2010) refers to this as a "story" (p. 108) and argues that a story is a part of "tribal tradition and worldview and

are a natural form of research in a tribal community” (p. 108). This study obtained University of Minnesota IRB approval.

A purposive snowball sampling was used to select the sample population. In this study, the Minnesota Department of Human Services provided a list of approximately 15 names of individuals who were members of the original workgroup. These individuals were directors or coordinators of tribal human service agencies and American Indian urban programs. After reviewing the list from the state, the researcher worked in collaboration with one of the workgroup members to identify other participants who could be contacted. The author of this paper was able to locate five participants. After participants were located a letter was sent asking for their help in understanding the experiences of drafting the 1998 Tribal State Agreement. They were told the information gathered will aid in a better understanding of the intent and outcomes of the Agreement and that the results would be shared with Indian Tribes, tribal workers, and those practicing in Indian child welfare as well as, The Minnesota Indian Child Welfare Advisory Council to further their understanding of the process of drafting the Agreement. The letter stated: “To participate in this process, please find attached a list of questions that I will be asking in an interview with you. I will be contacting you in the next few weeks to set up a date and time to conduct the interview either by phone or in-person. Your names will be kept confidential. Your input will provide valuable information and your participation will be greatly appreciated.”

Several follow-up phone calls were made to set up appointments for the interview. Telephone interviews followed. All but one of the participants contacted were American Indian women who were employed and over 50 years of age. One of the participants was retired. During the time of the drafting of the agreement the women were either working for a Minnesota tribe or contracted to work for them.

The participants were called and asked standard questions about how they got involved in the process and what they remember. After the initial inquiries they continued telling researcher their story about what they remember about the process. They spoke about the purpose of the agreement, recalled the process itself, and gave suggestions on what others who are interested in doing the same type of initiative should do. The snowball technique was used during interviews with the five individuals. This method involved the sample being created “from a series of referrals made within a group of people who know one another” (Streeton, Cooke & Campbell, 2004, p. 37). More specifically, they were asked “who else do you remember was active in the workgroup and where do you think they are working now or could be located.”

Data Collection

The study reported in this paper used structured interviews as the method of data collection. The first set of five questions was intended to discover what members of the workgroup hoped to accomplish when working on the Agreement, what the foundation for creating the Agreement was and what was happening in Indian Country at the time to cause them to draft this agreement. The second set of four questions focused on the process and what the process was like for the workgroup when drafting the agreement. The third set of three questions addressed recommendations the workgroup would make to others interested in creating their own agreement or a similar document.

Questions were developed to use in a structured interview with respondents. One of the workgroup members who is now considered an expert in Indian child welfare issues due to her many years of experience, leadership position, and national recognition assisted in the development of the following twelve questions.

Motivation for Developing the Tribal State Agreement

1. According to the 1998 Tribal/State Agreement (Agreement), the foundation of the Agreement was based on the continued existence of the tribes by keeping American Indian children connected to their tribal community. Is that correct? If so, how was that done?
2. Was the original intentions (goals and objectives) of the 1998 Tribal/State Agreement carried out? What were they?
3. The 1998 Tribal/State Agreement purpose was to strengthen ICWA and MIFPA, how did that happen?
4. Do we need both the 1998 Tribal/State Agreement and MIFPA? Why?
5. Does the 1998 Tribal/State Agreement still meet the goals of family preservation? Why or Why not?

Process

1. Could you describe the process of drafting the agreement? Cumbersome? Lengthy? Wasteful? Productive? And Why?
2. How was the workgroup formed and did most or all those involved in drafting the agreement agree with the outcomes? Was their group consensus?
3. What was the state’s relationship with the workgroup? Supportive? Combative?

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4. What strengths and challenges did you encounter with the process?

Recommendations

1. How would other states begin this process?
2. What recommendations would you give them?
3. Is there anything that would have been done differently?

Data Analysis/Results/Findings

The final results were tabulated under three subheadings: 1) motivation, 2) process, and recommendations. Themes were identified under each subheading using a frequency count; how often two or more respondents gave the same or similar answer.

Motivation

The theme that emerged for the first subheading is the common belief that county workers, judges and attorneys as well as, those working with American Indian children were not following ICWA. One respondent commented that, "Noncompliance was occurring."

Process

Two themes emerged for the second subheading. The first theme was that the process used to create the document was "lengthy and cumbersome." The second theme was concern about the relationship with DHS. Workgroup members believed that the state was more focused on their relationship with counties than the concern tribes had over their children. One workgroup member commented that they were not treated as equals and struggled with the state over certain issues.

Recommendations

The theme that emerged from the third subheading was that the workgroup members agreed that those that are going to engage in this type of work be prepared, patient and informed. They argued that this was a good starting point for them that resulted in a useful mechanism for holding counties accountable and provide a guide for more appropriate treatment of American Indian children and families in the State of Minnesota.

Discussion

The first set of questions asked the workgroup why the legislation had to be created in the first place and if the intention of the agreement had been carried out. The first set of responses focused on the fact that counties were not doing enough to implement the Indian Child Welfare Act, as a result the respondents had hoped that a State Tribal Agreement would

strengthen ICWA and stopped Minnesota tribes from losing children because of non-Indian agencies practice policies.

The 1998 Tribal State Agreement had been created after tribal child protection workers realized that counties were not complying with the ICWA and the MIFPA and further, many social workers did not know the purpose or history of the ICWA. During this time, out-of-home placement for American Indian children was higher than any other racial group. A workgroup participant reported that grandmothers on the reservations were worried when they realized the tribes children were disappearing and there were few children left in the community. She also said that counties did little to implement the practice of "active efforts" when working with American Indian children. When members of the workgroup convened on this issue, they worked with state officials to create the Tribal State Agreement. The working group was able to locate the only other Tribal State Agreement, which was the State of Washington. They used the document from Washington to guide them in their efforts to develop a Tribal State Agreement in Minnesota. Clearly having another document to use as a prototype provided a helpful framework for forming the Tribal State Agreement in Minnesota.

The tribal workers, mostly women, came together and confronted the Minnesota Department of Human Services to see what could be done to force counties to comply. These women formed a workgroup to address this concern and went to St. Paul, the state capitol, and met with DHS staff to figure out what could be done about the continued disregard of ICWA. One workgroup member responded that they were not treated as equals and struggled with the state over certain issues. For example, the tribes tried to change passive language in social service manuals to make it stronger. Unfortunately, there are still words such as, "may," "shall" or "encourages counties to..." in the Minnesota social service manual. Words such as "will" or "required to" are not in the manual. Workgroup members believed that the state was more focused on their relationship with counties than on the concern tribes had over their children.

The second set of questions was written to discover what the process was like. The workgroup was able to reach general conclusions about the process itself, as well as, give examples what had occurred. When participants in the workgroup discussed the process they all agreed it was lengthy and that they did not get much support from the county. Some of the DHS staff consisted of American Indians who took on the positions of liaison to the tribes to help simplify the process and reduce any confusion. The workgroup members reported the process was confusing, frustrating and time-consuming. Without the diligent efforts of this workgroup it is unlikely that, little if anything, would have happened to address the counties and their disregard for ICWA or the lack of recognition of tribal sovereignty.

The final set of questions asked the workgroup what recommendations they would give to others interested in creating their own agreement. It is unfortunate that tribes had to spend their time, money and energies on something that should have already been happening, that is compliance with ICWA. However, the members of the workgroup believed that it was a necessary process and they all agreed that they would not have changed anything about the process. They acknowledged they were pioneers in this process and only had one other model to follow. One participant recommended having an enforcement clause to ensure compliance.

Most, members of the workgroup agreed that it is important to go in to meetings prepared when attempting to initiate state legislation and to be patient about the process and informed about current laws and policies about child welfare issues.

Limitation

One limitation of this study is the small sample size. However, this is the first step in documenting the process used by the workgroup beginning in 1993. Minutes to these workgroup meetings were documented by a tribal agency secretary, but ended up destroyed in a fire at the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe headquarters. Other limitation included some participants of the workgroup were unable to be located and one participant declined to be interviewed.

Conclusion

Recent national statistics show that out-of-home placement rates for American Indian and First Nations children are disproportionately higher than for any other group of children. The lack of compliance with current laws and a lack of cultural understanding contribute to this problem. One way a group of Minnesota Indian women addressed this problem was by developing a piece of legislation to enforce ICWA. This article in an attempt to document the history of a small group of tribal women who took action during the 1990's. Their stories show on way Indian tribes across the United States and Canada can address the problem of the lack of compliance with current legislation. All of the Minnesota workgroup members agreed that they were pioneers in creating this Agreement and wanted something that would be useful to child welfare practitioners and others working with Indigenous children. They felt the Agreement established procedures for following ICWA and had safeguards for working with American Indian children. It was a good starting point that resulted in a useful mechanism for holding counties accountable and encouraging appropriate treatment of American Indian children and families in the State of Minnesota.

In summary, further research is needed about the personal experience of the workgroup. Additional questions for this workgroup and DHS would be: 1) What was happening at the time in Indian Country at the time of this Agreement? 2) Why out-of-home placement was high for American Indian children? 3) Why were the children taken out of their homes? and 4) What did the court reports document?

Other research questions that are important include: 5) How can DHS improve relations with Indian tribes to match county responsiveness? 6) What was the perspective of DHS on the process of developing the Tribal State Agreement? 7) Has compliance improved with this agreement? 8) Why were revision made in 2007 and what were they? 9) Why is there no longer a compliance team and how is the change to a mediation compliance system working? Finally, more workgroup members could be interviewed to gain their perspective and provide a more complete history.

What makes this project unique is the historical significance of the 1998 Tribal State Agreement. The State of Minnesota and the Minnesota Indian Tribes were at the forefront of creating a groundbreaking document. There has been little documentation of significant policy issues around the Indian Child Welfare Act and the 1998 Tribal State Agreement as well as the importance of having a Tribal State Agreement. This research is a step toward providing the much needed documentation.

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 53-65

Narrative as Lived Experience

It is time, she said, we have strayed far enough and need a light to guide us home, will you hold up your life so we can see? (Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009)

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Introduction

Aboriginal peoples across Canada have waited patiently for wrongs to be righted and the senseless pain generated out of unresolved historic grievances to cease. Today, by telling our own narratives through a variety of mediums, we are undertaking a heroic journey, a journey that begins with speaking and writing our own truths in regards to our personal and community experiences; in fact, it is a journey that begins with the laying down of seven well known values, values that are stepping stones to an ancestral space some of us have never or rarely experienced.

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Abstract

My concern is these serious issues will continue to worsen, as a domino effect that our Ancestors have warned us of in their Prophecies (Arvol Looking Horse, May 2010).

Aboriginal peoples have walked a long way through a landscape of loss and determination since early contact with Europeans. Today Indigenous authors, healers and spokespeople are asking our people to awaken fully and begin the process of reviving and practicing the seven sacred values that guided our ancestors and ensured that we might live today. The Prophecies and Creation stories contain the encouragement our people need to unburden themselves of deeply embedded historic trauma and loss. We have work to do; to tell our own stories, to actively participate in rescripting the narrative of our lives and representations, and to do this in our own voices (Nissley, 2009). This paper is a narrative of the historic challenges that have shadowed the many since 'his-story' began interspersed with the story of my own lived experience.

Key Words: Historic Trauma, Complex PTSD, Narrative, Story Telling, Prophecy, Seven Sacred Values, Residential Schools, Cultural Hypocrisy, Identity, Healing, Youth, Victoring.

Those values are; having the courage to step forward, reclaiming respect for ourselves and others, modeling a sense of humility and remembering that our story is not the only story of loss and grief in the world, telling the truth, and remembering that our truths are not the only truths in the world, practicing honesty, and remembering that we can be reflective and tell it like it was/is for us, which we in turn hope will bring us once again to a place of true love for ourselves as a people, and lead us to the wisdom we need to take our children and our collective future to a better place, physically, mentally, emotionally and spiritually (Hill, 1995, Morrisseau, 1999). This means the gathering up of a collective courage, a willingness to begin, to step out and into what we know to be true from our past and our present and generating release through narratives that can

illuminate our lived experiences and teach others. So, this is my story too, a story that begins like many others and can be told through the experiences of an entire people's history ... once upon a time ...

There was this event called "contact" and in that experience many Indigenous peoples on this continent, now called the "Americas," died. In that experience "the people" as many tribal groups across this land now called Canada referred to themselves, were pushed from their lands, fought diseases and sicknesses they had never seen before, and watched their children and elders leave this life prematurely and in horrific pain. That pain was the result of what Ronald Wright has identified as a form of biological warfare noting that, "Europe possessed biological weapons that fate had been stacking against America for thousands of years. Among these were smallpox, measles, influenza, bubonic plague, yellow fever, cholera, and malaria – all unknown in the Western Hemisphere before 1492" (1992). In the death and destruction that reigned on this continent for three hundred years, as many as 100 million Indigenous peoples lost their lives (Axtell, 1992, Cook, 1992/1998, Cook, 1973, Denevan, 1976, Stannard, 1992).

Was this carnage just the beginning of many events that the prophets had foreseen, was this a manifestation of the "strangers and strangeness" that it was said would come and change the world as they knew it? Elders from many different tribes across the land said they knew about the coming of the white man long before he arrived. The holy men said that these new people would come and want to live among them. It is said that long before they arrived the elders and holy men had already begun discussions on how they would live with this 'white man.' "Your land - all of it – will be mapped in the future," Nogha said, "Then not long after that, you will be huddled together (on a reservation)," and he continued, "that time has come now. Today the things he told us about have happened" (Dene Tha prophecies, from *Wolverine Myths and Legends*, compiled by the Dene Wodih Society). The Dene Tha, a northern people, did not then and do not now differentiate between knowledge gained by direct experience and that derived via dreams and visions (Goulet, 1998). They are not the only ones, there were many that foresaw the arrival of a "strange people" who would have a tremendous impact on those already living on this continent, a land known as "Turtle Island" from the creation stories that speak of a woman who fell from the skies only to land on the back of a giant turtle who took pity on her fall (Johnston, 2003; Mohawk, 1993; Porter, 2008). Other creation stories speak to the "Earth Diver" the lowly muskrat, who was the only one who could dive deep enough to bring back some mud from the very depths of the waters that the woman might have land to stand on, and some place to grow her food (Johnston, 2003). "Another old man in Lapwai – I forget

his name – used to see the future in his dreams. He would see white-faced animals a little bigger than deer coming over the hill. They would come down Thunder Hill, between Lapwai and the Clearwater River. Behind the white-faced deer was a white-faced man. "Another kind of human being is going to be here soon," the old man would tell his people. People laughed at the old man's dreams, laughed at what he said would happen. But everything he prophesied came true. This is a true story, not a myth or legend" (Nez Perce oral tradition, *Indian Legends from the Northern Rockies*, Ella E. Clark).

According to many scholars, issues such as contact and resulting stories of colonialism belong largely to the historic past and that discourse has been replaced by inequality and domination in other forms in the present. However, Indigenous researchers have proposed that the historical experiences of First Nations peoples which disrupted the process of Aboriginal lives, communities, and cultural identity formation has continued to resonate loudly into the present, and that the harm done in the past has continued to manifest inter-generationally into peoples lives today. This harm can be extrapolated into virtually any area of Aboriginal life-ways and community narratives; including physical and mental health, having a sense of well-being, continuing education, and social and community development. A great deal of effort has more recently, perhaps only in the last twenty years, been dedicated to explicating some very specific areas that were adversely affected by contact with Europeans and whose impacts on the people continue to manifest into the present day (McCormick, 1997). And, even though the creation stories are still told, the hurt inflicted by the period directly after contact and the destruction that has continued have not been resolved nor well represented in story telling or print into our present.

Infectious Dis-ease

Influences include waves of disease with the resulting death and dislocation of healers, medicine people, teachers, and spiritual leaders, outsider greed for land and resources, and unwanted or forced interpersonal interactions between invaders and Indigenous peoples across the continent. These negative forces have made it very difficult to create and delineate clear models and best/wise practices for continuing to strengthen and reinforce First Nation capacity for social resolution and social action in the present (Thoms, 2007, UNESCO, 2000). Therefore, it has been necessary to work hard to locate and understand the various mechanisms of control put in place historically by colonizers to marginalize and downgrade native people's personal and communal roles and destroy their cultural life-ways and beliefs. These mechanisms; armed force through guns and other weapons, European rule of law which was brutally

enforced through the death and destruction of leaders and entire villages, theft of children and women, banishment of medicine peoples, and the outlawing of ceremonial practices, served to destroy Aboriginal culture and social domains, to restrict their social mobility, to disfavor them in access to resources, and to create or accentuate inequalities within and between Indigenous communities continentally (Wesley-Esquimaux, Smolewski, 2004). Some of those mechanisms, like the early spreading of contagions such as influenza viruses, although initially not conscious or deliberate, became a chosen method of extermination as time passed (Duffy, 1951, Thornton, 1987). All of these tools ultimately had a devastating effect, deliberate or not, on Aboriginal identity, social/cultural capacity and the building of cultural and social capital since the arrival and enforcement of Europeans and their laws and economies on this continent (McCormick, 1998, Salee, 2006).

It has been pointed out many times that historic colonialism and intense contact with European society has produced a profound alteration in the socio-cultural milieu of subjugated societies globally. We must recognize that North American Aboriginal peoples do not stand alone in the annals of historic injustice (Weine et al, 1995). Glaring examples include the Jewish Holocaust, the colonization of India, the internment of Japanese nationals in Canada, and the stolen generations of Indigenous children here and in Australia. Colonial powers introduced sharp status distinctions, imposed strict rules for governing conduct, controlled the system of social rewards and punishments, and overtly manipulated power and status symbols (Wesley-Esquimaux, Smolewski, 2004). These alternations are generally discussed in reference to past events, but it can be readily argued that these impacts have contemporary and generational application and effect. A variety of disciplines can be called upon to illustrate and elaborate on the phenomenon of (inter/intra) generational impact and traumatic consequence, including history, anthropology, psychology, psychiatry, sociology, social work, and political science. Each of the sciences can provide different perspectives and interpretations on how historic trauma can be understood as a valid source of continuing dis-ease and reactivity to historic and societal forces in Aboriginal communities across Canada and the United States, and perhaps as importantly, around the world.

Historic Trauma

Aboriginal scholars have come to refer to these various impacts as "historic trauma," a phenomenon that has become a part of Indigenous peoples' common experience, and which has covertly shaped individuals lives and futures, and has had devastating consequences for entire communities and regions. Since first contact, First Nations people(s) in Canada have

experienced several waves of traumatic experience on social and individual levels that have contributed to the health crisis in Aboriginal communities and have continued to place enormous strain on the fabric of Native societies across this continent. Aboriginal people have experienced unremitting trauma and 'complex' post-traumatic effect since these contagions burned across the entire continent from the southern hemisphere to the north over a four hundred year time span, killing up to 90% of the continental Indigenous population and rendering Indigenous peoples physically, spiritually, emotionally, and psychically traumatized by a deep and unresolved grief (Herman, 1997, Wesley-Esquimaux, 1998). The reason this experience is referred to as deep and unresolved is because we now know that the epidemics hit Indigenous populations across the Americas, on average, approximately every 7 to 14 years, not allowing Indigenous peoples the time necessary to regroup and reformulate their population bases, societies or economies (Wesley-Esquimaux, 1998), or conversely, the time necessary to properly grieve and resolve their immense losses.

Over time the myriad effects of historic trauma, also known as a "complex or cultural post traumatic stress disorder" (Herman, 1997) have become deeply imbedded in the worldview of Indigenous peoples, sometimes manifesting as a strong sense of separation and learned helplessness. Historic factors strongly influenced Aboriginal peoples locus of personal and social control (decision making capacity), engendered a sense of fatalism and reactivity to historic and social forces, and adversely influenced inter and intra group relations. We have learned through experience, that when all the compartments of a social structure become damaged, a society cannot exist anymore; it loses its social self, which is a group's cognitive, psychological, spiritual and emotional definition and understanding of themselves as related and humane beings (Bussidor, 1997). Through these reactions, and in the eyes of non-Aboriginal populations, Aboriginal peoples became silent, powerless constructions of "otherness"; a representation of which was bounded but never relational (Wesley-Esquimaux, Smolewski, 2004). These complex processes, located between the inscriptions of marginality imposed on Aboriginal people by the dominant culture, and Aboriginal integrity translated into negative cultural propositions, have never really been fully understood by Aboriginal peoples or non-Aboriginal societies (ibid). Only by deconstructing historic trauma and (re) membering the far distant past, are Indigenous peoples enabling themselves to see each other from the oppositional realms they presently occupy in existing dominant and resistant cultural structures. This awareness is the only path to healing and the reconstruction of positive life-ways. The creation of inspiring narratives to guide people home can only come from within

the circle of timelessness that has become our mutual lived-experience.

There are multiple inter-linkages between specific areas of historic impact as well and more contemporary forces that have continued to play themselves out over and over again over time. The good news is that Native peoples across the country are presently in the process of critiquing the dominant culture on their own terms, forging individual strengths, and renewing their collective unity. To do this, they are looking both inside and outside of their cultures and political structures for the tools that will address and hopefully rectify the societal and cultural breakdown they have been forced to grapple with for so long. Expressing narrative as lived experience has been shown by Indigenous healers and authors to be one very powerful tool for that desired change.

What does societal and cultural breakdown mean? Soon after contact with non-Native colonizers, Aboriginal peoples were stripped of their social power and authority through relentless pursuit and warfare over lands and resources. Once they realized that they could neither control, nor escape catastrophic events, many began to exhibit helpless “giving up” behavior patterns. Many, by default, withdrew individually and socially, thereby lessening their social and psychological investment in communal and societal relationships. They reduced their cultural and spiritual activities, sending some underground, and became engaged in displaced re-enactments of conflict which led to disruptive behavior, social alienation and profound psychological problems which manifest to today as alcoholism, drug addiction, domestic violence and sexual abuse (Wesley-Esquimaux, 1998). Coupled with increasing external and internal reactive abuse, is the loss of storytelling and the use of narrative as lived experiences that can teach and comfort from a traditional perspective and be a deterrent to a continuing loss of spiritual practice facilitated by governmental suppression of cultural activities and mores.

Anthropology and other disciplines could become better ‘allies’ in the process of recovering Indigenous narratives, and reinforcing people’s abilities and experiences of “shared remembering.” This shared remembering, as Staub (cited by Chataway & Johnson, 1998:234) says, together with “building a cohesive internal community, and rituals, which bring the suffering to light and in which grief and empathy with oneself and others in the group can be felt and expressed” are important elements in group healing. According to Taylor (1992), a positive cultural identity is a crucial feature of a sense of self; to acquire or retain an identity, a group needs communal celebrations, ritual enactments and public opportunities to embrace their traditions. Kirmayer et al, agree and state that, “The collective representations and images of Aboriginal people

in the dominant society become part of Aboriginal peoples’ own efforts to re-invent themselves, and to rebuild self- and group-esteem damaged by the oppression of religious, educational, and governmental institutions” (1993/94:69). Unfortunately, many educational institutions remain at a loss as to how to better integrate and celebrate the infusion of Indigenous narrative and learning into their broader academic curriculums.

According to Berry (1976: 1985), there are four different patterns of response to the acculturation experienced in Aboriginal communities; integration, assimilation, separation and marginalization. How a person or a community responds to acculturation is influenced by two factors: whether cultural traditions and cultural identity are seen as valuable; and whether positive relations with the dominant culture are perceived as desirable. Kirmayer et al. (1993/94:64-65) conclude that integration and assimilation are viewed as positive outcomes by the dominant society, where the acculturation models assume that a dominant culture “absorbs, overwhelms or replaces a subdominant or less powerful culture.” For example, Dorothy Lee, a white anthropologist interested in how people from different cultures perceive their immediate environment, described what she saw while looking at trees outside her window: “I see trees, some of which I like to be there, and some of which I intend to cut down to keep them from encroaching further upon the small clearing I made for my house” (1959:1). In the same passage, she contrasts her own perceptions with those of Black Elk, a Dakota visionary who “saw trees as having rights to the land, equal to his own ... “standing people, in whom the winged ones built their lodges and reared their families”” (cited in Lee, 1959:1). When Aboriginal people start agreeing with the perception of place as indomitable and that development rules, we believe they have moved to a model of living that precludes the deep respect and protection of the “standing people” of their past, and have internalized the processes Berry iterated in his model (1985).

Residential Schools

And then, there were residential schools, and because of them I was born to a generation of refugees in their own lands, because they didn’t come from anywhere else, they were simply taken long ago from what they knew, they were changed, and their light was extinguished. Imagine being born into the dark, into an emotional and physical landscape of grieving that permeated everything and made living a difficult and dreary experience. A landscape that stretched so far back into time that more recent events, such as the imposition of these fairly recent educational systems, were seen as the most pivotal events in our collective history. My generation, born into an enduring anger and sadness, could only look through the lens held up by our parents through which they viewed the ubiquitous “they” and never

know why it was so painful, because it was still a story untold, and yet every generation born since the late 1400's have been reluctant witnesses to the unspeakable and silent expression of a violent and unrelenting process of loss, assimilation and social degradation. This is where the concept of holding one's life up so others can see becomes a critical expression of the journey; we need the light that shines from multiple stories of success and survival to illuminate new mechanisms of change and self-efficacy.

The results of these schools across Canada and the United States have been documented by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers, and the aftermath of contact and residential school attendance has not been substantially different in the far north or the south, or even from anywhere in the United States. Even in more recent generations issues like youth suicide and family dysfunction have become a contemporary social by-product of those decades of physical, mental, emotional and spiritual abuse experienced by previous generations from many Indigenous communities. It is not just those that attended who are continuing to suffer; their children, grandchildren, and now great grand children are also feeling the effects of unresolved trauma and grief generated by the experiences of children who could not understand what was happening to them, and yet could not speak out because of parental commitment to the 'goodness of the Church'. Aboriginal playwright, Tomson Highway, a Cree from Brochet, Northern Manitoba, shared that although he and his brothers went home every summer, and were relieved to get out of the clutches of the priests that abused them, they never told anyone about the abuse they suffered. They did not tell anyone, because of the faith and belief their parents had in the Church, and because they did not want to hurt them as they, the children they unknowingly sent into harm, had been hurt. Tomson noted that he wrote his book, *Kiss of the Fur Queen* (1998), to unburden himself of the pain that he had carried since childhood and that for him, "it was a matter of write the book or die" (Personal Communication, Summer, 1999). In many Aboriginal communities across Canada people are still not willing to openly talk about or acknowledge the effects of that harm on themselves, their parenting, or their relationship skills. In many communities, the effects of Residential School attendance are only very slowly being acknowledged as a deeply painful issue that must now be dealt with everywhere. It took Tomson Highway almost 50 years to actively confront his own pain and confusion. The silence around this issue is based on deeply painful memories and anger, both of which 'the people' have been taught to keep to themselves. My own research has examined how much of a role the phenomenon identified as "(inter/intra) generational grief" by agencies such as the Aboriginal Healing Foundation, have played in creating dis-equilibrium in the Aboriginal community. I understand

today that this phenomenon is believed to affect every single Aboriginal person in Canada and the United States in some way that is not always readily apparent, and is directly related to attendance at residential schools by previous generations who embedded images and memories of trauma in the collective social consciousness (Haig-Brown, 1988; Johnston, 1988; Knockwood, 1992, Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009).

Recent studies (Kirmayer, 1993/94:69) also suggest that traumatic events that Aboriginal people experienced "were not encoded as declarative knowledge but rather 'inscribed' on the body, or else built into ongoing social relations, roles, practices and institutions". When I have talked to people about this 'inscription of harm' on their perception of self and cultural habitus, many admit that being sent to residential schools taught them about isolation and they learned to fear it, as fear itself became something that tangibly 'inscribed their bodies' with profound difference. The fear and isolation they learned 'outside' their home community in residential schools and sometimes in a contemporary sense during extended hospital stays, is considered something that "teaches people a very different way of being with each other" and – repeating after Kirmayer et al. (1993/94:69) again, this "something", together with grief over what has been lost, becomes deeply embedded in "social relations, gender roles, family practices, and institutions."

All of this chaos then becomes the backdrop to my personal lived narrative, because the process of extermination by disease and warfare, the process of assimilation by force and the faulty education of an entire people through colonial legislation only 'shadows my story' because I did not live it directly. No, in many ways my story has been lived in spite of everything that has happened, and mine has become a story of challenge, change and a returning home to the richness of being "self" and the re-remembering of a far distant past as a real 'present' where light shines and people have hope. Telling my story has meant picking up the shattered pieces of my youth and forming them into a narrative that celebrates the overcoming of events into the present, while at the same time, working diligently to understand and integrate the historic past for myself and my community of origin.

Acculturation and Identity

Much has been written about the effects of acculturation and the "dis-eases" that resulted from externally generated alterations in living conditions and expectations. These factors are important to explore because occurrences such as suicide and alcoholism in the adult population in particular cannot be changed or stopped if things are not brought under some social/cultural control. People become numb to – what might be – if what is happening around them or is said to them has

become their 'norm' even if that 'norm' is not publicly or socially sanctioned. It should be noted here as well that, "For many modern historians and anthropologists, what people imagine or believe might have happened is just as important as what did happen, because historically "untrue" statements are still psychologically or sociologically "true". Since people act in accordance with what they believe is true ..." (INAC, 1996:7). The main consideration here becomes that they take action to re-enliven a narrative of possibility and hope for the future.

As an Aboriginal person from Southern Ontario, I see that the lessons learned by southern First Nations through overt assimilation and forced acculturation may have value to those in the north. This does not preclude people in the north learning their own lessons in survival as they have always done. It simply places the southern experience in the position of an elder or teacher in a certain way, since most southern reserves transitioned through acculturation traumas earlier and have been doing so for longer spans of time than those in the north. Aboriginal people often express that it is incumbent upon elders and teachers to identify their own life experiences and share those with younger and less experienced generations. If southern Aboriginal experiences can shed light on the present transitioning processes in the north and offer help by actively sharing learning about their own resistance to acculturation and the many problems they overcame, this then could become a helpful and healing tool for Indigenous peoples throughout northern Ontario. It might also help southern First Nations in their own healing by reinforcing a growing sense of community, national or regional unity, and promote new access to cultural safety and cultural preservation. Sharing stories more effectively for our own healing needs will come out of compassionate sharing with others.

Stories create a 'place in time' that imbues people with identity. As George Copway, a Mississauga/Ojibwa Indian from a southern Ontario reserve noted 150 years ago, (he was an "acculturated" Ojibwa Indian who saw the Christianization of his people as being a good thing, and who actively encouraged education for Indians in white man's schools), "the Ojibwas have a great fund of legends, stories, and historical tales, the relating and hearing of which, form a vast fund of winter evening instruction and amusement. Some of these stories are most exciting and so intensely interesting, that I have seen children during their relation, whose tears would flow most plentifully, and their breasts heave with thoughts too big for utterance. Night after night for weeks I have sat and eagerly listened to those stories. The days following, the characters would haunt me at every step, and every moving leaf would seem to be a voice of a spirit ... these legends have an important bearing on the character of the children of our nation. The fire-blaze is endeared to them in the

after years by a thousand happy recollections. By mingling thus, social habits are formed and strengthened" (Copway, 1850: 95-97). Where did we lose those long winter nights of comfort and engagement? Yes, we still tell stories, but what have we been saying today, not only through our words, but our actions to our children, and when will we acknowledge that the path forward may mean the releasing of a negative historic narrative that we no longer have cause to carry?

Oral Traditions and the Value of Stories

In Aboriginal communities across Canada, story telling used to be a cultural 'anchor'. The old stories that young people were told and the cultural activities in which they participated provided a social 'security blanket' that helped people situate themselves firmly in an everyday context, to comprehend every day meanings, and to construct a strong social identity. The mundane 'going about of doing one's business', living one's life and telling one's cultural story were all connected in the nexus of lived experience. No one part of life was abstracted or detached from another. Communication about life in the bush through story telling is now a rare occurrence and those adults who remember some of those stories say they haven't heard them since childhood. Again, modern influences and long buried traumatic experiences and memories have been allowed to get in the way of and obscure valuable teaching experiences between parents and children. In far too many cases today, television tells the only stories the children in our communities will hear and assimilate. This is unfortunate, because, as Malinowski once observed, "Daily life is fraught with inconsistencies, differences of opinion, and conflicting claims. Oral tradition provides one way to resolve those claims. People reflect on their oral traditions to make sense of the social order that currently exists" (1926). The historic damage done over time, has unseated much of the efficacy of consistent social supports and communal narrative exchange, at least the kind of narrative exchange that once provided healing and a strong social/cultural identity. The interesting thing about this loss is that there was at one time fairly strict controls put on everyone's behaviour and there were clear expectations from the community about how people lived together. Now, people are increasingly reluctant to get involved or provide any sanctions for what people (including the youth) do, whether the acts are positive or negative. "A long time ago, people did things for each other because they cared about each other. They didn't wait until things got out of hand. They dealt with the matter right away. Today...the government gives us money to hire workers to do that. So, there's a mentality that has developed that since the government is giving money to hire workers, there's no reason to worry about things" (Justice Research, 1994:70).

The other thing Aboriginal scholars have learned is that we are increasingly addressing ourselves as individuals, as a sense or experience of community it is becoming difficult to meet on familiar terms. And, it is becoming more and more apparent, that when we begin to address our lives as individuals, it becomes a matter of everyone for themselves. And so we also begin to neglect the teachings of our elders, the very people that have gone through their lives, learned from their own experiences, and are now moving towards the end of their journey. We begin to neglect the direction handed down by our spiritual teachers, our healers, from our Churches, and from our community leaders. Although as a chief from the far north of Ontario once said to me, "some of us I should say [have neglected their elders]. I shouldn't say everybody. I myself am guilty of certain aspects of [that] neglect" (Vince Gimaa, 1994). And individualism, of course, weakens traditional practices, which are founded on a communal ethic (Spirit River Report, 1994:70).

Without oral traditions from our elders that can situate our people, and in particular our youth, we are left with a disconnection to the environment around us. Shared language, and shared narrative as lived experience is surely a teaching tool that can become a vehicle of social and cultural meaning and a force that bonds people together, allowing for different, individual contexts to come together to form a shared cultural context of community. As Bakhtin (in Gates 1985:1) writes, "... it lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else's... the word does not exist in neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words!) but rather it exists in other people's mouths, in other people's contexts, serving other people's intentions: it is from there that one must take the word and make it one's own.

Narrative as Lived Experience

To share my own lived experience I decided to adopt story-telling as the method, as I consider my own narrative an exercise in establishing avenues of communication between my "old" world and the world in which I became an "Indian-educated-in-both-ways". I do not consider this an exercise in "analogical anthropology" which, according to Dennis Tedlock (1983:324), a Zuni scholar who always argued for a need to use a dialogical approach to analyze Aboriginal cultures, "involves the replacement of one discourse with another... Ana-logos, in Greek, literally means 'talking above', 'talking beyond', or 'talking later', as contrasted with the talking back and forth dialogue". Agreeing with Tedlock (1983:324), who sees dialogue as a "continuous process [which] itself illustrates process and change", as opposed to an analogue which he sees as a "product or result", I sometimes "travel in circles", instead of presenting my

life story or those of the past, linearly or chronologically. Mainly because I want to acknowledge and preserve the process of social relations and retain the power of our original Aboriginal voices which – I hope – speak loudly through the narratives as lived experience we are beginning to tell. I am fully aware that my emphasis on the process rather than the product creates difficulties in textualizing my own applied research experiences and community observations. It is not so much that I believe in a greater value of unmediated experience over interpretations; it is more about seeing dialogue as Tedlock does, "not a method, but a mode, a mode of discourse within which there may be methodological moments" (Tedlock, 1983:323).

So what is so special about my life? Nothing really, other than that I am the product of a generation that has moved from almost total marginalization in mainstream and rural societies to what I have termed "victorization" and cautious engagement with dominant mores, mostly, thank goodness, on our own terms, and I am considered "successful". However, I started my life like so many others from the Aboriginal community in Canada. As child of residential school attendees, there was a lot of confusion in my household and far too much residual terror. My mother shared many stories with me about her experiences while living at the Shingwauk Residential School in Sault Ste. Marie, Ontario. There she said, and this is but one poignant example, "I remember when I was a young girl being forced to kneel every morning with all the other girls, the matron was a large black woman, and I'll never forget how every morning, she would make us kneel and pray, and she would say very loudly "God bless these poor little savages!", and we always wondered why she said that, who was she to call us savages?" (Personal communication, JP, December 2000). My step-father, who lived at the same school from the age of 4 years, never did learn how to put down the burden of shame he was handed there, other than through the alcohol that fueled his defeat and eventually became destructive. He did not know what to do with the anger that welled up out a frustration born of a child's helplessness and fear. He could not understand what a child [me], could possibly need when he had never had the opportunity to be comforted in his own right and had been brutally abused when all he had wanted was a gentle touch. So I never received those comforting assurances either and I too had to learn to live without them. Over time, I have learned through my own research and lived experience, how to handle and place this painful and volatile history into a 'sacred space' in my life and how to work with others to help them integrate similar life experiences and find peace in their hearts and homes.

How am I accomplishing this? As I noted earlier in this text, many Aboriginal scholars have been reviewing the historical record and building an understanding of what really happened

historically, and then they have corroborated that information with many elders through their traditional knowledge. The recollections of the very old and the written materials that have come out of anthropological narratives and ethnographic accounts has been extremely helpful in piecing together the story of our collective journey under the yoke of colonial power.

We now know that all students were 'released' from residential school upon reaching the age of sixteen regardless of their academic standing, and that at residential schools, Native children had much of what would have constituted their "cultural identities" wiped from their lives. The children's days were spent learning the English language, being punished for speaking their own languages, working in the fields and doing manual labor. Their days were full of activities and they were kept busy because they were expected to be working at all times. It was the nights, at least for those like my stepfather, that were spent mired in loneliness, abuse, and deep emotional and spiritual pain. His description of those years was painful to hear, although the experience of living them must have been infinitely harder. When he was an adult, he attended a Shingwauk Indian school reunion on my prompting, and he shared how as he walked up the road to the school entrance, "I just wanted to take a bomb and blown that damn place up, I hated that school, I hated those people, and I hated those memories" (personal communication RW, 1999). It was that anger simmering just below the surface of my parents' memories of early life experiences that contributed to chaotic childhood years for me, years filled with rage, neglect, family violence, and alcoholism as constant companions in our home. In fact, many of the Native homes my family frequented in the city while I was growing up, and most of the children in those homes, were regularly exposed to the same contemporary trauma and dysfunction from alcohol abuse and cultural confusion that my own family struggled with. We now know unequivocally where it came from, a deeply embedded, repeatedly reinforced, historic and now intergenerational holocaust.

In Toronto I was raised in a Native community without reserve boundaries, a community that had Aboriginal people, but not a strong cultural grounding. We were the children of residential school attendees; we were raised in a never-never land of lost or abandoned identities and shifting cultural mores. It was a many Nations experience as well because people in Toronto were from all over Ontario and Canada, north and south, east and west. There was no specific way of being "Indian", understanding culture, or even language, because in those days almost everyone came from somewhere else. For me as a child, there was the additional confusion of being illegitimate and coming from a mixed Aboriginal heritage, and therefore not fitting into any single tribal grouping, or having any real knowledge of language or family lineage. Although my step-grandfather spoke only

Ojibwe to me during my early childhood years, the language was not reinforced or used conversationally in our home, mostly because my mother did not speak the language with any fluency.

My tribal background is Chippewa/Mohawk on my birth father's side and Pottawatomini/Ojibwa on my mother's, although, because my mother had not married my birth father, nor retained any kind of relationship with him after she became pregnant, there was no grounding in family values or tribal affiliation. Therefore, I was not only lacking a strong cultural grounding, I was lacking the influence of an entire paternal family relationship. This was true of many of the young people that were born into the 'Indian' cultural milieu that was Toronto in the 50's and 60's. Because our parents came from so many different points across Ontario, and spoke so many different Native languages or none at all, we were a generation that grew up without understanding and appreciation for the significance of language and tribal or First Nation affiliation or traditionally based communal (reserve) living.

The Aboriginal community in Toronto was however, fairly tight knit and people were well known to each other through the 50's, 60's and even 70's. In many ways it was not a healthy community however, and it seemed everyone knew about and experienced the effects of alcohol and family violence, but in those days it was never talked about out loud, nor was the fact that most had come to the city directly out of residential school. It wasn't until much later, in the late 80's and 90's, when people began to understand and accept the need for public education on those issues that people began to talk about what happened, and then actively sought and received help. For many Native people, like my parents, in the early days, drinking, fighting, hating, separation and divorce were the only solutions they felt they had access to.

My interest in Aboriginal traditions, transitions, and transformation began during those childhood years in Toronto. I saw that many people generally worked and maintained themselves as best they could during weekdays, including my own parents, although my stepfather drank almost everyday. Most people in their age group more often than not spent only their weekends in "party" mode and this is when they did some very heavy drinking. My stepfather frequently took beer to work in his lunch bucket. The weekend scenes I witnessed as a child closely paralleled those in the 1995 film "Once Were Warriors," a Maori commentary on love, family, violence, and social relations immersed in alcohol consumption (Lee Tamahori, 1995). As in "Once Were Warriors", the violence and heavy drinking at house parties were what I remember most about Aboriginal people being together in the city. The 'norm' of an every weekend experience of drinking excessive amounts of alcohol, or even alcohol based perfumes and strong colognes, and abusing

themselves, their children, and their homes was my personal experience of what was “normal” for who we were and what we did. In those early days there were hardly any social gatherings or cultural activities that people could go to for spiritual renewal, or cultural sustenance. There was an “Indian” club, a small friendship center downtown, and annual dances for members, but from my personal vantage point, an annual or even bi-annual event does not a solid cultural foundation make.

The negative role modeling for being an “Indian” was a much more powerful force on the young people in our social circles, and this role modeling fostered more contempt than a positive Aboriginal identity. The summer pow wows, year round celebrations of cultural dancing, singing around a group drum, and regular emphasis on Aboriginal teachings came much later when I was closer to adulthood, and thankfully most of these activities have continued into the present for many young Aboriginals in Canada and the United States, although many are still left without consistent rites of passage or spiritual support.

Traditionally in North America young people achieved their “individual wholeness” through the development and enhancement of their spiritual connection with the “other” world (Fiddler, Stevens, 1985). Youth in a clan would fast and open their minds while lying alone in the forest or on a mountain for several days at a time. Males were taught to survive this difficult climate and environment through the use of their visions and dreams. These visions and dreams would be used to lead them to the animals they could kill for food. When a boy reached the age of sixteen, his father would show him how to survive by using his mind and his dreams. The visions were sought during a very specific time of year, when the ice was thawing, migrating birds were returning, and the leaves were starting to grow back. Parents instructed the boys to seek the migrating birds, the winter birds, the animals, and the plants in their visions. It was understood that it was the boy’s dreams that would continue to help him throughout his entire life. He would learn to respect the plants and the trees that gave him his tools and his medicines for curing himself and others. He would learn to respect and thank Manitou for his gifts (Fiddler, Stevens: 1985). This is no longer done in most communities, rural or remote, and the boys in particular are left without this important rite of passage to confirm their transition into manhood and to foster a deep appreciation of the land and waters, or even their own families.

I have lived and worked within the Native community in the city of Toronto and on various reserves across southern Ontario my entire lifetime. I have spent the past 35 years working in a variety of capacities within urban Aboriginal Organizations, First Nation governments, community based claims development processes and assisting in self-government negotiations. I have spent considerable time within the Aboriginal healing and

wellness movement in Canada and the United States, and more recently have worked as a trainer and professor of Aboriginal Studies and at the Faculty of Social Work at the University of Toronto. I have been an independent consultant and facilitator for the past 25 years, and have had the privilege of working in many First Nations across Canada and the United States, as well as with Indigenous populations in other countries. I have watched transitions occurring in Aboriginal communities over those years and have marveled at the speed of change and development both in the city and within “on-reserve” communities. Much of the change can be perceived as positive, but some of it from a cultural standpoint has been detrimental to individual health and in maintaining a strong sense of community. As Aboriginal people have shifted into a more acculturated and non-native mode of living, they have all too frequently lost touch with what the term “community” once represented. Aboriginal people still live on reserves, but they do not interact with each other the way their grandparents did. Wanda Big Canoe, an elder in my own First Nation, Georgina Island, shared during a personal conversation, “When I was a girl, we used to visit all the time, it was perfectly normal to stop in and see each other for tea or something to eat, or just to chat, now people either don’t do it, or you have to call first and practically book an appointment because people do not have the time or interest” (Wanda, 2004).

This was/is a common observation among the elders I visited with in both the near and far north and I have heard it from many older people I have the opportunity talk to today in the south. Now people are careful about whom they visit, when they visit, why they visit, and they generally do call first, and carefully knock and wait for a response before they enter anyone’s home. But it is more than that, much more, as our people are beginning to realize, and the loss is deeply insidious, as we watch our children increasingly losing touch with their culture, languages, and identity and more significantly, in our northern communities, their reasons for living.

Speaking the Unspoken

It is not impossible to hypothesize that holding a certain belief (expressed by some of my own informants) that, “things are just the same as they were before” helps people to protect their identity in times of crisis. It may give them an impression of security and it may even help to maintain a protective sense of cultural distinctiveness. Nevertheless, I have determined through my own life experience, and through the therapeutic work I have undertaken, that there is an embracing of what I would term a kind of ‘cultural mythology’ about the people who once were alive. Perhaps even a ‘cultural mythology’ about who we are as a people in today’s world. Fred Wheatley once said, “You have to live in the world in which you find yourself.”

Unfortunately, in the world in which we find ourselves there is a steady undercurrent of personal and family dysfunction and negative cultural transitioning that is not being acknowledged. There is a sense of everything being well, and nothing being well. The 'hypocrisy' aspect is hard to articulate, but it is as if people say, "We are supposed to be this thing, this way, and therefore we are", but through active family violence, depression, and alcoholism they communicate an entirely different message or 'story' to our young" (personal communications). I concur, and far too often I have observed that our children are left hanging between two worlds, one that is a warm reminiscence and one that is coldly real and hard to negotiate.

In the end the question remains: what kind of story is being told by Aboriginal peoples versus what kind of story is being enacted and re-enacted in everyday life? The term "cultural hypocrisy" may sound harsh, but over time, I have developed a very strong sense of another "story" of aboriginal "being-ness" that does not necessarily demonstrate oft stated traditional or cultural activities. I am well aware that there is an Ojibway cultural standard for traditionalism, which invokes the seven, sacred teaching of the seven grandfathers Nezhwahswe Mishomisuk which I threaded through the opening section of this paper, and which suggests that courage, respect, humility, truth, honesty, love, and wisdom are 'the' essential values of Aboriginality. The general day by day living conditions still existing across Canada in too many Aboriginal communities often present themselves as the opposite of these 'essential values', with a chronic lack of self-care, substance abuse, spousal assault, various types of child neglect and a general lack of personal responsiveness for family well being. Julie Cruikshank suggests that there is a basic principle in the social sciences which suggests that, "All societies enunciate rules about ideal behaviour that may be generally shared but not necessarily followed in every instance; that in fact, social organization is usually riddled with contradiction, that people are quite likely to say one thing and do another, and that rules are confirmed as much in the breach as in the enactment" (1998). This is what I hang my research and trainer hat on; that in spite of the dichotomy of behaviour I have observed throughout my life and written about here; there remains a strong and viable method in the madness.

The 'old stories' being told can mediate between what is socially enacted today and what the traditional 'ideal' actually is. Perhaps the Aboriginal peoples of Canada know it "instinctively" and this is why they are ready to accept all the "daily" contradictions to mostly unspoken traditionally based rules. People still consider themselves "Aboriginal" even when what they do is seemingly incongruous with traditional Aboriginal values. These contradictions implicitly tell people more about "what to do", than "what not to do", and those "ethical pointers"

are, just as Cruikshank (1998) predicts, embedded in seemingly chaotic social organization.

Nevertheless, there seems to be a chronic lack of continuity between the world as-people-remember-it and the world as-it-is, and this causes endless confusion for our youth who are looking to their parents and elders for clear explanations and unambiguous instructions on how to locate themselves in between the adults' memories and the youth's sometimes terrified "here-and-now".

It has been well documented in the literature that many indigenous, and colonized people around the world suffer today from the very same social problems. Hezel (1995) in his study on Micronesian youth suggests that uncertain relations between young men and their families lead to a growing frequency of suicide and family dysfunction. Hezel analyzes factors such as weakening bonds of the family and the larger community, as well as the cultural upheaval from modernization that takes its toll on the family: the family roles become relegated to other institutions, and the effectiveness of the supporting role it once played for the young erode. People caught up in-between two worlds: the "modern" one and the "traditional" one, became "decentered selves", people who are "a part of an immense discontinuous network of strands that may be termed politics, ideology, economics, history, sexuality, language and so on" (Guha & Spivak, 1988:12). If one agrees that, before contact, family, community and spirituality were at the center of indigenous people's social and cultural lives, then it can be agreed that the recent "de-centering" of traditions has left Aboriginal peoples without a core in their social relationships. The loss of communal cohesion and family support in First Nations across Canada has exacerbated an ongoing and increasingly hurried descent into a cultural transition that leads to even more loss and deeper social uncertainty.

I have eventually come to realize that there is a genuine need and value to artificially or deliberately creating, co-creating, or re-creating community and family closeness especially when there has been a loss of identity for our young, or when a community has grown too quickly, whether it is urban or rural. This kind of directed activity can be regarded as necessary in many Aboriginal communities because as noted, over time people have drawn themselves into a more westernized type of "individuality". It has become difficult to sustain a sense of collectivity when everyone goes back to their own houses, their own social spaces, and seemingly have no need to commune with anybody else, or to help resolve growing social problems. In important ways people need to be drawn back out into real and messy communal interaction, at a level apart from feasts, butchering moose, hunting celebrations, birthday parties, and bi-annual hunts. I believe that the level of communal relations

we are neglecting as a larger community of Indigenous peoples has a great deal, along with unrepresented historic trauma, to do with growing issues of conflict, stress, dysfunction, abuse, family violence, and alcohol consumption. Deaths of our children by suicide come right out of a narrative of silence which, for many people, has become the norm rather than the exception. Also, as in many Indigenous communities in colonized countries, "internal animosities, corrosive factionalism and jealousy are endemic. There is no 'treatment' other than learning how to diffuse situations, by using techniques such as conflict resolution" (Tatz, 1999:7). As an example, inevitably blame for education problems go to the teachers and directors of our local schools, and it is virtually impossible to get parents to accept an active role in sorting out child behavioural issues. Yet, at the same time, there seems to be an underlying request for personal and community change that remains somewhat indefinite and unreal, as if each person is always waiting for someone else to make the first move.

We need to remember for the sake of our children, that many changes in lifestyle were brought back to reserves and urban centres directly from residential schools, others were learned in the cities that people migrated to when they left home looking for work, and of course, some changes were introduced, adopted and entrenched right at the reserve level. Different ways of life have been brought onto reserves over the years by missionaries, non-Native teachers, Indian Agents and the myriad government workers and officials that have "looked after" the interests of Native peoples on reserves while actively encouraging assimilation and acculturation. Many residential school attendees from my parents generation and probably long before, never went back home, but stayed in the cities, married, and raised children there. This "staying away" had its own special effects on the wellbeing of the communities they left behind, and it has created new effects as people return home in their retirement years.

For Aboriginal people born and raised in the city, it is easier to fit into the anonymity of 'off reserve' life. Many people, like me, today return 'home' to our reserves bringing different ideals, values, and expectations, which are not necessarily welcomed by the middle aged or even the young because they often mean challenging the status quo. Through the course of my lifetime, my work, and later through doing academic research, my observations of the number of changes among Aboriginal people in the south, even though they are not always obvious, have been validated.

Through my community work over the past 35 years, I have journeyed a long distance, running through a forest of pain and anger generated by mostly misunderstood and denied personal experiences that have profoundly impacted not only myself, but

the Aboriginal collective. More recently, I have regularly, but gently, admonished those who have not yet found their own stories, who are still seeking a sense of personal respect and reality, to "mine their lives for the diamonds" to survey their lives for lessons hard won, and times well lived. I have learned to live and love in this way, and my personal narrative is like that, a story of getting back up and trying again, of taking risks and being honest with myself and others, sometimes losing, sometimes winning, but recognizing the tremendous gains realized out of a tumultuous life lived focused on the past, and the wisdom earned through learning how to stay balanced in the present, practice kindness, and walk in a humble way into the future.

There are many different stories that people tell about who they are and who they would like to be. There is a life narrative, as it is "lived" by the adults, and there is a narrative of death in far too many places in Canada, as it is "lived" by the youth (McCormick, 1998). This interrelated reality and this dichotomized reasoning that people practice is, as Jay says, "necessarily distorting [in its tendency to take all difference as a matter of presence/absence, existence/non-existence] when... applied directly to the empirical world, for there are no negatives there. Everything that exists... exists positively" (1981:48). Maybe it is this polarity itself that makes it extremely difficult for the adults and the youth in Indigenous communities today to find a common ground to stand on so they can open new avenues of communication, especially as nothing was ever dichotomous in Aboriginal world views before. If the pure fact that "there is a community" (that people live together, remember, and plan for the future) is taken as an undisputable "positive", admitting that things do not work as they should (or could) would introduce a "negative". As such, this then, might infuse necessary conflict and therefore opportunity, and, would disturb and shift the communal status quo that was born at one point in time out of the people's shattered past. We all need to remember that Aboriginal people in Canada, like many other dispossessed indigenous populations around the world, fought very hard to create a "good life" for themselves and to preserve their identity in the midst of an ever-present vagueness that surrounded and threatened to permanently destroy their hopes.

Victorizing into the Future

Regardless of the problems Aboriginal peoples are continuing to experience now – they have in fact succeeded to a large degree. Recognition of these binary oppositions (ie, two different narratives, two different communities) may actually help explain [to them] the non-sensical nature of the colonial domination that created the very dichotomies they live in today. The presence of dissonant narratives, however damaging to community, may give people hope, because if one of their stories

is, what Bahr (1989:316) calls, a “victimist history... which tells how one people was damaged by another”, the other one is a story of survival, perseverance and determination. What I have come to call a ‘victorization’ and celebration of survival. The multiple stories we have to tell, the tapestries of pain and perseverance that have long shrouded our ability to speak with authority can and are being flung back and shaken to release strong narratives of recovery and strength (McKegney, 2007). The tears that are being shed in conferences, healing circles, and community confrontations with the past are tears of health and relief. We are rapidly moving from tales of victimization to narratives of resilience and pride, tales of victorization and wellness. We have broken through the buckskin ceiling and flung open the buckskin curtain (Cardinal, 1999), and demanded that the light of traditional knowledge and historic truths be brought forth to shine and illuminate the path into our collective future.

It is women like me and many others, who are now called upon to open the gates of change and to re-instill the confidence and balance of responsibility, respect, and reverence that has been stilled by historic events. Jeanne Herbert (2003) says that “applying traditional knowledge to healthy families today is a process that will take time, since we need to re-discover the essence of traditions in creative ways, and if you have lost the culture, you have to live it to regain it” (Herbert, 2003:4). This means that we all have to participate in the active victorizing of our lives, our cultures, and positively enlivening the entire circle of our communities and our work. The breaking of silence in our communities and organizations is an important element of building sustainable and instructive change. It means creating an active presence in political and spiritual forums and insisting that feminine and youth issues be fully represented in policy and legislation, both internal and external to each community across Canada. It means rescripting our history and our lives with a new narrative, because the old story and his-story generated by European thought no longer serves us as a re-emerging force in Canada (Nissley, 2009). It also means giving a full measure of respect to ourselves, our children and our leaders so that we can (re)gain it in our homes and communities. So much has been taken away from the Aboriginal population over the years, but we are fighting back in ways that are becoming indelible in the social consciousness of Canada. We have found that we can provide new role models and enlightening events to revive those who were beaten into submission in residential schools and through Indian Act regulation and exclusion, and we can learn to re-live and practice our traditional seven sacred values in our everyday lives.

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 66-73

First Nations Children Count: An Indigenous Envelope for Quantitative Research

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Special thanks to the National Collaborating Centre on Aboriginal Health who made this paper possible.

Introduction

Indigenous peoples repeatedly call for disaggregated data describing their experience to inform resource allocations and policy and practice change (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2003; UNICEF, 2003; Rae & the Sub Group on Indigenous Children and Youth, 2006). Although there has been significant discourse on the destructive historical role of western research in Indigenous communities (RCAP, 1996; Smith, 1999; Schnarch, 2004) and more recently on the cultural adaptation of qualitative research methods (Smith, 1999; Bennett, 2004; Kovach, 2007), there has been very little discussion on how to envelope western quantitative social science research within Indigenous ways of knowing and being. This paper begins by outlining the broad goals of Indigenous research before focusing on how quantitative research is used, and represented, in the translation of Indigenous realities in child health and child welfare. Given the rich diversity of Indigenous peoples' knowledge, this paper is only capable of what respected Indigenous academic Margo Greenwood (2007) would term "touching the mountaintops" of complex and sacred ideas.

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Abstract

Indigenous peoples have increasingly called for disaggregated data to inform policy and practice and yet there has been very little discourse on how to "Indigenize" quantitative research. This article provides a synopsis of Indigenous research goals before moving onto describe how quantitative research can be placed in an Indigenous envelope to advance Indigenous child health and welfare policy goals.

Keywords: Quantitative data and research, Indigenous research goals, Indigenous child welfare, policy.

Cutting Edge Quantitative Research: lapping at the shorelines of Indigenous knowledge

Some researchers believe that qualitative methods are, almost inherently, more "indigenous" in nature than quantitative methods. Such assumptions are premised on beliefs that Indigenous peoples were (and are) more concerned about storytelling and ceremony than scientific and numeric endeavour. However, as Nobel Prize nominee, Dr. Ervin Laszlo (2007) posits, many of the most celebrated advances in western science are now just lapping at the shorelines of the complex knowledge held in trust by Indigenous peoples for millennia. For example, Laszlo (2007) describes how the Indigenous beliefs in an interconnected reality across time and space and in multiple dimensions of reality are now being explored by the most theories in physics such as string theory and the theory of everything. Network science also suggests that complex interconnected systems can be effectively negotiated as holistic systems running against the trend in western social science to reduce reality to elements of analysis (Watts, 2006). In addition, research is bearing out the importance of acting and thinking in what Aboriginal people call "a good way" or with "a good mind as findings points to information shaping reality instead of being a by-product of reality (Laszlo, 2007). Laszlo (2007) is not

alone in his assessment of how advanced Indigenous scientific knowledge is. Nobel Prize winning biologist, Dr George Wald joins Peter Knutson and David Suzuki in arguing that advanced genetic science is now confirming the long held Indigenous belief that all life forms are genetically interconnected (Knutson and Suzuki, 1992).

These recent developments build on a long history of Indigenous science informing western science, particularly in fields of pharmacology, medicine, agriculture and architecture (Weatherford, 1988; RCAP, 1996). For example, an impressive 60% of the world's food source is derived from the knowledges of Indigenous peoples in the Americas (Weatherford, 1988).

From a mathematical perspective, numbers were developed to represent the natural world. As Indigenous peoples have long defined their cultures and languages in reference to the natural world, numbers are often not a foreign concept. For example, Meso-American cultures invented zero in about 32 BC - centuries before it was "discovered" in India. Meso-American cultures also developed the most accurate calendar (365 days per year) and had perfected architectural development in ways that outstripped civilized European society at the time (Mann, 2006.) Although Indigenous scientific and numeric concepts varied, and were shaped differently than western systems, it is clear that these differences did not handicap Indigenous scientific enlightenment. Given that Indigenous peoples have sophisticated systems of thought that produce scientific information, the widely held belief that quantitative research is somehow more culturally foreign than qualitative research is suspect.

In addition to Indigenous research methods (Kovach, 2007), western qualitative and quantitative research methods should be viewed as legitimate options for use with Indigenous peoples so long as they are appropriately enveloped in Indigenous knowledge and research protocols. However, it has been my experience that quantitative research is much more persuasive to western policy makers and thus is often a preferred option when pursuing the research translation agenda. The problem is that even though quantitative research is often more convincing to western policy makers there is a stereotype that quantitative research is somehow culturally inappropriate putting Indigenous researchers in a "catch 22". This is why it is so essential to debunk the myth that quantitative research is somehow more or less Indigenous than qualitative methods. The frank reality is that both qualitative and quantitative methods are western cultural constructions. There is nothing implicitly more Indigenous about using a qualitative versus quantitative approach. Methods become culturally appropriate through the application of critical cross-cultural examination and adaptation of the method. This reality, coupled with the fact that Indigenous communities the

world over are calling for quality disaggregated data describing their situation (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2003; UNICEF, 2003; Rae & the Sub Group on Indigenous Children and Youth, 2007), suggests an acute need for a robust discussion on how to "indigenize" quantitative research methods.

Quantitative Translation Research

Although western universities and democratic societies say they welcome alternative ways of knowing the world, the reality is that the dominant power structures still heavily privilege western paradigms. What this means, in practical terms for Indigenous peoples, is that they often have to "confirm" their knowledge and reality using western methods before non Aboriginal policy makers and funding bodies will listen. This reality is what drives the translation research goal in Indigenous research. Translation does not imply a manipulation of the data. It simply means employing western research tools to explore and document what, quite frankly, most Indigenous people believe is an obvious reality. For example, First Nations have been reporting for decades that the child welfare system was removing a disproportionate number of First Nations children (Assembly of First Nations, 1993; RCAP, 1996) but without western research "evidence" these claims were often minimized (Blackstock, 2003). Once the Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect (Trocme et. al, 2001) produced quantitative evidence supporting First Nations claims, the over representation of First Nations children in child welfare care was more seriously considered by non-Aboriginal child welfare authorities.

The focus on research as a translation tool is an important distinction from the western research doctrine of viewing research as a tool to generate "new knowledge." Research as translation, as opposed to being solely innovative, is one example wherein the interfaces between Indigenous and non Indigenous knowledge can create tension and confusion for non Indigenous researchers. The highest professional accolades and funding sources, in western academia are reserved for those who produce new knowledge. By comparison, Indigenous peoples believe that the most important things about humanity are already known and thus the highest standard is the wisdom held by the Elders who have studied ancestral knowledge for a lifetime (Auger, 2001.) What this means, in practical terms, is that western academics often get little reward for conducting translation-based research, research that is precisely so often needed by Indigenous peoples. The end result is that, until recently, there have been very few non Indigenous social science researchers who were willing to engage in translation based research. Consequently, many Indigenous researchers struggled

to achieve two, often mutually exclusive goals (being recognized in western academia and doing meaningful translation research) so that Indigenous communities could access the policy change and resources they needed.

Although the value of translation based research is beginning to be recognized in western academic circles, practical barriers such as funding and academic recognition continue to persist. Eliminating these barriers is critical for Indigenous communities who, increasingly, are calling for more translation based research in order to get the “evidence” and funding needed to redress the longstanding socio-economic challenges they face.

Quantitative research is most frequently sought out by Indigenous peoples wanting to pursue specific policy goals requiring some sort of western approval or support (United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, 2003; UNICEF, 2003; Rae & the Sub Group on Indigenous Children and Youth, 2007.) The question of whether this should or should not be the case is another debate. Indigenous peoples often face grave socio-economic conditions requiring immediate relief and, in order to get that relief, they need to present the most compelling and convincing case to western policy makers: this often means presenting the case within and through research gathered in a quantitative manner. In order to perform the translation function well, quantitative researchers need to thoroughly understand the research goal, build respectful relationships with the respective Indigenous community and adapt their research methods to more closely reflect the Indigenous context.

Preparing the Envelope: Adapting Western Research Methods for the Translation Research Purpose

Non Indigenous researchers must understand how western research was used as a colonial tool within and towards Indigenous communities and peoples (RCAP, 1996; Smith, 1999; Bamblett, 2005). These colonial research paradigms resulted in knowledge extraction from, as oppose to knowledge benefit for, Indigenous peoples. As a result, Indigenous peoples have developed a healthy scepticism of western research, insisting that researchers demonstrate how the research will result in community benefit and how Indigenous knowledge and ethical protocols will be respected (Schnarch, 2004). Observance of Indigenous ethical standards and values are not discretionary nor should researchers believe that western research ethics reviews accomplish the same goal rendering a secondary Indigenous ethics process redundant. Adherence to Indigenous ethical standards should be thought of as an essential pre-requisite to effective research. These ethical standards are

often not onerous and serve to enhance both the quality and utility of results.

Inherent to the ethics of Indigenous research protocols is a requirement that researchers will nurture and maintain a respectful relationship with the Indigenous peoples who are subject to the study. This respect unfolds throughout the research endeavour, beginning with the formation of the research question. As a default setting, Indigenous communities should develop the research question in partnership with the researcher (Blackstock, 2003) because the whole goal of translation based research is to evidence a community reality. Indigenous communities should also be consulted in development of research methodology in order to ensure the inclusion of relevant information, the proper observance of cultural or contextual protocols and the proper interpretation and dissemination of findings (Schnarch, 2004).

Western researchers have often been raised on the idea that distance equals objectivity and frequently raise concerns about whether or not the formation of relationships within a translation-based research context introduces unnecessary bias. Porter (1995) argues that western conflation of relational distance and scientific objectivity is a falsehood in that it fails to recognize other sources of bias sourced in the researcher, method and unaccounted variables. This view has gained traction in the social science research community, notably with the growing popularity of Participatory Action Research and the generally accepted practice of declaring sources of bias in research articles. Indigenous peoples do not try to deny the influence of relationship or personal interest on research. They believe that centering community values and interests, whilst maintaining a proper balance of research interests and emotions, ensures research integrity and efficacy (Smith, 1999).

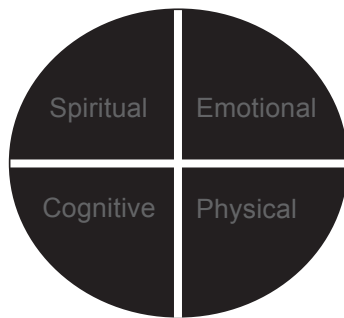
Given the diversity of Indigenous communities, it is critical that researchers work with Indigenous community leaders to identify the most effective and respectful ways of conducting and disseminating research. Useful guides to these discussions are the Ownership, Control, Access and Possession (OCAP) research principles (Schnarch, 2004) and the Reconciliation in Child Welfare: Touchstones of Hope for Indigenous Children, Youth and Families principles (Blackstock, Cross, Brown, George & Formsa, 2006). Both these documents were jointly developed by Indigenous and non Indigenous child welfare experts to maximize the efficacy of child welfare research, policy and practice respecting Indigenous children and families.

The Holistic Worldview: setting the stage for putting quantitative research in an Indigenous envelope

The widely held Indigenous holistic world view holds that we are part of an interconnected reality created by everything that came before us. This foundation of experience and knowledge

often called oral history shapes our current and future realities. Optimal functioning of this complex system, including all human experience and endeavours, is achieved when there is balance between the spiritual, emotion, physical and cognitive dimensions.

The holistic model is broadly held by Indigenous peoples worldwide but it can be expressed differently. One of the most broadly used expressions of the holistic model is the Medicine Wheel:



Applied in a research context, clarity of thought is achieved when the research reaches spiritual, emotional, cognitive and physical balance. The holistic worldview acknowledges that periods of imbalance are inevitable during the research process. The goal, therefore, is to identify these periods of imbalance and act in a way that achieves cumulative balance over the course of the research project.

Quantitative research in an Indigenous envelope

What would quantitative research look like when enveloped within an holistic approach? The following section describes how Indigenous researchers or non Indigenous researchers advised by Indigenous peoples have enveloped quantitative research in an Indigenous holistic world view envelope by invoking the spiritual, physical, emotional and cognitive dimensions of being.

Invoking the spiritual

For Indigenous peoples, spirituality plays a key role in contextualizing knowledge. Protecting knowledge, and its sacred status, results in instilling deference to the collective and is anchored in community values such as the Seven Grandfather Teachings: wisdom, truth, humility, honesty, bravery, love, and generosity (Auger, 2001). The spiritual has supernatural and natural dimensions, creating a reality wherein myth and reality become mutually reinforcing. For example, environmentalists Knudtson and Suzuki (1992) describe how Indigenous beliefs in circular creation, often termed reincarnation in western contexts,

contributes to effective natural resource management. This belief system holds that animals, plants and other necessities of human life will only recreate themselves if they are treated with great respect by the current generation of humans. A failure to do so results in these essential life resources not being available for future generations and the eventual extinction of the human race. First Nations have known for centuries what the Al Gore is just finding out – if you do not treat the earth with respect then you are treating yourself badly (Auger, 2001).

From a quantitative social science research perspective, Indigenous research reports consistently employ symbolic art, legends and teachings to add meaning and context to the findings. For example, a young Yorta Yorta woman named Kahlit Luttrell designed the magnificent cover of the Secretariat National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care [SNAICC] (2002) report entitled *through black young eyes*. The image is intended to capture the emotions that children living with violence experience. Poetry and traditional teachings are threaded throughout the report alongside qualitative and quantitative research findings in order to add meaning. The back cover of the report was considered equally important and features the following poem by Lorraine Patten:

*They think I don't know
What about me?
Does anyone care?
The fights, the blues and the despair-
Some people think
I don't know
But the feeling inside me
Tells me what's so
"I'm sorry, I'm sorry
They say back and forth
But what about me?
I wish I could talk*

SNAICC, 2002

Similarly, the First Nations Child and Family Caring Society includes symbolism in its report entitled *Wen:de: We are Coming to the Light of Day*. The cover of the report features a First Nations girl holding a candle looking to the future and the inside of the cover features images of light. Interestingly Michelle Nahanee, the very talented First Nations designer who compiled the report, had visions of light and, at the same time, Elder Donald Horne was thinking of naming the report *Wen: de* which means "coming to the light of day". The name and the design were spiritually inspired and this spirit enveloped the dedication of the report made in memory of a First Nations

boy named Jordan who unnecessarily spent over two years in a hospital as governments fought over payment for his at-home-care (Lavalee, 2005). The back cover of the report featured an inspirational quote encouraging the reader to move the report recommendations into a lived experience for First Nations children. These two reports were independently produced thousands of miles away by Indigenous peoples and yet they are remarkably similar in terms of how spirituality is expressed.

In contrast, western social work and health journals require articles to be submitted in text form only and the inclusion of spiritual content is typically discouraged. In general, the more bland the cover of the journal, the more scholarly it appears to a western audience. Is it any wonder why the readership of academic journals is so limited? Western research has not yet embraced the spiritual as a legitimate and integral aspect of knowledge—but Indigenous researchers are demonstrating how spirituality can help readers infuse information with meaning to create and internalize knowledge.

Invoking the emotional

For some reason, the trend in western research is to conflate objective truth with an absence of emotion and passion. It seems the more indifferent you are about a topic the more respected you are for your “objective” and “unbiased” opinion (Priddy, 1999). As Theodore Porter (1995) notes, however, western researchers cannot excise their interests and emotions from pure science research let alone the social sciences centered on human experience. Linguistic science affirms Porter’s point of view, noting that people interpret information, including research, through cognitive frames which are shaped by our life experience, culture and context (Lakoff, 2004). Neuroscience has found evidence suggesting that emotion and cognition are linked (Rabins, 2003) and thus true research emotional objectivity in western science is more myth than reality.

For millennia, Indigenous peoples believed that such distance between logic and emotion is impossible, not to mention undesirable. Consistent with a holistic world view, Indigenous peoples believed that a balance of cognition, emotion, spirituality and physical knowing created the optimal climate to cultivate valid and useful knowledge (RCAP, 1996). It is important to understand the importance of the word “balance” in the holistic worldview – Indigenous peoples and non Indigenous researchers would agree that too much emotion distorts reality. However, Indigenous peoples believe that balance, from an emotional point of view, means acknowledging and embracing emotion as a reality versus trying to sideline it or deny it (Kovach, 2007). This means going beyond “declaring bias” in a research report to understanding your emotional connection to reality as a dynamic resource and influence throughout the research process.

Invoking the physical

The Wen:de: we are coming to the light of day report (Blackstock, C., Prakash, T., Loxley, J., and Wien, F., 2005) was printed with ecologically friendly ink on paper that protected old growth forests. The report needed to embody the values of respect for the land that are so integral to the healthy development of Indigenous children.

Indigenous languages are used in many quantitative research reports respecting Indigenous peoples such as the Our children: Nos enfants report authored by the Nunavik Regional Health Board of Health and Social Services (2003.) The cover features an Inuksuk embedded with pictures of children from Nunavik and the Inuktitut language is used for the title and throughout the body of the report. The statistical reports that typify quantitative research appear in this report, but they are interpreted in Inuktitut.

For indigenous peoples the written word is frozen when knowledge was meant to be alive. To infuse life into the written word, the physical elements of an Indigenous quantitative report must be in balance with the emotional, spiritual and cognitive elements.

Invoking the cognitive

The cognitive domain is very familiar to western researchers: it is also highly valued by Indigenous peoples, although it is important to keep in mind that there are two very different worldviews informing cognition at work here. Indigenous peoples are more likely to value ancestral knowledge, interconnection and value the influence of the emotional, physical and spiritual domains on cognition than western researchers (Blackstock, 2007.)

The use of a common language (i.e.: French or English) can create an illusion of common understanding between western researchers and Indigenous communities. For example, the words “partnership” and “consultation” are often used by Canadian federal and provincial governments to describe how they work with Indigenous peoples but Indigenous peoples often have a far different interpretation both of what these words mean and how they are actualized by government officials. Western governments often believe that partnership with Indigenous peoples has been achieved whereas Indigenous peoples often believe it is still being aspired to (RCAP, 1996; MacDonald, 1999.) Research ethics in western research are not necessarily reflective of the personal ethics of the researcher but, in Indigenous cultures, no such differentiation exists – ethics are something you are, not something you put on (Blackstock, 2007).

Researchers involved in translation research need to become fluent and multilingual in both Indigenous and non

Indigenous constructs of knowledge in order to accurately describe and translate the situation of Indigenous peoples for western policy makers. Western researchers must, in effect, walk in multiple worlds. In practice, researchers will often get invaluable assistance from Indigenous peoples who have long had to function in “multiple worlds,” one of which (a Euro-colonial world) has actively marginalized Indigenous ways of knowing and being.

Comparing First Nations and western representations of a quantitative study



The Canadian Incidence Study on Reported Child Abuse and Neglect [CIS] (Trocmé et al., 2001) provides an excellent contrast of how a population based study appears when it is enveloped in western and First Nations ways of knowing and being. The western report summarizes the major Canadian findings whereas the First Nations report, Mesmimik Wasatek, presents the secondary analysis of First Nations data (Trocmé, MacLaurin, Fallon, Knoke, Pitman & McCormack, 2006.) The CIS is widely respected by Aboriginal and non Aboriginal child welfare researchers alike. First Nations have found the CIS data especially useful as it is the first national child maltreatment study

to specifically collect disaggregated data on the experiences of First Nations children and their families. The inclusion of First Nations in the CIS study necessitated some minor methodical modifications, such as respecting community ethics review processes and working with First Nations experts to develop and prioritize research questions for secondary data analysis: the results, however, are that much the richer on account of these slight methodological modifications.

Table 1 shows how the final report contrasts with the First Nations report across several key areas. The one area where the reports do not differ is in terms of the rigor and quality of the data analysis and the presentation of findings.

In my view, the CIS is one of the most successful examples of how quantitative research can be placed and employed within an Indigenous envelope. The openness of the CIS research team to work respectfully with First Nations researchers and communities to envelope the CIS in Indigenous ways of knowing and being, while taking seriously the translation research function, has resulted in significant policy advancements. For example, the First Nations CIS report has informed a national First Nations child welfare funding policy, amendments to

Table 1: Comparing the Mainstream and First Nations CIS Report layouts

Content	Western CIS	First Nations CIS
Cover:		
Cover Meaning:	Government designed with a maple leaf likely symbolizing Canada and a grid but with no meaning is noted in the report.	Designed by a First Nations author who was commissioned by the Mi'Kmaq First Nation who named the report.
Title	Canadian Incidence Study of Reported Child Abuse and Neglect	Mesmimik Wasatek: Catching a drop of light
Meaning of the Title:	None noted	Name gifted by the Mi'Kmaq Family and Children's Services. "The tears of the beautiful child in the artwork fall into the sacred smudge bowl filled with water, the essence of all life. The butterfly symbolizes how the CIS information helped shape the transformation of services offered by Mi'Kmaq Family and Children's Services to better support Mi'Kmaq children and families.
Internal photos / Images:	None	Portions of the cover art throughout.
Methodology Group:	Quantitative	Quantitative

provincial and First Nations child welfare programs and policy submissions to the United Nations.

Although the research team still feels improvements could be made to future cycles of the CIS to further maximize its policy efficacy, it serves as an excellent example of how quantitative research can support the Indigenous translation research purpose.

Indigenous Research – on its own terms

Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach (2007) argues that only Indigenous research centered on Indigenous ontology and methods is truly Indigenous - everything else is a compromise. I agree. I am encouraged by the growing numbers of Indigenous studies that validate Indigenous knowledge on its own terms and provide a framework for Indigenous knowledge and research to inform western social science.

In general, western social sciences have lagged behind the western pure sciences in terms of recognizing Indigenous knowledge and appreciating its potential to inform western knowledge. Social work and health theories still tend to understand the world in segmented scope (i.e.: structural theory, ecological theory, complexity theory, systems theory, phenomenology) or in segmented populations (i.e.: feminism, ethnic studies and anti oppressive frameworks) (Blackstock, 2007). Although some western research methods such as ethnography explore phenomena across time, these approaches tend to focus on specific events or groups instead of an interconnected reality. Social work has not even begun to seriously consider something along the lines of the Theory of Everything that is being contemplated in physics in recognition of emerging evidence of the interrelationship of all things (Laszlo, 2007).

The pure sciences have gone full circle from discounting Indigenous knowledge in favour of myopic scientific knowledge and then, having followed the trail laid by years of scientific endeavour, are lapping at the shorelines of Indigenous knowledge again. In contrast, social science adheres to a myopic and dated concept of western science that largely discounts the validity of Indigenous knowledge a myopic, and dated, concept of western science. As a result, western social sciences often cast Indigenous knowledge to elective status or bracket it as only having relevance to Indigenous peoples. This diminishes the value of Indigenous knowledge and also limits western social science knowledge and research.

The potential for the social sciences to benefit from Indigenous knowledge is exponential. Indigenous peoples have been living in social, economic and political systems in North America for at least 20,000 years and have highly sophisticated methods of surveying and transmitting knowledge across long

periods of time. This knowledge could assist social scientists in expanding the potential of longitudinal research approaches and glean important ancestral knowledge about human existence and relationships. Many of the problems that western science has found most elusive such as global warming, dealing with cultural difference, and resolving conflict can be significantly enlightened by respectfully embracing Indigenous knowledge. Physics, biology, ecology, pharmacology and others have already benefited from Indigenous knowledge (Weatherford, 1988) and now it is time for social sciences to do the same thing before they get left too far behind.

Summary

Indigenous peoples and their knowledge count. Not just for Indigenous peoples but for everyone. Understanding the different purposes of Indigenous research provides a framework for Indigenous and non Indigenous research to co-exist respecting the distinctiveness and validity of their knowledges and research methods.

Enveloping quantitative research in an Indigenous envelope does not “water it down” but rather contextualizes the information and provides more knowledge pathways (emotional, spiritual, and physical) than the typical western approach. After all, when you look at Table 2 what report would you, regardless of your culture, rather read? The western one with the grid and maple leaf or the one with beautiful child and the smudge bowl. Western social science has a lot to learn from Indigenous peoples – it is time for it to reach out to the Elders and go to school.

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 74-87

Indigenous Wholistic Theory: A Knowledge Set for Practice

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Introduction

This article joins other recent and worthy publications where authors advance Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing (Graveline, 2004; Hart, 2002; Nabigon, 2006; Poonwassie & Charter, 2005; Sinclair, Hart, & Bruyere, 2009; Solomon & Wane, 2005). As Indigenous practice increasingly becomes asserted and expressed, we need to continue to articulate elements of Indigenous wholistic theory that guides Indigenous based social work practice.

Indigenous peoples have worldviews and means of relating to the world. Stemming from this worldview comes the understanding that 'we are all related'. Indigenous theory is rooted intimately within Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, cultures and traditions. Indigenous wholistic theory is wholistic and multi-layered, which encompasses the spiritual, emotional, mental and physical elements of being. We also acknowledge our past, present and future. By that very nature, we must look at the past and into our future and Indigenous theory factors in seven generations past and the seven generations into the future.

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Abstract

In this article, the author, establishes a knowledge set for Indigenous social work practice based on Indigenous wholistic theory. An overall framework using the circle is proposed and introduced followed by a more detailed and elaborated illustration using the four directions. The article identifies the need to articulate Indigenous wholistic theory and does so by employing a wholistic framework of the four directional circle. It then systematically moves around each direction, beginning in the east where a discussion of Spirit and Vision occurs. In the south a discussion of relationships, community and heart emerge. The western direction brings forth a discussion of the spirit of the ancestors and importance of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous knowledge production. The northern direction articulates ideas surrounding healing and movements and actions that guide practice. Finally, the article begins with a discussion on all four directions together with a final examination of the center fire where all elements interconnect and intersect. Lastly, the article proclaims the existence of Indigenous wholistic theory as a necessary knowledge set for practice.

Keywords: Indigenous wholistic theory, social work practice, theory, four directional circle, relationships, community, healing.

It forms a framework to 'indigenize' our thoughts and actions into active healing processes that simultaneously decolonize and indigenize. And finally but not exclusively, I know that Indigenous theory is earth based and derived from the teachings of the land, sun, water, sky and all of Creation. Its' methodologies of practice integrate the natural teachers and elements of the earth. Indigenous wholistic theory is an ancestral concept to Indigenous people where,

Aboriginal people in Canada have ancient culture specific philosophical foundations and practices, which continue to provide them with guidance in everyday life. In their healing process these imperatives provide guidance to those who experience physical, psychological, emotional, or spiritual distress – individually, in a family, or in a community (Poonwassie & Charter, 2001, p. 63).

Our work as wholistic practitioners is to remember and reconnect with wholistic knowledges, pick up our bundles and activate them again. Picking up our bundles means to relearn, reclaim, pick up and own the teachings and practices that emanate from wholistic theory and knowledge. It means to live and practice *minobimaadsiwin* (a good life). In this article, a wholistic framework organizes and presents the knowledge set for Indigenous wholistic theory in Indigenous social work practice.

This article, in fact, stems from an earlier article I wrote in 1993 called *Healing as practice: Teachings from the Medicine Wheel*¹, which I never formally published but was widely requested and used. Within this article I use the terms Indigenous and Anishinaabek as inclusive to all Aboriginal, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples. My use of the spelling wholism indicates 'whole' as in wholistic, complete, balanced and circular. First I present an overview. Second, I identify who I am. Lastly I present initial tenets of Indigenous wholism with a wholistic model and discussion.

Overview

This article is written for those that seek to understand a wholistic perspective of practice from an Indigenous lens and is organized using a wholistic paradigm of the four directions circle which encompasses concepts such as cyclical, circular and relational. Wholistic theory includes an intermixing and consideration of time and space: the past, present, future; directions and doorways of life; the ecology of creation such as earth, sun, water and air and all their occupants; and values that retain the balance and harmony of all of the above. My goal is to highlight a knowledge set that informs Indigenous wholistic theory for practice. This knowledge is based in oral traditions, is sacred and can take years to understand and know. I feel limited to fully and adequately articulate a complete portrait of the elements of Indigenous theory. However, I encourage readers to embrace opportunities to learn and follow-up with references cited to develop their own knowledge set. The presented framework does not delve into the specifics of each area of knowledge because specific knowledge sets can be learning processes in themselves. This knowledge set can be used to guide practice and further practice lenses can be developed for purposes of wholistic assessment, evaluation and treatment and change; and may be applied at levels of self, individual, family, community, organization and institution.

Who am I?

During my contemplations of writing this article I wondered: Who am I to write such an article? An Indigenous

1 Absolon, Kathy (1993). *Healing as Practice: Teachings from the Medicine Wheel*. A commissioned paper for the WUNSKA network, Canadian Schools of Social Work. Unpublished manuscript.

worldview seeks that you identify yourself to the Spirit, the people and the Spirit of the work you intend on doing and this act establishes the beginning of respectful practice. As I send out these words I can only do so from where I sit and from where I am located (Monture-Angus, 1995). Through my sharing of who I am I establish the parameters of what I may know and not know. In doing so, readers can determine what fits for them and what doesn't. Before I send out this knowledge, I need to share a bit on where this knowing comes from and who I am to honor its' source and to be accountable. We arrive at our place of knowing because of our families, communities, Elders and many other helpers. Our knowledge bundles develop over time with experience, teachings, and reflections. Our genealogy of knowledge is significant and we acknowledge who our teachers are and where we received our teachings (Marsden, 2005). What follows is a brief introduction to who I am as a prelude and this is how we would traditionally begin.

First, in my language I announce my name, acknowledge my nation, relatives and family because they taught me about living on the land and life in the bush. *Minogiizhigokwe n'dizhnakauz* (I am Shining Day Woman). *Anishinaabekwe n'dow* (I am an Anishinaabe woman). *Waubzhizhii n'dodem* (I am Marten clan), and *Flying Post n'doonjibaaam* (I come from Flying Post First Nation). I am also *Midewiwin* and receive many of my teachings from the Three Fires Society *Midewiwin Lodge*. For the past twenty years I have a blended background of Indigenous based wholistic healing practices along with some western social work practice methods. Over the years many traditional mentors have appeared on my path and at the community level. My Anishinaabe relatives, *Midewiwin* and clan family continue to teach me to walk in the beauty of our culture and ways. Consequently, my knowledge bundle is both cultural Anishinaabe and western where I strive to balance both worlds. However, I have been actively focusing on my Anishinaabe culture and language which means learning my language, teachings, songs, ceremonies, medicines and many other aspects that our knowledge bundles entail. In part, my knowledge is a summation of those who have crossed my path and took pity on me enough to share their knowledge and wisdom. Finally, I am grateful for all the spirits that guide and walk with me. They provide the signs that let me know I am on the right path. Currently, I teach at Wilfrid Laurier University in an MSW Aboriginal Field of Study program where we employ wholistic knowledge and teachings on a daily basis. We² call this process *Indigegogy* whereby we teach Indigenous theory and worldview using Indigenous pedagogy. Lester Rigney (1999) called an Indigenous methodology *Indigenist*, however in our Indigenous social work education context we call it *Indigegogy*. Finally, I come from the land and frequently return there as reference points for my work as

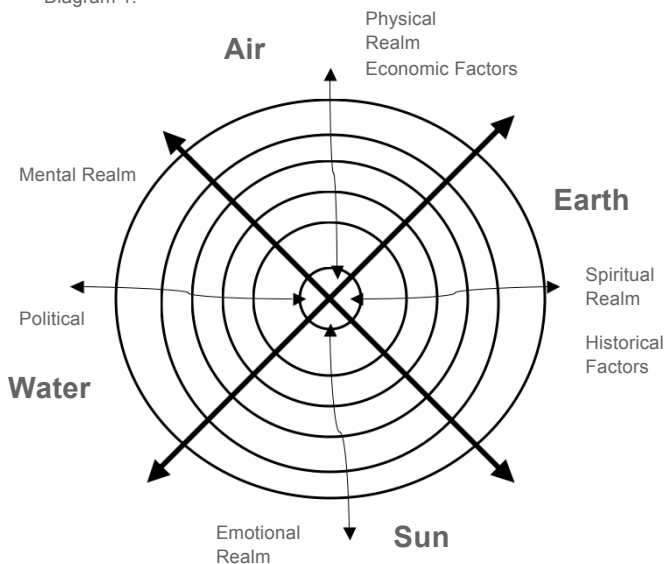
2 My colleague Malcolm Saulis tell us that the term was given to us by Stan Wilson who coined what we do as *Indigegogy*.

an educator, researcher and practitioner. The teachings of the Anishinaabe inform my worldview.

Indigenous wholistic theoretical orientation

Indigenous wholistic theory is whole, ecological, cyclical and relational. The Medicine Wheel, Four Directions and Circles have been used as an effective and appropriate means and tools for develop healing strategies. They offer a multilevel strategy that is circular in nature which has been practised for thousands of years by our ancestors (Absolon, 1993; Graveline, 2004; Hart, 1996, 2002; Little Bear, 2000; Nabigon, 2006). The following diagram of concentric circles represents a level of being and illustrates the reciprocal interconnections of self, individual, family, community, nation, society and creation. At the centre is a tiny circle representing the Self. The next circle represents family, then the community, then the nation, society and outward to the ecology of creation. Inclusive to all the levels are the infants, youth, young adults, adults and Elders. Each level of being is affected by the historical, social, political and economic and each layer has a spiritual, emotional, mental and physical element. Indigenous wholism considers the connections and the

Diagram 1:



concept “we are all related” begins to make sense as we perceive each aspect in relation to the whole. The dynamics of our realities are created because of the relationships and experiences of these interrelationships and interconnections. I use the Medicine Wheel as a tool to depict Indigenous wholistic theory, which helps us to understand our realities and experiences by considering the influences of all elements of the whole on our individual and collective being. This is just a beginning.

Understanding Indigenous peoples experiences can initially be understood within such a wholistic framework. The above illustration illuminates that Indigenous peoples experiences can be framed and contextualized within a historical, social, political and economic framework. Such a wholistic framework provides a concrete tool toward understanding the nature of balance, harmony and ‘Bimaadisiwin’ – living a good life. It acknowledges the factors that contribute toward achieving that sense of peace and balance.

Imbalance is then determined to occur in the symptoms that people identify which are typically called presenting problems or issues. These presenting issues are initially identified by people, families or communities who desire a change toward peace and balance. Upon further consideration of the elements of Indigenous wholism in problem definition we need to consider factors that fuel imbalances among Indigenous peoples’ lives. If Indigenous worldviews, traditions, values and beliefs are foundational to living a good life, then the absence or attack of Indigenous worldviews, traditions and identity has created imbalance and dis-ease. Colonizing agents and mechanisms of colonization such as residential schools, child welfare authorities, social welfare traps, land dispossessions etc... have all contributed to personal and familial imbalance in many areas of functioning (Duran & Duran, 1995; Graveline, 2004; Hart, 2002; LaRoque, 1991; Nabigon, 2006). The attempted domestication³ of Indigenous peoples via Indian Act policies has contributed to disease and illness among the people. Now the internalization of colonialism contributes to internal violence and lateral oppression. As earth based and earth centred peoples, a forced disconnection from our land would naturally create imbalance and disease among the people. Our reactions to these conditions are then understandable. Indigenous peoples have been living and breathing oppressive conditions for centuries now and undoubtedly the internalization of racism and the need for community healing is apparent when,

Some of the greatest resistors to the recovery of Indigenous knowledge are our own Native people who have internalized the racism and now uncritically accept ideologies of the dominant culture... Because of the extent to which colonization has taken root, any efforts to restore our traditional ways would have to be matched with a strong community decolonization agenda. While developing a critical consciousness aimed at understanding precisely how colonialism has affected our health and mindset, and thus how we might meaningfully challenge that oppression, we can begin to reaffirm the richness and

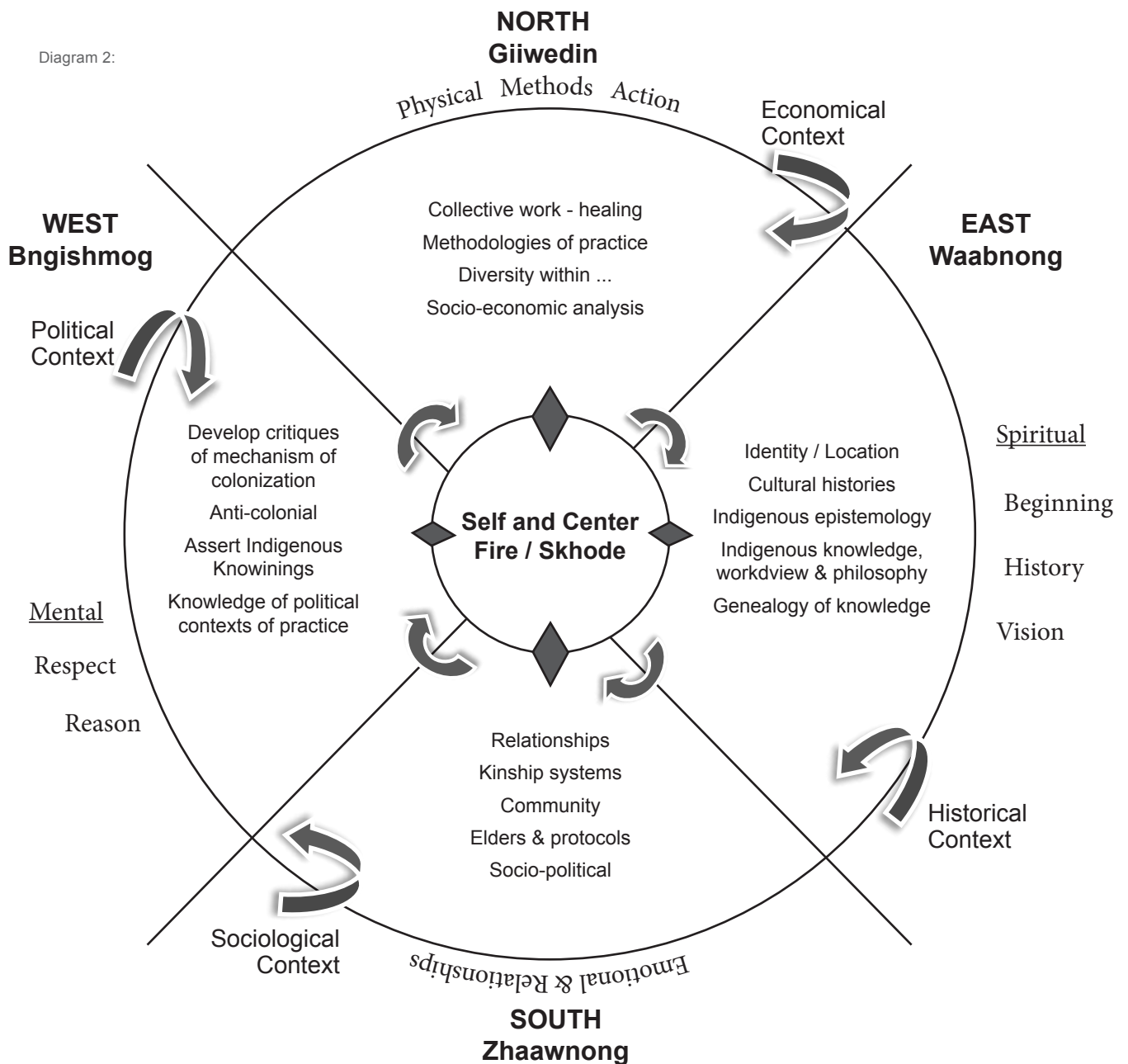
³ I use the term domestication to coin what Paulo Freire in Pedagogy of the Oppressed describes when colonizing forces attempt to acculturate or assimilate Indigenous peoples. The treatment of Indigenous peoples by the colonizer with the goal of acculturation is akin to the domestication of animals.

wisdom inherent in our traditional ways (Cavender Wilson, 2004, p. 72).

I agree with Angela Cavender Wilson in that using and applying Indigenous theory to practice requires a knowledge set of the social and political policies and practices. At this juncture, I become more specific in my presentation of Indigenous wholistic theory.

The following diagram is a more specific representation illustrating theoretical underpinnings using the four directions and spiritual, emotional, mental and physical elements. Within each element are some specific theoretical factors that warrant consideration in Indigenous based practice. There are many more elements and this representation is by no means exhaustive. Circle teachings are diverse and representations of such can look different depending on the context, teacher and Nation. With

Diagram 2:



that being said, the proposed theoretical framework requires a dual knowledge set of Indigenous knowledge and anti-colonial knowledge. Current theory must tackle colonial constructs while asserting the power and role of Indigenous knowledge. The chapter is now organized using the following circle as a guide. Each direction is briefly introduced with teachings of the nature of that doorway or direction as given to me by my traditional teachers whom I am grateful to acknowledge (Herb Nabigon, Bawdwayidung, Obaunisay, Medwayaushii and many others). Grandfather Sun rises in the east and so we enter into this discussion through the eastern door and follow the directions to the south, west and north doorways. Each section will discuss components of Indigenous wholistic theory relative to each doorway. These directions are not mutually exclusive; in fact, they interrelate, interconnect and are interdependent. Any change or movement in one area will affect the whole. The arrows in the diagram illustrate the interrelationships and interdependence between all the components.

The discussion of each of the doorways is meant to guide a wholistic knowledge set. The goal of this article is to present an Indigenous wholistic theory for social work practice. It does not present the specifics of Indigenous issues or concerns, but presents a framework from which issues can be understood and practice guided. This article advocates a knowledge set that is based on the collective doorways of the whole circle – that is the knowledge set that an Indigenous wholistic theory commands.

WAABINONG: In the East

The teachings from the sacred direction of the eastern doorway, Waabinong, speak to us about new beginnings. The sun rises in the east presenting us with a new day of life. With each day we have new life and new gifts. Waabinong represents Springtime and rebirth. The Eastern doorway brings forth teachings of visioning, beginning and rebirth. Here is where I present literature that deals with foundational principles and issues. Visioning requires one to be able to see the past, the present, and envision the future. Visioning denotes the theoretical underpinnings and principles from which searching for knowledge begins. Beginning denotes recognition that Indigenous people are in a state of resurgence and revitalization and at this time in our long history we are recovering, re-emerging, and reclaiming our knowledge base. The context of our past has vastly changed, yet we remain: We are Indigenous and we carry our ancestors' stories, teachings and knowledge. Renewal of this doorway gifts us with the ability to experience rebirth of the old into the new. In processes of renewal and rebirth change is inevitable.

Aspects of Indigenous wholism that proceed through the eastern doorway are spirit, identity and history. The role of

spirituality must be considered within healing practices and processes (McCormick, 2005). Each and every being is a spirit being and acknowledging one's spirit begins with acknowledging oneself. Spiritual knowledge entails awareness and understanding of Aboriginal epistemology and a respectful consciousness of the sacred world to Indigenous peoples. Indigenous wholism implies a balance within all aspects and elements of the whole, which is achieved through interconnections, interdependence and interrelationships (Marsden, 2006). As Dawn Marsden states, "If we know who we are, that all life is connected through spirit, and if we learn how to live good lives, then by extension we will act responsibly toward the creation of harmonious and sustainable (healthy) relationships in this world" (Marsden, 2006).

Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews, methodologies and frameworks must form the basis for our knowledge quests and practice (Bishop, 1998; Cole, 2002; Duran & Duran, 2000; Ermine, 1995; Fitznor, 2002; Kenny, 2000; Simpson, 2001; Sinclair, 2003; Wilson, 2001). Within the essence of Indigenous epistemology is spirituality and as Indigenous peoples our responsibilities include: To honor our relations with all of Creation; to follow our original instructions as orally passed on; to continually relearn ceremonies, rituals, daily protocols; to regenerate mutual relationships and not to replicate western paradigms (Cole, 2002; Ermine, 1995). Spiritual considerations occur within the guidelines and frameworks of our Creator and we are to honor the knowledge we have. Spirituality is inherent in Indigenous epistemology, which sees everything in relation to Creation, the earth and recognizes that all life has spirit and is sacred. Willie Ermine (1995) talks about the inner space and inner knowing within Aboriginal epistemology. He identifies the ways inner knowing is inherent in Aboriginal epistemology in the following quote.

Those who seek to understand the reality of existence and harmony with the environment by turning inward have a different, incorporeal knowledge paradigm that might be termed Aboriginal epistemology. Aboriginal people have the responsibility and birthright to take and develop an epistemology congruent with holism and the beneficial transformation of total human knowledge. The way to this affirmation is through our own Aboriginal sources (Ermine, 1995, p. 103).

The doorway to the inner space, where the ancestral knowledge sits, is through other realms via dreams, ceremonies, vision quests and rituals. The ancestors are there waiting to share their knowledge. The map to get there is in Indigenous knowledge and more specifically within Aboriginal epistemology. The published work of Indigenous scholars reveals that Indigenous worldviews and ancestral knowledge are being carried forward

into our future by asserting the role of Indigenous cultural knowledge and history and second by critiquing and dismantling colonizing knowledge and mechanisms of oppression. These actions set the stage for visioning, beginning and renewal. Out of renewal emerges a duality of knowledge, characterizing a cultural discourse and a colonial discourse. Both must necessarily be addressed.

Within an Indigenous worldview, we believe we are Spirit beings. As such, identifying who we are is the first protocol we do before we begin any ceremony, speak or act. Some people announce their Spirit names as they address the Spirit. Some people announce their English name, clan and Nation. We speak from our location and announce who we are, where we come from and what our intentions are. In doing so, we are also announcing who we are not and where we do not speak from. Accountability and ethics of oral tradition is thus established and the people now have the power and choice to receive your words or actions. Within this specific doorway Indigenous wholism implies that we attend to our positionality and locate ourselves (Absolon & Willett, 2005; Monture-Angus, 1995). Inclusive to location and positionality is identifying who you are, where you come from and what your motives or intentions.

Waabinong, in the east, also implies knowing our history: cultural and colonial. It calls upon a knowledge base of: the history of colonization of Indigenous peoples in Canada and its impact on Indigenous peoples' cultures and traditions; the oppression of Indigenous spirituality, ceremonies, songs, dances, gatherings, naming and death ceremonies, and life teachings. It calls for us to know that the suppression of Indigenous people's bundles and their "traditional Elders, keepers of knowledge were deliberately murdered" (Colorado, 1988, p. 51). Sacred birch bark scrolls, knowledge bundles and ceremonial objects were confiscated, destroyed and outlawed. To understand the extent of Indigenous peoples anger, grief, depression and loss one must develop an awareness and understanding of the impact of having ones culture, family, children, language and way of life attacked over and over.

Indigenous scholars are calling for an ongoing critique and deconstruction of colonial motives, theories and methods (Absolon & Herbert, 1997; Duran & Duran, 1995, 2000; Henderson, 2000b; LaRocque, 1991; Ross, 2005; Smith, 2000; Talbot, 2002). Critical reflections and discourse set a pathway for decolonization and for freedom to be attained without replicating or empowering colonialism and Eurocentric hegemony (Alfred, 2005). Decolonization presupposes a commitment to a critical analysis of the existing unequal power structures, a rejection of hegemonic belittling, and a commitment to consciousness raising and politicization. Clearing the mind of colonial constructs alone is not enough. Decolonization is the common

descriptor for unlearning out of racism and colonization (Calliou, 2001; Fitznor, 2002; Graveline, 2004; Simpson, 2001; Wa Thiong'o, 1986).

In summary, the theoretical elements of Indigenous wholistic theory of Waabinong, the Eastern doorway are Spirit, beginnings and history. Some key points from this doorway are:

- Beginning and rebirth
- Inclusion and respectful acknowledgement of Spirit
- Spirituality is connected to healing
- Establish your location and position yourself within your practice as such
- Acknowledge your genealogy of knowledge
- Recognize the legitimacy of Indigenous epistemologies, worldviews and knowledge
- Understand that Indigenous peoples have a culture history that predates colonization.
- Identity: Understand the diversity within families, individuals & communities
- Develop a knowledge set about the history of colonization and the mechanisms of oppression.

ZHAAWNONG: In the South

The Southern doorway, Zhaawngong, encompasses the emotional and relational realms. It brings forth teachings of life, relationships, people and growth and will cover literature relating to principles of reciprocity and relationships. Zhaawngong brings the summer and renewal. This doorway addresses issues of relationships, protocols, accountability, reciprocity and community. Relationships can extend to humans, the natural and spiritual world. For example, "Indigenous peoples the world over follow the rhythm of the cosmos with distinct relationships to the sun, moon, stars, animals, plants, sound, wind, water, electrical and vibrational energy, thunder, lightning, rain, all creatures of the land and water, the air, and the rhythm of the land itself" (Solomon & Wane, 2005, p. 55). In Indigenous contexts building and nurturing quality relations is integral to living in a good way.

Kinship systems and their relationship connections are recognized in the southern doorway. Leroy Little Bear (2000) identifies the value of knowing that totality and wholeness exist within the circle of kinship. He uses an analogy of four flower petals to symbolize strength, sharing, honesty and kindness in kinship relations. Further, he states that "the function of Aboriginal values is to maintain the relationships that hold creation together. If creation manifests itself in terms of cyclical patterns and repetitions, then the maintenance and renewal of those patterns is all-important" (Little Bear, 2000, p. 81).

Kinship systems serve to connect threads between individuals, families and communities and extend beyond biology. For example, kinship systems can be based on the clan system where relationships and roles are determined by clan identity and function (Benton-Banai, 1988). Families have tendencies to adopt people and community members can relate to each other as aunts, uncles, nieces, nephews, brothers or sisters without the genetic basis for such ties. Our Cocomish and Shaumish can be other Elders other than our biological ones. Families and communities are broadly defined and are not limited to genealogy or genetics.

Indigenous communities have immense strength and resources from which kinship ties, healing and recovery, wellness, survival and collectivity exist. The viability of community relationships in social work practice cannot be underestimated. Identifying community strengths in all areas of prevention, intervention, rehabilitation, support and postvention approaches will contribute to the development of grass roots, community strengths approaches (Gone, 2004). Principles of collaboration and empowerment ought to guide relationships with community members such as engaging with local community members in the planning and delivery of service. From an Indigenous perspective the culture of a community is where the heartbeat of that nation resides. Communities are suffering in the colonial aftermath, hence their heartbeats may be weak. Nevertheless, the heartbeat of a community is in the people, which ought to influence methods of practice. Community interests ought to be considered essential elements of practice and community involvement fostered at all levels of service delivery such as planning, visioning, brainstorming, designing, creating, evaluating, assessing, intervening and treating. In this sense, methodologies of practice will diversify as community contexts vary from one community to the next. Training for work with Indigenous communities ought to be interdisciplinary and diverse community based methodologies encouraged. Methods that foster community relationships and collaborative processes include the teachings of the Medicine Wheel, storytelling, sharing and teaching circles, community participation and role modeling (Poonwassie & Charter, 2001). Methods of practice ought to attend to supporting and fostering healing relationships within self, family and community.

Elders are another cornerstone of Indigenous knowledge, culture and heritage. Oral traditions, languages and historical accounts would be lost without the wisdom, knowledge and experience of Elders. Ethics of practice exist in the protocols in working with the Elders and with traditional knowledge. Elder protocols are varied depending on the nation and territory and identifying reliable Elders will occur in consultation and communication with community resource people. For example,

some people will offer tobacco, cloth or a small gift as a gesture of reciprocity and gratitude. Elders are essential to learning and teaching through mechanisms such as storytelling, ceremony, songs, dances, and passing on teachings. Healing and wellness programs often employ Elders to work with children, youth and families. Community initiatives in Ontario such as Enaahdig Healing Lodge and Learning Centre, Kii-Kee-Wan-Nii-Kaan Southwest Regional Healing Lodge, Anishinaabe Health in Toronto, Shawanaga Healing Centre, and Skaagamakwe Healing Centre work with Elders in the delivery of programs and services. There are many other examples across the country of programs and services that recognize the role and contribution that Elders can make to healing and wellness initiatives.

This doorway also calls for the development of a critical understanding of the social context and conditions of issues such as an understanding of family violence and abuse, alcoholism, addictions, depression, grief and loss, disempowerment, suicide, intergenerational trauma, lateral violence, and multigenerational trauma. Angela Cavender Wilson states that:

When considering the phlethora of social problems facing Indigenous communities today (including poverty, chemical dependency, depression, suicide, family violence, and disease), it is profoundly clear that these are the devastating consequences of conquest and colonization. For Indigenous nations, these problems were largely absent prior to European and American invasion and destruction of everything to us. A reaffirmation of Indigenous epistemological and ontological foundations, then, in contemporary times offers a central form of resistance to the colonial forces that have consistently and methodically denigrated and silenced them (Cavender Wilson, 2004, p. 70).

I believe that when practitioners continue to apply psychotherapeutic approaches to practice that omit the social and political contexts of Indigenous peoples realities than their practice continues to pathologize, diminish and problematize Indigenous peoples. I agree with Eduardo and Bonnie Duran (1995) that the DSM ought to have a category recognizing the post trauma affects of colonization and genocide. Further, "those negative influences have resulted in the marginalization and clientization of these groups in contemporary society" (Poonwassie & Charter, 2001, p. 64). We must be careful to not adopt theories and methods of practice that only pathologize and problematize Indigenous clients without regard for the broader socio-political issues and historical context.

In summary, the theoretical elements of Indigenous wholistic theory of Zhaawngong, the Southern doorway acknowledge the emotional aspects of the whole where relationships and sociological contexts are understood. This doorway specifically:

- Calls for renewal at relational levels
- Attends to relationships
- Integrates understandings of diverse relationships
- Understands kinship systems as moving beyond genetics
- Identifies community strengths and resources,
- Collaborates with community to foster healing relationships
- Utilizes methods that support healthy relationship building
- Acknowledges the role and contribution of Elders and protocols and
- Contextualizes issues within a socio-political analysis of social problems facing Indigenous peoples today.

NIINGAABII'ONG: In the West

The Western doorway, Niingaabii'ong, brings forth teachings of the ancestors, the mind and respect. It relates to respect of knowledge and knowledge of creation. Niingaabii'ong brings the Autumn and cleansing. It also calls for mental strength and reason. Operationalizing respect in practice requires one to step back and think wholistically and consider how all the doorways specify and articulate the value of respect. Asserting Indigenous knowledge as a tool for recovery from colonial trauma and all its manifestations is acknowledged in this doorway. It is evident that in Indigenous communities across the land, a re-emergence of knowledge is occurring. Decolonizing our minds in addition to establishing a critical discourse, theory and practice based on Indigenous knowledge are acknowledged by Niingaabii'ong.

Respect is a core principle from which Indigenous methodologies ought to emerge (Absolon & Willett, 2004; Archibald, 1993; Battiste & Henderson, 2000a; Fitznor, 1998; Graveline, 2000; Gross, 2002; Kenny, 2000; McPherson & Rabb, 2001; Sinclair, 2003; Wilson, 2003). Respect is a wholistic value and can be applied and operationalized at all levels of social work practice. To acknowledge and validate Indigenous philosophies and worldviews is to practice respect. Gross (2002) states that respect is in the Anishinaabe teachings of Bimaadziwin, which loosely translates to mean 'a good life.' The life goal of the old Anishinaabe was to follow the Anishinaabe teachings of Bimaadziwin, hence to strive toward living a good life. We need to learn our teachings and apply these teachings today to rebuild and recover from colonial trauma. I have heard over and over how Indigenous people have been helped through our own cultural mechanisms such as sweat lodge ceremonies, healing ceremonies, sharing and talking circles, dances, songs and other cultural pathways to wellness. Indigenous ways of health and recovery remind people of the beauty of who we are, where we come from and what we know. It builds healthy

esteem and confidence in our identity. It instills good feelings about being Indigenous again and reconnects people to the power of their identity. We must respect who we are, what we know and where we come from. Our recovery and rediscovery is imperative to our healing as a peoples.

The recovery of traditional knowledge is deeply intertwined with the process of decolonization because for many of us it is only through a consciously critical assessment of how the historical process of colonization has systemically devalued our Indigenous ways that we can begin to reverse the damage wrought from those assaults. (Cavender Wilson, 2004, p. 72)

Respect calls upon us to look again, speculate, consider and operationalize Indigenous knowledge as a source of healing and recovery. In itself, though, Indigenous knowledge is massive, complex and dynamic. Many of Indigenous scholars share commonalities across the diversity of their nations regarding Indigenous knowledge (Absolon, 1993; Battiste & Henderson, 2000b; Benton-Banai, 1988; Brant Castellano, 2000; Cajete, 2000; Colorado, 1988; Fitznor, 1998; Graveline, 2000; Gunn Allen, 1986, 1991; Hart, 2002; Henderson, 2000a; Holmes, 2000; Kovach, 2005; Martin, 2002; Nabigon, 2006; Thomas, 2005). "There is a communal ideology and unique worldview between and among the Indigenous peoples of the world. This common thread is inherent in most indigenous cultures despite the severity and sustained duration of the colonial impact ..." (Solomon & Wane, 2005, p. 54). For example, Indigenous knowledge is consistently referred to as wholistic. That is a given. Additionally, "most Aboriginal worldviews and languages are formulated by experiencing an ecosystem" (Henderson, 2000a, p. 259). Indigenous worldviews teach people to see themselves humbly within a larger web or circle of life. It is both feminine and masculine and acknowledges the roles of both men and women. The Earth is feminine and the Sun is masculine – both are necessary for life to exist. Men's work and women's work may be different, but they are interdependent and contribute to a healthy whole. Interrelationships and interdependence within this circle create a consciousness of relationality within all of creation.

Indigenous knowledge comes from ancestral teachings that are spiritual and sacred in origin (Ermine, 1995). It exists in our visions, dreams, ceremonies, songs, dances, and prayers. It is not knowledge that comes solely from books. It is lived knowledge, experiential knowledge and enacted knowledge. It is cyclical and circular, and follows the natural laws of creation. Indigenous knowledge is earth centered with ecology-based philosophies derived out of respect for the harmony and balance within all living beings of creation. Indigenous knowledge occupied itself with the past, present and future. The past guides our present and in our present we must consider the generations to come. Indigenous

knowledge lies in our stories and narratives and within our oral traditions. It exists in our relationships to one another and to all of creation. Indigenous knowledge exists in the animals, birds, land, plants, trees and creation. Relationships among family and kinship systems exist within human, spiritual, plant, and animal realms. Indigenous knowledge systems consider all directions of life: east, south, west, north, beneath, above and ground levels. Life is considered sacred and all life forms are considered to have a spirit. We manifest this knowledge in our humility in offering thanks for life and in seeking life's direction. Indigenous knowledge has enabled Indigenous nations to live in harmony and balance with the earth, without harm. Our ancestors have used their knowledge to respect the laws of creation, while subsisting on the land, since time immemorial. Thus, practice that is derived from Indigenous knowledge would certainly entail methods that demonstrate respect and reverence within these understandings. Healing centers today, for example, have programs and services reconnecting people to the land, plants, medicines and elements. Youth programs venture outdoors where the natural world fosters and participates in the healing and recovery needs of young adults. Sitting by a fire is peaceful and water fosters a sense of serenity and calmness. Earth's elements are healing elements too.

Our ancestors sit in the Western doorway and when we use spiritual protocols in our practices we are sending our thoughts into the spirit world. The significance of ancestors cannot be ignored. Many Indigenous people pay homage to the ancestors and turn to sacred ceremonies to tap into and seek out ancestral knowledge. Healers and medicine keepers work with healing ceremonies and invoke the ancestors and use of sacred medicines to facilitate healing practices. Recognition of the ancestors implies an acknowledgement of the cycles of life and death as natural life cycles. Funerals and burials involve teachings of life and death, which facilitates the grieving process for family and community. Indigenous communities have high incidences of death and loss and our capacity to cope and survive such tremendous losses is fostered through our ceremonies and cultural understandings of life and death. Death and dying, grief and loss are among common issues that confront Indigenous people. Higher mortality rates plague Indigenous communities and depression is often connected to unresolved grief and trauma. Loss has been felt with loss of people and family members, loss of language, culture, land, freedom, movement, subsistence and livelihood. The losses are many and are vitally important when considering issues of unresolved grief and loss. Importantly though, Indigenous theory has teachings which reflect understandings of life and death.

In contextualizing the loss of culture, language, traditions, community, land, and family this doorway casts our attention toward the political arena to further develop an understanding

of the politics of colonization and its impact on Indigeniety, governance, livelihood, subsistence, freedom, land bases, and living an Indigenous way of life. The extent to which assimilation policies and oppressive tactics diminished Indigenous peoples good life cannot be underestimated historically and currently. We need to have a political analysis to understand why families do not know their life cycle ceremonies or why children were forced to attend residential schools. We need to understand the lack of choice and free will and forced erosion of the culture and language so that we do not perpetuate a 'blaming the victim' stance in our practice. For example, while working at the community level, I recall people blaming members in their own community and negatively labeling them 'Bill C-31ers'. Their remarks indicated that they thought 'Bill C-31ers' were undeserving of their membership, housing and treaty entitlements. Consequently, I engaged them in critical education about the nature of Bill C-31 (an Indian Act amendment) and the history of the Indian Act and sexism instituted in it. Many of our people don't have this knowledge set and so Indigenous wholistic theory calls for practitioners to become critically literate and critical educators to their clients to begin teaching individuals, families and communities about the colonization of Indigenous peoples on their own land. We must develop anti-colonial practices and consider issues of power and oppression in areas of health, social welfare, child welfare, justice, mental health, family and community services. In this sense, this doorway calls for a power analysis and an understanding of power and social constructions of health and illness.

In summary, the theoretical elements of Indigenous wholistic theory of Niingaabii'ong, the Western doorway acknowledge the mental aspects of the whole where reason and respect are addressed. This doorway specifically:

- Recognizes ancestors, ancestral knowledge and power
- Acknowledge the mental aspects and power of knowledge
- Asserts and respects Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing
- Applies a critical analysis and knowledge of the political contexts of practice
- Develops critiques of the mechanisms of colonialism and engages in critical literacy and critical education with Indigenous communities
- Is anti-colonial in practice and works to counter colonial ideologies
- Acknowledges the ancestors and cycles of life and death

GIIWEDINONG: In the North

The Northern doorway, Giiwedionong, brings forth teachings of healing, doing and movement. In this realm the

physical elements are acknowledged and physical action and movement are located. Giiwediniing brings the Winter and healing. When all the other three directions are in place, the teachings of the Northern doorway are operationalized and it is with consciousness of all the doorways that action occurs in a conscious and healing way. Methods of practice are recognized in this doorway as 'doing'. As an example, I suggest the reader locate a recent publication edited by Raven Sinclair, Michael Hart and Gord Bruyere entitled *Wicahitowin Aboriginal Social Work in Canada* (2009), which provides many excellent contextual chapters on Indigenous based social work practice. What we do is addressed in the northern doorway and winds of change gift us with opportunities to heal. In practice, the following quote poses good questions for consideration when bringing forth healing practices.

In many Indigenous societies some of the questions they are constantly asking are, How much of the sacred healing practices can they share? Would these practices work out of context? Is it possible to re-create rituals of healing outside of the healers' community? Each healing practice is unique to the individual requiring healing and to the healer. (Solomon & Wane, 2005, p. 53)

Some people will not discuss or share sacred healing practices, but there are now common practices among Indigenous peoples that are readily identified. Indigenous based practices ought to recognize the disconnection that colonial mechanism created and engage to reconnect people through collective processes. Circle processes or circle talk was named as a viable methods for working with Indigenous groups and communities (Graveline, 2000; Hart, 1996; Steinhauer, 2001; TeHennepe, 1997; Weenie, 1998). I agree that, "[m]any indigenes have growing interest in returning to their sacred teachings and ceremonies and will continue to follow their traditions to sustain themselves and to help the generations to come" (Solomon & Wane, 2005, p. 53). 'Protocols', 'circles', and 'sharing' are common Indigenous practices that bring people together for sharing, learning and healing. Circles processes counter the isolation and alienation that many Indigenous people experience in relation to the issues and concerns they face. Sometimes we don't know what we don't know until exposed to knowledge and experiences of others. Only when fed with accurate information can we develop in our understanding and knowledge. The following story was told to me by one of my mentors and has helped create an understanding of patience and care within the healing journey:

Once there was a starving human without food or water, alone on a raft for a long, long time – salt water surrounded the raft and was undrinkable. More time passed and this person is one day discovered by another human who is

able to recognize the thirst and hunger and not be afraid of it. This human offers the diseased, sickly and starving person a dropper of water - not a whole meal but only a slight drop of water. Slowly the human absorbs the drop and then is given another drop. A few drops of water turn into a dropper of water over time. The dropper of water is tolerable and digestible; a full meal would not be. In time, that dehydrated person is able to drink more and more and more. And over time this human begins to acquire an appetite and over time develops an incredible hunger and yearning to be fed: the dropper is no longer enough. The hunger and yearning become the drive for more food... and is ready to digest food...

Learning about our truths and sharing collective pains is a process that occurs in time. Sitting in many sacred circles (women's circles and mixed gender circles), through listening and listening, and sharing and dialoguing as we fed each other droppers of water taught me about patience and acceptance. Our thirst and yearning for knowledge is quenched through the listening to others' stories and experiences and drawing on our collective strengths. Acquiring the knowledge and understanding is a life long journey and circle processes provide a culturally congruent means. Our feast therefore is a series of "droppers of water" through conversations and dialogues, and not the eating of one large meal. Healing is fostered, friendships develop and relationships between the people are restored. Within the circle process many formats have been shared in terms of amount of people and length. Michael Hart (2002) has researched and worked with circles for many years and his book *Seeking Minopimatisiwin* is a good resource. Additionally, I would add that methods of gathering people together are varied, but one thing for sure is that food is central to any successful gathering. Feeding people in a loving and good way will fuel a positive environment and nurture optimistic feelings. Rod McCormick (2005) presents a worthy chapter where Indigenous practices toward a healing path are summarized. He identifies the healing path and outlines the role of "spirituality in healing, the role of nature, the role of cleansing, the role of culture in healing, the model of the circle and Medicine Wheel, the concept of balance, the role of connection, and the role of ceremony in healing" (p. 293-294). It explains healing approaches and practices that utilize Indigenous methods while integrating concepts such as connection, balance, nature and wholism. His chapter is useful because he links these approaches to counselling and therapy with individuals, groups and communities. Indigenous healing processes are identified as wholistic, multifaceted and diverse where sharing is facilitated in through a variety of paths.

I had the privilege, at a young age, of being a student of traditional teachers and was given teachings to live, practice

and share. I also had the privilege of growing up in the bush. I acknowledge these privileges because of the institutional racism that severed many First Nations' from their inherent right to the traditions and values of our many cultures. All Indigenous people, I believe should have their teachings with them. My responsibility has been to internalize the teachings into who I am and honour them in the way I live. I cannot lose them or have them stolen - they exist as a part of me - in my mind, my body and my spirit and heart. For these tremendous gifts I am most grateful. Relearning the cultural teachings, worldview and philosophies of my people has been my personal and professional methodology of practice. Committing to relearning our culture and language as a methodology for emancipatory and liberating practice is now essential to my life and work. If I am able to offer Indigenous people something, I want it to be based within Anishinaabe epistemology.

Diversity is another concept of this doorway and actions of practice ought to reflect the diverse manifestations of colonialism and internalized colonialism. People have diverse experiences and not all Indigenous people aspire to be traditional or have traditional knowledge. Indigenous people are also Christian and traditional or neither. Some people are assimilated into Canadian society and like it that way. Indigenous people are diverse in their linguistics, lifestyles, culture and way of life. Families are diverse and communities are diverse. Community governance structures can be diverse and the operations of programs may reflect cultural and organizational diversity. Communities may vary in their priorities, goals and objectives. Land bases are diverse and livelihoods will also be diverse. Nations across Canada are very diverse as are the linguistic groupings. Programming that might work in one community may not be appropriate for another because of the unique conditions and situations that exist within communities. Distinct community based strategies will require specific considerations relative to each community.

Additionally, economic conditions among Indigenous people are diverse, though there is a prevalence of poverty and low socio-economic status. The high incidences of unemployment and the poor housing conditions continue (Wesley-Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004). Some communities struggle with poor qualities of drinking water and sewage systems. The physical conditions under which some Indigenous people exist are deplorable. A socio economic analysis of poverty, unemployment, housing, homelessness and other consequences of the economic marginalization of a peoples in a colonial and racist society is required to refute any notion that Indigenous people are poor because of stereotypical notions of being lazy, drunk or stupid. One need only look at the peasant farming policies in the prairies in the late 1800's to realize the governments agenda was to maintain Indigenous people as

the working poor and did so by creating glass ceilings on profit margins in farming (Carter, 1990). Because of racism, oppressive Federal policies, fiscal erosions, and renegeing on fiduciary responsibilities, Indigenous people have retained sub-standard economic status. Understanding the economics of Indigenous peoples lives requires a structural economic analysis. This understanding will foster a compassionate lens from which you perceive the people and their conditions. I believe this analysis prevents a blaming the victim and redirects the problem to the institutions and structures.

In summary, the theoretical elements of Indigenous wholistic theory of Giiwedinihong, the Northern doorway acknowledge the physical aspects of the whole where methods of practice and action are. This doorway specifically:

- Recognizes the healing in being and doing
- Calls for action and movement
- Acknowledges the collective work
- Addresses methodologies of practice from Indigenous frameworks such as sharing or teaching circles, ceremonies, use of nature, and process oriented action
- Healing as a restoration of balance using tools such as the Medicine Wheel
- The diversity within Indigenous contexts
- Encourages a socio-economic analysis to contemporary conditions

CENTER SHKODE

The center shkode (fire) is where the fire exists and where all four doorways intersect and interrelate. The center is where balance and harmony exist when all aspects are living in harmony and balance. The center fire could also represent Self in relation to all else. It is the essence of self and the manifestation of the whole. In summary, the Center Fire represents a coming together of all four directions and Willie Ermine (1995) tells us more about this center fire of the Self:

Aboriginal epistemology is grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be grounded in the spirit. Knowledge must be sought through the stream of the inner space in unison with all instruments of knowing and conditions that make individuals receptive to knowing. Ultimately it was in the self that Aboriginal people discovered great resources for coming to grips with life's mysteries. It was in the self that the richest source of information could be found by delving into the metaphysical and the nature and origin of knowledge. Aboriginal epistemology speaks of pondering great mysteries that lie not further than the self. (p. 108)

The center represents the fire of life where all directions meet and locates the teachings of integration, balance, interconnections, and holism. The center also represents the Self - the essence of the cumulative aspects of self: the spirit, heart, mind and body. Utilizing a wholistic analysis enables practitioners to better understand people in their whole context as the center really represents the cumulative aspects of all four doorways.

Each doorway in isolation from the others is insufficient. All doorways are interdependent, interconnected and make up the collective whole. An Indigenous wholistic theory of practice considers all four doorways and their elements. For example, an Indigenous worldview effects how people see themselves in relation to their community and themselves. Recognizing cultural knowledge implies the existence of methods of healing and practice that have been exercised and applied in Indigenous contexts. Wholistic practice means to honour the balance and respect all the directions in programming, policy and practice. For example: create programs that feed the spirit (using medicines of sweetgrass, sage, tobacco and cedar; ceremonies and circle format), the emotions (the internalized inferiority, fear, shame, anger, pain and self-hate), the mind (educating First Nations workers and shareholders⁴ about the authentic history, the nature of their own experience, decolonizing our minds and unlearning racism, and dealing with our internalized racism and inferiority), and the body (addressing the symptoms of racism that First Nations people, workers and leaders carry with them as baggage that result in low self-esteem, substance and personal abuse, family violence and suicide).

Indigenous knowledge is a lived knowledge meaning that you must practice what you know and be what you do. There is no distinction between living and working. Indigenous knowledge is a way of life. For Indigenous helpers to continue to develop their knowledge and understanding into practice they must be provided with opportunities to learn. Professional development for Indigenous helpers means those helpers need to be supported to attend ceremonies and traditional venues so they can learn how to pick up their knowledge bundles. Traditional knowledge is transmitted and passed on at ceremonies and that is where we learn the teachings and protocols.

Workers need to be aware of Indigenous peoples' contexts and within Indigenous contexts is where capacity is developed. Community based education directed at capacity building and critical education fosters peoples' abilities to control their own needs and program directions. Building a solid foundation for

4 I learnt of this term at Kii-Kee-Wan-Nii-Kaan Healing Lodge where the term shareholder was used in lieu of client as shareholders indicated that people have a stake & investment in their own wellness where their wellness journey is a mutual process. I liked the application of the term shareholder.

any initiative is paramount to its success. Any community based initiative ought to have an anti-colonial agenda coupled with an affirmation and presence of Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing. Staff education will, in part, address an authentic movement of healing and will begin to truly reflect Indigenous wholism in practice. Professional development is also about cultural development and a commitment to providing cultural teachings and language lessons empowers helpers in their own identity and knowledge set. In essence, practice and programming based on Indigenous theory ought to support workers to be strong and healthy in terms of clear minds, strong spirits, healthy bodies and healing hearts. A genuine and real movement addresses and deals with the internalized oppression of First Nations peoples. It also includes and addresses symbolic components of culture and spirituality in a complementary fashion and in way that strengthens and heals our spirit, bodies, and heart.

This article was set forth to present an Indigenous wholistic theory as a knowledge set for practice. I utilized the concepts of concentric circles and four directions. As I travelled around the circle I discussed some elements related to each direction eventually leading to the place where all components intersect. Indigenous wholistic theory is cyclical, circular and wholistic. Oral traditions were typically the venue for transmitting such knowledge. Utilizing visuals is one method to try to lift the words and concepts off the page. Ironically, Indigenous theory is not something one can acquire vicariously or by reading a book. It is a living phenomenon. This representation of Indigenous wholistic theory can be elaborated upon much further. My hope is to convey a theory that is based on the culture and traditions of Indigenous worldviews; is anti-colonial in its perspective; is wholistic and cyclical; and is ecologically derived. Spiritual and natural laws direct the protocols from which these methodologies are derived. Understanding and learning Indigenous wholistic theory is simultaneously simple and complex. It is both fluid and concrete. B'maadisiwin is the good life we strive for and the Creator gave us all that we need to heal ourselves wholistically. Indigenous ways of knowing, being and doing have worked for our ancestors and can be translated into contemporary contexts. Our nations are not bankrupt. We have the spirit of our ancestors and strength of knowledge and theory that has a capability to heal ourselves, our families, our communities, nations and the earth. Indigenous wholistic theory is a theory for balance, harmony and B'maadisiwin. *Chi'miigwech. All my relations!*

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 88-95

Indigenous Knowledge, Community and Education in a Western System: An Integrative Approach

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Introduction

Epictetus once said “only the educated are free.” When applied to Indigenous people in Canada, it is seen that the government attempted to remove the freedom of Indigenous peoples by expunging Indigenous knowledge. Residential schools were designed to eradicate Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing under the guise of providing education to Aboriginal peoples in Canada (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). The residential school system forcefully removed children from their families and disconnected children from their culture. Residential school was one of the most destructive colonial practices and the impact of the inter-generational trauma caused by the residential school system continues to be evident in the educational system (Battiste, 1998). Only recently has the Canadian government issued an apology for the assimilation policies of residential school (O’Neil & Dalrymple, 2008). Robertson (2006) suggests that it may take many generations for Aboriginal peoples to heal from the impact of the residential school system.

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Abstract

Colonization attempted to eradicate Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous Ways of knowing through coerced education, yet education may be the key to the healing journey for Aboriginal people in Canada. At present the educational system is not serving Aboriginal students well as measured by levels of student success. The integration of Indigenous knowledge, community and education increases the likelihood of success of students in educational settings and promotes healing from colonization. Research suggests that a community based model of education is not only appropriate for Aboriginal students but is likely to enhance their education by providing community controlled and culturally relevant experiences.

Keywords: Indigenous knowledge, community-based education, policy.

The present educational system remains rife with challenges for Aboriginal students as reflected in the low rates of attendance and completion of high school (Milligan & Bougie, 2009). It is also evident in the gaps in levels of attainment in postsecondary education (Milligan and Bougie). These challenges are arguably reflective of an educational system that has not yet learned to fully support Aboriginal students. This paper argues that supporting Aboriginal students and improving their experiences in the educational system is inextricably linked to restoring and honouring Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing. However, one cannot escape the Western ways of knowing entirely and it is suggested that the most beneficial approach would respect and integrate both Western and Indigenous ways of knowing. It is suggested that there are values in Indigenous cultures, such as interconnectedness, which lend to a community based approach to education for Aboriginal peoples. This paper outlines how community based education provides a strategy for integrating Indigenous knowledge into a Western based educational system.

Indigenous knowledge

Indigenous ways of knowing are the pedagogies, or processes, of learning in Indigenous cultures (Pember, 2008). Indigenous knowledge is a reflection of Indigenous ways of knowing. Indigenous knowledge has been defined as the cosmologies, values, cultural beliefs, and webs of relationships which are embodied in specific communities (Dei, 2002). Indigenous knowledge is as diverse as the communities in which it based and Aboriginal populations in Canada and the United States have significant within-group differences in language, traditions, and cultural practices (Restoule, 1997; Warner, 2006). These differences are reflected in the Indigenous knowledge of the groups because Indigenous knowledge is rooted in language and culture (Pember, 2008; Steinhauer, 2002). Consequently, it would be erroneous to imply that there is a ubiquitous Indigenous knowledge that would apply equally to all groups of Aboriginal people (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008); nonetheless, there are commonalities which are shared among Aboriginal peoples.

One such commonality is the theme of interconnectedness. Interconnectedness, or interdependence, was necessary for survival when Indigenous groups were engaged in subsistence activities (Roué, 2006). Interconnectedness incorporates the idea that all things in the natural world are related (Steinhauer, 2002); the impact of actions on all things - mineral, vegetation, animal and human - are considered with equal regard. Aboriginal peoples have a great respect for the land and strive for a harmonious relationship with nature. This holistic framework lends to what is often termed a collectivist approach where the needs of the community supersede the needs of any individual (International Working Group for Indigenous Affairs, 1996). Collectivist social structures are often juxtaposed against individualistic structures wherein the individual's needs are placed above those of the community or social group. Individualistic approaches tend to dominate in mainstream Western culture and these attitudes are visible throughout the academic systems. For example, in classroom settings individual assignments predominate and individual grades are given; there are few, if any, attempts to create a sense of community where the needs of the group would supersede the needs of the individual student.

Holism is also a theme within an Indigenous framework. A prominent example of this is the Medicine wheel which originated with the Plains nations (Bopp & Bopp, 2001; Dumbrell & Green, 2007). The medicine wheel has four quadrants which can represent a number of different things based on the context in which the medicine wheel is placed. When the medicine wheel refers to an individual the quadrants represent the aspects of a human being: the spirit, the intellect, the

emotions and the physical body; when applied to a community the four quadrants represent: the political and administrative aspects; the cultural and spiritual aspects; social aspects; and economic and environmental aspects. There is also a medicine wheel related to human and community development which includes the wider world: the person, family clan or group and the community itself and society. Indigenous ways of knowing suggest that the four components, in any medicine wheel, are intimately interrelated and that anything that affects one will impact the others by proxy (Bopp & Bopp, 2001). For example, if an individual suffers from a physical wound he or she will also feel the repercussions mentally, emotionally and spiritually.

Indigenous knowledge is a fluid, living process rather than being a static construction based in the past (Steinhauer, 2002). Indigenous knowledge is deeply personal and as result does not claim to be 'the' truth (Castellano, 1999). Castellano suggests that the personal nature of Indigenous knowledge allows for discordant perspectives to be valid because they are unique to the individual.

Wane (2008) states that Indigenous knowledge is a living experience that is informed by ancestral voices. This can be taken both literally and figuratively, in that ancestral history is passed down through an oral tradition while in the figurative sense it is the knowledge or voices of the ancestors that are being heard in the present. Indigenous knowledge was traditionally passed down orally by Elders in the community (Castellano, 1999). Western scholars often depict this as primitive, by using terms such as preliterate, yet when it is carefully considered there are excellent reasons for disseminating information through oral traditions rather than through literary works. Castellano discusses a number of reasons for the reluctance of Elders to have their teachings recorded. It is suggested that recording or printing information adds a level of authority to the information and removes the ability for the information to be presented in the context of a relationship. Also, when Indigenous knowledge is passed on orally the Elder can adapt the content to reflect the maturity level of the recipient; once material is in print it lacks the ability to be personalized. Finally, the oral tradition is reflective of the fluid nature of Indigenous knowledge; oral stories are adaptable whereas print is fixed. As such, there are benefits to the oral tradition used by Indigenous peoples.

Castellano (1999) identifies three components that encompass Indigenous knowledge: traditional knowledge, empirical knowledge and revealed knowledge. Traditional knowledge is knowledge which has been passed down generationally. Traditional knowledge often includes the story of creation, ancestral rights to territories, clan origins in encounters with animals, and tales of battles. It is through this traditional knowledge that values are instilled and reinforced. Elders are

often entrusted with this privilege and are given the primary responsibility for educating children through story (Pember, 2008).

There is a component of empirical knowledge in Indigenous knowledge, despite what Western science might suggest (Pember, 2008). Empirical knowledge consists of that knowledge which is gained by careful observations. An example of this is seen in Aboriginal knowledge of ecosystems. Waldram (1986, as cited in Castellano, 1999) explains that these observations are not conducted in the same way that a Western researcher would (repeated observations in a controlled environment), rather the observations were accumulated over time and are composed of a number of different vantage points. Waldram was able to identify and described in his work instances in which observations made by Aboriginal people in this manner were more valid conclusions than those based on traditional Western methodology.

The third, and final, component to Indigenous knowledge as outlined by Castellano (1999) is knowledge based on revelations. Dreams, visions and intuitions that are understood to be spiritual in origin, compose revealed knowledge. One such example is the tradition of vision quests. A vision quest was often the process through which youth made the transition to adulthood and sought guidance from the spiritual world through fasting and ceremony. Revealed knowledge is the component of Indigenous knowledge that is likely to be the most contested by those working from a Western paradigm. Western paradigms strive for the complete segregation of spirituality and scientific knowledge because they are perceived as fundamentally incompatible whereas Indigenous paradigms depict spirituality as an inextricable part of a holistic approach to the world. As a result knowledge gained from the spiritual part of the human experience is not to be ignored in favor of that which is based in the physical realm.

Comparison of Western and Indigenous ways of knowing

Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing have been subjugated in academic dialogue because Western ways of knowing are depicted as superior to Indigenous ways of knowing (Dumbrill & Green, 2007; Wane, 2008). Brayboy and Castagno (2008) are among the many authors who argue that Indigenous ways of knowing are neither inferior nor superior to Western ways of knowing; rather they are a different perspective. Difference should not be devalued and, according to El-Hani and Bandeira (2008), Indigenous ways of knowing should be acknowledged as different rather than trying to justify their inclusion in the realm of Western science. As such, it is important

to discuss the differences between Western ways of knowing and Indigenous ways of knowing.

There are many differences between Western and Indigenous ways of knowing; one of the most significant differences is that in the Western paradigm knowledge can be obtained and owned - in effect knowledge is a noun while the Indigenous conception focuses on knowing, a verb (Warner, 2006). This implies that Indigenous knowledge is not something which can be possessed by a single individual; it suggests that knowledge is shared with all of creation because all things are interconnected (Steinhauer, 2002).

Indigenous ways of knowing are described as relational because of the concept of interconnectedness and because Indigenous ways of knowing views things from a holistic perspective (Steinhauer, 2002). The relational nature of Indigenous ways of knowing is a stark contrast to Western ways of knowing which attempts to dissect and compartmentalize nature to understand it (Dumbrill & Green, 2007; Warner, 2006). Indigenous ways of knowing do not discount analysis entirely; instead analysis must be balanced with synthesis. In addition, it is possible to draw a parallel with divide and conquer mentality used in Western ways of knowing to the colonization practices used when Europeans first colonized Canada (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Wane, 2008); both are used to assert dominance without any regard for relationships. Indigenous ways of knowing require a respectful reciprocal relationship rather than an assertion of control (Steinhauer, 2002).

The Western paradigm attempts to remove relationships from the pursuit of knowledge in order to maintain objectivity (Dumbrill & Green, 2007). In the Western paradigm, objectivity is imperative because it allows the researcher to find a single truth which is presumed to be globally applicable (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008). This striving for objectivity is what precludes revealed knowledge from Western ways of knowing (Steinhauer, 2002). It is the principle of objectivity which, in Western ways of knowing, determines the validity of knowledge. In Indigenous ways of knowing objectivity is neither sought, nor considered desirable. There are those, such as Dr. Dawn Adrian Adams, who would argue that the notion of objectivity is not only false but that it conveys a false sense of control over the world (Pember, 2008). Indigenous knowledge, because of its roots in culture, varies substantially and suggests there are multiple realities rather than one objective reality. Indigenous ways of knowing suggest that you cannot remove something from its context and still have a useful understanding (Steinhauer, 2002). Castellano (1999) argues that to determine the usefulness of knowledge one has only to look at whether or not it enhances the capacity for people to live well.

Western ways of knowing often exclude the spirit when attempting to understand people; there is ample research on the intellect, the physical body, and emotions – one only has to conduct a brief Google search to find thousands of web pages, books and scholarly publications on these topics. Yet the Western academy tends to remove the concept of spirit from scholarly work because spirit cannot be removed from the context of the individual and quantified or objectively studied (Dei, 2002). In Western ways of knowing if something cannot be studied empirically then it is devalued. Indigenous perspectives, however, value and honor the spirit in the understanding of people. This is again a reflection of a holistic worldview rather than the compartmentalization seen in Western ways of knowing.

There has been movement towards the integration of Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing in the research community, as evidenced by documents such as the Ownership Control Access and Possession (OCAP) principles (Schnarch, 2004). OCAP has been described by Schnarch as “self-determination applied to research.” Despite the advocacy for self-determination in education (Watt-Cloutier, 2000) the educational field lacks a unified approach to the integration of Indigenous principles.

Indigenous knowledge and education

Indigenous knowledge was passed down through an oral tradition for generations prior to contact with Europeans which interrupted the transmission of knowledge through use of colonial practices. Indigenous ways of knowing were used to teach children in an experiential manner (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Children were taught through modeling and storytelling; education was conducted in a way that was integrated with daily life and emphasized relationships. Oftentimes elders and grandparents were responsible for the education of children while the parents were engaged in subsistence activities. Education, in traditional times, was preparation for life rather than simply a measure of academic achievement. Contact with Europeans introduced the Western academic system which had significant impact on the transmission and production of knowledge (Castellano, 1999).

The government of Canada promised to support the education of Indigenous peoples through various treaties (Stewart, 2006). This promise is in addition to the constitutional right of all Canadians to have equitable access to education. This education was promised as an optional addition to the daily lives of Indigenous peoples in Canada (Stewart, 2006) and was not supposed to deter from traditional education in Indigenous communities (Cardinal & Hildebrandt, 2000). This was a promise that was not kept.

Education in the Western system in Canada began as voluntary for Indigenous people but when Indigenous communities were not willing to give up their children the Canadian government adopted a coercive model as constructed in the Indian Act of 1876 (Dumbrill & Green, 2007). The coercive model took the form of residential schools in the early 1920s (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Aboriginal children were removed from their homes and families and taken to residential schools where they were isolated from their culture. Students were punished for speaking their own language or engaging in traditional activities, such as smudging (Roué, 2006). Residential schools were, in effect, a legislated form of cultural genocide (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). The last residential school was closed in 1996 (Assembly of First Nations, n.d.) yet the impact of residential school, and colonialism in general, is still prominent in the education of Aboriginal students today (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003).

The detrimental impacts of oppressive education are seen not only in the lives of the students, but also in the lives of their families and the health of their communities (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Many of the difficulties faced by Aboriginal communities today, which include mental health problems, physical health problems, and high rates of incarceration and morbidity, have all been linked to colonial history (Kirmayer, Simpson & Cargo 2003; Wilson & Rosenberg, 2002). There are also challenges specific to the field of Aboriginal education.

Aboriginal students in Canada have been noted as chronically underachieving (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003; Stewart, 2006). Many Aboriginal students do not make it through the present academic structure to graduate. Stewart (2006) provides information based on a report by the Auditor general which indicates that while 65% of the general Canadian population has a minimum of high school education only 37% of the Indigenous population attains that minimum. Another focal point is the dropout rates. While the general Canadian population has a very low dropout rate prior to completion of grade nine (3%) the dropout rate among Aboriginals is significantly higher (18%). The dropout rates for students between the ages of 18 and 20 are 40% for Aboriginal students and 16% for the general population. Dropout rates are a reflection of the education gap. The education gap consists of the differences in levels of educational attainment, dropout rates, in school problems and socio-economic concerns (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). The widening education gap evidences that the present educational system is not serving Aboriginal students well (Watt-Cloutier, 2000).

There are those who would argue that colonial oppression is present in today's educational system though it takes on a more insidious form (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Dumbrill

& Green, 2007; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Oppression occurs whenever Indigenous ways of knowing are presented as less valuable, valid or legitimate than Western ways of knowing (Dumbrill & Green, 2007; Wane, 2008). It is suggested that when Indigenous knowledge is presented as less than Western knowledge that this creates tensions and adjustment problems for students, which may contribute to high dropout rates (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Moreover, Brayboy and Castagno (2008) state that much of the information presented in classrooms lacks relevance to the lives of Aboriginal students. Lee (2007) suggests that for Native students to gain meaning out of education that it must be relevant to their lives. Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) also discuss how the boredom, stemming from the lack of relevant material, has been cited in much of the literature on dropout rates among Aboriginal students.

Future of Indigenous Education

Colonial history continues to impact the future of education for Aboriginal students; education was part of the oppressive history that has harmed Aboriginal peoples, nonetheless, it can potentially serve as part of the solution as well. As part of the solution, Indigenous knowledge needs to be meaningfully reintegrated into Aboriginal education (Watt-Cloutier, 2000). Indigenous knowledge should be included in the classroom to add relevance and pique the interest of Indigenous students (Lee, 2007). Community is valued in Indigenous ways of knowing and was traditionally part of education (Castellano, 1999); as such it is suggested that interaction with the community could be used to incorporate Indigenous knowledge into the educational system.

One suggestion for integration Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing into education is through the use of community based education (Lee, 2007; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Community based models of education, such as the one used by Lee (2007), form an egalitarian partnership between schools and the communities they reside in. The communities are given opportunities for input on what their children are learning about and the children are able to gain experience through interactions with the community. Furthermore, the relationship with the community allows students to access the community's resources. Many community based models that have been used with Indigenous peoples have focussed on restoring Indigenous language (Lee, 2007; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003) but there is nothing to indicate that this is the limit of the applicability of the community based model. In fact, the study conducted by Lee used community based education to explore math, science and environmental studies. Consequently, it is reasonable to suggest that community

based models could be incorporated into the entire academic curriculum.

Advantages of community based models of education

There are specific advantages to using a community based model with Aboriginal populations. Community based models access community resources (Lee, 2007) and Aboriginal communities have a unique resource in the form of Elders. Community based models are designed to enhance contact between students and Elders (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Schissel and Wotherspoon's study suggested that Aboriginal youth value Elders and their contributions to learning. Elders are often able to engage students in learning that they might not receive formally in the classroom. For example, Elders can teach students about the spiritual aspect of being or the story of Creation that is specific to their people. Elders are also able to pass on Indigenous knowledge to the students that is specific to the community.

Community based models are advantageous because they are based on the needs of the community. This enables students to focus on issues that are relevant to their lives (Lee, 2007); when education is focussed on relevant issues it encourages students to engage more fully in learning (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). For Indigenous people, relevant issues are likely to include Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing (Bopp & Bopp, 2001). However, this is not to suggest that the Western part of the curriculum is entirely removed because that would detrimentally impact the ability of students to interact in the dominant culture (Lee, 2007; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). The work by Bopp and Bopp (2001) indicates that the ability to be biculturally competent is important to Indigenous peoples; thus the goal is not to live solely in an Indigenous framework but to integrate Indigenous and Western frameworks to the benefit of the students.

A further benefit of community based models is that curriculum content is determined by the community rather than from an official who lacks a connection with the community (Lee, 2007). The implementation of curriculum by outsiders has historically caused a problem for Indigenous peoples. There is mistrust for the educational institution as a consequence of residential schools and there are those who would suggest that the government should not attempt to impose a solution to the problems in education that were created by the government (Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Lee Maracle (personal communication, October 23, 2008), in a panel discussion entitled "Towards Reconciliation: Residential Schools and the Role of Public Apology," suggested that non-Native individuals should give Native peoples the space they need to find the

solution for themselves and should only step in when invited. This is also reflected in the document produced by the National Indian Brotherhood titled 'Indian Control of Indian Education' (Abele, Dittburner & Graham, 2000). In this document the National Indian Brotherhood, now known as the Assembly of First Nations, suggests that regaining control of Indigenous education is essential for Indigenous peoples to achieve self-determination. Consequently a model which empowers Indigenous peoples to take control of their own education is highly valuable.

Multiple approaches to learning are used in community based approaches (Lee, 2007). The use of multiple approaches to learning make a community based model accessible to more students. Moreover, it allows students whose strengths are not accessed in the typical Western model of education to gain confidence in their abilities. Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) suggest that Aboriginal students respond especially well to approaches that involve active experimentation. Active experimentation emphasises experiential learning rather than facts or abstract concepts. The article by Watt-Cloutier (2000) reinforces the concept that education should focus on skills rather than rote learning. Experiential learning is gained through extended and frequent field trips that allow students to explore their community in new ways or to access parts of the community that is normally unavailable to them. Allowing students to learn in their own community is a positive experience, as opposed to the negative experience when children were forcibly removed to residential schools. Participating in the community enhances students' connections to their community, which is a step toward healing the wounds of the residential school system.

Community based models allow students to interact in a meaningful way with the communities and through this experience students develop interests in the community (Lee, 2007). By becoming interested in the community students are more likely to want to serve the community in their future endeavours. The development of these relationships is beneficial for both students and communities. Moreover, through this interaction students are able to experience interconnectedness and reciprocity in relationships. This experience is invaluable in teaching students about Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing.

Challenges for community based models of education

The community based model is not without its challenges. One of the most prominent obstacles to community based education is funding. Given that there are more field trips, interactions with the community and changes in curriculum it is presumed that community based education would be more

costly than a regular curriculum. The potential for community based education to be more costly notwithstanding, Aboriginal education is consistently underfunded by the government and it is suggested that this contributes to the lower levels of educational attainment among Aboriginal students (Stewart, 2006). However, it is possible that rather than requiring more funds for Aboriginal education, that using a community based model would allow for the funds to be used more effectively and to better benefit the students. Alternatively, it is possible that the community may want to contribute to the funding if they are given control of the educational system.

Community control of curriculum has the potential to be extremely beneficial to students (Schissel and Wotherspoon, 2003) yet there is also the concern that if the changes to the curriculum are too extensive that students will not be able to achieve on standardized testing which may jeopardize their ability to pursue further educational opportunities. This concern may be addressed by ensuring the integration of Indigenous ways of knowing with Western ways of knowing rather than replacing one with the other. Western ways of knowing will remain important to students if they want to be able to engage productively with the dominant society (Lee, 2007). The challenge is finding an appropriate balance of the two paradigms.

Acquiring appropriate and skilled teachers who are able to facilitate the community based model is also challenging. Schissel and Wotherspoon (2003) suggest that for Aboriginal teachers to adequately provide for the number of Aboriginal students their numbers would have to increase three-fold. Although, the authors also point out that the available research regarding whether Aboriginal descent impacts success in teaching Aboriginal students is not conclusive. Research does, however, suggest that teachers must understand Aboriginal cultures and be sensitive to the learning needs of the students (Dumbrill & Green, 2007)

The training of teachers is a challenge yet there are programs in place which train Aboriginal teachers and incorporate Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous ways of knowing into the training. Gardner (2000) discusses the Native Indian Teacher Education Program in place at the University of British Columbia. Another example is the Saskatchewan Urban Native Teacher Education Program that is based out of the Gabrielle Dumont Institute (Dorian & Yang, 2000). The latter model has successfully used a community based approach for the education of teachers and the graduates of this program are highly regarded in their workplaces.

Community based education for Aboriginal peoples may also be challenged because it incorporates Indigenous ways of knowing which are different from Western ways of knowing. By incorporating Indigenous ways of knowing, community based

education disputes the position of power in which Western ways of knowing have been placed (Castellano, 1999). The dominant paradigm is unlikely to shift overnight; the process will be slow and, at times, uncomfortable, yet Indigenous ways of knowing will hopefully be recognized as equal to Western ways of knowing (Castellano, 1999; Dumbrell & Green, 2007; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003).

Diversity among Indigenous peoples in Canada also poses a challenge. Although Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing share commonalities there is significant differences between groups of Aboriginal peoples (Brayboy & Castagno, 2008; Dumbrell & Green, 2007; Schissel & Wotherspoon, 2003). Consequently, it cannot be assumed that one model or template for community based education would work equally well for all Indigenous peoples in Canada. However, community based models are adaptable because they put a significant emphasis on the input of the community. Communities are able to use the components that are helpful and replace those that are not helpful with concepts that are helpful. The adaptability of community based education is implicit in the system because it is built around each unique community. Any concerns regarding standardization need to be looked at in context, as standardization is not the objective of community based education when learning about cultural practices; however, it is useful when considering developing curriculum that meets Canadian educational standards. Developing an integrated curriculum which balances Western and Indigenous worldviews will continue to be challenging though not impossible.

Summary and Conclusion

Indigenous ways of knowing, though different from Western ways of knowing, are a legitimate, valid and valuable way of looking at the world. Indigenous ways of knowing have persevered and adapted despite a history of oppression. Indigenous knowledge is diverse, holistic, personal and part of a lived experience.

The integration of Indigenous knowledge into education is essential for the progress of Aboriginal education and the movement away from colonial practices. A community based model of education is suggested as the way by which Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing can be integrated into the educational system. The community based model has both advantages and challenges, and it has been successful in both high school (Lee, 2007) and post-secondary endeavours (Dorian & Yang, 2000). The challenge now is to implement this model on a more widespread basis -- to have community based education become the norm rather than the exception. Although the progress towards equality in education is slow, progress is being made nonetheless.

It is better to take many small steps in the right direction than to a great leap forward only to stumble backward.

Chinese proverb

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 96-106

Inferiorizing¹ Indigenous Communities and Intentional Colonial Poverty

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¹ This term comes from the mind and experiences of Indigenous author, Lee Maracle, during wonderful dialogic exchanges in her classes at the Centre for Aboriginal Initiative.

^a Mr. Koptie returned to academia in his 5th decade, and successfully graduated from OISE at the University of Toronto in 2010. He won the Presidents Award for Top Aboriginal Graduate Student after fighting hard to be admitted to graduate studies as an adult learner. Steven is a glowing example of the diversity of individuals who constitute Indigenous scholars in the academy. He notes that returning to school can enrich not only your own life, but inform and dispel the many myths that plague and undermine relationship building between Aboriginal and Canadian citizens in this country.

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Introduction

To paint a picture of the Canada that Aboriginal people envision I need only turn to the ideals of a good life embedded in Aboriginal languages and traditional teachings. The Anishinabek [Great Lakes people] seek the spiritual gift of "piimatizwin" - long life and wellbeing, which enable a person to gain wisdom. The Cree of the northern prairies value "miyowichtowin" – having good relations. The Iroquois [Six Nations] Great Law sets out rules for maintaining peace "Skennen kowa" between peoples, going beyond resolving conflicts to actively caring for each other's welfare. Aboriginal peoples across Canada and around the world speak of their relationship with the natural world and the responsibility of human beings to maintain balance in the natural order. Rituals in which we give something back in return for the gifts that we receive from Mother Earth reinforce that sense of responsibility.

I would guess that most Canadians subscribe to these same goals: long life, health and wisdom for self and family; a

Abstract

This paper is a reflective topical autobiography of a man seasoned by thirty years of community and crisis work. It has been written to encourage Aboriginal peoples to reflect on their lives and share their lived-experiences with others so that we can work together to break the colonial spell that has held so many hostage to their past.

Key Words: Indigenous Scholars, demystify, decolonize, colonialism, Cultural Safety.

harmonious and cohesive society; peace between peoples of different origins and territories; and a sustainable relationship with the natural environment. Canadians would probably also agree in principle with the traditional Aboriginal ethic that our actions today should not jeopardize the health, peace and well-being of generations yet unborn.

(George Erasmus: The Lafontaine-Baldwin Lectures, Vancouver 2002)

There is a splendid reflexivity in identifying as an Indigenous scholar. Demystifying denigrating misconceptions and worn out rationalizations of Victorian age myths of British hegemony, imperialism, and a perverse sense of entitlement to privilege is the modern warrior's way of re-contextualizing the experience of colonization.

The writer has had many difficult debates about "Aboriginal poverty" on Canadian reserves. My observation in working on northern Ontario fly-in reserves as a mental health worker is that while the residents of 'unnatural communities (reserves) may be materially poor in comparison to the unsustainable excesses of southern Canada, they remain tied, albeit precariously, to their ancestral lands. They stand in stark contrast to increasingly greedy citizens of southern Canada and those around the world who remain dependent on the stealing of natural resources from

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Acknowledgements:

Author Lee Maracle – I wish to send you a heart felt thank you for coining the term Inferiorizing and showing great kindness and generosity in guiding my written work through graduate studies at the University of Toronto. You remain an Indigenous writers' best ally and a remarkable SAGE (Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement) cultural guide. The concept of Inferiorizing Indigenous Communities was birthed from your wisdom and conversations about my wanting to explore and express Indigenous poverty from an Indigenous world-view.

Dr. Cynthia Wesley-Esquimaux – I, like many others, have gained significant insight on what truth and reconciliation can look like through the lenses of your passion and dedication to "Changing the Face of Aboriginal Canada," I can only say, "Many layers of thank you for your efforts".

Indigenous lands. Pirates continue to plunder riches from foreign places while renaming their destructive tendencies as progressive civilization. The question becomes how much of today's progress is based on utopia ideals by theorists unmoved by on the ground encounters to critically evaluate the costly-in-all-ways trajectories of modern mankind? Indigenous peoples stand as stark reminders that not all peoples endorse the realities created by privileged nobility that allow for less than 5% of the worlds' population to own land. What is the recourse of future generations who exist beyond the consciousness of an Indigenous world-view. The conditions on many Canadian reserves mirror many locales across the globe where resource plundering and unjust land grabbing are tolerated because citizens are shielded from the real costs of free-fall capitalism and development.

The oil sands of Alberta avidly represent the foolish innocence of too many Canadians and display a remarkable disrespect for the consequences of becoming a rich energy super-power. Dreier (2001) writes about place-based inequalities that create political and economic separation that lead to stereotypes where the privileged attack those who they identify as burdens when a fair costing of economic wealth must be determined. He writes "the development of "separate societies" for rich and poor not only directly increases income inequity by affecting access to jobs and education; it also generates dangerous stereotypes and tilts the political terrain." (Dreier, 2001:24). For Indigenous scholars this idea has contextual relevance but misses the Indigenous world-view that author John Mohawk invites us to contemplate. There is a huge gap in the rationales put forward to account for the "vicious circle of geographically rooted income inequities" (Dreier, 2001). They exclude a critical review of the failure of colonization and offer little hope for intellectual reclamation of an alternative Indigenous voice.

I was required to appeal a rejection of my application for graduate studies at the University of Toronto. My voice was not regarded as offering an equal contribution, even with my extensive community experience. It was the Supporting Aboriginal Graduate Enhancement (SAGE) group who advocated for recognition of the contributions my generation of social workers made. They spoke from within the walls of

the academy, talking over the systemic barriers to Indigenous knowledge. Their support is instrumental in gaining recognition for our work as vital to informing the truth and reconciliation healing work Canada has stubbornly avoided. There is an attendant awkwardness in posing difficult questions or challenging myths that surround the failure to invite in or respect Indigenous passions. The academy, and Canada as State, would rather intimidate, coerce, and punish Indigenous peoples for their reluctance to assimilate, integrate and join modernization, globalization, and a form of civilization that very few human beings can actually share. Perhaps, that few even want to share. When victims of colonization trauma exhibit angst at the impositions of the settler state, express their suffering, or request truth regarding historical injustices, they are told they are lazy, ungrateful, and biting the hand that feeds them. What has happened is the silence has become deafening and the social pain remains a tangible reminder of that which is not.

This paper became a reflective topical autobiography, a research method learned from New Zealand Indigenous scholar Irihapeti Ramsden (2003). Her seminal work on Cultural Safety before she died deeply informed my research and writing path through graduate school (Koptie, 2009b). She began her Ph.D. thesis with what she terms a 'reflective topical autobiographical journey of self-discovery' to understand how her ancestors became the poorest members of colonial New Zealand;

Although the daughter of an historian I had little knowledge of the political history or the legislative manipulation of the ownership of Maori land and the social, economic, educational and legislative processes which led to the poverty of Maori people. ... I did not understand why Maori were stereotyped as unintelligent, irresponsible and lazy. Why Maori were demonised in the media, filled the prisons and hospitals and were told that they had the same opportunities for successful social accomplishment as everyone else. My whole experience showed me that there were fundamental and brutal injustices in our society and I wanted to know how and why they got there, how they worked and how they were sustained. (Irihapeti Ramsden, 2003)

Indigenous scholars can emulate Irihapeti Ramsden's "melancholic journey of self-discovery" and public enlightenment because it helps to frame and articulate how the Canadian Indian Act of 1876 legitimized colonization of a once sovereign people (Koptie, 2009b). The strained relations between Canadians and Indigenous people will likely not survive 21st century sensitivities to social justice, and we all need to ensure the prevention of dangerous political, social, environmental and religious upheavals that threaten global well-being. Indigenous poverty must be framed from within the perspective of Cultural Safety. Irihapeti Ramsden was a path-finder in articulating ways to empower future generations in challenging the status quo. She demanded that we learn to respect and accommodate the diversity of humanity. She taught her students to resist and rebel against the ignorance and arrogance of the settlers of New Zealand and the sameness that continues to prevent deep soul searching of privileged colonizers in Canada. Ellison-Loshmann (2003) in her obituary for Ramsden shared a reflective narrative of an opening statement Ramsden made at a lecture in 2001. Ramsden challenged nurse trainees with the following; *"there are three kinds of people; those who make things happen, those who watch things happen and those who never knew what hit them - let nurses be in the first category."*

It requires extraordinary good will to escape the enmeshment of historic errors, misconceptions and misrepresentations and an urgent need to correct the ensuing injustices that marginalize, demean, diminish and destroy the lives of Indigenous peoples. Ramsden's movement towards a model of Cultural Safety is a superb road map to places of unity and collaboration for decolonization as well as equity of access for all of Creation's diverse human richness. She asked Moana Jackson to express the strengths of Cultural Safety in their sharing of reflective topical interviews (autobiographies). His narrative (Ramsden 2003:127), is the concluding thought to my reflections on the inferior communities that remain tolerated and unchallenged across Canada:

First, its strength is to challenge students to analyze where they've come from. I don't think we should under-estimate that in New Zealand educational system because there is one thing that education lacks in this country, it is the teaching of an ability to be critical, the colonizing mentality doesn't encourage criticism, it encourages conformity. But what Cultural Safety as an academic idea does, is that it re-invents or reclaims the need to critically analyse things, and I think that's most important and its greatest strength in a general academic sense.

In a more specific sense of nursing education, we as a people are not going to be able to remedy the unwellness of our people in six months or a year because it's the consequence

of a hundred and fifty-seven years of dispossession. And so it's crucial that we have people working in that area who are actually going to help our people be well. And so, I think its strength is that it, it helps provide that in nursing education in a specific area. But then its broadest strength I think, is what we've been talking about a lot and that is, that a political idea and in the end remedying the ills of our people is a political and a constitutional issue, not in terms of the Beehive and Parliament, but in terms of changing the mindset of our people about our power and our powerlessness and so on. (Ramsden, 2003, thesis chapter 9:2)

Nurses are frontline witnesses to community development successes as well as failures and Ramsden's work on decolonization helps to re-vise, re-tell and recover valuable lessons from this writer's struggle to alter the trajectory of suffering in First Nations communities throughout a Canada in which a Prime Minister can go mostly unchallenged for declaring that, "Canada has no history of colonization" (Harper, 2009).

This is mostly because the historical narratives most citizens of Canada study rarely challenge the trajectory of colonial inertia from the perspective of its victims. Archer (2000) shares Levi-Strauss's claim that history maintains a "closed system" that recounts the colonial narrative with little human experiential context;

History, in short, does not record or discover meaning; it does no more than provide a catalogue, which can serve as a point of departure in the quest for intelligibility. We must understand, that is, that there has been no progress of the kind that humanist historians suppose, no development of cognition, no dialectical process at work in human society, but merely the reformulation in numerous different guises of an essential structure of human knowledge – a structure which is, according to Levi-Strauss, a closed system. Historical thought is simply the humanist mythology by means of which the 'civilized' or 'developed' world relates to the discontinuous, objective and immutable structure of brain and psyche. (Archer in Soper, 2000:28)

Becoming an Indigenous scholar, writer and restorer of Indigenous meta-narratives to confirm our human rights to flourish in our homelands is a 21st century response to the injustice, confusion and foolish prerogative power that provides for human atrocities like the 1876 Canadian Indian Act and an actual Canadian Department of Indian Affairs to manage, regulate and suppress one specific race and erode our humanity. To be able to record new truths about such fallacies is to realize the eternal survival of Indigenous people across Turtle Island [North America], and their will to not disappear through cultural, political, social and spiritual inertia. It is imperative that we, as a

collective Indigenous nation, address the 'crisis of knowledge' that has resulted from 'not speaking' the tragic consequences of the past seven generations. Those unspoken narratives allowed inequities in caring, sharing and loving Creation's offerings for all our relations and all life on our Mother the planet Earth, whose diversity is self evident yet subject to disrespect and abuse, to be suffered. This tragic silence cannot continue because we have borne witness to the limits of survivability. It resonates loudly in the blood memory of all Indigenous people who continue to mourn those hurts. We know that one can be materially rich, but spiritually poor, and through experience we expect that future generations will question the reckless, destructive and selfish greed that now threatens mankind. And yet, as citizens of this earth too many continue to express little consideration for those from whom we borrow our lifetimes.

Canadian Indigenous scholar Neal McLeod credits Smith Atimoyoo, one of the founders of the Saskatchewan Indian Cultural College for teaching Indigenous people to use "new arrows" or "words that can be shot at the narratives of the colonial power" (McLeod, 2007). McLeod in his genre creating book *Cree Narrative Memory: From Treaties to Contemporary Times*, demonstrates the cultural revitalization of "coming home through stories" where past and present stories allow cultural transmission of the kind of struggles that help retain human dignity in the face of colonial dispossession, devastation and humiliation. He re-locates a story on "damn lazy Indians and the banishment to reserves":

A long time ago, an old man and his grandson went to town. The boy was about fourteen. They had gone to town to buy groceries. They milled about the store and collected the items that they needed. After they filled their cart, there was a man by door. He said to his friend, "Damn lazy Indians." The man then went up to the old man and said, "You are god-damn lazy. Why can't you just stay on the reserve, where you belong?" The taunts continued, but the old man kept calm. After they gathered their groceries, they stood outside their vehicles. The grandson asked, "Nimosom, why didn't you say something to that man who was there, who was saying those things to us?" The grandfather answered his grandson with another question: "How long were we in the store?" "Well, we were there for five minutes." "Yes, my grandson. We were in that store for five minutes. We had to deal with that man for five minutes. But he has to deal with himself for the rest of his life." (McLeod, 2007:68-69)

One of the most enriching experiences of graduate studies for this author was re-locating and reflecting on myths of who we are as people and what happened to our cultural pride. Seneca Indigenous scholar John Mohawk's (1994) Ph.D. thesis

"A View from Turtle Island: Chapters in Iroquois Mythology, History and Culture," gives long-overdue acknowledgement to the role of Indigenous women in fostering strong Indigenous communities. At the screening of a new documentary on the Six Nations land claim dispute at Caledonia titled "Six Miles Deep" I too was deeply impressed by the unrecognized magnitude of Indigenous women's work to bring a peaceful resolution to that 150 year-old struggle (Roque, 2009). The filmmaker stated she was using a new term making the rounds in Indian Country, "historicide" to denote the misrepresentations and misconceptions Canadians accept in their unawareness of the true history of colonial Canada. In a chapter entitled, "The Ancient Longhouse", Mohawk (1994) offers powerful endorsements to an enduring women-spirit and the extensive roles and responsibilities women have played to organize and orient Indigenous communities to communal harmony. Clan mothers and the older women of each longhouse prompted social efficacy and communal resilience, while effectively mediating sexual economy and respect through the negotiation of marriages. They knew the health of their men, their work habits, and who had desirable qualities for ensuring longhouse cohesion. Oversight of the development of their youth, including young men, gave clan mothers the authority to manage the formation of healthy relationships. Violence, especially sexual violence carried severe sanction, including possible death penalties, and therefore was rare. In addition, they held responsibility for preserving the land and maintaining agricultural fields for the benefit of the entire community. The coming of alcohol and the resultant cultural upheaval altered long held values and social order and created "mayhem and misery" in previously "gentle and loving communities" (Mohawk, 1994: 160). Blind adherence to prerogative power enabled the enslavement of those "vernacular cultures" who stood in the way of civilization and progress, and Mohawk states that, "Indigenous peoples are the ultimate vernacular cultures" (1994:20). They were societies based solely on reciprocity and interdependency on the lands they inhabit. Finally, Mohawk sees the inertia that followed the imposition of European colonial models of domestic enclosure of people for economic domination as something that led to reserves in the past, and, as leading to future ecological disaster for the future (Mohawk 1994:19-24).

The following extract from George J. Dei, Budd L. Hall, and Dorothy Goldin Rosenberg's (2002) book, *Indigenous Knowledge in Global Contexts: Multiple Readings of Our World*, summarizes what it can feel like to carry the responsibility to resist and rebel against ignorance, arrogance, and claims to innocence that transfer the obligation for transformative change to the victims of colonial excesses. Those excesses have permeated all human relations, infected the human condition with wanton disrespect, and ultimately challenge planetary

survivability. Does the next human catastrophe beckon from unresolved historical lapses? Mohawk and others of his genre suggest that the restoration of good minds, good will, and good intentions are still possible through following 'ancient cultural imperatives'. He notes however that all humanity must re-locate good will across the artificial boundaries of superiority that have been created to privilege the few (Mohawk, 1994).

Should the world's Indigenous peoples fear Canada's suggested irresponsibly in oil sands exploitation, unfettered mining interests, or the depletion of sacred water resources? Perhaps globalization could best be regarded as modern colonization, which both endangers and disregards future generations. Through the following passage I wish to honor a powerful voice that comes very close to the oral traditions I have come to value within Indigenous cultures. The following treatise resonates with Indigenous expression on globalization and is presented mostly in its entirety:

Globalization has accelerated the flow of cultures across geographical, political, and cultural borders; it has also transformed knowledge into a commodity to which the most powerful in society usually lay unjustifiable claim. For indigenous peoples, the 'crisis of knowledge' can be seen in, or has resulted in, the following: fragmentation of traditional values and beliefs; erosion of spirituality; distortions in local, regional, and national ecosystems and economies; and tensions related to cultural revitalization and reclamation.

All knowledges exist in relation to specific times and places. Consequently, Indigenous knowledges speak to questions about location, politics, identity, and culture, and about the history of peoples and their lands. The process of teaching (and learning about) their histories and cultures is, for many Indigenous peoples, an act of political resistance to colonized and imposed ways of knowing.

Indigenous knowledges cannot be dismissed as mere localized phenomena. Such knowledges extend across cultures, histories, and geographical spaces, as well as across time. At different times many educators, community workers, and social activists have expressed their frustrations with the patriarchal colonizing practices of educational institutions... The negation, devaluation, and denial of Indigenous knowledges, particularly those of women, is the result of deliberate practices of establishing hierarchies of knowledge. This problem of knowledge hierarchies in homes, families, schools, and workplaces cannot be dismissed lightly; after all, such knowledge hierarchies have always shaped schools, communities, and political lives. Institutions are not unmarked spaces of thought and action. Knowledge forms are usually privileged to construct

dominance, and can be 'fetishized' so as to produce and sustain power inequities. Fetishized knowledges are assigned or come to acquire an objectified, normal status, the status of truth. Thus they become embedded in social practices and identities, as well as in institutional structures, policies, and relationship... Indigenous knowledges, which have existed apart from colonial or imperial formations, are found at the very heart of the profound transformation of the world that is presently underway. (Dei, et al., 2000)

The above thoughts, while lengthy, capture the tenor of my thoughts as an Indigenous community worker and scholar after close to 30 years of First Nation community development work. I sought meta-narratives to explain how and why Indigenous peoples, the human beings that I identify with, continue to be mistreated, misunderstood, and even hated on their own lands. One of my heroes, Tekamthi (Tecumseh), declared that, "God gave us this country" (Gilbert, 1989), and I believe the land still resonates with that truth. The indifference to colonial injustice and the dismissive attitudes of far too many Canadian citizens for the human rights of Indigenous peoples is now an international stain wrought through political manipulation of the Declaration on Indigenous Rights. Early Canadian Treaty negotiations were also fraught with corruption, intimidation and predatory misrepresentations. The creating of suffering and 'poverty' to soften or weaken Indigenous peoples resolve has morphed into shameful mining practices by Canada in the north and around the world, but it hasn't ended there.

My understanding of the plight of Indigenous peoples in Canada is deeply informed by narratives gathered during a long community development and healing career in southern and northern Ontario. As a welfare worker during the 1980 recession, when the scandal of reckless investing led to the closure of the Massey-Ferguson combine factory in Brantford, I personally witnessed poverty intensely reflected in a sense of entitlement to privilege. This was an Ontario where my ancestral connection to the Six Nations of the Grand River First Nation was birthed; these actions forced my eyes open, but my powerlessness lay revealed, left impotent in a capitalistic wake.

In the 1980s and 1990s, I was a child welfare worker, suicide counselor and crisis worker, as well as a substance abuse treatment worker. My generation conceived and developed Toronto Aboriginal health and social services that were part of the recovery and renewal that has taken hold across Canada over the past twenty years. We were able to test models of hope and renewal that many other nations would ultimately emulate. Canadian Indigenous peoples are respected internationally for their work during the past 50 years, which reasserted a simple dignity and our human right to survival. We spoke the language of self-determination, railed against forced assimilation, and

claimed lands which colonial states had stolen from Indigenous populations in their quest for domination, rampant greed, classism, and spiritual supremacy.

Most Canadians are not taught the significance of the Royal Proclamation of 1763. This was the peace treaty that opened Canada for nationhood, through a mutual desire to protect the lands from gross exploitation. Canada's citizens remain mostly uninformed about the very real resistance of Indigenous peoples to unlawful European expansion into Indigenous territories. European concepts of settlement and community formation in the 'New World' were amply endorsed by civil philosophers like Locke and Hobbes who promoted imperialistic self-interest through the use of prerogative power (Arnold, 2007), and the concept of terra nullius or empty lands waiting for Christian settlement under the Christian Doctrine of Discovery (Mohawk, 2000). Indigenous world-views on place/territories of occupation opposed Eurocentric and massively destructive settlement patterns that were justified as taming wilderness and subduing primitives. As a continent, and as a society, we are now facing old/new cultural imperatives to actively consider sustainability for future generations. We are being forced to demystify the tragic consequences of those earlier ignorant and arrogant justifications for human misconduct. We are using words like cultural and environmental genocide, and warnings of tipping points generated by our use and abuse of natural resources to maintain our societal hunger for more, are no longer disregarded as hysterical. In this growing chaos, Aboriginal reserves, where poverty, poor water, poor education and poor health care are shameful realities, we can see a new normal developing. The Canadian government, with its inability to share resources, preserve commodities for future generations, or create healthy public trusts is eating itself from the inside out. We can all see the effects of deprivation, look to any Indian reserve in Canada that has been the recipient of Canada's inability to share its largesse with a singular and wanting population, masquerading in history as care and consideration. How can Canadian people trust that they will continue to benefit as recipients of these same lands when Canada has been so obviously duplicitous?

This paper ultimately became a reflective exercise of an Aboriginal man and scholar struggling to make sense of what the pathos/pathology of colonization on Canadian reserves represent in terms of our larger community. What I have seen is what community looks like when Canada fails to recognize the social, economic, political, spiritual upheavals colonization has embedded in its collective psyche. There can be no sense of well-being for Indigenous peoples enclosed on reserves governed by the colonial Canadian Indian Act of 1876. We are the only people in this country governed by this antiquated legislation, with the door to change firmly shut in our faces. If community

development is a primary goal to help people improve their social and economic situation, and "to help people become subjects instead of objects, acting on their situation instead of simply reacting to it" (Chistenson et al., 1994:2), then the United Nations ratification of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 must guide future Canadian social change agents onto the pathway of alleviating First Nations colonial poverty. Article 3 of the September 13, 2007 United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples which Canada failed to sign until 2010, and then only conditionally, relocates the path-way to recovery for First Nations communities:

Indigenous peoples have the rights to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.

However, far too many Canadian minds are 'shielded from those truths' and they continue to endorse mythologies fomented during historical settlement in the past 150 years (Wesley-Esquimaux, CRE, 2009a). Chaotic dispossession of First Peoples lands and subsequent loss of their ability to be self-determining within their traditional Indigenous homeland, because they were under siege from disease and French and British settlers, is how the first seeds of dependency took root. Poverty has grown exponentially from those realities even though First Nation ancestors retained enough wisdom to fight for treaties and reserves until they could find ways to accommodate and adjust. Ratinyenkehaka (Mohawk) Elder Jan Longboat (2009) teaches that Indigenous natural sovereignty has never been surrendered. She calls for Indigenous people to strengthen spiritual ties to 'our place' and recover the 'richness' existing within traditional world-views and life-ways. Those are the ways that allowed us to feed ourselves, doctor ourselves, educate ourselves, and disciplined and maintained just societies for hundreds of generations before the experience of imposed dependency by settler states. Longboat (2009) claims we always had a richness that came from knowing how to plant gardens, hunt for sustenance, locate and extract the medicines we utilized for wellness, and to communicate in our beautiful languages. All of which made it possible to maintain good will and address Creation with gratitude. Our ancestors embedded through practice the worldviews and life-ways necessary for us to thrive in the places where we lived. Jan Longboat defined 'poorness' in terms of identifying suffering people who had lost the richness of collective reciprocity and interdependence, and who suffered cultural confusion. This can also be regarded as suffering from a 'poverty of spirit' in today's cultural vernacular. Hundreds of generations of self-determining peoples and the ancestral transfer of skills necessary to provide a good life for themselves and their families were undermined by contact. Thankfully, then

and today, those that suffered extreme circumstances through poverty have been helped by other citizens equipped with exceptional abilities and a willingness to share beyond their own individual needs. Longboat (2009) suggests that there were also three orders of life giving instructions that survived, one for men, one for women, and one for both as parents and family members. External interference and the resulting pathology from adopting individualistic concepts of competitiveness and predatory interaction require more deliberation within our communities. Welfare dependency brought shame, distrust and a debilitating fear of starvation and loss. Reciprocity and interdependence were replaced by domination from Indian agents who could decide who received 'rations' and this became the first form of welfare. By examining the intentions of Canadian historical heroes and villains Indigenous scholars and writers can create new frameworks for re-telling remarkable resilience narratives to garner new insights, understandings, and interpretations of colonial experiences. These re-histories will become tools to re-educate dominant society on the intent of our ancestors when making Treaties and other accommodations for survival and their need to buy time to adapt to the colonial circus rapidly engulfing their traditional ways (Koptie, 2009a). They did what they had to do when relinquishing their natural sovereignty in times of destructive turmoil in their territories. If the alternative was total genocide then we must remember to honor their legacy to future generations (Tatz, 2003).

The coming struggle for sovereignty in Canada's Arctic region is another new frontier that will challenge the rights of all Canadians. Diplomacy at home is proving as difficult as good will abroad as Canada seeks truth and reconciliation of its historical colonial prerogative power abuses once used to confirm its claim to legitimate nationhood. The misrepresenting of an entire race of humanity allowed for immoral and illegal predatory settlement across Turtle Island, a process that continues to carry a level of great conflict, controversy and injustice with global implications for how nation states like Canada will be expected to conduct geographical and political relationships in the present and into the future. The need for alternative perspectives is great in this country, and Canada is fortunate to have a growing number of Indigenous scholars and writers to frame an identity beyond that of a colonial outpost. Aboriginal cultural, economic, political and spiritual contributions to Canadian identity are significant, albeit misunderstood, defining attributes for this country (Saul, 2008).

Five days in the Pikangikum First Nation "where the pavement ends" in northwestern Ontario can shake anyone's faith in Canada's identity as a modern state (Wadden, 2009). My entire world was shaken hard by two years of work with fly-in reserves where very little community development work has been done and the landscape is truly Third World or worse.

Here you find people who live within the boundaries of some of the richest gold mines in the world and yet continue to be amongst the world's poorest people. The pathos in communities like Pikangikum expresses everything about the truth of Canada's relationship to Indigenous people. This truth extends beyond Canadian borders where Canada's reprehensible mining practices are no longer a secret only First Nations endure. What I witnessed is beyond blaming the citizens of Pikangikum First Nation for not 'working in the mine.' This is a story about a people desperately clinging to their traditional homelands in the face of greed and an unrelenting quest for control of the natural resources that generate massive wealth used to sustain the population that lives south of the 60th parallel. The successes of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries will haunt future generations of Canadian youth who will inherit our legacies of deceit and unresolved grievances. This author wishes to honour young Indigenous community activist Ben Powless from the Six Nations of the Grand River who is shining a light on Canada as a global colonial tyrant. Canada has foolishly transported its Aboriginal policies internationally hoping no one will notice just as no one notices what goes on in places like the Pikangikum First Nation and the ecological disaster of the Barrick gold mines in that region. Please Google Ben and follow his ecological struggles in protection of our Mother the Earth.

I researched one of Ontario's only resolved land claim and learned that when Canada negotiated Treaties it never expected reserves to last more than 100 years. The stark realities of Canadian justice were revealed while researching colonists such as Sir Francis Bond Head whose open contempt for the Red Man still reverberates through the annals of settlement stalemates in southern Ontario and the rest of Canada. Sir Francis Bond Head stands as the great-great-grandfather of Canadian Indian Treaties and the creator of reserves. His tragic legacy would continue under the poet Duncan Campbell Scott, Sir John A. Macdonald's appointee to the Department of Indian Affairs in 1869 who set out to get rid of the Indian Problem by getting rid of the remaining Indians. The use of residential schools to de-culture children and create poor living conditions on reserves were meant to force Indigenous peoples off their lands and into assimilation by the Canadian body politic. His response to a January 14, 1836 dispatch to imperial Britain's Lord Glenelg's inquiry on how to deal with Upper Canada's Indian question casts a sad shadow on Ontario's historical record. He observes:

"So long as we were obtaining Possession of their Country by open Violence, the fatal Result of the unequal Contest was but too easily understood; but now that we have succeeded in exterminating their Race from the vast Regions of Land, where nothing in the present Day remains of the poor Indian but the unnoticed Bones of his

Ancestors, it seems inexplicable how it should happen, that even where the Race barely lingers in existence, it should still continue to wither, droop, and vanish before us like Grass in' the Progress of the Forest in Flames. 'The Red Men,' lately exclaimed a celebrated Miami Cacique, are melting like Snow before the Sun" (Shortt and Doughty 1914: pp. 331-362).

The words of Sir Francis Bond Head are emblematic of the rhetorical historic paradox and irony that promulgate the roots of myth regarding the settlement of Upper and Lower Canada. The final sentence of Bond-Head's writings, which all Indigenous scholars should study, clearly determines the trajectory to 'reservationization' in Canada. Agents like Sir Francis Bond Head legitimized the mythology of an inferior race in need of domination and state wardship until civilization took hold or they melted away before the sun like so much snow (Koptie, 2009c), but were those words really his own?

In 1811, Indigenous leader *Miami Cacique*, also known as Tecumseh, attempted to unite Indigenous peoples, which would lead to the War of 1812, in an effort to block conquest of the whole continent through American Manifest Destiny. Although, it is not my intention to unduly privilege the written word and reward the arrogance of Eurocentric translators, it is written that Tecumseh had the following to *say* in response to Bond Head's colonial hyperbole when he made a plea to the Choctaw and Chickasaw nations to assist in resisting genocide:

*In view of questions of vast importance, have we met together in solemn council tonight ... The whites are already nearly a match for us all united, and too strong for any one tribe alone to resist; so that unless every tribe unanimously combines to give check to the ambition and the avarice of the whites, they will soon conquer us apart and disunited, and we will be driven away from our native country and scattered as autumnal leaves before the wind. But have we not courage enough remaining to defend our country and maintain our ancient independence? Will we calmly suffer the white intruders and tyrants to enslave us? Shall it be said of our race that we knew not how to extricate ourselves from the three most dreadful calamities-folly, inactivity, and cowardice? But what need is there to speak of the past? It speaks for itself and asks, "Where today is the Pequod?" Where are the Mohawks, the Narragansetts, Pocanokets, and many other once powerful tribes of our race? **They have vanished before the avarice and oppression of the white men as snow before the summer sun** (DAH, 2003).*

Out of respect for the oral traditions of the day, and recognizing that words were frequently and sometimes unfairly attributed to important leaders, I want to further

acknowledge that Tecumseh was one of many Indigenous leaders who recognized the true intentions of settlement, 'reservationization' and European prerogative power abuses sanctioned by the Doctrine of Discovery (Frishner, 2010). Those efforts still reside in global conflicts currently threatening mankind and the planet (Koptie, 2009c), and in the meditating of Indigenous success. Indigenous writers and scholars require culturally safe spaces to create descriptive pathways towards the correction and transformation of these outdated colonial mythologies. They need time and space to recover a multitude of ancestral world-views and long maintained life-ways that by most historical, Aboriginal, anthropological and spiritual accounts flourished successfully for thousands of years.

Renowned author, Farley *Mowat* re-tells a little known truth about Canadian colonization in his book *Walking on the Land* that the New York Times Book Review called "a provocative, alternative version of history, written by a master storyteller" (NYT, 2000). Farley Mowat (2000) recounts the use of stealth, starvation, removal and dispossession as mechanisms for destruction of the traditional ways of life of the Inuit in the interests of Canadian nation building. Farley Mowat (2000) pleads that his readers seek out narratives of Canadian historical injustices such as *Tammarnit* (Mistakes) by Tester and Kulchyski (1994), a scholarly review of Inuit relocations from 1939 to 1963 by the Canadian government:

The calamity in Keewatin that winter may have had something to do with Ottawa's subsequent decision to put the Ihalmiut under "the protection" of a pair of ex-trappers who were starting a commercial fishing business in northern Manitoba and who needed labour.

Early in April 1950, a policeman in a ski-equipped Otter flew to Ennadai and conducted what was, in effect, a forced deportation. Carrying little more than the clothing in which they stood, the Ihalmiut were flown in several relays to the south end of Nuelin Lake, well within forested country. Here they were left to become fisher folk. The fact that they had neither nets nor boats seems not to have troubled the authorities, who may have presumed the fish company entrepreneurs would provide the requisite equipment. This they never did. [Footnote by Mowat: Touted as a winter fishery that would deliver frozen fish by air to the railhead at Churchill, Manitoba two hundred miles away, the scheme had no prospects of success and was abandoned.]

Disoriented, fearful of the surrounding forests and of the Indians who inhabited them, and without any real means of making a living, the Ihalmiut sank into a kind of torpor [Encarta World English Dictionary definition: lack of mental or physical energy, numbness: absence of the ability to move or fell] from which they roused themselves

only when one of their young women died in mysterious circumstances- possibly murdered.

The Ithalmuit fled. They walked home. It took five weeks for men, women, and children to traverse a distance of only about 150 air miles. Their journey entailed travelling more than twice that distance over some of the roughest country in Keewatin, around innumerable lakes, and across scores of rivers. The Israelites fleeing from Egypt had no greater difficulties to overcome. But in due course the Ithalmuit arrived back at the Little Lakes near Ennadai, where they began trying to reconstruct their lives.

Having lost much of their gear, they were unable to make adequate preparations for the coming winter. Indeed, all that saved them from famine was the presence of the weather station staff, from whom they received food enough to keep them alive until spring.

The events of that winter established a debilitating pattern. During succeeding years the Ithalmuit became increasingly reliant upon the weather station. From being a self-sustaining people they were insensibly transformed into a people of the dole. (Mowat, 2000:45-46)

Paul Watson addresses this atrocity in a recent Toronto Star article in which he reports from first hand survivors that, “the Inuit felt herded like animals” (November 29, 2009). “They were issued numbers stamped onto leather ID tags with the words “Eskimo Identification Canada” and the intent was to signal Canada’s sovereignty of the north in the “Cold War” that followed the Great Wars of the 20th century for European global supremacy. Indigenous warriors have fought in those conflicts, as Tecumseh fought before them, against tyranny and genocide only to return to the humiliations of Canadian Indian, Métis and Inuit social, economic, political and spiritual policies of dominance, degradation and ‘dis-ease’. Watson (2009) ponders the use of human subjects by Canada within the “Arctic lab,” to assert sovereignty on the cheap. “It was an experiment for the government, to see if they could put people where there were no other people at all, and see if they could live completely on their own.” This travesty continued the exiling of Indigenous peoples of North America to reserves, islands and locations far away from white people until as Sir Francis Bond Head proposed, “they could perish” or as Duncan Campbell Scott hoped, “they would be forced to assimilate and disappear into the Canadian body politic” (Crean, 2009: 62).

Indigenous writer, lawyer and businessman Calvin Helin in his controversial book *Dances with Dependency: Indigenous Success through Self-Reliance*, challenges the notions of “white solutions” for “Indian problems” as a never-ending stalemate between the quest for assimilation and the notion of economic integration,

resource sharing and escape from the “poverty, dysfunction and nauseating dependency” existing within the “welfare trap” of most First Nations (Helin, 2006:100-103). Helin quotes from Harold Cardinal’s 1999 book *The Unjust Society*;

Years ago our people were self-reliant... [from] trapping and... whatever nature was able to provide us. Our life was hard... But we lived like men. Then the government came and offered welfare to our people... it was if they cut our throats. [Who]... would go out to work or trap and face hardships of making a living when all he had to do was sit at home and receive the food, and all he needed to live? The government had laid a trap for us; for they knew once we accepted welfare they would have us where they wanted us. (Helin, 2006:103)

The controversy surrounding Calvin Helin’s ideas is mostly political as he is an advisor to the Conservative Party of Canada. There is a great deal of distrust for policy that has evolved from Reform Party thinkers like Tom Flanagan from Calgary who believe that termination of all Indigenous rights will end the notion of “citizens plus” (Cairns, 2001), and special rights for First Nations in Canada. Flanagan (2000) warns in his book *First Nations? Second Thoughts?* that the current “aboriginal orthodoxy threads historical revisionism, critical legal studies and the aboriginal political activism of the last thirty years together and that,

... sooner or later Canada will be redefined as a multinational state embracing an archipelago of aboriginal nations that own a third of Canada’s land mass, are immune from federal taxation, are supported by transfer payments from citizens who pay taxes, are able to opt out of federal and provincial legislation, and engage in ‘nation to nation’ diplomacy with whatever is left of Canada. Flanagan challenges all the key propositions of aboriginal orthodoxy including concepts like the ‘inherent right to self-government’, ‘sovereignty’, and ‘nationhood’ as well as any recognition that aboriginal cultures were on the same level as those of European colonists. (Kopala, 2004)

History is repetitive and Tom Flanagan’s thoughts reside in the same white supremacist mindset as Duncan Campbell Scott, Sir Francis Bond Head, and many other instigators of crimes against humanity. Tom Flanagan remains an outsider looking in and is not a member of those ‘others’ who are actively resisting the landscapes of dispossession, despair and pathology, which follow predatory colonization around the planet. Indigenous people look seven generations forward as well as backwards and not just at the past thirty years of conflict, where Tom Flanagan’s fears of political, social and economic reconciliation are embedded. Perhaps he might benefit from reading Greg MacLeod’s (2000) profound writings on sustainable

community economic development, in MacLeod's great book, *From Mondragon to America: Experiments in Community Economic Development*. As an active participant in boards of directors, grant proposal writing and research that has led to creating vital social services in child welfare, day care, health delivery, Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder services as well as land claim negotiations, I have been able to directly experience much of the Aboriginal 'orthodoxy' to which Mr. Flanagan alludes.

My newest personal mantra comes from a February 2010 Canadian Roots Exchange youth program trip (www.canadianroots.ca) to the Mishkeegogamang (New Osnaburg House) Ojibway Nation in northern Ontario. This community is situated in the "Ring of Fire, a mineral deposit in northern Ontario that the Ontario government, in its 2010 Throne Speech, identified as the greatest mineral discovery in a century. I listened as their Chief, Connie Gray-McKay, mused, "we're tired of being the sandwich, we want to be the plate" expressing her frustration at watching wealth extracted from their traditional lands that does nothing to alleviate the heart wrenching poverty of her people.

Community recovery and reconciling injustices initiated by ignorance and insidious arrogance has been the service this author has participated in for close to thirty years. As a witness to the renaissance of Aboriginal struggles to reclaim resilience and recover dignity from the inhuman colonial inertia that allowed domination and degradation to define a whole race, I have no choice but to actively honour lessons learned from victims, survivors and *victorizers* in the Aboriginal community (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2009b). Locating reflective topical biographic narratives from the courageous, persistent, and dedicated efforts of people like Don Jose Maria Arrizmendiarieta, who worked to restore dignity, pride and self-reliance to the small Basque community, *Mondragon*, has been glorious. People like Greg MacLeod (2000) provide First Nations with a profound escape route from dependency and a road map to self-determination, and social, economic, political and spiritual liberation from colonization. Canadian First Nations increasingly have access to the resources necessary to emulate Don Jose Maria's experiment in recovery and reclamation after a civil war defeat. The Basque Country Mondragon cooperative model holds valuable principles: **Open Membership, Democratic Organization, Primacy of Work, Capital as a Means, Participation in Management, Wage Solidarity, Inter-cooperation, Social Transformation, Universal Mission and Education** (MacLeod 2000:41). These ideals are also found in every Indigenous world-view in this country and stand as strong testimony to our future potential. The unique historical relationship the Basque have as interdependent, reciprocal people, parallels early connections of fisherman with North

American Indigenous people, neither of whom saw a need to conquer others. Here is an amazing post graduate research project just waiting for exploration and expression. Tom Flanagan can be left to debate free market, socialism and racial supremacy while Indigenous people re-assert the **Primacy of Community and the Subordination of Capital** (MacLeod 2000:91). Instead of maintaining "inferiorized" communities across Canada, the journey to collaboration, sustainability, self-determination and the making of a Canada that does **with** Indigenous peoples rather than **for or to** must be our first order of business as Indigenous scholars.

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 107-116

Quels sont les facteurs favorisant ou inhibant la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones?

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Introduction

Depuis quelques années, de nombreuses études ont démontré la présence de facteurs favorisant ou inhibant la réussite éducative des élèves en milieu autochtone. Ainsi, dans le cadre de cet article, nous présentons les différents facteurs qui ont une incidence sur le rendement scolaire des élèves des Premières nations du Québec. Les principaux facteurs favorisant la réussite scolaire des élèves en milieu autochtone sont présentés dans une première partie, suivie des principaux facteurs inhibant la réussite éducative dans une seconde partie.

PARTIE I: Les principaux facteurs favorisant la réussite scolaire chez les élèves autochtones

Avec le plan d'action en matière d'éducation du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (2005), les Premières nations du Québec s'engagent à offrir à leurs enfants une éducation de qualité qui leur permettra d'améliorer leur rendement scolaire. Au cours des dernières années, la mise en place des services éducatifs axés sur la réussite scolaire est devenue une priorité nationale non seulement pour les

Résumé de l'article

Depuis plus de dix ans, de nombreux changements sont survenus au sein des communautés autochtones des Premières nations du Québec en matière d'éducation. L'analyse de la situation scolaire des Autochtones doit tenir compte de certaines composantes qui leur sont propres. Comprendre ces différentes composantes structurant la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones nécessite la présentation de multiples facteurs. Dans cet article, nous présentons les facteurs favorisant et inhibant la réussite scolaire des élèves autochtones.

Bien entendu, cet article ne prétend pas tracer un portrait exhaustif du parcours éducatif des élèves autochtones, ni élaborer sur toutes les dimensions existantes pour chaque nation. Il s'agit simplement de faire le point sur la réalité scolaire des Autochtones afin de mieux connaître et comprendre leur profil scolaire actuel.

Mots clés: autochtone, milieu scolaire, réussite éducative

intervenants du milieu scolaire, mais également, à une plus grande échelle, pour l'ensemble des communautés autochtones des Premières nations du Québec (ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2005; ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2005; Assemblée des Premières Nations, 2005).

Encore de nos jours, les jeunes Autochtones qui vivent dans leurs communautés sont considérés comme étant parmi les groupes sociaux les plus vulnérables (ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2005).

En dépit des nombreux obstacles que devront surmonter les élèves autochtones durant leur parcours scolaire, plusieurs études ont identifié divers déterminants favorisant leur réussite éducative (Assemblée des Premières Nations, 1988; Kirkness et Bowman, 1992; Wilson, 1994; Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996; Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998; Hampton et Roy, 2002; Malatest et coll., 2002, ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2005). Dégagés de la littérature recensée, ces principaux déterminants sont présentés ci-après :

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priorités gouvernementales, intervention précoce, participation des parents et des aînés, relation maître - élève, stratégies pédagogiques et établissements scolaires autochtones.

Avant d'exposer les différents déterminants, il semble essentiel de proposer une définition du concept de la réussite scolaire pour les besoins de nos travaux de recherche. Pour Gaskel (1995), ce concept a plutôt une portée élargie, il ne se résume pas à une définition ou à une formule simpliste. L'étude canadienne de Wotherspoon et Schissel (1998) abonde dans le même sens :

Au-delà de l'acceptation générale et des attentes associées aux diplômes d'études, aux connaissances de base et aux normes de discipline, la définition d'un bon élève varie d'une école à l'autre, selon les attentes morales et sociales des parents, du personnel enseignant et de la collectivité élargie (Wotherspoon, Schissel, 1998, p.9).

De nombreuses recherches proposent différentes définitions du concept de la réussite scolaire, mais nous avons retenu cette dernière puisqu'elle correspond à notre vision en raison de sa dimension élargie et de son caractère relatif.

Priorités gouvernementales

En 2004-2005, une des priorités nationales du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada vise l'amélioration de la réussite scolaire de tous les enfants des Premières nations d'un bout à l'autre du pays (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2005). Jouir des mêmes possibilités d'avenir et de la même qualité de vie que tous les enfants canadiens occupe une place préminente à l'heure actuelle. Bien que de tout temps les élèves autochtones accusent un retard académique (ministère de l'Éducation, 2004), on enregistre d'importants progrès depuis quelques années (Malatest et coll., 2004). À cet égard, le ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (2005) énonce que : (...) *la proportion des élèves des Premières nations vivant dans une réserve qui a terminé leurs études secondaires a toutefois augmenté de façon significative, passant de 31,4 % à 41,4 % en 2001 (p.3)*. Les divers paliers gouvernementaux sont déterminés à prendre des mesures concrètes pour que cette tendance se poursuive au cours des prochaines années (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2005; ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2005). Ainsi, les objectifs généraux du plan d'action en matière d'éducation d'avril 2005 du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada visent le rehaussement de la qualité, de l'accessibilité et de la pertinence d'enseignement et du soutien pédagogique dispensés aux élèves des Premières nations (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2005). Pour atteindre ces objectifs, certains efforts seront nécessaires. À cet effet, les différents acteurs impliqués dans le domaine de l'éducation (les élèves, les parents, le personnel enseignant, les

directions d'école, les communautés autochtones, les dirigeants des Premières nations, les paliers gouvernementaux) devront continuer à mettre en commun leurs forces vives, et ce, pour l'atteinte des résultats collectivement définis.

Intervenir tôt

Depuis plusieurs années, les spécialistes en santé infantile confirment que les six premières années constituent une étape cruciale du développement global de l'enfant (Dion Stout et Kipling, 1999). Hertzman (1996) a reconnu que l'implantation de programmes d'intervention précoce, auprès des jeunes enfants de milieux moins nantis, favorise leurs capacités d'apprentissage, leur socialisation et leur succès scolaire. Par l'implantation de ces programmes, l'enfant venant d'un milieu défavorisé arrive (...) *à l'école avec un coffre à outils bien garni (éveil à la lecture et à l'écriture, développement du langage, habiletés sociales, etc.)* (Blain, 2004, p.20).

Au cours des dernières années, les Autochtones considèrent important de bien préparer leurs enfants à l'entrée scolaire afin qu'ils obtiennent de meilleurs résultats à l'école (Commission royale sur les peuples autochtones, 1996). Dès 1988, le gouvernement fédéral appuie les initiatives communautaires destinées à la petite enfance de milieux autochtones afin de favoriser l'acquisition des pré-requis avant le commencement de l'école (Commission royale sur les peuples autochtones, 1996). Ainsi, pour aider à améliorer le développement et la maturité scolaire des jeunes enfants des Premières nations du Canada, le gouvernement canadien a mis en place, en 1995, le Programme d'aide préscolaire aux Autochtones (PAPA). La culture et la langue, l'éducation, la promotion de la santé, la nutrition, le soutien social et l'engagement parental sont les principaux éléments à partir desquels des projets éducatifs sont élaborés. Cette initiative a pour but (...) *d'inculquer un sens de fierté et un désir d'apprendre, d'aider à l'acquisition des compétences parentales, de favoriser le développement émotionnel et social, d'accroître la confiance et d'améliorer les relations familiales* (Santé Canada, 2002). En fait, ce programme permet d'appliquer des principes holistiques à l'éducation préscolaire des enfants autochtones tout en répondant à leurs besoins intellectuels, spirituels, émotionnels et physiques.

En guise d'illustration, le centre préscolaire Gengenlilas situé à plus de 320 kilomètres au nord de Victoria sur l'île de Vancouver offre aux enfants autochtones de la Première nation de Campbell River le programme d'aide préscolaire aux Autochtones depuis la fin septembre 1996. Divers aspects culturels spécifiques à cette nation y sont enseignés tels que la langue, la danse, les chants et les histoires ainsi que les légendes de Campbell River. Selon les écrits du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (2004), *lorsque les enfants fréquentent le milieu préscolaire avant le primaire, ils ont tendance à avoir beaucoup de succès (p.6)*. Une enseignante de la maternelle œuvrant auprès d'élèves autochtones abonde dans le même sens

en énonçant que les élèves qui ont fréquenté le centre préscolaire Gengenlilas (...) *sont plus avancés au plan scolaire que ceux qui n'ont pas fréquenté ce genre d'établissement* (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2004, p.6). Grâce à l'instauration du programme d'aide préscolaire aux Autochtones dans les communautés, les enfants des Premières nations possèdent une meilleure préparation à l'école favorisant ainsi un meilleur rendement scolaire (Santé Canada, 1999).

Participation des parents et contribution des Aînés

Parents et famille rapprochée sont les premiers responsables de l'éducation de leurs enfants, en conséquence, il est souhaitable d'accroître leur participation pour favoriser la réussite scolaire des élèves (ministère de l'Éducation, 2001). Comme le souligne Blain: *L'engagement du parent dans le parcours scolaire de son enfant est considéré comme facteur essentiel de la réussite* (Blain, 2004, p.19). Dans la même perspective, le ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (2005) reconnaît que l'engagement continu des parents représente une condition nécessaire à la réussite scolaire des jeunes autochtones.

Depuis les dernières années, les parents des Premières nations ont développé une plus grande confiance envers le système scolaire, car il est davantage administré par des autorités autochtones. Par conséquent, les parents participent plus aux activités éducatives de leurs enfants (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996). Selon la revue de littérature réalisée par Kavanagh en 2002, le rendement scolaire de l'élève sera positivement influencé par la confiance des parents envers l'école et leur participation.

En effet, la combinaison de ces deux composantes entraîne chez l'élève (...) *une plus grande assiduité, des attitudes positives, de meilleures notes et une participation accrue à l'enseignement supérieur* (traduction libre) (Kavanagh, 2002, p.11).

Plus récemment, les travaux de Gauthier (2005) confirment ceux réalisés par Kavanagh. Pour les besoins de l'étude, le chercheur a rencontré seize (16) étudiants de secondaire V fréquentant l'école Uashkaikan de la communauté innue de Betsiamites au cours de l'année 2003-2004. Plusieurs jeunes rencontrés disent être stimulés et encouragés par leurs parents. À cet effet, un étudiant énonce ce qui suit à l'égard de ses parents :

Ils s'informent de mes notes et pour savoir si tout va bien avec les professeurs. Ils n'ont pas manqué un bulletin. Ils viennent voir les professeurs (...) (Gauthier, 2005, p. 212).

Pour remplir sa mission, l'école a besoin de la complicité des parents et des Aînés pour transmettre les savoirs autochtones (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2005). Lors des consultations publiques de la Commission royale

des peuples autochtones de 1996, Harold Rampersad, coordonnateur des relations interraciales et communautaires de Winnipeg a proposé :

Nous devons considérer les anciens comme les gardiens des cultures autochtones et reconnaître leur rôle dans l'enseignement de la culture et de la langue dans tous les milieux scolaires et à tous les niveaux d'études (traduction libre) (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996, non paginée).

Grâce à leur contribution en milieu scolaire, les Aînés deviennent des personnes-ressources pouvant appuyer, orienter, conseiller le personnel enseignant et les élèves en partageant avec eux leur sagesse, leur philosophie, leur culture, leur histoire et leurs traditions autochtones (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996). À ce propos, Béatrice Medicine (1986), chercheuse Lakota, souligne que *tous les intervenants du système scolaire autochtone tireront profit du lien symbolique que créeront les anciens entre-deux domaines culturels différents* (traduction libre) (Medicine, 1986, p.11). Selon les écrits de Wotherspoon et Schissel (1998): *Les élèves qui se sentent les plus en sécurité, les plus à l'aise et les plus enthousiastes sont ceux qui reçoivent une certaine forme d'éducation culturelle à l'école* (p.16). C'est par la concertation des différents partenaires partageant la même vision en matière de réussite scolaire que les jeunes élèves autochtones pourront atteindre leurs objectifs scolaires et jouer éventuellement un rôle actif au sein de sa communauté (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2003, 2005).

Relation maître – élève

Wang, Heartel et Walberg (1993) ont réalisé une étude longitudinale couvrant 50 ans de recherches en éducation. Cette étude publiée en 1993 intitulé *What Helps Students learn?* visait à identifier les facteurs les plus susceptibles d'aider l'élève à apprendre. Basée sur une analyse de comptes rendus et de chapitres de manuels, de synthèses de recherche et d'enquêtes auprès de nombreux chercheurs en éducation, cette méta-analyse de grande envergure a identifié l'enseignant comme étant le facteur ayant le plus d'influence sur l'apprentissage des élèves. Comme le souligne Gaudreau (1998): *Une relation pédagogique saine conduit à une reconnaissance et à une acceptation mutuelle de chacune des personnes dans la classe* (p.47). En effet, la relation maître - élève est avant tout une relation unique qui a un impact sur la qualité des apprentissages, mais également sur la santé mentale des apprenants (Gaudreau, 1998).

Brossard (1995) propose ce qui suit :

La qualité de la relation personnelle que l'enseignante noue avec l'élève facilitera l'acquisition des connaissances chez les

élèves. L'élève apprend mieux avec une personne qu'il aime et qui aime (Brossard, 1995, p.21).

Reconnaissant l'ampleur des problèmes auxquels doivent faire face les élèves vivant en milieu autochtone, des chercheurs ont démontré que la relation maître - élève permet de combler certaines carences affectives présentes chez ces derniers. À cet effet, les données empiriques issues de travaux de recherche de nombreux chercheurs (Kleinfeld, 1975; Wilson, 1994; Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998; Goldstein, 1999; Hodgson-Smith, 2000, Mitchell, 2000; Hampton et Roy, 2002) ont démontré qu'une relation maître - élève basée sur la confiance, la reconnaissance culturelle et le respect mutuel aura une influence déterminante sur le succès scolaire des élèves autochtones. Par ailleurs, ces chercheurs ont tenté d'identifier la présence de certaines attitudes des enseignants favorisant la réussite scolaire chez les élèves autochtones. Ils stipulent que les enseignants qui œuvrent auprès des élèves autochtones doivent davantage développer une relation chaleureuse, adopter une attitude positive, être disponibles et entretenir un climat de classe harmonieux (Kleinfeld, 1975; Wilson, 1994; Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998; Goldstein, 1999; Hodgson-Smith, 2000, Mitchell, 2000; Berger, 2002; Hampton et Roy, 2002). De plus, l'Assemblée des Premières Nations (1988) et la Commission royale des peuples autochtones (1996) soulignent que la présence d'enseignants autochtones influence également le rendement scolaire des élèves autochtones, car ils ont généralement plus à cœur le respect des valeurs et des traditions autochtones que les enseignants non autochtones.

En somme, il importe de savoir que la reconnaissance de la diversité culturelle autochtone et la présence de relations ouvertes et bienveillantes entre enseignants et élèves sont intimement liées à la réussite scolaire en milieu autochtone (Wauters et coll., 1989; Lipka, 1990; Campbell, 1991; Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998, Berger, 2002).

Stratégies pédagogiques convenant aux élèves autochtones

Au cours des dernières années, l'utilisation de diverses stratégies pédagogiques auprès des élèves autochtones favorisant leur réussite éducative a été démontrée par de nombreuses recherches. Selon la Lipka (1990), Commission royale des peuples autochtones (1996), Wotherspoon et Schissel (1998), Hampton (2002) et Presseau et coll. (2005), la reconnaissance et la valorisation de la culture autochtone dans les pratiques pédagogiques des enseignants ont un impact significatif sur la réussite scolaire des jeunes autochtones. En effet, Wotherspoon et Schissel (1998) constatent

(...) que les avantages sont plus importants, tant dans les écoles provinciales et territoriales que dans les écoles des Premières nations, lorsque la culture autochtone est intégrée de manière holistique à tous les aspects du programme et de la culture scolaire (Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998, p.11).

De toute évidence, l'école devient un lieu de croisement de cultures où l'élève apprend à construire son identité culturelle individuelle (Henry-Lorcerie, 1986b). Depuis quelques années déjà, divers programmes pédagogiques axés sur la conservation culturelle autochtone ont pris forme dans les institutions scolaires destinées aux élèves autochtones d'un bout à l'autre du Canada (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996; Malatest et coll., 2002, 2004).

Lors des audiences publiques de la Commission royale des peuples autochtones (1996), de jeunes autochtones ont exprimé l'importance de réaliser des apprentissages concrets directement en lien avec leur quotidien et leur réalité tout en respectant leur diversité culturelle. Plus récemment, des intervenants éducatifs œuvrant au sein de communautés autochtones des Premières nations du Québec ont été rencontrés par l'équipe de recherche de Presseau et coll. (2005), ces intervenants ont déclaré ce qui suit :

Ils croient qu'un enseignement axé sur des apprentissages concrets, permettant de travailler à un rythme différent et requérant, un engagement actif de la part des jeunes autochtones est propice à leur réussite et à leur persévérance scolaires (Presseau, 2005, non paginée).

Par ailleurs, Sawyer (1991), Hampton et Roy (2002) reconnaissent que l'apprentissage coopératif favorise l'acquisition des apprentissages et la réussite scolaire chez les élèves autochtones.

We found that cooperative learning models may be the most effective methods for facilitating success of First Nation students, which is consistent with previous studies that have identified cooperative strategies as most effective for Native students (Hampton et Roy, 2002, p.12).

Pour accroître la réussite scolaire des élèves autochtones, les recommandations de la Commission royale des peuples autochtones (1996), de l'Assemblée des Premières Nations (2005) et du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (2005) proposent de consacrer des ressources particulières permettant aux équipes locales d'apporter un soutien approprié aux jeunes pour qui la réussite scolaire représente un défi. Au cours des dernières années, des programmes de soutien destinés aux élèves autochtones ont été implantés en vue de favoriser leur réussite scolaire (Malatest et coll., 2004). L'enseignement individualisé, l'appui des Aînés, la taille de la classe réduite et des ateliers éducatifs constituent des exemples de soutien dispensés

aux étudiants autochtones (Malatest et coll. 2004). Par la mise en place de programmes de soutien, les élèves pourront développer leur estime de soi, cultiver leur goût de l'effort et améliorer leur rendement scolaire (Malatest et coll. 2004).

Pour conclure, il nous semble pertinent de présenter le programme éducatif *Dene Kede Curriculum* instauré dans les communautés des Premières nations des Territoires du Nord-Ouest. Ce programme culturel reconnu officiellement par le ministère de l'Éducation de ce territoire applique diverses stratégies pédagogiques convenant aux élèves autochtones de la maternelle à la sixième année. Construit autour de quatre composantes : la terre, le monde spirituel, les autres et soi, il vise l'épanouissement de l'enfant par une approche holistique. À partir de 50 modules thématiques axés sur l'utilisation d'expériences culturelles, les enseignants proposent aux élèves des activités pédagogiques où l'observation, l'analyse, l'exploration, la pratique et la collaboration sont valorisées. Dans le cadre de ce programme, la réussite scolaire des élèves autochtones repose sur des apprentissages concrets et coopératifs où le soutien et l'entraide des élèves et des Aînés sont réunis autour d'objectifs communs (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996).

Présence d'institutions scolaires autochtones

Point de départ des futures réformes de l'éducation des Autochtones, le rapport de 1972 intitulé *Indians Control of Indian Education* (le contrôle de l'éducation des Indiens par les Indiens), recommande la prise en charge de l'éducation par des Autochtones. Découlant de cette recommandation, des établissements scolaires postsecondaires gérés par des gestionnaires autochtones ont vu le jour. Les travaux de Malatest et coll. (2004)(...) *ont démontré que dans toutes les situations où on donne aux Autochtones le contrôle de leurs propres programmes ou établissements, ils augmentent leurs taux d'inscription et de diplomation* (p.31). Au Québec, l'*Institut de formation autochtone* (IFAQ) est dirigé et administré par des Autochtones depuis 1982. Cet institut offre de la formation à l'ensemble des Premières nations du Québec. Par son mandat, il développe et adapte divers programmes d'enseignement et de formation répondant aux besoins spécifiques des clientèles autochtones des Premières nations du Québec.

Encourager les Premières nations à gérer de façon autonome les programmes et les services en matière d'éducation est une priorité du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (2005). Soulignons que le plan d'action en matière d'éducation déposé en avril 2005 est composé de mesures concrètes destinées à favoriser la réussite et la persévérance scolaire de tous les jeunes autochtones. Au cours des prochaines années, l'atteinte de ces objectifs exigera un travail concerté et soutenu entre le gouvernement fédéral, les Premières nations, les provinces, les

territoires et les différents partenaires clés (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada (2005)).

PARTIE II: Les principaux facteurs inhibant la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones

Selon le ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord du Canada (2005), les élèves autochtones accusent un retard significatif d'instruction par rapport aux élèves non autochtones. Ces retards augmentent considérablement leur propension à manquer d'assiduité et à abandonner leurs études tôt ou tard. Pour faciliter la compréhension des facteurs inhibant la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones, un portrait statistique de l'évolution de la situation scolaire de la population autochtone au Québec sera présenté dans un premier bloc, et dans un second bloc, les principaux facteurs inhibant la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones. Ces facteurs ont été identifiés et regroupés sous trois grandes catégories: les facteurs personnels, les facteurs scolaires et les facteurs psychosociaux. Notons que ces catégories sont inclusives et méritent d'être explicitées afin de faciliter la compréhension de cette problématique multidimensionnelle.

Bloc I: Portrait statistique de l'évolution de la situation scolaire de la population autochtone du Québec

Les données statistiques du ministère de l'Éducation au Québec (2004) et du ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord du Canada (2001) révèlent que les élèves autochtones accusent un retard scolaire significatif dès le primaire. Selon la déclaration des effectifs scolaires du 30 septembre 2001, 84,3 p.100 des élèves québécois de l'ensemble du Québec étaient inscrits à la 6e année du primaire sans écart d'âge (en plus) avec le groupe modal. Pour les élèves autochtones, 58,5 p.100 des élèves étaient inscrits en 6e année du primaire sans écart d'âge (en plus) avec le groupe modal. Les données statistiques du ministère de l'Éducation (2004) démontrent que la proportion d'élèves autochtones inscrits en 5e secondaire sans écart d'âge avec l'âge modale n'est que de 29,7 p.100 comparativement à 74,8 p.100 pour l'ensemble du Québec. Quant à l'enseignement secondaire, les études démontrent que les retards scolaires s'accompagnent bien souvent d'une augmentation de l'abandon des études. Selon le ministère de l'Éducation (2004), la diplomation en milieu autochtone est de beaucoup inférieure à la moyenne observée dans l'ensemble du Québec.

Selon les travaux de Brais (1991), le phénomène du retard à l'entrée au secondaire a un impact sur la réussite d'études au secondaire. Il note une relation entre ce phénomène et l'obtention d'un diplôme des études secondaires. Ce chercheur souligne que près des deux tiers des élèves ayant accumulé au moins un an de retard à leur entrée au secondaire abandonnent en cours de route

et composent la moitié de tous les décrocheurs et décrocheuses. Encore de nos jours, ce n'est qu'une minorité de jeunes autochtones qui ont accès à un diplôme d'études secondaires.

Une étude réalisée conjointement par Lévesque et son équipe ainsi que le Partenariat Mikimon (2001) pour le compte de Condition féminine Canada révèle que 90 p. 100 des jeunes autochtones ne terminent pas leur secondaire avant l'âge de 18 ans. Selon cette étude, le parcours scolaire des jeunes des milieux autochtones se caractérise essentiellement par de nombreux déplacements et par l'interruption répétée des études. Encore aujourd'hui, le jeune autochtone se retrouve confronté à l'obligation de quitter sa famille et sa communauté au moment d'entreprendre des études postsecondaires (Malatest et coll., 2002, 2004).

Bloc II: Facteurs associés au parcours scolaire difficile des élèves autochtones

Facteurs individuels :

- **Les différences de style d'apprentissage**

Au cours des dernières années, plusieurs hypothèses ont été formulées quant aux causes individuelles pour expliquer le faible taux de réussite scolaire des clientèles autochtones (Wotherspoon, Schissel, 1998; Larose et coll., 2001; Lavoie, 2001, Malatest et coll., 2004). Parmi ces causes inférées, soulignons les différences de style d'apprentissage entre ceux traditionnellement utilisés dans les communautés autochtones et ceux prônés par les curriculums scolaires du ministère de l'Éducation (Backes, 1993; Larose et coll., 2001; Lavoie, 2001). Ainsi, l'élève autochtone présente (...) *un style cognitif de type simultané plutôt que séquentiel* (Lavoie, 2001, p.19). Dès son jeune âge, l'enfant autochtone acquiert des connaissances par observation et manipulation directe sur le terrain (Scaldwell, Frame et Cookson, 1984). Il apprend donc à développer un mode d'appréhension globale de la réalité (Swisher, Deyle, 1989; Backes, 1993; Lavoie, 2001). Par exemple, le jeune autochtone part avec son père et son grand-père pratiquer la trappe de petits animaux au lieu de l'apprendre dans un livre.

En contrepartie, les programmes scolaires du ministère de l'Éducation semblent privilégier, de façon générale, des activités pédagogiques sollicitant davantage des habiletés intellectuelles de type séquentiel chez l'élève (Backes, 1993; Lavoie, 2001).

Les travaux de Hebert, (2000), Hampton et Roy (2002), abondent dans le même sens :

Methods that are more holistic, experiential, and use the narrative mode are more consistent with traditional Aboriginal epistemology than are teaching methods that encourage sequential, objective, and analytic orientation (Hampton et Roy, 2002, p.12).

À ce titre, Lavoie (2001) déclare que (...) *le jeune autochtone est, à la base, plus ou moins adaptée à cette réalité. Conséquemment, l'écart entre son style d'apprentissage et celui privilégié par le milieu scolaire le défavorise grandement* (Lavoie, 2001, p.19). En conséquence, les différences de styles d'apprentissage doivent être prises en compte dans l'analyse des facteurs contributifs au parcours scolaire difficile des élèves autochtones.

Les différences linguistiques

Depuis la fin des années 1960, on assiste à un mouvement grandissant de la revitalisation des langues autochtones (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996; Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones, 1997; Lieberman, 2002). Selon le Secrétariat aux affaires autochtones (1997) *Les Amérindiens et les Inuits s'expriment davantage dans leur langue en tous lieux et en toutes circonstances* (p.15). Dans un tel contexte, très jeune l'enfant autochtone apprend les bases linguistiques de la langue maternelle autochtone sans toutefois la maîtriser complètement avant son entrée scolaire (Lapointe, 1998). Généralement, la langue utilisée en salle de classe (le français ou l'anglais) diffère de la langue maternelle des Amérindiens (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996). Selon Maria de la Luz Reyes (1992), la maîtrise de la langue maternelle est nécessaire avant de faire l'acquisition d'une langue seconde. Selon le ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2005) *Bon nombre d'élèves autochtones doivent étudier dans une langue qui n'est pas la leur* (p.5). En conséquence, les travaux de la Commission royale des Peuples autochtones (1996), de Lapointe (1998), de Lavoie (2001) et du ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2005) révèlent que les élèves autochtones sont continuellement confrontés à une compréhension limitée de la langue d'enseignement, situation qui peut engendrer des difficultés d'apprentissage et nuire à la réussite éducative de ces élèves.

Facteurs scolaires

- **Pénurie des enseignants**

Selon la Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants (2000), au cours des dernières années, on assiste à une pénurie du personnel enseignant au Québec, dans l'ensemble du Canada et à l'échelle internationale. Un sondage réalisé par Vector Research (2000) pour la Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants, démontre que trois principaux facteurs expliquent cette pénurie : 1) les départs à la retraite, 2) la présence accrue des élèves en difficulté dans les salles de classe, 3) la baisse du taux de diplomation en éducation. Par ailleurs, les données de ce sondage révèlent qu'il était de plus en plus difficile d'attirer de nouveaux diplômés en éducation dans les régions rurales et éloignées. De plus, on prévoit, d'ici quelques années que cette pénurie importante

d'enseignants soit un phénomène encore plus marqué dans les régions éloignées et isolées géographiquement. Considérant que plusieurs communautés des Premières nations du Québec sont très dispersées géographiquement, on estime que le milieu autochtone sera davantage affecté par cette pénurie d'enseignants au cours des prochaines années.

- **Roulement du personnel enseignant**

Les travaux réalisés par le Groupe de travail national du ministre de l'Éducation (2002) révèlent que le roulement du personnel enseignant dans les écoles des Premières nations du Québec représente un élément important dans la compréhension des difficultés d'apprentissage des jeunes autochtones. Le ministère de l'Éducation du Québec (2004) révèle que le personnel enseignant qui œuvre auprès des élèves autochtones des écoles des Premières nations du Québec est plus jeune et de scolarité reconnue moins élevée que le personnel enseignant des autres commissions scolaires de l'ensemble du Québec. Les plus jeunes enseignants travaillant en milieu autochtone sont davantage caractérisés par un taux de roulement élevé. La difficulté à s'adapter à la culture autochtone et l'attraction exercée par les emplois en milieu urbain représentent des barrières pour retenir les jeunes enseignants à œuvrer en milieu autochtone.

- **Qualification des enseignants**

Dans les écoles québécoises et davantage dans les écoles des Premières nations du Québec, il est fréquent d'autoriser des personnes non qualifiées et sans diplôme à occuper des fonctions d'enseignant selon la Fédération des syndicats de l'enseignement (2005). Par exemple, en raison d'une pénurie d'enseignants qualifiés en mathématiques, des postes dans cette discipline ont dû être confiés à des personnes n'ayant pas les compétences requises. De plus, l'insuffisance du personnel suppléant et la difficulté à trouver du personnel qualifié pour pourvoir à des postes administratifs en milieu scolaire sont également soulevées (Fédération canadienne des enseignantes et des enseignants, 2000). Pour les communautés autochtones du Québec, on présuppose que la pénurie de personnel enseignant qualifié aura une incidence négative non seulement sur la réussite scolaire, le rendement des élèves et la qualité de l'enseignement, mais également sur les perspectives d'emploi de ces derniers (ministère des Affaires indiennes et du Nord Canada, 2005).

- **Manque de connaissances des enseignants relatives à l'intégration de la culture autochtone**

Plusieurs enseignants qui œuvrent auprès d'élèves autochtones appartiennent à un groupe culturel et socioéconomique non autochtone. L'Assemblée des Premières Nations (1988) stipule: *Many teachers are not actively participating in the First Nation community they are serving* (p.114). Selon

de nombreuses études, la plupart des enseignants non autochtones connaissent peu la culture, les traditions et les valeurs fondamentales autochtones; ils ne reconnaissent pas la diversité culturelle et la complexité des besoins éducatifs des élèves de communautés autochtones (Assemblée des Premières Nations, 1988 ; Lipka, 1990; Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996; Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998; Berger, 2002, Malatest et coll., 2002, 2004). Le ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport (2005) abonde dans le même sens :

Au cours des dernières années, bon nombre d'enseignantes et enseignants se sont dits dépourvus quant au type d'intervention à mettre en place pour répondre aux besoins de ces élèves. Leur spécificité culturelle et linguistique rendent souvent inefficaces les interventions pédagogiques courantes (ministère de l'Éducation, du Loisir et du Sport, 2005, p. 5).

Comme le souligne l'Assemblée des Premières Nations (1988): *Most teachers reported that they need training in cultural awareness and community orientation* (p.114). Par ailleurs, Wotherspoon et Schissel, (1998) énoncent :

Les écoles qui ne reconnaissent ni n'acceptent la culture autochtone dans leur programme, programmes d'études ou personnel enregistrent des taux de décrochage plus élevés, un nombre d'échecs scolaires accrus et un mécontentement à l'égard de l'instruction de la part des élèves autochtones, et risquent de rompre les liens avec les collectivités autochtones (Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998, p.10).

En conséquence, pour favoriser la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones, les enseignants devront connaître les valeurs, les traditions et les questions d'identité autochtones afin de les intégrer dans leurs pratiques pédagogiques (Commission royale des peuples autochtones, 1996; Malatest et coll., 2004).

Facteurs psychosociaux

Un bon nombre de jeunes des communautés des Premières nations du Québec vivent dans des conditions difficiles. Plusieurs sont aux prises avec des problèmes sociaux endémiques comme la pauvreté, le manque de soutien parental, la violence familiale, les problèmes de santé, la toxicomanie et l'alcoolisme, les logements misérables et les familles dysfonctionnelles (Ross, 1992; Santé et Bien-être social Canada, 1992; Wotherspoon et Schissel, 1998; Greenall et Loizides, 2001; Larose et coll., 2001; Lavoie, 2001). Le manque de perspective en matière d'emploi, le haut taux de chômage au sein des communautés autochtones n'ont rien pour accroître leur motivation à poursuivre leurs études (Gauthier, 2005). De plus, les valeurs sociales marquées par la compétition, l'individualisme et le pouvoir de l'argent contribuent également à dévaloriser l'éducation scolaire. En

résumé, ces divers problèmes sociaux vécus difficilement par les jeunes, représentent des obstacles majeurs pour améliorer leur réussite éducative.

Conclusion

Dans une première partie de cet article, nous avons présenté les principaux facteurs susceptibles de favoriser le rendement et la persévérance scolaires des élèves autochtones. Les priorités gouvernementales, l'intervention précoce, la participation des parents et des aînés, la relation maître - élève, les stratégies pédagogiques et les établissements scolaires autochtones sont tous des facteurs associés de près à la réussite éducative des jeunes autochtones. Depuis plusieurs années, de nombreux chercheurs se sont intéressés à identifier les différents facteurs associés au parcours difficile des élèves autochtones.

Dans la seconde partie de cet article, nous avons abordé les différents facteurs inhibant la réussite scolaire des élèves vivant en milieu autochtone. Un portrait statistique de l'évolution de la situation scolaire de la population autochtone du Québec est présenté dans un premier bloc. Ensuite, dans un second bloc, différents facteurs ont été identifiés, répartis dans trois grandes catégories (les facteurs individuels, les facteurs scolaires et les facteurs psychosociaux) puis expliqués.

Au cours des prochaines années, les dirigeants autochtones en concertation avec les différents ministères provinciaux et territoriaux devront élaborer et mettre en œuvre des stratégies d'intervention visant à créer et à maintenir des conditions favorables à la réussite éducative de tous les jeunes Amérindiens afin de leur assurer un avenir plus prometteur.

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Quels sont les facteurs favorisant ou inhibant la réussite éducative des élèves autochtones?

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First Peoples Child & Family Review

An Interdisciplinary Journal Honoring the Voices, Perspectives and Knowledges of First Peoples through Research, Critical Analyses, Stories, Standpoints and Media Reviews

Volume 5, Number 2, 2010, pp. 117-123

Le dépistage des retards de développement chez les jeunes enfants d'une communauté des Premières Nations

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Introduction

Les toutes premières années de vie des jeunes enfants sont des périodes majeures de développement. Le cerveau présente alors une plasticité maximale permettant aux stimulations de l'environnement d'exercer une influence prépondérante sur son organisation (notamment Shonkoff & Philips, 2000). Pour les enfants présentant des besoins particuliers, l'importance de débiter l'intervention spécialisée le plus tôt possible fait l'objet d'un très vaste consensus.

Afin de s'assurer que les interventions soient les plus appropriées aux besoins de ces enfants, le dépistage des difficultés ou retards de développement s'impose avec acuité. Cependant, 65% des enfants ayant des besoins spéciaux n'ont pas reçu de diagnostic (CSSSPNQL, 2008). Trop peu d'outils de dépistage, ayant une solide validité et fidélité et pouvant

Résumé de l'article

Bien qu'il importe d'utiliser des instruments d'évaluation adaptés aux caractéristiques et à la réalité des communautés autochtones, l'absence de normes psychométriques pour ces communautés est fréquemment déplorée. Le but est de documenter la pertinence et l'utilité de l'instrument de dépistage des retards de développement Age and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ) utilisé par des enseignantes auprès d'enfants (n = 213) Mohawks du Québec âgés entre 29 et 60 mois. Au niveau de la consistance interne pour les quatre questionnaires étudiés, sept résultats révèlent des alphas de Cronbach inférieurs à 0,60 : « communication » (Q42), « motricité globale » (Q36 et Q42), « motricité fine » (Q42) et « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales » (Q36, Q42 et Q54) tandis que treize présentent des alphas de Cronbach variant entre 0,61 et 0,90. Globalement, le groupe de discussion réalisé auprès des enseignantes révèle leur appréciation de l'instrument et le fait que son utilisation apparaît approprié pour cette communauté.

Mots clés: children, Mohawks, development, developmental delay, screening, psychometric, instrument, early identification.

être utilisé par différents types d'intervenants, sont disponibles. De plus, une certaine confusion existe entre les évaluations du développement des enfants utiles à des fins de diagnostic et celles utiles pour l'intervention (Losardo & Notari-Syverson, 2001). D'ailleurs, trop souvent des instruments diagnostiques sont utilisés à des fins de dépistage mobilisant ainsi des ressources importantes.

Comme mis en évidence par Meisels (1994), la finalité d'une évaluation de dépistage est de vérifier si l'enfant a besoin d'une évaluation plus spécifique. Le but principal est donc de vérifier la pertinence de référer l'enfant à un professionnel pour que ce dernier détermine la nature des difficultés présentées par l'enfant. Ce type d'évaluation doit être utilisé lorsque la difficulté n'est pas encore documentée. Les évaluations diagnostiques, quant à elles, regroupent un ensemble d'items choisis de façon

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Acknowledgements:

The authors wish to thank the parents and staff of Step by Step Child and Family Center for their invaluable collaboration on this study. We wish also to mention the financial support of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

statistique afin de comparer la performance d'un enfant à un échantillon normatif. Ainsi, ces items ne sont pas nécessairement des habiletés fonctionnelles. Autrement dit, les comportements sélectionnés ne sont pas forcément des comportements utilisés dans la vie quotidienne. Il s'agit d'une caractéristique essentielle qui distingue ce genre d'instruments, des évaluations utiles à des fins d'intervention.

Le recours à des outils pour le réaliser de dépistage s'impose. Ainsi, 30 % des difficultés de développement peuvent être identifiées (Palfrey, Singer, Walker, & Butler, 1987) alors que ce taux augmente à 70-80 % lorsque des instruments utiles à cette fin sont utilisés (Squires, Nickel, & Eisert, 1996).

En ce qui concerne les peuples autochtones, il existe peu d'études en petite enfance portant spécifiquement sur cette population (Palmanier, 2005). Selon Hernandez (1994), la plupart des tests standardisés ne sont pas développés en tenant compte des diversités culturelles. Plusieurs parents et intervenants autochtones en petite enfance croient également que les outils formels pour soutenir les enfants et les familles non autochtones ne sont ni culturellement appropriés ni aidant pour leurs enfants (BC Aboriginal Child Care Society 2003; Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples, 1996). En effet, le recours à des évaluations non culturellement appropriées peuvent avoir des conséquences négatives sérieuses pour les enfants autochtones telles que l'identification erronée de problématiques et les impacts à long terme de ces erreurs diagnostiques (BC Aboriginal Network for disabilities Society, 1996 in Ball, 2010; Mushquash & Bova, 2007). Pour ces raisons, il importe que les méthodes utilisées pour la sélection des items, le processus de validation et le processus de standardisation soient considérés. Ball (2006) souligne que la standardisation des instruments devrait minimalement inclure une représentativité des populations autochtones au niveau de l'échantillon.

Dans son étude sur les programmes en intervention précoce chez les autochtones de l'Ouest canadien, les résultats de Ball (2006) montrent que l'*Ages and Stages Questionnaires* (ASQ) (Bricker & Squires, 1999) est l'outil le plus utilisé. Quant à l'étude effectuée pour « The maternal and child health program First Nations and Inuit health branch » par Dion-Stout et Jodoin (2006), elle recommandait l'utilisation de l'ASQ (Bricker & Squires, 1999) en tant qu'instrument culturellement approprié à la réalité des Premières Nations. Cet instrument est largement utilisé par les Premières Nations en Colombie-

Britannique. Cependant, aucune norme pour les populations autochtones canadiennes n'est disponible.

Cette prise en considération de la dimension culturelle est pourtant une caractéristique des pratiques exemplaires en intervention précoce (Sandall, Hemmeter, Smith, & McLean, 2005). On souligne que les intervenants doivent être conscients des biais culturels possibles. Il est suggéré que les intervenants, lorsque la situation est appropriée, choisissent seulement des instruments qui ont été développés, validés et standardisés et dont les normes sont établies auprès des enfants présentant les mêmes caractéristiques que ceux évalués. Cette préoccupation trouve d'ailleurs écho au niveau de la formation des étudiants. Toujours selon Sandall et al. (2005), il est recommandé que les étudiants et le personnel participent à des activités dans lesquelles ils apprennent à développer et à implanter des stratégies d'intervention congruentes et respectueuses des croyances, des valeurs et des traditions aussi bien que la langue dominante et préférée des familles de cultures et de groupes linguistiques différents.

Pour ces raisons, des travaux visant la poursuite de la validation d'instruments de mesure en contexte canadien sont essentiels afin de s'assurer de disposer d'outils adaptés, valides et standardisés pour tous les enfants canadiens tout en considérant les particularités culturelles et linguistiques de différentes communautés.

But

Dans la présente étude, l'ASQ (Bricker & Squires, 1999) est utilisé auprès des jeunes enfants du Step By Step Child and Family Center situé dans une communauté des Premières Nations de l'est canadien. Le but est de documenter la pertinence et l'utilité de l'ASQ utilisé par des intervenants auprès d'enfants Mohawks et de recueillir des données pour sa validation dans un tel contexte.

Méthode

Participants

Les participants sont les enseignantes de 213 enfants Mohawks (105 filles et 108 garçons), âgés entre 29 et 60 mois, qui fréquentent le Step by Step Child and Family Center de Kahnawake au Québec. Douze d'entre elles ont été sélectionnées sur la base de leur expérience d'utilisation de l'ASQ pour participer au groupe de discussion.

Des données sociodémographiques sur les familles ont été recueillies pour 165 enfants. La majorité des familles parle l'anglais à la maison. Presque tous les parents sont d'origine Mohawk. Le taux d'obtention d'un diplôme d'études secondaires est de 20,8 % chez les mères. Ce taux est plus élevé chez les pères avec 28,8 % de diplômation. Au niveau collégial, 4,4 % des mères et 3,2 % des pères ont un diplôme. L'obtention d'un diplôme universitaire est plus élevée chez les mères avec un taux de 7,5 % comparativement à 1,3 % chez les pères. Concernant le revenu familial, 38,9 % des familles participantes ont un revenu familial annuel de moins de 25 000\$ et que 25,5 % des familles ont un revenu entre 25 000\$ et 40 000\$. Finalement, plus du tiers des familles (35,7 %) ont un revenu de 40 000\$ et plus annuellement.

Instruments

Ages and Stages Questionnaires

L'ASQ (Bricker & Squires, 1999) est un outil qui évalue le développement de l'enfant. Il s'adresse aux parents et aux éducatrices. La deuxième édition de l'outil, utilisée dans la présente recherche, est constituée de 19 questionnaires selon les âges (en mois) suivants : 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33, 36, 42, 48, 54 et 60 mois. Chaque questionnaire est construit de la même façon et contient 30 items décrivant, dans un langage clair, simple et précis, des habiletés ou des comportements à différents niveaux du développement. Ces items sont divisés selon cinq domaines : communication, motricité globale, motricité fine, résolution de problèmes (cognitif) et habiletés individuelles ou sociales. Le répondant doit, pour les 30 items du questionnaire, cocher soit *oui* pour indiquer que l'enfant manifeste l'habileté spécifiée dans l'item, soit *parfois* pour indiquer une manifestation occasionnelle ou en émergence de la part de l'enfant soit pas encore pour indiquer que l'enfant ne manifeste *pas encore* l'habileté, ou le comportement mentionné dans l'item.

Les propriétés psychométriques de la version américaine (2e édition) ont été étudiées avec plus de 8 000 questionnaires (Squires, Potter, & Bricker, 1999). La fidélité test-retest, en comparant les scores de deux questionnaires complétés par le parent (n = 112) à deux semaines d'intervalle, était de 94%. La fiabilité inter-juges, en comparant la catégorie dans laquelle l'enfant se retrouvait en se basant sur le questionnaire rempli par le parent (n = 112) et un intervenant (n = 112), était également de 94%. La validité de construit considérée comme le pourcentage d'accord entre la catégorie à risque à l'ASQ et une évaluation standardisée varie entre 76% pour le questionnaire 4 mois et 91% pour le questionnaire 36 mois pour une moyenne de 88%. La sensibilité (la capacité de l'ASQ à détecter les retards de développement) varie entre 51% pour le questionnaire 4 mois et 90% pour le questionnaire 36 mois pour une moyenne de 76%.

La spécificité, la capacité pour l'ASQ d'identifier correctement les enfants ayant un développement typique varie entre 81% pour le questionnaire 16 mois et 92% pour le questionnaire 36 mois pour une moyenne de 86%. L'analyse de la consistance interne révèle des alphas de Cronbach variant de 0,55 à 0,86 pour les questionnaires 36 et 48 mois (Squires et al., 1999). Pour ce qui est des questionnaires 42 et 54 mois, les alphas de Cronbach, variant de 0,66 à 0,83, n'ont pu être obtenus qu'à partir d'une étude réalisée avec la 3e édition de l'outil (Squires, Twombly, Bricker, & Potter, 2009).

Dans le cadre de cette étude, quelques adaptations et modifications ont été apportées aux questionnaires. Par exemple, concernant la forme, le logo du Step by Step Child and Family Center et des graphiques culturels (peuple; objets culturels et traditionnels tels des drums et des plumes) ont été ajoutés en remplacement au logo et graphiques originaux. Pour ce qui est du contenu, dans les questionnaires 36 et 42 mois, au domaine communication, à l'item « Ask your child to put the shoe on the table », il est suggéré d'utiliser un autre objet (pas seulement un soulier) car il est possible que le répondant trouve inacceptable de demander à l'enfant de mettre son soulier sur la table. Dans les questionnaires 48 et 54 mois, au domaine motricité fine, à l'item « Does your child color mostly within the lines? », l'intervenant fournit un dessin pour indiquer ce qui est acceptable ou non. Dans les questionnaires 33 et 42 mois, au domaine communication « What is your name? (first and last name) », si l'enfant dit son nom Mohawk, cette réponse est acceptée et l'enfant reçoit la cote maximum.

Questionnaire sociodémographique des parents

Un questionnaire sociodémographique, envoyé aux parents, comprend des questions sur l'origine ethnique, le revenu et la langue parlée à la maison. Ce questionnaire est accompagné du formulaire de consentement de Step by Step Child and Family Center.

Déroulement

Pour chaque enfant, les enseignantes complètent un ou deux questionnaires ASQ différents et ce, à un intervalle d'environ 12 mois. Un total de 277 questionnaires est complété par les enseignantes auprès d'enfants tout-venant dont 136 questionnaires pour les filles et 141 questionnaires pour les garçons. Pour ce qui est des groupes de discussion, les enseignantes ont été rencontrées à une reprise. Les rencontres ont une durée de trois heures. Les groupes de discussion visaient à donner l'opportunité de partager leurs vécus et leurs préoccupations. Les enseignantes avaient la tâche de noter, en cours d'expérimentation, leurs commentaires ou réflexions.

Résultats

Groupe de discussion

L'équipe de recherche a réalisé un groupe de discussion avec les enseignantes afin de vérifier si les activités faites en classe permettaient de répondre aux questions de l'ASQ, la concordance de cet instrument avec la philosophie d'intervention du Step by Step Child and Family Center, l'accessibilité du matériel, sa pertinence du point de vue de la culture Mohawk et de Kahnawake et son utilité. Finalement, il est également exploré si les résultats de l'ASQ confirment l'impression générale de l'intervenant quant au développement d'un enfant.

Globalement, en ce qui concerne la passation de l'instrument, les enseignantes ont mis en évidence qu'il peut être facilitant de voir l'enfant en individuel pour vérifier les habiletés ciblées dans l'ASQ. En effet, selon leur expérience, l'administration en classe peut être difficile étant donné le bruit et le fait que d'autres enfants peuvent répondre à la place de celui pour lequel l'instrument est administré. Toutefois, ce mode d'administration demande une organisation différente des activités quotidiennes. Une autre difficulté à la passation en groupe est que pour une classe donnée, six questionnaires de l'ASQ peuvent être requis étant donné l'âge différent des enfants. Finalement, les enseignantes se questionnent sur le soutien possible auprès de l'enfant lors de l'évaluation de l'habileté cotée. De plus, elles souhaiteraient parler en termes d'habiletés émergentes plutôt que le terme *parfois*. Des précisions du critère de réussite seraient également nécessaires pour ce qui est notamment du coloriage.

La concordance de l'instrument avec la philosophie d'intervention du Centre est vue positivement et les enseignantes recommandent clairement la poursuite de son utilisation. Pour ce qui est de l'accessibilité du matériel, le matériel est disponible pour la plupart des items sauf pour les casse-têtes de six morceaux et les escaliers. Les enseignantes recommandent la création d'une boîte de matériel pour chaque questionnaire afin de faciliter l'utilisation de l'outil.

En ce qui concerne la confirmation des perceptions de l'enseignante par rapport à l'enfant, ces dernières déplorent que les comportements dérangeants ne soient pas mis en évidence. Elles suggèrent d'inclure des questions sur la sphère socio-émotionnelle/comportementale et sur les difficultés de communication. D'autre part, la section informations générales offre un bon portrait de l'enfant mais il est suggéré d'inclure une feuille de commentaires pour y inclure plus d'informations sur ce dernier.

En ce qui a trait à l'intégration de l'ASQ dans le processus régulier de travail au Centre, les enseignantes soulignent que son utilisation s'est réalisée trop tôt dans l'année à savoir, à un

moment intense d'activités pour l'équipe de travail. À cet effet, il est suggéré d'avoir deux périodes de dépistage dans l'année. Il est également recommandé d'offrir aux plus jeunes un temps d'acclimatation (environ six semaines).

Dans le cas de la concordance avec la culture Mohawk, peu d'items ont été jugés non pertinents à l'exception de ceux concernant le prénom. Il importe de bien déterminer quelle réponse est acceptable. À titre d'exemple, à la question « Lorsque vous demandez à votre enfant: Quel est ton nom?, répond-il en disant son prénom et son nom de famille? » (domaine communication), si l'enfant utilise le nom Mohawk, sa réponse ne devrait pas être pénalisée même si la réponse ne comporte qu'un seul mot.

Finalement, lors de la deuxième expérimentation de l'instrument, cette dernière s'est avérée plus facile selon les enseignantes. Elles se sentaient mieux préparées et mieux organisées. Certaines ont développé des aides et des activités pour la passation. De plus, les discussions sur le développement de l'enfant ont été plus nombreuses.

Consistance interne

Seuls les résultats des questionnaires de 36, 42, 48 et 54 mois sont présentés pour un total de 277 questionnaires complétés. Le nombre de données insuffisant pour les questionnaires de 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16, 18, 20, 22, 24, 27, 30, 33 et 60 mois inclusivement, n'a pas permis d'assurer des traitements statistiques fiables.

Tout d'abord, la consistance interne de chacun des quatre questionnaires (36, 42, 48 et 54 mois) est étudiée. Pour ce faire, les alphas de Cronbach pour chaque domaine et ce, pour les quatre questionnaires de même que les coefficients de corrélation (domaines-score global de développement), sont calculés.

Dans un premier temps, le Tableau 1 présente les alphas de Cronbach par domaine pour les quatre questionnaires ainsi que les alphas de Cronbach de la version américaine. Ces derniers sont présentés à titre indicatif afin de contraster les résultats. Les résultats pour chacun des quatre questionnaires de la présente étude révèlent des alphas de Cronbach (pour chaque domaine) qui s'échelonnent de la façon suivante : pour le Q36 mois, la valeur des alphas est faible à bonne (0,61 à 0,74) avec des valeurs de l'alpha insuffisantes pour les domaines « motricité globale » (0,29) et « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales » (0,41); pour le Q42 mois, la valeur des alphas est de faible, se situant entre 0,51 et 0,69 à l'exception des domaines « motricité globale et fine » où les valeurs de l'alpha sont insuffisantes avec un 0,38 et 0,34; pour le Q48, la valeur des alphas est de bonne à élevée (0,69 à 0,83); le Q54 présente des valeurs bonnes à élevée se situant entre 0,68 et 0,90, avec une valeur de l'alpha insuffisante de 0,46 pour le domaine « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales ».

Tableau 1: Alphas de Cronbach standardisés par domaine par questionnaire pour l'échantillon de Kahnawake et des États-Unis

Questionnaires	n		Communication		Motricité globale		Motricité fine		Résolution de problèmes		Aptitudes individuelles ou sociales	
	Ka	ÉU	Ka	ÉU	Ka	ÉU	Ka	ÉU	Ka	ÉU	Ka	ÉU
36 mois ^a	74	231	0,61	0,69	0,29	0,76	0,74	0,72	0,69	0,66	0,41	0,55
42 mois ^b	65	950	0,57	0,72	0,38	0,68	0,34	0,76	0,69	0,72	0,51	0,66
48 mois ^a	76	336	0,83	0,79	0,70	0,84	0,75	0,86	0,69	0,85	0,69	0,86
54 mois ^b	62	586	0,90	0,83	0,68	0,73	0,68	0,79	0,78	0,75	0,46	0,71

Note: les alphas de Cronbach de l'échantillon américain ont été tirés des guides d'utilisation: a Squires et al. (1999) [2e édition] et b Squires et al. (2009) [3e édition] et sont présentés à titre indicatif.

La procédure selon laquelle le coefficient de Cronbach est recalculé suite à l'extraction d'un item est exécutée pour les domaines présentant des alphas inférieurs à 0,60 : « communication » (Q42), « motricité globale » (Q36 et Q42), « motricité fine » (Q42) et « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales » (Q36, Q42 et Q54). Les résultats montrent des augmentations du coefficient de Cronbach. Particulièrement, l'alpha du domaine « motricité globale » (Q36) passe de 0,29 à 0,42 et celui du domaine « motricité fine », (Q42) passe de 0,34 à 0,43. Toutefois, les augmentations des alphas ne sont pas suffisantes à l'exception du domaine « résolution de problèmes » (Q42) dont l'alpha passe de 0,51 à 0,65 lorsque l'item 5 est extrait à savoir « Si vous demandez à votre enfant : Montre-moi le plus petit cercle ?, désigne-t-il le plus petit ? Posez-lui cette question sans l'aider, c'est-à-dire sans faire de geste, pointer du doigt, ni regarder le plus petit cercle ».

Dans un deuxième temps, le Tableau 2 présente les coefficients de corrélation de Pearson obtenus lors des analyses

entre domaine et score total pour les questionnaires 36 mois, 42 mois, 48 mois et 54 mois. Les corrélations entre les quatre questionnaires et leurs domaines « communication », « motricité fine » et « résolution de problème » sont de faibles à élevées variant de 0,35 à 0,86. Les corrélations de « motricité globale » (0,35) du Q36 sont faibles. Celles des domaines du Q42 sont bonnes variant de 0,63 à 0,76. Pour le Q48, les corrélations sont de bonnes à très bonnes (0,76 à 0,86). Les corrélations du Q54 sont également très bonnes (0,63 à 0,85). Les domaines « communication », « motricité fine », « résolution de problème » et « aptitudes individuelles et sociales » présentent de bonnes corrélations avec le score global chez les quatre questionnaires (0,67 à 0,86). Par contre, les corrélations entre le domaine « motricité globale » et le score global chez les quatre questionnaires sont généralement moins puissantes variant entre 0,35 à 0,63 à l'exception du questionnaire 48 mois où les corrélations sont de 0,76.

Tableau 2: Coefficients de corrélation de Pearson entre domaine et score global de chacun des cinq questionnaires pour l'échantillon de Kahnawake

Questionnaires	n	Communication	Motricité globale	Motricité fine	Résolution de problèmes	Aptitudes individuelles ou sociales
36 mois	74	0,79***	0,35**	0,77***	0,68***	0,68***
42 mois	65	0,76***	0,63***	0,67***	0,75***	0,75***
48 mois	76	0,86***	0,76***	0,82***	0,82***	0,80***
54 mois	62	0,85***	0,63***	0,78***	0,80***	0,75***

* p < ,01; ** p < ,01; *** p < ,001.

Discussion

Le but de l'étude était de vérifier si l'outil de dépistage *Ages and Stages Questionnaires* (Bricker & Squires, 1999) pouvait être utile et approprié pour une utilisation par des éducateurs auprès d'enfants Mohawks. De façon générale, les résultats démontrent que lesphas provenant de l'échantillon Mohawk offrent une consistance interne acceptable. Toutefois, sept résultats révèlent

des alphas insuffisants (inférieurs à 0,60) à savoir les domaines « communication » (Q42), « motricité globale » (Q36 et Q42), « motricité fine » (Q42) et « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales » (Q36, Q42 et Q54). L'étude de Dionne, Squires, Leclerc, Péloquin et McKinnon (2006) auprès d'un échantillon québécois révèlent des résultats semblables quant à la

« communication » (Q42), la « motricité globale » (Q42) et aux « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales » (Q42 et 54). Ceux de Dionne, McKinnon, Squires et Bricker (soumis) auprès des parents autochtones vont dans le même sens pour la « motricité globale » (Q36 et Q42) et les « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales » (Q36 et Q42). Quant à l'étude chinoise (Tsai, McClelland, Pratt, & Squires, 2006), le Q36 présente également une faible consistance interne au domaine « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales ».

Les résultats de ces études révèlent une constance à savoir de faibles coefficients de consistance interne pour les domaines « motricité globale » et « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales ». Pour le domaine « aptitudes individuelles ou sociales », Tsai et al. (2006) constatent qu'il est possible que les items qui composent ce domaine évaluent deux domaines distincts plutôt qu'un seul. Bien que l'exercice d'extraire un item a été réalisé, l'augmentation de la valeur des alphas pour six des sept domaines est insuffisante. Quant au domaine « motricité globale », les résultats de Janson (2003) obtenus suite à l'utilisation de l'ASQ par les parents auprès d'enfants norvégiens, révèlent cette même tendance pour le questionnaire 42 mois. Spécifions que dans les deux situations le nombre de questionnaires utilisés est relativement petit en comparaison avec la version américaine. Quant aux corrélations entre domaine et score total, elles sont généralement bonnes. Une seule d'entre elles est plus faible soit le domaine « motricité globale » (Q36).

Pour ce qui est du domaine « résolution de problèmes » (Q42), l'extraction de l'item 5 à savoir « Si vous demandez à votre enfant : Montre-moi le plus petit cercle ?, désigne-t-il le plus petit ? Posez-lui cette question sans l'aider, c'est-à-dire sans faire de geste, pointer du doigt, ni regarder le plus petit cercle » permet au coefficient de passer de 0,51 à 0,65. Le retrait de cet item offre une amélioration appréciable de l'alpha.

D'autre part, le groupe de discussion a permis aux enseignantes de partager leur appréciation et leur expérience d'utilisation de l'ASQ. Elles soulignent certaines difficultés à utiliser l'ASQ en classe en situation de groupe (dérangement causé par les autres enfants, organisation de la classe modifiée, utilisation de plusieurs questionnaires pour un même groupe). Elles suggèrent également l'utilisation du concept d'habiletés émergentes (plutôt que le score « parfois ») et la création de boîtes de matériel requis pour chaque questionnaire. Elles soulèvent que peu d'items sont non pertinents culturellement parlant à l'exception de l'item sur le prénom de l'enfant dans le domaine « communication ».

Par ailleurs, comme les intervenantes de l'étude Dionne et al. (2006) au Québec et de Ball dans l'Ouest canadien (2006), les enseignantes du Step by Step Child and Family Center recommandent la poursuite de l'utilisation de l'outil. Plus

précisément, ces dernières suggèrent d'utiliser l'outil à deux périodes durant l'année et d'offrir aux plus jeunes une période d'acclimatation d'environ six semaines.

Finalement, en ce qui concerne la perception des enseignantes par rapport à l'enfant, on déplore que les comportements dérangeants ne soient pas mis en évidence. On suggère d'inclure des questions sur la sphère socio-émotionnelle/comportementale et sur les difficultés de communication. Par ailleurs, soulignons l'existence d'un complément à l'instrument sur la dimension socio-émotionnelle à savoir l'*Ages and Stages Questionnaires social-emotional (ASQ-SE)* (Squires, Bricker, & Twombly, 2002).

Cette étude comporte certaines limites notamment en ce qui concerne la taille de l'échantillon. L'expérience auprès de la communauté Mohawk de Kahnawake ne peut être généralisée à l'ensemble des peuples des Premières Nations au Québec et au Canada. En effet, cette communauté se situe tout près d'un grand centre urbain (Montréal). Au Québec, notamment, plusieurs communautés des Premières Nations occupent un territoire rural qui diffère en plusieurs aspects de celui auprès duquel cette étude a été réalisée. Cet état de fait n'enlève en rien à la pertinence de cette étude qui pourrait servir d'amorce à la création d'une plateforme offrant de l'information sur les types d'adaptations à apporter en fonction de la communauté qui utilise l'instrument.

Conclusion

L'importance d'utiliser des instruments d'évaluation adaptés aux caractéristiques et à la réalité des communautés autochtones est déjà bien identifiée. Cependant, comment s'assurer qu'un instrument soit approprié pour une utilisation auprès des peuples des Premières Nations. Ball (2006) souligne que la standardisation des instruments devrait minimalement inclure une représentativité des populations autochtones au niveau de l'échantillon. Dans le cas de la version américaine de l'ASQ, l'échantillon utilisé pour la standardisation incluait 15 % d'enfants autochtones américains.

Une autre façon de s'assurer de l'adéquation d'un instrument pour une communauté donnée est la perception des utilisateurs de l'instrument sur leur expérience et l'appréciation de ce dernier. Dans ce sens, en prenant appui sur cette expérimentation, nous pouvons mettre de l'avant que l'ASQ est un instrument approprié à la réalité de la communauté Mohawk de Kahnawake. Le très petit nombre d'items identifiés comme inappropriés ainsi que la préservation de la consistance interne de l'instrument soutiennent cette idée.

Cependant, il ne fait nul doute que l'intervenant qui utilise l'instrument doit avoir une bonne connaissance de la culture de la communauté auprès de laquelle il l'utilise. Cette connaissance

lui permettra de faire une lecture et une analyse appropriée au contexte et émettre des réserves à considérer le cas échéant.

Finalement, tout en déplorant le peu d'instruments élaborés à partir de la perspective autochtone, cette situation ne devrait pas être une entrave au déploiement d'activités de dépistage des retards de développement dans le cadre des services destinés à la petite enfance.

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