A Metaphoric Mind

Dr. Joseph Couture speaking at the Indigenous Knowledge Translation Summit held in 2006 at the First Nations University of Canada, in Regina, Saskatchewan. Photograph courtesy of Caroline Tait.

A Metaphoric Mind

Selected Writings of Joseph Couture

RUTH COUTURE &
VIRGINIA McGOWAN, *Editors*

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“From a heart-centred mind, to all my relations”

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Foreword

This is how I first saw him.

Dr. Joe Couture was a giant of a man. He towered above me with the presence of a mountain. His shining eyes piqued my curiosity and challenged me to say something. He spoke with a warm gruffness and a rock-knowledge in his choice of words, much as I would choose a stone for my slingshot: perfect for the mission, aerodynamic, and easily handled.

"Whatcha want?" he said, snapping me out of my hunter's strategic gaze. I must have been studying him for quite a while before my Kokum kindly patted my shoulder, which meant, "Don't stare." Joe ever so slightly smiled and shot me a quick wink. I ran past him and headed off behind the farm sheds and buildings to hide and regroup.

All that day I stalked Joe and watched him with an eight-year-old Cree's way of keeping in the shadows, just within the corner of his eye, as he and others who had gathered at my Mosom's farm began setting up their camps for several days of fasting and ceremonies. He knew I was there, and every now and again he'd motion with his head to "come and sit." I didn't, and wouldn't, and usually I ran off.

That evening, amid the din of visitors and campers, I sat close to my Kokum. She told me that Joe was her cousin and now my uncle. "And," she said, "he's very, very smart." She told me that he was once a priest and that he had so much schooling that he "didn't have to go to school no more–ever." That turned my head inside out and made Joe that much more interesting to observe. I was proud. He was a relative. He was Cree. And in my eight-year-old mind the thought of being so smart that I "didn't have to go

to school no more—ever" suddenly opened up dreaming and possibilities. By the end of his stay, at the beginning of that long summer, I managed to shake his hand.

I've heard it said many times by Indigenous Elders from northern Alberta and in the Northwest Territories that "in the future we must be strong like two people." That simple statement underlines the dual reality of the struggle of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and what we must do to endure and to continue to survive well into the future. We must maintain who we are, learn to use the tools of the day, and gain strength from both the worlds that we face. Indigenous academics have long struggled with the dilemma of maintaining their identity and their traditional way of knowing, especially in the face of severe competition from Western paradigms that often contradict Indigenous perspectives and bring with them cultural and intellectual pressure to conform. Both the struggle and the pressure are real and still continue to this day. It is a duality that Dr. Joe knew well and was able to articulate, explain, and transcend.

Articulation is a challenge for most Indigenous scholars and academics. Fundamental Cree concepts, for example, often defy translation into Western academic discourse, and, as a result, the deep meaning of these concepts is not easily conveyed to a reader or researcher. At times, when we attempt to express Indigenous concepts in a western European language, we end up diminishing their meaning and thus stifling their intent. Most Indigenous peoples, as well, see knowledge and knowing as something intrinsically linked to the person and his or her reality. "Truth" therefore becomes defined by the experience and the person involved. Knowledge is more than information transferred from one medium to another, or from one ear to the next. Joe once told me that knowledge can have measurable biological, emotional, and spiritual effects. Knowledge is far more than information.

Joe certainly had his struggles with contemporary institutions and their consistent push towards the assimilation of Aboriginal peoples in Canada and with the institutionalized lack of respect for Indigenous knowledge and ways of knowing as viable and of genuine academic value. Amidst that rub of cultures, however, he sought to understand the process

of knowledge gathering and production from both a mainstream and an Indigenous point of view. He delved into Indigenous knowledge by participating in ceremonies, learning how to conduct them, and spending a tremendous amount of time listening to and learning from traditional Elders. His love for learning and intellectual exploration was profound. He found it pivotal that we, as Indigenous scholars, understand not only the problems of current institutions but also how the institutions operate and why they operate the way they do. This deconstructionist perspective is necessary, he would say, so that we can understand more clearly how to incorporate what it is we know into the academy, or into our own institutions, in order to better serve and support future Indigenous scholars. Overall, he would suggest, we must master the tools, as well as both recover and invent our own. In this way, we will be better trained and prepared to deal with the issues of the day.

Joe was one of the first Aboriginal scholars to articulate ideas, concepts, and processes that were uniquely Indigenous and place them into the broader Canadian consciousness. Key strategic plans such as the 1970 *Citizens Plus* (also known as the "Red Paper") and *Indian Control of Indian Education* (1972) were documents that articulated for the very first time a clear strategic paradigm shaped by an Indigenous cultural framework. Joe's voice can be found throughout these documents. His wasn't the only voice, but his contributions are unmistakable and, in many cases, he led the philosophical charge. Today we see these two documents as part of our Indigenous scholarly and political canon; through them we can perceive elements of Indigenous identity and the importance of maintaining our identity, cultural values, and worldviews in the current age and beyond.

On the surface, Joe did not appear to be a complex man, yet he readily engaged in complex and compelling dialogues and debates. At the same time, he always insisted on keeping it simple. "The truth," he would say, "is fairly simple and direct. We tend to make things complex and confusing to show how smart we are." Joe relished good and spirited discussions and always challenged you to clarify your statements and make sure you could "back it up," as he would say. There had to be a pragmatism underlying any argument that I or others might make in defence of our "Indigenous" positions. It was never enough, nor was it tolerable to Joe, for us to conclude an

argument by saying, “Well, you just don’t get it,” or, “It’s an Indian thing.” Academic rigour was expected. Joe would not settle for anything less. He was intimidating in that way, so I would always make sure that I rehearsed an idea before I presented it to him.

Joe drew parallels between academic rigour and the rigour of healing ceremonies and rituals, in which a medicine man or woman must have clear knowledge and mastery of the ritual processes and the medicines and of how they work together. Without that clarity of understanding, and the insistence on it, the medicine will not work—and, worse, it could result in the person or the community being seriously harmed. With this need for rigour in mind, there is thus no room for half measures in any path of life we may take, Indigenous or Canadian.

Each generation needs to find its way. Each generation carries with it all the tools and knowledge from the previous generation. In most societies, this is the way general knowledge is passed along from one generation to another. In the Cree traditions, as in other Indigenous nations of North America, a Father, Grandfather, or Elder will present a Bundle to an initiate—in many cases, a person from his or her family or clan.

This Bundle will contain a number of ceremonial items or artifacts in which cultural, familial, and spiritual value and knowledge are embedded. The person receiving the Bundle will most likely have demonstrated an ability to use these ceremonial objects to heal or to commune with the spirit world. The Bundle represents an accumulation of knowledge and information that will assist the next generation or person in maintaining balance and cultural continuity.

Within each Bundle, elements have been added by previous holders. The unique knowledge of each Bundle holder is added to the rest and united in the common cause or purpose of that Bundle, which is then passed along to the next generation. The new Bundle holder will eventually add something to the Bundle, whether a new cloth wrapping or a special stone, that constitutes a message, a tool, or a prayer to the future.

Joe shared a story that still resonates with me regarding how each generation needs to create or add to the current knowledge base with its own songs or rituals. The importance of this story lies in its message—that we

are responsible for ensuring that new songs and rituals are created for our time:

> A long time ago, Abe Burnstick told me this story. It's his story, but it proves a real good point about tradition and change. One day, when Abe was a boy, a message was sent by his grandfather that Abe's father was to come to his house as soon as he could. Abe's grandfather was a well-known and highly regarded traditional healer and medicine man. Knowing this was probably something important, Abe's father brought little Abe along to see what the Old Man wanted.
>
> Abe's grandfather called both of them into his lodge out by his house. In the lodge, Abe's grandfather gave a small bundle or something like that to his father. With that, the Old Man said, "You now have everything that I have used in my ceremonies. You now know all of my songs and all of the songs that my grandfathers have taught me, and all of their ceremonies and medicines I have also taught you." He added, teasingly, "And you don't do them too badly."
>
> He continued, "I have given you everything that I know and I know that you will also, one day, pass these along to your son and grandchildren. But, there is one thing you will need to be complete and that I cannot give you." Well, Abe and his father were both eager to find out what that one thing was, so Abe's father asked him the question, "Father, what am I missing to be complete?"
>
> The Old Man smiled and said, "The songs and ceremonies that you will need to create for your people in your time. As I did and my father did."

Joe has left for us and our generation a Bundle of great importance. This book is a collection of writings from Joe's work—not all of his writings, but some very important works and critical tools that will certainly teach us, guide us, and encourage us for some time to come. Much more of his work will find its way to us. As the scholarly world begins to recognize his important contributions to contemporary Indigenous thought and philosophy, as well as his always pragmatic strategies for Aboriginal

community wellness and healing programs, we will begin to truly understand the scope of his intellect and the beauty of his spirit.

And as with his story about Abe, he is passing this Bundle—this book—to us, knowing that we have much work to do, and to continue to do, for the well-being of our people and all our relations. As we receive this gift, let's remember that we, too, have an obligation to add to this Bundle and pass it along to the next generation.

In this context, and in the spirit of understanding from our Ancestors, I recommend this book to all who are interested in the struggles of the Indigenous peoples of Canada and in the way in which they see themselves in their context, relationships, and roles. It is an essential document, a primer that introduces Indigenous thought and intellectual traditions in a surprisingly strong blend of scholarship and storytelling. This book will aid its readers in finding ways to gain a deeper understanding of the Indigenous worldview, review previous struggles, potentially renew relations, and quite possibly stake out a common ground where sharing, learning, and healing will set us out in new directions.

Lewis Cardinal
June 2010

Preface

An inspiring teacher, compelling writer, and gifted speaker, Joseph Couture (1930–2007) easily walked two paths, as a respected Elder and as a scholar, bridging the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds. His work broke new ground, challenging and transforming views about Aboriginal peoples that had long prevailed not only in the academic world but in the areas of healing and restorative justice and in the federal corrections system. Speaking from a heart-centred mind and from the experience gained through a lengthy apprenticeship to Elders, Joe tells us, "It is good to be Indian."[1]

This book presents selections from his written work that allow us to share in Joe's transformative journey as he encounters Indigenous spirituality and ancestral ways of knowing. The essays invite us to enter with him into the realm of "true" Elders and to attend to their teachings, to participate in the struggle of Native peoples as he interrogates the role of training and education in political mobilization, self-determination, and social change, and to probe with him the restorative process and the meaning of Native healing. The writings reflect insights shaped by his background in the social sciences and by the years he spent as an apprentice in Medicine Ways, learning about traditional methods of healing and about the richness and power of fully functional Indigenous culture. His essays offer guidance to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people alike, challenging readers to engage in their own encounters in the process of being brought forward into a new vision that ensures a living First Nations presence in Canada.

THE JOURNEY BEGINS

Born in Edmonton, the son of a French-Canadian father and a Cree mother, Joe moved with his family to the small backwoods community of Fort McMurray at the age of five. "The little 'bush' boy out of the North black fly and mosquito country," as he later described himself, was grateful for the small-town atmosphere of Fort McMurray prior to its boom days. At that time, Joe recalled, everyone got along: priests and ministers, Native and non-Native. It was as if barriers did not exist. "Joey," as he was called, loved books, but he also enjoyed exploring the bush, riding his bicycle, and going on family picnics.

When Joe was fourteen, his father—a great believer in education, who wanted his son to learn the French language—sent him to Edmonton's Collège Saint-Jean, a private boys' school run by the Missionary Oblates of Mary Immaculate. Through immersion in the language, and after much hard work, Joe learned to think, speak, and write in French. He recalled the day when "suddenly I was thinking in French."

Although he was scouted as a goalie for the Chicago Blackhawks, he chose another path. His studies at Collège Saint-Jean led him to the seminary, and his experience as an Oblate father shaped his life and thinking for the next seventeen years. It was during this period that Joe was first introduced to "Indian work," serving Indigenous communities as a principal and teacher in elementary and secondary schools. As time went on, however, a gnawing sense began to stir within him that eventually led him to embark on a deliberate personal encounter, in which he examined his feelings and allowed their full expression within him to grow. Joe went through a five-year period of what he described as "excruciating pain" and "deep self-introspection" before making a life-changing decision, one that required considerable courage and in which he felt very much alone. In 1968, he left the church. He later recorded in his personal journal the events of that memorable sunny September morning—going down the church steps in Vancouver, turning back to take one last look. "I never looked back again," he wrote.[2]

Joe went on to complete a PhD in educational psychology at the University of Alberta. It is a telling commentary that, when he graduated

in 1972, he was the first person of Aboriginal heritage to receive a doctorate in Canada. Throughout his studies, he continued his work in the Aboriginal community, as he knew that was where his life's journey would subsequently lie.

POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT

From 1968 to 1970, the federal government sponsored an adult education initiative called the Canada NewStart Program. In part, the program involved the creation of federally funded organizations that conducted action-based research among disadvantaged groups, primarily First Nations and Métis, living in remote regions of the Prairie provinces. Joe became the program's director of research for Alberta. He went on to serve as a consultant for the Human Resources division of the provincial government, where he worked on projects in association with various Native organizations, including the Alberta Indian Education Centre, writing proposals and conducting in-service field programs for community development personnel. In 1971, he was appointed the director of research and training for the Indian Association of Alberta.

These experiences opened the door for his political work with Stan Daniels, Harold Cardinal, Eugene Steinhauer, and Eugene Stiles, among others. Joe joined these leaders in founding an Indigenous political movement in Canada, the main objective of which was to promote the rights of Aboriginal peoples, not only in Alberta but all across the country, by bringing together a broad range of Aboriginal leaders and non-Aboriginals in a coordinated effort to advocate on behalf of Native groups. The movement became a hotbed of political activity, attracting many of the foremost Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers, among them George Manuel, Clive Linklater, Roy Diefenberg, Don Cardinal, Marie Smallface Marule, Ralph Steinhauer, and other members of the Steinhauer family. Joe was an integral part of this movement, immersed in crafting copious position papers and committing himself entirely to the betterment of Indigenous communities.

A significant development occurred in 1969, with the introduction of the Trudeau government's "White Paper" on Indian policy. The work of

then Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chrétien, its intent was to abolish the Indian Act of 1876, along with treaty rights and associated land claims, thereby hastening the assimilation of First Nations by reducing their status to that of any other minority group. The White Paper was widely perceived as a threat to Aboriginal collective rights, and it provoked a response from Indigenous leaders. This took the form of a document titled *Citizens Plus,* written by the Indian Chiefs of Alberta, which came to be known as the "Red Paper." As one of the movement's most respected thinkers (and the only PhD in the group), Joe was called upon by Harold Cardinal—the movement's leader and public spokesperson—to condense the ideas presented in the original document into a basic framework, which Cardinal subsequently presented to Ottawa as the collective response of the Indian Chiefs of Alberta. The counterattack was successful: the Red Paper caused the federal government to backtrack and to open avenues for a dialogue with Aboriginal leaders. Joe later referred to the years from 1971 to 1973 as the "learning years," when he was fast-tracked into the minefields of Indigenous political action in Canada.

SPIRITUAL APPRENTICESHIP

The years following the demise of the White Paper, with its agenda of assimilation, witnessed a reawakening of interest among Native leaders and others in Aboriginal tradition. Teachings regarding Native spirituality, ceremonies, and methods of healing had been passed down over the generations through oral tradition, and this knowledge was often closely guarded. The Alberta government had banned Native ceremonies, and many families had been forced to go underground to protect their Medicine Ways. Nonetheless, Joe felt keenly, as did many Aboriginal political leaders, that exclusion from oral tradition leaves a major gap in one's personal development. As he told participants in the Little Red River workshops, "Deep knowledge learned through oral tradition and handed down from generation to generation is of paramount importance."

Two transformative events provided a path into the knowledge he sought. Both events were major turning points in Joe's life, becoming

indelibly etched in his heart and mind and deepening his sense of mission, his determination to be of service to Aboriginal peoples. One was his participation in a series of Elder "think tanks" organized by the Indian Association of Alberta, which took place over a two-year period from 1970 to 1972. The other was the three weeks Joe spent at the Wind River reservation in Wyoming in the spring of 1971, engaging in ceremonies with the Arapaho teacher and healer Raymond Harris.

The think tanks consisted of a series of twelve brainstorming workshops that provided the occasion for dialogue between Elders and younger people (that is, anyone under about the age of fifty-five) on contemporary questions of concern to Aboriginal communities, notably the issue of cultural identity. The workshops, which took place in Alberta, culminated in the fall of 1972 in a gathering on Vancouver Island, which was attended by highly respected "power" Elders—those who possess exceptional spiritual gifts and a degree of influence commensurate with those gifts—representing various of Alberta's First Nations. The Elders spoke in high Cree, which relatively few people are able to understand, but Don Cardinal, who was fluent in high Cree, translated for those in attendance, thus enabling everyone to experience the wisdom of "true" Elders as conveyed through traditional stories and legends. As Joe writes in "Native Training and Political Change" (chapter 7), the workshops "stimulated, in most participants, a new awareness of who they were historically and of who they could become in light of tribal tradition."

Joe was, in his words, both "edified" and "thrilled" by the experience. As he later told transcultural psychiatrist Laurence Kirmayer, "None of us before ever witnessed so many advanced, brilliant minds sitting in a circle speaking the *lingua franca*, which was Cree." "It was," he said, "an awakening for all." The impact of this experience resonates throughout his writings, and it underscored his conviction that Aboriginal spirituality ranks among the world's great religious traditions. As the guardians of that spirituality, Elders can guide us to the deeper meaning of stories handed down from generation to generation, through oral tradition, if only we can learn how to hear and understand.

Reflecting on the think tank experience in "The Role of Native Elders" (chapter 5), Joe describes the "true" Elder and cautions the reader to be

wary of uninitiated, or "popcorn," Elders—those who go into sweats and come out Elders. He bemoans the "rarity of top or true Elders today" and the "relative immaturity and unsteadiness of younger spiritual teachers and ceremonialists." True Elders, Joe often remarked, are "those who live up to the responsibility, who steady the course" and "have something to give you." There is a moral imperative of trust and respect that, he felt, defines true Elders and crosses separate tribal traditions.

Joe's other life-defining experience occurred in 1971, during the three-week period he spent immersed in ceremonies under the guidance of Raymond Harris (White Hair), a powerful spiritual teacher and healer from Wyoming, who conducted ceremonies with the Cree in Alberta and Saskatchewan during the 1970s. The time Joe spent with Harris in Wyoming, at Wind River, was his first intimate contact with the world of Native medicine. In "Native and Non-Native Encounter" (chapter 2), he recalls that, during those three weeks, "I was introduced to sweat and pipe ceremonies, as well as to the absoluteness of traditional fasting." While his intent had been to spend a week at Wind River, the experience was so profound and his thirst for knowledge so great that he stayed on longer.

During this time, he was given his sacred name, Holy Eagle, by Raymond Harris. Native tradition tells us that the eagle has the power to soar, carrying prayers to the Creator, and to "see" hidden spiritual truths. One of its wings represents the feminine power, the other, the masculine; both are required for harmony and balance. The eagle is believed to be connected with higher truths, with intuition and a creative spirit, which can only be attained through direct experience. Holy Eagle was a name truly befitting Joe and the spiritual path he chose to follow.

During his stay at Wind River, another transformative event took place, which Joe describes in two essays, "Indian Spirituality" and "Native and Non-Native Encounter" (chapters 1 and 2). During three successive nights of fasting, he experienced a luminous dream—the same dream repeated, "identical in all details." Dreams are usually a private matter, with a personal meaning of importance only to the dreamer. But because of its significance for Aboriginal peoples, Joe was given permission to speak his dream. This dream became the roadmap for the rest of his life. It is this dream—of the chalice and the pipe—that, for Joe, illustrated the meaning of "oneness": that

Native spirituality (symbolized by the pipe) and Christianity (the chalice) ultimately express the same truth. Joe's mission crystallized around this dream, which he interpreted to mean that he should do his best to bridge the two cultural traditions—Western Christianity and Native spirituality.

LIFE'S WORK

These two experiences infused an energy into Joe's work that would sustain him for the rest of his life. As he tells us, his pivotal dream freed him from the shackles of questioning Christianity and Native spirituality. The experience of direct knowledge—knowledge received by the symbolic, intuitive mind—went to the roots of his being and enabled him to draw on his inner spirit as well as on his intellect. For the remainder of his life, he never swerved from his goal of working on behalf of the Indigenous community in Canada, exhibiting a passionate commitment to that community and becoming a powerhouse of action, in an effort to carry forward the meaning of his personal experiences with Native spiritual traditions and ways of knowing.

Those experiences led him to focus on the importance of experiential knowledge and on "learning by doing" as the preferred approach for personal and collective development. Like so many others, Joe was keenly aware of the need for healing among Aboriginal peoples, at both the individual and the community level. In the years immediately following his introduction to Native ceremonies and holistic modes of healing, he helped to lay the foundations of the Nechi Institute for Alcohol and Drug Education, which opened in 1974.

In 1975, Joe embarked on an academic career. He was invited to apply for a position in the Department of Native Studies at Trent University, which at the time boasted the largest offering in Canada of courses focusing on Aboriginal issues. As chair of the department, he developed the honours baccalaureate degree in Native studies, which has since been emulated by Native studies programs in universities across the country. Joe also established the first Elders conference at Trent, to ensure a cultural environment that would support and enhance student learning. To

his credit, the Elders and Traditional Peoples Gathering continues to this day, and many of his students have gone on to become community leaders, working among First Nations peoples in virtually every province and territory in Canada.

While on sabbatical from Trent, Joe was offered a professorship at Athabasca University. Because the position would enable him to move his family back to Alberta, he decided to accept it. At Athabasca, Joe retooled the basic programs in conventional empirical psychology, including developmental psychology, and also wrote the first curriculum on personality theory. During this period, he resided in Calling Lake, about 60 kilometres north of the town of Athabasca, where, each spring, he held fasts and sacred pipe ceremonies that attracted a growing number of participants.

During his transition from Trent to Athabasca University, Joe had undertaken contract work for the federal corrections system. While at Athabasca, he received a call from Dan Erickson, the new warden at Pe Sakastew, a minimum security correctional facility located in Hobbema, Alberta. Erickson offered Joe a staff position, hoping that Joe would join with them in transforming the prison into a healing centre, a challenge Joe accepted eagerly. "Dr. Joe," as he was called, worked closely with inmates, focusing on healing as the foundation of restorative justice. His work, which included the development of a culturally appropriate assessment system, provided much-needed direction for the evolution of programs for Native offenders in federal corrections facilities.

Joe's Legacy

Joe's vision and leadership as both an academic and an Elder helped to shape many of the current fields of Aboriginal scholarship. He was fortunate in having the ability not only to appreciate but also to integrate multiple perspectives—and we are fortunate that he possessed, as well, the ability to set his thoughts down on paper. The twelve essays in this book, selected from among Joe's published and unpublished writings, offer a representative cross-section of the ideas, insights, and spiritual principles that moved him. They have been gathered into four parts, organized according

to themes in Joe's writings that seemed to provide a natural focus. The final section, "Cornerstone Teachings," is a more informal selection of his teachings gleaned from letters, conversations, and notes on projects and workshops. This volume by no means represents the totality of his work, nor are the essays in it intended to be viewed as discrete writings. To some extent, they overlap one another, illustrating the traditional Native sense of interconnectedness, the understanding that everything is a seamless part of an ever-evolving and all-encompassing whole. Taken together, the essays open a window onto the traditional Aboriginal worldview as conveyed through the teachings of Elders. They also show us a mind grappling with contemporary issues of pressing concern to Native communities.

In one of the final sections, Joe asks, "Where are the stories—the stories of today?" He tells us that *we* must build new stories, for it is in the stories, in the legends, that truth is revealed. His own writings provide a starting point and illustrate the process whereby ideas rooted in age-old tradition can be translated into contemporary action. He asks us to reflect on these traditional teachings, which point to the underlying "oneness" of creation and can help us to foster new and constructive encounters between Native and non-Native—to engage in a process of healing.

To those he touched, Joe offered a defining challenge that he heard many times from Elders: "It's up to you. You have all the answers within."

NOTES

1 The term *Indian,* which designates a legal status under the Indian Act, was commonly used by Dr. Joe and his contemporaries to describe their identity and their cultural heritage. The term encapsulates a history of discrimination and Euro-Canadian imperialism, but, when used by Native individuals about themselves, it serves as an affirmation, a conscious reappropriation of the term, with connotations of pride rather than subjugation.

2 Joe was a very private person, not someone to share details of his emotional life with anyone other than close family and friends. As Joe's widow, and with his express permission, Ruth Couture had access to his journals following his death. Most of these journals have since been destroyed, out of respect for his privacy.

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Ruth Couture and Virginia (Ginny) McGowan

ONE

Personal Encounter and Ancestral Ways of Knowing

Introduction

In the following three essays, Dr. Joe writes about the essential features of Native spirituality and worldview and about Indigenous ways of knowing. The ideas contained in the essays, and his reflections on those ideas, constitute the foundations of a spiritual perspective that informs most of his subsequent work. The essays also offer encouragement and guidance to those wishing to explore Native spirituality, challenging them to embark on their own path of personal encounter.

"Indian Spirituality: A Personal Experience," written in 1982, opens with an account of Joe's first encounters with Native spirituality. Although he began from a perspective heavily influenced by Western rationalism and empiricism, as well as by Christian dualism, he gradually moved towards an acceptance of Indigenous spirituality, with its emphasis on direct, intuitive experience and the oneness of being. In the course of his reflections, he probes parallels between the Native notion of the Great Spirit and concepts central to other religious traditions and provides the reader with a set of principles that characterize the Native spiritual outlook. This "progress report from someone diligently on the Way" is a broad contemplation of the place of Amerindian spiritual traditions in contemporary efforts to return to what Joe calls "authentic religious experience."

In "Native and Non-Native Encounter: A Personal Experience," written in 1989, Dr. Joe describes the deliberate intercultural encounters that took place at a series of summer workshops held in the 1980s that he was instrumental in setting up. The workshops were structured around Native Indigenous modes of learning, supplemented by techniques that drew

on Western psychology. The goal was to encourage Western participants to let go of their addiction to reason and, through a process of "learning by doing," to come to trust intuitive, experiential ways of knowing. After exploring some of the resistances that Western-trained minds must overcome, Joe ends with thirteen statements that describe the conditions for meaningful intercultural encounter and are intended to provide the starting point for further reflections. "Notwithstanding significant historical and psychological obstacles," he writes, Native and non-Native spiritual encounter is indeed possible, "for Spirit's work is Spirit's work."

The final essay in the section, "Natives and the Earth," first appeared in 1991 in a volume titled *Alternative Futures for Prairie Agricultural Communities*. In it, Joe attempts to convey some sense of Indigenous peoples' spiritual relationship to the Earth. Rather than viewing the natural world as something to be mastered and exploited, Native tradition emphasizes connection, reciprocity, harmony, and the unity of all creation. This spiritual orientation to the land has been passed down over the generations by tribal Elders, "the ones who remember," who remind us "how it was to be in balance with the Earth." As he points out, the Western habit of mind sees the world in terms of subject and object, a tendency that is evident in the very structure of language. In contrast, he explains, "Native mind 'space' is one of non-ego, not of ego versus object. Its defining orientation is towards meaning, not towards results." Echoing contemporary concern for the environment, he argues that personal transformation, the "emptying of self," is the cornerstone of the development of "eco-insight" and the assumption of our personal responsibility as stewards of the Earth.

1 Indian Spirituality
A Personal Experience

PRELIMINARY REMARKS

This essay is based on personal experiences with Indian Medicine People and Medicine phenomena since 1971. A description of the main events and features comprising that experience initiates this discussion. Elements of a viewpoint are then provided. Some suggestions serve as a conclusion.

I readily acknowledge that throughout these pages, while attention is given to clarity, concision, and scientific perspective, the account remains unabashedly subjective. These lines provide a progress report from someone diligently on the Way. The academic practice of providing footnotes and specific references is dispensed with. The references at the end have been carefully studied by the author and are given for the convenience of the reader who may wish to study further. I owe much to Mircea Eliade, Susan Griffin, Charles Fillmore, James Dumont, Gregory Bateson, and Thomas Merton. Also, gratitude is due to the Reverend Ahab Spence, whose initial request in 1980 for a detailed opinion on the parallels between Indian spiritual process and basic Christianity led to a lengthy letter on my part, and which letter, widely circulated subsequently, is the basis for the present endeavour.

A backdrop awareness highlights my statement as positive and optimistic. Although I am keenly aware of historical and contemporary "bad medicine" activity, of hexing and possession, of fakery, of misrepresentation, distortion, and outright ignorance, my view of Indian Medicine is optimistic and positive. Suffice it to affirm to such things. So a caveat to the

reader: my optimism stems from a hard-earned knowledge and experience of what is there, discoverable by anyone who wants to "see" earnestly and sincerely. It's as simple as that.

THE EXPERIENCE

My first major contact with Indian Medicine occurred in the spring of 1971. Within a context of a sweat lodge and pipe ceremony, I fasted for the first time and had my first Dream. The fast was absolute, that is, no food or water for four nights and three days. It required staying awake from dusk to dawn, an eight-hour period, approximately. On each of the three nights, the same dream was experienced. At the time I didn't know it, but in hindsight, what was experienced is what Plains Indians refer to as the Dream. Also, always in hindsight, because of personal ignorance and obtuseness at the time, three tries were needed. Normally, one such dream would suffice!

Immediately, the Dream resolved hours of anguished reflection. I was instinctively and deeply attracted to what I had begun to sense about the true meaning of the Indian Way, but because of a conventional Christian mentality, one which judiciously considered "Indian religion" to be pagan and animistic, I was profoundly disturbed by a fear that I was being drawn into something that might be destructive, outer appearances and inner attraction notwithstanding. I was torn between what I was observing to be the remarkable, consistent good effects, especially of a physical healing effect in the sweat lodge and other ceremonies,[1] and by the imperiousness of my philosophical and spiritual disposition.

The Dream displayed at the right of the scene an exquisitely tooled, gem-studded Mass chalice and at the left, at the same time and on the same level, an exceptionally well-carved and balanced Plains red-stone pipe. The two objects moved towards each other, coming to overlay each other without either losing a single feature or quality. The merging movement took place three times, and so on each of three nights. At the end of the third repetition of my dream, my compulsive and apprehensive rational mind quietly settled into a waiting attentive mode, and with that came trusting acceptance of what began to be a deeply satisfying, in-depth Indian spiritual experience.

Further affirmation and direction came with a second kind of event, repeated many times, but in nature the same activity, that is, participation in "information" sessions in the medicine lodge. The reward to the seeker in such moments is that he may pose questions to the spirit helpers of the medicine man, through the mediumship of the latter. To one's queries immediate replies are given. Further, one can discuss the content of such responses as extensively as one needs to. For example, one question put in those early years concerned my preoccupation with the nature of the "grandfathers," or spirit helpers. I was confirmed in my hunch that they were, in effect, biblical-like entities, angel spirits whose responsibility in the divine economy, as it were, was, and is, the Native peoples of North America. A later question related to the appropriateness of studying the so-called esoteric or occult Christian literature, to which a convergence of circumstances and events had brought me shortly after that eventful spring and to which I was equally and spontaneously attracted—all of which, in turn, began inducing another round of anxiety similar to the one indicated above. In the lodge, I was told simply that the pursuance of the latter interest was "-on the right track!" And again, with that, I experienced a strengthening of a sense of direction, increased trust, and a new confidence and inquisitiveness.

Without detailing further, I should mention, however, that I have now participated in countless sweat lodge ceremonies, healing ceremonies of various kinds, pipe rituals, and others, all complemented or overarched by a great many hours of discussion with Medicine People from a number of tribes, particularly the Arapaho, Cree, and Blackfoot, and to some extent the northern Slavey. Finally, I would mention that the absolute fast described earlier has been undergone thirteen times. The fast, whenever entered into, is a crucial moment, for it is then, perhaps more than at any other moment of conscious relating to Spirit, that one enters deeply into prayer and introspection, into experiences of inner and outer phenomena, into experiences of enlightenment and change. Ineluctable and ineffable moments these can be and frequently are, and I've striven to understand them as comprehensively and deeply as possible and, subsequently, to articulate them with as much openness and intellectual probity as possible.

SOME REFLECTIONS

1. When thinking on Indian religion and Indian spiritual development, one should keep in mind that the issue is one of Indian religion and spirituality as it is today. For whatever reasons, increasing numbers of individual Natives are turning to Native spiritual leaders for counselling and training. Here and there across North America small communities are forming in accordance with Indian life principles, striving to go back to the original inspiration, the ancient wisdom and methods, notwithstanding the fact that in many areas much has been lost of the Old Ways and Teachings.

2. To come to "know" as an Indian knows, to "see" as an Indian sees, that is the key objective. It is a process objective, requiring conscious sidelining of discursive reason, or the intellectual mind, to let intuition, or the intuitive mind, play. Doing this can lead one to a direct experience of the truth of the Indian Way, entering directly upon its Ground where knowing is being. The Indian Way of knowing is metaphoric and symbolic in expression, intuitive and direct in its process.

3. Through that process a vital relationship is established and maintained with a dynamic, eternal Supreme Entity, often referred to as the "Great Spirit" or the "Creator." It is this that defines Native cultural heritage as essentially spiritual. This is a crucial understanding. Staying "in balance" or "centred" in this relationship with all manifestations of Being is what gives meaning to all, to the self, to all components of one's environment. Eliade's metaphor of the *axis mundi* is appropriate here, that is, the living relationship, an axis that gives meaning to all.

4. A recent insight propounded by comparative religionists places Native American religion equally with four great world religions: Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, and Christianity. But these four attribute no central importance to the land, the earth, whereas Amerindian

religion does. "I and Mother Earth are one" is an often-heard proposition. The earth is central because with it a highly personalized, sensed relationship with "Mother Earth" is maintained, in addition to the various realms of guardian spirits attendant to minerals, plants, and animals.

5. While this refreshing, qualitative breakthrough is occurring within academic circles, at the same time one witnesses a confrontation between Indian Christians and Indian religion protagonists and, as well, a lingering condemnatory distrust by Western Christians. It seems to me that there are serious, feasible reasons of a spiritual and philosophical nature that suggest bases for authentic reconciliation and rewarding encounter rather than bitter recrimination, opposition, and condemnation.

   Emphatically, open dialogue is required. Competence and sensitivity, of the order one can presently observe in the Anglican-Roman reconciliation process, are warranted equally here. Considerable awareness needs to be developed around the mindsets, the conceptual forms, metaphors, and principles, and other characteristics of each party. Subtle dispositions of superiority and condescension in the one party and a penchant to unsureness and distrust in the other are attitudinal dimensions that require de-crystallization. With the dissolution of such central cognitive and effective dimensions, one can then begin to perceive fundamental, striking similarities in process, content, or values. The parallels or similarities are there and exist at the level of the nature of respective religious experiences and the importance attributed to these experiences by respective adherents.

   Indians entering such dialogue will need to withhold distrust and fear that non-Indian religionists will enter into their process and distort it, and strive to control it. The insensitivity and triumphalism, albeit understandable, of non-Indians over the decades, especially of professional Christians who, in their ignorance, condemned Indian religions as being pagan, animistic, and of the devil, must give one serious and careful pause. Starting with the Puritans, the non-Indian has rarely, if ever, "seen" the Indian. The Puritans, for example, never conceived of the Indian in the least save as an unformed Puritan. The

immorality of such a perception, the inhumanity, the brutalizing effect on Indian minds, they (the Puritans) never suspected. And perhaps, still, many moderns do not perceive more clearly than their Puritan forebears. The ability to transcend one's mindset is an uncommon skill, in my opinion, particularly for those minds that are predominantly rational and analytical—in other words, Western-trained.

6. It is difficult to describe the way the Indian mind processes content. In order to better sense the beauty and truth of that mind in its function and in terms of the object or goal of its functioning, several interrelated principles can be affirmed:

   a. It seems to me that Indian spiritual mind, or spiritualized mentality, perceives or experiences the Creative Mind in all, everywhere. It is not linear, but dynamic and holistic. It is the "signs" of the God Creator manifesting that constitute the "laws of nature" or, in Western terms, the Natural or Cosmic Law. For an Indian, these (the Laws) are the Right Things, with which one strives to relate to in a Right Way: a theme, the variations of which are to be found in the tribal rituals across the continent.

      The spirit of nature, of Mother Earth, the pulsating life on the earth, for the spiritual Indian, stirs in him. The spiritual Indian and the earth are one: within each is the same creative action of Spirit. This at-one-ness with Nature, conformance with her laws, is the source of peace with self, for it is really a living in the Self, or self of selves, the Source of being. Nature so experienced is something both external to and internal within the Indian individual. The external is a world of spirits, with which he learns to communicate at will. An inner development process initiates and sustains an awareness of spirit. The inner and outer are one process. In that process there are dimensions of imminence and transcendence. Also, there is no essential difference between waking and dream states. Both are real and equally important.

      In either state, one enters into the world of spirits and Spirit and establishes a state of fulfilling communion. Silence is regarded

as preconditional to such awareness development. Silence is necessary in order to arrive at a realization that one is not only capable of developing such relationships but also that through silence one is capable of strengthening and deepening such awareness, and in so doing acquires certain powers of mind. This "work" is not the activity of analytical intellect but is that of intuitive mind and of dream activity. The attainment of such awareness, it should be understood, requires persistent, unflagging motivation.

The spirits of the Indian's world of Nature and of dream consciousness—the various cosmic powers, as some would say—are for me in essence the full range of biblical angel entities. This world is also a psychic world, the realm of extra-sensory perception. It is a world not only of dream vision and activity but also of telepathy, telekinesis, clairaudience, clairvoyance, and clairsentience, of spiritual and physical healing and control of mind over body and matter.

b. Another background principal for the present discussion is that of belief and believing. It is clearly not a question of a "belief" in God in this general Indian context, certainly not in the conventional sense of belief/believing. Rather, it is an issue of knowing from direct, personal experience—an intuiting of the ground or basis of all existence, that is, that by which all things are. Paul affirms that from the beginning man has had direct knowledge (Romans 1:19–20). John declares that all men are directly affected by the Word and are in the Word (John 1:1). Historically, this truth has been described or referred to variously, for example, in the Tao of the Chinese, the Nirguna Brahman of the Hindus, the Dharmakaya of the Buddhists, the One of the Greek Plotinus, the abyss of the Godhead of mystic Christians, the Divine Darkness of Dionysius, or again the Lightsome Darkness of fourteenth-century mystics: a range of metaphors, substantially the same as that of the Amerindian Great Spirit? It seems to me that down through humankind's history, various cultures have consciously related to the one same Entity, however described, as the ground of existence, as the ground of consciousness.

c. I find that the Indian mind experiences a ground of existence as the ground of consciousness. Semantics? The perception is of a ground from which all thoughts spring but which itself cannot be thought. One purpose to the long hours of Indian fasting is to experience that Truth at an unpredictable moment. In the fast also one comes to experience oneself as knower and known, as an entity who is and who knows, as one who is both subject and object. The arena of that process is that of one's high self—Merton's *point vierge*—a point at which, in Christian terms, one experiences oneself as an expression of God, as being in His "image and likeness."

   It is the place of the self/Self that is beyond being, insofar as thought is a reflection, a concept of being. It is pure awareness of being. Medicine People, the most evolved ones, know this. It is an area in which all hitherto familiar landmarks fail. It is no wonder that people are afraid of going beyond their subjective sense of self-being, beyond thought, that is, beyond what is reasonable or rational. New World people have a method and an experience that facilitates a process of self-transcendence. This parallels the Christian principle of "losing one's life to save it." In either case, it strikes me that, as a process, the direction is to a same Truth reflecting itself in human consciousness.

d. "Truth reflecting Itself" is often referred to as the Light. An Inuit saying is: "What is life but a voyage into the Light?" The Pomo are reputed to hold that there is "a white Light at the centre." Old John, a Manitoulin medicine man who died several years ago, declared in anticipation of his transition that he would "cross the river soon, over to the mountains, and go up into the Light." These kinds of declarations suggest harmonies with Johannine principles,[2] an attractive point of encounter.

   This light metaphor is not just a word. Some Indians do achieve enlightenment, that is, union with the Light. That many Indians don't, first of all, doesn't negate the principle of possible attainment, and, second, it points to the difficulty of attaining

enlightenment. It does require facing one's absolute nothingness, total emptiness, the unreality of one's perceptions of what is truly real, non-illusionary, in order to arrive at experiencing the non-duality of all reality. Black Elk is eloquent in this regard (see Niehardt's *Black Elk Speaks*).

e. Elders and Medicine People are indispensable to the individual on the Path, as facilitators and developers of discernment. The usual pattern is to apprentice under one Medicine Person for a period of time—a number of years usually, varying with the individual. Nonetheless, other Elders do figure in this apprenticeship. The degree of respective influence is correlative to the "gift" of each, freely given under the "right" conditions.

   I can't emphasize enough that one must frequent Elders, regardless of whether one was raised in an Indian culture or not. Elders are those people who are seers, prophets, teachers, holy men and women who, like the Medicine People of all ages, affirm that they become acquainted with the Creator through prayer and fasting, who expresses to them in the spirit of their minds. I have seen the power of their prayer—it literally illuminates their faces. I am impressed also by the balance that Elders who are Medicine People achieve, for example, between the sobriety and propriety of traditionalists and the exuberance and verbal piety of charismatics. The Medicine People I know consistently edify me with their capacity for spontaneous prayer, their serenity, their sense of poetry, their joyous thoughts and cheerful ideas, their total accessibility and unassuming manner, their power as channels.

   It is through repeated Elder teaching that one comes to sense the wisdom of the Indian Way. "It's up to you" and "You have all the answers within you" are the valley's two sides, as it were, through which the Path meanders. Such statements resonate with "The Kingdom of God is within You," "The secret place of the Most High," "the inner chamber," and so on.

   Medicine People don't preach or lecture or formally teach. Their teaching, such as it is, is always brief and concise, and is

relative to the nature of what one experiences. They are facilitators of a learning-by-doing process. Their teaching is given only when it becomes clear that you aren't able to figure things out for yourself. All beginners have an encumbering mindset that one must learn to let go of. The benefit for me has been that through a sequence of Indian spiritual activities I've come to release myself from a definite rationalistic, conventional Christian frame of mind in exchange, so to speak, for a more wholesome, considerably more fulfilling, nourishing gestalt.

The centre of that gestalt is the Light, the Law, the Spirit. Ceremonies, fasting, prayer: these are the means by which or through which the Law becomes one's Life. Parallels are found again here with such statements and metaphors as "I am the Way, the Truth, the Light," "pearl of great price," or the *unum necessarium.*

f. It is easy to understand, then, that following one's Path to such a goal requires right thinking about right ends shown by the Great Spirit. It includes right views, thoughts, speech, action, living, endeavour, mindfulness, and contemplation. The Great Spirit in this context is the Source of universality and unity, that within which individuals in their diversity upon the earth find their reciprocal linkage.

In the name of the "right way," Indian ritual may appear to be unyielding, excessive. One should note that Indian ritual, in principle, is indicated by spirit agents. Compliance is simply the obedience of an individual spirit to the laws of Spirit. In situations of emergency—for example, a child with third-degree burns—ritual hours give way to direct and immediate intervention. The fundamental thrust or purpose of ritual is to provide a helping environment to within which healing energy is channelled.

It takes time to discern within ritual detail, from tribe to tribe, what is essential or required for the inflow of spirit, or energy. At the level of external features, there can be disconcerting detail. In the tribal variations of the West, at least, one will invariably

find as common elements pipe(s), tobacco, sweet grass, singing, and invocative prayer, no matter what the tribal variation may be. These elements frame the Action. Law is expressed through the instrumentality of the Medicine Person and the ritual elements. For this to occur, the individual channel must undergo serious inner change such that Law becomes manifest within the individual's self. The features of this change are basically those characteristic of Christian "rebirth," that is, the unfolding of the soul as Christ-consciousness emerges within. An Indian in his study of the Laws of Nature is not aware that, ipso facto, his study is the study of scripturally revealed Divine Law. In his endeavour, however, he comes to know God directly. He is aware that his path is a path to enlightenment, but he does not know that Christ is Enlightenment, for it has not been revealed to him.

g. There are a number of interrelated issues, such as self, sin, freedom, healing, and word.

The question of self is a psychological, philosophical, and theological problem. What is the nature of an individualized self on the Path, and how does it perceive itself? It helps me to consider the self as a principle of reason and responsibility. It is not an autonomous self but is subject to Law—to what Thomas Aquinas, if I recall correctly, refers to as Universal Reason, a reference based on Paul's admission that there is no excuse for any man not to know God (Romans 2:14–15).

Original sin, in this context, would be to consider self as independent, as having absolute freedom. For an Indian, responsibility is compliance with the Laws of Nature, a compliance that induces transcendence of individual self, the fruits of which are joy and wisdom. To fall out of balance with Nature, whether within or without, is to do "wrong." This fall is into self-consciousness, which causes a sense of shame, which is not entirely identical to Western guilt:

> I am ashamed before the earth; I am ashamed before the heavens; I am ashamed before the evening twilight; I am

ashamed before the blue sky; I am ashamed before the darkness; I am ashamed before the sun; I am ashamed before that standing within me which speaks to me. Some of these things are always looking at me. I am never out of sight. Therefore I must tell the truth. That is why I always tell the truth. I hold my word right to my breast. (Navaho saying.)

As to healing, some very brief comments. First of all, it is a matter of record and observation that through the instrumentality of Medicine People, physical, emotional, and spiritual healings take place. Healings are often permanent. The cause of relapse or of no healing is a question of either the karma of the individual and/or of a non-sustained spiritual motivation. "Yuh have t' have the right reason," as one Old Man is wont to say. Second, when you're told that "some medicine, they put in there"—into an ailing organ, for instance—that means that "energy" was directed in. Energy directing is a question of individual energy field repatterning, a shifting from negative energy dominance to one of positive balance, a moving away from negative dis-ease to restoration of positive ease. It is thus that natural law or way is restored.

It seems to me that the ability of Medicine People to heal is a developed capacity to pick up on an individual's life current and through it to revitalize the body/emotions/mind based on right relationships of thoughts and words. My hypothesis is that healing is a process of mental impulses, which starts with a current of energy that shapes and stimulates the molecules and cells that already exist within the client. These impulses produce life, strength, and animation where inertia and impotence, *dis*-ease, were the dominant condition. Illness, of whatever kind, is a failure to adjust human understanding to Divine Mind (the Great Spirit) and to stay so adjusted.

One never hears an Indian swear or curse, unless he or she is highly acculturated. When an Indian does swear or curse, he or she has to do so in a non-Indian language. This behaviour derives from a sense of the sacredness of words. Uttering words manifests the need for right ways and right thinking relative to what is Right.

The above is selective. It suffices, however, to indicate interrelatedness and interaction of a number of characteristics of the Indian Way. They are an invitation to the reader to explore and experience. I have confidence in the understandings presented thus far. I also have some questions. These are presented below, together with some concluding remarks.

SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT

1. Reincarnation requires careful attention. The Old People very seldom talk about this principle. Yet, when you pin them down, they will declare that reincarnation is a law of Nature and is inseparable from a law of cause and effect. Reincarnation is a Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim, and esoteric Christian tenet. The Episcopalian theologian John Howe has described how the early Church, up to the time of third-century Fathers, believed in reincarnation. He doesn't explain why that teaching ceased, but he does cite St. Justin the Just, Origen, and Tertullian to support his claim.

2. One needs much discernment when learning Indian religious ways. There is, unfortunately, much "bad" medicine about, and much superstition and ignorance. It is unfortunate that a number of elder Indians strive to impress and control. They are to be avoided in preference for those few across the Continent who are humble and who use their "gifts" in the "right way."

3. We have much to learn from Indian religious content and process. I think that if we are to find the path of return to authentic religious experience, which is what I perceive that the established churches are currently striving to do, we must be willing to learn from such an ancient tradition as Amerindian paths of spiritual development. The suppressed and almost eliminated Asian, African, Aboriginal, and Amerindian religions bear within them the treasures of that ancient wisdom. In so doing, we can return to the heart of the child within each of us.

The Indian experience does help one understand the relevance of the original perspective and experience, and shows one how to acquire it. It helps one to go back beyond institutional formulations to the initial inspiration and experience. To do so is to provide oneself with a means of breaking away from what can be idolatrous attachment to form and formulation.

I see the Church as having a basic structure that derives from the New Testament, as well as a doctrine, ritual, and organization. The historical development of this structure is relative in meaning, not absolute, and therefore should be regarded as subject to change. I see it changing. It is the Graeco-Roman structure built on the original Jewish matrix that is crumbling, or so it seems to me. This then means that its dogmatic formulas, sacramental system, and hierarchical system should be allowed to change, given the nature of things. The guide through what may seem to some as an invitation to chaos, to some others as inescapable anarchy, and to others still as desirable dissolution, is to recover the original inspiration that created the Church on the foundations of Judaism. Are we not now required to live out more profoundly than ever before the mystery of death and resurrection?

From the beginning of history, in my opinion, the Body of Christ, to use Paul's expression, is the body of humanity in the whole of creation. It is this organic whole that is the Temple of God, the Temple of Wisdom. Since its beginning, the body, indwelt by Spirit and of Light, has been growing, evolving from age to age. Every single human being is a member of that Body. Every religion has contributed to the building of that Temple. The Church is that body, as it has been revealed, but not the institutional church in isolation. This divine mystery, this ancient wisdom, is present in the hearts of people everywhere. It is significantly present in each of the major religions. From this standpoint, couldn't one argue that Indian religion is dramatically situated? This is an awesome and magnificent context.

This essential Truth cannot be discovered by any process of dialectic but is perceived only in silence through the stilling of the faculties, within the depths of soul, beyond word and thought. Indians know this and, more important, they know how to facilitate that process.

Finally, if we are to look to Indians for lessons, we should look also to those moments of meals when such are an integral part of ceremonies and,

as well, to the moments of dance and song during and following such ceremonies—for, at such times, it is possible to experience a high, pure level of oneness with each other and creation in Spirit.

As an Indian once stated, "Everybody has a song that is no song at all: it is a process of singing, and when you sing, you are where you are."

NOTES

1 The sweat lodge is essentially a purification ceremony, one that integrates the spiritual and physical within the participants. The lodge is a low structure, typically constructed of willow branches and bark. In its centre is a pit in which heated rocks are placed, together with cedar, sage, or sweet grass; water is then poured on the rocks to create steam. In the intense heat and darkness of the sweat lodge, and through fasting, song, prayer, and personal sharing, the physical and spiritual dimensions of the participants are brought into harmony and powers of healing released.—*Eds.*

2 "Johannine principles" refers to the teachings attributed to John the Apostle, as contained in the Gospel of John, as well as the first, second, and third epistles.—*Eds.*

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2 Native and Non-Native Encounter *A Personal Experience*

BACKGROUND

A long time ago, it was revealed that one day the White brother would come to the Red brother for teaching. The Old People say that no one knows when this prophecy was first uttered, nor from where it came. Some attribute it to the Hopi. Others say that time and place of origin matter little, for now virtually all of the Peoples acknowledge the need for meaningful encounter and have, as well, the desire for deep cultural and spiritual sharing. They say that the time is now at hand. Spiritual leaders across North America quietly and unobtrusively began to share the "secrets" with the turn into the 1980s. Here and there across the continent, events occurred that indicated burgeoning forms of interaction, communication, and teaching at new levels, in new areas.

The writing of this article is essentially, and necessarily, a tentative beginning reflection on the process of encounter as I see it occurring between Native traditionalists and Western religious. More specifically, it is the coming together of Elders and Catholic religious professionals, a major event, one that provokes deep feelings, stirring up old and not-so-old memories. It also, as an event, raises many questions, one of which is how to articulate this reflection, for it requires holding in hand as objectively as possible two contrasting dimensions of my work and life experiences.

What follows is shaped by my social science training as much as it is by my years of apprenticeship in Native Medicine Ways. Psychological paradigm and Native spiritual and psychic insight are inextricably intertwined,

the two continuously shaping each other. This interaction is fluid in movement, always subtle, and elusive, a real and meaningful dynamic. This inner state is effectively a prism through which I begin this examination of what is happening in the name of deliberate encounter.

The fascinating fact of encounter itself is simple, but the perception and description of facets of its nature and its necessary conditions are somewhat more complex. This essay strives to delineate several features of spiritual encounter by drawing broadly on social science for concepts and terms, and it strives also to convey something of what is fundamentally full drama. So I begin with some stories before commenting on participants, purpose, method, issues, and conditions, and finishing with another anecdote.

I have four stories. These stories, and particularly the fourth one, not only imply but also explicate meaning and meanings, psychological and philosophical, all and each rendering something of the prophecy. The first three are anecdotal; the fourth is analysis and focuses on a recurring summer event.[1]

Story 1: The Dream

Contact with the world of Indian medicine and spirituality began for me in the spring of 1971 during a three-week camp at an Elder's place. There, I was introduced to sweat and pipe ceremonies, as well as to the absoluteness of traditional fasting. There is much to say about that first fast, but it is on the dream that I wish to dwell for a moment.

It took me three nights to discern that I had received a true dream in the first night. It is unusual for the same dream, identical in all detail, to be given three nights in succession. In hindsight, I confess to obtuseness and ignorance for I was then unperceptive, too dull and ignorant to realize the significance of the dream on its first and second nights. I had to be shocked into enlightenment.

It was sometime during the deepest hours of each night that the dream came. A symbolic scene, simple and beautiful, presented itself, displaying to the right an exquisitely tooled, gem-studded Mass chalice, and to the left, at the same time and on the same level, an exceptionally well-carved and well-balanced Plains red-stone pipe, stem poised up to the left, the

pipe held in profile. The two objects moved towards each other, very slowly, holding to the same plane, stopping in overlay to each other without either losing a single feature. One should have hidden the other, but didn't. The merging movement took place three times on each of three nights.

With the third repetition, hours of anguish of mind fell away. Part of me, instinctively and deeply, sensing an unusual purity, integrity, and power in the ceremonies, warred with well-schooled and conventional Christian principles regarding the paganism and animism of Indian religious practice. I was profoundly disturbed by this, for I feared being drawn into something sinful, destructive of my Catholic faith. I was torn between what I was perceiving as remarkable, consistent, enduring good effects in the sweat lodges and other ceremonies, and by the imperiousness and inflexibility of my philosophical and theological orientation.

What the dream did on the third night was to break up a Cartesian, myopic mindset,[2] and induce a felt need for an additional faculty, necessary so that inner attentiveness and trusting receptiveness could begin and a new sense of role and mission could be instilled.

Story 2: Henry and the Missionary

One day, Henry was busy digging, cleaning down inside an old well, when the local missionary sauntered by and stopped to chat. After words about the weather and the Oilers, the missionary shifted the conversation to his concerns over the atrocious conditions in the parish. The missionary summed up his views on the problems of the People by saying that "They were in a hole." Henry, irritated by what he perceived to be the pretentiousness of the good missionary's viewpoint, laconically replied, "You're in the hole, too, Father. Who goes to church nowadays?" After a long silence, the missionary, stung by the pointed honesty of the remark, yielded nonetheless to the truth of Henry's observation, acknowledging that, yes, he too was in the "hole," and, like his parishioners, was hurting and frustrated.

Story 3: Spiritual Visitors

There is a long experience, not only of spiritual entities in a range of animal forms, but also of spiritual visitors, peaceful and handsome entities, human in appearance, saying good things, providing helpful teaching and healing,

notwithstanding grievous, prevalent, and pervasive bad-medicine activity. A shift in trend of the content of visions experienced during Sun Dance became apparent several summers ago. I have personal knowledge of four Indians who, during their prayers and dancing in summer Sun Dance, were given visions of a Christ-like figure, in resurrected and glorious form, atop the central Sun Dance pole.

Some of these experiences are high-order, mystical. Individuals continue to have them. Is this a trend that will continue? Where will it or could it lead to? How far does it really go back?

Story 4: Elders and the Church People

Late in the summer of 1982 I had a dream depicting Elders and church people coming together in ceremony. The sharing of that dream led to the first of a series of summer workshops.

The first workshop grew out of a request from missionaries in attendance at an international theological conference at St. Paul's University, Ottawa, during the summer of 1982, at which I lectured on Native Canadian spirituality and shamanism. The original participants comprised, in addition to Natives, twelve Catholic missionaries and five lay-people of various religious backgrounds. The first session was organized on the condition that the learning experience was to be under Elder direction exclusively. The organizers readily acceded. To my knowledge to date, that workshop was a first of its kind, for until then it was unprecedented that Catholic priests should formally request Elders' guidance in spiritual development.

The desire for a follow-up seemed to come less from curiosity than from an awareness that perhaps there was something to be learned. My view was, and is, that what was experienced the first summer by a majority was personal and cross-cultural enough to whet appetites for more.

Five workshops have been held since then, and a sixth is planned for the summer of 1988. The first workshop took place in 1983 in the Alberta Rockies at the traditional grounds of the Stoneys in Kootenay Plains. Later workshops were held at one of the traditional areas of the northern Cree at the junction of the Little Red and Peace rivers, below the Vermilion Falls.

What do the workshops reveal and imply? And where will they lead? There are some indicators.

What follows continues this fourth story, the story of what I think happened by way of learning at these workshops. I am mostly concerned with the psychological and spiritual events experienced by the participants and by myself. The continuing story is testimony to my background and training experience in the concepts and processes of Native spiritual ways into which I have been guided by Arapaho, Blackfoot, Cree, and Slavey Elders, and to having been ratified and affirmed by such Elders in my pursuit of the deeper truths, those beyond the bewildering surface of tribal rituals, customs, and ways.

THE EXPERIENCES

Participants

The workshops were organized each summer by a committee comprising members of the Oblate Fathers order. Table 1 provides a profile of the students in each workshop. The table does not include the numbers of local Native helpers who were engaged to provide transportation of various materials, such as wood and water, transportation to nearby villages, cooking services, and assistance in various ceremonies.

Participants brought with them the necessities for outdoor camping and participation in ceremonies. The organizing committee defrayed costs for help and air transportation from Fort Vermilion through grants and tuition fees. Training activities and ceremonies were held in two very large teepees and a large sweat lodge.

Personal Responsibility

These stories are markers, in a sense, of an emerging movement: a movement directed forward and upward. My dreams suggest that. Acceptance of the two dreams has meant for me that I take responsibility for and provide initial and ongoing direction to the summer workshops. I verified with Elders, as holders and purveyors of Tradition, my interpretation of those dreams. By analogy, in the context of this paper to accept responsibility means to describe and reflect carefully on the workshop design and on the behaviours of apparently culturally and spiritually different people

TABLE 1 SUMMER WORKSHOPS

Year	Location	Total students	Oblates	Non-Oblates	Natives	Non-Natives	Males	Females
1983	Kootenay Plains	23	12	11	5	18	18	5
1984	Little Red River	22	13	9	2	20	16	6
1985	Little Red River	18	10	8	4	14	15	3
1986	Little Red River	18	10	8	3	15	13	5

deliberately trying to meet, as well as to describe the observed behaviours and to begin thereby an articulation of what conditions meaningful encounter requires.

Method of Analysis

The method of analysis applied here is a loose, generic combination of anthropological and psychological induction and description. This is so because of my own role. I was, and remain, a "participant-observer" in the workshops, as well as a psychologist trained both in Native and Western methods of facilitating personal and spiritual growth.

Native "technique" consisted in providing the opportunity for professionals to participate not only in such basic activities as the Pipe, Sweat Lodge, and the Fast, but also in such simple things as Elders' teachings, legends and stories, meals, dance, song, drumming, herbs, stones, fire, water, wind, colours, dreams and visions, sacredness of words and songs, entities, bad medicine, and hexing. Western approaches included the use of conventional Progoff Intensive Journal exercises,[3] as well as personal adaptations of these exercises devised for workshops, together with a range of exercises chosen to initiate and develop skill in use of the mind's visualization ability.

This combination was my own decision for a number of reasons. In my view, a primary goal for participants was to experience the usefulness of

exercising the intuitive area of their mind and to do so consciously and, ultimately, with skill. In a sense, this meant getting back in behind the individual's everyday or usual sense of "mind": drawing into inner consciousness one's own images as an organizing principle, as a process, as mirrors of the depths of soul, of true self, of soul as expression, and as individualization of God—that is, that within which is in the image and likeness of God. I assumed that this choice of metaphors would be congruent with those of most participants. This meant getting trainees to discover the difference between mediated and direct knowledge, on the assumption that Native spiritual knowledge is in the realm of direct knowledge. This in turn meant modeling for and indicating to students a necessary switching back and forth within the mind between Christian and traditional concepts, metaphors, and symbols.

The combination seems useful for professional non-Natives so that conscious awareness and attentiveness to the inner as well as the outer begins. The evolved Native mind is like a darting butterfly, moving unpredictably (only from a formal logic standpoint) in one direction or another, always in flow, always angling, seeking a natural level, shaped and carried forward by the contours of the surface, so to speak, never finding it, at least never finally stopping, always in movement forward, and becoming aware of this happening as it occurs.

As I had a dominant role in the workshop series, there is more to say about factors that make for an inescapable subjectivity and for the desire for careful analysis. It has been difficult to maintain a skeptical perspective in the face of my own passionate interest in human encounter and my own spiritual development.

My spiritual role is shaped by two gifts-to-the-People: that of counselling through "seeing" and that of healing through the hands. Most nights of each workshop people came for healing of different kinds. Participants, following some training in visualization, were invited to "work" with me in healing work.

Since the beginning of the workshops, instinctively almost, an overriding concern has been to grasp and describe clear reference points, that is, beliefs or assumptions, and conditions I now deem indispensable to the attainment of the general goals and objectives of the summer meetings. From a spiritual standpoint, there is no doubt as to the

possibility of encounter, notwithstanding significant historical and psychological obstacles, for Spirit's work is Spirit's work. And, as that phenomenon develops, the behaviour of the individuals involved can be validly and legitimately examined.

The Learning Model

The combination of techniques described earlier clearly implies a particular learning design because of pedagogical purpose, defined by participant expectations and my own judgment. The dominant model of the summer sessions is experiential in nature. The nature of the techniques itself suggests that. My judgment was formed by the view that traditional Native learning comes about through "doing it," before reflection or analysis. Also, Native spiritual insights and teachings are largely imbedded in oral tradition and ceremonies. One has to "do," that is, enter fully the ceremonies, in order to obtain the insight. In my view, the experiential, or learning-by-doing, model is a condition sine qua non to helping students break out of the ingrained, rationalistic twist of their Western minds.

At the planning stage, considerable attention was given to the learning design for the workshop. It seemed appropriate to orient all learning activities in terms of the characteristic, traditional Indian learning mode. The assumption with regard to selecting Western techniques was that, given the individual backgrounds of the trainee group, application of several growth techniques germane to the traditional mode would facilitate their engagement in fresh ways of thinking and perceiving: hence the choice of the Progoff method and a number of visualization exercises, complemented by group and sub-group discussions and evaluations.[4] The five summers experimenting with this combination appear to indicate that it is pedagogically sound.

Goals and Objectives

In preparation for the first workshop I proposed a number of descriptive statements as learning objectives. These formulations took into account a range of written requests submitted to me prior to the first session. These statements provided reassurance to the participants, who agreed to enter into new and strange activities, and involved the theological, spiritual,

psychological, sociological, and philosophical as examples to deepen personal awareness of role and mission and to perceive the psychological and spiritual characteristics of shamans, such as eco-centric strengths and techniques. They are reiterated here because of the reassurance they could and did provide to participants as they agreed to enter into new and strange activities.

1. Theological
    a. To re-examine personal theological constructs, personal paradigms and beliefs, in light of workshop experiences in "Energy" or "Life Force," spirit beings, and ceremonies
    b. To re-examine such shared principles as revelation, ministry, church, transcendent, or immanent, Being, creation, and the myths, metaphors, and images used to express such
    c. To begin a fresh theological imaging of autochthonous Christianity
    d. To attain more closely to the perennial ideal of catholic universality through working in another real world, with another perception of self/spirit.
2. Spiritual
    a. To deepen individual perception of self in relating self to others and to creation in the context of the richness of ancient Aboriginal experience and knowledge
    b. To see that private revelation is not the exclusive domain of "saints" but is also for those who are as deserving and able as any "saint"
    c. To sense that one's point of power is in the present moment and nowhere else

d. To deepen personal awareness of role and mission

e. To identify more clearly one's "gifts."

3. Psychological

a. To experience the validity and supremacy of the subjective, becoming introspective with confidence, and thereby sharpen and strengthen personal process skills

b. To experience minority status and to learn from it

c. To shed assumptions and to begin conversing with an actual Aboriginal community of faith

d. To recognize and to accept the requirements of radical perceptual shifts, to move from established and sanctioned concerns, and to open to a world *in via*

e. To become aware of one's dualistic thinking modes

f. To "see" the world in holistic terms.

4. Sociological

a. To identify points of tension and conflict in mission communities

b. To identify and develop workable solutions thereto

c. To perceive the psychological and spiritual characteristics of shamans, such as eco-centric strengths and techniques

d. To distinguish between "good" and "bad" medicine

e. To deal with the sometimes intense inter-shamanistic rivalries and jealousies

f. To understand that shamans develop their knowledge and powers in solitude and through cleansings

g. To learn the tradition of private revelation.

5. Philosophical

a. To perceive Native Wisdom as *philosophia perennis*, the perennial Wisdom of Humanity—to perceive the nature of the organic features of Indian Wisdom in terms of such concepts as rapport, love, wholeness, and oneness.

These statements of purpose were distributed to participants before their arrival. No single objective or subgroup of objectives was systematically pursued. The statements, as such, display unavoidable overlap. Informal feedback has since assured me that all objectives were attained in some measure, the degree of attainment varying from person to person.

ISSUES

During the first session, and in subsequent workshops as well, I perceived several interrelated difficulties to be significant obstacles to the experience of encounter and will now provide more detail.

Encounter can occur on a number of levels. The simple act of sitting for a first time and talking with Elders, for example, is usually meaningful. Nonetheless, as necessary as is listening and sharing, it remains a beginner's stage. Sensing the "goodness" of participation with others in ceremonies is another. Nonetheless, deeper encounter from within realms or areas beyond concepts and verbalization, the inner spaces attained through sustained rooting out of fears, and the instilling of complete confidence in one's own self-identity and meaning, and communicating from there with Elders

and spiritual entities represent a level of experience that must be reached in order to begin to sense the more important spiritual bridging points.

There are serious difficulties to be overcome in acquiring such knowledge and skill. Obstacles or learning challenges that obviate or delay such attainment derive, in my view, from rationalism, lack of trust, and inability to discern.

I define rationalism or intellectualism as reliance on reason as the basis for the establishment of truth, on reason in itself as superior to and independent of such other sources of perception as the senses and the intuitive mind, and on reason alone as capable of providing the fundamental criteria in the solution of problems. In and of itself, of course, rationalism does not exist, so one infers it from behaviour.

It seems to me that many religious people, perhaps more unconsciously than consciously, display a sometimes gluttonous attachment to philosophical and theological concepts, a cultural addiction of sorts, an imperialism even in that their concepts are the criteria by which they arrange their perceptions of ways and perceptions different from their own, invariably producing, if not a complete distortion, certainly an incomplete grasp of what is. Also, they are often compelled to tell non-Western religious people what is "wrong" with what they do, think, and feel. They have a tendency because of that to analyze, like picky, demanding consumers at a department store site, the strange ways and concepts of Native religion and thereby to trivialize all that they touch. Such stubborn behaviours are observable and as well are understandable, albeit deeply disappointing.

It is understandable, for example, that someone who studies Christology for four years should end up knowing a lot about Christ, and certainly knowing a great deal about what theologians have to say about Christ, and should end up believing that he or she believes in Christ, but in fact ends up without knowing Christ directly through or from within a recognized personal experience. Such a stance in its essence may be regarded as infatuation with ideas: an undue, exaggerated, if not idolatrous, attachment to concepts. This resilient tendency to start with analysis is strangely allied to anti-intellectualism that distrusts hard thinking, as well as to a stereotyped attitude towards mystical experience. It appears to be a characteristic of the busy professional struggling with "real" problems, wanting

and seeking immediate, "fast-fix," tangible solutions. Contemplation, of course, is for monks and nuns in cloisters. This paradoxical positioning is largely unconsciously clung to, and it fails to "see" more than it is able to understand, thus diminishing and caricaturizing what is so incompletely perceived. It is a tendency of affect as well, in that it is a penchant, a need, to control. So having to "understand" everything intellectually precludes any learning-by-doing, or at least slows up or delays any engagement with that mode of learning. This positioning precludes for many entry into the poetry of Native soul in its ingeniousness and lily-in-the-field sophistication, into a life sustained through dance, song, drumming, ritual, history, and legend.

Further, initial awkwardness and general discomfort with learning-by-doing provides evidence of an absence of mystical experience, in the classical sense, that is knowledge through direct or experiential knowing (*cognitio experimentalis*). Thus, an ungainly and inflexible preference for intellectual control and "understanding" before doing and likewise a marked incapacity to trust the self in doing something new and to trust those providing the new are propensities awaiting dissolution.

Now, none of that should be surprising, for the participants are neither of the culture nor steeped in it and are without a full-blown, functional mode of thinking and feeling, of sensing and perceiving, of doing in silence, of being in quiet, of relating, of living life. And that, in turn, explains the dismaying lack, initially, of a liturgical sense on the part of the participants: the absence of an intuitive and cosmic sense of ceremony, silence, and action.

Learning to trust, removing the reluctance to trust, is a major challenge. First of all, to trust one's own inner experiences in the areas of image, symbol, metaphor, dream, and vision, and each of these with its own affect, to grasp each of these in its root processes, is of course very difficult. This relative positional rigidity does surprise, for there is a traditional Christian emphasis on the primacy of individual conscience as the basis to morality, together with that of personal responsibility to inform that conscience.

The intellectualism-cum-anti-intellectualism posturing, together with the unproductive, anxious, and reluctant habit of distrust, is difficult to change. Nonetheless, its dissolution is conditional on learning to discern

within the self the good from the bad, the real from fantasy, valid perception from the hallucinative and the delusory. Drill and practice under Elder guidance are the means to develop this essential skill. As these new habits begin to form, the capacity to "see" in new ways, to "see" more of that which is the Life Force manifesting, comes.

ASSUMPTIONS

The commentary thus far has attempted to align and describe broad features of an unprecedented learning situation from the perspective of general purpose, approaches, objectives, and issues. In what follows, I want to abstract the conditions that, I contend, are the sine qua non to meaningful encounter. Thirteen statements, each with some comment, are presented. Before doing that, I feel several more observations should be made, however.

It seems to me, in keeping with my learning over the years as an apprentice to Elders, that the attempt to bridge these two major spiritual traditions is a completely demanding and entirely worthwhile exercise. It is a rare but understandable occurrence because of its inherent requirements. Also, in pondering the why-not of it all, I have often wondered why the first missionaries did not announce the Good News in these words: "The laws of Nature, the laws of the Life Force, the Creator, the laws of Light that you know and preciously hold to and guard, have also been shown to us. It has been revealed to us that the Light is the Christ through Jesus, and that Jesus is our brother. As brothers, we come to share our knowledge with you." But it didn't happen that way. Someone, somewhere, has said that "Buddha is the way to enlightenment. Christ is enlightenment." I would transpose and say: "The Native spiritual way is a way to enlightenment, and the Christ is enlightenment." This emphasis clearly suggests a fine point of bridging harmony.

Therefore, from my perspective, authentic encounter between two basic cultures, that is, Western and Native American, through members of each who comprise, on the one hand, Elders and spiritual teachers of different ages, all experienced in the processes of Native spiritual learning

and developments, and, on the other, religious professionals wishing to learn from such Elders, assumes or requires a number of inner capacities, honed awareness and channelling skills, and related behaviours.

1. Spirit works in an infinitely creative, fresh, wise, and good-humoured manner in the lives of us all, whether we know it or not. There is much humour in working through the challenge!

2. Initiated Elders, the Ones who know, refer to a fundamental Energy, a Great Spirit, a Creator, a Life Force, an at-once without and within Presence—the Animator of all at the core of one's being.

   For example, Elders declare, "What is Life, but a journey to the centre of the Light?" "I stand, with the Voice within me," "When I die, I will cross the River, climb the Mountain up into the Light." It is known that this is an Energy that requires and makes for changes, manifesting itself on four levels or dimensions, that is, physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual (whence comes the symbolic, quartered circle). In apprenticeship, one learns that this Energy within, manifesting itself variously, requires and induces four dimensional changes and that this same Energy at the same time is without, everywhere active and manifest.

3. The "encounter," if it is to be, is assumed to occur perforce in terms of this expressing and expressive Energy. This "encounter" is cross-cultural in the sense that culture comprises differentiated, characteristic behaviours, that is, ways of doing, relating, perceiving, and thinking, which contrast with characteristic non-Indian, Western behaviours and constitute a primary obstacle to perceiving the processes, the concepts, and the awarenesses: the characteristics of Native spiritual experience.

   Concretely, professionals who engage in this process of cross-cultural encounter quickly reach a point in their beginning experience when they invariably must question and examine the appropriateness or the validity of their theological, philosophical, and spiritual understanding and commitments. For some individuals this moment is

acute. They feel incomplete, unsure, and unfamiliar with the changes within. They reach out, unaware of their dependency on books, bibles, study notes, and at such moments they are told, "It's up to you. You have all the answers within." This leaves them in frustrated solitude until they break out of the dependency.

The break-out is a crucial moment, and its gravity and portent are neither to be ignored nor underestimated. (Note that this same moment is difficult for Natives as well. The requirements of this condition are universal in application.) Discussion with fellow workers concludes that it takes five or six fasts before one discovers that one does not "know anything." I believe that a number of students who did not return after one or two sessions left disappointed with the "experience" of the workshop, simply because their trust and patience was not extensive enough. They came for the "experience," but did not get it!

Also, at such moments, understandings and habits of mind assiduously acquired and developed over a number of years, usually during young adulthood, under the influence of scholastic philosophy and theology, habits of mind featuring induced and unconscious dualism, manifest unproductively. For others, because of subsequent university years, the shaping powers of that kind of influence are further laboriously compounded by philosophies of science and behavioural theories, as laboriously assimilated.

In either case, a profound reworking, a radical shift sometimes, is required in the direction of inductive learning methods that address and are rooted in the phenomenological, the empirical.

4. "Experiential learning" is imperative.

To learn consciously through doing seems to be essential. This concept is fundamental in my judgment, for this learning mode is a condition for encounter with spiritual Elders in the areas of spiritual and mental knowledge and skill. It is basic because the primary doing is ceremonial. "It's all in the ceremonies," the Elders often say. It is true that the whole cosmos teaches, but it is through oft-repeated ceremonial participation that one enters into the root experiences, concepts, and teachings. The ceremonies are the context within which Spirit

and spirit helpers are experienced. The ceremonies are the moments that bring insight, the beginning and deepening of increasingly sharper and stronger awareness.

Wholehearted acceptance of and trust in this non-literate mode of learning is imperative. It invariably requires an inner radical repositioning, an alignment within what appears to be a central principle, common to Native and Christian mystical development, that is, the acquisition of experiential knowledge (*cognito experimentalis*). This is a point of harmony.

5. There is an underpinning process causing and directing inner change.

   The process of inner change unrelentingly takes one beyond familiar boundaries, into the "Light," as the Elders say, to new and unfamiliar places, that is, to new levels of consciousness. Changes are required to provide direction beyond familiar inner terrains on all four levels (physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual). The effort demanded is absolute, requiring consummate patience with the process and forbearance with personal levels of maturity.

6. There is a psychological validity to the Native Way.

   Behaviours, characteristic of the individual into the Native Way, are several, as the preceding assumptions suggest. The starting point, and one frequently returned to, is one's fear base, manifest in patterns of anxiety, inhibition, suppression, and repression regardless of etiology. In my view, the psychology of the "Native Way" is primarily a psychology of recognizing and dissolving fear through various techniques, a releasing from fear patterns developed over time, a healing at one's deepest level of being.

7. Complete trust in Native Elders is essential.

   The fasting experience is a primary moment for the release of habitual patterns. These moments of release are dramatic and involve dreams, visions, visitations from spirit entities, inner inspirations, and counsel from Elders. The moment of confrontation with one's fears is ipso facto the moment of release, often a terrifying and awesome

moment of disintegration and reintegration, of breakdown and of build-up, an immediate inner repositioning, and a moment of enlightenment. The beginning side of this moment is often horrendous, characteristically inspiring great resistance until, as a result of acts of utter trust, of total and conscious faith and surrender to promptings, inner and/or outer fears and useless attachments are dissolved.

Trusting Indians in general, and sweat holders and fast holders in particular, to facilitate a deep, very personal change—trust in a process, the features of which are initially unfamiliar, if not repellent—requires a letting go of one's usual reference points, be they conceptual, emotional, or both, and a letting go that requires the guidance of experienced workers. Such acceptance at least minimally established, to trust going into one's own truth, to face oneself as one really is, an entity of strengths and weaknesses, also requires utter trust, regardless of the need for Elders.

8. There is axiomatic validity to key Native spiritual teachings.

   Fundamental to Native Spiritual teaching regarding inner development is the principle of personal responsibility: "It's up to you" is the push to all inner endeavours. Equally important is, "You have all the answers within," a principle that situates the locus and source of personal truth within. The concept of Light as central is equally fundamental.

9. In principle and in effect, experience shows that a selection of Western learning techniques combines well with traditional Indian development approaches.

   The former serves as a bridge to deeper learning experiences and understandings and as a means to shorten learning time. Both approaches require experiential learning.

10. There is a psychological capacity underlying the experiential learning mode, the triggering of which is fundamental to success in Native spiritual learning, to the awakening and sustaining of intuitive ability.

    The development of intuitive capacity involves the learning of consciousness-raising skills that require time and much attention to their

development. This is especially true of attentiveness development, for there are a number of different things to tune in to, in new ways.

11. Discernment skill is crucial.

    This experiential approach to learning also entails learning to discern within the inner midst of activity, for there can be much within-complexity. Development of this ability to sort out inner phenomena leads to the development of a related ability to discern what is acceptable in a spiritually different culture from the perspective of Jesus's statement, "I have not come to destroy but to complete." It seems to me that missionaries should be able to discern that which is valid in the spiritual tradition of the culture they are visiting. Otherwise, completion cannot be effectuated. Over decades, already many illiterate Natives have experienced and perceived the Christ and have conceived and expressed many times over an integration of Christian perceptions from within their own experiences and perception of spiritual realities. Some Elders have done so. It is clear that, ages ago, God broke into Indian life. It behooves us not to take away their imagination in order to fill them with concepts of conventional, non-symbolic Western theology, but rather to affirm that creative capacity. Indian life has its own beauty, truth, good, purity, and holiness, originating in and belonging to God and constitutive of the heritage of Christ, the "it" of that which He came to fulfill and not to destroy.

    It would seem that according to the testimony of a number of missionaries, there are clear examples of this integration, instances generally unperceived by non-Indian Christians. However laudable it is at the level of intention, the effort by non-Natives to take material elements of Native ceremonies for the purpose of integration into their own liturgical forms is misguided. For one thing, without knowledge of and skill in the underlying purposive processes and realities of Native ritual action, congruence and authenticity are not possible, all the more if such persons are not deeply steeped in the purposes and dynamics of their own rituals. A second difficulty also stems from a lack of understanding without extensive insight into the Tradition that is carried by ceremonial detail, viewed singly or as a whole, of a particular ceremony (for example,

a medicine lodge prayer ceremony), and of the cosmic elements and principles that compose and drive ceremonies. Authenticity and congruence are important elements of effective ceremony. It seems to me that such validity cannot be assured when specific elements are singled out for transposition into another liturgical context.

Those who propound acculturation seem to be saying that completion of the Native experience and perception is to be brought about by the non-Indian Christian. There is evidence suggesting that the reverse process is effective. The living example of Elders is an obvious area for evidence.

12. It is imperative that those seeking to bridge learn to enter into their own self-discovery rather than try to become like spiritual Natives. Many fail, at least initially, to perceive that a key, if not *the* key, to experiencing the Native soul is to awaken themselves within themselves. There is an enlightenment experience to be obtained, as well as a paradox to be carefully understood: going further into yourself is the way into Native self, a self also created in an image and likeness of God.

    The knowing required is a knowing obtained in the manner of Christian mystics. The *cognitio experimentalis*, once again, allows one to intuit accurately the workings of the Native soul and to relate consciously to it.

13. The evolved Elder is an exemplar of spiritual development and ministry.

    The high spiritual Elders are married, have children, and exercise their gifts for the People. They are usually economically independent and are extraordinarily inwardly and socially free. Some are born with the gifts; others develop them later in life. In either case, they are under signs and visions—their own, those of others in the community, or both. They are in a moral, psychic, and spiritual network with Elders within their own community, within the tribe and between tribes. Their ministry is not a structure of leadership or of presbytery, but rather one of modelling, teaching, prophecy, and healing. They usually have helpers of various kinds, especially in ceremonies, who,

while tending to the material requirements of setting ritual environments (for example, sweat lodges and medicine lodges of various kinds and the Sun Dance) maintain an inner awareness and attentiveness to the spiritual import of the practical and to the need for congruent behaviour as rigorous as that of the Elder.

ONE LAST STORY

Oral tradition is real and alive, but at times it is difficult to carry forward the purity of the original vision or event, and even more so to recapture it in the post-Contact period in a region when it has been largely lost. Nonetheless, from out of legends comes a most remarkable story. Tradition has it that there was a time of peace, a golden age, when war and intertribal strife were virtually unknown across Turtle Island, and that into this land came the Golden One, the Pale One, who walked across the entire island demonstrating and teaching, and that he will come again, and with that, a golden age will be upon us again.

NOTES

1 Normally in Cree tradition one would not share his or her dream, for dreams are private and not for sharing. After I sought counsel, in the case of two dreams (Story 1 and Story 4) it was decided by Elders that these dreams should be shared, given that other people were to be involved in subsequent enactments related to these dreams.
2 Dr. Joe refers here to Cartesian dualism, the theory of mind set forth by René Descartes in *Meditations on First Philosophy* (1641). Descartes argued that, in contrast to the physical body, the mind—the seat of thought and self-awareness—was something nonmaterial. The theory gave rise to a philosophical conundrum commonly called the mind-body problem.—*Eds.*
3 See Ira Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal Process.*
4 See ibid. and also Progoff, *The Practice of Process Meditation: The Intensive Journal Way to Spiritual Experience.*

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3 Natives and the Earth

This essay, hopefully with circumspection, with a sense of Tradition, and as a progress report of sorts, acknowledges the Elder admonition that "the time has come to share the secrets," for it has been said that the "White brother will come to the Red brother for teaching." This essay attempts, therefore, to take a number of concepts and subjective factors into account.

This endeavour is self-conscious, set as it is against a historical backdrop of extreme difficulty.[1] Yet, that notwithstanding, traditional concern over "my children and my children's children" to the seventh generation has essentially remained in place. Because of that, absolute alienation from the Earth has been avoided over the decades since Contact.[2] And so tradition continues to be a story of a relationship that is rational in vision and action. What is stressed here, then, are the characteristic features and dynamics of that Tradition.

This essay is self-conscious also in that its focus on spiritual process contrasts with the immediate context in this book of insightful socio-economic, political, and cultural considerations contributed by fellow writers who address the dismaying and alarming contemporary conditions affecting prairie agriculture and non-Native rural living.[3] Their preoccupation is situated in contemporary literature that seeks alternative answers and guidance from new directions. Eco-philosophers, ecologists, eco-feminists, eco-theologians, green politicians, and futurists provide views that offer a similar general emphasis and gesture broadly in a similar direction: that change is needed to move away from destructiveness and

incompleteness, from soil degradation and total environmental contamination, to a more fulfilling world and a better balanced state of being.[4]

The literature attests also to the prevalence of worldwide ignorance and indifference to ecology. The analyses seem to underscore the psychological numbness that Stuart Hill describes,[5] a subconscious denial of world-scale destructiveness, a denial that is an addiction, a tenacious cultural addiction to group and corporate ways of perceiving and behaving. This observer's conclusion is that people and earth are "hurt" and that "healing" is needed.

Natives would concur that much healing and support is needed and that people are not evil, for as Elders say: "It's up to you. You have all the answers within you. I'll help you the best I can." These are affirmations that underscore the inherent wholeness and rationality of humans. Natives would say as well that the healing process requires life-supporting activities rather than life-threatening activities: for example, different approaches to child-rearing and human development, different interactions with the environment, acceptance of responsibility for our own and humanity's evolution, and a sorting out of wants from needs, with priority given to the latter.

For centuries, Aboriginal Peoples have known that the land suffers much from foreign abuse and that Mother Earth is in painful travail. Old People across North America foresaw and forewarned that eventually the earth's capacity to sustain itself would be radically threatened.

It would seem that virtually all rural communities are confronted presently with the same stark reality: namely, that of the land's limited capacity to yield. Prairie agriculturalists of all kinds now find themselves in crisis. Furthermore, under these unprecedented conditions, rural peoples have, like the Natives, been marginalized and are now faced with unsettling prospects. At issue is their fundamental well-being, symbiotic as it is with the productivity of their land. It is because of all this that perhaps now one minority group may speak to the other. This essay is one opening attempt. Its eyes are those carriers of Tradition, the Elders, who are the ones who remember. They help us, as a collectivity, remember how it was to be in balance with the Earth, a balance that made and makes for the "good life."

Indisputably, the earth as a biosphere is endangered. Inarguably, if removal or diminishment of the danger is to occur, new understandings

must be sought.[6] This summary of characteristics of the Native American experience may contribute to a salutary perception and articulation of needed understandings.

KEY CONCEPTS

Something of the qualitative or existential stance and attitude of the North American Indian towards the earth is conveyed by the following observation: when speaking of the Earth as a mother, "the contemporary American means that the Earth and all of nature are like his natural mother. But the Navajo (and other American Indians) means that his natural mother is the closest thing he will ever know that is like his real mother—The Earth."[7]

A primal principle is evoked here. It is "different" from mainstream perception and it is imperative to grasp that, although "different," Native experiential knowledge, the Native Story, is based on perceived reality and not on romantic fabrication. The Native Experience is a Story with power, beauty, and mystery. Nonetheless, to share something of that experience poses considerable difficulty.

It has to do with the language. Our Western language, academic or otherwise, is really a language of the everyday self, busy with differentiating the multiplicity of objects. Western prose is awkward at best, often inept in translating spiritual realities. Nonetheless, as Dennis and Barbara Tedlock suggest, the problem of inexpressibility may be partially overcome through selected approximations, by "using language in a way that draws the speaker and his subject closer together than they would ordinarily be."[8]

To that end, the Native uses the concept or noun of relationship to indicate something of his vision and uses the verbs of being and becoming to indicate how knower and known are drawn together. Such choices can communicate some degree of the allurement and attraction of other dimensions when "seeing another world," without the total loss of meaning that the use of ordinary language invariably entails.

The following statements underscore the need to "see" and indicate the generic content of that "seeing":

You don't respect yourselves.

You don't believe anything unless you can read it in a book.

You have to learn to use your eyes.

You have to learn with your eyes shut.[9]

When I tell you these stories, do you see it, or do you just write it down?[10]

"Are all the stones we see about us here alive?" The old man answered, "No! But some are."[11]

Native "seeing" is a primary dynamic, an open and moving mindscape. This process determines and drives the Native habit to be fully alive in the present, without fear of self and others, non-compulsively and non-addictively in full relationship to all that is—in relationship with the "is"-ness of a self-organizing ecology, a cosmic community of "all my relations."

Native mindscapes, therefore, may have a scope that suggests possibilities for contemporary landscapes. The West has accepted a great deal of technology from American Indian peoples but has not yet learned their considerably more difficult lessons about mind and spirit.[12] This mind and spirit is conscious of the energies of the planet and the universe. These energies are the reality, at once one and multifaceted. This energy principle provides a conceptual point of reference for our encounter and dialogue. Theoretically, at least, given recent findings from physics, we can converge and meet within a similar perception or experience of reality.

The Earth and the Universe are, in the Native mind, realities of Power and Beauty, of Mystery—in social science parlance, a matrix of interactive and interdependent dimensions.

Power and Beauty

For the Native, everything in the entire universe is alive. This ubiquitous life force and activity is one of reciprocal allurement and attraction.

Mystery

Tradition holds that the Blackfoot chief Crowfoot said a century ago: "What is life but the flesh of the firefly in the night, the breath of the buffalo freezing over the prairie snow, the shadow running across the grass into the sunset . . . the baby playing on the floor . . . ?"

There is an unseen shaping, an organizing principle, immanent in all that is. The Ancient Ones understood cosmic dynamics and primordial powers: manifest without and embodied within the self. An attentive self is held as central and unconditional and is the basis for personal responsibility. Trained Native perception can attain to unmanifest essence per se, where everything is numinous, sacred, holy, lightsome, unending. The Sioux call this *wakan,* the Cree call it a *masnitu*, and the Iroquois call it *orenda:* "The Great Unknown Power . . . the Unknowing was seen and had many forms."[13] This Active Force can be "looked" to as being expressed manifest through the four physical realities of water, land, fire, and air.

FOUR PRIMORDIAL ACTIVITIES

Water Activity

Water primarily has the power to absorb and dissolve. The power of water enables human sensitivity to perceive, or absorb, or catch the photonic shower, and the beauty of the universe, through a sustained, self-reflective mindfulness that is a consequence of learning to really "listen" and "see."

Land Activity

The land of the planet through the millennia of its evolution reveals a power to link back, to reconnect, to remember. Natives look to the land and to the planet and animal worlds, for they contain and remember all previous adaptations through the ages. They remember the way the past works in the present. To forget the past is to deprive ourselves of extraordinary knowledge and power. One looks, therefore, to creative achievements of our ancestors, who have lived with the rhythms of the planet for tens of thousands of years, as permanent advances. As Brian Swimme describes it: "They have forged rituals and initiation rites to remind them that this

Earth is sole provider and sustainer of life forms. They have accumulated knowledge that we cannot do without, wisdom that, should we lose it, we could never reproduce."[14]

Native philosophy is an earth spirituality, an earth wisdom, requiring a humble relationship with the immediate environment and the all-embracing, encompassing universe. This experience and perspective is pan-Indian, a communal characteristic of Native identity in general. Lame Deer has said: "I think when it comes right down to it, all the Indian religions are somehow part of the same belief, the same mystery."[15]

The way Natives "look" at the land and "look" at humanity is the same. Because of that, at the time when the treaties were signed, the First Peoples did not have a concept of surrendering the land. They couldn't. Their deeply rooted impression was that they were agreeing to share the land they lived on, not to give it up, and that they would continue to use it freely, as in past times.

Agricultural monocultures have simplified the ecosystem dramatically, but artificially. We know that the complex depends on the simple. And, to its inevitable peril, monoculture has ignored, amongst other factors, the life forms below the surface of the earth, such as soil bacteria, as well as life forms above, such as worms and insects. Conventional agriculture has always been perceived by Natives as a rape of Mother Earth, a diminishment and impoverishment of the balance between living organisms. Across North America, Natives managed their ecosystems as supportive of self-regulating and self-maintaining processes. They now envisage competent ways to facilitate ecosystem recovery and regeneration, based on those same principles.

The following statements pictorially describe something of the Native relationship to the land:

> We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. . . . He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep

> or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.[16]
>
> As you know, we Indians think of the earth and the whole universe as a never-ending circle, and in this circle man is just another animal. The buffalo and the coyote are our brothers; the birds, our cousins. Even the tiniest ant, even a louse, even the smallest flower you can find—they are all relatives. We end our prayers with the words *mita-kuyo oyasin*—"all my relations"—and that includes everything that grows, crawls, runs, creeps, hops, and flies on this continent. White people see man as nature's master and conqueror, but Indians, who are close to nature, know better.[17]

Fire Activity

The activity of fire is manifest in the power of unseen shaping. Within, fire activity is the organizing activity of the self, that which lies behind speaking and understanding. Without, it is the conduit of the ultimate physical source of power, the sun.

Understanding of this concept of self is crucial, as no thing exists outside of the mystery of unseen shaping. Swimme declares: "The Earth is a self-organizing process of astounding complexity and achievement."[18]

Air Activity

Air or wind activity is the power of movement. Wind, incited by heat, moves from place to place. All that exists in and on the earth, and in the universe, is a movement of change. Movement, allurement, is found in all life and mineral forms, in physical gravitation, biological instinct, and human interest, for example. Inevitably, a Native person breaking into self-awareness learns and becomes celebration and generosity. So much of his song, dance, and drumming enhances and celebrates power—thanksgiving, giveaways, naming, healing, and so on.

Life forms are movement, energy frequencies, elements of balance, the power of the expressed, the feeling and seeing, the mind and the heart of the planet. Such awareness calls for strength, adventurous play, humour, and much laughter. In the words of a Navajo ceremonialist:

> When a Navajo experiences the sacred mountains' inner forms kindling a new strength within himself, he says, 'I am invincible. I am beautified.' To be invincible is masculine. To be beautified is feminine. These two concepts together are a powerful entity. There is no strength from only one. Power comes from the interaction between them. When you have strength, you recognize your opportunity, you know what you must do, and you have the grace to do it.[19]

The Native life principle is a concept that also comprehends the purposefulness of violence and destruction in the universe. Cosmic violence achieves awesome beauty. The study by Charles Schweger and Catherine Hooey describes the outcomes of hot and cold cycles over millennia, each with its "destructive" features.[20]

FURTHER COMMENTS

One instinctively intuits that much, if not all, of what we see around us does not make sense. Conventional scientific and technological explanations are now perceived to be short-term and myopic in scope. At the same time, Western society seems to be powerless to change individual and group behaviour, whether at community, regional, or national levels. Such folk dicta as "You can't beat city hall" and "Big Business has no loyalty" are cynical and pessimistic, expressive of a collective syndrome of distress at all levels of political and economic power. There seems to be a deficiency, a stultification, a radical inability to deal with questions of human-earth relationships.

Original Native experience and viewpoint are fundamentally optimistic. Much of what Natives know transcends cultural and historical boundaries. The complex of cosmic vectors described in the previous section describes a perception that "sees" and "knows" a planet in a universe that is psycho-socially sophisticated, with subtlety and nuance, and that is inclusive of all realms of being and becoming. It is a world of persons in relationship, and not of perceiving egos and objects, a relationality not of detached, juxtaposed persons but of kin.

The Native proposition for the attainment of eco-insight is therefore one that stipulates that personal transformation is a keystone of sustainable organizational and institutional transformation. The emptying of self through attentiveness is a prerequisite to perceiving unmanifest essence. It requires a self that is non-discursive, un-calculative, intuitive, and mystical. Native mind "space" is one of non-ego, not of ego versus object. Its defining orientation is towards meaning, not towards results. Epistemologically speaking, the Native is an individualist and empiricist; he knows only what is personally experienced.

The Native perspective provides a consistent experience, a time-tested vision, valid and reliable, an offset to much autistic, conventional science and technology, which has no developed capacity to communicate with the natural world. For the traditional Native, the well-being of ecosystems is a condition for human well-being, and this well-being results from the participation of the human community in the planetary community; this process is sacralizing.

Mutuality of relationship means "knowing" the larger community of life as the primary referent in terms of reality and value, as primary economic reality, primary educator, primary governance, primary healer, primary presence of the sacred, and primary moral value.[21] Thus, as Thomas Berry states, all species are granted "their habitat, their freedom, and their range of life expression."[22]

The Original People hold a unique story of the universe and planet earth, of life consciousness. They understand the rights of living beings to exist and not to be abused or wantonly used or exterminated. They know the process of mutuality and what can be derived from relationships, together with what must be given or returned to relationships.

Rationality, mutuality, is the structure of Native human ecology. It is the organizing principle of all else, the prime shaper of Native perception. Because of this vision, responsibility towards the earth is one of stewardship. Faithfulness to this role as steward is what assures the earth to "our children and children's children."

This manner of relating diametrically opposes the addictive propensities of contemporary society, the current corporate and consumer

tendencies, especially in the manifest preoccupation of conventional agriculture with productivity, profit, and political power.[23]

CONCLUSION

The Native Story is one of response to the planet and to the universe. It is also a response to a modern Western felt need for a new paradigm, that is, a "New" Story. The West is experiencing the incapacity of the contemporary Science Story to provide meaning.[24] Swimme and Berry propose that for elements for a New Story one should look both to the enduring features of the Native Experience and to the burgeoning awareness in the field of quantum physics.

For the Native, the Universe/Earth self-educates through talking, reflective humans, for it is careful and caring words that shape our attention, our desires, and our visions. Elders would agree with Swimme, who declares: "This photonic shower from the beginning of time powers your thinking. . . . We are the creative, scintillating, searing, healing flame of the awesome and changing universe."[25] And also with Berry:

> The natural world is subject as well as object. The natural world is the maternal source of our being as earthlings and the life-giving nourishment of our physical, emotional, aesthetic, moral, and religious existence. The natural world is the larger sacred community to which we belong. To be alienated from this community is to become destitute in all that makes us human. To damage this community is to diminish our own existence.[26]

To sum up, Original Peoples tend to perceive relationships in a mental and spiritual way, and so they tend to go about things differently. Their Vision, born of empowering attentiveness, comprehends ranging diversity, life sustainability, and thereby a profound and rich quality of life.

A fitting final word to buttress this chapter's timid suggestions comes from Swimme:

So much of our destruction of the continent intertwines with our debilitation of women, Native Americans, and Black Americans. . . . Dawning in our awareness in our own decades is the recognition that the complementary interaction between these two traditions is our most significant source of social creativity and political power. We enter a period of enormous promise. The scientific-technological, Christian, masculine, individualistic, Northern European spirit joins with the ecological, animistic, feminine, communal native spiritualities in the creation of a new form of society whose significance towers over that of all other political or social events.[27]

NOTES

1 Hesitancy hangs over this writing. My own reluctance to share seems to derive from conditioning that predisposes one to act out. Contemporary Natives generally tend to be defensive, constantly suspicious and distrusting, prone to attack anything or anyone perceived as threatening ridicule or rejection. In large part, these are defensive stresses ultimately attributable to a near-total arrestation of a natural relationship with the earth, stresses now so manifest in the full, and exponentially increasing, range of areas of social breakdown. Containment and profound inhibition of Native American cultures ensues from encounter with European colonizers, who were driven by greed, ignorance, and fear to appropriate vast Canadian lands. Rendered powerless, the First Peoples were forced to witness violation of the land. That Natives have managed to retain any traditional values and attitudes at all in the face of violence, dispossession, betrayal, degradation, and misguided paternalism, systematically visited upon them since the 1600s, is indeed astounding. Although in Western Canada a hundred years of systematic and deliberate oppression of Native earth-related lifeways has had a deep, debilitating impact on Native creativity, power, and potential, what is important now, once again, is to stay focused on basic features of the Turtle Island tradition.

[The Turtle Island story is a creation myth, common among the Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) and Anishinaabe peoples. In the latter decades of the twentieth century, the term *Turtle Island* became popular among environmentalists and Native rights activists, who used it to refer to North America, hoping to encourage a more inclusive and ecologically holistic understanding of the continent, one capable of reconciling Native and non-Native perspectives. Whereas “North America” is the home of colonizers, for whom the land is something to be tamed and mastered, “Turtle Island” is a place where Indigenous cultures, with their emphasis on environmental balance and stewardship of the land, remain vital and respected.—*Eds.*]

2 Joe is alluding here to a prophecy to the effect that an environmental apocalypse would occur seven generations after European contact, following which First Nations would reclaim stewardship of the land. The prophecy is commonly interpreted to mean that Native peoples must ensure their survival through the next seven generations.—*Eds.*

3 The reference is to *Alternative Futures for Prairie Agricultural Communities,* the collection of essays edited by Jerome Martin in which "Natives and the Earth" originally appeared.—*Eds.*

4 See the works of Thomas Berry listed in the bibliography. See also Stuart B. Hill, "Soil, Food, Health, and Values"; and Brian Swimme, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon: A Cosmic Creation Story.*

5 See Hill, "Soil, Food, Health and Values," 94.

6 See ibid., in which Hill elaborates on this point.

7 See Jimmie C. Begay, "The Relationship Between the People and the Land," 28.

8 Dennis Tedlock and Barbara Tedlock, *Teachings from the American Earth: Indian Religion and Philosophy,* xi. See also Joseph Couture, "Explorations in Native Knowing."

9 Beeman Logan, quoted in Tedlock and Tedlock, *Teachings from the American Earth,* xx.

10 Zuni informant, quoted in ibid., xxiii.

11 Ibid., 146, quoting an elderly Ojibwe informant.

12 See ibid., xvi.

13 Leonard Crow Dog, quoted in Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, *American Indian Myths and Legends,* 131.

14 Swimme, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon,* 103.

15 See Lame Deer and Richard Erdoes, *Lame Deer, Seeker of Visions*, 246.

16 Commonly attributed to Chief Seattle, 1854. [Joe refers here to the speech delivered by the Duwamish chief Si'ahl (Seattle) in 1854, regarding the concession of Native lands to the American government. The speech has been the subject of much controversy, and many versions of it exist. For the text from which Joe quotes, see http://www.kyphilom.com/www/seattle.html.—*Eds.*]

17 Jennie Leading Cloud, quoted in Erdoes and Ortiz, *American Indian Myths and Legends,* 5.

18 Swimme, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon,* 133.

19 Daniel Deschinney, a Navajo ceremonialist, quoted in Trebbe Johnson, "The Four Sacred Mountains of the Navajos," 47.

20 See Charles Schweger and Catherine Hooey, "Climate Change and the Future of Prairie Agriculture."

21 See Thomas Berry, "The Ecozoic Era," 5.

22 Ibid., 7.

23 See Hill, "Soil, Food, Health and Values"; see also Thomas Berry, "The New Story: Comment on the Origin, Identification and Transmission of Values.".

24 Each of Berry's excellent essays in *The Dream of the Earth* illustrates this point.

25 Swimme, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon,* 169 and 159.

26 Berry, *The Dream of the Earth,* 81.

27 Swimme, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon,* 159.

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TWO

Encountering Elders

Introduction

In Part II of this volume, Dr. Joe writes about the importance of true Elders: how to recognize them, learn from them, and adapt their guiding wisdom to today's contemporary world. Drawing from his experiences with medicine Elders, Joe uses simple maxims and stories to convey their teachings. He offers insightful comparisons with Western psychology and examines the complexity and depth of Native knowledge, central to which is "the concept of a direct experience of nature, the principle of the spiritual immanent in creation." He argues that traditional Native insights and values are dynamic—that they are continually re-expressed in new forms and thus remain pertinent to modern culture. He also points to the alarming rarity of true Elders today and asks us to awaken to our own stories, suggesting that we can gain a new sense of future possibilities through an understanding of the past.

"Next Time, Try an Elder!" is the first of some seventy essays that Dr. Joe wrote between 1979 and his death in 2007. He begins by describing a major shift in Native consciousness that occurred in the late sixties and early seventies, in which a growing sense of defeat within the Native community reawakened interest in Indigenous tradition and, especially, in the knowledge held by tribal Elders. While he acknowledges the need for Native people to develop a new and stronger sense of identity, one that is fundamentally bicultural, he argues that the key to forging this identity lies in the teachings of Elders, teachings that are grounded in a holistic worldview very different from that of mainstream Western culture. As he sees it, Western education, with its elevation of reason over intuition, has

produced a mindset that relies almost exclusively on the left brain, the seat of linear thought and analysis. In contrast, "Native mind," as exemplified above all by Elders, has the potential to be fully operational, integrating the symbolic, intuitive, and pattern-generating powers of the right brain. Sayings or maxims that surface throughout the essay affirm the Indian way as one concerned not with instrumental, object-oriented *doing* but with a process of "*Being/Becoming* a unique person, one fully responsible for one's own life and actions."

In "The Role of Elders: Emergent Issues," written in 1991, Dr. Joe pays tribute to the contemporary resurgence of Elders—who, as the guardians of Native ceremonies, had for many years been forced to render themselves all but invisible. Staring around 1970, however, Elders were sought out afresh, as Native peoples began to embrace their heritage, sensing that in traditional teachings might lie answers to both personal and communal difficulties. Drawing on a series of summary statements, Dr. Joe describes the fundamental moral and spiritual orientation embodied in these age-old teachings, emphasizing that, in the hands of Elders, traditional stories and concepts continue to acquire new and timely meanings. He goes on to discuss the character traits and outlook that Elders typically manifest, before ending with a consideration of several issues of contemporary concern, among them the rapidly decreasing number of "true" Elders and the rise of "instant" Elders. As Joe acknowledges the outset of the essay, any attempt to translate an orally transmitted "literature" into written form is bound to be only partially successful. In closing, he further draws attention to the problems of understanding that can result when non-Natives, whose outlook is steeped in Western intellectualism, encounter Elders, whose teachings demand the engagement of our hearts as well as our heads.

In "Explorations in Native Knowing," also written in 1991, Dr. Joe makes a pioneering effort to describe the defining features of a cognitive mode he calls "Native mind." As he points out, "in traditional perspective, nothing exists in isolation; everything is relative to every other being or thing." It is this sense of wholeness, of interrelatedness, of immanence, that distinguishes Native cognition from the analytical mode of mental functioning characteristic of the Western mind. Native mind rests on an intuitive and holistic mode of perception, one that resists translation

into the linear structures of language and instead relies heavily on metaphor and symbol. In the course of the essay, Dr. Joe examines the usefulness and the limitations of existing psychological theories, both Eastern and Western, in relation to Native mind, before going on to propose certain basic assumptions, or “critical givens,” that should undergird further explorations of Indigenous ways of seeing and knowing. In closing, he reflects on the problem of how to integrate these hitherto unfamiliar epistemological orientations into the university setting, noting that even in Native Studies programs Western models still prevail. Nonetheless, he is firmly of the opinion that an appreciation of Native modes of awareness and mental process is essential to Native identity and ultimately to Native cultural survival.

4 Next Time, Try an Elder!

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This paper is based substantially on the author's life and work experience. While little effort is made to be scientifically rigorous, nonetheless the author's views are carefully situated against a conceptual backdrop of such eminent thinkers and researchers as Martin Buber, Carl Rogers, Abraham H. Maslow, Fritz Perls, Vine Deloria, Jr., John Niehardt, and others—a background, in turn, overarched by the teachings of a host of Elders. The author is of Cree ancestry.*

In the mid-seventies in Canada, a fresh spate of survey statistics appeared, describing once again a familiar grim Native situation. One statistic in particular provoked a sense of déjà vu. It was found that alcoholism affected virtually every Native family in Alberta, in stark contrast with a 10 percent impact on families in the dominant society. Other studies focused on the ratio of Native versus non-Native convictions in the courts, the proportion of Native inmates in federal and provincial prisons, the alarming increase in Native suicides, and the growing number of child neglect and abuse cases. All studies delineated a graphic scene of intense socio-cultural, emotional, and mental deterioration. These research studies confirmed what Natives already knew: that things are bad and getting worse.

In the very late sixties and into the early seventies, Native political and service leaders and organizers experienced much discouragement and deepening frustration. It was a time when bureaucratic and political doors had to be forced open, when programs were exceedingly difficult to start

and maintain. Yet, in the midst of the hurt, resentment, and dismay, the dawn of a major shift in consciousness appeared. It is not my intent to provide the historical details that led to this return to the sources, but rather to suggest what I believe to be the relevance of that movement for virtually all the difficulties experienced by Native individuals and groups of all kinds across the country, and particularly for Native mental health in its most comprehensive sense. My proposition is premised on the theoretical possibility not only that traditional cultural ways are not static but that in fact old values are dynamic—that they can be, and are continually being, re-expressed in new forms and, as such, are being effectuated by Elders now at grips with an increasing flow of Natives seeking advice and counsel, healing and inspiration, interpretation of the past and present, and indications for future survival. In order to establish the claim of Elders' relevance, it is helpful to examine some history, some Elders' teachings and behaviour, and offer some recommendations.

A BRIEF HISTORY

The very late sixties was a period during which Native individuals and groups virtually everywhere in North America keenly realized that past and current efforts to resolve their enormous cultural, socio-economic, and political difficulties were unsettling failures. It was also a period of intense introspection induced by the perceived lack of results: "How can we change the direction of the destructive currents? The White man hasn't got any answers!" These and other similar statements expressed the deep anger and consternation of the day. In the midst of indignant disarray, a saving thought was provoked when someone said, "Why don't we try the ways of our culture? We've tried everything else! Maybe if we talked to some old people?" With that incipient awareness, for many began the uncovering of what Elders and Indian heritage are all about and how this is literally the vital, life-inducing roots and sources of problem resolution.

One event, paralleled subsequently in other places on the continent, occurred in the fall of 1972. It is noteworthy for it presents clear evidence of

a major shift in Indian consciousness. On that occasion, Elders from eight different tribes in Alberta were convened for twelve days on the west coast of Vancouver Island by the Indian Association of Alberta's current leaders and staff workers. After two days of discussion on education issues, in substance, the following was declared:

> In order to survive in the twentieth century, we must really come to grips with the White man's culture and with White ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The White man has many good things. Borrow. Master and use his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general cultures, between the basic values of the Indian way and those of Western civilization—and thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. For to be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had to do this before. But, in so doing, we will survive as Indians, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so.[1]

The importance of this statement is several-fold. Of unique significance, and for the first time in many decades, is that Elders, as the historians of their tribes, interpreted for their own people the meaning and direction of their own history. With this, traditional leadership came out of mothballed existence and expressed itself with freshness and vigour. Of note also is that the general nature of desirable and meaningful connections between the two cultures was defined, thus indicating that careful openness and selectivity are preferable to and healthier than an attitude of distrusting defensiveness.

Finally, perhaps the most important emphasis lies in the redefinition of Indian identity: that is, to become bicultural is a needed, positive, existential act. Thus, a comprehensive goal for Indian education was described. One particular event is underscored because of its singular importance. As indicated, similar events almost contemporaneously took place throughout North America. Since that era, attention has been given to characteristics of the advice or teachings of the Elders and to how these relate to identity and survival.

It suffices to present a few recurring sayings that can be heard virtually everywhere throughout North America: *Don't worry. Take it easy. Do your best. It will all work out. Respect Life. It's all up to you. You have all the answers within . . .*

These few sentences reveal a deep and strong existential stance. Its principles, besides being interrelated in their meaning, are in turn correlates or facets of a more comprehensive traditional focus: *The centred and quartered Circle is the sign of wholeness, of inclusiveness of all reality, of balance and harmony between man and nature* (Amerindian tradition).

Further appreciation of the central importance of the preceding quotations can be gained by drawing attention to the profound harmony that exists between such Indian traditions with a long-standing Western cultural tenet: *The subject and object of education is the whole of man, in the whole of his environment, for the whole of life* (Western tradition).

The latter is a philosophical theme of holism and personalism that threads back through the centuries to Graeco-Roman times. It is to the whole person that educators were urged to direct themselves. It is a similar process that Indian education enabled. Traditional means effectively taught Indians how to become and be unique expressions of human potential. These same traditional processes also developed a strong sense of responsibility towards self and, equally, towards the community, which phenomenon indicates how the general Indian community resolved that long-standing human paradox of how to be simultaneously both individualistic and communal. This Native achievement constitutes an extraordinary and perhaps unparalleled event in the context of known history.

The richness of Indian holism and personalism can be further delineated by drawing on Western existentialism. When one looks beyond or behind the externals of local and regional custom, language, and history, the core dynamic of the Indian Way of Life is revealed. Existentialism, despite its scholastic variations, stresses the utter validity of subjectivity; for example, the feeling, reflective subject has the freedom to make choices and thus to determine his life. Therefore, what one does is of key importance.

The *doing* that characterizes the Indian Way is a doing that concerns itself with *Being/Becoming* a unique person, one fully responsible for one's own life and actions. Finding and following one's Path is a characteristic Indian enterprise that leads to or makes for the attainment of inner and outer balance. In marked contrast is the general Western understanding of *doing* that strains towards having, objectifying, manipulating, "thingifying" everyone and everything it touches.

The Indian *Being/Becoming* thrust is characterized in particular by the nature of its relationship with the cosmos, especially with Mother Earth, the land. Comparative religionists only of late have begun to study Native American religion. They now rank Amerindian religion with the great religions of the world and draw attention to the centrality of land as a unique characteristic. This relationship is personalized and is essentially one of trust and respect deriving from a direct and sustained experience of the "one-ness" of all reality, of the aliveness of the Land. Exemplars of such a way of living and relating are, of course, Elders. The preceding glimpse of their sayings may now be usefully supplemented by a look at several Elders' behavioural features.

ELDERS: SUPERB EMBODIMENTS OF HIGHLY DEVELOPED HUMAN POTENTIAL

I am of the opinion that Elders are superb embodiments of highly developed human potential. They exemplify the kind of person that a traditional, culturally based learning environment can and does form and mould. Elders are evidence that Indians know a way to high human development to a degree greater than generally observable in prevailing Western society. Their qualities of mind (intuition, intellect, memory, imagination) and emotion, their profound and refined moral sense, together with a high level of spiritual and psychic attainment, are perceived as clear behavioural indicators deserving careful attention and possible emulation.

Such examples of unusual self-actualization are of considerable consequence for Native health programs, as well as for the full range of Native educational development. To relate to Elders is to observe and listen

carefully. To come to understand the "what" and "why" of their behaviour grounds and roots one in the living earth of Indian tradition.

It is not possible to study and examine Elders in the conventional sense simply because that is not the "way." One learns about Elders through relating over a period of time. Elders apply a learning-by-doing model: counselling and teaching focus on the doing, on one's experience. Respectful observation eventually yields evidence of remarkable, incisive intellect; of tested wisdom; of sharp and comprehensive observational ability allied with excellent memory recall; and of well-developed discursive ability—abilities and skills that constitute the main cognitive qualities of Elders' minds. Unfortunately, we do not know yet, in detail, what combination of psycho-cultural variables combine historically to develop their abilities. Nonetheless, some insight can be acquired through study of child-rearing practices and traditional decision making.

It is my observation that child-rearing practices are person-centred and that their application fosters free individuals, developing children who effectively learn to take full responsibility for what they do and become. The practical ways of Indian parents who, in the context of an extended family, raise their children in a steadying atmosphere of trust and respect, instil a sense of freedom, responsibility for self, and creative ability. For example, the history of those few tribes who record instances of homosexuality also indicate that it was institutionalized, meaning that homosexual individuals were acknowledged and allowed to be themselves.

Equally satisfying would be to learn the patterns of traditional decision making. Virtually every tribe employed a consensus decision-making process, a process that contrasts sharply with that of democracy's majority decision making. It is a common observation that majority rule can be at times tyrannical and oppressive for minorities. Majority-based decisions are not necessarily humanizing in their application, whereas Indian groups traditionally did not decide until everyone present indicated their feelings and thoughts. Time was allowed for everyone to express and re-express themselves, to consider and reconsider all opinions, and to thus allow everyone to move with confidence into a group decision. The underpinning value of such a process of respect is that of the importance of the

individual as a unique and responsible person. It was because of this process that Native groups were able to resolve the standing paradox, as indicated earlier, of how an individual might best become his or her unique self and follow his or her own path while at the same time being responsible for, and intensely involved in, communal interactions and activities and mutual support systems.

In addition to this description of cognitive ability, it would be equally interesting to examine the affective dimension of Elder behaviour: for instance, their exquisite sense of humour, their sense of caring, their communication finesse in teaching and counselling. Verification of these qualities is left to the reader, however.

A final aspect of Native holism can be explained in terms of recent research and experimentation. The work of Robert Ornstein and followers such as Bob Samples suggests strongly that there is clear physio-psychological evidence pointing to left-brain activity as distinct from right-brain cerebral function and that our school systems develop only such left-brain functions as intellectual analysis, linear thinking, and language. Metaphorical and symbolic perception, an intuitive activity that is a characteristic right-brain function, has been curiously neglected. In a sense, in mainstream Western society we are half-brained! Left-brain functioning has been well tended to, with little or no right brain development occurring, so it can be said that we are incomplete.

It is contended that traditional Indian educational processes engaged both cerebral functions, unconsciously perhaps, but they did so nonetheless. Characteristic Native mind involves both generic activities, not one to the exclusion of the other. A linear analytical mind can neither understand nor appreciate the behaviour of a person who frequently moves in terms of his or her intuition. The latter behaviour is deemed "un-reasonable." The analytical mind, of necessity, must break things down into controllable little pieces before it can comprehend. Such a mind experiences considerable difficulty in developing a relationship with a person who is actively intuitive, metaphoric, and symbolic in self-expression. This characteristic difference is perhaps a central obstacle to White-Indian communication. Non-Natives say, "Who can understand an Indian?" and Indians, in turn, declare, "Crazy White-man thinking."

USEFULNESS

Some philosophical and psychological concepts have been briefly referred to above, intimating that a Native life philosophy, as modelled by the persons of Elders, is relevant to Native education generally and to Native mental health particularly.[2] The suggestion is that there clearly are elements according to which Indian behaviour might be patterned more meaningfully and by which traditional behaviour might be more fully understood and appreciated. One test of the relevance and pertinence of such rather abstract formulations lies in their functionality. Can such elements re-become the inner dynamics of Native behaviour? Can educators and counsellors get some principles to operate effectively, or if already operational, can their functioning be strengthened? The hypothesis is that modern Indian lives that are lived and based on traditional values can make for maturity and balance. The question, then, is what is the *how?*

To describe the *how*, several observations about what goes on at universities may be useful. It is strongly felt that much of what university people do stems from a bourgeois appetite for success in the eyes of peers, a success that rides on the effort to control, or to "have." It is a rule-and-conquer syndrome that affirms, "We call the game. You must meet these standards via the strategies that we also define. That is the road to success." Notwithstanding the inherent need for evaluative criteria, the prevailing ethos is essentially colonizing, subjugating, controlling.[3] It is a form of control and processing that is often a form of violence as well.

This is an understandable process because mechanistic rationalism prevails in universities. As we have seen, the rationalistic or intellectual mind is analytical–linear in its modality. In the name of "scientific method," such a mind breaks things up into exact pieces, but in so doing it fails to see the loss of gestalt meaning that such dissection inevitably entails. The academic mind sincerely and arduously labours for years to acquire and develop its conceptual prisms, but at the same time develops a frequently unyielding compulsion to determine for everyone else what reality is, and to label or name that reality. As far as Indians are concerned, this strong tendency is all too often arrogant, patronizing, insensitive, overly systemized, ignorant of, and impervious to others' ways of knowing.[4]

It is difficult for many intellectuals so encased in their academic egos to perceive what is extraordinary reality—in this case, the "what" seen by traditional Indians and the "how" whereby they arrive at seeing the "what." The analytical approach by itself is incomplete, "half-brained." It needs to be complemented by the intuitive faculty. Both are needed: the head and the heart. Both function in complementary fashion in traditional Native mind.

One method by which the long and arduous route to full-mindedness can begin is through apprenticeship. This is the most straightforward and clear method through which academics, public service professionals and paraprofessionals, Indian and non-Indian, can acquire knowledge of the Indian way and develop the various skills that acquiring such knowledge requires. Such apprenticeship is comprehensive in scope. Its focus is health: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual balance, and harmony within and without, with all living things, life forms, Nature, and the cosmos. Through apprenticeship, the laws of Nature are learned. It facilitates entrance to other levels of consciousness, to additional ways of knowing.

Apprenticeship is also a painful process because much unlearning of inefficient and/or inadequate ways of coping with life and self becomes necessary—and for academics and other professionals especially it is particularly difficult to allow a reconfiguration of rational concepts to take place because intuitive ways of knowing are not rational. They are *a*rational, not *ir*rational. This learning process is akin to what Kazimierz Dabrowski designates as a "disintegration/reintegration" process. It may be likened to what Fritz Perls characterizes as letting go of one's mind and coming to one's senses. It is a question of entering into a continued relationship with an Elder to learn the rules of his game on his ground. For professional people, the system has trained us to assume control, to define, to label, to analyze; we become very egocentric, our altruistic claims notwithstanding. The professional has to learn arational behaviour, which at first glance is unreasonable! The necessary letting go of one's conceptual paradigm can be of quantum leap proportions.

A second method is of an intellectual order. The effect of serious, conventional, analytical, and critical study would be to prepare the ground of

mind for an apprenticeship experience that renders one sensitive to Indian ways of knowing.

The study of holistic and personalistic philosophies, the study of the meaning and "the whole man, in the whole of his environment, for the whole of his life," would be rewarding intellectual pursuits. As well, the study of the meaning of the Being/Becoming process as propounded by humanistic and existentialist philosophers and psychologists would be appropriate. The examination of homeopathic medicine and of Western physics would also be a rewarding and readying exercise.[5] Homeopathic medicine, with its focus on "Vital Energy" and its concern with the repatterning of energy flows, remarkably parallels Indian Medicine interventions. Physics has now established that we are individual energy configurations, or frequency vibrations, and that there are laws governing these humanized energy forms—laws that are known to Medicine People.

Finally, as a third method, and perhaps more concretely, "experiential" learning models have much to offer to professionals struggling with Indian mental health problems in a setting of bicultural differences and harmonies. Human relations training, basic communications skills development, and Perlsian and Rogerian encounter-learning models all provide useful theory and techniques relative to Indian socio-cultural identity and survival and growth needs.[6]

CONCLUSION

The most effective method of all is long-range. It consists of the maintenance of an Indian community-related base. Many acknowledge that one has to live with, cry with, laugh with, and rejoice with Indians in an extended family setting and remain rooted in an Indian sense of life and vision. The Indian learning process stimulates, sustains, and enhances human growth. This process is learned only through doing. For the professional, it could provide the traditional skills needed for the treating of Indian mental health problems. This process develops a fully functioning mind. Inner strength and confidence, authenticity and congruence, are additional results. Such learnings strongly offset the pervasive and

debilitating Western compulsion for control and success. The Indian Way removes one from a path of under-fulfillment, if not from self-destruction. It is an intriguing, benign experience.

If in doubt, next time try an Elder!

NOTES

1 Declaration made by Elder Louis Crier, Cree Nation, Ermineskin Band, Hobbema, Alberta. Subsequent travels to Native conferences and meetings in Canada and the United States since 1972 indicate that virtually throughout North America, at approximately the same time (i.e., the early 1970s), similar Elder events took place and declarations were made.
2 The distinction made here between philosophy and psychology is for the purpose of presentation only. The point of this study is that the two perspectives are concentric and inseparable.
3 For an excellent analysis of the shortcomings of colonizing rationalism, see Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*.
4 Don Juan continuously chastises Castaneda's shallow, rationalist mind: see Carlos Castaneda, *A Separate Reality: Further Conversations with Don Juan*.
5 On the former, see Harris L. Coulter, *Homeopathic Medicine*; on the latter, see Fritjof Capra, *The Tao of Physics: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism*.
6 The author has completed three runs of a course titled "Native Identity Development" (Native Studies 211, Department of Native Studies, Trent University, Peterborough, Ontario) that grouped 220 Native and non-Native students in thirty-two workshops. The Native to non-Native ratio was 1:2. The methods referred to here were utilized. Controlled data obtained over a three-year period (1976–78) appear to support the author's claims. Previous work experience with the Nechi Institute of Alberta clearly demonstrated that the presence of Elders in all training workshops not only assured a significant cultural climate but immensely enhanced the workshop learnings because of the ability of Elders to cement facilitator endeavours through the sharing of their own knowledge and demonstration of their own skills.

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5 The Role of Native Elders
Emergent Issues

> Shorn of the various surface features from different cultures, Coyote and his kin represent the sheerly spontaneous in life, the pure creative spark that is our birthright as human beings and that defies fixed roles or behaviour. He not only represents some primordial creativity from our earlier days, but he reminds us that such a celebration of life goes on today, and he calls us to join him in the frenzy. In an ordered world of objects and labels, he represents the potency of nothingness, of chaos, of freedom—a nothingness that makes something of itself.[1]

> In discussing the relationship of humankind to the Earth, we must understand the basic difference between the Navajo view of Mother Earth, and what the Western European or contemporary American mind means when it tosses around poetic metaphors like "mother nature," or "mother earth."
>
> The contemporary American means that the Earth and all of nature are like his natural mother. But the Navajo (and other American Indians) means that his natural mother is the closest thing he will ever know that is like his real mother—the Earth.[2]

There are those who say that the Native Way holds a key, if not *the* key, to the future survival of mankind. They say that it is in the nature of the Native's relationship to the cosmos, the land, to all life forms, to himself,

manifest in ritual and ceremony. They say that to learn the "how and why" of the traditional Native stance is to find the key, to discover a "saving grace" of insights and a creative power beyond any rationality, all crucial to human continuance.[3] If that is so, as I know it to be, then central to this discovery and primary to the Native existential positioning is the presence and function of Elders. This chapter is intended as a tribute to their contemporary emergence.

To that end, I begin with comments that serve to situate somewhat my experience with Elders and to indicate some of the difficulties in writing about them. Certain events are highlighted and interpreted, the importance of a number of Elder teachings is underscored, and the relevance of Elder inner and outer behaviours is set forth. A discussion of several other Elder-related issues leads to the essay's conclusion.

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

In the late 1960s, confronted by a sudden, strong wave of seekers, Elders, although flattered and grateful, were initially flustered and were forced to rethink and redefine themselves and their roles. They were faced with dire and unsettling questions about identity and survival and with basic paradoxes regarding the nature of the Native world and fundamental issues about the world in which humans live.

I agree with David Brumble, who says that Elders have become the focus of a "cultural dialectic."[4] Involved in this dialectic are Elders in both treaty and non-treaty communities, as well as Natives and non-Natives. Included are social scientists of all stripes pushing to observe and analyze, striving for their syntheses, as well as increasing numbers of Natives engaged in a return to their roots. Both tend to look indiscriminately to Elders, wherever they can be found, for insights and guidance.[5] Both experience difficulties in this endeavour, the former hardly aware that what they expect to observe is restricted by the conditions necessary for their presence as observers and the latter confused by the rarity of top or true Elders and by the relative immaturity and unsteadiness of younger spiritual teachers and ceremonialists.[6]

My views on Elders derive in general from experiences with a number of true Elders over the years since 1971, and particularly from apprenticeship with several Medicine Elders who were initiated that same year. It is true, in my view, that Elders themselves, of whatever type and development, form an unusual phenomenon. Like all other Natives, they too have been influenced by the forces and consequences of Contact. Early on, they were, so to speak, hammered back into the woodwork. Long proscribed and banned by governments and churches, now barely emerged from decades of withdrawn underground activity, they are perceived not as harbingers of a lost Eden but rather as the oral historians, guardians of the Secrets: as interpreters of the Life of the People, as unusual teachers and way-showers to the People.

Use of the term "Native" herein connotes inclusivity. It refers to all Original Peoples in Canada. In the context of this kind of discussion, by choice I favour this broad connotation since Elders themselves of all tribes stress Native identity as being a state of mind, as it were, centred in the heart. The late Abe Burnstick's frequent reply to, "Who is an Indian?" was to exclaim, with finger stabbing his heart, "An Indian is Indian right *here*."[7]

A difficulty confronting Native writers is how to write for print-literate readers, especially those trained in the social sciences and/or in professional education, so that these readers will somehow be able to respond as to an oral literature. To so write, for one thing, requires keeping in hand an immense oral "reference bibliography," that is, the stories, legends, prophecies, ceremonies, songs, dances, languages, and customs of the People. To so write also requires that the qualitative dimensions of these sources—for example, the non-verbal expressions and gestures of the storyteller and the ceremonialist—be expressed and conveyed with integrity, and that is virtually impossible. And, although Elders have declared that "the time has come to share the secrets," its achievement remains most awkward, if not painful.

Nonetheless, in my view and in that of Brumble, the task of written sharing and communication must begin resolutely at this time in our history.[8] There is a need in the contemporary Native world to articulate traditional views and to transmit with discernment and discretion, to the extent possible, something of the fullness of the Traditional Experience and Story—as embodied in the highest, most evolved Elders—in its intricacies, beauties, and ineffabilities. Further, in the view of Thomas Berry and

others, there is a worldwide human need to survive, to which Native North Americans have something significant to contribute.[9]

There is therefore a challenge, and the tentative solution followed here is to write as a storyteller as much as possible, but from a broad social science perspective. In other words, as I now proceed as best I can, with the expression and sharing of my thoughts and feelings regarding my experience with Elders, my endeavour attempts to circumscribe that experience and amplify it to some extent by deliberate association with Western social science and education constructs.[10]

In so doing, my hope is to avoid what Vico called the "barbarism of reflection," the intellectual over-refinement that is unable to sustain the poetic wisdom and imagination of the sort that establishes and sustains true Elders and, better yet, to suggest something of how normal and natural it is for Elders to think and behave a certain way.

My proposition assumes that traditional values are dynamic and can be and are being re-expressed in new forms,[11] and that these new forms are being brought about by Elders now grappling with an ever-increasing flow of Natives and non-Natives seeking advice, counsel, healing, and inspiration, as well as an interpretation of the past and present, in their apprehension and concern over future survival.

SOME HISTORY

The late 1960s and early 1970s witnessed the political emergence of Native organizations in Alberta. The opening round of activity by both political and service leaders and organizers, initially enthusiastic, culminated in early 1969 in much discouragement and deep, angry frustration. Both deliberate and unwitting obstacles to program development were formidable. In negotiations, mutual distrust predominated. Confrontation was required and frequently resorted to, and conflict became a working condition in the drive to break open bureaucratic and political doors. It was a time also when programs were exceedingly difficult to start and maintain, largely for lack of adequate core and development monies, and partly for lack of skill and insight on both sides. In the midst of this period of

dismaying hurt and resentment, a major shift in consciousness nonetheless slowly dawned. It started that same year, with Native leaders seeking out Elders, and continued subsequently when others also began the trek back to the Elders of their tribes.

Amazingly and concurrently, virtually everywhere in North America signs of revitalization appeared. Nonetheless, because past and current efforts to resolve the enormous cultural, socio-economic, and political difficulties were stark failures, they were unsettling.

So began a period of intense introspection, induced by a keen perception of disheartening results and encouraged by an intuitive sense that Natives, through a return to cultural origins, might allay their profound consternation and anger and find answers to the basic question: "How can we change the direction of the destructive currents? The White man hasn't got any answers! What can we do for our children and our children's children? Maybe if we talked to some old people?" That incipient awareness became the theme of the beginning struggles, a theme soon variously played out across the country.

A second event, subsequently paralleled in other areas of the continent such as the Smallboy and Mackinaw camps in the Alberta Rockies and the Rolling Thunder camp in Nevada, occurred in the fall of 1972. It is most noteworthy, for it presents clear, milestone evidence of momentous stirrings within Native consciousness.

Elders from eight different tribes in Alberta gathered for twelve days on the west coast of Vancouver Island under the leadership of the Indian Association of Alberta. After two days of discussion on education-related issues, Elder Louis Crier made the following declaration:

> In order to survive in the twentieth century, we must really come to grips with the White man's culture and with White ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The White man has many good things. Borrow. Master and use his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general cultures, between the basic values of the Indian way and those of Western civilization—and thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. For to be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had

> to do this before. But, in so doing, we will survive as Indians, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so.[12]

In the discussion of that statement, the following comment was made by Elder Charlie Blackman:

> On any given day, if you ask me where you might go to find a moose, I will say, "If you go that way, you won't find a moose. But if you go that way, you will." So now, you younger ones, think about all that. Come back once in a while and show us what you've got. And we'll tell you if what you think you have found is a moose.[13]

This particular event has been underscored because of its obvious, singular importance. Nonetheless, and once again, this one incident is to be understood within a continental context of similar contemporaneous events that occurred throughout "Indian Country."[14] Since that era, and understandably, attention to Elders has continued to accrue, especially with regard to their role and function and the relevance of their teachings for contemporary Native identity and survival.

SOME TEACHINGS

A few recurring sayings reveal a characteristic simplicity, range, and richness. For example:

> Don't worry. Take it easy. Do your best. It will all work out. Respect Life. Respect your Elders. It's up to you. You have all the answers within you.

> Listen to what Mother Earth tells you. Speak with her. She will speak to you.

> What is Life but a journey into the Light? At the centre of Life is the Light.

Soon I will cross the River, go up the Mountain, into the Light.

These typical statements set forth a deep, strong, moral, and spiritual vision and understanding. These interrelated principles are the corollaries or facets of a unitary, primary, traditional insight that is variously articulated. For example: *The centred and quartered Circle is the sign of wholeness, of inclusiveness of all reality, of balance and harmony between man and nature* (traditional saying). *There are only two things you have to know about being Indian. One is that everything is alive, and the second is that we're all related* (anonymous Indian).

COMMENT

One sees here the classical themes of holism and personalism, of relationality, of an environment and cosmos that are alive. A broad characteristic goal of traditional education has always been that the whole person in the whole of his or her life be addressed. In the traditional setting, one effectively learns how to become and be a unique expression of human potential. These same traditional processes, in the context of extended family and community Elders, describe a strong sense of responsibility both towards self and towards the community.

Such statements also, in my view, provide reference points to the seeker in his or her journey "back," suggest something of the richness of the spirit of Tradition, and provide as well "memory-bank data," as it were, for Elder reinterpretations, of which the 1972 declaration is a prime example.

The 1972 statement is several-fold in its importance. For example, for the first time since the signing of the treaties in western Canada, top Elders responded in assembly as the historians of their tribes, as philosophers and teachers of Tradition. They expressed anew for the people the meaning of their history, in light of present conditions, and pointed out a saving and safe direction to pursue so that the People's History could be sustained and forwarded.

Also crucial is that, to describe the behaviour required, Elders focused on the connections that needed to be established between the two general cultures, urging discerning openness and selectivity over distrust and closed defensiveness. A further emphasis in the declaration is the

redefinition of Native identity—a landmark moment, for to become bicultural is designated as a positive, warranted, existential act. At that meeting, it was clearly understood that to be bilingual would always be "better" and "richer," but what the Elders also affirmed is that bilingualism is not essential for a core sense of one's self as Native, thereby keeping open the possibility of authentic Nativeness for the large number of Natives who, for whatever reason, do not speak a Native language.

Thus, criteria were defined whereby the survival movement could judge whether or not it has found a "moose." That day, Elder mediation empowered, sanctioned, formalized, and redirected the struggling emergence of the People.

Grown men cried that day.

Traditional Native holism and personalism as a culturally shaped human process of *Being/Becoming* is rooted in a relationship with Father Sky, the cosmos, and with Mother Earth, the land—a characteristic that has led comparative religionists to rank Native American religion as a major classical world religion. These experts point to the centrality of land in Native spiritual and religious experience as its distinctive dimension.[15] This relationship with the land and the cosmos is personalized and personal and is marked by a trust and a respect that stems from a direct and sustained experience of the oneness of all reality, of the livingness of the land.

The richness of this holism and personalism extends further. When one looks beyond or behind the externals of local and regional custom, language, and history, more of the core dynamic of the Native Way of life is revealed. In the West, classical existentialism stresses the utter validity of subjectivity, that is, of the feeling, reflective subject who has the freedom to make choices and thus to determine his or her life. Therefore, what one does is of key importance. The *doing* that characterizes the Native Way is a doing that concerns itself with being and becoming a unique person, one fully responsible for one's own life and actions within one's family and community. Finding and following one's path is a characteristic Native enterprise that leads to or makes for the attainment of inner and outer balance. This is in marked contrast with general Western *doing,* which tends and strains towards having, objectifying, manipulating, "thingifying" everyone and everything it touches.[16]

BEHAVIOURAL FEATURES

The exemplars of such a way of living, relating, and perceiving, of course, are the most evolved, or "true," Elders. The preceding references to typical sayings may now be usefully supplemented by a description of a number of Elders' behaviours.

It is no simple matter to describe Elder behaviour because of the deep interconnectedness of all facets of their behaviour. The observations that follow are not rigorously organized in pyramidal fashion, but rather as one link leading to the next, in cyclical fashion up and around a same conceptual axis: Elders.

COMMENT

I am of the opinion that true Elders are superb embodiments of highly developed human potential. They exemplify the kind of person that a traditional, culturally based learning environment can and does form and mould. Elders also are evidence that Natives know a way to high human development to a greater degree than is generally suspected. Elders' qualities of mind (intuition, intellect, memory, imagination) and emotion, their profound and refined moral sense manifest in an exquisite sense of humour, in a sense of caring and communication finesse in teaching and counselling, together with a high level of spiritual and psychic attainment, are perceived as clear behavioural indicators deserving careful attention, if not compelling emulation.

To relate to Elders is to observe and listen carefully and to come to understand the what, why, and how of behaviours that ground or root one, so to speak, in the living Earth of Native Tradition.

It is not possible to study and examine Elders in the conventional sense, simply because that is not the "way." One learns about Elders by learning from them over a long period of time, by becoming comfortable with a learning-by-doing model. Their counselling and teaching focus on learning from one's experience. Thus, through respectful and patient observation, evidence is eventually perceived of remarkable, incisive intellect, of tested wisdom, of sharp and comprehensive ability allied with excellent memory recall, and of well-developed discursive ability.

Further signs of Elder-hood are found in their level of trust in both life itself and their own experiences; by their being into true feelings (that is, into the spiritual side of feelings, without sentimentality); by their art of being still, quiet, unafraid of darkness and nothingness; by their ability to laugh at one another, as well as at self. All that is so because they are trained in the lessons of how the very nature of our being is in at-one-ment with the cosmo-genesis. And so they hold to the land, ceremony, and medicine, linked to the past, in Spirit.[17]

What is the "secret," if any, behind those admirable multi-behaviours? My experience suggests that it is their knowledge of and skill in "primordial experience."[18] Primal experience for true Elders is, in my view, centred in the pervasive, encompassing reality of the Life Force, manifest in "laws"—the Laws of Nature, the Laws of Energy, or the Laws of Light.[19] In other words, true Elders are familiar with Energy on a vast scale, in multiple modes: energy as healing, creative, life-giving, sustaining. Both the experience and perception of such manifestations and the manifestations themselves reveal that all is one, is natural, and is the realm of creative Spirit—the mysterious "Life-Force" (the Wakan-Tanka of the Sioux). There is no "between" between the God-Creator, Source and Sustainer-of-Life, and the cosmos, the environment, all life forms, and Native soul.

Such outstanding qualities and levels of insight and skill testify to an inner and personal, fundamental, consistent, and unchanging process, to a capacity to respond to life as its conditions invariably change: "We have always survived. Our history tells us so."

Elders are an invitation to taste existence within the functioning of the natural world, to experience the mystique of the land. They are, Thomas Berry says, in a state of "fascination with the grandeur of the North American continent."[20] They acquire knowledge and insight into the nature of the universe. For centuries, they have wondered over the revelation of the universe.

It strikes me that their "wisdom" is rooted in Immanence and Transcendence, that this wisdom is attuned to the Immanent in time and space, in the dimensions and seasonal rhythm of the universe, and to the Transcendent, the Above of the confines of historical space and time. This timeless positioning makes for the Story, as carried down through the

ages—to it being retold and reshaped presently, leading to the discovery of new forms needed to transform current conditions of Native individuals and groups, and thereby humankind.

Elders hold the secrets of the dynamics of the New Vision. They are propelled by the past, are drawn absolutely to the future. Theirs is a bio-concentric Vision, a vision of earth and community—an ecological vision of an enduring Mother Earth and the People, a relationship intertwined in a single destiny. In other words, Elders hold an in-depth insight into the structure, functioning, and manifestation of the entire ecological process.[21]

The powerful and awesome beauty of Elder vision and experience includes the contemporary state of the ecology—a deep point of agony, for Mother Earth and Father Sky are in a worldwide, unprecedented state of ecological devastation and disintegration.[22]

Elders have what Berry calls "an earth response to an earth problem."[23] "We need only to listen to what Mother Earth is telling us," the Elders repeatedly utter. Their "earth response" is the Story that has never ceased and that carries the dream of the earth as our way into the future. In a sense, this Story holds the "genetic and psychic encoding" needed by humankind for survival.[24] Their "earth response" is processual through and through, and the only immutable reality is the Life-Force itself.

True Elders are so, and do what they do, because they have shamanic personalities—a non-romantic, brilliant sensitivity to the dimensions and patterns of manifestations of the natural world in its most challenging demands and delights. As humans, as one of the earth's life forms, they are capable of relations so that all others can equally flourish. Their power and personality hold the ability to shake us and lead us out of the current global cultural pathology and bring us along into and through a healing and restructuring at a most basic level. They facilitate healing because they have sensitivity to the larger patterns of nature in its harsh and deadly aspects as well as in its life-giving powers, always in balance with all life forms.[25]

More can be said about Elder perception. Once again, their perceived world is radically and entirely relational, that is, all realities are constituents of that perception. These are what Eugene Fontinell calls fields of being and what Matthew Fox refers to as "isness."[26] Therefore their

"faith," if that is an appropriate term, or their "knowledge" and "wisdom," is of these "fields." Theirs is a "faith" founded in what they experience. Characteristically, their "faith" is a fundamental mode of experience rather than an intellectual grasp and understanding of concepts. It is also perforce a "knowing" that is ongoing, that is an open-ended task because, for one grounded in Nature, there can be no once-and-for-all determination of just what is authentic (as opposed to that which is apparent, absolute revelation).

Elders should not be considered as concerned, therefore, with a Western sense of "belief"—a going beyond that for which there is evidence at the present moment—but as having "faith," an experiential knowing, an integrating experience "whereby all modes of experience are brought together in a relatively cohesive whole that is expressed in the life of the person, thus rendering human life meaningful."[27]

I suspect that the traditional Elder capacity to accommodate change upon contact with Western Christianity readily led them to become Christian in a way that not only allowed for a transformation of perception but also sustained a full continuity with the faith of the People.[28] My hypothesis is that conversion was a simple instance of new growing out of the old, forming a new syncretism congruent with their "faith."

SUMMARY

I concur with Will Gravely, who says that a true Elder is not classifiable as a "passive informant on the traditional past" but as "a creative theologian, open to the possibilities of his situation, to new ideas and symbols, and to a dialogue between the traditions."[29] Elders manifest consistency in the life process and in relationship to several worlds, moving in and out as shamans are wont to do, with seriousness and humour, with persistent attention and awareness.

Elders possess keys to a classical journey of human and earth ecological transformation. In this era, they are being called upon to reinterpret and to apply the Tradition, the Story, in a new way. There is urgency to this task, for Mother Earth is no longer looking after herself naturally but is an

earth looked after, and badly, by humanity. Elders are now so engaged in this task.

SOME ISSUES

Every turn in this essay raises questions or issues that deserve more extensive exploration but which an overview description such as this precludes. Nonetheless, in this last section, aspects of either a practical or academic concern are reviewed.

The rapid decrease in numbers of true Elders is most alarming. Who is to replace them? For some decades now, significant numbers of communities across Canada have lost all their traditional Elders. Many individuals, forced to seek out Elders in other tribal traditions, initially encounter some difficulty because of differences in ways. This is a two-way pressure on both Elder and seeker.

The range of kinds of Elders also is bothersome. According to one Elder's prediction, these times of emergence are to be marked by chaos and confusion before changing into a time of light and peace. Certainly a significant part of this difficult phase is attributable to "instant" Elders, overnight wonders who, with limited ceremonies and an abundance of clichés, confuse and stall many in their personal journey. The mantle will fall to those spiritual people, less evolved, of less ability and knowledge. "True" Elders are those who have gone through painful encounter with spiritual realities and who have become thereby, in the perception of the People, intermediaries between their respective cultural communities and the spiritual forces of the universe as well as defenders of the community's psychic integrity. They are those who have enacted and sustained a personal relationship with Nature.

Elders are a national issue because of their qualities and rarity.[30] The needs of the People require guiding wisdom as assurance of a continuing, living Native presence in Canada during the time needed to acquire a "faith" about the real possibility of survival.

The practical requirements of establishing and maintaining a relationship with Elders are not readily perceived. First of all, at the level of individual

need and change, much time and patience are required. There are no short-cuts to attitudinal and spiritual change, no possible end runs around phases of inner change. A complete and enduring commitment is required. Second, the "return" is not only to "primal roots," to the living core of the Tradition itself, but is conditional on personal achievement so as to arrive at presenting to the world an authentic mode of living.[31] And that is not an easy matter.

The "knowing" of Elders is problematic to those who, for a range of reasons, were not schooled in oral tradition. Elders as "knowers" know intimately, directly, and are non-dualistic in their perceptions and understandings. Western-trained people are inherently scholastic and dualistic in perception and thinking. True, the sense of identity of Elders is marked by an ordered consciousness. Nonetheless, at the same time, it is unbounded by space and time, all the while remaining in direct contact with both dimensions of historical time and space. Again, attainment to that state of development is a basic challenge.

Problematic also, and for that same kind of Western-trained mind, is that Elders have consistency, continuity, and clarity of insight and skill regarding the paradigmatic alteration (that is, reinterpreting of the Story) that, in my view, as John Grim declares, "germinates understanding of the creative role of imagination and intuition in human history."[32] Elders are positioned, I would suggest, to contribute to facilitating what Robert Wilson calls "quantum leaps" in developing new models of thought.[33]

It would seem that presently there are growing numbers of Western academic approaches hinting at a hitherto unknown possible amenability with Native mind. Carolin Keutzer, commenting on the work of such physicists as David Bohm, Einstein, and Fritjof Capra, suggests that such physicists are becoming students of consciousness itself.[34] Their concepts of "flow" and "hologram," for example, and statements that "everything is alive" are very suggestive. To Keutzer's list, I would add the names of such theologians and historians as Fox and Berry and of the physicist-philosopher Brian Swimme.

A corollary to the issue of "knowing" is that of mysticism (currently a much abused and misapplied concept, in my view). From a Native spiritual standpoint, as I see it, mysticism is a question of *Becoming/Being* rooted or grounded in relationships with all constituents or dimensions of reality. I

like Fox's description of mysticism because it is congruent with my understanding of Native spiritual experience. He holds that "the essence of the mystical experience is the way we are altered to see everything from its life-filled axis, to feel the mysteries of life as they are present within and around us."[35] That's Indian!

To arrive at a direct experiential understanding of that definition is a primary learning task. To discover how ceremonies, for example, mediate helping energy and teaching takes some doing. Prayer, ritual, and ceremony ground one in life, for, as Elder Abe Burnstick was fond of saying, "It's all there, in the ceremonies."

To acquire an awareness of all earth forms as having a life of their own, to become aware of all as Spirit-bearing, as Spirit-expressing, takes some doing. To become steeped in, adept in, Native mysticism is to enter into the beautiful, the truth, the Oneness, in balance against all negativity and absence. It is to activate and sustain personal discovery that leads to a true sense of self-understanding, to a sense of future time through awareness of the past—that leads to learning how to intuit the close relationship between one's culture and one's genetic impulses.

Elders have teaching challenges to deal with. One is with regard to non-Natives. They are aware of the currently unfolding prophecy that "the White brother will come to the Red brother for teaching." There is acceptance of the non-Natives who come to them. Nonetheless, they find themselves struggling with a different mindset and affectivity, as well as with language barriers. Also, because of the knowledge level of both Native and non-Native seekers, many are not grounded in a sense of the real but mysterious power of nature in mountains, rivers, lakes, rocks, life forms, all as enmeshed in the web of the universe. So the legends and stories require pedagogical adaptation. The stories have to be retold, reshaped, and refitted to meet contemporary seekers' changed and changing needs.

Such encounters are but necessary moments in the retelling and reshaping of the Story, as in the case of the 1972 declaration. New legends, as well as the retelling of ancient stories, are forthcoming across the continent, sparked by medicine Elders' dreams and visions. Tradition as conveyed through Elders is converged on the present, revealing forgotten depths of perception and understanding.

Present Elder endeavour exists in a context of tension. Elders are aware of the tensional exchange between the Story of the People and the need for a new direction, as we have seen. They are aware of the tensional exchange between immanent direction within living matter itself and the transcendent source of the creative impulse. They are aware of the tensional character of awakening, of the inner dynamics of spiritual and socio-political life.

CONCLUSION

We look to Elders for the way they use words, for the structural devices they employ, for the teaching and counselling approaches they utilize, for the philosophical and spiritual perspectives of the world, experienced and envisioned. We look to them to show us "the archetypal essences appearing in animal forms," as Joseph Epes Brown says—in other words, to show us the Way.[36]

We look to them to tell us about the "moose."

Daniel Deschinney, a Navajo Blessing Way singer, explains how a Navajo experiences these sacred mountains' inner forms. He says:

> When a Navajo experiences the sacred mountains' inner forms kindling a new strength within himself, he says, 'I am invincible. I am beautified.' To be invincible is masculine. To be beautified is feminine. These two concepts together are a powerful entity. There is no strength from only one. Power comes from the interaction between them. When you have strength, you recognize your opportunity, you know what you must do, and you have the grace to do it.[37]

NOTES

1 Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, *American Indian Myths and Legends,* 39.
2 Jimmie C. Begay, "The Relationship Between the People and the Land," 28.
3 See the works by Thomas Berry listed in the bibliography, as well as H. David Brumble, "Anthropologists, Novelists and Indian Sacred Material"; and Paul Steinmetz, *Meditations with Native Americans: Lakota Spirituality.*

4 Brumble, "Anthropologists, Novelists and Indian Sacred Material," 34.
5 See Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 119, for similar views.
6 On the limitations that surround observation, see Tony Rothman, "A 'What You See Is What You Beget' Theory," 91–92.
7 Elder Abe Burnstick, of the Stoney Nation, Paul Band Indian Reserve, Duffield, Alberta, was a pre-eminent orator and teacher.
8 Brumble, "Anthropologists, Novelists and Indian Sacred Material," 42. See also Galen Buller, "New Interpretations of Native American Literature: A Survival Technique"; Janice Gould, "A Review of Louise Erdrich's 'Jacklight'"; and Kenneth Lincoln, "Trans–to the Other Side of, Over, Across."
9 See Matthew Fox, *On Becoming a Musical, Mystical Bear: Spirituality American Style* and *Meditations with Meister Eckhart*; Gerald Hausman, *Meditations with Animals: A Native American Bestiary*; and Steinmetz, *Meditations with Native Americans.*
10 This position I take regarding the difficult issue of oral-literate mind versus print-literate mind finds support in the views of Clifford Geertz and Bennetta Jules-Rosette, for example. Geertz holds that the main task in interpreting cultures is one of "explicating explications" (*The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays,* 18). In other words, it is imperative to acquire the feel for the "homely in homely context," for to fail to do so is a failure to place common sense thought within the context of its use. The development of the "thickest descriptions" possible becomes therefore both an ideal and necessary objective. It also means, as Jules-Rosette points out, dealing frontally with the problems of subjective interpretations ("The Veil of Objectivity: Prophecy, Divination, and Social Inquiry," 563). The "veil of objectivity" masks an inability to grasp another interpretive system or style of perception. Objectivity has "totally falsified our concept of truth" (Michael Polanyi, quoted in Jules-Rosette, "The Veil of Objectivity," 563)–the "veil of Objectivity" is a protective shield of one's own oracular structure. It covers what Graham Watson calls "profound parasitic lay assumptions" ("What Is Effective Intercultural Communication?" 118). This difficulty is illustrated by the case of Castaneda. His construct of reality was so impenetrable that drugs were needed to forcefully assault it to allow him to receive spiritual insight.
11 For more detail about the creative capacity of Native culture, see Joseph Couture, "What Is Fundamental to Native Education? Some Thoughts on the Relationship Between Thinking, Feeling, and Learning." [Reprinted as chapter 9 in this volume.–*Eds.*]
12 Elder Louis Crier, Cree Nation, Ermineskin Band, Hobbema, Alberta.
13 The late Elder Charlie Blackman, Chipewyan Nation, Cold Lake Band, Cold Lake, Alberta.
14 The expression "Indian Country" is commonly used by those who talk and write about Native culture. It has positive connotations, summoning to mind the "old days" and evoking a sense of intimate connection to the land and to traditional ways.–*Eds.*

15 See Åke Hultkrantz, "The Contribution of the Study of North American Indian Religions to the History of Religions," in *Seeing with a Native Eye: Essays on Native American Religion,* ed. Walter H. Capps, 86–106. See also the works by Thomas Berry and by Matthew Fox listed in the bibliography.
16 See Couture, "What Is Fundamental to Native Education?" 180–88.
17 See Viola F. Cordova, ed., *Philosophy and the Native American: The People Before Columbus,* 23–26; Buller, "New Interpretations of Native American Literature," 166.
18 Huston Smith claims that "there is, first, a Reality that is everywhere and always the same; and second, that human beings always and everywhere have access to it" ("Philosophy, Theology, and the Primordial Claim," 276).
19 For further discussion, see Joseph Couture, "Native and Non-Native Encounter: A Personal Experience." [Reprinted as chapter 2 in this volume.—*Eds.*]
20 Thomas Berry, "Creative Energy," 185.
21 Ibid.
22 *Akwasasne Notes,* an internationally established Iroquois journal of social comment, has for over two decades now reported, both abundantly and consistently, on ecological deterioration. With special attention to Aboriginal regions worldwide, its regular columns describe, in cause-and-effect terms, the autistic relationship between the ecological vision and the industrial vision.
23 Berry, "Creative Energy," 186.
24 See Thomas Berry, "The Dream of the Earth: Our Way into the Future," for a provocative, insightful discussion of this concept.
25 For more detail on shamanic personality and qualities, see Berry, "The Dream of the Earth," 211–12; and Morton Kelsey, "The Modern Shaman and Christian Belief," chap. 22 in *Transcend: A Guide to the Perennial Spiritual Quest.*
26 See Eugene Fontinell, "Faith and Metaphysics Revisited," 138. The term *isness* occurs frequently in Matthew Fox's writings.
27 Ibid., 140.
28 See Will Gravely, "New Perspectives on Nicholas Black Elk, Oglala Sioux Holy Man," for Black Elk's powers of adaptation.
29 Ibid., 11.
30 See Donna Philips, Robert L. Troff, and Harvey Whitecalf, eds., *Kataayuk: Saskatchewan Indian Elders*; and Donna Philips and Harvey Whitecalf, eds., *Enewuk.*
31 See Thomas Berry's foreword in Hausman, *Meditations with Animals,* 7.
32 John Grim, "Time, History, Historians in Thomas Berry's Vision," 235.
33 Robert Anton Wilson, "Quantum Leaps," 55.
34 See Carolin S. Keutzer, "The Power of Meaning: From Quantum Mechanics to Synchronicity."
35 Fox, *On Becoming a Musical, Mystical Bear,* 77.
36 Joseph Epes Brown, "The Bison and the Moth: Lakota Correspondences," 7.
37 Quoted in Trebbe Johnson, "The Four Sacred Mountains of the Navajos," 47.

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6 Explorations in Native Knowing

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This paper expands on the substance of a lecture delivered to the annual Conference on Indigenous Peoples' Education, sponsored by the School of Native Studies, University of Alberta, November 18, 1988. I am indebted to Thomas Berry and to Rudolf Steiner for helpful words and phrases in this reflection on the content and process of my "knowing" and "seeing." Berry is insightful in his interpretation of the Native American presence. Steiner is a scientist and epistemologist.*

It is . . . difficult to find a people who over such a long period of time have undergone such destructive influences, yet have survived and preserved their identity so firmly as the American Indian. . . . [He] has established a creative response rooted in his ability to sustain life in its moment of high tragedy and to continue the basic path of his human development in its most distinctive aspects.[1]

With our own overemphasis on mental activity we are apt to think that the Indian, without any written language, lacks something important or necessary in not possessing a scholastic or dialectical type of doctrinal presentation.[2]

A STORY

It began during the first "round" of my first sweat lodge ceremony. Jammed in with many others in the dark, swirling hot steam jetting over my face and body, mistaken stoic warrior, I strove to sit straight and unflinching. My ignorant posturing unnerved me, for I panicked, no longer able to inhale the sharp, scalding air. I remained aware that I might bump others onto the hot rocks in any dash to the door, so I frantically grabbed the base of lodge boughs on either side of my hips, and set myself to uproot them. In that split-second of grabbing and bracing to pull up, the lodge flaps opened. As craving lungs lunged at the air, my eyes fell into the full, steady gaze of the ceremonial leader. There, on the backside of a bright twinkle, something told me that he knew what had happened to me. His gaze reassured me, midst extremes of feeling and thought. Nonetheless, I remained particularly stunned and startled, for how did he know . . . ?

Since 1971, that intriguing question has kept me in pursuit of the answer. That event began a demanding and arduous quest, a relentless facing of necessary changes, the learning of ways to release blocks to developing a Native mindfulness. A number of rigidly entrenched, myopic assumptions were obstacles within my mind. I didn't understand at first, for example, the key importance of reliance on subjectivity in the learning process, nor did I know how to think paradoxically. A radical reshaping of conventional university-induced scientific thinking was required. From that incipient event, through phases of seeking and discovery, I came to discern that, paradoxically enough, full subjectivity had objective validity, thereby expanding my capacity for knowing and my range of knowledge. It has been an extensive exercise in the patient eradication of fears, in the experiential discovery of Life-Force, of Energy as Isness and Oneness, of my individuality in relationship with self, with others, and with the cosmos. This personal journey has led me to a strong and growing appreciation and admiration of why and how remarkably enduring is the original human of this continent. I'm grateful for those unyanked boughs. The Exercise, shaped as it is by my life experience, and limited to my present level of attainment in Native medicine ways, continues now through this exploratory essay that seeks to delineate some cognitive dimensions of that experience.

The reader must keep in mind a standing *problématique*, an ongoing learning and communication difficulty stemming from the fact and nature of oral tradition. Elders and their teachings must be experienced and perceived in that context, so that a "right" perspective and direction is maintained, for example. An enlightened grasp of that reality is normally the business of a lifetime, and so this essay can be no more than a wayfarer's report, an inherently tentative enterprise. Primarily in social science language, without sentimentalism and as carefully as I can, I wish to identify some components of Native thinking, based on the assumption that this is both possible and useful to attempt.

AN ENCOURAGING CONTEXT

My own attraction to the subject is reason enough to want to hold forth. There are signs of late, however—emergent and compelling socio-cultural signs—that seem to warrant a forthright assertion of who we are as spiritual people, possessors as we are of a unique spiritual heritage and experience. It is true that the Elders who "know" have been reticent and most discrete about sharing and teaching their "knowledge."[3] Nonetheless, those same Elders now point to an unfolding prophecy that states that "the time has come to share the secrets." And so, Elders are a first sign.

A second sign is the contemporary ecological movement and the related current dialogue between physicists and mystics. The analyses and considerations of such internationally known eco-philosophers and eco-investigators as Thomas Berry, Brian Swimme, David Suzuki, and others are another indicator.[4] Prevalent conditions in many Native communities where there is loss of language and spiritual culture might incline an observer to conclude that the tradition is gone, irretrievable. This apparent absence is also a sign, an invitation to walk where we can to learn the ways of "Indigenous knowledge" without piecing it together from scraps, bits and pieces of the past. Rather, what we can and are looking to most sharply is, in Robert Boissiere's words, "the ancient purity and integrity of the ceremonies, the ancient knowledge of early humanity."[5]

After the shotgun intensity of the 1970s' socio-political start-up, followed as it was by a brief catch-breath phase, a pause that first triggered a return to Elders, as a People we now find ourselves encouraged and affirmed from within ourselves. The meanings of the dramatic details of our survival are being revealed, becoming clearer, and impacting upon us. Berry is right in declaring that the Indian is aware of having won a "moral victory of unique dimensions during the past five centuries."[6] And so now, as Native writers Gerald Hausman and Jamake Highwater observe, respectively: "We are returning to our Native place, after a long absence," in order "to celebrate those multitude of things that make us distinctive and unique."[7] As a People, it seems to me, Aboriginals, custodians of centuries-old skills and understandings, are positioned with honour. Berry notes that the Indian

> has this position . . . not merely by his temporal priority, but by his mystical understanding and communion with the continent. . . . He has realized that life tests the deepest qualities within himself, qualities that emerge in heroic combat not merely with others, but with himself and with the powers of the universe.[8]

An analysis of Native knowing and knowledge somehow now seems necessary and is certainly now possible. My contention is that Indigenous knowing and knowledge, as in past eras, remains necessary to the survival and enhancement of Native personal and communal identity. Also, now that most barriers to secrecy have fallen away, it is possible to access, as it were, some aspects of the characteristic content and mode of Native thinking and to accede thereby to some of its power. Through a mode of existential positioning virtually ignored hitherto by general Western culture, we can attain to some understanding of how non-dualistic knowing balances all relationships, individual and "communitarian." There is an alluring uniqueness to this possibility, and it parallels the possibilities underscored by such contemporary investigators of human consciousness as Robert Ornstein, who comments with regard to Eastern and Western psychologies that a bridging between the two will allow humankind to develop in ways not contained in either alone.[9]

It is most plausible to me, then, that from within our Native struggle we affirm ourselves now, *as we are*. We have been pulled by a disruptive, humiliating experience of age-old cultural carnage, directed against a Western experience in transcending the limits of personal knowledge gained through external, objective sciences and against an Eastern experience in inward studies, to overcome, in Ornstein's words, "the shifting biases of personal awareness."[10] The Native American has skill and an understanding to share with North Americans, and so with all humankind. The fundamental Native American experience perhaps demonstrates to humankind a way to human development not contained in many other spiritual cultures. It deeply stirs our sense of self therefore to consider, as Berry concludes, that the Native American is an expression of "genius that cannot be denied."[11] With Berry, I regard the humanness of the Native American as a unique human mode of being and see him standing with the other great spiritual traditions of humankind. In this view, the Native American spiritual tradition ranks along with, for example, the respective emphases on divine transcendence in India, on mystical humanness in China, and on a sense of an historical divine saviour in Europe. Berry declares that "the American Indian has his own special form, numinous mode of *nature mysticism,*" or *earth mysticism*, "a mystical sense of the human amid other living things."[12]

PURPOSE

Framed as it is by an intense ongoing personal experience, this essay attempts to indicate characteristic dimensions, such as the nature and conditions of acquiring Indigenous "earth knowledge." This sensitive undertaking is complex, multifaceted, multileveled, and difficult. Nonetheless, the intention is to begin some sorting by focusing on what are for me several interrelated factors. A first section describes facets or dimensions of process and content, understood as core principles in Native knowing. That description leads to proposing assumptions as critical guidelines to further reflection and research in this area and to suggesting some implications of this for university programs. A third section serves as a conclusion.

A number of Native and non-Native writers attribute an inclusive meaning to the term "Native knowledge."[13] I agree with that view, for one must hold in hand a number of considerations having to do with mode and capacity, mind as agent, mind processes, the oral-literate mind, primal experience, relationships, laws of nature, Elder sayings, and the question of what contemporary psychology has to offer.

Mode and Capacity

The mode of Indigenous knowledge is a non-dualistic process—it transcends the usual oppositions between rational knowledge and intuition, spiritual insight and physical behaviour. It is inclusive of all reality. As a process of thinking and perceiving, it is irreducible. Its focus is on what goes together. For example, a sense of self-esteem and competence and a sense of control over life events are together with a sense of internal and external conflict; over the compelling influences of both Native and dominant society cultures, a sense of space and sense of time are together.

Mind as Agent

The agent or subject of this comprehensive, multi-dimensional knowing is the mind. A fully developed Native mind is one that is aware and fully conscious. This mental awareness "organizes" the entire Native bio-system, that is, it accommodates the complete range of world components, apprehended through the sensory systems. This mental awareness is the ground of conscious life. It is that from and through which, for example, all ceremonial impacts proceed. It underlies and is behind thought, perception, and feeling. And it remains active when these are not present.[14]

Mind Processes

The "seeing" mind discovers in self-reflection that it is an ongoing activity that generates what Arthur Diekman calls a process of felt-meaning.[15] In other words, the mind is a living context for thoughts and perceptions, a relational movement. Like all minds, Native mind manifests itself in

functions or operations that are ways of organizing relationships, perceptions, or forms of interconnectedness.

Meditation, whether as a formal discipline as in Eastern spiritualities or an informal consciousness expansion as in Native areas, is the tool or the means that Native mind uses to arrive at "seeing" through experience. It is, as Medard Boss says, "the effort of timeless, open, still, and concentrated listening to what goes on within, to the root melody of all being, *instead of a straining of the intellect*."[16]

Central in this processual mode is the imagination activity. Imagination in Native mind, as I experience it, is the route by which, or the means through which, the spiritual world influences creatively the development of individual and group cultural life. In other words, imagination is a capacity, a power, that enables, as Rudolf Steiner states, "the true spiritual world to light up within the individual soul."[17] In sum, traditional Indian knowing is an experience in matter and spirit as inseparable realities, nondualistically apprehended. Characteristically, because Native thinking is inclusive, it resists simple, abstract objective definition. There are several other interrelated components to consider.

Oral-Literate Mind

Traditional Indigenous mind is an oral literature–dependent mind, as compared with a mind that is print literature–dependent. Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, in their study of primitive mind, state that "basic archaic thought tends to be based on more *far-reaching tacit integrations* than are acceptable to the scientific mind of modern man."[18] Native traditional mind is openly and sharply impressed, in my view, by sensory qualities of relationships, all perceived as inherently meaningful. Native thinking, to borrow a Steiner phrase, may be referred to as "pictorial thinking."[19] Elder teaching of concepts is therefore characteristically and understandably directly visual or "pictorial." Joseph Epes Brown reiterates this view in observing that Native mind expresses itself "through the symbol, which includes the auditory word or echo, all of which have reference always to the forms, forces, and variations of nature."[20] Brown also observes: "There is a fluidity and transparency to the apperceptions of the phenomenal world which permits no absolute line to be drawn, for example, between the world of animals, men or spirit."[21]

The Native capacity to form "far-reaching tacit integrations" is manifest in its extensive use of symbolism, such as journey symbols, heroic personalities, quartered circles, the mandala symbolism of the self, various transformative symbols, the Great Mother, or the symbolism of creation myths, initiation ceremonies, the sacred pipe, sun dance, ghost dance, and vision quest.

In reference to what to learn and where to learn it, Abe Burnstick often exclaimed: "It's all there, in the ceremonies. That's our Bible!"[22] Native ceremonies are the primary oral literature and remain the main traditional source of psychic energy for thinking, for identity development and control, for survival and its enhancement.[23] The oral-literate mind develops a capacity to integrate, to form patterns, a process that penetrates and transforms the experiences obtained in and through a dynamic, non-print environment. According to Gregory Bateson, "patterns" interconnect the components of process and content, of knower and known, and thus provide context and meaning.[24]

Primal Experience

Huston Smith considers that "there is, first, a Reality that is everywhere and always the same; and second, that human beings always and everywhere have access to it."[25] The perennial experience of that "Reality" constitutes the primordial, abundant foundation of Native traditional existence. It is the accumulated knowledge, rooted in that experience, that is carried forward by oral tradition. Within this experience, reality and meaning are found and held. To be in this experience, and to be skilled in sustaining it and in initiating others into it, is the normal and natural activity, the knowing and doing, of evolved Elders. The primal "experience" embraces the inner and outer worlds. In Native cognition, these are together and are equally real and functional. The sense world, as well as the spiritual world: each has something to reveal that only it can express. The spiritual and the physical are both acknowledged as inseparable and recognized as belonging centrally to the sphere of Native, human knowing. It follows that such primal experience is the basis, as well, of traditional Native culture. As Berry says:

> These experiences, which generally present themselves as divine revelations, are irreplaceable. They form the foundations upon

> which the cultural systems of various peoples are established. They also determine the *distinctive psychic structure* of the individual personalities within the culture. Together these revelations form the ultimate psychic support for the human venture itself.[26]

In sum, the Native North American experience suggests, again in Berry's words, that there are "extensive human resources that are available to these original inhabitants of this continent" and that "intimate communion with the depths of their own psychic structure is one of the main differences between the psychic functioning of the Indian and the psychic functioning of the Euro-American in modern times."[27]

Relationships

As intimated earlier, being in relationships is the manifest spiritual ground of Native being. In traditional perspective, nothing exists in isolation; everything is relative to every other being or thing. As Indians are wont to exclaim: "And all my relations." Native thinking in its modality precludes dichotomous categories. In other words, traditional awareness, as Brown states, is characteristically one of "inter-relatedness across categories of meaning, never losing sight of ultimate wholeness."[28]

Native mind is therefore a mind-in-relational-activity, a mind-in-community. This personal-experience-within-a-community-of-beings-and-cosmos, subtle and elusive in quality, is not the same as the concept of "belief," for it does not derive from a declarative authority. This qualitative principle is not an a priori doctrinal point, a *lex credendi*, but is a direct result of consciously experienced process.[29] This "knowing" in its "workings" is also irreducible, for it is, in the final analysis, entirely subjective and absolutely personal. This is simply so, in turn, because that is the way it is.[30] This mode is as irreducible as one's sense of identity and self-understanding of a culture. Anselm Kyongsuk Min states:

> In the final analysis, the identity of a person cannot be objectified or imposed from the outside. It is a matter of the self-description, self-definition, and self-understanding of the person himself or herself. The self-understanding of a culture is likewise irreducible, unique,

> and should be taken without attempts at reduction and objectification. As the ultimate collective self-understanding of a culture, a particular religion should be accepted as an entity *sui generis*.[31]

Laws of Nature

Elders consistently refer to the "laws of nature." This means that, in the inner and outer worlds, occurrences are according to perdurable patterns (integrations) that are "laws" of time and space, of now and then, of here and the universe. There is a classical activity, a matrix of "laws," at work in Native mind, co-natural with those that govern the universe. For example, a perception of the relationship between time and space is fundamental. It is noteworthy that, as Brown points out, "most Native languages . . . reflect a perennial now."[32] Also, the experience of space is not entirely physical; as an anonymous Indian aptly put it: "Everybody has a song to sing which is no song at all. It is the process of singing, and when you sing, you are where you are."

In short, non-dualistic thinking develops a physical image of the spiritual. The thoughts of the "world" are as creatures, as processes of growth and becoming, and not as abstract concepts and explanations. Native awareness and perception are of the spiritual as belonging to this world, and not to some beyond. This is the stuff of "earth spirituality." Native knowledge is of what is behind inner and outer phenomena and is acquired and developed in a grasping of it—the phenomenon—by entering into it, according to the "laws of nature." And this is normal.[33]

Elder Sayings

Elder sanity, the "normal and natural" behaviour of Elders, "arises from living in accord with the natural process and freshly relating to the dynamic unpredictability of every moment."[34] The Elder process of becoming a balanced human being lies in attaining the ability to go to the further reaches of human nature (as Abraham Maslow has often declared regarding general human capacity). It is this developed capacity that is the constitutive basis of Native spiritual uniqueness. There is an observable Elder "psychology" implicit in what Elders do and say. Elders, as highly aware persons and carriers of oral tradition, are the exemplars, the standing reference points.

When guided by Elders, the apprentice learns to perceive and understand something of such dimensions as the nature of their knowledge itself, of the centrality of primal experiences, of the "laws of Nature," and this is found in Elder sayings.

A quick reference to frequent sayings suggests a body of evidence that highlights Native process and content. For example: "There are only two things you have to remember about being Indian. One is that everything is alive, and the second is that we are all related." "It's up to you." "You have all the answers within you." "What is Life but a journey into the Light?" "At the centre of Life is the Light." "There is within me a voice that tells me who I am and where I am." "And all my relations."[35]

Evolved Elders arrive at and preserve a sense-rooted thinking that knows the world as a spiritual reality. He who "knows" experiences a spiritual nature in the perceived world. Reality is experienced by entering deeply into the inner being of the mind, not by attempting to break through the outer world to a beyond. This positions the Native person in "communion," within the living reality of all things. His "communion" is his experience of the ideas within, concentric with reality without. Thus, to "know," to "cognize," is experiential, direct knowing.

Contemporary Psychology

An earlier reference implied an important role for contemporary psychology in the study of non-Western epistemologies. At first glance, it may seem improbable that contemporary science, and psychology in particular, can address Indigenous cognition, given the former's instrumental penchant and preoccupation with analysis and behavioural quantification. Although the difficulties and shortcomings of the Western mode of knowing are manifest in mainstream psychology, there are recent signs, nonetheless, as frequent references to John Welwood in this essay attest, of a promising shift in theoretical development. The very structure of Western technological civilization, which seems to deny and destroy the inner meanings and mysteries of everything it touches, may tempt one to conclude that in-depth communication with Native peoples is most difficult, if not impossible. It may be mostly for want of effort, however, as Brown declares:

> Rarely is the prerequisite effort made to understand the alien tradition *on its own terms,* through the categories of its proper language, and thus for what it really is in all its profundity and complexity, and with all its impelling and sacrificial demands.[36]

Western psychology cannot yet address non-dualistic experience, that is, awareness, for there is a complexity and a depth that psychology is not able to comprehend fully, let alone articulate.[37] Ornstein provides a toehold, however. For example, he considers that an identification of the characteristic frames of reference, such as unconsciousness/consciousness (the surface dualism notwithstanding), and their translation into those of Western psychological thought, and vice versa, could be helpful.[38] There are, as well, other promising endeavours. In the field of cognitive psychology, despite its significant relationships with behaviourism, one notes encouraging developments.[39]

Reuven Feuerstein's concepts of human cognition, in my view, are amenable to extension; that is, they could move to the identification of further reaches or dimensions of mental capacity and function to reveal and articulate congruence with characteristic dimensions of the Native mode of cognition.[40] Recent Western studies of oriental psychologies are most suggestive.[41] Equally promising are recent investigations by feminist psychologists and philosophers. On the basis of their research findings, Mary Field Belenky and associates, for example, emphasize the importance of drawing on intuition and feelings and of stressing "responsibility of 'caring orientation (interdependence, intimacy, nurturance, needs, context),' in contrast to a 'rights orientation' (autonomy, independence, abstract critical thought, morality of rights)."[42] A provocative review of feminist and womanist literature by Sandra Friedman and Alec Irwin features several conceptual congruencies such as relationality, power, and empowering.[43]

Relative to several facets of the issue of the mode characteristic of Native mind, current work in Asian psychology provides several attractions. One is that its concepts are rooted in actual experience rather than in concepts forming a theoretical system. A second attractive feature is that Asian psychology is primarily concerned with humans and their experience as a whole process studied in relation to the whole of

the environment. Third, and finally, the Asian psychological perspective includes the transcendent; that is, it is primarily concerned with human experience in an awakened state of mind.[44] Ken Wilber illustrates how virtually all of Western therapeutic theories and methods may be applied at several levels of awareness.[45] His descriptions have implications, I would suggest, for issues of Native learning, personal change, and development. He contends that his model of consciousness is of "universal" application, for it includes the ample insights both from non-Western psychologies and from amongst a plethora of therapies of such typical Western disciplines as ego psychology, psychoanalysis, humanistic psychology, Jungian analysis, interpersonal psychology, cognitive psychology, and behaviour modification.

These several Western insights are promising. Nonetheless, none are explicit about primordial "earth experience." Once again, central to Native knowledge is the concept of a direct experience of nature, the principle of the spiritual immanent in creation, in direct relationship with Nature. In a word, behavioural science in general has not yet developed a "psychological geology" to reveal those underlying activities that shape the mind's topography. A pluri-dimensional approach is needed if we are to understand Native mind and knowledge and thereby discern the roots of Native identity and survival. The challenge to Western researchers and theorists, and to educationists as well, is therefore to awaken to the comprehensiveness of this awareness—to conceive ultimately of limitless awareness, to become able to perceive and to establish the experiential unity of all that is. In other words, how an awareness of being interconnected on the basis of a highly evolved sense of self-worth and dignity—one that goes beyond conventional notions of "normal behaviour"—derives from a matured capacity for direct experience: this is what awaits psychology's attention.

Another aspect of our quest is to discover, in Western terms, how an "idea," that is, Indigenous knowledge, is moving or can move about in a sophisticated technological world and shape the way people think and feel about themselves.[46] We need to appreciate both how the completely subjective conditions of Native consciousness have objective validity and how the experience of sense perception is allied with the experience of

ideas—how, through the senses, the world's objective reality is experienced. Steiner writes that there is a step "from the unessential external aspect of the sense-world to its essential inner reality."[47] Whatever the conceptual means, I think we are looking for what Bateson identifies as "the pattern which connects,"[48] the context that yields the meaning(s) in aliveness, and not just as "structure." Native mind is dynamic; it is in a oneness that includes the biosphere and humanity. There is a metapattern, immanent, embodied in all specifics, amenable to Native mind. Intellectually, it is a question, in Bateson's words, of "*looking to this to arrive at that by which one can apprehend what is as it is*."[49] The Native sense-world is spiritually patterned, and the mind lives within this recognized spiritual world by widening the consciousness to encompass it. This mind-state is one of clear consciousness in its process, like that of a Western mind entering mathematics or analytical physics, for example. I think that in the name of science and its method one can get to that kind of awareness.

DISCUSSION

Critical Assumptions

I propose the following concepts as critical givens for a further exploration of the Indigenous mind:

1. It is possible to "know."

2. A well-developed sense of self-deprecating humour is needed in the acquisition of Native knowledge.

3. Characteristically, Western culture values rationalism and objectivity above intuition, mastery above relating to, and having above the doing of becoming/being.

4. Characteristically also, Western culture tends to regard intuitive knowledge as "primitive" and therefore as unsophisticated and less

"valuable" than so-called objective modes of knowing.[50] This is not the case. The issue of oral literature is one of subtlety and sophistication.

5. There is no difference between mental and spiritual activity and development—they are two sides of the same, transparent coin. Both constitute an arduous and complex development over time.[51]

6. Native thinking is predominantly "pictorial," manifest in key metaphors, and constitutive of the "substance" of Native oral literature.

7. Investigators must continuously question assumptions they make about themselves as persons and as professionals, about others, and about the cultural-socio-political world, the environment, and the cosmos.[52]

8. It is not clear, at this time, whether the issue of knowledge is really one of Native versus non-Native, rather than one of male versus female, or whether it is a question of the nature of humanness with male/female, masculinity/femininity dimensions, or whether it is an issue of objective versus subjective knowledge—or whether it is one issue with the elements of all of those.[53]

9. Holism is holism and is the source for a fresh paradigm. The older conceptions are too narrow.

Relevance to University Education

The difficulty of acquiring Indigenous knowledge is of some relevance, if not of crucial importance, to such university programs as Native Studies. One aspect of the difficulty stems from the nature and requirements of the knowing process itself; a second derives from an inescapable role that many Native-related university programs assume, consciously or not.

Universities are obvious purveyors of culture. The attainment of this goal in programs about and for Indigenous students is understandably conditional on the experience of the faculty itself. Native Studies faculties, knowingly or not, are prime agents of Aboriginal culture preservation and

development. They draw critically on many disciplines and methodologies, as on tradition, in order to define and deliver programs and courses in response both to the wider spectrum of Native needs and to university learning requirements.

Within that endeavour, however, oral tradition factors fare unevenly, whereas, in my view, oral tradition should be a central concern in program and course development. But that requires faculty members who have a developed sense of oral tradition and a prolonged experience in ceremonies. That challenge is in turn compounded by the forces of traditional university intellectualism versus Native intuition, of academic versus colloquial languages, of elitism versus people-in-communities, of knowledge of the professional versus knowledge of the People, of direct knowledge versus indirect knowledge, and of written tradition versus oral tradition.

It is a standing question as to whether Native ways of knowing can be fostered in a university environment. Stated ideals to the contrary notwithstanding, universities historically have tended rather to develop critics and not artists and poets, scientists or controllers and not facilitators. Formulating questions of what is necessary, what is possible, and what should be possible might make that possible, however. As mentioned earlier, Belenky and associates affirm that learning has to be personalized in order to develop the intuitive and analytical capacities of the human mind to prize and to affirm, to evaluate. Their basic assumption is that "the nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it. They affect our definition of ourselves, the way we interact with others, our public and private personae, our sense of control over life events, our views of teaching and learning, and our conception of morality."[54]

Vera John-Steiner, who is doing work in Navajo cognition, insists that university-level learning requires craft, logic, mastery, and commitment.[55] She is also emphatic about the need for "dialectical movement" between process and product, person and society, modality within modality, intention and expression, as all these are thought processes at the core of the creative process.[56]

CONCLUSION

The concern of this essay is with a core knowledge translated by oral tradition, in its nature and in its process (notwithstanding the pragmatics of discernment), both within personal experience and within a tradition strongly influenced inwardly and outwardly since the time of Native contact with Euro-American culture. My focus precludes consideration of several other significant areas. For length reasons, this paper does not address related religious questions, attendant at various points throughout. The same reason prevails also with regard to the consideration of healing, "bad/good" medicine, and the spectrum of psychic phenomena. The exclusion of lower levels of knowledge is intentional, such as may be observed in social attitudes and customs in contemporary Native communities regarding health and education, for example. I have concentrated on the principle that the traditional "world" of Indigenous knowledge is a sense world that is in truth spiritual. My ambition to discern this phenomenon here is predominantly intellectual, and admittedly that is a limiting factor. The reader who "studies" what I have written here, without any sense of direct knowing, will not understand.

Indigenous knowledge and Native American survival somehow go together. Nonetheless, as Berry observes, after five centuries of contact, there is yet "no adequate interpretation of this event. . . . It remains, however, *one of the most significant events* in the total history of the earth."[57]

NOTES

1 Thomas Berry, "The Indian Future," 135.
2 Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 31.
3 Regarding the general difficulty facing the Native writer, Jamake Highwater states: "It is my educational duplexity in two completely contrary sets of values that gives impetus to what I have to say" (*The Primal Mind: Vision and Reality in Indian America,* xi). It is this duplexity of sorts, an inner sense of "irreconcilable differences," that compounds the need for appropriate words and phrases. But, perhaps this is not so at deeper levels of mind. I would also emphasize that this inner struggle is rendered more difficult by a process of breaking out of the

cramping confinement of acquired Western thoughts and thought processes, through a complicated and problematical process of "going back." Regarding the "sharing of secrets," there are those who fear and object that the white man will take over Native spirituality, were he to learn the "secrets," and again, one ultimate time, leave the Native absolutely bereft. This is a most understandable and significant apprehension that nonetheless on closer examination falls away because the requirement of the "learning" of the "secrets" are such that were non-Indians to acquire the "knowledge," they would be "trustable," for in a sense they would no longer be non-Indian! It is sobering to keep in mind that significant numbers of Natives across the continent abuse their "gifts" through "bad" medicine. We have perhaps more reason to fear our own. See E. James for an account of "medicine" misuse and corruption. Robert Boissiere writes: "The Indian visualizes the mysteries of life without the need to express them consciously to anyone" (*Meditations with the Hopi,* 22).

4 See, for example, David Suzuki, "World Environment and Indigenous Peoples"; Arthur Koestler, "Cosmic Consciousness," 54.

5 Boissiere, *Meditations with the Hopi,* 21.

6 Berry, "The Indian Future," 136.

7 Gerald Hausman, *Meditations with Animals: A Native American Bestiary,* 5; Highwater, *The Primal Mind,* xiv.

8 Berry, "The Indian Future," 136.

9 Robert E. Ornstein, "Eastern Psychologies: The Container vs. the Contents," 36.

10 Ibid.

11 Berry, "The Indian Future," 136.

12 Ibid.

13 See, for example, the works listed in the bibliography by Marie Battiste and James (Sákéj) Youngblood Henderson, Thomas Berry, Joseph Epes Brown, David Brumble, Beatrice Bruteau, Galen Buller, Viola Cordova, Richard Erdoes and Alfonso Ortiz, Janice Gould, Will Gravely, Stanislav Grof, Jamake Highwater, Wolfgang Jilek, Trebbe Johnson, Bennetta Jules-Rosette, Roger Obonsawin, and Carolyn Shaffer.

14 This paragraph draws on John Welwood, *The Meeting of the Ways: Explorations in East/West Psychology,* 30, 34, and 151.

15 Arthur Deikman, *Personal Freedom: On Finding Your Way to the Real World,* 47.

16 Medard Boss, "Eastern Wisdom and Western Psychotherapy," 190; emphasis in the original.

17 Rudolf Steiner, *An Autobiography*, 251 (and see also 190).

18 Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, "Truth in Myths," 150; my emphasis.

19 Steiner, *An Autobiography,* 104. The emphasis made here is not exclusive. In my view, Native mind as exemplified by evolved Elders manifests highest-order intellectual activity, both discursive and analytical, as well as the range of intuitive and metaphoric capacity. I do not observe this mind as having less of any human mental capacity, but that (in the context of this essay) when compared with Western mind, traditional Native mind displays highly developed "pictorial thinking."

20 Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 69.
21 Joseph Epes Brown, "The Bison and the Moth: Lakota Correspondences," 9.
22 The late Abe Burnstick, Stoney Elder, Paul Band Indian Reserve, Duffield, Alberta.
23 See Joseph Couture, "The Role of Native Elders: Emergent Issues." [Reprinted as chapter 5 in this book.—*Eds.*]. I would add the following comments:

Oral literature is and must be considered as a medium in its own right, apart from textuality, if one wishes to "study" Indigenous knowledge. That is a starting point requirement. Addressing this issue under that condition is a major challenge to the print-based academic researcher.

The question of grasping another interpretive system, especially when rooted in the culture—and as a social scientist—is never complete, much as it is never complete for the individual. Nonetheless, I assume that there is some process of communication and evaluation possible across Native and Western forms of thought. See Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays,* and Bennetta Jules-Rosette, "The Veil of Objectivity: Prophecy, Divination, and Society," for caveats and possibilities.
24 Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity,* 8.
25 Huston Smith, "Philosophy, Theology, and the Primordial Claim," 276.
26 Berry, "The Indian Future," 136; my emphasis.
27 Ibid., 137.
28 Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 71; Brown, "The Bison and the Moth," 9.
29 See Eugene Fontinell, "Faith and Metaphysics Revisited."
30 Ibid., 130.
31 Anselm Kyongsuk Min, "The Challenge of Radical Pluralism," 273.
32 Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 50.
33 The relevance and the serious practical difficulties of discernment regarding Elders are addressed elsewhere (see Couture, "The Role of Native Elders"). I would like to add that a Native Elder is a person who says what he/she thinks himself entitled to say according to his own experience from within a spiritual world—and there is much evidence regarding this ineffable behaviour. Also, in the teaching of Elders bearing on stages of learning, clearly there are steps that cannot be skipped, for each situates the necessary competency (comprising content, skill, attitude), that is, the means of "organizing," to make "sense" of it all. This model of sorts reflects the insight that traditional Native personality is a multi-leveled manifestation, or expression of a single consciousness. Noteworthy also, as Viola Cordova states, is (1) "Our thinking is in the mainstream of human thought," and (2) "Native American beliefs contain some of the most abstract notions in any philosophical system" (*Philosophy and the Native American: The People Before Columbus,* 24, 26). [This volume is no longer available. Cordova's writings have since been collected in *How It Is: The Native American Philosophy of V. F. Cordova,* edited by Kathleen Dean Moore, Kurt Peters, Ted Jojola, and Amber Lacy (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007). These remarks appear in "Windows on Academics," pp. 52 and 53.—*Eds.*]

34 John Welwood, *The Meeting of the Ways: Exploration in East/West Psychology,* xiv.
35 This list, in my view, is a characteristic sample of Elder axioms.
36 Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 110; my emphasis. Ornstein ("Eastern Psychologies," 36) points out: "Our culture is the best educated, wealthiest, most 'emotionally aware' in history. It is also one of the most spiritually illiterate. We are, I think, near the end of this illiteracy."
37 Welwood (*The Meeting of the Ways,* xii) states: "Oddly enough, this central aspect of everyday consciousness has rarely been observed, much less studied, in Western psychology, which has chosen instead to analyze mind as though it were an object independent of the analyzer, consisting of postulated structures and mechanisms that are not directly experienced. The Eastern approach to mind sets out to examine different aspects of immediate awareness, how we relate to things, and to understand mind in a very direct, personally relevant way."
38 See Ornstein, "Eastern Psychologies."
39 Brent Slife and Suzanne Barnard, in "Existential and Cognitive Psychology: Contrasting Views of Consiousness," delineate clearly the behavioural roots of cognitive psychology and present a useful comparison between cognitive and existential psychology.
40 See Reuven Feuerstein, *Dynamic Assessment of Retarded Performers: The Learning Potential* Assessment *Device, Theory, Instruments, and Techniques,* and *Instrumental Enrichment: An Interview Program for Cognitive Modifiability.*
41 See Stanislav Grof, *Beyond the Brain: Birth, Death, and Transcendence in Psychotherapy*; Ornstein, "Eastern Psychologies"; and Welwood, *The Meeting of the Ways.*
42 Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind,* 8.
43 See Sandra Friedman and Alexander Irwin, "Christian Feminism, Eros, and Power in Right Relation."
44 See Welwood, *The Meeting of the Ways,* xiii.
45 Ken Wilber, "Treatment Modalities."
46 In a manner, parallel perhaps, to what Sherry Turkle (*The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit, 23*) has discovered about how a culture can be transformed by an idea—the impact of Freud on contemporary culture, for example, and now computers.
47 Steiner, *An Autobiography, 215.*
48 Bateson, *Mind and Nature,* 8.
49 Ibid.; my emphasis.
50 See Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing;* Feuerstein, *Dynamic Assessment of Retarded Performers,* and *Instrumental Assessment*; and Vera John-Steiner, *Notebooks of the Mind: Explorations in Thinking.* Feminist researchers stress a personalized way of knowing versus the rationality and objectivity of Western technological society, with its prevailing assumption that intuitive knowledge

is more primitive, lacking in sophistication, and therefore less valid than so-called objective modes of knowing.

51 See M. Scott Peck, *The Road Less Traveled: A New Psychology of Love, Traditional Values, and Spiritual Growth,* and *The Different Drum: Community Making and Peace*; Ira Progoff, *At a Journal Workshop: The Basic Text and Guide for Using the Intensive Journal Process,* and *The Practice of Process Meditation: The Intensive Journal Way to Spiritual Experience*; and Steiner, *The Philosophy of Spiritual Activity.*

52 I do not wish to underplay the significance of obvious obstacles to acquiring a non-dualistic mode of knowing. I would liken the characteristic Western way of knowing to a "cultural addiction." D. L. Morrow claims cultural addictions to be as pernicious as chemical addiction. The latter takes over the role of primary integrating factor in a person's life. As such, it distorts his/her perceptions and actions to a degree that is very limiting. Cultural addiction has a similar effect. This is an addiction that we may not readily admit to. Morrow points out that the remedy is to develop "acute self-awareness" in order to free ourselves of our own cultural addictions ("Cultural Addiction," 30, 32, 44). Another example of cultural addiction is what Berry calls "compulsive saviour instincts," a characteristic of some professional religious people ("The Indian Future," 134). See also Couture, "Native and Non-Native Encounter." [Reprinted as chapter 2 in this book.—*Eds.*]

53 I have contrasted Native with Western for the sake of as simple a presentation as possible.

54 Belenky et al., *Women's Ways of Knowing,* 3.

55 John-Steiner, *Notebooks of the Mind,* 5. She also states: "The conventional conception of 'scientific method' slights the intuitive, imagistic side of creative thought and ignores the place of passionate dialogue—has not addressed the reality or realness of 'direct experience.'" Her statement is complemented by Bateson's observation that "Logic and quantity turn out to be inappropriate devices describing organisms, and their interactions and internal organization" (*Mind and Nature,* 22).

56 John-Steiner, *Notebooks of the Mind,* xii.

57 Berry, "The Indian Future," 133; emphasis in the original.

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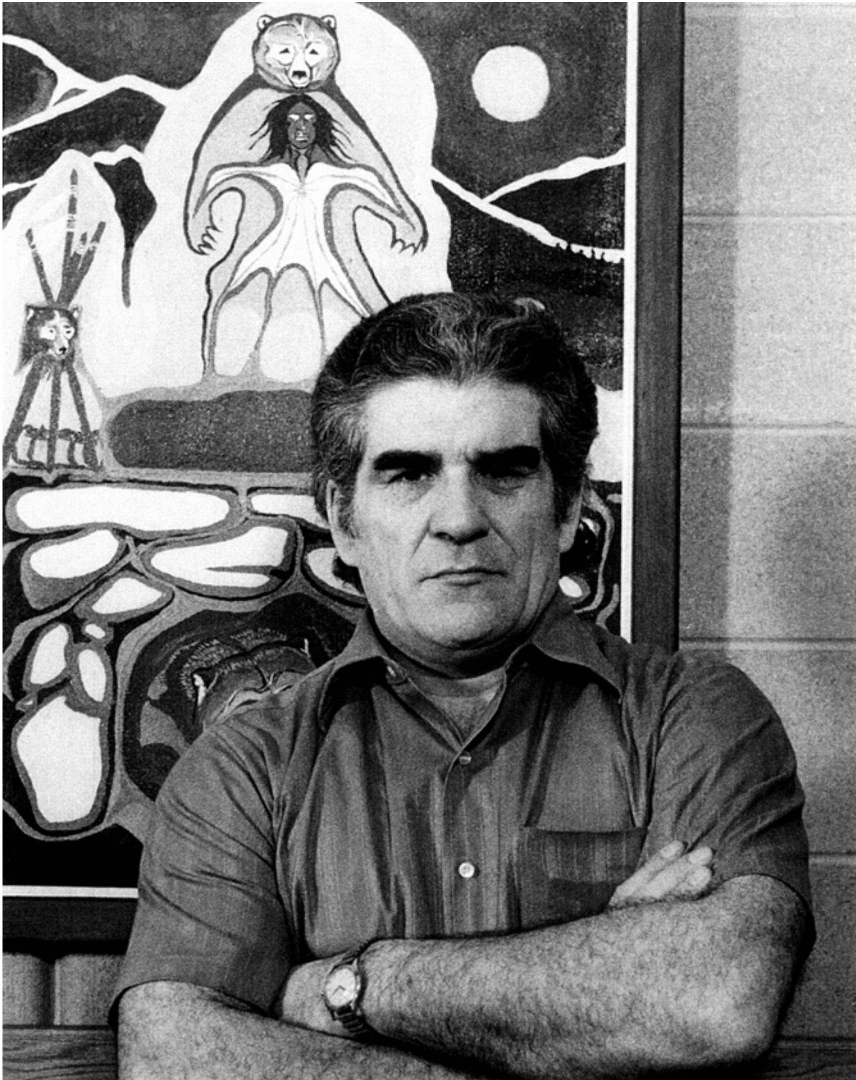
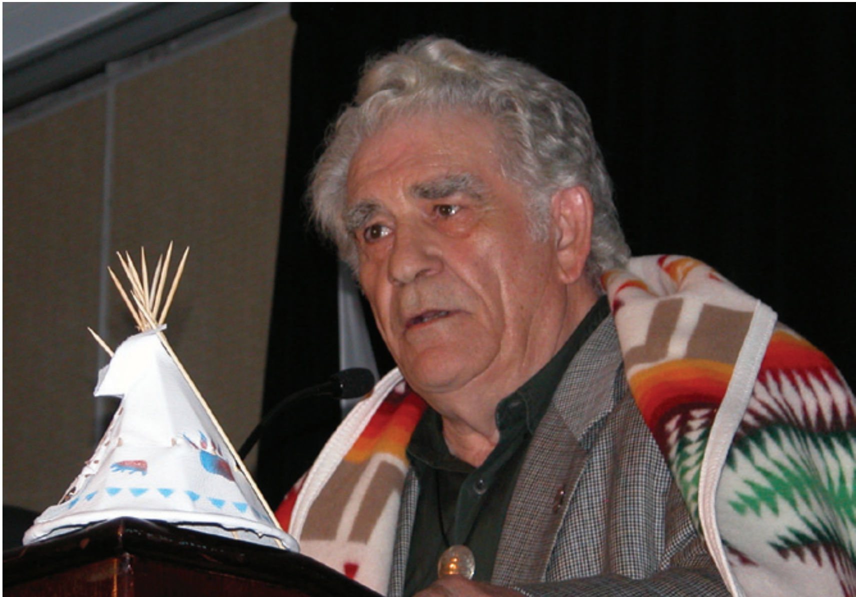


Dr. Joe in the mid-1970s, when he was chair of the Department of Native Studies (as it was then called) at Trent University, in Peterborough, Ontario. Photograph by permission of the Department of Indigenous Studies, Trent University.

Group photograph from the 1972 Vancouver Island workshop, the culmination of the series of Elder "think tanks." Dr. Joe, in the light green shirt and white pants, is talking with Harold Cardinal (in the red shirt, on Joe's right). Participants also included Don Cardinal (fifth from the left), as well as Elders representing various of Alberta's First Nations and members of the Indian Association of Alberta who were involved with the Indigenous Peoples' rights movement in Canada. Photograph courtesy of Jerome Slavik and Tanya Kappo.

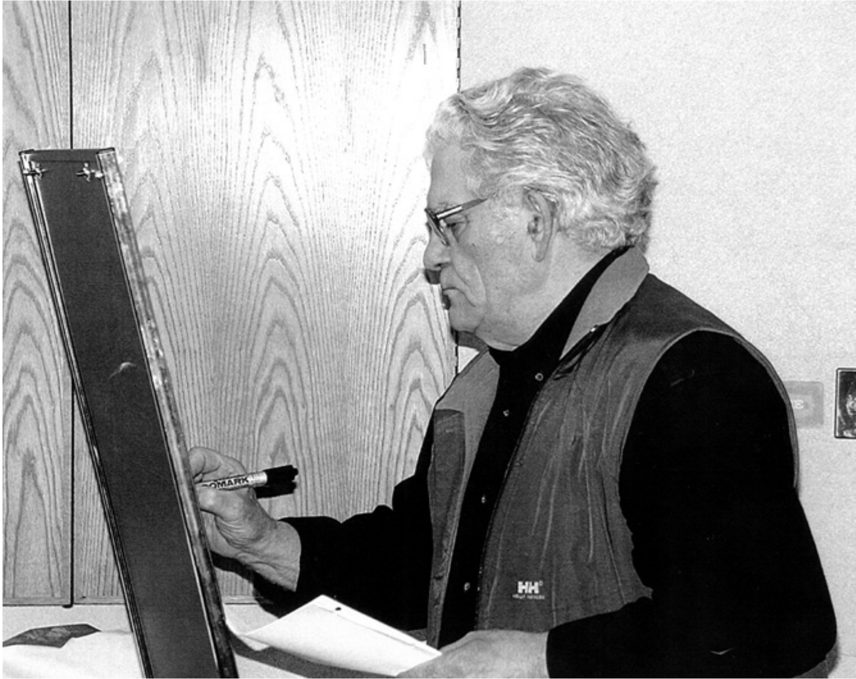
The campsite set up for a workshop and ceremonies in 1973 at Cline River. Dr. Joe is slightly to the right of centre. Photograph courtesy of Lewis Cardinal.

The teepee in which Dr. Joe held pipe ceremonies, located at his home in Calling Lake, Alberta, where he resided after he returned to Alberta from Ontario. Photograph (1999) courtesy of Joanna Couture.



Dr. Joe receiving the 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award from Native Counselling Services of Alberta. Photograph courtesy of Native Counselling Services of Alberta.

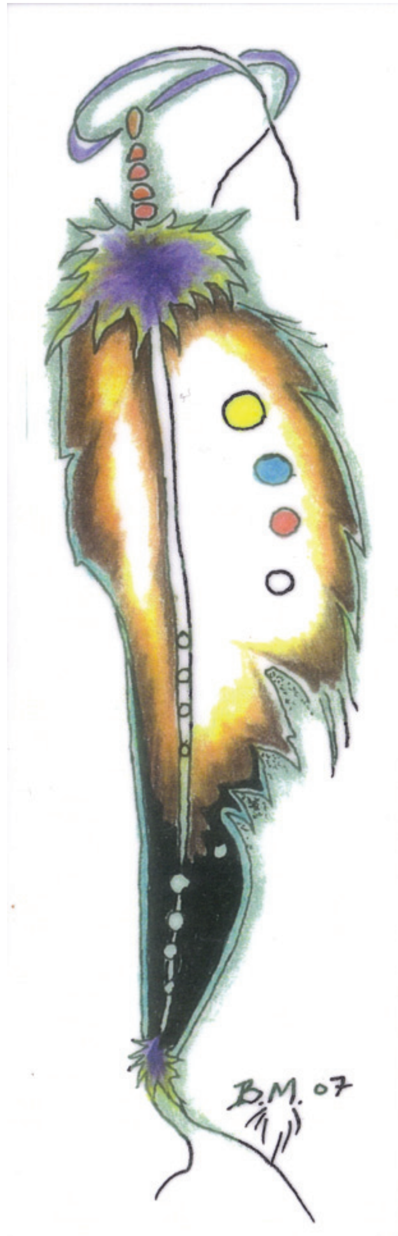
Dr. Joe in Abbotsford, British Columbia, where he chaired the 2005 meeting of the Research Advisory Group of the Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program. Photograph courtesy of Correctional Service Canada.



Dr. Joe at the easel during the 2006 Indigenous Knowledge Translation Summit held at the First Nations University of Canada, in Regina. Photograph courtesy of Caroline Tait.

Dr. Joe receiving the 2007 National Aboriginal Achievement Award for Health, with two other NAAA award recipients, Monica Peters and Chief David Walkem. Photograph courtesy of the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

Eagle with wolf, buffalo, and bear paw print on feathers. Drawing made by Bob Martial for Dr. Joe, 2007.



Eagle feather in Dr. Joe's colours: yellow, white, red, and royal blue. Drawing made by Bob Martial for Dr. Joe, 2007.

A circle of life, rendered in Dr. Joe's colours (yellow, white, red, and royal blue), showing his sacred pipe, the eagle feather, the bear spirit, and the setting sun. Drawing made by Bob Martial for Dr. Joe, 2007.

THREE

Education as Encounter

Introduction

Dr. Joe devoted the larger part of his life to Native education, as a teacher, a developer of training programs, and a scholar. As he saw it, education for Aboriginal peoples must be based on personal encounters with traditional values and ways of knowing, in which students engage in holistic learning-by-doing, with the Elders at the centre of the learning circle.

The opening essay, "Native Training and Political Change: A Personal Reflection," was written in 1982 in response to an invitation to reflect on the current status of Native education. In it, Joe looks back on his experiences in the development of Native training programs in the pivotal period of the late 1960s and early 1970s, which he marks as the historical moment at which the Aboriginal self-determination movement emerged. Central to this movement was the need for organizations to build capacity that would enable these organizations to address effectively the issues facing Aboriginal communities and to articulate and pursue political goals. Education and skills training were essential to the development of such organizations; as he observes, "there was simply no pool of Native professional and paraprofessional workers" at that time. He recounts the history of two early efforts at Aboriginal self-empowerment, the Native Training Institute and a series of workshops, or "think tanks," at which Elders functioned as both teachers and trainers. He then turns to a discussion of the Nechi Institute, which he regards as an especially noteworthy example of innovative training developed "by Indians for Indians." Founded in 1974 to provide a culture-sensitive program for personal and collective healing, including recovery from alcohol abuse, the Nechi Institute adopted an

experiential model of learning known as "process education," or learning-by-doing, in which Elders were central participants. Joe goes on to propose a "best" format for Native training, arguing that both the trainers and the training itself must reflect traditional values and worldview, such as respect for life and a sense of connection to the land. Dr. Joe was firmly convinced that an educated embrace of their cultural heritage was fundamental to the politicization of Aboriginal peoples. Only by becoming fully aware of their circumstances, he felt, and of the historical conditions, political forces, and cultural dynamics at play in those circumstances, are a people able to realize that they have the power to change their situation. The essay thus closes with a vision of Native-controlled training as a force for political and social change.

"Native Studies and the Academy," written in 2000, examines the tasks that lie before a field of study that was, at the time, only just emerging and was struggling for recognition as a legitimate academic discipline. It was regarded as essential not only that oral tradition and Native ways of knowing be recognized as valid sources of knowledge but also that Indigenous epistemologies be incorporated into programs in Native Studies. This meant that such programs often occupied an uneasy place in the university, with its characteristic emphasis on secondary analysis rather than the immediacy of experience. Dr. Joe begins by outlining a series of assumptions implicit in the study of Native ways, as well as the conundrums, both pedagogical and situational, that these assumptions present. He contrasts the holistic, inclusive, intuitive, metaphorical, and imagistic nature of the Aboriginal worldview with the values central to the university environment, which tends towards compartmentalization, elitism, and analytical modes of reasoning that devalue phenomenological or experiential sources of knowledge and insight. In the light of these considerations, he describes what is needed in the area of curriculum development, as well as what programs in Natives Studies demand on the part of teachers and students. In concluding, he suggests that there exists an enduring "core of communalities," a heritage shared by many, if not all, Native American cultures, one that includes traditional "ways of knowing and of being/becoming a human being." It is the task of Native Studies to draw upon this ever-evolving "Story" and in turn to contribute to it.

The final essay, "What Is Fundamental to Native Education? Some Thoughts on the Relationship Between Thinking, Feeling and Learning," was written somewhat earlier, in 1987. Joe begins with a return to the watershed moment in 1972 when Elder Louis Crier issued a challenge to Indigenous peoples to "forge a new and stronger identity" by embracing biculturalism, by finding the "harmonies" between Native tradition and Western civilization. In the light of that challenge, he sets out to explore some of the critical differences in values and outlook that distinguish the Native worldview, in all its dynamism and diversity, from mainstream Euro-Canadian culture. He describes the historical, philosophical, and psychological dimensions of traditional Native values, arguing that "Canadian society has overlooked virtually all of these values" and has instead "tended to ignore or downgrade Native cultural distinctiveness." Acknowledging that Native students are often underachievers, he points to the urgent need for holistic pedagogical approaches that affirm Indigenous values and cognitive models and that recognize the validity of experiential learning, while at the same time training students to reason and analyze. Only in this way, he concludes, will it be possible for Native students to become truly engaged in post-secondary education, which has for so long refused to consider alternative models of learning. It is one of Dr. Joe's most outspoken pieces of writing, in which one easily senses both his frustration with the continued marginalization of his people and his commitment to their future.

7 Native Training and Political Change
A Personal Reflection

My experience in Native training began twelve years ago, preceded by a ten-year period in Indian elementary and secondary education activities. What follows are primarily the reflections of a practitioner.[1] This essay refers to many Alberta events simply because I have worked in that province for most of my career. Nonetheless, some additional experience in all the provinces of the west, in the Territories, and in such states as Wyoming and New Mexico, in combination with much shop talk with trainers from across the continent, leads me to think that the conclusions of my various experiences have some validity. It is quite clear to me, for example, that across the continent certain training designs were developed for similar goals and produce comparable results.

A summary of the main features of my experience constitutes the first section of this essay. In the second and concluding sections, an attempt is made to draw out the implications of that experience for the future of Native training. The last section avoids presenting futuristic specifics; rather, it proposes the importance of knowing how to engage process variables in training.

THE EXPERIENCE

Throughout virtually all of Indian North America, 1969 to 1970 marks the moment of the emergence of the Indian movement towards self-determination. That period witnessed the beginning of widespread organizational

development. Both politically oriented and service-directed units proliferated across the country.

The initial staffing of these programs was problematic. It was not possible to hire Indians with specific qualifications. Employers had to hire whoever could be found and whoever was willing to work with organizations whose future was very unsteady. There simply was no pool of Native professional and paraprofessional workers.

At start-up, then, training was largely of the on-the-job variety, supplemented by job-to-job experience. The early wave of employees was very fluid. Once a minimal organizational structure was established—that is, a board, an executive officer, and some staff, especially once program planning and development had begun—then the inadequacies of job-related ability and preparation were more keenly perceived. An initial effort was made to train some employees, such as liaison workers, but the workshop designs focused largely on information giving and were limited in their effect on skills development. Very quickly, however, organization-related work became complex and difficult, and for this employees were not prepared.

The foregoing is an overview of the evolution in the perceived need for skills and in the sharpening of training design. Now I would like to indicate a sequence of certain training events. In doing so, I would like to underscore the developmental process that I see embedded in that sequence, because it seems to me to be relevant to the critical issue of the politicization of a people.

I understand politicization to mean an encompassing process by and through which an individual and/or group becomes aware of all of the dimensions of his, her, or their existence, including oppressive conditions, social forces, economic circumstances, and cultural repression—with particular attention to the political forces. In this process, the individual or group begins to move, usually through trial and error, in the direction of changing his, her, or their situation. A characteristic of virtually all Native groups at the outset of a dawning consciousness appears to have been: "Our situation is bad. This can't go on. Only we can change it."

Politicization, concomitant community development programs, and consequent training initiatives are rooted in the economic and cultural

nature of circumstance and in the relative disparity and poverty of that circumstance. Thus, politicization meant becoming more aware of the dimensions of economic and racial oppression. Out of that context came the need to expand individual and collective Indian awareness of the dynamics at play and of the political and service actions required to change them. For training, that meant the development of a range of political skills—negotiation skills, organizational and assessment skills, public-speaking skills, all based on the collective identification of common interests and needs—and a broad knowledge of the process of political change in Canadian society at large.

THE NATIVE TRAINING INSTITUTE AND ELDERS' THINK TANKS

The fall and winter period of 1968 to 1969 was the time during which the Indian Association of Alberta, the Métis Association of Alberta, and the Native Communications Society shared a common office and co-operated with each other in evaluation and planning and in lobbying for program monies. In the spring of 1969, after obtaining grant funding, these groups established the Native Training Institute as a joint program. All three organizations were seeking fieldworkers but could find none with training or experience. Since there were no suitable training programs available, either within government or at nearby community colleges and universities, it was decided that we should establish our own.

A two-month residential and supervised field placement training program was designed to accommodate some forty-five status and non-status Indians, both men and women. A core staff of five trainers from across the Prairies was brought together and an on-call pool of professional resource people, Indian and non-Indian, Canadian and American, was established. The program was housed in a former residential school near Edmonton. The experiential sequence involved an initial eight-day, T-group-style communication skills development,[2] followed by a two-week placement to gather information about Native health services. The program ended with several weeks given to debriefing the field experience with the help of the various resource people, who also provided technical and cultural

information as needed. At the end of the two-month period, the trainees moved to each of the three co-sponsoring organizations for job placement.

No systematic evaluation of that institute was ever attempted. Its noteworthy features appear to be that, in addition to being the first intensive and comprehensive workshop ever organized by Indians for Indians, it was the first effort to adapt the training philosophy and design of the day to Native job skill development and that it attempted to develop awareness and assessment skills in trainees relative to Native community problems. In a sense, that initial group formed a cadre of Indian "troubleshooters," who were political investigators as well as community development workers.

The Native Training Institute was based on the premise that everything Native is inherently political and controlled by powers outside of Native communities. The skill that needed development, it was thought then, was the ability to perceive local felt-need and to facilitate the development of local problem-solving, decision-making, and resource development skills in order to induce desired and needed changes.

A second significant training event was the institution of Elders' "think tanks" sponsored and organized by the now-defunct Alberta Indian Education Centre under the aegis of the Indian Association of Alberta during the years 1971 to 1973. This program consisted of a series of twelve workshops that were held throughout Alberta. The format involved the bringing together of several Elders, sometimes as many as eighteen to twenty, from the six tribes of the province, to discuss with younger Indians the issues of the day including, for example, who is an Indian, what is an Indian, Indian education, economic development in Indian communities, and so on.

The workshops were residential and ran from three to five days. These conferences were typically unstructured and ran on "Indian time," which allowed for a free-flowing dialogue between the young and old (the "young" being anyone under fifty). The advantage of this format was that it provided the opportunity for many younger Indians to discuss the particularly vital issue of cultural identity. It also provided the Elders with an opportunity to reassume their traditional role of teacher, advisor, historian, and philosopher combined. In addition, it required of them, by their own admission, that they redefine their traditional position of waiting for

the younger generations to seek them out. They declared then that, as of that time, they wished everyone to know that they were available and were willing to travel to wherever when called upon and also that the younger ones needed to hurry up and seek them out because there weren't many Medicine People left.

The think tank experience appears to have had a strong and lasting impact. It introduced a new element to training that was to become a permanent feature of regional and provincial, and ultimately national, planning and training endeavours. Within the think tank setting, Elders not only revealed the power of their wisdom and experience but also—and this was of particular importance to youth—modeled an exceptional and attractive personality type. Elders displayed high levels of intellectual astuteness, affective qualities such as warmth and empathy, humour, teaching and counselling finesse, psychic insight, and spiritual powers. Elders also demonstrated a profound knowledge of Indian history, particularly of the treaties, and generated the moral, spiritual, and political processes that underpin the Indian struggle of today. This has been an important contribution to the socio-political evolution in many Indian communities.

The Native Training Institute and think tank experiences were comprehensive, global, and largely undifferentiated in scope. They were trial-and-error adaptations aimed at addressing a first round of crude, unrefined expressions of felt-needs. It is true that the various training efforts made at the time were unrelated to each other and were sporadic, but they laid the basis for the more sophisticated forms of training of the future.

Examples of second-round training offerings can be found among several of the service organizations, such as the Native Counselling Services of Alberta and the Native Communications Society, both Edmonton-based. By 1972, both groups were keenly feeling the absence of even ad hoc training opportunities. The former group was very involved in assisting Indians in the courts of the province, and the latter was very busy acquiring media technology and experience. Both groups moved in the direction of obtaining training in news reporting that would develop the specific job skills needed by each program and also provide the technical information and content that the respective workers needed, such as knowledge of the

law, in the one instance, and information-reporting forms and strategies, in the other. Each group moved towards defining their own training objectives and drawing on non-Indian technical resources.

Some Indian trainers were now available and became engaged in facilitating the respective training sessions. In addition, both groups also began to include Elders, as a result of the think tank experience. With refinement in training, however, both organizations, and others of analogous service orientation, continued to call upon non-Indian resource persons. This was an understandable and necessary trend, although criticized by some at the time, because Indians with advanced, sophisticated training skills were not yet available.

The Nechi Training Institute,[3] founded in 1974, was to become the vent through which, in a sense, Native training capacity not only expanded but matured. It proved to be the facilitating agency from which the first major group of highly skilled Native trainers emerged.

THE NECHI INSTITUTE

The Nechi Institute came immediately upon the establishment of two all-Indian treatment centres, one in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, and the second in Edmonton. Both centres represented a planned response to the conclusion of several detailed surveys, namely, that alcohol was the number one Native health, political, and social problem. Almost all Native families, it was found, were affected by alcohol to some degree. Indians were stereotyped because of alcohol. As well, drinking had become a large part of the self-image of many Indians. Consequently, and obviously, it was a political issue, one that repeatedly frustrated effective political organization and consistent personal functioning. A very major segment of Native leadership was, at one time or another, influenced by alcohol. Only after alcohol problems had been dealt with did a relatively steady flow of leadership begin to appear. Therefore, a planned effort to deal with alcohol became an obvious and needed step in political and personal development. Alcohol thus became a logical focus for extensive training oriented towards personal and community development.

The Nechi "thing" deserves close examination, for it presents several interesting features. One, a central characteristic, is that it was instituted by Indians for Indians, with complete control of training design.

A second aspect is that the Nechi founders borrowed and adapted a learning model that effectively operationalized the principle that the "poor" can do things for themselves. In this case, the "poor" were those many Indians affected by alcohol. It was a "process education" or "experiential" model carried up from the University of California at Santa Cruz, where several Canadian Indians had trained. A group at Santa Cruz had, during the late sixties, developed an effective training rationale and techniques while working with Black, Chicano, and American Indian groups.

The rationale, as a third characteristic, demonstrated that desirable and needed self-help skills for both the individual and community could be significantly developed through learning-by-doing, that is, "process" or "experiential" learning. The model took into account cultural sensitivities, biases, and differences in a manner that enhanced the strengthening of a sense of identity, for it allowed the individual to tap into his or her cultural heritage and roots.

The training design was comprehensive in that it addressed individual personal growth needs, as well as professional skills development for alcohol counselling and program management and community resource identification and development. Nechi trainers demonstrated that a "total approach" to alcohol as a community issue was operationally possible and that this could be carried out in terms of a culturally based educational philosophy and psychology.

The Nechi program, at the outset, demonstrated very clearly that the presence of Elders in all training workshops was not simply a good thing but that their wisdom and skill inputs into the total training process became necessary on two counts: as models of the kind of human being traditional Indian education develops and as exceptionally effective teachers and counsellors in their own right.

At the beginning, program offerings in the area of counsellor training and program management were of an introductory nature. Quickly, however, advanced training designs were developed in response to trainee need. Indian "trainers" learned on the job. The "training of trainers" was

facilitated through the efforts of the director and program coordinator, together with "outside" trainers, usually from the Santa Cruz pool. At the same time, over the first several years of operation, Nechi staff undertook further training in several professional programs across North America.

The Nechi model provided the conditions and the opportunity through which many Indians were for the first time "turned on to themselves" in their work in the communities. It gave them confidence, commitment, and energy. They experienced their potential, and many subsequently continued to pursue a variety of opportunities for personal and political growth. In Alberta, Nechi trained a large number of social counsellors, and many of the current Indian political leaders at the reserve level are Nechi graduates. Nechi instituted a new, sober ethic that was quickly embraced by leadership-starved communities and organizations.

Within two years of its founding the Nechi Institute began to receive invitations from Indians across the Prairies, British Columbia, and the Territories to act as consultant-trainers on alcohol-related issues. At about the same time, Nechi began to provide a consultant-trainer service to provincial and federal prison programs for Natives. Another refinement was provided through the establishment of accreditation with Grant MacEwan Community College. It thus became possible for Nechi trainees to continue on into the provincial community college system, which some Native persons eventually did. That college in turn became accredited with the University of Alberta. This linkage with two provincial institutions marked an important breakthrough in terms of the educational philosophy of the province. It recognized the validity of Indian knowledge and Indian educational methods. Accreditation was possible because Nechi demonstrated success in relation to the goals it had set for itself in conjunction with the approval of the educational bureaucracy.

In sum, the Nechi endeavour was a clear illustration of what a training program for Indians, started and controlled by Indians, can do. From a technical standpoint, this experiential model provided considerable flexibility and adaptability. The Nechi experience showed that the same training team could, and did, train separate groups, each made up of trainees from different helping or people-service professions. It was found, for instance, that the training team could provide a workshop for counsellors

the one week, then enter into a workshop for social workers the next, and move on to a group of community development workers by the third. It proved to be a useful assumption that, in addition to acquiring the skills and knowledge specific to their respective professions, all people-service workers needed certain general skills, such as observational, communicational, personal survival, and process facilitation skills. Once the development of these common skills was underway, specialized resource persons, materials, and equipment were introduced into the design.

Thus far I have discussed the more singular and relatively clear training developments that were provided or sponsored by Native people for Native people. While such moments certainly constitute personal highlights for the 1969 to 1975 period, I would like to indicate as well some of the other training experiences obtained during that same period by many of us in the Native movement.

What I have in mind are the many short (one to two days) conference and seminar-type workshops that were organized from 1969 through 1975. These workshops focused on a number of issues, including the training of political or service fieldworkers, local community development workers, court workers, media workers, and members of boards of various political and service groups. These training workshops arose from felt-needs at the community level or were instigated by workers from Native organizations or by the organizations themselves for their own workers.

The initial training designs utilized throughout this early period by myself and others reflected the state of the art of the day. The early seventies were characterized by designs that addressed themselves more to generalist fieldworker conditions. Sophistication in design did not appear until the Nechi era.

The point is that whatever the design and whatever the moment in the early period, the various training thrusts were essentially the result of felt-need and were therefore always framed in terms of the political and socio-economic situation of the moment. Then, as now, from an Indian standpoint all issues were "political," for the whole of the fabric of Indian life, particularly that of the status Indians, was politically and bureaucratically controlled and directed. This umbrella control, of which there was a consistent awareness, was perceived as the front-and-centre reality.

Special mention needs to be made of the contribution of Alcoholics Anonymous (AA). AA should be considered a serious and major "training" program! It is clear that a significant number of Native leaders, in both service and political organizations, at all levels, got their "start" in AA. The ongoing contribution of AA to training, and thereby to the politicization of the general Native community, has been that of providing the milieu within which many Indians have "found themselves" and have acquired a sense of power and direction.

AA is a form of community therapy through which many individual Indians have developed a confidence and awareness of themselves and the plight of their fellow Indians and a motivation to better the Native situation. The AA program remains for many such Indians an anchor, a reference point in the process of becoming increasingly self-starting, responsible individuals. In addition to ensuring the presence of Elders, Nechi, mindful of the power of AA, provided the opportunity for participation in AA as a matter of course within its workshops.

AA was also the first contact point for many Native people with non-Indians. AA does not segregate and so provided the first occasion for profound contact at a heartfelt level between both groups. Such contact broke down many of the unspoken prejudices and barriers between the two races. This was also the case with some of the Nechi programs in which non-Indians in the training situation created the opportunity for both parties to examine their feelings and biases towards each other.

A final comment refers to several external sources that had some effect on training and political development. Various federal activities and the community development programs of several provinces provided consciousness-raising and learning opportunities. They helped create and strengthen the desire to do something about local and regional conditions. Many Native board members, Native fieldworkers, chiefs, and band councillors obtained an initial experience as change agents in these programs. These various funding agencies of the Trudeau liberal era expected that cultural adaptation by Indians would occur and that they would thereby enter into the Canadian cultural mainstream. The programs were funded so as to ultimately reduce or minimize the social costs of Native people to society as a whole. When Indians started moving away from the assimilation

thrust, however, the government more stringently "bureaucratized," and funds for training became more difficult to obtain.

Training programs started in 1969 in an anxious atmosphere. Native people were impatient to change things themselves, but the struggle was uncertain and complex, and the funding precarious. Programs were initially motivated by a restless indignation that sought the removal of oppressive conditions. Most knew what they were against, but it took them some time to formulate what they were for. Initial training programs reflected the relatively undifferentiated change goals of the day. Parallel to the refinement in organized political and service activity, training design as well moved from the global to the specific. Training of liaison development workers broadened and diversified to accommodate trainees spanning the full spectrum of literacy levels and a broad range of skills needs.

One of the ultimate outcomes of the early training programs, it seems to me, was that they gave Native people a new language and new concepts for managing, identifying, and articulating their problems. Because of that, the training programs did much to bridge the gap between the framework of white helping institutions and the goals of Native self-help organizations.

This history seems to suggest some things for the future.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

My experience in Indian schools, in Indian addiction counselling, in Indian community development, and in Indian training programs has led me to conclude that virtually anyone who acquires intellectual knowledge of and develops demonstrable skills in process facilitation on an apprenticeship-in-the-field basis can become effective as a worker in the area of Native problem solving and social change. The bottom line is one of learning, of "learning how to learn," and learning how to stay responsible for and in control of desired change, be it for personal or community benefit. Without referring here to research evidence and experience from elsewhere to support my contention, it is sufficient to note that such does exist in a wide range of professional literature.

In this section I would like to present a number of recommendations based on my personal experience for future directions in Native training. These recommendations centre on the question of what is the "best" format for training.

"Best" Format for Training

Experienced trainers know full well that facilitation of both personal and group change is to a great degree a question of trainee style. As with teaching and counselling, considerable skill is needed to bring about desired changes. Human development is not obtained through mechanistic action according to a predetermined recipe. For this basic reason, it can be argued, it is not possible to claim that anyone equipped with a training design or methodology is necessarily the "best" one. Nonetheless, I would like to suggest that certain key elements need to figure as dynamic components in an appropriate training design for social change.

First, in the trainer's mind there needs to be a clear awareness of the relative distinctiveness and interconnectedness of several broad political issues. Of fundamental importance is recognition of the pan-Indian drive towards self-determination—and of, as a necessary corollary, the processual analogy that exists between training for the development of individual identity and training for group development of whatever kind (political, economic, cultural, and so on). In other words, a deep understanding and appreciation of the broad concept of human development in its many applications and forms is indispensable, at least ideally. Native training has a distinctive collective base, in contrast with the Rogerian or "human potential" emphasis on personal responsibility and almost narcissistic focus on the "I."[4] The mind of the people—the meanings deriving from tradition, from shared political, social, and economic circumstance—are elements of that collective sense, of the sense that "We all go ahead together." For that reason, it can be argued that Native training, as it has developed to this point, is to some degree more socially and politically responsible and spiritually meaningful than the secular human potential model.

The Cree, for instance, have no word for being materially or economically poor. "Poor" in Cree refers to a lack of personal quality. Thus poverty is a condition of character such that, in a sense, we are all poor

since no one is ever perfect or complete. This attitude results in a certain compassionate view of others and of self that seems to be a basic characteristic of true Indian culture. This notion has some effect on the kind of economic development that occurs on some reserves, wherein collective or family concerns often override those of the individual. In the best of circumstances this results in a strong individual carrying his family, but in the worst situation it makes for a vicious, "drag-down" system of social relations.

As a third point, there is a need to acquire an understanding of the traditional Indian sense of the land: the land is sacred and man's relationship to it is one of stewardship. This notion is fundamental to Indian tradition and stands in contrast to the dominant society's emphasis on land as something to be acquired, developed, manipulated, and sold for a profit.

A fourth area for trainers to attend to is acquiring a very broad concept of leadership training. The development of leadership ability is many things. Communications skills, for example, are usually needed and always useful. Many trainers experience frustration initially in developing Indian communication and decision-making skills because many Indian trainees display these basic skills in a culturally styled manner. Non-verbal communication, silence as silence, silence as a form of communication, the desire not to hurt anyone's feelings in communication, the initial reluctance to self-disclose, and the equally striking ease with which an important self-disclosure is made—these are some Indian behavioural characteristics that trainers need to be able to recognize and relate to sensitively and effectively.

Awareness of the decision-making style of culturally rooted Indians is of central importance. Such Indians already have, in their bones so to speak, a definite tendency to make decisions together. This is not a question of making decisions for each other, which they usually refrain from doing, but rather it is a question of making decisions together that will affect each other. This pattern is contrasted with many non-Indian trainees, who tend to be individualistic, competitive, and not oriented towards group needs.

Other Cultural Factors

In addition to the foregoing, several other cultural factors are worthy of note. Bringing Native people together for training facilitated by Native

trainers in and of itself makes for a Native cultural dynamic of sorts. I would like to suggest that trainers, both Native and non-Native, should do something more than simply content themselves with an ipso facto situation. It is advantageous on many counts to continuously facilitate to the fullest extent the interplay of authentic cultural variables. The modest but encouraging success to date of such Native-controlled training programs as those of the Nechi Institute has been largely based on the extent to which cultural influences are introduced into training designs. My experiences at Nechi and at Trent University show that there are several factors to consider.

One important influence is that of the nature and relevance of such traditional values as respect for life, which is closely related to interpersonal and "personalistic" trust. The traditional stance is one of relatedness to all beings in a personalized manner. In traditional Indian society, relationships were based on the knowledge that all life possesses personhood, that all life is sacred in quality, and that such life forms are governed by natural or cosmic law. It is within this perspective then that land is held sacred, as a gift from the Creator. Experiential knowledge of such dynamics helps a trainer establish the cultural insight that is a prerequisite in Native training.

For many Native trainees, sensitization in terms of that Indian worldview is important, if not indispensable, because that is usually what a majority wish to pursue. Regardless of the intention of trainees in workshops, the opinion of Elders is that Indian cultural and spiritual heritage is the ground out of which Native identity rises. The ability to engage cultural dynamics therefore has a significant helping influence on individual need, particularly in the areas of anger, hatred, resentment, distrust of self and others, and hurt of various kinds.

As indicated earlier, Nechi established the practice of inviting Elders into the training teams for all of its workshops, for whatever kind of trainee, including counsellors, program managers, board members, and prisoners. It is my experience that Elders completely understand the nature and purpose of current training techniques for personal and community development. They consistently display a marked ability to complement facilitators trained in non-Native approaches through the sharing of their own cultural and psychological insights and by exhibiting sophisticated teaching and facilitating skills. The inclusion of Elders in a training workshop is

the most effective and also the easiest operational effort that trainers can make to ensure an appreciable cultural impact in the training experience.

It is, in my view, indisputably clear that trainer awareness of cultural variables, together with the utilization of Elders, provides for Native trainees a supportive and motivating learning environment that has direct and immediate effect on the trainee's individual sense of confidence and self-worth. Once these two components are in place in a training process, then it is with considerably less emotional effort that individuals develop a keener sense of responsibility for their own learning—which is a direct reference to the frequent Elder admonition of "It's up to you." And this has to be the ultimate in existential statements!

To this point, I have described some features of a special awareness that is essential for trainers involved with Native trainees in whatever Native program. As well I have attempted to show how the inclusion of Elders can ensure the provision of a dynamic ethos and cultural grounding relevant to Native learning. The link between these elements is defined by the requirements of individual identity development in interaction with a significant sense of collectivity. I also have tried to build a case for the acquisition of knowledge and skills in process and have argued for a learning model that can accommodate the complexities of Native learning needs.

Yet there is still one further quality of this model that is very pertinent to the problem of the future. That quality involves the *capacity to accommodate complexity*. It allows one to face chaos in a reasonable manner; it permits the integration of the unpredictable. This capacity involves the skill to perceive change and respond to the change as change occurs—as expected, or in unforeseen manner. Trainers should be aware of this "survival" skill of the future. Training designs should foster this quality in trainees on an individual and collective basis.

Into the 1980s

It seems obvious to me that the interaction between Native society and the dominant society will continue to diversify, to become more refined, and will include a growing number of issues. Native organizations (band councils, political and service organizations) are now involved in a wide range of activities. Presently, there exists a larger and proportionately greater

manpower pool among Native groups, and they have more diversified training needs.

In terms of the provision of general and follow-up training packages, there has been for the past five years a growing and urgent need for Native people to address themselves to providing not only a wider range of para-professional programs but also to ensuring the provision of relevant and effective professional training and programs. While institutions of the dominant society, such as community colleges and universities, can claim some success in the area of Native professional development, such gains have not been impressive from the perspective of cultural appropriateness or sensitivity. A case could be made for a Native-controlled junior college somewhere in Canada, one that could improve on the Blue Quills model.[5] The basic challenge is to develop an operational formula that incorporates Native values and the philosophical and methodological perspectives of Native teaching into the post-secondary mainstream of institutions providing courses to Native students.

There also needs to be in-depth awareness of the present state of negotiations and of the goals and objectives of status and non-status political groups around such crucial issues as Aboriginal rights, land claims, and revision of the Indian Act. Current discussions point to a profound change in the future sense of individual and group identity. These efforts, which imply far-reaching effects on Native community life everywhere in Canada, have already launched a complex problem: the transfer of Native administration to local control. There are many difficulties of a legal and political nature attached to this movement towards local control. A critical question is whether or not changes in the structures and attitudes of the dominant society will be deep enough and comprehensive enough to become permanent. The possibility of such a shift and the indicators of some changes in status quo already suggest many obvious training opportunities.

CONCLUSION

It seems perfectly reasonable to me to declare that the move away from government, or colonial, control to Native control of all areas of Native life constitutes, in essence, a revolution, that is, a radical change from what was. From a cultural standpoint, it seems imperative that the shift, whatever its operational or strategic forms, consistently promotes a humanizing development process. This will demand of Native leaders, developers, educators, and trainers an extremely high level of individual and group commitment. Certainly, something more than bovine placidity is needed. Otherwise, it seems to me that Native people, together with the non-Native persons involved in the development of the future of Native people, will degenerate into two groups of non-heroes, fading into faceless oblivion.

The commitment to humanizing development is a commitment to true education, as Paulo Freire stresses, and true education is true revolution. There are many Native trainers in Canada who have that understanding and the necessary skills.

NOTES

1 I am completely indebted to Jerome Slavik, of Price and Slavik Consultants (Edmonton), for his judicious comments. He participated with me in many of the events referred to herein.
2 For T-group (Training group) methods, see, for example, Chris Argyris and Donald A. Schon, *Organizational Learning: A Theory of Action Perspective.*
3 The institute is today the Nechi Training, Research and Health Promotion Institute. For information, see http://www.nechi.com/.—*Eds.*
4 Joe refers here to the American psychologist Carl Rogers (1902–87), founder of humanistic psychology. Rogers held that the key to personal empowerment lies within each individual and propounded a "client-centred" approach to psychotherapy, as well as student-centred focus in education.—*Eds.*
5 The Blue Quills Indian Residential School was operated by the Oblate Fathers in Alberta. When the federal government attempted to close Blue Quills in 1971, the local First Nations protested and, in a landmark decision, the school was turned over to the Blue Quills Native Education Council, becoming the first residential school administered by Aboriginal people. Blue Quills is now a First Nations college that operates on the twin principles of Indigenous thought and Western academic thought. See http://abheritage.ca/stvincent-stpaul/st_paul/community_blue_quills_en.html.—*Eds.*

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8 Native Studies and the Academy

This essay follows from an earlier effort to draw attention to the practical, alluring relevance of Native ways of "knowing" and to do so within in a general social science perspective.[1] Frequent reference to psychology, then as now, simply reflects my own professional interest and conventional training. A continued focus on perceived traditional views and practice derives from my apprenticeship since 1971 in Aboriginal healing ways.

The previous writing was an exploratory attempt to note aspects of centrality deriving from direct experience of spiritual realities and dimensions. My stated intention was to propose some features of a "psychological geology"—for example, some of the underlying realities and processes that mould the topography of traditional Aboriginal mind. I emphasized also that a pluri-dimensional approach seemed needed in order to arrive at discerning criteria relative to general, current issues of identity and survival. Then, as now, it seems to me that understanding Indigenous knowing as ageless process and content has eminent, practical, and salutary implications for Aboriginal existence in a sophisticated technological and politically manipulative, if not oppressive, world. As Thomas Berry declares, it does seem important to appreciate that the Indian "has established a creative response rooted in his ability to sustain life in a moment of high tragedy and to continue the basic path of his human development in its most distinctive aspects."[2]

I continue to hold the above viewpoint, and to reiterate it here is to provide an overall context to the considerations that follow regarding Native Studies in general.

This essay reflects as well an intense personal experience, ongoing since 1975, in what was already then and remains a fresh, poignant, and exciting event.[3] Some twenty years later, while its emergence as a legitimate academic endeavour is no longer in question, Native Studies perforce continues to express tentativeness. This seems to stem from the immensity and complexity of its task. To illustrate that, as this essay proceeds under an intention to suggest guide points, thoughts and feelings are grouped under the headings of "Native Philosophy" (worldview, assumptions) and "Role-Related Difficulties" for universities, curriculum development, teachers, and students.

The views expressed here are biased, understandably personal, suggestive at best, and derive in part from the chosen focus of Native Studies: the simple, stark fact of Aboriginal Peoples in change. These views also stem from the acknowledged pressures of an on-campus academic habit and attitude that bear strongly on Native Studies as it endeavours to establish itself as bona fide discipline.

To varying degrees, community and academic stakeholders perceive and strive to relate to what is characteristically high drama for Peoples who, from out of unique, remarkable histories, are presently intensely engaged in inner/outer, individual/collective change and growth, away from degradation and despair through to individual self-determination and group empowerment. As First Nations, Aboriginals are both subject and object of intense transition, of great stress and radical changes. They are in movement away from what is a highly intolerable situation and towards establishing conditions of responsibility for their destiny.

This phenomenon, this process of transition, impresses one as epic in scale, for at its core the base rhythm is one of unprecedented healing and self-expression. That reality, reflecting as it does a complex of human needs and aspirations, relentlessly goads Native Studies. It is this that makes for the discipline's many philosophical and strategic concerns. The fundamental grounding principles and need requirements referred to above are presented as hilltop markers that flag a number of practical issues. One of these points to the nature of its task and to worldview-related assumptions.

The Fundamental Task

By the late 1960s, Aboriginal Peoples around the world had begun to discover inspiration and means needed to obviate and move away from oppressive, devastating influences. To their unabated astonishment, these discoveries were made in their respective backyards. Since then, a dawning awareness expressed through a return to Traditions has expanded into a bracing and creative movement. The institution of Native Studies is placed within that rhythm.

While the implications of this movement continue to unfold, it became clear early on that ancient tradition and history are lightsome carriers of first principles and are awaiting discernment, articulation, and application to contemporary conditions. The more one enters traditional sources, the more one perceives their worldview concepts and values as foundational, holding a power to incite and guide the resolution of the full continuum of Aboriginal development and learning needs.

It also became clear that the "constants" for "living a good life" are carried by a timeless traditional reflection, continuously renewed down through the ages. What-is-carried, in its essence, manifests itself in processes such as spiritual awareness and values development and is expressed in principles underlying a continent-wide variety in language, customs, and ways of First Nations that are understood as paramount to "living-life," as engendering patterns of connecting responses to self, others, family, community, and the cosmos. The "stuff" of relationships reveals itself to be the "ground" to Aboriginal being and becoming and provides a sure footing, one step at a time, to the necessary walk into and through contemporary dilemmas.

Since its inception in the early 1970s, Native Studies has toiled carefully, unavoidably in a trial-and-error way. It has striven to implement strategies to uncover and describe accurately the Aboriginal Story in all its dimensions.

That daunting task, a trailblazing undertaking, presented a second intimidating hurdle, that of modulating a university-based critical analysis.

So as to arrive at an able and sure grasp of current conditions, the goal became one of rendering, intentionally and systematically, a convincing translation of culture-based knowledge, skills, and attitude measured against traditional teachings and under the scrutiny of Elders. In other words, in the midst of contemporary contingencies, Native Studies sought a new existential paradigm impelled by a culture-rooted sense of both worlds in all their dimensions in time and space and expressed in a bicultural survival mode.

The responsibility for interpreting and applying the content of Tradition is a sanctioned enterprise. In the early 1970s, at the end of twelve days of discussions in a camp setting and summing up on behalf of Elders from eight First Nations of Alberta in assembly, Elder Louis Crier stated:

> In order to survive in the twentieth century, we must really come to grips with the White man's culture and with White ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The White man has many good things. Borrow. Master and use his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general cultures, between the basic values of the Indian way and those of Western civilization—and thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. For to be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had to do this before. But, in so doing, we will survive as Indians, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so.[4]

In the ensuing discussion, another Elder made the following comment:

> On any given day, if you ask me where you might go to find a moose, I will say, "If you go that way, you won't find a moose. But if you go that way, you will."
>
> So now, you younger ones, think about all that. Come back once in a while and show us what you've got. And we'll tell you if what you think you have found is a moose.[5]

The characteristic attitude and posture of Native Studies is one of upbeat, continuing evolution. It may be likened to that of a savvy broker, one who

is at once a pulse taker, a keen translator who conveys worldview meanings and ways both to the dominant society and to university faculty and students and who, as well, voices to Aboriginal Peoples from a particular vantage point perceptions of its society and institutions of higher learning, always according to the criteria for a "good life."

Assumptions

By convention, Western science results from the struggle to develop human knowledge. To that end, it is postulated that the seeking of knowledge is guided by assumptions about reality. These are seen as concepts and/or values that constitute a set of "beliefs," the validity of which cannot be demonstrated.

Assumptions are largely utilitarian because they are necessary to all human investigative endeavour, serving as points of departure and guiding references once that endeavour is underway. Their "truth" lies mainly in their usefulness. Assumptions are like a map, a matrix of conceptual and experiential indices that provide a sense of direction, according to which the searching mind can methodically explore and thereby incrementally build up human knowledge. To a burgeoning discipline, like post-secondary Native Studies, a number of assumptions play a crucial role.

For example, it is believed that, if vitally connected with Aboriginal worldview(s), Native Studies expresses a philosophy that has several corollaries. The first is a reflection on what, historically, is a total "way of life," which for its success requires unified or holistic learning. A second corollary is that Native Studies seeks to exhibit the inherent validity and usefulness of a heritage derived from a philosophical habit and an understanding of contemplation. This heritage manifests itself in ways of knowing that Native Studies draws upon to confront and assess present conditions.

That the "Aboriginal Way" features mutuality without subordination and forms a comprehensive "way of life" is a fundamental point. This key position is illustrated by the following traditional Native axioms:

> There are only two things you have to remember about being Indian. One is that everything is alive, and the second is that we are all related.

It's all there, in the ceremonies! There's a right time, a right place, with the right people.

Walk in Beauty on the Blessing Way. Find your way home, and when you do, you will know everything there is to know.

When a Navajo experiences the sacred mountains' inner forms kindling a new strength within himself, he says, "I am invincible. I am beautified." To be invincible is masculine. To be beautified is feminine. These two concepts together are a powerful entity. There is no strength from only one. Power comes from interaction between them. When you have strength, you recognize the opportunity, you know what you must do, and you have the grace to do it.

Each person has a purpose and a place. Don't worry. Take it easy. Do your best. It'll all work out. Respect life. Respect your Elders. It's up to you. You have all the answers within you. Walk the talk. Work hard. Old-time learning was very hard. You can do anything when you put your mind to it.

Everybody has a song to sing which is no song at all. It is the process of singing, and when you sing, you are where you are. I dance, I sing, I am. There is within me a voice that tells me who I am and where I am.

We know that the white man doesn't understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. . . . He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like a sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.

We didn't know for a long time that we were equal. Now we know, and there's no stopping us anymore. We had forgotten our Story. Now we're starting to understand.

A third assumption relates to the university preference for immediate relevance and pragmatics. To the institution, Native Studies brings an age-old understanding that "useful" learning is comprehensive, leading to the development of mind, attitude, and adaptations in conduct.

A fourth corollary is that Native Studies is engaged in a process of becoming a new expression of or variation on the characteristic themes of general North American Aboriginal Tradition. Accordingly, Native Studies seeks to articulate a deep, comprehensive perception of all levels of reality, experienced as sacred and sacralizing. Native worldview, like beauty, has an inherent power to enliven. By analogy with the words attributed to the poet Gerard Manley Hopkins, this "power" has an innate capacity "to keep our wits warm to the things that are."

A fifth supposition is that today's Native person—of whatever individual background (for example, genetic, legal, historical, cultural, educational) or whatever position on the wide continuum of possible Native origins and heritage—who finds himself or herself in a university milieu needs to consider certain insights and skills as likely conditions for fulfilling survival needs and gaining the ability to function in socio-bicultural systems. It is felt that such a person can be or become tuned to both to the spiritual and psycho-cultural nature and requirements of traditional existence and self-enrichment and to the demands and shaping influences of impinging director culture(s).

The possibility of this fundamental position-to-the-world, as an optimistic basis from which a satisfying, alternative direction to modern Native thought and action can be sought and developed, expresses a pivotal assumption. From this position, one can think on and unceasingly move forward to a pre-eminently more beneficial future, albeit midst a swirl of intertwining and often conflicting trends, in constant relationship and dialogue with an immediate, often chaotic and always dramatic past. By re-establishing harmony through the restoration and healing of relationships, becoming again self-reliant and socially competent, and taking back self-determination and control over self, family, community, and the Nations, a more fulfilling future is assured.

It is believed also that the Native Way of "seeing" and "knowing" is valid, both from general Western philosophical and traditional perspectives and from a social science approach and style of description. This sixth

assumption contends that these are basic constituents crucial to the development of Native science, that is, a contemporary Native way of knowing and a faithful reinterpretation of Tradition.

In that way of knowing, Elders and Tradition are primal givens. Our perceptions and grasp of the first principles of this traditional way of knowing can shape our response to twentieth-century realities. Importantly, this knowledge elicits an ethical attitude in response. The traditional viewpoint claims that a "right" vision is a condition for seeing and understanding life in the "right" way. When queried as to which is the "right" way, an old man replied, "They're all the 'right' way, as long as they're done the right way!"

Comments to this point underscore "oral literature" as basic data. Oral tradition is a medium in its own right, one that stands apart from textuality, and can be "studied" on its own conditions, parallel to the exigencies of "print literature" mastery. To pursue such a study presents a major challenge to the ensconced academic analytic style and print-based propensities, however. When the effort is made, one experiences a surprising gestalt, an enrichment that complements analytic endeavours.

"Core culture" is another marker concept. It implies an inner, underpinning cultural dimension. In some regions the phrase "pan-Indian" is invoked to reference generic, characteristic values and related attitudes. The advent of students of diverse Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal backgrounds is a fact that begs recourse to this underlying dimension. More specifically, many students present themselves for help, through courses and programs, in fueling and ensuring authentic identity development.

"Core culture" is also an intriguing notion. In some regions, the phrase may connote a reduced state, a "something-which-is-less-than" full tribal formation, a state of breakdown and/or irretrievable loss (or at best retrievable only with long-sustained effort). In the eyes of some, to anchor oneself into this "something-less-than" is regarded to be less than "Indian." Nonetheless, a flip side suggests that "something-more-than-less-than" may be attained.

To increasing numbers of seekers, including many students in Native Studies, accessibility and attainability is possible through learning ways and customs and through applying teachings and techniques that promote

spiritual development. This recent mode of development is seen as a path to inner balance and help, as a way out of cultural anomie and individual alienation. "That-which-is-better," which includes fluency in language and its underlying patterns of mind, may be beyond the immediate reach of a significant number of Natives. Nonetheless, to settle for "that-which-is-less-than" need not be simply a forced choice; rather, "that-which-is-less than" may also represent an authentic beginning, positive in direction. Notwithstanding that, this issue of the nature and scope of "core culture" poses a multi-faceted dilemma.

One illustration is pedagogical and arises in classrooms and training programs at all educational levels. Native students, as well as faculty in any Native program or course, usually represent a continuum of Aboriginal backgrounds. What "culture" then is to be conveyed? What choices regarding values and related ways can teachers facilitate? What selections can and do students make when the Native teacher is not of their culture?

The second conundrum arises from the experience of many city-born and city-raised Natives who are without rural or community-based cultural ties. With what Aboriginal culture should they identify when they wish to connect to a near-zero base as their starting point? Are those who have lost or who never had a Native language, and for whom English or French (in Canada) is the "Native" tongue in their community, less "Native" than those who are language endowed? Yes and no. Whatever the answer, it remains that in the spirit of the ages, as the ideal to strive towards, fullness of identity seems to require a bicultural and bilingual base.

There is a risk in the classroom of placing undue pressure on non-Crees when one expounds from a Cree perspective, for example. Nonetheless, when students are held at a generic level, that is, that of Native communalities (a life philosophy and psychology based on relationality with self, family, community, nation, nature, and cosmos; the importance of trust and respect; stories and legends; dance and song; ritual and ceremony), it becomes appropriate to advise them by such directives as: "Now you're into the basics. Go home to your Elders for help in putting a Blackfoot face or shaping on all this." Or: "Go find a spiritual teacher for the specifics. Find an opportunity to learn the language if you can."

Finally, it seems that the disadvantages of being city-based are no longer limited to such individuals. In growing numbers, including Aboriginal prison inmates, Natives coming from many other regions present themselves as seekers of roots, wanting to discover or to reclaim their Native heritage and knowledge.

ROLE-RELATED DIFFICULTIES

The Native Studies undertaking imposes variously on universities, curriculum development, teachers, and students.

Universities

Universities tend to be apprehensive about absolutes and nervous about the intellectual vice of absolutism. The institution's experience, based as it is in the hard sciences, social sciences, and humanities, is with the ambiguous, that is, with the tentativeness of theory and with the shortcomings of method and inquiry.

Universities are understandably wary. One of their primary tasks is to question assumptions. It is vital even to a university's sense of the fulfillment of its mission that assumptions can be questioned. It is because of this orientation towards analysis and doubt that, in the relationship of Native Studies to and with the university, an unavoidable yet necessary tension ensues. It arises from an academic inclination towards verbal articulation and restraint versus a worldview that is alluring, often silent, energetic, and generous, prizing holism and metaphoric thinking and intuitive imaging, in addition to high-order discursive capacity and prowess. In a sense, therefore, a "dialogal dialogue" is required of both parties (as opposed to a "dialectical dialogue," which seeks to convert): a veritable, open, ecumenical positioning to each other, charged by a willingness to find in human traditions other than one's own complementary modes of learning, understandings, and justifiable interpretive systems.

Our academic setting seems to be one of much skepticism and intellectual restlessness and of a defensive retreat into conservatism. The elitism of faculty environments and a penchant to value-neutrality are pervasive.

The university bent tends often towards organization, efficiency, competition, quantitative results, and a primary concern with *how* rather than simultaneously with *what* and *why*. These organizing principles prevail and manifest themselves in mindsets that, in turn, lead to social institutions and social structures that are the products and projections of inner attitudes and unquestioned values.

To undertake to enunciate Native understandings in a Western language in such a psychic milieu is not an easy task. In addition to the working hazards that derive from university attitudes grounded in social class, both parties must contend with a dimension of uncertainty encountered in the socio-cultural and psychological consequences that attend any human action in "naturalistic" circumstances, specifically in the flux and turmoil of everyday conditions of Native life in the 1990s.

In a university environment, neither elitism nor value-neutrality in the conventional sense are appropriate stances for Native Studies. Native Studies must insist on freedom in intellectual search in order to formulate and communicate to the various communities—including the community of scholars—relatively more inclusive, fresh models congruent with the Traditional paradigm. To develop and steadily hold a "fair witness" position relative to a highly complex reality is, to say the least, problematic. This holds true not only at the level of a rationale but in areas of curriculum preparation and course delivery, teacher preparation, and student needs as well.

Curriculum Development

That Native Studies concerns and curricula do not present themselves as established canons, a set of concepts, is understandable largely because Native Studies is a relatively recent discipline. In light of its own evolving and expanding paradigm, it will take time to amass relevant, accurate data that will lead into courses and publications.

To accelerate curriculum development, Native Studies readily looks to the humanities and sciences for tools to uncover and develop, enhance and maximize insight, so as to contribute to understanding of the human condition as formed both by the processes of nature and by the structures of both societies. The articulation of meaning and the acquisition of skills necessary to initiate and sustain that search draw on and utilize knowledge

from many directions and areas, including Oral Tradition. In addition to content issues, curriculum delivery must take into account the requirements of the primary traditional learning mode, which is one of experiential learning, or of "learning-by-doing."

Teachers

Attentiveness to and involvement in the ordinary life of the First Peoples as equals is peremptory, all the more because in-community involvement is vigorously claimed (and increasingly so) by the communities.

In other words, this fundamental imperative demands of Native academics compassion, competence, critical intelligence, and appraisal, as well as moral and spiritual sensitivity. It is indeed hard to argue that Native Studies does not demand a structuring of personal life around its paradigm. It requires including the idiosyncratic, the "private" (that is, the entire subjective and contextual here-and-now), which is constantly impinged upon by the dynamics and meanings of family, community, and nation in the context of Oral Tradition. Harder still is to reconcile the primary demands of mainstream academic life, such as teaching, research, and publishing as bearing on academic promotion, for example, with the forthright claims of local community and regional groups.

Academics committed to Native Studies are still in a demanding apprenticeship, struggling to learn to access oral literature through learning-by-doing. They are therefore understandably limited in the degree to which they can legitimately reflect and expound on Tradition through the medium of courses and programs.

A related requirement is for an intelligent grasp of the scope of past and present colonizing forces and their multiple impacts on Native life since Contact and also of the tempo and scale of such contemporary dimensions as civil, human, and Aboriginal rights, worldwide Aboriginal emergence, affirmative action, feminism, abortion/pro-life debates, rock music, and drugs—virtually all of the aspects of a rising global social upheaval. These in combination suggest that mastery of Tradition will be time consuming.

The gross and pervasive destructiveness of the Invasion and the period since that time is a front-and-centre fact. This is obvious at the level of human relations presently, where the pulse rate of change is increasing. It

is not so much that one should be apprised of social breakdown, as current conventional indicators grimly show—for example, increasing rates of incarceration, suicide, and drug addiction and the alarmingly widespread incidence of sexual abuse, families in dissolution, people on welfare, and so on—but rather that, at the deepest levels, one needs to perceive the degree and extent of consequent trauma and dysfunction. It is here that enrooting or instilling traditional values and learning approaches, including healing approaches, needs to occur, a process that, thankfully, is now underway across the Land. This bedrock healing phenomenon is becoming, indeed, marvellous to behold: traditional energies can and do nourish and revitalize the savaged and degraded soil of the Native psyche.

To hold in hand the distinction between what is traditional behaviour and what is contemporary comportment is very helpful. Nonetheless, in more and more communities the two correspond less and less, if at all; for example, the sense of male and female personhood, styles of interpersonal relating, and child-rearing practices are markedly altered by schooling and decades of welfare in virtually all Aboriginal communities.

In summary, all is a setting-in-movement, a movement of interplay and interaction, of conflict and rejection, of pathos and pain, and of hope and laughter. A kaleidoscope of variables is burr and prod to the Native Studies analyst and teacher, who is faced with grasping and imparting the meanings of the interrelated areas and levels of Native life. The People rightfully demand the analyst-teacher to be consistently innovative in the formulation and propounding of effective models that reflect the dreams, the voiced needs, and the aspirations of the People. Culturally sensitive interventions are expected in Native life, educational or otherwise.

Thus, in and of itself, the combination of work and community conditions and requirements presents a series of demanding tasks. The fact that many Native academics find themselves possessed of rather imperfect knowledge and skills, and are at the same time situated in an ambiguous environment that is flawed in its attitude, compounds their discomfort.

Students

At a minimum, it follows that the education of students in Native Studies must involve a very personal, critical assessment not only of one's

knowledge but also of one's experience of self, others, and social contexts, for these are necessary to the fullest possible participation in bicultural life. In the case of people-service professionals, the development of a genuine disposition towards helping oneself and others is seen to rest upon attitudes of deep respect for persons as equals, without subordination, in all of their multilayered complexity.

Ideally, from the viewpoint of students and faculty, only through a comprehensive preparation in this process of critical self-assessment and in the knowledge and methods of related disciplines, including an in-depth exposure to the arts and humanities, one that is shaped by traditional knowledge and method, can one begin to differentiate causative factors, principles of solution, and applied short-term and long-range solutions.

For the university student, there can be no assurance of attainment to the levels of personal development that lead to further strengthening of dispositions and attitudes. To such a student, as well as to faculty, what knowledge is essential to becoming an educated Native person is a preoccupying question. Nonetheless, an advantage of ours, in our desire and motivation to transcend personal and group limitations, is that we can look to exemplars of human potential development. These are respected persons who, in their visions, emotions, thoughts, and actions, in both the traditional and the classical Western sense, are the "educated." These people are the Elders, the philosopher-historians, the carriers of Oral Tradition, the teachers and healers, whose attitude and activity overarches Native Studies, providing sanction and support.

CONCLUSION

The "electronic interconnection of humankind," as Christopher Mooney says,[6] is fostering at present new and very different perspectives on life and is demanding that educated persons be capable not only of providing specialized answers but also of asking the Big Questions of life itself regarding all that is good and valuable to living in a world moulded and controlled by a Euro-Canadian outlook. Fortunately for the Native student, Tradition

presents "large," phenomenologically oriented answers in a way that is every bit as intellectual, spiritual, moral, and socio-political.

Native Tradition in its treasures of embodied wisdom responds to such exigencies. At present, Tradition, in its many Aboriginal expressions, is being discovered and investigated, or rediscovered and reclaimed. A leading role in that pursuit is devolving to Native Studies.[7] Native Studies' professors have, as a forward-moving academic initiative, begun to uncover constants—for example, laws of Nature/Energy, meanings, and process factors that animate and sustain from within the core of Native American life, past and present, in its thrust to the future. This is a "Story": a concrete, ongoing human saga sustained by traditional value-driven dynamics.

The comments of this essay touch on some comparatively abstract culture-related ideas and processes. Broad strokes outline some key features of the Story in its themes and compelling principles. There seems to be a core of communalities that stand as an essential heritage shared by many, if not by all, Native American cultures: a core of skills and behavioural characteristics comprising ways of knowing and of being/becoming a human being, which somehow have endured down through the ages, among Nations, and which now quietly clamour for attention.

The distinguished Native Studies researcher Joseph Epes Brown observes: "With our own overemphasis on mental activity we are apt to think that the Indian, without any written language, lacks something important or necessary in not possessing a scholastic or dialectical type of doctrinal presentation."[8] Yet Tom Berry, Elder and internationally regarded scholar in cultural history, speaks of the "extensive human resources that are available to these original inhabitants of this continent" and declares that "intimate communion with the depths of their own psychic structure is one of the main differences between the psychic functioning of the Indian and the psychic functioning of the Euro-American in modern times."[9]

NOTES

1 See Joseph Couture, "The Role of Native Elders: Emergent Issues," 340.
2 Thomas Berry, "The Indian Future," 135.

3 In 1975, Dr. Joe was appointed chair of the Department of Native Studies at Trent University, in Peterborough, Ontario.—*Eds*
4 Declaration delivered by Elder Louis Crier, Cree Nation, Ermineskin Band, Hobbema, Alberta.
5 The late Elder Charlie Blackman, Chipewyan Nation, Cold Lake Band, Cold Lake, Alberta.
6 Christopher Mooney, "Education's Prism." See also Sherry Turkle, *The Second Self: Computers and the Human Spirit,* for an excellent, intriguing socio-philosophical analysis of modern man and the computer as machine.
7 The Native return to ritual and ceremony is now a continent-wide phenomenon. The People have begun to dream again. See Couture, "The Role of Native Elders: Emergent Issues," and "Explorations in Native Knowing." [Reprinted as chapters 5 and 6 in this volume.—*Eds.*]
8 Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 31.
9 Berry, "The Indian Future," 137.

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9 What Is Fundamental to Native Education? *Some Thoughts on the Relationship Between Thinking, Feeling, and Learning*

It was unheard of prior to the late 1960s that traditional Native values and behaviours should be and could be the foundation for a relevant philosophy and psychology of Native education. Since that time, an awareness of the potential of traditional sources as inspiration and as sound guidelines has slowly and steadily developed.

In Alberta, at the political level, an awareness of the value of Native tradition in education dawned during the winter of 1968–69 after months of intense struggle by such burgeoning organizations as the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA), the Métis Association of Alberta (MAA), and the Native Communications Society (NCS). During the preceding summer, each of these societies had come under new leadership. All three organizations initially shared a common office, from which they lobbied for hearings and hard-to-find program moneys, with no significant breakthroughs. A joint meeting was called in January 1969 to review the activities of the recent months. After hours of depressing assessment, and in the midst of a brooding silence among the leaders, someone blurted out: "We've tried everything the White man has laid on us, but it doesn't work. What we haven't tried is our culture. Let's go and talk to some Elders." With that, the return to the roots began.

A series of workshops, under the title of "Elders' Think Tanks," was organized across Alberta over a two-year period. The series climaxed in the fall of 1972 at Long Beach, Vancouver Island. Of the many memorable declarations made at that gathering, one was uttered by Elder Louis Crier:

> In order to survive in the twentieth century, we must really come to grips with the White man's culture and with White ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The White man has many good things. Borrow. Master and use his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general cultures, between the basic values of the Indian way and those of Western civilization—and thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. For to be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had to do this before. But, in so doing, we will survive as Indians, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so.

Elder Louis Crier spoke on behalf of Elders who had assembled to reflect on and to discuss current Indian problems. There were nine Elders present, representing eight tribal groupings from Alberta (Beaver, Blackfoot, Cree, Chipewyan, Sarcee, Saulteaux, Slavey, Stoney), in addition to some forty employees of the Indian Association of Alberta. That IAA-initiated conference, a first of its kind and now regarded as a milestone, marked the emergence and revitalization of Native culture in Alberta in the early 1970s.

The importance of Louis Crier's declaration is simple and dramatic. As the historians and experts on survival, Elders interpret for their own people the current meaning and direction of their own history. The declaration clearly indicates several desirable connections between Native and Western cultures, broadly speaking. Notably, Indian identity is redefined in terms of the twentieth century. Fundamental, traditional elements are re-expressed and presented as fresh inspirations for renewed action. The poignancy of Louis's urging is with us still, a standing and pointed challenge to the children of this generation and to their children's children. "And it is good that it is so," as the Old People say.

The effort to "master and use his technology" is indisputably one visible feature of Native development during the past fifteen years. Through the media, for example, one can easily trace Native attempts to access Canadian society's institutions and to understand and apply their technologies. One can observe the Native struggle with value reinterpretation and identity redefinition. This is a drama that is evident now in all areas of Native social, cultural, political, economic, and educational activity.

PURPOSE AND METHOD

The purpose of this essay is to explore some of the basic cultural differences that seem to distinguish Native from Euro-Canadian culture and to comment on their implications for Native educational policy. Recognition of diversity is fundamental to our discussion. It is widely agreed that Natives today live on a continuum ranging from highly acculturated urban Natives through to traditional outback Natives. This continuum is manifested in many different languages (including English and French) and in many differing customs and traditions. It includes those groups who have retained their cultures intact, as well as other groups who exhibit varying degrees of cultural and social breakdown, personal disorganization, and near-complete identity loss among their members.[1] Many factors contribute to this diversity, which derives largely from legal and regional differences, different histories of intertribal relationships, and Native-white relationships mediated through a variety of dominant social institutions.

What follows identifies a number of basic traditional values, some of which can be perceived as "value bridges" between the two general cultures and also as functional, defining, or organizing principles that can be applied to solving Native education problems. It is essential that both components be borne in mind if the present alarming conditions and acute learning needs of Native students—especially of Native undergraduate students—are to be responded to in comprehensive, culture-sensitive ways.

It is the intention of this essay to explicate several principles that can help both to delineate the cultural factors that make for significant, contrasting differences between Natives and non-Natives and to suggest meaningful guidelines for a pragmatic and sensitive response in the many areas of Native educational need. To that end, the question of what are characteristic traditional Native values and behaviours is pertinent, as is the question of how these might best be applied to education. This is a "good theory/good practice" approach, for it assumes that an examination of traditional values as manifested in behaviours is a source of "good" theory and that this thereby presents sensible guidelines for "good" application as an insightful response to Native educational need.

A twofold approach is followed in describing the characteristics of traditional Native values. First of all, this analysis sets forth historical and/or philosophical characteristics that describe the nature of traditional values. Second, a brief description of what I regard as traditional behaviours common to most Native groups is presented. These two sections provide a basis for a general discussion of how Native learning conditions could be significantly improved. The final section, on pedagogical requirements, makes it possible to consider other practical and related issues.

HISTORICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL NATIVE VALUES

Elder Louis Crier's statement reflects an awareness of a historical Native capacity to endure. Oral tradition teaches that when certain values or laws are upheld and observed, the People survive: it devolves to Elders to provide these precepts. Nonetheless, as Crier's statement indicates, both the interpretation and application of the directives of Elders are the responsibility of the younger generations. Evidence of what these younger generations are thinking and seeking can be found in several contemporary sources. One area of interpretation of both Elder oral tradition and aspirations of the People can be found, for example, in the writings of such Native authors as Vine Deloria. In *God Is Red: A Native View of Religion,* Deloria reveals a deep understanding of the relevance of the Native presence on this continent and the distinctive qualitative nature of the Native relationship to the land. A second important source is official documents of several national Native organizations. A comparative analysis of their respective statements reveals a consensus on a number of distinctive, interrelated characteristics of traditional Native values and attitudes. The agreement among the several official Native views, condensed below, is striking.

1. Native cultures are dynamic, adaptive, and adapting, not limited to the past.

2. These cultures are authentic and valid, inherently creative, and capable of distinctive and sophisticated human development and

expression. Therefore, they can invent structural forms and institutions as needed to assure and strengthen both group and individual survival. They are capable of a social and political rationality of their own and are as creative in this regard as the dominant culture. It is in this that a basis for legitimate and valid differences between the two general cultures is to be found.

3. Native lifeways are rooted in a perception of the interconnectedness between all natural things, all forms of life. Within this, the sense of the land is a central determining experience.

4. There is a characteristic sense of community, of "the People," a collective or communal sense that contrasts sharply with Western individualism and institutional forms based on private ownership.

5. The current Native situation presents a wide spectrum of variation and diversity of Native behaviour and attitude, history, and social and political systems and, as well, a wide continuum of behaviour encompassing the traditional unacculturated Native together with the highly acculturated.

6. To a greater extent than in any other Canadian group, modern Native behaviour includes responses to highly specialized relationships with the dominant Canadian society at a variety of levels (for example, government, churches, local businesses and retail shops, and oil and mining corporations).[2]

7. A seventh concept is implicit in the preceding. As a thread running through the value statements above is a concept of being that is primarily concerned with the process of an individual's being and becoming a unique person, responsible for his or her own life and actions in the context of significant group situations. This stance contrasts sharply with such Western ways as having, manipulating, objectifying—all three carried out in "rugged" individualistic fashion. The traditional Native "being/becoming" posture requires trust of self

> and others, a non-manipulative relatedness, and a sense of oneness with all dimensions of the environment—components that, without exception, are experienced and perceived as possessing a life energy of their own. Native philosophies of life manifest a characteristic person-centeredness, a holistic personalism that regards the human person as subject to relationships; both the subjects and the relationships exist in a dynamic process of being/becoming.[3]

General Canadian society has overlooked virtually all of these values. It is a matter of record, as the reports by the Task Force on Canadian Unity clearly indicate, that the Canadian public and its governments have tended to ignore or downgrade Native cultural distinctiveness. At best, the Canadian habit has been to reify selected aspects of Native cultures and to incorporate them as part of the national heritage—in, for example, the prizing of aesthetic and folkloric elements. This, of course, has been the path of least resistance, and it repeats the historical tendency of most, if not all, majority cultures worldwide.

It is much more difficult not only to acquire an understanding of fundamental Native cultural values but also to create the conditions for the maintenance and reproduction of those values. For example, the history of relationships between francophones and anglophones in Canada illustrates the fundamental difficulty that anglophones have had in understanding and accepting francophone uniqueness, despite the European origin and history of both groups and the fact that they share of a number of Western values. The difficulties are understandably compounded when one considers that the traditions, values, and histories of Native cultures differ radically on many basic points from the dominant Euro-Canadian culture.

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF TRADITIONAL NATIVE VALUES

The basic Native cultural values described above constitute a vital, inner source of strength. These values are the roots of a number of characteristic behaviours, the understanding of which must be regarded as

essential to educational planning and development. A working knowledge of these underlying values—as exhibited in such concrete areas as extended family systems, child-rearing practices, and the fostering of individual autonomy—is crucial to effective Native educational planning. One is further enriched if one learns to identify several special behaviours and relationships, such as joking and the use of humour as a form of feedback in place of direct criticism, avoidance behaviour, age-graded sensitivities and requirements, the hurt/anger/distrust syndrome, the existence of hereditary leadership patterns, the use of analogy in place of linear logic in teaching and problem-solving, and decision making based on consensus.

Several features of the above behaviours can be better defined through comparison with some generally recognized dominant-society behaviours.

Historically, each Native nation or group had its own ways, developed over centuries and deriving from internal needs and values in particular environments, with individuals learning defined roles within the community. Across this range of behaviours, there are a number of practices and support systems that clearly contrast with dominant-society patterns (for example, extended family systems, child-rearing practices, the role of Elders, interpersonal dynamics, and learning styles).

The traditional extended family is a social institution found in virtually all nations.[4] Child-rearing practices must be perceived within the extended family context. Traditionally, child rearing includes not only the parents but also grandparents and aunts and uncles who also share in this process. In addition, siblings and cousins, nearby or under the same roof, help with the rearing of their relatives' children. Economic reasons may require children to move from one nuclear family to another, but it is within the extended family network that help will be obtained in times of crisis. Advice from Elders, who are respected and listened to, is sought also. Finally, traditional child-rearing customs give children emotional and physical room to make mistakes, to succeed as well as to fail, which is a practice that tends to foster emotionally independent, autonomous, and responsible individuals.

Within the context of extended family and child-rearing practices, Elders of both sexes play a central role. Traditionally, Elders are the

guardians, purveyors, and teachers of the oral traditions and history of the People: they are the doctors and healers, the expert survivors. Traditional Native people often display unusually rich personalities and sophisticated mental development. Their minds are manifestly capable of expounding, for example, on concepts of a metaphysical, epistemological, or moral order. One still finds examples of remarkable intelligence and wisdom animated by a patient sense of humour, excellent memory recall, discursiveness, a sense of caring, and finesse in teaching and counselling. The existence of these abilities and qualities is little suspected by non-Natives and now, unfortunately, by growing numbers of Natives, particularly among the urban born and raised.

Ideally, knowledge of the "truth" of the Elder is indispensable to educators. Nonetheless, this principle presents a practical problem to non-Native and Native alike. The problem stems mostly from the limited number of Elders, their restricted availability, their manner of teaching, and their "rhythm," which is that of the seasons and not that of the watch and calendar. Much time is required to learn their ways and their teachings. For the serious student of Native life, there really is no way but to relate consistently over time with Elders. In the present day, finding time for such teaching relationships is a problem. Pending such an apprentice relationship, the next best thing for the student preparing for Native-related work would be to enter into daily Native interpersonal relationships. Once within these patterns of living, one can learn over time to discern at least some of the underlying traditional values described earlier.

It is a commonplace that non-Natives are often frustrated by much of Native behaviour. This has resulted in frequent and repeated reference to Natives as uncooperative, stubborn, belligerent, "dumb," impossible, and so on. It would be useful to try to discern subtle behaviours: self-reliance, easily perceived as stubbornness; aloofness that is really a reluctance to ask for or receive help other than in an emergency or crisis; the tendency not to interfere on the basis of a live-and-let-live philosophy, for to interfere is to be discourteous, threatening, even insulting; confrontation avoidance, which is sometimes interpreted as non-cooperation or immaturity but which actually reflects the desire to avoid direct disagreement with a particular individual.

It is a matter of record that Canadian society imposed an educational philosophy and system to which Natives were forced to submit. Natives had no control or say over this, and it led to a loss of dignity, decades of miseducation, and a weakening of parental and group responsibility for their children.[5] Since the early 1970s, Natives have been enrolling in growing numbers in a wide range of courses and programs at colleges and universities across Canada. On the face of it, this should be regarded as an encouraging and promising phenomenon. At the same time, however, many Native students who enrol in post-secondary programs often fail to complete their certificates and/or degrees. A recognition that increasing enrolments are accompanied by a high level of under-attainment set against a continuing history of high dropout levels from secondary school systems remains a disquieting backdrop to this whole discussion.

The dominant society's behaviour seems to stem from a Canadian ethnocentrism, a kind of cultural addiction that holds tenaciously to its ideas about knowing and knowledge and about the disadvantaged, education, segregation, ethnicity, and Native "problems." This state of mind steadfastly prizes middle-class individualism, private ownership of property, aggressive "getting ahead," and an attitude of competitiveness and engenders a patronizing, colonizing, custodial mentality towards Natives, especially in the case of those in positions of power (for example, teachers, missionaries, bureaucrats, guards, business and industrial development people). The dominant system is hierarchical, perennially and unilaterally imposing decisions, whereas traditional Native systems are based on consensual decision making and respect for the individual.

Given the general characteristics of Native and dominant Canadian cultures, several dilemmas confront us. One of these arises from the fact that Natives generally know what they want and need and that they have repeatedly voiced their concerns through various representative organizations. With a little help, they can and do develop their own solutions, which are more effective than the disastrous "solutions" imposed by the majority culture. Can a new, functional model, inspired and defined by culture-sensitive philosophies, be developed and implemented, so that getting an education ceases to be a source of failure, if not punishment? Can this new model be implemented to survive in community settings marked by

increased suicide and alcoholism rates, growing family breakdown and child neglect, and rising levels of violence and general social degradation? At this point, I can only argue, from personal and professional experience and from an understanding of traditional values and behaviours, in the direction of some operational principles that should and could, in my view, be readily applied.

PEDAGOGICAL REQUIREMENTS OF TRADITIONAL NATIVE VALUES

The Canadian approach to Native education is a dismal failure. The recorded views of Native peoples, regionally and nationally, repeatedly describe the causes of this failure. Alberta has witnessed many indignant Native protests about educational conditions in the provincial school systems. These are typically followed by government attempts to downplay the situation, deeming it not as bad as Natives perceive it to be, and by calls for yet another task force on the issue.

The need for appropriate and insightful action in Native education remains urgent, given Native need and the nature of such obstacles as government ignorance and condescension. Another major obstacle to Native educational development is the almost total absence of systematic and sustained investigation in all areas of Native educational need. While it is now possible to gather provincial and federal government literature on Native curriculum development, analysis reveals little or no work in terms of the primary values and behaviours described earlier. We also know little about how to develop in Native and non-Native teachers and administrators an appropriate understanding of Native behaviours, customs, and ways. There is no general organized attempt in Canada to draw on compatible Western resources relative to Native learning and identity needs.

All this may seem discouraging to teachers, counsellors, and administrators. There are directions to be followed and things to do, however.

Earlier I suggested that the ideal, traditional way to learn basic Native values and behaviour would be to apprentice oneself to an Elder and that the next best thing would be simply to live among Natives and learn from social interactions. Both methods work, but they require long periods of

time. From a professional training standpoint, there are several other helpful projects that can be more easily undertaken.

One of these can be found in the longstanding Western tradition of theory and experience that is holistic, humanistic, and person-centred. Since the 1960s, this has been promoted by humanistic educational thinkers and writers, such as Carl Rogers and Bob Samples, and by innovators such as Paulo Freire.[6] The common distinction used by many writers between non-formal or informal education and formal schooling would be useful if applied to Native educational planning, curriculum development, and school administration, for traditional values have been, through the ages, taught through informal means. This approach contrasts with prevailing educational practice, which tends to objectify and rationalize learning and to treat it as a commodity.

There are now some exciting school-related and cross-cultural learning-related endeavours to heed. Examples include the takeover of federal schools by local communities such as the Fort Alexander Band in Manitoba and the Alexander Band in Alberta. The latter community has succeeded in drawing on the Waldorf and Anisa curriculum development and teacher training models in such a way that the community's perception of traditional values and behaviours is readily incorporated. The work of Reuven Feuerstein and other researchers and institutions in this regard hold much promise.[7]

There are areas of Western philosophy and psychology that provide more comprehensive educational paradigms than do current reductionist varieties.[8] They can provide reference points and models through which undergraduate institutions, for instance, can meaningfully bridge a number of cultural, cognitive, and affective gaps.

Highly important to any discussion of educational planning for Natives is what I regard as traditional Native patterns of learning. It is my view that traditional Native learning style and conditioning induce a development of both the analytical and intuitive capacities of the human mind. Recent research, notably that of Robert Ornstein and Bob Samples, suggests strongly that there is left-brain activity distinctive from right-cerebral function and that our school systems and post-secondary institutions have done little else but develop the left brain.[9] These researchers contend that

the left hemisphere of the brain is the area of intellectual analysis, linear thinking, and language, whereas the right side of the cerebrum is the seat of metaphorical and symbolic perception, the area of intuition. These investigators of right-brain behaviours also claim that the next major revolution in education will be in right-brain behaviours development. In my judgment, it is a question of mind and not of brain function. The new development should ultimately and simply allow for pragmatic approaches to total or whole-mind development, regardless of the physiological location of either general mind function. In other words, teachers should learn how to develop affective and cognitive capacities, intuitive or metaphoric abilities, and analytical thinking in their students. Only then can traditional Native learning and Western educational endeavour truly meet.[10]

More concretely, "experiential learning" or "learning-by-doing" models have much to offer (for example, in the context of human relations training, assertiveness training, basic communications skills development, or Perlsian and Rogerian encounter learning). Such strategies are in tune with the demands of identity development, human relations, cross-cultural communications, and holistic development.

CONCLUSION

I regard the systematic study and application of holistic approaches not only as both plausible and feasible but also as necessary. To point to what is needed is one thing; it is quite another to determine what is possible, given Canadian cultural and political realities in general, and those of educational institutions in particular.

Since Canadian universities are largely responsible for training professional educators at all levels of teaching, it is at such institutions that new thinking and the development of additional competencies are urgently required. This may be asking too much of universities, however, for they are notoriously slow to change.

So much of what university people do stems from what may be likened to a bourgeois appetite for success: a striving for control and possession. Many Native American and non-European critics, including Freire,

consider this kind of academic performance a form of colonialism, a divide-and-conquer syndrome, a compulsion to name what will be, a form of unilateral control. Such behaviour, although understandable, is not excusable. It is behaviour that stems from a predominantly rationalistic, analytical, non-intuitive mind, linear in its modality. Such a mind tends to dissect reality into controllable pieces in the name of "objectivity" and scientific "method," overlooking the loss of gestalt meaning that such analysis unavoidably entails. Such a mind fails to perceive and esteem another mind that is characteristically intuitive, actively metaphoric, and symbolic in expression, in addition to being analytical. That is one basic reason why the conventional academic mind fails to develop a full perception of the Native. A significant change in attitude and an expansion of the existing epistemological paradigm are obviously needed.

The general North American non-Native educational scene provides a broader context that underscores further the need for a paradigmatic shift in education. In the 1960s, in both Canada and the United States, educators and policy makers struggled with concepts of equality and excellence in the name of the "democratization of education." Harry Passow describes the general situation and highlights the basic issue of cultural differences and attendant tensions within an encompassing and historically unfavourable context:

> In various ways the concepts of uniformity and diversity have raised issues with regard to all aspects of education—goals, curriculum, instructional strategies, staff deployment, resource allocation, organization, evaluation, etc. Just as the goals of equity and excellence are both deemed desirable, uniformity and diversity are both considered desirable even though they are often in conflict with one another . . .
>
> In striving to attain the twin goals of equity and excellence, curricular and instructional uniformity and diversity are needed. When uniformity and common curriculum are appropriate and when diversity and differentiated curriculum and instruction are appropriate raises questions that do not respond to either-or solutions. Basic philosophical positions affect decision-making and doctrinaire

> decisions are not likely to move schools and school systems towards resolution of questions concerning curriculum and instruction. How to blend uniqueness, individuality, and differences with commonalities, and group and societal needs without subordinating one to the other, is the continuing quest of the curriculum developer in selection of content, instructional strategies, resources, and evaluation procedures.[11]

The education of underprivileged groups in Canada, in the words of an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, is a "major Canadian problem," and the education of Native people is a "special case of perpetuated under-privilege."[12] The standard offering to Native students through provincial systems is assumed to be "adequate" when this is clearly not so. Canada has not defined "an overall concept" for the improvement of educational opportunities for Native children; this is so because Canadian educators are "characteristically unreflective."[13]

It seems clear to me that a holistic philosophy and psychology of education rooted in traditional Native values can provide an "overall concept." While Passow's comments indicate the nature of the inequality issue relative to the American educational scene, his analysis applies equally to Canada. The discussion of educational inequality must take into account the broader dimensions of economic inequalities and political influence. Canadians need to recognize that, in the graphic words of the OECD report:

> Many of the school related practices that reinforce societal inequalities have occurred and endure precisely because they serve certain economic and political interests. All the good will in the world among educators will not then suffice to eradicate such practices, for that requires a more profound change in the distribution of power in society and the goals which power is made to serve.[14]

Balancing the tension between dominant-society interests and culture-specific hopes is a fundamental and inescapable challenge. There is an ongoing struggle in opposites at play—for example, recognizing the

strengths in persons and communities as opposed to describing weaknesses and pathologies; cultural action as the opposite of cultural destruction; a holistic perspective and approach to problem solving in contrast to the piecemeal and static solutions proffered and imposed over the decades; and authenticity as the opposite of lying. There is no mistaking the daily realities of the struggle for enlightened Native educational development; one struggles always both with the results of unsuitable educational resources and inadequate or damaging forms of social services and with institutional racism and limited attention to social and cultural development.

The purpose of Native education is not to provide an inferior education but to provide a *different* education, the objective of which is to develop knowledge, skills, and values rooted in centuries-old tradition in order that students can contribute to the betterment of their community and their People.

The solution can be found at the heart of the two general traditions:

> The centred and quartered Circle is the sign of wholeness, of inclusiveness of all reality, of balance and harmony between man and nature. (Amerindian tradition)

> The subject and object of education is the whole of man, in the whole of his environment, for the whole of life. (Western tradition)

Each tradition is a testimony to life.

NOTES

1 That something of a "Native" identity remains despite absolute cultural changes is argued by D'Arcy McNickle, a Flathead Indian. McNickle observes that cultural changes can and do occur without necessarily obliterating personality structure. Natives remain Natives, he writes, "not by refusing to accept change or to adapt to a changing environment, but by selecting out of available choices those alternatives that do not impose a substitute identity" ("The Dead Horse Walks Again," 11). The precise nature of what does persist is not entirely clear. It is perhaps some kind of psychological pan-Indian

core. That certain behavioural characteristics seem to survive, in a qualitative sense, and this despite centuries of Indian-white association, is commonly acknowledged amongst Natives.

2 This statement is based on an analysis by the author of official documents of present-day national Native organizations. See Joseph Couture, *Socio-Cultural Developments—Policy Recommendations: A Discussion Paper.* The point was also raised by the National Indian Brotherhood in several of its presentations to the federal government ("Presentation to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development Regarding Indian Government," "Presentation to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development Regarding the Constitution," "Presentation to the Standing Committee on Indian Affairs and Northern Development Regarding the Ft. Nelson Bill C-26," and "Presentation to the Parliamentary Task Force on Employment Opportunities for the 1980s"). See also Harry W. Daniels, *Native People and the Constitution of Canada: The Report of the Métis and Non-status Indian Constitutional Review Commission*; National Native Alcohol Addiction Program, *A Report on the Problems and Needs, Alberta: NNAAP Projects with Recommendations*; and National Office for the Development of Indian Cultural Education, *A Discussion Paper on Indian Control of Indian Cultural Education Centres Program.* [Note that the National Indian Brotherhood is now the Assembly of First Nations; the NNAAP has been renamed the National Native Alcohol and Drug Abuse Program.—*Eds.*]

3 Underlying these several qualities, in turn, is a principle of spirituality. For a general discussion of this and related aspects, see Joseph Couture, "Indian Spirituality: A Personal Experience," and "Traditional Aboriginal Spirituality and Religious Practice in Federal Prisons: An Interim Statement on Policy and Procedures."

4 An extended family is a kinship unit made up of relatives on either side or both sides of a couple. Not uncommonly, it may also include close friends who are not blood relatives. The members of an extended family are joined in a network of responsibility and interdependency relative to the welfare of each member and relative especially to child-rearing needs.

5 A report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, although it praises Canadian pragmatism, condemns the general Canadian educational system for its unreflectivity in its treatment of students. See Canadian Association for Adult Education, *OECD Report*; and V. Hesp, *Native Studies at Athabasca University: Need Project.*

6 See, for example, Carl Rogers, *Freedom to Learn: A View of What Education Might Become*; Robert Samples, Cheryl L. Charles, and Richard Barnhart, *The Wholeschool Book: Teaching and Learning in the Late Twentieth Century*; Robert Samples, *The Metaphoric Mind: A Celebration of Creative Consciousness*; and Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.*

7 Feuerstein's work with the multi-subcultures of Jewish immigrants to Israel, and especially with such a radically different culture as that of the black Ethiopian Jews, is suggestive. His basic distinction between the "culturally different and the culturally deprived" and his assessment approach to

determining skill needs relative to dominant society adaptation requirements are attractive and feasible and warrant close consideration. See Reuven Feuerstein, "Cultural Differences and Cultural Deprivation: A Theoretical Framework for Differential Intervention." A second springboard to theoretical model development and pedagogical invention is the common treasure of "competency-based education" and "experiential learning." The latter developments arose inductively out of the experience of several American colleges and universities. This promising movement is now sponsored nationally by the Council for Advancement of Experiential Learning (CAEL). See Arthur W. Chickering, *Experience and Learning: An Introduction to Experiential Learning*; Morris T. Keeton and Pamela J. Tate, *Learning by Experience: What, Why, How*; and David Kolb, *Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development.* Through its member institutions, CAEL has produced and continues to present sound work at the level of adult learner need in the areas of prior assessment of learning and curriculum development. The CAEL-sponsored work is noteworthy because it takes into account not only knowledge or content assimilation but also skills and attitude development. Research in personalized student instruction (PSI) would also be extremely useful: see Fred S. Keller, "Good-bye, Teacher . . ." The pool of knowledge mastery, skills, and attitude development is relevant since Native students in community colleges and universities presently tend to be of the "adult learner" category. A growing consensus among some Native developers and educators is that Natives wishing to train in any one of the service areas, notably teaching, counselling, and social work, need knowledge and skills that prepare them to work in two interrelated areas regardless of choice and profession (that is, teaching and community development). It is felt that the CAEL and PSI insights are relevant to that end.

8 Much of mainstream psychology, for example, is based on a reductionistic and mechanistic model of human behaviour, which has had a direct and disproportionate influence on modern educational theory and practice. The reductionist-oriented mind, as far as Natives are concerned, is arrogant, patronizing, insensitive, excessively systematized, and ignorant of other ways of knowing. Don Juan frequently chastises Castaneda for the shallowness of his rationalist mind. See Carlos Castaneda, *The Teachings of Don Juan: An Exploration of the Parallels Between Modern Physics and Eastern Mysticism.*

9 See Robert L. Ornstein, *The Psychology of Consciousness*; and Robert Samples, "On Learning with the Whole Brain."

10 This is truly an intriguing area that awaits analysis and application in Native learning issues. For principles and examples of application to non-Native children, see Samples, "On Learning with the Whole Brain"; Elizabeth L. Simpson and Mary A. Gray, *Humanistic Education: An Interpretation*; and Robert E. Valett, *Humanistic Education: Developing the Total Person.* Readers interested in total-person development theory and practice are referred to the entire twelve-volume "Studies of the Person" series, prepared under the general editorship of Carl Rogers and William R. Coulson and published by Charles E. Merrill.

11 A. Harry Passow, "Uniformity and Diversity; Curricular and Instructional Issues," 1, 18.
12 Canadian Association for Adult Education, *OECD Report*, 145–54.
13 Ibid., 20.
14 Ibid., 87.

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FOUR

Restorative Justice as Encounter

Introduction

Approached in terms of personal encounter, restorative justice is a process of restoring balance—emotional, physical, spiritual, intellectual—and, as such, it is restorative *healing*. In these three essays, Dr. Joe examines the significance of Aboriginal values, viewpoints, and knowledge in the contemporary context of restorative justice, an area in which he worked for many years. As a practitioner in the field, his dual qualifications—his doctorate in educational psychology, coupled with his training in Native healing—earned him the confidence and respect of inmates, as well as providing him with fertile ground for reflection. As always, he seeks to bridge the gap created by two very different worldviews, arguing that "key traditional values" and the holistic and spirit-centred approaches to healing embodied in the teachings of Elders can be combined with Western psychology to produce a useful therapeutic synergy.

"Aboriginal Healing Programs and Plans: Basic Teachings, Concepts, and Core Values for Restorative Justice" is based on a series of working papers that Joe wrote between 2000 and 2005 and that remained unpublished. In them, he examined the importance of Aboriginal knowledge and core values to remedial programs mandated by Correctional Service Canada. He argues that values transmitted through Indigenous oral tradition are not only pertinent to Aboriginal offenders but are essential to an effective program of healing, just as they are essential to efforts at community healing. He describes a series of traditional concepts, or core principles, that, he suggests, should be "foundational features" of healing and recovery programs if the justice system wishes to realize its goal

of responding adequately and appropriately to the needs of Aboriginal offenders. In so doing, he illuminates the immediate possibilities of an approach to restorative justice grounded in the traditional Native understanding of healing as process of personal growth.

"Aboriginal Behavioural Trauma: Towards a Taxonomy," first published in 1994 by Correctional Service Canada, explores significant features of, and underlying assumptions about, Native behaviours, ranging from functional to dysfunctional. By assembling a list of behavioural descriptors and by identifying and describing dominant behavioural patterns, Joe aims to develop culture-sensitive assessment criteria and diagnostic strategies that will provide a more appropriate way of evaluating Aboriginal mental health. He notes that the task at hand is obviously unfinished; nonetheless, the essay lays out, in considerable detail, the groundwork for a working taxonomy. An essential shift, he tells us, will require Western psychology to encounter and incorporate basic Native perspectives so as to enable clients to move beyond the "beginning stages of understanding, awareness, consciousness, and attention."

In the final essay, "A Window on Traditional Healer Activity: Elements of Healing," a working paper written in 1999, Joe examines the effectiveness of intensive healing and learning approaches inspired by Aboriginal values and expertise in addressing the needs of Aboriginal people as a whole, including those who are presently incarcerated. He stresses that what "works" among inmates is also what "works" among families and communities. "The capacity for healing activity," he observes, "arises directly from, and is sustained by, 'experiential knowledge,'" knowledge that is apprehended directly and is preserved in and transmitted by Indigenous oral tradition. Among other things, the essay attempts to convey to "non-initiates" some appreciation of the power of a "long-matured mindful awareness, fully positioned within a multilevel reality," such as Elders possess, and its capacity for "the channelling and applying of healing energies."

10 Aboriginal Healing Programs and Plans

Basic Teachings, Concepts, and Core Values for Restorative Justice

For some years I have been struggling with the definition of key traditional values in the correctional context, seeking to bridge the cultural gap created by the face-to-face of two worldviews. My felt-need was to understand, as objectively as possible, the positive and negative consequences of generations of colonialist domination, the interface of which has many times featured clash and conflict, oppression, and the infliction of hurt, fear, and disappointment. Historically, values, customs, and ways characteristic of the Canadian Aboriginal perspective are strained at the family and community levels to the point of breaking.

In the here-and-now of such a context, the essence of correctional work is, seemingly, to reconcile a system's policies and ways with the requirements of a Traditional viewpoint—a daunting task addressed by many in various ways. While at times the signs of success have been dim, my hope for success has not faltered and, presently, may be heightening in intensity.

BACKGROUND PERCEPTIONS

> The Indian Agent, the Missionary, the Anthropologist, came with their questions. They thought we didn't understand their questions. We did. They didn't understand our answers.[1]
>
> Outsiders are forever breaking us into pieces.[2]

The little I know . . . I use it the right way.[3]

It is very difficult to translate the individual experience in ceremonies. . . . It is very hard to explain how "something" happened to that person.[4]

You've got to know who you are, where you're coming from.[5]

When you get your moose, bring it to us, and we will tell you whether it is a moose or not.[6]

Some Elders may impress you for a day, a month, or a year . . . [but] in the end they fall apart. . . . They're all words and appearances. . . . Those who do real healing work, they're together, very strict; they care, work long hours; they heal, they're the same day in and day out; they haven't been bought out by money.[7]

In this study, American cultural values of individualism and individual choice are at odds with the traditional Native American values of consensus and community and are discussed as a barrier to Native American recovery within a majority cultural framework. . . . Indeed, Katz (1979) sees pull between the two cultures as inevitably irreconcilable.[8]

A system that defines the self as separate and hierarchically measurable is usually marked in Western cultures by power-based dominance patterns. In such systems, the self-boundary serves as protection from the impinging surround and the need for connection with, relatedness to, and contact with others is subjugated to the need to protect the separate self. Abstract logic is viewed as superior to more "connected knowing."[9]

Our deepest feelings, our passions and longings, are essential guides, and . . . our species owes much of its existence to their power in human affairs.[10]

INTRODUCTION

This essay addresses two sets of established views, each rooted in a Tradition. It is an effort that assumes that the clarity and complementarity of the two sources indicate a win-win potential, that is, a real capacity to impact four dimensional need areas of Aboriginal men and women in correctional environments.[11] Further, I strive to articulate briefly several compelling traditional concepts as foundational features of Canadian Indian healing interventions, presenting a typical or "generic" (that is, not exclusively Cree) Elder response to the goal of correctional institutions to develop an *appropriate* response to Aboriginal inmate need. I strive to avoid romanticizing tradition; rather, as carefully as possible, the positions that I take identify those touchstone values that can serve as a bridge to mainstream psychology and psychotherapy.

Several enduring "organizing principles" are contrasted with several prevailing misunderstandings, if not denials, of "differences." I contend that those involved in Native inmate healing work, Native and non-Native alike, will become more insightful if they become able to perceive how traditional healing approaches are carried by *process* dynamics or energies, in the context of an age-old Story. Conditionally, one can come to perceive that traditional worldview and cosmology, insights, and skills bear directly on healing, without compartmentalizing individual and collective personality, and that, because of this, this approach is stringent, rational, and ethical.

I seek to uncover a number of interdependent variables that reflect the fact of cultural differences at their interface in prisons, using the conceptual tools and methods of mainstream social science. To make some sense of this, I articulate a number of interrelated notions, each like a link in a chain, each interdependent while remaining a necessary constituent of the chain. I present my views regarding Elder/Healer and client as persons; problems such as deficiency as a consequence of reductionism, science as both direct, experiential knowing and method, holism, generic aboriginality, metaphors, and criteria and standards are addressed in other writings

A standing difficulty of this essay is one of two-way translation, that is, of rendering and expressing as faithfully as possible the letter and spirit of Oral Tradition to Natives and non-Natives alike through the use of a Western writing style, as well as Western concepts and terms. My hope is that every line herein echoes Elder/Aboriginal "speak," together with the best that comes to us from the West.

The translation endeavour ultimately leads to issues of program development and delivery, both in terms of healing centre conditions and the requirements of traditional teaching, healing, and ceremony. Given that purpose, I feel that a relatively extensive review of Indigenous sources is warranted and necessary, and I begin with presentation of these sources as part of an oral tradition that is the "ground" of healing. These sources present compelling, alluring ideas—"organizing principles"—with the power to perpetuate Aboriginal survival by actuating healing. My underpinning proposition is that such sources yield criteria and standards against which, in time, one can perceive and weigh, validly and reliably, evidence of individual weaknesses and strengths and their modifiability.

The several readings presented in the first section include a non-Aboriginal perspective; in the second section, I consider generic program or activity-related factors, client characteristics, Elder and staff qualities and roles, and evaluation concerns. The final section, "Mapping an Aboriginal Healing Plan," suggests what seems desirable and possible in formulating Aboriginal Healing Plans in light of current views and attitudes emphasized in reports on correctional planning and progress.

SOURCES AND RELEVANCE OF HEALING PRINCIPLES

Key Themes: Oral Tradition as the "Ground" of Healing

A number of themes emerge from the core values of oral traditional teachings as key to restorative justice:

a. Aboriginal ways of knowing are legitimate in their own right. That is, they stand on their own without need for validation by other ways, paralleling in rigour of method and standards of validity and reliability

those of the Western way of knowing and use of the "scientific method."

b. Current paradigm shifts in healing impress me as amenable, revealing their capacity to acknowledge and address substantial cultural differences.

c. Determining the clinical needs of Native peoples is equivalent, in essence, to identifying static and dynamic need factors; how one addresses these needs differs, however.

d. Characteristically, the traditional learning modality is direct, that is, experiential.

The Letter and Spirit of Oral Tradition: Native Insights

Common Treasure Teachings

The hardest journey of your life will be from your head to your heart. Track the man of big heart within you.

My Grandfather exclaimed many times, "It's all there, in the ceremonies! That's our Bible! There's a right time, a right place, with the right people!"

Go home and straighten out your thinking, then come back, and we will work together.

The Old Man was asked, "Which is the 'right' way? The Cree, Ojibwe, Sioux . . . ?" He thought about that for a while and then said, "They're all the 'right' way, as long as they're done the right way."

Each person has a purpose and a place. It's up to you. You have all the answers within you. There is within you a voice that tells you who you are and where you are.

There are only two things you have to remember about being Indian. One is that everything is alive, and the second is that we are all related.

Look to the Clown for the teachings of laughter to understand that life is outrageous.

Walk the talk. Work hard. Old time learning was very hard. You can do anything when you put your mind to it. Develop a strong mind.

Stages of Life

One finds across the Land enlightening, long-standing descriptions of Aboriginal human development. These depictions are essentially similar and simple in tracing vividly sequential stages of human development.

Traditional sources offer convincing illustrations of how love, honesty, sharing, determination, and perseverance are foundational process principles, inseparable one from the other, together forming ideal outcomes. A Cree Nation perspective, for example, holds that one attains old age through seven stages: Happy Time (infancy, childhood), Confusion Time (puberty), Searching Time (moving through adolescence, opening out to the world), Truth Time (discovery of sources of strengths and integrating the truths of life), Decision Time (living a balanced way of life, in harmony with others as equals), Planting Time (loving our children as our parents loved us), and Teacher/Advisor/Healer Time.[12]

An Ojibwa Story

Ojibwa Elder Charlie Fisher, speaking to Assistant Crown Attorney Rupert Ross, declared:

You have to restore people to themselves and to the community by coming to an understanding of what it is that has gotten them in the difficulty in the first place and taking steps to assist them to come out of that. Jail only increases the problems. The youth learns bad things: how to be defiant, think only in terms of number one.

> You [the justice system] seem to be treating each offender as an adversary, as someone who should be kicked out of the community and punished instead of somebody who, in some ways, we must have failed as a community for him to have gotten to that particular state. We cannot treat offenders as adversaries because they will come back and because it is our responsibility to treat them in the way they should be treated, to build their self-esteem, to give them useful roles in the community, to make them feel valued. Your jail does exactly the opposite.
>
> Your laws tell a person what they cannot do, not what they should be. We know you have a legal system; we are just not sure it is a justice system.
>
> The Elders say: Yes, a mistake was made, but you have value in your family, to yourself, to your community, and you are valued by the Creator. . . . You must restore people to themselves and to the community by coming to an understanding of what it is that has gotten them in the difficulty in the first place and taking steps to assist them to come out of that.

Life Positioning

Understandably, traditional teachings abound regarding living life, its meaning, and its direction. The reader is referred to another form of voiced teachings by Elder John Stonechild.[13] As he points out, his example should not be taken as an absolute, that is, the "only way" of understanding, but rather as bearing on common ceremonial practices of those involved in healing work with imprisoned Natives, for example, Elders, Ceremonial Keepers, Pipe Carriers, and Cultural Workers. His is a wholesome interpretation and authentic adaptation of the concepts of the Circle, the Four Directions, and Smudging.

A second story, presented to the 1996 report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, goes to the heart of Native existence and purpose:

> In the time before there were human beings on Earth, the Creator called a great meeting of the Animal People.

During that period of the world's history, the Animal People lived harmoniously with one another and could speak to the Creator with one mind. They were very curious about the reason for the gathering. When they had all assembled together, the Creator spoke: "I am sending a strange new creature to live among you," he told the Animal People.

He is to be called Man and he is to be your brother. But unlike you he will have no fur on his body, will walk on two legs and will not be able to speak with you. Because of this he will need your help in order to survive and become who I am creating him to be. Man will not be like you. He will not come into the world like you. He will not be born knowing and understanding who and what he is. He will have to search for that. And it is in the search that he will find himself. He will also have a tremendous gift that you do not have. He will have the ability to dream. With this ability he will be able to invent great things and because of this he will move further away and further away from you and will need your help even more when this happens. But to help him I am going to send him out into the world with one very special gift. I am going to give him the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice. But like his identity it must be a search because if he finds this knowledge too easily he will take it for granted. So I am going to hide it and I need your help to find a good hiding place. That is why I have called you here."

A great murmur ran through the crowd of Animal People. They were excited at the prospect of welcoming a new creature into the world and they were honoured by the Creator's request for their help. This was truly an important day. One by one the Animal People came forward with suggestions of where the Creator should hide the gift. Buffalo said, "I will carry it on my hump to the very centre of the plains and bury it there." "A good idea, my brother," the Creator said, "but it is destined that Man should cover most of the world and he would find it there too easily and take it for granted." "Then give it to me," said the Salmon, "and I will carry it in my mouth to the deepest part of the ocean and I will hide it there." "Another excellent idea," said the Creator, "but it is destined that with his power to dream,

Man will invent a device that will carry him there and he would find it too easily and take it for granted."

"Then I will take it," said the Eagle, "and carry it in my talons and fly to the very face of the Moon and hide it there." "No, my brother," said the Creator. "Even there he would find it too easily because Man will one day travel there as well."

Animal after animal came forward with marvellous suggestions on where to hide this precious gift, and one by one the Creator turned down their ideas. Finally, just when discouragement was about to invade their circle, a tiny voice spoke from the back of the gathering. The Animal People were all surprised to find that the voice belonged to the Mole.

The Mole was a small creature who spent his life tunnelling through the earth and because of this had lost most of the use of his eyes. Yet, because he was always in touch with Mother Earth, the Mole had developed true spiritual insight. The Animal People listened respectfully when Mole began to speak.

"I know where to hide it, my Creator," he said. "I know where to hide the gift of the knowledge of Truth and Justice."

"Where then, my brother?" asked the Creator. "Where should I hide this gift?"

"Put it inside of them," said the Mole. "Put it inside them because then only the wisest and purest of heart will have the courage to look there."

And that is where the Creator placed the gift of knowledge of Truth and Justice.

Non-Native Insights

Currently, the practical wisdom of Aboriginal teachings is finding resonance in a growing number of professional and academic circles. A brief sampling that expresses some of this new-found sense follows:

> With our own overemphasis on mental activity we are apt to think that the Indian, without any written language, lacks something important or necessary in not possessing a scholastic or dialectical type of doctrinal presentation.[14]

> It is . . . difficult to find a people who over such a long period of time have undergone such destructive influences, yet have survived and preserved their identity so firmly as the American Indian. . . . [He] has established a creative response rooted in his ability to sustain life in its moment of high tragedy and to continue the basic path of his human development in its most distinctive aspects.[15]

> Incorporate Aboriginal expectations and history in the correctional process . . . [to] address particular needs. . . . Consider everything within the context of the Gladue Decision . . . [and find] types of learning theory models that work best.[16]

Charlie Fisher's perceptions, as expressed to Rupert Ross, now find impressive, singular resonance in several government publications. It is encouraging to discover recent and reliable interpretations in the spirit of the Gladue Decision in a number of key government documents (including directives from Correctional Service Canada).[17]These views are supported, in turn, by an emergent academic literature, accelerating in its expansion since the early 1990s. One relevant example addresses clinical concerns with American Indian patients:

> Some would argue that the misuse of standardized tests, as well as the general lack of effort toward obtaining cross-cultural knowledge and sensitivity, has served to perpetuate scientific racism, spawning majority culture research and clinical service efforts that are often inadequate and inappropriate. . . . A number of cultural obstacles have complicated attempts to obtain a better understanding of the clinical needs of Native peoples. Overcoming these obstacles requires unique and thoughtful solutions, a great deal of tenacity and hard work, and an attitude of flexibility and tolerance.[18]

Taken as a whole, the above perspectives can reliably guide minds and hearts along to mounting insight-rooted, appropriate activities. Such an endeavour will do much to reduce significantly the risk of ongoing, systemic, collective, and individual reductionism, that is, the hazard inherent

to program development and delivery at all levels, including the definition of rationales, goals, and objectives. In a word, implementation of these perspectives would result in improved decision making at virtually all points of system intervention relative to Aboriginals.

An Interpretation of Traditional Core Values

The sets of texts presented here as Traditional Core Values are concentric and provocative in a good way. Together, they show a tangible way of uncovering, bridging, and assuring possibilities for a grounded, restorative approach. Moreover, they underscore realities that are recognized in Canadian federal corrections: "paramount to Aboriginal culture" are those interventions that "fit . . . for this individual for this offence in this community . . . [and] new and innovative ways of managing Aboriginal offenders" are to "be promoted and embraced."[19]

It is essential to grasp that Traditional Core Values are experienced, perceived, and held to as defining a complex of dynamic elements that, when integrated appropriately, in multiple ways, in many socio-political environments, lead to discovery and recovery through healing. It seems clear to me that the two perspectives of Tradition and Government can and do arch into each other in crucial ways to generate rewarding activities. Impelled by a two-sourced convergence of meanings and implications, possibilities are emerging. Should ambiguous situations arise, Government directs that Core Values will "guide action when specific rules and regulations do not cover the situation" and that we must "consider everything within the context of the Gladue Decision."[20]

Core Values Expressed as Principles

The Government viewpoint acknowledges that, because we are really treading uncharted waters, bearings will be re-established through recourse to "Core Values" as they are enunciated in CSC's mission statement, which will "guide action when specific rules and regulations do not cover the situation." That directive faithfully reflects the Gladue Decision in declaring that Aboriginal expectations and history are to be incorporated in the correctional process by addressing the particular needs of Aboriginal offenders within that context. Against such a backdrop, reflection on the

meanings and implications of a profusion of Tradition-based teachings and experiences takes on fresh importance. The following Core Principles are drawn from that abundance.

The Core Principles are expressed here in a Western manner, that is, as comparatively abstract, in contrast to a presentation featuring symbol, metaphor, and story. Notwithstanding that the act of writing inescapably makes for a form of reductionism, the Native writer's belief is that the proposed perspectives are core dimensions of mainstream Oral Tradition.

It is essential to grasp that Traditional "Core Values" are experienced, perceived, and held to as defining a complex of elements that, when integrated appropriately, in multiple ways, in multiple socio-political environments, lead to discovery and recovery through healing. The following formulation is proposed as reflecting both the letter and spirit of Traditional values and attitudes, as well as Government direction. Both frame the considerations that follow:

a. The "organizing principle" is experiential, that is, the Aboriginal Way is "process," verifiably a "Way of Life," whole and entire—completely holistic—all-embracing in breadth and depth, expressing itself in relationships with an encompassing and unfolding universe: a seamless weave without intellectual or existential splits. Everything is relationship.

b. Awareness of this reality reveals that all humans are created equal, that each person is therefore unique, high in potential: an evolving, living complex of weaknesses and strengths. In this, the roots of core identity are embedded. Within this process one finds one's "voice."

c. Furthermore, it follows that "punishment of crime" is not an Aboriginal concept. Rather, the unwavering focus is on responsivity and learning from one's mistakes through healing.

d. Thinking and acting on these core principles leads one to develop and maintain wholesome, reciprocating relationships with self, others, Nature, the Cosmos, the Life Force. From this, a dynamic and enduring optimism and hope arise.

e. A mind stimulated and sustained by these incipient notions and shaping dynamics becomes strong, humorous, intellectual, intuitive, and imaginal, ultimately expressing a serene and grounded sense of gender-based identity and self-worth.

f. The activities that facilitate and maintain such relationships, leading to an experience of being in and with Everything, express a commitment to internalizing the meanings carried by learning to think in both linear and holistic ways, to intuit, and to explicate through concepts, metaphors, and symbols.

Core Values and Healing Program Development

Indigenous healing programs, understood as "learning activities," are basic, fluid opportunities to connect with cultural heritage, with traditional concepts and methods—doorways to sought-after and needed personal changes. Healing/learning activities "process" the person through immersion in the Circle of Life at the centre of which, positioned as facilitators of the "process" and teachers of knowledge, stand traditional Elders/Healers.

These programs are inherently holistic and inclusive; that is, they address all human relationships in terms of the four life domains, or dimensions, and the multiple Energies. The experience to which each program contributes may be likened to a meaningful step towards attaining a life-in-balance, to developing a commitment to self-improvement and to healthy relationships with self, others, Mother Earth, the Cosmos, and the Creator Spirit.

There are many forms and practices under Native spirituality. Healer styles vary from region to region, community to community, individual to individual. There is no "right" way of practicing Native spirituality, but as the Old Man has indicated, what is fundamentally important is that each way is "done the right way."

Traditional learning modalities eventually bring one to "think intuitively," to "think with the heart," to "think Circles," to understand and utilize dream, metaphor, and symbol. In due time, one also begins to experience, understand, and live in harmony according to Natural Law, that is, the Laws of the Life Energy in its myriad forms. This growing sense of

the Circle becomes a "reality principle," that is, a grounded sense of one's being that is instilled through ceremonies, spiritual ways, and internalization of teachings.

The invention of new programs, or "new" ways, as an objective is mandated by the Traditional teachings. Attainment of goals and objectives occurs through a combination of institution, Elder, and jointly developed programs. Formation of a mix, or a "blend," presents challenging difficulties as well as promising possibilities regarding interpretation of ancient ideas and their application to contemporary conditions of human need.[21]

A Healing Centre should, in time, arrive at embracing and upholding the motion and power of the Sacred Circle. Its purpose is to help and encourage individuals, families, and the community to heal, to achieve and maintain health, and to establish and hold balance among the four domains within the shaping tensions and influences of the two cultures.

Implications of Traditional Goals and Objectives

I wish at this point to make several comments with regards to the above as source and frame of reference for healing programs and plans to address Aboriginal inmates' need areas:

a. Learning is a cyclical, reciprocating process that revolves around a central axis, that is, a continuous folding of unlearning into learning, a movement of expanding, of the arising of new learning, cycling back to "reinforce," "consolidate," and "internalize."

b. As commonly established elsewhere, the traditional learning model is a "learning-by-doing" modality, that is, a do-it-first then figure-out-after what, why, and how it happened.

c. "Matching" by program deliverers, especially when developing "blends" (that is, of traditional and Western ways), is essential to assure the linking of specific, effective activities, singly or in combination, with specific objectives. This principle of instructional design, with mastery as its objective, is operative in all traditional modalities—always influencing and generating "far-reaching tacit integrations."[22] Traditional learning

modalities are effectively and intrinsically holistic, triggering a number of learnings simultaneously, one never without the other(s). For example, an activity such as gathering rocks and wood addresses a number of objectives simultaneously on a number of levels.

d. Cornerstone learning and healing goals target a full range of behavioural and attitudinal change through traditional ways. The processing penetrates an individual's unique past, uncovering and discovering the true identity based on "where-you-come-from" origins. The scope of objectives can be realized in conjunction with institutional program dynamics. The primary goal is to provide and maintain opportunities and environments within which the hurt/fear/anger complex may be addressed, assuring a place within which to untangle childhood traumas, to rebuild a person's identity within his or her life history, within family, community, and First Nation—keeping in mind the requirements to provide reports on the correctional plan and progress. In other words, the standing goal of a healing program is to elicit and stimulate individual commitment and to catalyze change in behaviour and attitude through Aboriginal approaches.

The direction is towards inducing attitudes of trust and respect, as well as new skills of self-management through a process of changing attitudes and behaviours in relationship with family, community, and First Nation. The driving purpose over time is to connect the individual with a range of Aboriginal-specific in-house and community healing programs and services that reduce incarceration rates. The behavioural change priorities listed in CSC's report on correctional programs and plans contribute to and support that direction.

Healing Centre Activities

The many activities of a Healing Centre are, by definition, culture-inspired and formed according to acknowledged and mutually acceptable Indigenous and Western criteria and standards, as well as effective learning theory and models. Aboriginal healing programs, by nature, are inclusive, requiring as complete an immersion as practically possible.

Orchestration of collective and individual programs and attitudes serves that end. At most healing centres, social, cultural, and spiritual activities and programs are presently offered on a formal, regular basis. Activities include smudging and prayer, pipe ceremonies, sweat lodges, fasting, talking circles, the shaking tent and horse ceremonies, parenting workshops, and Elder or psychological one-on-one counselling. Among the programs are In Search of Your Warrior, the ManKind Project, and the Aboriginal Substance Abuse Program.[23]

Pending funding and the advance of personnel training, other possibilities include an orientation course, specialized workshops (for example, visits by vocational and service agencies, both civil and private, including Aboriginal political, service, and cultural organizations) designed to address issues such as substance abuse and relapse prevention, alternatives to violence, the grieving process, and the need for family counselling and crisis intervention, and Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous. In the course of daily centre operations, a range of informal traditional skills development activities are usually available, for example, art and beadwork, outfit making, singing, drumming, dancing, teepee making, gathering and braiding sweet grass, and gathering rocks and wood.

A listing of recurring ceremonies over a twelve-month period, according to season, include sweat lodges (prayer, thanksgiving, "doctoring"), powwows, round dances, Sun and Rain dances, cultural camps, vision quests, naming, honouring, initiation (becoming a "new man"), Ohscapios initiation,[24] and ceremonies within ceremonies. With offerings and the right intention, these and other ceremonies lead to change and growth.

Participants

Healing Centre activities are designed primarily for Aboriginal (Indian, Métis, and Inuit) clients. While successful exceptions have been made by non-Native participants, priority is given to a waiting list of Native applicants.

Healing Centres tend to view individuals on arrival as hurting, angry, and out of balance with themselves, their family, their community, and their Creator. It is up to each person, under Elder guidance, to learn where he or she fits into the contemporary Native spiritual mosaic

and—equally important—to perceive how to take advantage of the potential of institutional programs.

The propelling belief is that each person is capable of love, forgiveness, nurturing, and understanding, factors deemed necessary to acquiring and sustaining balance. "Balance" denotes objectives such as a sustained willingness to take full and active responsibility for the past, the attainment of psychological and emotional stability, and the application of positive techniques for recognizing and coping with trauma and conflict, for neutralizing internal distress, facilitating self-awareness, and drawing out and strengthening personal potentials.

The long-term objective is to demonstrate one's ability to hold to a healing journey upon release through a continuing one-day-at-a-time release that goes to the roots of patterns or tendencies to violence and abuse.

The Client as Person: Vexing Differences

General Considerations

Notwithstanding much non-Native opinion to the contrary, differences are real for Indigenous peoples, as a matter of daily experience. These differences are found not only in prisons, between Natives and non-Natives, but also within the general Native population, between groups within that population. There are reasons for this.

Around the world, as in Indian Country, cultures are relatively and significantly different because of their qualitatively different modes of thought. The modes differ because of the interplay and interdependency of the mental dimension: dreaming and dreams, intuitive knowing, and imaging. This is key.

Canadian Aboriginal historical, socio-political, and economic contexts mould the differing senses of time, place, and self that cultural groups develop. Without insight into these components, the individual has difficulty arriving at an understanding of how cultural meanings are learned and applied. In the case of the North American Indian, for instance, non-Natives fail to understand why they have survived under compelling assimilationist conditions. The task of grasping history and life-related meanings is central.

The nature of the "differences" with which we are concerned here derives from the fact that Natives as a whole in North America have fundamentally different assumptions about self and identity, about life, health, and justice. While the experience and perception of the differences vary for obvious historical and regional reasons, it remains that these form the "stuff" to and around which, for example, healers and institutional staff are hinged according to degree of effectiveness and satisfaction, mostly owing to contrasting, if not conflicting, perspectives.

The profound, shaping influences of cultural factors are universal: all humankind is so affected. Nonetheless, this experience varies and is distinct from one to the other around the world because of the life histories of each population. It is this dimension that "appropriate" response must address.

A commonplace Native view at the core of contemporary Aboriginal struggle is that virtually all Native peoples seek a psychology within which they, as human beings, can live and breathe. This existential or phenomenological bent makes for a vigorous sense of equality with all other humans. From this, in turn, flows a spontaneous tendency to want to "co-construct," that is, to agree together and do together as equals: Natives with Natives, Natives with non-Natives.

It is not surprising then that Elder/Healer involvement with inmates is primarily weighted, although not exclusively, towards the discernment of meanings in order to trigger ultimately the release of the negatives and the instilling of the positives. "You've got to know where you're coming from," that is, in order to clarify the meaning of an individual's life as it has unfolded in the historical milieu of family, community, and tribe. Psychic identity is central.

Identity Issues

Many Aboriginal inmates present as severe cases of the stresses bearing on families, communities, and First Nations. Involvement in identity healing in a prison setting is most demanding, if not overwhelming, too frequently leading to burnout among Elders/Healers.

The dwelling by Elders/Healers on stress factors, conditions, and consequences is deliberate. Elders get very close (without violation of

boundaries, however), according to the conditions of custom, whereas the system dismayingly dissuades interpersonal closeness. There is a level of intimacy and emotional involvement that is deemed necessary and salutary to the eliciting of a positive response. A peculiarity of this ultimate interaction is that the Healer seeks not to "direct" but rather to "facilitate" a process of empowering. Healer function is predominantly instrumental and plays out at once on physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual planes.

Post-Contact stress is an awesome phenomenon. While regional responses (such as those of Northerners versus Southerners, Westerners versus Easterners, Coastal versus Mountain versus Prairie people) to such stress depict real differences, current designations also reflect and imply a shared outlook and behaviour as stemming from inescapable confrontations, past and present, with the larger Director Society, the results of which are now dramatically manifest in rising rates of dysfunction. The throes of autochthonous cultures caught in the grip of historical and current, multi-directional, and modal demands play out in these times as daily, stark drama. Aboriginal peoples' reality is thus far more manifold than meets a casual eye.

Further complicating recognition of the kinds of Aboriginal Peoples in everyday life are current legal designations. The terms "Indian," "Inuit," and "Métis" do not differentiate sufficiently. Inuit people, for example, do not refer to children of Inuit-White unions as Métis. The various kinds of mixed marriages in all three groups are another factor, for the nurturing impact of the mother varies significantly according to whether the mother is Native or non-Native.

Elders, Healing, and Tradition

Obscuring, if not obviating, insight and appreciation by non-initiated Native and non-Native alike of the attitudes and skills of a "working" Elder/Healer is the fact that, whether singly or in tandem with others, the Elder/Healer is rooted in a higher order.

All parties involved must perceive and understand that the characteristic Elder response is from within: an upholding and embracing cultural, philosophical, spiritual, and mythical dynamic. Their mind space is one that carries forward an Ancient Story and experience of the world carried

down through the eons. They have discovered and knowingly grounded themselves in that Story, aware that it is one in which all humans can find themselves.

The essence of this positioning identifies and evokes a full range of interpenetrating relations among body, emotions, mind, and spirit. Elder skill lies in being able to facilitate and channel a healing of the disconnections between those dimensions that can be found anywhere, including prisons. The goal of an Elder/Healer presence in the prisons is purely to heal: to facilitate awakening clients to the depths of their own truth and to release the negative overlays, those that hinder health or balance among the four dimensions, by going to those behavioural routines that define, disturb, and exhaust individual, family, and community lives.

Involvement with Elders necessarily draws one into "customs and ways" that are the carrier and framing elements of Tradition-based "protocol." These are the "rules." "Protocol" denotes values, attitudes, behaviours, skills, and insights. It is the "right way," connoting a "line" past which the uninitiated are not tolerated, largely because of the high risk of misperceiving and/or misunderstanding, if not of outright cognitively distorting, protocol. Ritual, as a specific instance of protocol, is a reassuring constant.

There is a rich range of variation to ceremonial detail and purpose. Every good, working Healer finds his or her place within this. To that end, he or she maintains a vital dependency on Elders somewhere—a protocol requirement—especially to a master teacher who has shown or is showing him or her how to do "it" the "right way," who is in turn linked with other evolved Elders. This demanding relationship is an apprenticeship that lasts many years. At the practical level, it can be to a beginner a bewildering display of ritual detail, easily leaving one confused as to the "right way," the true meaning and purpose; eventually, everything becomes filled with meaning. As the Old Man said regarding which is the "right" way: "They're all the 'right' way, as long as they're done the right way."

Thus, albeit subtle and elusive at times, the individual Healer, whether working in community or in prison, is always a deliberate expression of an Oral Tradition and is a carrier of collective experience and views, of a knowledge system, and of group-sanctioned skills.

Elder and Staff Roles and Qualities

"Good working Elders," not "overnight wonders," walk to the beat of a different drummer, that is, to the rhythm of the "Life Force," commonly referred to as the "Creator Spirit." This reality makes, amongst other things, for a very individualized "working" and "relating" style, for each has his or her own "ways." Each is bestowed with "gifts" ("powers"); each one lives out his or her life in a way that directly experiences everything as sacred. Their individual behaviours and attitudes express themselves as maturity and competence, trust, and respect. These qualities are conditions sine qua non, bearing on all Healers.

Although frequently bumping into systemic hesitation or resistance, Elders play out their role in prisons through formal teaching, informally by example and word—positioned ideally at the "heart" of decision making—working with both Native and non-Native staff who see the effectiveness of ceremonies.

The work of Healers and staff converges to maintain the attitudinal, behavioural, and spiritual conditions necessary to induce and maintain the energy processes of healing and learning, as staff come to understand and accept that "work" at a Healing Centre is not "just a job": "This condition underlines the importance of being 'healthy' before helping those who are in difficulty."[25] A condition, as well, is that all workers come to understand "trust" and "respect" as demanding imperatives, essential to perceiving the fundamental distinction between "religion" and "spirituality," to discerning that Native spirituality is primarily a psychology of awareness expansion.

While each centre sets its moments for ascertaining individual levels of initiation, internalization, and integration, ultimately Elders make recommendations at specific intervals of an individual's healing cycle. Further, they determine whether the individual should advance in treatment through the ceremonies, or whether the person is required to repeat any set of his healing plans.

Most Elders require assistance in the preparation of the several reports required of them (for example, the Intake Progress report). Institutional experience indicates that the concrete details of reporting can be worked out between Elders and staff.

Evaluation

Throughout the healing/learning process, one watches for indicators of progress and reinforcement, for emerging signs of "coming along," "getting there," or "readiness." This raises several practical questions.

A primary assessment and reporting difficulty lies in addressing the necessary influences of traditional protocols. In general terms, this devolves from the fact that all dimensions of the overall healing process are often not perceived. In other words, the "matching" of learning with spiritual activity is not yet entirely established, because of the conditions of protocol.

This legitimate requirement, however, does not preclude inferring from participation in spiritual activities evidence of progress, for Healers do so as a matter of course. One can assume that such suffices for purposes of both standard non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal reporting.

A second difficulty derives from Western psychometrics itself, which not only has been reluctant to recognize the reality of cultural differences but to wrestle with these to their resolution as well.[26]

A third evaluation concern lies with cultural effectiveness from an administrative standpoint, with the administration of Lodge and Circle activities as a whole and in detail. This includes issues of financial resources, staff selection, needs, and development, the effectiveness of the management framework and approach, transfers, health, community involvement, relationships with other facilities, and assuring and scheduling appropriate program-related activities, as well as the viability and strengthening of the Vision and Cultural Framework.

MAPPING AN ABORIGINAL HEALING PLAN

The implementation of teachings and core values presents conceptual concerns at this time: one relative to formulating goals and objectives, a second relative to evaluation (as above). Rendering the fullness of the core notion, on all dimensions, as implied by the term "holism," is one instance. Furthermore, this effort is slowed by the absence of such Western resources as tested theory, model, and trained personnel.

Such notwithstanding, the following concepts are proposed as useful, if not essential, in the development of individual, customized healing plans.

Key Features

In essence, healing goals are near absolutes, as the enduring mountain to be climbed over a long period of time, whereas "objectives" are relative to a given goal or to other objectives. That is, taking steps is required to progress to the mountaintop.

A "healing journey" is likened to a goal, taking a lifetime to complete. Such journeys comprise cycles or phases. A given healing ceremony becomes a "step" forward within a phase. For example, one healing cycle may comprise a number of sequenced activities, that is, steps forward on the healing journey. A healing journey is a direction to follow: a time of learning achievements.

A "healing plan" maps out a sequence of actions, a series of private, group, and/or one-to-one activities, guided by ongoing Healer analyses of level(s) of need and time factors. It is difficult to sort factors out into relatively discrete categories. This difficulty stems from the nature of healing processes that involve whole matrices of interacting and interdependent dimensions or variables—for example, physical, emotional, mental, spiritual—all within a compelling moral context of the two moral imperatives of trust and respect.

In this perspective, most common Native and non-Native taxonomies of behaviours and attitudes towards change tend to focus exclusively on weaknesses or needs. Such conventional listings can be enriched by explicitly incorporating qualities such as identity-related features, along with those of self-empowerment, transformation as journey, congruence, growing in spiritual awareness, acceptance of what can't be changed, recognition of signs of an improving quality of life, a sense of humour, an increasing sense of quality in relationships, high levels of self-maintenance, and motivation.[27]

Original Vision

This essay proposes that a vision for a Healing Centre or Healing Lodge may have the form and content of the following:

Goals:

To dare to vision

To create community wellness through development of the Healing Lodge, incorporating the principles and values of Cree culture in terms of the legitimate requirements of corrections

To develop a process that manifests the Healing Lodge as intended

Desired outcomes:

To be accepted by the community as having integrity and motivation

To encourage staff into wellness

To enjoy good communication and rapport with media and surrounding communities

To acquire a fully engaged team of staff and Elders as central components of the Lodge

To assure satisfying ownership by all principal stakeholders

Implementation objectives:

To organize the Healing Lodge in a manner both culturally congruent and synergistic with the policies and procedures of federal corrections

To undertake four developmental workshops

To develop mutually beneficial relationships and strategic partnerships to facilitate re-integration

To engage in an Assessment-Based Community Development Approach by identifying assets, strengths, and skills of vision holders, the organization, staff, management, and community

To identify components for a community centre for healing and wellness

To outline the Healing Lodge's organizational culture, principles, praxis, and strategic plan as an Aboriginal "regime"

To organize and plan within the framework of the Medicine Wheel.

CONCLUSION

The healing plan should be both a teaching and a recording technique, an aid to help the individual define learning/healing goals and objectives. The plan should also select matching and needed activities and guide the gathering and recording of reliable information from Elders/Healers, in particular regarding progress in change and growth.

In conjunction with program facilitators, a practical starting point to the design of such an instrument will be to compare and study existing Elder questionnaires in use in the Pacific and Prairie regions of federal corrections in Canada, with special attention to the pioneering work at Stony Mountain Institution, Willow Cree Healing Centre, and Pe Sakastew Centre. Another area of endeavour will be to examine program performance evaluations by facilitators of Aboriginal-specific programs, to address violent criminal behaviour and substance abuse.

Like the *Boléro* leitmotif, the short, recurring theme throughout this whole exercise is a sense of respect for and recognition of the richness of First Nations culture, healing knowledge, and skills.

It is necessary for all involved to continue the work that has begun.

NOTES

1 Chief Bob Small Boy, 1969.
2 Attributed to a Hollow Water Elder, 2000.
3 Attributed to a Cree Elder, 2001.
4 Attributed to a Cree Elder, 2001.
5 Attributed to a Cree Elder, 1969.
6 Attributed to a Cree Elder, 1972.
7 Attributed to an inmate, 2001.
8 Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology,* 96. [In the passage quoted, "In this study" is a reference to Thomas S. Weisner, Joan Crofut Weibel-Orlando, and John K. Long, "'Serious Drinking,' 'White Man's Drinking,' and 'Teetotaling': Drinking Levels and Styles in an Urban American Indian Population," *Journal of Studies in Alcohol* 45, no. 3 (1984): 237–50. "Katz (1979)" is Philip Katz, "Saulteaux-Ojibway Adolescents: The Adolescent Process Amidst a Clash of Cultures," *Psychiatric Journal of the University of Ottawa* 4, no. 4 (1979): 315–21.—*Eds.*]
9 Mary Field Belenky, Blythe McVicker Clinchy, Nancy Rule Goldberger, and Jill Mattuck Tarule, *Women's Ways of Knowing: The Development of Self, Voice, and Mind,* 100.
10 Daniel Goleman, *Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ,* 3–4.
11 "Need areas" refers to dynamic criminogenic factors addressed in correctional programming.—*Eds.*
12 I am drawing here on the teachings of Elder Mike Steinhauer, who refers frequently to these seven stages in the context of healing ceremonies. [For a more complete description of the seven stages, see chapter 12 in this volume.—*Eds.*]
13 See John Stonechild, "Information Bulletin—Aboriginal Issues."
14 Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian*, 31.
15 Thomas Berry, "The Indian Future," 135.
16 Correctional Service Canada, Aboriginal Initiatives Branch, *Commentary: Supreme Court of Canada Decision on R. v. Gladue,* 1–2. [The landmark Gladue decision of the Supreme Court of Canada (R. v. Gladue [1999], 1 S.C.R. 688) is considered a cornerstone of restorative justice practices in Canada. The decision addresses section 718.2(e) of the Criminal Code, which stipulates that, in sentencing, "all available sanctions other than imprisonment that are reasonable in the circumstances should be considered for all offenders, with particular attention to the circumstances of aboriginal offenders." In Gladue, the Court acknowledged that Aboriginal persons are too often incarcerated for relatively minor offences and urged judges to take into account the historic, economic, social, and cultural factors that influence the lives of Aboriginal peoples and make every effort to impose sentences that are more remedial than punitive. For more information, see http://www.aboriginallegal.ca/docs/apc_factsheet.htm.—*Eds.*]
17 See, for example, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (S.C. 1992, c. 20); Correctional Service Canada, Commissioner's Directives, CD 702

"Aboriginal Offenders," and CD 001 "Mission of the Correctional Service of Canada."

18 J. D. McDonald, R. Morton, and C. Stewart, "Clinical Concerns with American Indian Patients."

19 Correctional Service Canada, Aboriginal Initiatives Branch, *Commentary: Supreme Court of Canada Decision on R. v. Gladue.*

20 Ibid.

21 See Joseph Couture, 'In Search of Your Warrior: A Critical Review."

22 See Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, "Truth in Myths," 149.

23 In Search of Your Warrior is a high-intensity program that aims to address violent criminal behaviour; for information on the ManKind Project, see http://mankindproject.org/. The Aboriginal Substance Abuse Program, now the Aboriginal Offender Substance Abuse Program (AOSAP), is a moderate- to high-intensity program, to the development of which Dr. Joe contributed. For a complete list of correctional programs offered currently, including Aboriginal-specific programs, see http://www.csc-scc.gc.ca/text/prgrm/cor-pro-2009-eng.shtml.—*Eds.*

24 The *ohscapios,* or "helper," is the medicine man's assistant. During sweat lodge ceremonies, he performs tasks such as gathering rocks and wood for the fire and ensuring that the temperature in the lodge remains sufficiently hot. In turn, the medicine man teaches the *ohscapios* how to perform specific ceremonies that the broader sweat lodge ceremony incorporates.—*Eds.*

25 See Correctional Service Canada, "Healing Lodge Vision Paper," and "Pe Sakastew Centre: An In-depth Examination of a Healing Lodge for Federally Incarcerated Offenders."

26 See McDonald, Morton, and Stewart, "Clinical Concerns with American Indian Patients."

27 See Lewis Mehl-Madrona, *Coyote Healing: Miracles in Native Medicine.*

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11 Aboriginal Behavioural Trauma
Towards a Taxonomy

INTRODUCTION

Approach and Assumptions

Ideally, an examination of research theory and findings bearing on Aboriginal wellness and dysfunction should accompany this study. Reality precludes such an enterprise simply because focused behavioural typologies, relative to Aboriginal peoples, are as yet undeveloped. A serious gap exists in knowledge and skill, which the Canadian Psychological Association has recently begun to address (1992). It seems appropriate, then, to suggest a number of working hypotheses that could lead to the definition of behavioural constructs, categories, and schemata, all referenced to general Canadian Aboriginal views on health and aberration.

There is obviously a pressing need in penal institutions for reliable descriptors and measures of severe personality disorders in Native clients, especially those who have suffered individual and collective victimization, notably survivors of prolonged, repeated abuse. Conventional diagnostic categories, as in the DSM-IV catalogue, for example, and those operationalized in the current array of behavioural assessment instruments, were not designed to measure non–Euro-Anglo behaviours. An immediate task, then, is to identify a range of core variables and to attempt a delineation of significant general features of Native behaviours covering a continuum from function through to dysfunction.

This exploration is guided by a number of assumptions. One is that relationality is traditional or foundational and serves as an organizing

principle of the characteristic Aboriginal worldview—so often echoed by the widespread adage, "We are all related." This connotes myriad interacting and interdependent ecosystems, processes of multi-dimensional mutualities, of connections, and reciprocities. Personhood and identity are shaped by transformative processes and sub-processes of separation and individuation, of attachments and differentiations, governed by age-old experience and perceptions of processes of relating.

I am assuming also that Aboriginal group wisdom is valid. James Shore states that diagnosis by Native groups is "usually as accurate as the so-called scientific world-view."[1] It is understood that, inherently, an age-old analysis does not require Western constructs to describe attitudes and behaviours, wellness and imbalance, but the attempt to do so may be worthwhile.

A third assumption is that, since the academic viewpoint is essentially a social construct, the development of clinical insight and expertise relative to Native behavioural difficulty, disorder, and pathology should be conditional upon an understanding and appreciation of Aboriginal traditions, languages, and histories. Special attention should be given to the post-Contact period, in order to capture a general Native sense of optimal experience through to extreme dysfunction, of behavioural consistency and inconsistency, as well as of the impacts, changes, and adaptations that Contact has entailed.

There is a common Aboriginal perception, a shared experience of pervasive, coercive control, at once political, economic, and psychological, that is imposed onto Aboriginal culture from without and that manifests itself in impoverished rural communities, reserve life, residential schools, many incarcerations, violent family life, justice systems, and federal and provincial systems of control. All are contributing factors to the contradictions between Natives' reality and the Canadian legal definitions of that same reality. As a result, Natives have commonly found themselves isolated and invisible. The effects of this historical process have been extreme and are observable in many individual and community instances.

There are other variables to keep in mind. For example, it is important to recognize that this undertaking requires weaving Western contributions from history, religion, philosophy, psychology, education, politics, and popular culture together with insights from sources such as Native

languages and healing-related knowledge and skills, as well as from co-worker perceptions.[2] Multi-faceted approaches seem required in order to discern, describe, and translate the complex, holistic dimensions of Aboriginal history, worldview, and experience.

Another factor is a common failure to perceive that Canadian Aboriginal cultures are today in the throes of profound change: many Native cultures presently are neither intact nor entirely healthy.

Third, there seems to be a close parallel, if not a direct analogy, between Aboriginal symptoms of personality disorder and pathology and those of victims of other situations. As Judith Herman writes:

> There are commonalities between rape survivors and combat veterans, between battered women and political prisoners, between the survivors of vast concentration camps created by tyrants who rule nations and the survivors of small, hidden concentration camps created by tyrants who rule their homes.[3]

The suggestion that victimization has not only occurred but continues is predicated upon decades of oppressive colonial control and damaging manipulations, compounded by overt and covert systemic racism, as a recent Assembly of First Nations study stresses.[4] Trauma has a history. At the same time, one must keep in mind, because it has implications for therapy, that, for example, there are unequivocal traditional teachings regarding personal responsibility for one's actions and their consequences, and that these teachings guide the maintenance of essential life-giving and restoring connections. Finally, there is no room for attributing blame to Aboriginal persons and communities, for their dysfunction clearly is not endemic to traditional culture.

Purpose

The discussion that follows reflects the above complexities. My goal, through the assembling of several general behavioural descriptors, and through the identification, description, and setting of determinant patterns, is to move towards the development of culture-sensitive assessment-related constructs and strategies.

To that end, a first section considers several dimensions, such as concepts of self, of acculturation, and of trauma, as interacting sub-processes that bear on virtually all Aboriginal behaviour. In light of these, a subsequent section addresses a range of common Aboriginal behaviours.

SHARED PHENOMENA AND BEHAVIOURAL CONSEQUENCES

Virtually everywhere in North America, Native workers and healers are aware that Aboriginal communities, in urban centers as well as in rural areas, have developed a form of passive resistance to pressures destructive of their unique worldview and lifestyle. Under debilitating processes of assimilation, conflicted reactions have resulted. Under current conditions, this grassroots, outward passivity, sustained over centuries by a remarkable stamina, seems overlaid in many individual and family cases by symptoms of marked psychic weakness and damage.[5]

This tendency raises questions regarding the nature of its psychological dynamics and features, for this pattern fundamentally seems to be a complex of accommodating and subordinating adaptive responses to an interplay of Contact-related variables. Examination of this phenomenon is problematic because of the absence of any Aboriginal-sensitive behavioural theory, that is, of discrete descriptors and explanations of Aboriginal behaviours.

Recourse to prevailing psychological or psychiatric perspectives and approaches is a useful starting point. The belief is that, from within its own principles, psychology can guide a systematic investigation of the dramatic issues of culturally formed minority behaviours. Nonetheless, this seems to require a combination of academic theory and practitioner rationale, and it also demands that basic concepts of normal development and abnormal psychology be re-examined and be driven by Aboriginal viewpoint and experience.

There appear to be a number of vectors, or dimensions with direction, which can be grouped in this section under conventional headings such as *self* (together with several correlates), *acculturation stress*, and

trauma, as points of entry into the impressive complexities of present-day Aboriginal living.

Each of the following sub-sections is set against such critical background concepts as being/becoming, relationship, and disturbances and corrosion of personality (as predictable outcomes of prolonged conditions of coercion and control).

Self, Family, and Bicultural Identity

Western psychology characteristically posits that clients are essentially similar and are expected to aspire to internal control and to exercise personal responsibility in their own lives. Services for them constitute a contractual and negotiated exchange grounded in participants' exclusive responsibility for themselves. These expectations signal autonomous behaviour and relatively solitary identities as requisites.

In contrast, a traditional Native sense of self may find a relentless focus on self as alien, disquieting, undesirable, or unnecessary. Rather, a general Aboriginal sense is one of an "embedded, enfolded, socio-centric self."[6] This suggests that careful attention be directed to aspects of confused identity development, for example, low self-esteem, rage, hatred, negative identification, socio-cultural and economic conditions, racial bias, absence of positive role models, and the need to be bicultural. These are seen as conditions that exacerbate the developmental trauma of separation and individuation, together with the requirements of connecting to object relations. These are also seen as factors that, in the name of survival accommodation, can and do make for hiding one's thoughts and feelings, becoming extra-sensitive to the non-verbal cues of others, revealing one's "true self" only to fellow Natives and a "dissociated self" to meet the expectations of prejudiced non-Natives.

Reference to some features of family structure as a context for living is also helpful in developing an appreciation of the contention that the boundaries of the self-concept can vary—that a range of formative realities exist. This provides a basis for a guarded optimism. Contemporary studies indicate that, cross-tribally, the structure of the traditional family unit is astonishingly durable, despite prolonged and complex post-Contact

experiences, manifest in the encompassing and debilitating effects of socio-political, educational, and economic stresses.[7]

Inclusiveness is a second structural quality. Unlike the Anglo-European family model, for example, which is centred on one household, the Native family is extended. Vertically, it embraces three or more generations, and horizontally all relatives at least twice removed (more in some communities) and, frequently, adopted Native and non-Native kin as well. Characteristically, this lateral dimension makes for an extended family that can include several households and form a small rural village. Interactive boundaries between self and other persons in an extended family, in clans, and in communities provide context and meaning.[8]

Under conditions of conflict and crisis, the expression of self has come to manifest itself in several styles. Post-Contact stresses have required that the family unit accommodate significant lifestyle changes. Some recent studies converge to describe three broad categories of present-day identity adaptations: traditional, bicultural, and assimilated.[9] Homogeneity is not implied by this categorization, as these each apply to each of the three major Aboriginal groupings, that is, Indians, Inuit, and Métis. Of significance also as a determinant of "aboriginality" is whether both parents are genetically full-blooded or mixed, and, in the case of latter, which of the parents is Aboriginal: the mother or the father.[10]

Traditional family members are those who adhere primarily to culturally defined behaviours and styles of living. The bicultural groups are those families who tend to favour Western ways, who have developed some synthesis of Western and traditional values and customs, and who may live in urban as well as in rural areas. The pan-traditionals are those families who, aware of loss of language and traditional ways, are engaged in discovery and/or reclaiming roots and heritage to arrive at a more meaningful and authentic culture-based lifestyle.

The effort to survive under a directing society has led to a second significant modulation of self, that is, the forming of a bicultural identity. This reflects an existential double-bind in which Native peoples are enmeshed and often results in a distorted, stigmatized identity that can and does make for an altered perception of reality. This modulation of self leads an individual to internalize systems of meaning in such a way

as to justify stereotypical attributions (for example, of innate badness, of being a "dumb, lazy, drunken Indian"), as well as producing regressive feelings of rage and revenge fantasies, the full range of avoidance behaviours, violent acting out under the influence of alcohol or drugs, and physical and sexual abuse. This results in contradictory identities, a debased and an exalted self, which the individual has difficulty integrating or cannot at all.[11]

There has never been, at any time, a total absence of fully functioning Native persons, who have a healthy ability to cope with life events and to solve problems relating to survival, adaptation, and personal well-being.[12] Nonetheless, the stark reality today is that the individual exists in a context of family and community that tends to foster behavioural dysfunction. As a standing phenomenon of scale, the basal Aboriginal self and family are daily bombarded by what can be referred to as inclusive and pervasive acculturation stresses.

Acculturation Stress

Definition

Acculturation and its effects are observable worldwide.[13] It is a phenomenon of changes in original cultural patterns of groups who are in continuous first-hand contact with one another. When one group is a minority relative to a second, the unrelenting pressure to change induces acculturation stress. Ensuing behavioural complexes are patterns that, in a core sense, overlay continuing, characteristic value orientations such as time, relationship with the natural world, social relationships (consensus and collaterality), being/doing/becoming, non-interference as a way of being, and traditional family organization.[14]

Post-Contact Behaviours

New forms of stress appeared at Contact, dramatically increasing through subsequent phases of conflict, crises, and adaptations. While acculturation itself can lead to needed, positive adaptation, acculturation stresses have by and large erupted into high rates of homicide, suicide, family violence, and substance abuse.

These traumatic processes constitute a psychological or acculturation dialectic between opposing behavioural processes and states (for example, traditional values and ways versus those of the dominant Canadian society)—between Native Canadian self-determination, cultural identity, social structures, and ways and customs and the constant inhibition and minimization of Native identity in response to both Anglo and French assimilation pressures. The pull to assimilate into the majority culture is unrelenting, pervading all Aboriginal life, with multiple dimensions and outcomes. Its worst form appears in such composite behaviours as disempowerment and disconnection, the constitutive elements of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Observation suggests that through social and familial institutions such traumatized persons experience, in Herman's words, "the contradictory responses of intrusion and constriction," and this process, Herman continues, "is perhaps the most characteristic feature of the post-traumatic syndrome."[15]

This bipolar process now seems self-perpetuating in many Aboriginal families. Acculturation-induced traumas may seem enduring, but they should not be mistaken as characteristic of a victim's personality. What seems to be significant is what is missing in the inner life and in the outer range of activities—a difficulty that is not readily diagnosed.

Traumatized persons can and do suffer damage to the basic structures of the self. Also, individual differences play an important part. For example, if the individual was prone to anti-social behaviour prior to an event, then irritability and anger are likely; or, if the individual had a high moral expectation of self and strong compassion for others, then depression follows.[16] Nonetheless, it seems that whatever the traumatic event, it is couched in an acculturation process.

Levels

It is helpful to consider degrees or levels of difficulty with regard to the assimilation torque in terms of conventional categories of severity, such as in problems-in-living, behavioural disorders, disorder, and pathology. Whatever the categories, however, there is a continuum that extends from meaningful and fulfilling connections through to rupture and trauma and that is influenced at each point by lifestyle-related factors.

Acculturation levels may affect the nature and form of clinical symptoms, as well as the client's understanding of symptom origins, expression of complaints, and reaction to intervention. The level of acculturation can be determined, as Richard Dana proposes, through an identification of the moderator variables.[17] It follows that this phenomenon should bear on treatment philosophy, psychotherapy styles, and community interventions.

Trauma

Theodora Abel, Rhoda Métraux, and Samuel Roll declare that "the degradation of identity and relational life of the culturally different is not the same as ordinary personality disorder."[18] In the extreme, feelings of intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation can be manifest. None of these seem to be measurable on any single dimension, however. At the other end of the behavioural continuum one finds individuals who are stress resistant, who are of high sociability and have considerable skill in communicating with others, who display alert thoughtfulness, who express a task-oriented coping style, and who have strong perceptions of their ability to follow their destiny.

Definitional Concerns and Complexities

The concept of a damaged communal self challenges current constructs. Its operationalization through therapies poses a definition problem.

As a consequence of acculturation pressures, Aboriginal communities present, in many cases, a damaged collective self, which reverberates through the community and its component families, through to individual-in-family. What affects the structuring of the individual self, and what impinges on the systems of attachment and meaning that link the individual to family and community have importance. These factors include being alienated from and being alien to Anglo-Canadian culture and/or being alienated from Aboriginal culture. Each of the three lifestyles is an illustration of this phenomenon.

In addition to the effects of acculturation, there is what Abel, Métraux, and Roll refer to as "culturally and regionally limited types of psychopathology without total loss of one's own distinctive culture."[19] This means looking to the "fit" between cultural configuration and the manifestation of

abnormality.[20] In other words, as Dana suggests, it is an issue of identifying responses not in terms of psychopathology or personality constructs, on the assumption that responses are transcultural or universal in nature, but as potential culture-specific responses.[21]

The tendency toward denial prevalent among individuals and in the community presents another important aspect of difficulty. There is much impressionistic evidence in communities of a powerful tendency to deny, that is, to cover over the many kinds of abuse and atrocity. For example, a chief declared recently to an astounded and frustrated Indian RCMP officer: "We have treated our women and children this way for decades. So back off."[22] This incident reflects one of Herman's conclusions: "Denial, repression, and dissociation operate on a social as well as an individual level."[23]

Trauma as Symptom

Symptoms stem from traumatic life events. Much of Native trauma revolves around the breach of attachments and unrelenting pressure to break them all off. Clinical axiom holds that a secure sense of connection with caring people is the foundation of personality development. In diagnosis, given the centrality of relationships in the Aboriginal way of living and thinking, and given the enfolding modality of self-formation and expression, group-individual linkages must be kept in sight. The primary attachments under assault seem to be those of family, friendship, love, and community.

Complexity

As Abel, Métraux, and Roll state: "The problem of the deviant individual is an extraordinarily complex one, particularly in the matter of whether or not he is necessarily, by the standards of his own culture or in terms of psychological theory, abnormal and emotionally disturbed."[24] The clinical impression is that the somatic symptoms of survivors are not the same as ordinary psychosomatic disorders. Subjective experience as a function of culture can explain this significant difference. Some Aboriginal forms of depression do not entirely correspond with the DSM-IV definition, for example. These varieties appear to be more complex in origins and symptoms. As a syndrome, Native depression presents a set of symptoms such as alcohol abuse, present deprivation, a nostalgic orientation to the past,

probable preoccupation with thoughts of spirits and death, and thought-travel to the place where dead relatives reside by willing death or threatening or committing suicide.[25]

Moreover, there are forms of disorder and psychopathological functioning that are determined by regional culture(s): for example, southern reserve Indian versus "bush" Indian, Treaty Indian versus Métis versus Inuit. In Western terms, these disorders may appear as psychotic episodes, anxiety states, or hysterical manifestations, but they are cultural aberrations as well.

It is a matter of archival record that, at Contact, adult Natives were as "children": trusting, respectful, and readily sharing. It is common Indian knowledge that the Treaty signers believed they were simply agreeing to share abundant resources. What happened instead was the shattering of long-standing, traditional, "childlike" qualities such as trust and respect.

In Herman's words, "the developing child's positive sense of self depends upon a caretaker's benign use of power."[26] Regard for individuality and dignity elicits feelings of being valued and respected, making for the development of self-esteem, self-reliance, and social competence within relationships and a sense of one's own separateness or autonomy within relationships, both individual and collective.

It helps to keep in mind that, as indicated earlier, the Native viewpoint knows that recovery is possible, severity notwithstanding, and that this process is governed by the degree to which the individual accepts responsibility for present and past actions. The process of confronting avoidance tendencies and patterns of denial, minimizing, and the avoidance of responsibility and decision making is a first phase.

Apparent now are the growing number of cases in which individuals are able to attain significant levels of inner bicultural integration by means of ceremonial and/or Western therapeutic interventions.

CONSTRUCTS AND ABORIGINAL BEHAVIOURS

Central to utilizing Western-based constructs to explain a full range of Native behaviours are problems of equivalencies.[27]

Construct equivalence is of special importance and difficulty. Construct validation, translations, culturally determined response sets, and the willingness to self-disclose are concerns. Linguistic equivalence is inseparable from construct equivalence. Even when equivalent constructs exist in another culture, a common oversight is the failure to document the intensity, commonality, and range of use, in addition to the denotative dictionary meaning of *constructs*. Functional equivalence pertains to different behaviours developed to cope with similar problems in different cultural contexts. Metric equivalence is concerned with formats for presentation of scales, questionnaires, and personality measures. These modern commonplace formats are perplexing for non-literate persons and for those who do not speak the dominant language well.

One tack on the issue of equivalencies is to choose ideographic evaluation over nomothetic strategy. George Kelly's approach to developing Personal Constructs is very suggestive, as are Heinz Kohut's notions concerning connectedness.[28] Another way may be to develop an Aboriginal DSM-IV (although this would demand much painstaking time). A compromise, as J. Gowen Roper has suggested, may be to find common elements in Native culture and compute deviance from those norms.

What follows is preliminary to the latter and is the most tentative part of this essay. It does not delve into the specifics of equivalencies at this point but attempts to describe observed Native inmate behaviours under headings currently in use in Canadian corrections inmate assessments. This section assumes that there are, as yet, numerous elusive, intervening variables.

Present practice, by and large, is to view Native inmate behaviours through the prism of conventional constructs and categories. My distinct impression, however, is that labels such as "hallucination," "passivity," "withdrawal," "antisocial behaviour," or "personality disorder" are not infrequently erroneously applied.

Under headings of powerlessness, shame and doubt, self-injury, dangerousness, anger, addiction, victimization, religion, and anti-social behaviour, Native perceptions are introduced to suggest a significant supplement to established clinical definitions. The following comments hint at construct correctives and/or expansions.

Powerlessness/Hopelessness

Present-day survival requires an altering of collective and individual reality, a narrowing of everything—for example, relationships, activities, thoughts, memories, emotions, even sensations—as Western influences bear on First Nations People. As Herman indicates, this leads to a kind of "doublethink," which in its clearest expression is the power to hold two contradictory beliefs in one's mind simultaneously, a splitting of a dissociated self from the true cultural self. This phenomenon is apparent in significant numbers of contemporary Aboriginal persons. In its extreme, this dissociative state can devolve into total passivity.

In many cases, however, it seems that the lie of such a pattern is not one of simple reduction to a defeated or apathetic state. It is likely a complex inner struggle, with an energy of its own, which can be positive. In one sense, it is a "survival" pattern, more akin to an active state of focused watchfulness, together with deliberate control of thoughts and feelings. My conversations with Native inmates who have experience of Correctional Service Canada's Special Handling Unit (SHU) suggest that this is so.

When one is physically and/or emotionally powerless, active resistance is futile: accordingly, the system of self-defence shuts down. For some, the only escape is through altering one's state of consciousness. Depression, for example, can set in. Perceptions may be numbed or distorted.[29] This dissociative numbing of perception can produce detached states similar to hypnotic trance states.[30] For those who cannot spontaneously dissociate, similar numbing may be produced by using alcohol or narcotics. Extreme symptoms of Native powerlessness and helplessness seem to underpin a very widespread substance use to control hyper-arousal and intrusive symptoms (insomnia, nightmares, irritability, outbursts of rage) stemming from the absence of role models of authentic and healthy adaptation, from a lack of any substitute for yesteryear's initiation rites that could affirm readiness and accession to adulthood, and uncontrolled drinking in proportion to group losses. These behaviours are more or less conscious attempts to obliterate a sense of helplessness and muted terror (for example, over loss, or from moral rape). This dependency compounds personal difficulties, alienates an individual from others, and, although adaptive in an immediate way, is ultimately maladaptive, for it blocks needed integration.

Self-injury and Suicide

Native self-injury may be mistaken for a suicidal gesture. It likely stems from a sense of powerlessness. The drive to obliterate this emotional state can be jarred in the body through deliberate infliction of injury: "I do it to prove I exist." At times, wanting the drastic heat of the sweat lodge—"the hotter the better"—may possibly be, in the extreme, a pathological seeking of a soothing form, particularly at early stages of participation.

Suicide as an ultimate form of self-injury appears to be what it often is for everybody else: an act of despair, the loss of the will to live, the relinquishment of autonomy, worldview, moral principles, connection with others for the sake of survival, and an attitude of absolute passivity. It can ensue from the experience of contempt for one's autonomy and dignity or from destruction of the belief that one can be oneself in relations with others. In addition, in the case of Aboriginals, at the stage of suicidal ideation, the preoccupation may not exclusively be with despair; rather, thoughts of suicide may carry with them a hope of reuniting with ancestors.

The Aboriginal suicide rate has risen dramatically since the 1950s. James Shore attributes this to contemporary acculturation pressures.[31] His study indicates that suicide patterns seem to run along identifiable family lines. Gernot Sonneck and Caroline Sjögren claim that, in institutional settings, suicide can be predicted one out of three times.[32] No one knows whether this average rate holds for Aboriginals.

Dangerousness/Violence and Prediction

A review of violence-related literature provides some guiding clues. Indications are that dangerousness and violence as concepts are interchangeable, that both are situationally determined to a significant degree, and that violent behaviour is multiply determined.[33] A uniform definition of violence in research studies on violence does not exist. This led Antonio Convit and his colleagues to propose "assaultiveness" as a more appropriate term.[34] Predicting violent behaviour is not accurate, but it is required.[35] David Brizer and Martha Crowner write that "decisions regarding what constitutes violence, and what criteria for 'dangerousness' are to be used in determining the necessity for . . . the continued preventive detention of individuals, are essentially political ones."[36] Poor accuracy in the long-term

clinical prediction of the risk of dangerousness has been clearly demonstrated.[37] Studies show that this low accuracy derives not from systematically formed clinical judgments but rather is based on what clinicians feel in light of clinical and behavioural information. This does not surprise, for very little is known about situational or environmental factors and interactions with regard to a client's propensity towards violence.[38]

Another reason is that prediction is attempted for a setting different from the present one of the client. Prison is a structured, predictable environment. To extrapolate predictions in such a setting to the community is clinically unwarranted.

It is now established that a history of violent behaviour is the "best" indicator[39] and also that "transient fluctuations of cognitive and physiological states" are influential in determining violent behaviour.[40] Brizer and Crowner also declare that, within a given history, such events as alcoholic blackouts and seizure disorders are not indicators of violence, whereas violent suicidal behaviour, parental psychiatric illness, the existence of a psychotic state at the time of violence, schizophrenia, victimization of children and familial brutality, and biological trait markers are.[41]

Native inmate aggression may or may not have an organic or structural basis. Mainstream research has yet to provide an analysis that clarifies the nature of the interactions between the physical and socio-cultural environment, the learning environment, and neural structure.[42] In fact, little is known about present-day Aboriginal violence in general. We do know that, comparatively, Native communities in the past have tended towards being non-interfering, towards a much greater tolerance of this and other deviant behaviours. This trend is recent; it is not a carryover from the "Old Days," when child rearing and youth disciplining customs and socially sanctioned interventions in families were still in place.

We do know that violence has become a routine part of Native domestic and sexual lives, that it is pervasive and endemic for many, and that a tyranny of private life and the subjugation of women through terror prevails in many families. Little is known about the impact of such abuse on inmates' inner states, including the influence of provocation by peer and staff attitudes and behaviour. Cathy Widom argues that there is little evidence that early childhood experiences of neglect have "lasting consequences for

the commission of serious violent crimes in adulthood."[43] We don't know whether this holds true for Native people.

There is a social propensity, observable in assessment reports, as well as in the behaviour of police and the courts, of teachers, and of the range of mental health workers, to blame the victim, attributing the abusive situation to the "victim's presumed underlying pathology," assuming "a perverse gratification in repeated abuse."[44] Herman also states that this assumption is rarely true.[45] What happens, she writes, is "passively experienced as a dreaded but unavoidable fate and is accepted as the inevitable price of relationship."[46] Most likely, then, the violence in Native communities is not primarily a collective fulfillment of masochistic needs.

Anger

Contact triggered the collective anger of a civilized people, quickly rendered helpless through deliberate fraud and deceit. Virtually every Aboriginal person carries anger because of subsequent in-family turmoil.

Anger is a correlate of powerlessness, of passive resistance. It is not measurable on any single dimension. It is difficult to quantify. Anger patterns have to be inferred through identifying certain experiences, which may establish the likelihood of harm. As Herman states: "The trauma is resolved only when the survivor develops a new mental 'schema' for understanding what has happened."[47] Many inmates have lost, or have become disconnected from, or have never had, a traditional worldview and family upbringing. Introduction to Elder teaching and counselling and participation in healing ceremonies provides them with a new mental schema, replacing incomplete and distorted perceptions and understandings. For example, an Elder and/or ceremonial leader provides a safe, caretaking relationship, through which the fear of being dominated or betrayed may be addressed and released.

Shame and Doubt

Native shame is a losing of face, which induces a loss of prestige and social status. Guilt, as a sense of transgression against a moral imperative, may be experienced but is likely overridden by shame. Unsatisfactory resolution of normal developmental conflicts over autonomy leaves a person prone to

shame and doubt. Shame cuts across behaviours and can fuel addictions. Shame is linked to fear, guilt, and anger, and with self-esteem. Shame is a response to helplessness, accompanied by doubt as to one's ability to maintain one's own separate point of view while remaining in connection with others.

Religion-Related Behaviours

Natives are remarkably religious, and remarkably aware of and sensitive to spiritual realities. For many, the influence and control of Christian denominations has radically modified traditional worldview and values. Degrees of religion-related conflict result.

The current emergence of Native spiritual activity in general touches most Aboriginals, to varying degrees. For those with profound identity issues, a salutary rejection of Christianity and an option for traditional teaching is not uncommon. In penitentiaries, numbers of Native inmates are participating in Elder counselling and in ceremonial activity with observable, radical healing effects.

Addiction-Related Behaviours

Of 238 Native inmate cases examined, only two (0.8%) are not stories of alcohol-related crime. Field workers have the impression that many Aboriginals are survivors of alcohol-related abuse. Its omnipresent usage has led to violence in many forms. It is a matter of record that alcohol distribution was deliberate as a colonial means of subjugating Native peoples. For decades, a dysfunctional message conveyed to Natives has been that they are drunk and stupid, lazy and careless, inattentive and disorganized, incapable of merit. Internalization of these messages formed barriers that precluded healthy relationships.

Alcohol abuse is also symptomatic of deeper difficulties. For one thing, it reveals dependency, a looking to something or somebody else to "fix" it, to provide liberation from boredom—for "something to do." Natives growing up in dysfunctional homes (and in serial foster homes) develop compulsions and addictions in an attempt to make sense of and bring order to situations beyond their control, such as incarceration, unresolved loss (of land, language, culture, loved ones), and shame over personal failure.

Compulsive consumption becomes a means of protecting oneself from unwanted responsibilities of life by incapacitating one's self through the indiscriminate and compulsive use of alcohol and/or drugs. Leo Booth writes: "The great lie of addiction and co-dependence is that something external, beyond us, will make us better. . . . The more we believe that an outside source will fix or rescue us, the more dependent we grow on external things to make us better."[48]

That Aboriginals are physically predisposed to chemical addiction has not been established. Nonetheless, my impression is that addiction to alcohol, with attendant trauma, may be characteristic of virtually all Native inmates. There is an observable trend now of Native inmates suffering from multi-chemical addictions.

Most Native workers would agree with the conclusion of Edward Zamble and Frank Porporino that, as with inmates generally, alcohol and drug abuse are "pervasive and omnipresent."[49] Inside penal institutions, addiction constitutes a response to life conditions as a whole. These researchers also state that "the problem is greater than previously documented for the Canadian system. . . . We can see that the total problem is almost catastrophic."[50]

Alcohol abuse affects the complexes of dysfunctional behaviour, including, for example, depression, denial or minimization, and avoidance. A list of inmate avoidance behaviours includes temper tantrums, fist fights, noisy emotional arguments, intellectualization, rationalization, pseudo-perfectionism, negativism, procrastination, and running away. Many inmates not only avoid making decisions and taking on responsibility, but they also resent others who attempt to control them.

Usually addiction-shaped behavioural patterns are chronic. Repeated or chronic trauma is insidious, eroding personality, leaving the individual feeling irrevocably changed, no longer with a baseline state of physical calm or comfort. Regarding inmates, Zamble and Porporino declare:

> Not only had they dealt poorly with their problems, but they did not know better ways to respond. As they have lived without planning or direction, so had they created for themselves a major part of their difficulties without realization. In all, they demonstrated a notable

lack of insight about the causes of their problems or the limitations of their ways of handling them.[51]

Victimization: Victimizer as Victim

In all its forms, growing awareness of this phenomenon is acutely embarrassing, shaming, and overwhelming. Its confrontation in the communities is complicated by a so-called ethic of non-interference, which directly contributes to denial. This tendency itself is evidence of cultural breakdown. Traditionally, as stated earlier, socially approved sanctions and parental customs with regard to the disciplining of children effectively excluded addiction and its consequences. In a general sense, many Natives have given up and have become victims of life. The several forms of addiction (for example, chemical, gambling, eating, sexual) make for a self-fulfilling prophecy, that is, the progressive search for a "fix," as Booth says, out "of a persistent need for control," thus fortifying impairment and dysfunctional behaviours. With this, denial sets in. Victims "become doormats" that bite, using underhanded aggressiveness and covert manipulation to get their way. They become "crabs-in-the-bucket," pulling down each other in a desperate attempt to "get ahead."[52] In another sense, the victimizing tendency manifests a compulsion to get even, to take it out on others, to vent anger.

From a clinical standpoint, Herman holds that survivors of childhood abuse, like other traumatized people, are frequently misdiagnosed and mistreated in the mental health system.[53] She describes three misapplications: somatization disorder, borderline personality disorder, and multiple personality disorder.

Native treatment programs are increasingly engaged in programs for female victims. Male victims (often incarcerated victimizers) have been remarkably slow to come forward. The issue of victimizer as victim is compound and constitutes a first-order challenge to conventionally trained therapists.

Anti-social Behaviour, Hallucination, Delusion

Institutional reports frequently label Native inmates with such adjectives as "anti-social," along with "withdrawn," "passive," "non-communicative,"

"uncooperative," and "rebellious." Notwithstanding that there are cases when the application of such adjectives to Native inmate behaviour are justified, these symptoms are not necessarily what they seem to be. Together with components of protest, irritability, and anger, this forms a fundamental survival thrust, albeit acute, yet revealing some deliberateness of response.

Also, attributions of hallucination and delusion are examples of recurring misdiagnoses. Native experience and viewpoint is that there are processes of mind that non-Natives misperceive. Hearing voices and spirit visitations, for example, are not uncommon to Aboriginals (or to people in a number of other world cultures).

CONCLUSION

At every turn in this paper, research issues are suggested or implied. It was earlier suggested that a compromise could provide a useful starting point. In equation form, Roper's suggestion becomes:

> Pathology = cultural norm and degree of deviation from cultural norm x acculturation stage.

This assumes that, through sampling and analyzing patterns of experience, whatever is salient will become manifest. Simultaneously, the effects of pertinent variables, such as nationality, family, and degree of acculturation, may be discerned.

In order to develop accurate and comprehensive diagnostic concepts, a study of acculturation impacts may likely have serious consequences for treatment "because the connection between the patient's present symptoms and the traumatic experience is frequently lost."[54] Attempts to fit Natives into the mould of established diagnostic constructs often results at best in partial understandings and fragmented approaches to treatment.

On that basis, it may become possible to distinguish adaptive behaviours to a hostile environment, for example, from pathological defence structures. The above approach should also provide a sharper focus on

diffused identity issues such as a developmentally under-structured self, in a culturally determined socio-centric context—for what is traumatized is the process of development of relationships with self and self-objects, that is, others (family, community, Nation), Nature, and the Cosmos.

Language, healing processes and techniques, and "power" Elders must be looked to also for descriptive and analytical clues. Two words with the same root in Cree, for example, are required to describe both mental and emotional states. One can work back to syndrome description from the words used to state the purpose of a given ritual, or from the nature of specific herbal remedies.

Characteristics of Elder attitudes and interventions provide further leads. A very Rogerian-like respect prevails, that is, a capacity for empathic and unconditional positive regard, rooted in congruence with self. Counselling interventions are not a question of direct elimination of symptoms but rather of imparting and initiating clients into a lifeway to help them handle their suffering. The subjective experiential life of the client, the enhancement of self-regard and consolidation of the self, and a focus on manifest content rather than on latent meanings are all looked to with an eye to rebalancing.

All of this means that qualitative research needs to be combined with quantitative methods in order to understand better how assessment, counselling, and therapeutic activities can be more effective for clients from Native cultures. It is both analyses of patterns and of discrete behavioural parts that are needed. Both are needed, and can be worked together as complementary contributions towards assuring a more inclusive and valid understanding of Aboriginal views, attitudes, and behaviours.

All of the preceding presents a set of unfinished comments. They remain directed in an immediate way to construct development and, in turn, towards a working taxonomy. The need for a basic Native perspective and experience, systematically and empirically established in light of up-to-date neuropsychological views and findings, together with those of depth and transpersonal psychologies and findings, and together with significant net contributions of cognitive-behavioural theory and practice, is obvious.

Western psychology is only in the beginning stages of understanding, awareness, consciousness, and attention.[55]

NOTES

1 James H. Shore, "Psychiatric Research Issues with American Indians," 78.
2 My reliance on reiterated personal views, in turn guided by Richard Dana's analyses and recommendation, is apparent throughout this paper. I also draw on Judith Lewis Herman's work *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror* (1992). Herman's definitions of such process categories of hyper-arousal, intrusion, constriction, disconnection, and captivity are most suggestive, and amenable. It is assumed that these closely parallel general Native experience through the phase of contact, conflict, crises, and adaptation. See also Csikszentmihályi's remarkable study of the psychology of optimal experience. [The reference is to Mihály Csikszentmihályi's *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience,* first published in 1990.—*Eds.*]
3 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 2.
4 Assembly of First Nations, *Breaking the Silence: An Interpretive Study of Residential School Impact and Healing as Illustrated by the Stories of First Nations Individuals*.
5 See Thomas Berry, "The Indian Future."
6 Richard Dana, *Multicultural Assessment Perspectives for Professional Psychology,* 22.
7 On the durability of family structures, see Carolyn Niethammer, *Daughters of the Earth: The Lives and Legends of American Indian Women*, and the studies of John Red Horse, Ronal Lewis, Marvin Feit, and James Decker: "Family Behavior of Urban American Indians," "American Indian Elders: Unifiers of Indian Families," and "Family Structure and Value Orientation in American Indians." See also Assembly of First Nations, *Breaking the Silence.*
8 See Caroyln Attneave, "The Wasted Strengths of Indian Families," and "American Indians and Native Alaska Families: Emigrants in their Own Homeland."
9 See Dana, *Multicultural Assessment Perspectives for Professional Psychology*; Red Horse et al., "Family Behavior of Urban American Indians"; James Waldram, "Aboriginal Offenders at the Regional Psychiatric Center (Prairies)."
10 Joseph Couture, "Multicultural Competence: Background Theory and Practice Relevance to Canadian Aboriginal Assessment Need."
11 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 103.
12 For a more complete discussion, see Joseph Couture, "The Role of Native Elders: Emergent Issues."
13 The writings of Thomas Berry, Edward Boldt, Jerry Mander, Rupert Ross, and Geroge Sioui describe the adversarial hostility of justice and social systems towards Aboriginals.
14 Attneave, "American Indians and Native Alaska Families."
15 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 47.
16 Ibid., 52, 57.
17 Dana, *Multicultural Assessment Perspectives for Professional Psychology,* 104.
18 Theodora M. Abel, Rhoda Métraux, and Samuel Roll, *Psychotherapy and Culture*, 53.

19 Ibid., 52. [The original manuscript referred the reader to examples of "Windigo Psychosis" and "Arctic Hysteria." In the intervening years, however, these so-called culture-bound syndromes, although still listed in the DSM, have been discredited as such. See James Waldram, *Revenge of the Windigo: The Construction of the Mind and Mental Health of North American Aboriginal Peoples*.—*Eds.*]
20 Ibid., 53.
21 Dana, *Multicultural Assessment Perspectives for Professional Psychology*, ,174.
22 Personal communication, 1993.
23 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 2.
24 Abel, Métraux, and Roll, *Psychotherapy and Culture*, 403.
25 This is very similar to what Wolfgang Jilek describes as "anomic depression." See Wolfgang G. Jilek, "Anomic Depression, Alcoholism, and a Culture-Congenial Indian Response."
26 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 52.
27 See Dana, *Multicultural Assessment Perspectives for Professional Psychology*..
28 See George Kelly, *The Psychology of Personal Constructs*; Heinz Kohut, *The Analysis of the Self: A Systematic Approach to the Psychoanalytic Treatment of Narcissistic Personality Disorders.*
29 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 41–44.
30 Ibid., 43.
31 James H. Shore, "Psychiatric Research Issues with American Indians."
32 Gernot Sonneck and Caroline Sjögren, "Contribution to Suicide Risk Assessment, II: On the Practice of Suicide Risk Asessment."
33 David A. Brizer and Martha Crowner, *Current Approaches to the Prediction of Violence*, xxi.
34 Antonio Convit, Judith Jaeger, Shang Pin Lin, Morris Meisner, and Jan Volvka, "Prediction of Assaultive Behavior in Psychiatric Inpatients: Is It Possible?" 39.
35 Han Blankstein, "Organizational Approaches to Improving Institutional Estimations of Dangerousness in Forensic Psychiatric Hospitals: A Dutch Perspective," 342.
36 Brizer and Crowner, *Current Approaches to the Prediction of Violence*, xxi.
37 Convit et al., "Prediction of Assaultive Behavior in Psychiatric Inpatients," 37.
38 See Blankstein, "Organizational Approaches to Improving Institutional Estimations of Dangerousness," 342; David Bear, "Hierarchical Neural Regulation of Aggression: Some Predictable Patterns of Violence," 95; Brizer and Crowner, *Current Approaches to the Prediction of Violence*, xii; Convit et al., "Prediction of Assaultive Behavior in Psychiatric Inpatients," 52; and John Monahan, "Risk Assessment of Violence Among the Mentally Disordered: Generating Useful Knowledge."
39 Norman Tallent, *Psychological Report Writing*, 15.
40 Brizer and Crowner, *Current Approaches to the Prediction of Violence*, xvi.
41 Ibid., xv–xvi.
42 Bear, "Hierarchical Neural Regulation of Aggression," 95.
43 Cathy S. Widom, "Child Abuse, Neglect, and Violent Criminal Behavior," 141.
44 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery*, 117.

45 Ibid., 112.
46 Ibid., 112.
47 Ibid., 41.
48 Leo Booth, *When God Becomes a Drug: Breaking the Chains of Religious Addiction and Abuse,* 38.
49 Edward Zamble and Frank J. Porporino, *Coping, Behavior, and Adaptation in Prison Inmates,* 61.
50 Ibid., 63.
51 Ibid., 65.
52 Booth, *When God Becomes a Drug,* 41.
53 Herman, *Trauma and Recovery,* 123.
54 Ibid., 118.
55 For a useful examination of a non-Western approach, see Jane L. Aldous, "Cross-Cultural Counselling and Cross-Cultural Meanings: An Exploration of Morita Psychotherapy."

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12 A Window on Traditional Healer Activity
Elements of Healing

> With our own overemphasis on mental activity we are apt to think that the Indian, without any written language, lacks something important or necessary in not possessing a scholastic or dialectical type of doctrinal presentation.[1]

> It is . . . difficult to find a people who over such a long period of time have undergone such destructive influences, yet have survived and preserved their identity so firmly as the American Indian. . . . [He] has established a creative response rooted in his ability to sustain life in its moment of high tragedy and to continue a basic path of his human development in its most distinctive aspects.[2]

INTRODUCTION

These opening comments suggest a leitmotif, a defining spirit to this essay. It concerns imparting an appreciation of the Aboriginal capacity for a "creative response" from within the setting of present-day conditions of "high tragedy." My sustained reference in this essay to the stance and activity of Native healers amidst Aboriginal federal inmates highlights elemental aspects of that response. It assumes that what "works" in prison—in its how, why, and what—is unchanged in essence from what "works" in families and communities across the Land.

Insights into the reality of this "creative response" require several cautions. The capacity for healing activity arises directly from, and is sustained by, "experiential knowledge" that is couched in and carried by Oral Tradition, which is *the* ground and backdrop to this essay's sense of the healing processes necessary in the face of the events and consequences of Contact. A focus on the fullness of a healer's world and on healer activity with Aboriginal inmates will illustrate some of the dimensions, requirements, and implications of ancient insight and skill in the dynamics of restoring healthy living.

Attainment of the stated goal is daunting for several reasons. First, the very nature of print expression, that is, what is written by a "print-literate" person for "print-literate" readers, is a significant and limiting factor. While a careful effort has been made to impart something of individual-cum-collective experiences in healing activity—conveying what is abundant, dynamic, powerful, and complex in nature—this writing inescapably remains a blurred, flat, incomplete presentation of pertinent Tradition-formed perceptions, thoughts, and actions. Academic writing precludes those spoken-word and non-verbal meanings, understood and acquired through decades of schooling in primal energies and in ceremony-incited elements. Light, the heat of fire, water, earth, wind, movement, sight, sound, sensation, persons and other life forms are important, integral factors in traditional learning. The import and scope of these principles or dimensions can be understood only through guided experience, as facilitated by an "oral-literate" medicine person or healer who orchestrates the various ritual sequences. Instilling the resultant "experiential knowing" is entirely beyond the power of print literature.

A second related challenge for an untrained mind is to grasp and appreciate the high ability of a Tradition-formed mind to "image," to express through metaphor and symbol,[3] and to understand how this mind functions in the awareness-expansion processes, including the process of rebalancing energies, that are fundamental to healing work.

Acquisition of healing-related skills and "knowledge," that is, understanding and insight, develops out of an extended guided immersion in an experiential-learning modality.[4] In other words, awakening to the possibility of accessing knowledge of and developing skills related to the

processes or Laws of Energy, including acquiring knowledge of herbs, is conditional upon the emotional, spiritual, and mental evolvement gained through apprenticeship over many years.

For readers, this essay's ideas are no more than, and can be no more than, a "sift" from one healer's mind expressed in his choice of words and metaphors. Their mastery of the content presented in this essay cannot assure them that they will come to "know" directly, in a deeply personal way, for textual mastery, in its very nature, is confined to the assimilation of someone else's views.[5] At best, the descriptive references to several defining factors supply a window through which the reader can observe a vista, an Indigenous healer mindscape, envisioning and addressing humans in need.

It is imperative to come to appreciate that the reality of seasoned, traditional healers is a world experienced and "known" as an extraordinarily rich matrix. It is a world that embraces and interacts and is interdependent with and within an endless myriad of alluring and awesome systems-within-systems.[6] It is inclusive of the physical and nonphysical, the cosmos, the all of the What Is. Perforce, it is this perception of the world that is the template—an exemplar that is something more than just an "interesting," "quaint," or "primitive" existential philosophy.

Within the traditional perspective, the human person is experienced and perceived as unique, a being-becoming-in-community-in-a-place-in-the-world, unfolding in a process of growth leading to a Way of Life. This individualized path roots one in an essential "core" reality, one that plays out and along as an organizing principle, an enabler of a "good life." As the Old People say, it is a Path to Wisdom.

It is of critical importance to understand how the Way or Path places one within a many-dimensioned, living, relation-centred culture. The individual on his Path is formed and moulded, bonded with and bounded by family-in-collectivity. When one is aware of oneself as an integral part of what is an animated whole, this "knowledge" becomes, in its application, a factor that directs and pulls one towards health and a fullness or wholeness achieved through actuated relationships. The quintessential Way, enacted down through the ages to present times, is formally a really-real positioning, an animated theme, always *in via*, continuously evolving

through and out of its core and revealing always an extraordinary, multi-dimensioned Indigenous capacity to accommodate, to adapt, to recreate. Today, this capacity, incarnate in healers, confronts a continuum of differing expressions ranging from crippling, crushing breakdown through to inspired wholeness.

As healing implies need, imbalance, or dysfunction, another set of interactive factors, inseparable from one another, must be noted. One influence is the vitality of the various milieux attendant on the Aboriginal healer. These include his or her community-back-there, the region, the People, as well as in recent years such institutional settings as prisons, schools, colleges, and universities. This network of environments obviously impinges in significant ways on the behaviour and attitude of both healer and client.

Designations are another influential factor. From many angles and on many levels, cultural differences are established by such Canadian legal and political terms as "Aboriginal," "Native," "Indian," "Inuit," and "Métis." The Peoples' reality is far more complex than indicated by such relatively abstract labels, however. Broad behavioural and attitudinal differences exist between and within each of these groups. The effect over time of elements such as geographic separation, languages, and regional histories are in turn compounded by an encircling phenomenon of Contact: an incessant and inexorable pressure towards acculturation and assimilation.

At the same time, while regional responses to such stresses reflect real differences, current designations imply the existence of a shared outlook and behaviour stemming from inescapable confrontations with the dominant society, past and present, the results of which are now dramatically manifest in rising rates of dysfunction. The throes of autochthonic cultures caught in the grip of multi-source demands plays out now as a daily, stark drama.

A widespread, abiding Native perception is that many Aboriginal people, individually or collectively, were and are markedly shaped, often disastrously, by a continuing cultural contamination introduced by the European usurpation of continental North America, a displacement and manipulation driven by policies aimed at "civilizing the savages."

This spectacle displays a disintegration of many of the traditional ways used by Aboriginal peoples to maintain physical, mental, and spiritual health. Cumulating over several centuries, these effects are now evident as blatant, barren residuals that are a mere reminiscence of what was. The bleak outcomes are manifest in the high degree of social, emotional, and physical disorder visible in poverty, alcohol and drug abuse, crime, and augmenting rates of violence and sexual abuse. Not surprisingly, the past two decades are now witness to an unrelenting aftermath, which is that of the dismaying rise in the incarceration rate of Aboriginal men and women and the inhibiting, if not debilitating, influences brought to bear on these faceless persons.

Experienced individually, any one of the above events would have a profound and deleterious impact upon any Aboriginal person. Records indicate that many inmates experience a combination of such events. Thus, their needs are often acute. The work of recovery from the influences of these encompassing historical events presses on the traditional healer. Simply put, it is within this enduring cultural drama that healers strive to re-establish the balance of well-being-ness.

The change and growth that can take place among incarcerated Aboriginal persons reveal healer effectiveness and italicize components of hope and success. An overbearing multi-dimensional historical context, in its basic features, is perceived as characteristic of the intense environment within which most current traditional healers and inmate clients find themselves, with—at its core—a sparkling, eons-old insight and skill. It behooves the larger society to learn to appreciate and honestly accept the validity and reliability of ancient knowledge and approaches to healing.

In light of the above synopsis, the considerations that follow denote several interrelated areas or aspects of healer work with inmates. These serve as panes in the window. Some attention is given also to denoting a number of behaviours and commenting on how these behaviours bear on basic Aboriginal healer-client interactions and sought-after outcomes.

This essay proposes that in the face of situational and individual complexities, effective and intensive healing/learning programs propelled by Aboriginal vision, inspiration, and skill exist and are relevant not only for the People as a whole but for the presently incarcerated as well.

FEATURES OF A TRADITION-ROOTED HEALING MODEL

In sketching a healing model founded in and framed by Tradition, I use terms such as "healing," "therapy," and "treatment" interchangeably. Among Native peoples, the preferred English word is "healing," for it best signifies directly ways of being/becoming and knowing, processes of staying well and in balance, as well as ways of rebalancing to restore health within a Way of Life.

In addition, throughout this text, the word "spiritual" and its variants are employed or implied. Their use herein assumes a distinction between "spirituality" and "religion." Briefly, to religion is relegated the task of attributing meanings to the contents of life experience (as theologies, dogmas, and doctrines). Spirituality, in contrast, is viewed as concerned relatively more with the psychology of discerning and with guiding the application of the principles. It has to do with the interplay of processes involved in the development and expansion of awareness and in the sharpening of intentionality and attentiveness necessary to the alteration of inappropriate behaviours in any or all of the four aspects: physical, emotional, mental, and spiritual.

In marked contrast with conventional biomedical, mechanistic, or instrumentalist models, an Aboriginal healing model is inherently multilayered and inclusive in its approach to the human condition. That this model reflects Native worldview essentials is fundamental. These factors frame processes of relationality—those perennial determinants in the shaping of the individual such as the need for socio-centric identity, a sense of personal and social responsibility, that is, self-with-self, self-with-others (family, community, the People), and self-with-Nature/Cosmos. The Aboriginal model is holistic.

Contemporary healer consensus indicates that a "total approach" consistently works better with a significant number of Aboriginal subjects than do many of the established and currently favoured non-Aboriginal interventions and approaches. What is generated is a model of intense involvement with individual lives that, in the short term, can enliven a reconnection with self and can lead, in turn, to positive connections and enlivened relationships with others. This grounding or enrooting process

is a characteristic goal of traditional healing and relapse prevention. This model endeavours to accentuate a healer activity that moves to engage the subject responsibly in a process of unlearning/learning, disintegration/reintegration, and change/growth and to accomplish this through ceremonies that, in bare-bones terms, catalyze needed healing.

While its guiding assumptions stand, the provision of traditional approaches to healing in prisons is still tentative. One likely milestone of progress would be to place a complete healer program directly in the hands of competent Natives. Some federal prisons at present envisage a model in the form of on-site "holistic healing centres" staffed by Elders skilled in addressing the full range of violent behaviours, including all forms of sexual offence and gang-induced behaviours. Younger Aboriginal program facilitators would then serve as in-training assistants to the Elder. While it will take some time to address need issues completely, at the level of their sources (local and regional, home communities and reserves, rural and urban settings), my strong conviction endures that wholesale and wholesome involvement of Aboriginals will increase the likelihood of successful survival in prison and the fulfillment of inmates' needs during the crucial and fragile transition from prison to community. In other words, the risk to re-offend will, ultimately, be significantly reduced.

Oral Tradition

The postulates upon which the Aboriginal model is based are embedded in Oral Tradition. They are carried forward by a personal "Medicine-apprenticed" experience in community with other apprentices and Elders and by the assimilation of recounted legends, stories, and adage over many years. To illustrate the latter, a suggestive sample follows of several widely shared traditional metaphysical, moral, and psychological principles for living and healing.[7]

As a whole, these didactic maxims underscore "right" behaviours and attitudes; they are inherent in ceremony, teaching, and counselling. They readily make for the affirmation and empowerment of the individual in the construction and actualization of a new personal and social reality. This list, while selective, reflects basic Aboriginal traditions. These axioms have a place here as expository notions, as expressions of timeless Aboriginal

understandings of the world, and as behavioural requirements for change and growth:

> You made your mistakes yesterday? Today you must learn from them. Shame itself is punishment enough. Vengeance has no eyes, no tears, no heart, and no mind. Peace comes with forgiveness.
>
> Your opponents are like sharp rocks in the creek. Bypass them as the water does.
>
> A coward avenges his injuries upon the first who comes his way. He who will not give is a thief, and he who will not share dies alone.
>
> A man who will not accept his tribal customs will have a life ruled by fear and anger. It is fear that makes us savage. The man who will not belong to his People will be owned by his enemies.
>
> Look to the Clown for the teachings of laughter to understand that life is outrageous.
>
> We know that the white man does not understand our ways. One portion of the land is the same to him as the next, for he is a stranger who comes in the night and takes from the land whatever he needs. The earth is not his brother, but his enemy, and when he has conquered it, he moves on. . . . He treats his mother, the earth, and his brother, the sky, as things to be bought, plundered, sold like sheep or bright beads. His appetite will devour the earth and leave behind only a desert.
>
> For a long time, we didn't know that we were equal. Now we know, and there's no stopping us anymore. We had forgotten our Story. Now we're starting to understand.

Voiced maxims such as these, and their assimilation by inmates, enables the healer to establish and maintain a common cultural footing,

that is, shared understandings and meanings that in turn provide a basic emotional and mental setting that favours healing work. In prisons today, through ceremonies, and inspired by such teachings, healing success is beginning to parallel what is happening elsewhere in Native communities on a wider scale.

The effect is momentous, as attested to by various reports from Native programs such as those at Alkali Lake (British Columbia), Okimaw Ochi Healing Lodge (Saskatchewan), and Hollow Water (Manitoba). Traditional insights and skills evident in these programs are reported to be effective in addressing a full range of unhealthy behavioural and attitudinal patterns. Such events, together with the unsung work and revelations of the many healers in the federal prison system, are both convincing and compelling.

More specifically, healer effectiveness in prisons over the past fifteen years indicates clearly that the potential of clients to recognize and change dangerous impulses and risk environments can be realized. Through drawing on an age-old knowledge and skills base, clients can become empowered to execute personal strategies that redirect ruinous impulses into pro-social behaviours for the betterment not only of themselves but of potential victims in their home communities as well.

Intention, Activity, Trauma, Change

Central to this exploration is that a healer's fundamental perception of the person is full and embracing. It takes into account an individual's uniqueness and mystery that is enveloped in an enduring history moulded by post-Contact policies and energy-sapping pressures to assimilate, with an ensuing weakening and/or loss of culture and spirituality, as well as crises of identity, all of which cause strengths to founder and overwhelm the individual with weaknesses. Within the swirl of such negative energies, healer presence and intervention is intentional and active and addresses past trauma and the need for change and growth.

Healer Intention and Involvement

Healer involvement requires maturity, intention, and proficiency in the processes of modulation and release of unproductive behavioural and attitudinal patterns, that is, those patterns that block and hinder identity

development. A complex set of qualities of character, insights, and skills ("gifts") favours the healer's ability to facilitate a number of processes. From the moment of first contact, these skills mesh to help the client begin to dispel apprehension and ignorance, to piece together what may seem to be fragments of a broken life, to assemble bits and pieces of knowledge into a meaningful whole, and thereby to begin instilling a fresh sense of identity and direction.

Healer intervention is not directed primarily towards analysis and discussion of an individual's problems. Rather, the preference is for immediate involvement of the client in "multi-experiencing," through listening, hearing, seeing, smelling, tasting, touching, feeling, and thinking. "Good" process is at once very Zen, measured and directed towards drawing clients out of their "heads" and into their "hearts"—in other words, getting away from intellectualizing, rationalizing, denying, or minimizing and into allowing feelings to arise and express, learning how to become aware, to identify and make use of feelings without shame, and learning to become responsible and act with confidence.

Drawn towards shifting imbalances, a healer strives to guide the client into rebalancing, that is, into a psychic health-inducing process, to urge the client gently and firmly towards a state of well-being. The eye of healing stays "fixed" on identity definition as the overriding need—on the issue of who one is within a dynamic historical and cultural context. Variously, for example, such component need areas as locus of control, self-worth, self-reliance, relationships, interpersonal responsibilities, and overall competence are touched, nudged, and expanded.

Healer intentionality targets building strengths, forming healthy connections, and modifying unhealthy goals through the release of inhibiting, paralyzing patterns, drawing on dreams and vision content and processes along the way. The therapeutic preoccupation is with walking a client towards and through problems of social restructuring, cognitive distortion and manipulation, resentments and hurts, as well as towards examining and changing the anti-socializing, destructive influences of family, community, and prison culture. Over time, in a "safe" psychic environment, the healer discerns and reveals how personal problems develop

and how acknowledgement and responsible acceptance are conditions of a solution.

Trauma

It is clear that the prevalent conditions of communal anomie and individual alienation make for problems-in-living, if not outright behavioural disorders, for many Aboriginal inmates. One form, in its extreme expression, may be defined as similar to a state of "helpless victimization" or as a "post-traumatic stress disorder."[8] In general, there is a range of inmate behaviours, virtually always exacerbated by substance abuse, that can and does bring the Aboriginal into conflict with the law and hence to prison. These are behaviours that are, in turn, often heightened by the upsetting experience of incarceration, which often itself becomes a first-order need. Accessing such dysfunction is inherently difficult, all the more so when individual recall is often lost in a fog of shame, guilt, fear, and ineffective attempts at expiation.

Examples of damaging experiences and working healer targets are:

- disruptive and disrupted links with families, communities
- abuse at the hands of parents, relatives, or persons in positions of trust
- unresolved grief over many, often tragic, deaths
- an unresolved sense of loss of land, language, and of a way of life, coupled with an abiding sense of having been defrauded
- profound sadness, often growing in a context of increasing isolation
- violence witnessed on many occasions
- poverty and misery
- introduction to alcohol and other mood-altering substances at a young age

- lack of love and affection
- an inability as adults to love their own families, to trust people
- the impact of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal racism
- hate and bitterness over what life has been and seems it will be in the future
- great difficulties in building a sense of identity
- antisocial attitudes and behaviours, that is, patterns of violent reaction manifest in a lack of respect for others, their feelings, and their property, antagonisms towards authority, and fear and anguish over being labelled, especially as a sex offender.

Despite any or all of the above, Aboriginal *resilience*—a tough-minded, unusual capacity to survive, together with a comfort with silence and an easily accessed sense of humour—encouragingly endures.

Summary

Healer intention is directed repeatedly at stimulating and guiding inmates into recognizing and confronting the range of their needs as anchored in and shaped by their respective life histories. An overriding intention is to motivate a client to attain immediate objectives for change and at the same time to inculcate the lesson that "full healing" must be an ongoing, lifelong process, conditional always upon personal discipline and patient, sustained adherence.

States and behaviours, modulated as they are by collective and individual historical factors, are considered by healers as symptoms of a deeper, essential reality: a shaky, weakened, shame-riddled identity, but one with a potential for change grounded in resilience and the capacity for silence and humour.

STAGES OF CHANGE

That change in a prison milieu is most difficult is accepted wisdom. To address and learn to release anger, bitterness, resentment, and envy in what is primarily an antisocial, highly stress-inducing environment constitutes a massive challenge at best and often appears impossible.

To acquire the capacity to perceive accurately the truth about one's own actions and that of others is of primary importance. Learning to see a way towards the forgiveness of self, together with a cessation of blaming others (for example, parents, residential schooling, missionaries, federal police, case managers, psychologists, spouse) is critical. Quietly and unobtrusively, and contingent on cleansing and release (over months, in most cases), an awareness of a fresh connection of self-with-self-with-others can emerge. When it does, it marks the beginning of the awareness of self as an identifiable, inherently socio-centric being.

As well, often concomitantly, the individual experiences an awareness of What Is as a Great Mystery in all its realms, of a Reality expressed as Life Energy/Force or Creator Spirit. All this, in turn, quickly and inevitably prompts the person to begin addressing the practical requirements of trust and respect, a process quickened by an encroaching, dawning Reality in its plentiful manifestations in prison. At this stage, the individual begins to sense that he or she can and must change his or her relationships with others: staff, fellow inmates, family members, and other victims.

At this stage, clients are also confronted with a second lesson. They begin to learn to use their eyes in fresh ways so as to see the way things really are in their personal life and to use their ears to hear Traditional teachings, perhaps for the first time. Once again, within and because of all that, an expanding awareness begins to develop.

These two thrusts position the inmate on the brink of an in-depth healing, at a point where he or she can undertake changing a mind that tends to intellectualize and rationalize—a mind that harbours dissonance and distortion—in order to move towards engaging the "heart." This means conceiving and desiring such qualities of the "heart" as understanding, insight, forgiveness, caring, kindness, patience, perseverance, trust, and respect. As Elders say, "The hardest journey of your life will be from your head to

your heart." This realization, together with a full acceptance of responsibility for managing one's misery, one's behaviour, thoughts, and feelings, is foundational. These are, in institutional language, "potential gains to target."

OTHER HEALER CONCERNS

Complementary to the above are several other interrelated healer propensities. One is not to deny the past, nor at the same time dwell on it, for lingering delays the healing process. Yet it is essential to that process for the healer to provide an occasion for frank and probing disclosure of past downfalls or "mistakes" (use of the terms "crimes" and "offenses" is usually avoided).

Normally, "confessing" is done within the context of family, usually with a designated relative, often in a ceremonial setting, openly and readily, but not with strangers, that is, not with non-family others. This characteristic restraint is apparent amongst many Native peoples, especially with respect to physical deviant behaviours. In prison, this tendency is often allied with fear of breaches in confidentiality that might lead to an inmate being labelled a "sex offender."

This reserve is often misperceived by officials as a lack of remorse and guilt. The institutional tendency is to dwell on the past through repeated probing of perceived client guilt, remorse, and denial or minimization relative to negative behaviours, with little or no beneficial yield.

Many healers observe that verbal and written reports frequently refer to Native inmate reticence as "refusing to face his crime," as being "still in denial" or "unremorseful," or as "hiding behind the Elders." Not only does this display a misunderstanding of the reported behaviour, but it can also further inhibit a given subject.

In summary, it is essential that healing be viewed as comprising basic phases and as conditional upon healer-client interaction in an intense, full-blown reciprocity. It is conditional as well on client cooperativeness, sustained commitment, and an acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibility for the past, present, and future that is "seen," "heard," and

"understood" within the dynamics of psycho-spiritual, ceremony-induced, and sustained processes.

HEALING, EDUCATION, AND SAFETY

Many Aboriginal inmates arrive in prison bereft of cultural knowledge and are desperate for such. These persons are located along a wide spectrum of cultural inheritance, history, language, and culturally shaped need. In fact, they present a startling range of varied and complex backgrounds and experiences.

Education and Healing

A well-marshalled educational thrust, through formal and informal activities focused directly on identified areas of need, is a traditional habit of correctional institutions. As indicated earlier, it is axiomatic that to achieve "health" the focus must first be on identity development: "You've got to know who you are." Essential as well is the need for a "safe" space, one that in absolute terms will not be interfered with or altered. A safe context for instruction, for the development of personal responsibility, and for the facilitation of the initiation and maintenance of healing processes can be and is provided by the Elder/healer.

Typically, teaching and healing interventions are interdependent, often repeated, given in a Circle (for example, one-on-one sessions constitute a circle), and usually bestowed by an Elder/healer or sometimes by hand-picked apprentice-assistants. A notable demonstration of the potential of the sweat lodge and the Talking Circle in tandem occurred in June of 1995. An eight-week intensive program, open to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal volunteers, was delivered by Elder Mike Steinhauer. The Circle was not explicitly for convicted sex offenders, but it was hoped that such persons would attend. Thirteen Natives and three non-Natives volunteered. All completed the program. The starting focus was on sharing life stories. The daily routine comprised a morning Talking Circle and an afternoon sweat lodge ceremony. The Elder reported that six weeks were required to establish trust to the point where every participant fully admitted to

being a sexual offender, convicted or not. Upon completion, virtually all the inmates enrolled in institutional programs they had been previously reluctant to undertake. Each was able to get "on track" and to commit more deeply to change and growth. No evaluative follow-up to this unique event occurred, although it was hypothesized that a follow-up would have yielded tangible evidence of increased efficiencies of time and effort.

The sharing of teachings through traditional stories, legends, and history is a primary vehicle for education and healing. These embody and translate, in Berry's telling words, a "Survival Story": a remarkable, singular history of survival in the face of implacable, destructive odds, a Story that shows the Way or the direction to give one's life, revealing practical conditions for getting on with the process of being/becoming who one is, of discovering and establishing a sense of identity rooted in a rich, vital personal and collective history that is constantly unfolding.[9] The Story holds descriptors and teachings that identify and transmit encounters with key historical events marking pre- and post-contact with Europeans and their descendants. The catalytic Story, inseparable from old-time and contemporary stories, legends, and adages, is manifest as well in symbols and colours, ritual artifacts, ceremonial dance, song, naming, and seasonal rhythms.

Typically, when the healer begins to deliver services within an institution, he or she undertakes to establish his or her "Story," that is, his or her understanding of the Story of his or her People, so as to assure a "ground" and "safe" structure for the healing interventions to come. This framework is anchored also in knowledge about growth stages, about what and how to learn what is necessary to unscramble twisted life histories and to arrive, alternatively, at "living the Good Life."

To illustrate further, over the years Cree Elder Mike Steinhauer has frequently spoken about the Seven Stages of Life. Drawing on oral tradition, he describes the learnings characteristic of each stage, from birth to Elderhood. His teachings can be summarized as follows:

> *Introduction*
> What is discussed does not try to say that there is only one way of understanding the Seven Stages. What is stressed is how kind living, or how

love and understanding, are inseparable. Honesty is also required and is a third principle, together with perseverance as a fourth.

Stage One: Happy Time

If we are born to and raised, loved, and nurtured by functional parents, our life by and large is happy. We begin by experiencing the care, protection, and love of mother and father. All our needs are met; we are taught right from wrong; we learn to share with siblings; we learn the meaning of kindness and honesty.

So, during this beginning stage, we begin to learn to finish what we start. It is a time for prescription. We are taught to follow the ways of our parents: we see how they are to each other, how they treat each other in kindness and respect, and how they settle differences. They are our first role models. These are some of the reasons why we call this stage the Happy Time.

Stage Two: Confusion Time

This stage is marked by puberty: we are adolescents, not quite adult (but we like to imagine that we are). We begin to challenge those around us, especially our parents. We feel that we can do anything we feel like doing. We begin to shun our younger siblings, for they are now seen as inferior, too small and too young to be bothered with. We begin to stray from earlier teachings and learnings. We tend to regard our parents as old-fashioned and see ourselves as "cool." Others in our age group are experimenting with alcohol and drugs, or whatever else they can lay their hands on.

By now you begin to come home late with excuses, and eventually with lies. Our parents notice these changes in behaviour. They love us and are responsible parents, so they begin to discipline us to show that they are still in charge.

Their kindness and understanding helps us through this adjustment period, a time of confusion. As adolescents, our thinking has begun to change; we begin to think about leaving home, where to go. We wonder if our education and training will be good enough to see us through, and to where.

Our search has begun in earnest.

Stage Three: Searching Time

Our parents again play a central role showing us the options, the alternatives, and their consequences. At this time, if our parents are spiritually minded, we are taught the difference between spirituality and materialism, and they begin introducing us to spiritual ways. They show us themselves in these matters. They continue to advise us, but they also begin to refer us to places where more information about what to do with our lives can be found. Other significant adults come into our lives to help with the discovery of what we can expect of life and to help with the preparation for it.

Stage Four: Truth Time

At this stage, we discover how serious life is and the kind of effort and motivation that are required. We begin to discover that life doesn't necessarily meet our expectations and, especially, that it is only through serious effort that we earn what we wish for.

We are introduced to trusted Elders and initiated into the many Ceremonies of our People. We are taught protocol, the processes of the "right ways." We begin to see and appreciate the high levels of learning of our Elders.

Our parents got us started by teaching us what they know. Wise men and women build on that knowing and extend it. Out of contact with a range of Elders one is led to choose a mentor. Such a choice may come from observation, or from dreams, or during a Ceremony such as a fast; you will come to know when it is the right time.

Your choice may be of a person who has ceremonial knowledge, or again it may be of a person who is simply wise and who could guide you safely and honestly through this stage of life. Whatever the choice, help will be forthcoming in terms of spiritual matters and in terms of your responsibilities as a man or woman. It is at this time that the importance, the nature and requirements, of balance in life are taught. You come to understand more deeply than before the difference between the spiritual and the material.

Your Elder guides and directs you on the Path of the rest of your life. He or she does this by focusing on the four aspects of wellness: spiritual, physical, emotional, and mental.

We develop a sense of symbolic direction in terms of the Four Directions. Love, honesty, sharing, determination, and perseverance are examples of values that, when pursued and applied, provide that sense of inner direction.

This is a very critical stage of our lives. What we learn and practice now, guided by the teachings, will determine the spiritual and moral direction and quality of the rest of our life. It is clear that the Teachings regarding a balanced way of living must be foremost in our thoughts and actions throughout our lives.

Stage Five: Decision Time

Preparation time yields to living time. We have been prepared to choose what will make for a balanced way of life. We have been shown from where the strength will come to maintain our balance.

We connect with people who have common beliefs and attitudes. We can't escape involvement in the modern working world and so must maintain that involvement the best we can. But this relationship is not to deter us from a life rooted in the Life Force on which our balance is based. The Physical Dimension has now become very important. We are now expected to be concerned with the physical needs of food, clothing, and shelter.

Gender is now an important factor also. Caution and respect must play a role. Elders teach us that as men we are here on Mother Earth through women. Mother Earth and Woman are the same. Women produce the human form, as expression of the Creator's Law. That guides us in the process of choosing a spouse, as a partner in a team for life.

Stage Six: Planting Time

We are young and energetic, very willing and capable of supporting our chosen spouse and the gifts of life that are our children. It has become our turn to love as our parents have loved us.

We cherish our parents' assistance. As grandparents, they love these little ones too. They continue to remind us of our duty towards our children. They remind us to give the young ones the best of care, protection, food, and clothing, and especially to lead them, as our parents taught us, through the steps of life so as to give them a good chance at life.

At times, it is difficult, for we would rather look the other way instead of reprimanding and correcting. As parents now we must forever remain mindful of our behaviour and not forget our role as models.

We introduce our children to our Ceremonies; we bring them to Sweats. We encourage them to listen to adults as they discuss and tell stories, as our parents did for us. We are there to share in their happy times, to guide them through confusion time and help them in searching time, and to begin their truth time until they can go on their own.

Nowadays education in schools is important. Education and work training have replaced hunting and physical labour. The requirements for success today in the job market are different. Welfare living is a poor substitute and should never be considered as a way of life.

We must teach our children at home as much as they are taught at school: that is our responsibility.

Stage Seven: Teacher/Advisor/Healer Time

Having come through life and its struggles, we are now grandparents. We are happy as grandparents. Our role now is as much towards our children as it is towards our grandchildren. In our Traditional Way, we never completely let go of our children. We shift into being respectful advisors, teachers, and healers.

This is the way we must look at life today, even more so than before. There is much to do to make this a better world, a healthy environment for our children.

In Summary

To sum up, the Story is about how life-relevant meetings and actions are rooted in relationships, and how these relationships, when broken or damaged, can be restored. The Story, credible and inclusive, is presented verbally through impromptu personal anecdote, family stories,

and legends, and symbolically through ritual and ceremony in different ways and at different moments, respectfully and incessantly, so as to establish for the client an ethos, a vibrant "holding place," within which dis-ease is redressed and from where the disturbing challenge of growth can unfold throughout life's phases.

Safety and Breakthrough

It is mandatory that a sense of psychic and emotional harbouring be instilled in a "space" where a client can release repressed feelings, behave freely, and speak openly without fear of consequences.

Breaches of confidentiality are a standing inmate concern. Inmates acknowledge that Elders' services are delivered within the limits of prison rules, for they understand that Elders must do some "reporting" to institutional authorities on their clients' state and rate of progress. Apprehensions regarding confidentiality and the need for evaluation and its reporting seem to be significantly offset, however, by the ability of individual Elders to reassure and hearten inmates by modelling honesty and fairness and through the repeated admonition that "What is said here [in the Circle], stays here."

Assurances of safety are conveyed in a number of ways. The most salutary spaces are created through a continuum of Ceremonies from simple smudging to the Sun Dance. In these spaces, healer intervention works to incite trust and respect. Interplay with a client, characteristically, does not require directly challenging the individual through repeated probing of past "mistakes," nor does it result in upset over individual relapses or hesitations.

The most apparent ceremonial activity in a prison setting is the sweat lodge ceremony. Typically, a lodge, in its construction and use, entails dozens of details, each with purpose and meaning. The physical elements and the activities of the leader and helpers become propitious teaching moments, all arranged, singly or in combination, to secure a safe social-emotional-psychic environment for the participants. In other words, all is pertinent to healing needs.

The most frequent sweat ceremony is referred to as a "Prayer Sweat." Variations on the prayer theme include healing at all levels of

the person's needs, as well as in areas of specific need, such as forgiveness, expiation, and reconciliation with the victim or with the perpetrator, as well as celebration and thanksgiving.

Many of the most dramatic instances of healing occur in the utter darkness of the sweat lodge. Here, intense emotional reactions and cleansings are sparked, and perceptions of positive energy fields are formed, as the levels of heat bring the individual to the edges of mind/body endurance—to a degree that one would likely not reach otherwise. In so doing, depending on the individual's degree of commitment and readiness, these intense experiences very frequently lead to catharsis, to crying-breakdown as one moves into one's truth, to verbalizing "wrong" doings, regret, shame, the desire to change and to make amends, and thus to cleansing, releasing, and expanding awareness.

EFFICACY

Determining the efficacy of Aboriginal healing interventions through an assessment of "gains" poses a practical challenge. One difficulty is the lack of a theory and methodology in psychology that have sufficient powers of discrimination.[10] A rationale and an investigative strategy, more insightful and comprehensive relative to the experienced realities of Aboriginal clients than the conventional view and approach, is not yet well developed. Nonetheless, there are signs of a growing Native readiness to articulate better explanations and assessments of behavioural changes.

For example, recent consultations with healers and liaison staff working in prisons indicate that inmates are becoming less apprehensive about institutional myopia regarding the criteria on which assessment and reporting are based. Healers are now more willing to share and describe their "readiness" standards and indicators that concern the attainment of individuation objectives and the transformation of a client into a responsible person, someone capable of initiating and maintaining social mutuality as a standing goal.

A first step towards resolving institutional and healer assessment concerns, together with those of community and parole authorities, could be to develop checklists of behaviours covering the points on a scale from no

gain to gain. This technical challenge would require the preparation of carefully worded items in order to reflect accurately healer understandings—for example, "mistakes," "readiness," "living a Good Life," and "trust and respect" manifest as "far-reaching tacit integrations"[11] that require attentive articulations of the components of each integration. This requires an explication of such Elder comments as:

> He's starting to understand his mistakes. He's ready [not ready]. He's doing okay [not okay]. He's really coming along. He's trying real hard. He'll be okay. Take it easy. He might make it. He's starting to take it easy.

EVALUATION

Likert-scale lists of behavioural patterns, for example, used in conjunction with other methods of evaluation, could make it possible to examine the degree to which an inmate is considered ready for release and under what conditions release should occur.[12] Two lists are provided here to highlight the possibility of a dual perspective for evaluation: one representing institutional criteria for assessing individual inmates, the other, healer criteria. Parallels, or points of congruence, between the lists are obvious:

Institutional criteria for assessing individuals:

Elimination of drugs (abstinence)

Observed and reported changes in antisocial attitudes and behaviours

Social shifts in peer associations and increase in familial affection

Increases in self-control through the internalization of locus of control, self-reliance, and self-management

Success of Escorted or Unescorted Temporary Absences (ETAs/UTAs)

Granting of parole

Fact of completing programs

Lessening up on swearing and cursing

Attitudinal and behavioural shifts observable on the ranges: for example, diminishment and/or cessation of bullying, muscling, fighting, verbal abuse; release from tendencies towards lying, stealing, and aggression

Healer criteria for assessing individuals:

Degree of participation in Sweats and other Ceremonies and Circles

Native Brotherhood involvement

Regular talks with Elders

Confiding completely in Elders

Not feeling judged for feelings and desires

Development of a sense of the sacredness or holiness of the body as requiring respect for own body and the body-person of others

Emergent signs of forgiveness of self, of the Creator, and of others

Praying for those harmed

First touching, for example, upon completion of a ceremony, the shaking of hands with each other, the giving of hugs, and the sharing of innermost feelings

Becoming motivated to take non-Aboriginal programs and/or further Native-related programs

Signs of emergent and growing confidence

In summary, in light of the preceding observations and concerns, assessment strategies and techniques can be applied to three areas: (1) developing simple and effective methods of conveying healer judgment to institutional staff, (2) gathering observable evidence of participant learning in Elder-facilitated modules, including expectations, satisfaction, and motivation, and the capacity to apply learning once released, and (3) demonstrating how these attributes contribute to the reduction of recidivism.

CONCLUSION

In a review of the state of psychometrics, Paul McReynolds reminds us that a "full understanding of the psychopathological condition clearly requires insight into its etiology."[13] A well-designed, comprehensive study of contemporary Aboriginal socio-cultural conditions that focuses on the impact of these conditions on individual behaviour remains to be undertaken. Also long overdue are insightful, systematic studies designed to reveal the purpose and sophistication of Aboriginal healers' approach and skill in interventions, the standards at play, and the short- and long-term results, together with expectations regarding client attitude and behaviour.

This paucity of research and study notwithstanding, the Peoples' sense of the results of Aboriginal healer intervention in the lives of incarcerated Natives is enduring. The testimony of other Native workers in the prisons and in the courts, over the past twenty years, also attests to the efficacy of Native healing: "If they get spirituality in the joint, they don't come back." Two recent culture-sensitive studies similarly demonstrate that inside-the-walls involvement in Aboriginal spirituality results in positive changes to participants.[14]

A fundamental thrust of this essay, in referencing Elder and Aboriginal inmate experience, has been to hint at inherent capacity and power, time-tested values, related attitudes, and approaches to life and healing within historical and contemporary parameters, connoting reinterpretations and adaptations under complex conditions of Aboriginal cultural variability.

Further, I have assumed that fundamental teachings and behavioural norms defined, carried, and driven by a unique Survival Story are completely relevant and helpful to confined men and women in understanding and rebalancing their lives through recognizing and altering areas of risk and personality and behaviour and in assessing and changing their dangerous impulses and risk environments. This optimism is grounded in age-old collective experience and reflection on how to ensure a Good Life.

My own work experience, as well that of many other contemporary healers, indicates that individuals do attain the ability to implement strategies that help in redirecting negative inclinations and attitudes into pro-social behaviours of benefit to the person, to their family members, and to their home communities. That experience, together with its distinct assumptions, characteristically leads into the development of effective strategies and programs. The ultimate program will explicate the criteria and standards for assessing change as expressed by multi-dimensional, tradition-based propositions, supplemented by an uncovering of the many points of affinity between traditional and contemporary perspectives and approaches.

This essay is an attempt to bring non-initiates to the threshold of long-matured, mindful awareness, fully positioned within a multilevel reality. Such accession, within the limits of the printed word, can instil a requisite degree of respect for, and some expectation of, what constitutes high-order sophistication in the channelling and applying of healing energies. To attempt greater distinction and differentiation is beyond its scope.

NOTES

1 Joseph Epes Brown, *The Spiritual Legacy of the American Indian,* 31.
2 Thomas Berry, "The Indian Future," 135.
3 James Waldram's *The Way of the Pipe: Aboriginal Spirituality and Symbolic Healing in Canadian Prisons* is a pioneering example of systematic work in this area. An earlier publication, "Truth in Myths," by Michael Polanyi and Harry Prosch, is also helpful.
4 Joseph Couture, "Explorations in Native Knowing."
5 Consult Edward Said, *Orientalism,* for a lucid, scholarly discussion of an ingrained, Western cultural penchant to attribute value to the views of

"experts" from outside a given culture. See also Eduardo Duran and Bonnie Duran, *Native American Postcolonial Psychology,* for an insightful discussion of the pitfalls and consequences of cross-cultural therapeutic work, in which they apply a DSM category type to American Indian trauma: "acute or chronic reaction to genocide and colonialism" (53).

6 See Brian Swimme, *The Universe Is a Green Dragon: A Cosmic Creation Story,* for an "alluring" description of the universe seen through the eyes of a physicist.

7 In *The Way of the Pipe,* Waldram offers a discussion of the spiritual teachings of Saulteaux Elder Campbell Papequash drawn from educational materials that Papequash used with prison inmates. These teachings amply illustrate how axiomatic truths regarding life and its meanings, as transmitted through oral tradition and through ceremony and ritual, continue to hold didactic value today. See *The Way of the Pipe,* 80–97.

8 On victimization, see Wolfgang G. Jilek, "From Crazy Witch Doctor to Auxiliary Psychotherapist: The Changing Image of the Medicine Man"; on post-traumatic stress, see Judith L. Herman, *Trauma and Recovery: The Aftermath of Violence—From Domestic Abuse to Political Terror.*

9 See Berry, "The Indian Future." In expounding on the need for a New Story for foundering contemporary humanity, Berry points to the Native American experience as a unique, remarkable "Survival Story."

10 On this point, see Çigdem Kagitçibaşi and John W. Berry, "Cross-cultural Psychology: Current Research and Trends."

11 See Polanyi and Prosch, "Truth in Myths," 149; see also Gregory Bateson, *Mind and Nature: A Necessary Unity.*

12 A Likert scale is a bipolar psychometric scale that measures a subject's degree of agreement or disagreement with a given item, which usually takes the form of a statement ("A woman's place is in the home," for example, with possible answers ranging from "Strongly agree" to "Strongly disagree").—*Eds.*

13 Paul McReynolds, "Diagnosis and Clinical Assessment: Current Status and Major Issues."

14 See Nechi Institute and KAS Corporation, *Healing, Spirit and Recovery: Factors Associated with Successful Integration*, and Waldram, *The Way of the Pipe.*

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FIVE

Cornerstone Teachings

Introduction

Throughout his career, Dr. Joe was frequently approached by people of all ages and backgrounds with questions concerning a myriad of topics, among them the status of Indigenous knowledge within the academy, the role of Aboriginal women and men in the community, issues surrounding Native identity, the importance of traditional ceremonies, spiritual insights, and modes of healing, the teachings of Elders, and the meaning of restorative justice.

Dr. Joe freely imparted answers. He sought, through both word and deed, to translate his personal beliefs and his knowledge, training, and experience into action. The following selections—gleaned from letters, notes, conversations and workshops—represent only a very small part of the more informal teachings that he shared with those with whom he came in contact.

These are his Cornerstone Teachings.

ON WOMEN AND THE WOMAN'S CIRCLE

The following are excerpts from a letter in which Dr. Joe responds to a female Native healer and trainer regarding a manual she had submitted to him.

Your sentiment about what men teach and don't teach men, or teach and don't teach boys, is correct and will need to be upheld for some time to come for all to confront—something that has barely begun (1991). Nonetheless, your analysis must also eventually come to teach what women teach and don't teach men and boys. Unreservedly, as a pressing immediacy, our best insights and highest energies must address the crying needs of abused women and children. Soon, I hope, we can broaden our compassion to include the men—disadvantaged and retarded as we are—the perpetrators especially, for they are more deeply damaged than their victims.

I am grateful with you that you have been blessed in crossing paths with a number of women who are now traveling with you, in directly knowing that there is within each woman a healing energy that is not only effective when channelled through the Circle, but is destined to grow stronger across the Land. Through Elders, I have been brought to know that Woman is the Protector of Man. Tomorrow that insight will be upon us. Today, it is the dawning: that of Woman. It is, in my view, to refer to this Medicine as nurturing, the giving and fostering of the Life Force individualized. It is to women that the responsibility of birthing devolves, biologically and spiritually. That role has taken on a greater urgency, for so many are ready for rebirthing.

As your power grows you will attract other kindred souls with developed capacities, to aid and contribute to the miracle of Indian Women stepping into the Circle to heal each other. And, time and time again, we step into that circle for we are all "damaged healers," each on the way towards the extraordinary state of full balance, in complete harmony with all life, "with all my relations."

It is those who are being healed within their deepest wounds who will be the strongest healers. They will be the most generous for it is they who, blessed as they are, respond so completely in it. They will be the new Persons, the New Indians, so long awaited.

I am in fundamental agreement with your position about encounter with the offender. Careful planning and timing are requisite. The emphasis on learning to love the self is crucial. Your emphasis on a "leaderless" group is practical wisdom, for the reasons you give. As inner spiritual awareness develops, participants will come to experience and acknowledge the guidance of Spirit within, the presence of helping spirits without. As you come together, each time you will discover more how truly led you are. Truly, healing circles never are leaderless. The "smoke" of whatever smudge is used—the sweet grass, sage, cedar, grey-willow fungus—makes manifest the fullness of Spirit presence, filling the circle space, fully, equally touching and embracing all participants, within and without.

From my hilltop perspective, I concur with you that many healing circles must be exclusive, and be for women. Only thus can the jagged, damaging effects, the decentralizing intrusion of terribly imbalanced male energy be eradicated. A later phase will bring awareness of the need to draw balanced masculine energy into the healing and rebalancing process. In the meantime, we are not to wait for that to come through men. Rather, as women's healing circles mature in knowledge and skill, they may look to and connect with cosmic "male" energies. The energies of Brother Fire and Brother Sky can be channelled in powerful, highly perceptible, and salutary ways. There are ceremonies for this. The intervention of Deer and Mouse, depending on what tribal background one is from or is in, for example, can also be most salutary. "Deer," for instance, is an obvious expression of nurturance and connotes also the integration of feminine and masculine energy dimensions into the core of the soul.

The norm is that deep wound healing takes time. With that wisdom in hand, we nonetheless stay open to the unpredictable moment of instantaneous, total healing, for it happens in our Ceremonies increasingly across the Land, as the wisdom, skill and understandings of ceremonial leaders—men and women—grow in all of their dimensions.

Learning to make one's own Medicine Wheel is another transcultural technique. To sit (or lie) at the center of one's circle helps rebalance the energies on all four dimensions, that is, physical, emotional, mental and spiritual. See Freesoul's book (a Theosophy Press publication). He is a

northern Cheyenne. The late Evelyn Eaton's two books on Native spirituality are also very helpful to self-help education.[1]

One quick note with regard to dreams. To those who "complain" that they can never remember a dream, it is helpful to suggest that they can always remember the feeling state: for example, joy or fear. They should try keeping track of how the feeling shifts over time. One can thus chart personal progress and eventually be better able to remember the visual part of the dream. As well, many will remember their position in the dream, that is, as participant or observer. In either case, the feeling state and position are helpful indicators.

EXCERPTS FROM "DIALOGUES BETWEEN WESTERN AND INDIGENOUS SCIENTISTS"

This dialogue, the first of two sponsored by the Fetzer Institute, took place in Kalamazoo, Michigan, in May 1992. The participants included physicists (among them David Bohm), linguists, and psychologists, who together represented "Western" perspectives, and Native American scientists, philosophers, and Elders.

JOE'S COMMENTARY

When I first came in you were talking about law and that there were laws of nature from an Indian standpoint. As a student, my best work was in trying to understand what the old people really mean when they talk about the laws of nature and how it relates when they say: "It's all there in the ceremonies. That's our Bible." It sounds quaint when you hear this, rather than what it usually denotes in science and in the legal system. But then we come to the statement that everything is relative. As I listen to the teaching of the Elders, and think and participate in ceremonies, I realize that there is an absoluteness to the concept of rationality. There is an absoluteness to the process. And, if one were to ask, "What are the laws of nature from an Indian point of view?" I'd say that we're all in relationship—"all my relations." If there is to be a bridging between the two generic sciences, Western and Native American—a careful, conceptual bridge—then one of the laws is *process*. You must focus on process. And you can't understand process without referring to relationship.

There is a Native American tendency, a fundamental existential position, that addresses what is being said about "observer-created reality": the image that every morning a man goes up the hill, that the sun may not come up. We assume that everything in nature is doing a parallel thing. But we're uncomfortable because we're only beginning. We're trying to use the metaphor. We have to learn to be pictorial, and that reflects process. . . .

Anyone know that word *neeji?* It's in the name of the Nechi Institute.[2] Old Abe Burnstick translated the name for us one day. The word is used as an adjective to describe the institute, and it means "when people come

together, that's good." There's process. When there are people, there's relationality, mutuality, and goodness.

Sometimes an expert translation can't render the beauty of a word in Indian. If the ambition is to do science in a better way, by relating and learning from Native science, there's a personal dimension to it. You learn science in the university without ever concerning yourself with the quality of your personal life. I guess that's why so many academics are obnoxious people—understandably. Their loyalty is not to the world, or to other people, but to their discipline, and "making it" in the eyes of their peers. And that's a full, absorbing exercise. A great many respond well to that. But a great number do not respond well to that kind of pressure in terms of becoming a better human being. . . .

I think about what David [Bohm] said here today about electrons jumping an orbit. While I don't understand that language, I resonated to it because in the healing situation—I've done healing work virtually every day since 1977—one of the observations I've made for the past five years relates to the whole issue of instant remissions in the healing situation, the ceremonial situation, in emergencies without any rituals or ceremonies, but straight from the mind. It had to be those electrons jumping orbits that David talked about because healing is not magic. It's always a natural process. And we all understand what the word "natural" means in Native terms. It's when the whole order is sacred and in balance. It's not natural versus supernatural, as believed in Western thought.

RECIDIVISM AND THE NEED FOR COMMUNITY-BASED HEALING

The following excerpt is taken from a memo to a colleague.

The whole system, from the very name "correctional services," in Canada is essentially a punitive model, and it continues to institutionalize the Aboriginal people in this country.

There are a lot of justice stats associated with Aboriginal people being in the system and the reasons why they are in the system, a lot of stats suggesting that Aboriginal people tend to get re-arrested more frequently than non-Aboriginals, have less chance of being released, are more likely to be considered more violent, and more likely to have less possibility for re-integration into the community.

Correctional Service Canada (CSC) has a very good idea about trying to implement Aboriginal-specific programs, but the impetus is not really there. It's almost like it's a political decision rather than a decision that comes from the heart . . . so there is no real conviction.

Regarding community healing: community healing is incremental. Things are happening, but you have got to be there, in the community, to sense the nuances of what is happening. Empowerment is starting. The community *is* beginning to have a voice.

Women seem to be taking the forefront, as they normally do in these communities, but they are not, as yet, strong enough to be mobilized. The women are starting to have influence and question the band and the elders. I see this emerging. . . .

It is very difficult to put a dollar on qualitative increases. They are incremental and may continue to be incremental over the next two generations. Some data exist regarding the referral basis to various social service agencies, the various admissions to hospitals, and the incidence of physical disease. These are some of the indicators of an unhealthy community. Diabetes is rampant, and you'd expect that. It's the recognition that is part of the dis-ease of the whole community and it needs to be addressed in the long term. That's not Correctional Service Canada's only mandate, and

that's one of the problems. CSC does not view itself as a partner with other agencies, and in fact, likes to walk alone.

This points to the need for a multi-agency approach to community problems that must be addressed in the long term. Indian Affairs, Health Canada, and various other provincial and federal agencies need to put into place some kind of resource and effort to look at the problem holistically. CSC is very much into the recidivism rate and how many people they put through their programs. While this gives you a rough and ready yardstick of the effectiveness of the program, it doesn't give you a sense of what is really happening in the community. The programs need to be evaluated in a realistic way, and the degree to which you can raise the consciousness level is wonderful. The bottom line is what we do to make this process continue and the degree to which we can do that.

Take a look at Hollow Water as a healing treatment centre.[3] They bring in foster and FAS/FAE [Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects] kids from other communities, see that they get financial aid or cost relief. Can there be a proposal using Hollow Water as a model, knowing what they're doing from the spiritual aspects? Giving them other benefits, economic benefits as well, teaching them a work ethic, having jobs for them? It would take a major corporation that's interested in healing to put the kind of dollar it needs behind it, but it would be a phenomenal project.

It is important that a work ethic be instilled in the men to give them a sense that they can get on if they do work. It will take at least a generation to accomplish. They've got to be trained to work and find something economically viable. It's very difficult for them because they haven't had a tradition of long-term work, and motivation is lost very quickly. After they stop working for a few months, they lose the desire to go back to work. And if you've never had regular work as part of your lifestyle, it's very difficult to acquire as you get older.

Also, it's important to focus on youth. Why shouldn't youth drop out? They have nothing to work for. Give them financial "hope." Everything else comes from that. If hope is not there, they get into drunkenness, sexual and physical abuse, and all the other stuff. It really depends on having a good-quality financial base that is not welfare dependant. We're not looking at a welfare community: we're looking at a community of people who

are looking after themselves and earning money for themselves. That's when pride comes in. We can talk all we want to about healing the world, but unless these other things are put into place, it is not true holistic work. Sixty years of dereliction and neglect is not a rosy picture. Health and healing must be shown in several directions; we must show that the quality of living is increasing and getting better via the health of the community.

Many issues are interwoven, and a formula for success becomes extremely complex, but as a fraction of a community becomes empowered, good stuff results: pride, self-esteem, and so on. It's critical to strengthen the empowerment of these peoples. The pathological organism is overwhelming in many communities—a self imploding pathology. We're looking at multi-source funding, substantial funding.

WHERE ARE THE STORIES?

This is an excerpt from a talk—"Our People, Our Struggle, Our Spirit"—given to Aboriginal community workers at the Convention Centre in Edmonton, Alberta, in 1989.

My fundamental view of Indians today is a computer in one hand, a Pipe in the other. There can be no argument as to the importance of oral tradition in Indian and Native culture. Today, the sense of the dynamics of that tradition, along with knowledge of the content of that tradition, is perhaps something that dismays many.

It is the stories about the past, through Elders, the marvellous carriers of spiritual and moral teaching, that a growing number of people have had little or no exposure to. It left me wondering and frustrated over not being able to access these Sources in time. So I asked myself, "Is there an alternative? Where are the stories?" For we need the stories.

Then, one day, it occurred to me: What about the stories of today? And, further, the story of our emergence, of our revitalization, and all the stories within that story. Do any of these carry the spirit of the Tradition forward? And which are an update to that Tradition? In order to look ahead, we have to look back to where we are coming from.

There *is* "soul": the core of the tradition that Elders embody and model. There *is* a sense of the People, a rhythmic sense of time, a cosmic and alive sense of space and of the land. We need to place great effort here to trust the marvellous energies of our Tradition: to break out quietly from our conservatism, our anxiousness, in our sincerity; to become involved again with our children. The *greatest failure* is children learning a second culture without the involvement of their parents and family, causing significant impact on cognitive functioning, self-esteem, confidence, and social competence. There are basic realities of Native culture(s). It is these that we are called upon to mould and to share our behaviours. As the Old People say, "You have all the answers within you."

COMMENTS FROM THE FOURTH LITTLE RED RIVER WORKSHOP

As Joe explains in "Native and Non-Native Encounter" (chapter 2): "Late in the summer of 1982 I had a dream depicting Elders and church people coming together in ceremony." Out of his dream came a series of summer workshops, attended by both Elders and Catholic priests and designed to bridge the gap between Native and Western spiritual traditions. This excerpt is taken from Dr. Joe's commentary at the fourth of these "bridging workshops," which took place at Little Red River (Cree Nation) in northern Alberta in the summer of 1986.

My own training as an apprentice shaman is not only personally rewarding, but it is also rewarding for others from a research point of view. Being both an apprentice shaman and an academic is worthwhile. It's unusual, not mainstream research, but this work is going somewhere and will make a contribution in academic circles.

This type of summer workshop had its original reasons for being: it has brought together large numbers and a range of people from high level, well-trained, highly regarded academics and professionals, on the one hand, and everyday working missionaries like most of you, on the other. You're down in the trenches, from the missions of Ontario, Manitoba, and across the country. Each of you has had your reasons for wanting to come here, from which maybe I can learn something very specific, or you've had insights that you wanted to expand on. You may already have a teaching or running relationship with an Elder or Elders in your home area, and you want to build on that, and then there's whatever is in between.

In the beginning, you might have had the impression that the way to learn was to learn like an Indian. But that's impossible. *Impossible.* The point I really want to make in everyday colloquial language is that *the key is to get turned on to yourself.*

It's impossible to learn how an Indian mind that is into spiritual development works—it's impossible. But you can learn how to bring your own mind along to get into similar or parallel spaces to develop awarenesses that are for *you* in terms of who *you* are.

What I'm suggesting here is that if you want to bridge the two spiritual cultures, the key is to discover who you are and to commit yourself to that. With that as a goal, then the ceremonial experiences become a direct contributing factor. You will find that the ceremonial experiences will favour and enhance that. It's not just words. The more you discover yourself, the more capable you become in tuning into someone else. It's the old Carl Rogers idea that I'm working from at this moment: the concept of empathy, of confluence, which means being in tune with yourself. The more you're in tune with yourself, the more easily you can relate to others. And that's very Indian at the same time because it's one of the primary psychological variables that one learns within the Native spiritual development process. Confluence, empathy: Rogerian concepts are really helpful in understanding the ceremonial experience.

So what I'm saying to you is, it's about discovering yourself. It's a mistake to try to become like an Indian trying to get into the Indian mind in a direct way. Get into your own. That will allow, will facilitate, mind-to-mind empathy, heart-to-heart rapport. That is fundamental. This has connotations, too, if you want to extend that: love your neighbours, love yourself.

The second observation related to the first, about which I made a statement and explained on a little yesterday, is that the Indian spiritual experience is an affair of the mind. I'd like to draw on this a little further by using the concept of intuition. It is still a safe conclusion that most of us, if not all of us, received or underwent an incomplete education. University training, for example, and even seminary training was okay, as far as it went. But it didn't go far enough. Seminary and university training reflect the rationalism and pragmatism of the time—a very reductionist, very mechanistic model of human development, and that is what we've been subjected to: reductionism, in the sense that if we do education for intellectual development only, that's a reduction. Of course, it's fine within those limits, but those limits are severe because they preclude the whole realm of the aspect of healing effectively, and, most importantly, they preclude intuitive learning.

For the last few years or so there's been this right-brain, left-brain stuff. That's useful, although it's not as sharp as it might be. According to this theory, the seat of the intuitive capacity of the mind is on the right side

of the brain. And that capacity of the mind can see things. For example, you've all written exams, and when you know your stuff you know that you know, but it takes you two hours to write it all out. Right at the beginning, however, you "know" that you know. It's all there in a flash. It's the right side of the brain that "knows" in that manner. The left side, the intellect, has to lay it out one step at a time. The intuitive part of the mind, the right side, is the one that "sees" the totality: the gestalt, as Fritz Perls would say. And that's the side of the mind that one images and from which one visualizes. I don't think it's important to talk about right side or left side. Just that it's an area of the brain that has the capacity to visualize. And it is in this that the power of the mind deepens.

NOTES

1 Joe refers here to John Redtail Freesoul, *Breath of the Invisible: The Way of the Pipe* (1986), and to Evelyn Eaton, *The Shaman and the Medicine Wheel* (1982), and *I Send a Voice: A First Person Account of the Consciousness Expounding Transforming Rites of an Amerindian Sweat Lodge* (1978). All three were published in Adyar, India, by Quest Books, an imprint of the Theosophical Publishing House.—*Eds.*

2 In the early years of the Nechi Institute (founded in 1974), its name was occasionally spelled "Neeji."—*Eds.*

3 Hollow Water is an Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) First Nation comprising four neighbouring communities located in northern Manitoba. To address a history of violence, suicide, addiction, and sexual abuse, the residents developed the Community Holistic Circle Healing (CHCH) approach to restorative justice, a unique healing model that enables community members to participate in the justice system in a way that acknowledges the impact of individual acts of violence and abuse on the surrounding community. CHCH uses the healing power of the Circle, which includes family members, friends, relatives, community members, police, the Crown, lawyers, and others, in a thirteen-step process from Disclosure to Cleansing Ceremony, to facilitate healing of individual offenders, victims, and the families of both. Remarkable results have been achieved, and the CHCH is regarded as a leader in approaches to alternative justice. The CHCH provides on- and off-site training for Aboriginal communities and has been the subject of an award-winning National Film Board of Canada documentary, "Hollow Water" (2000). For a more complete description of the CHCH, see http://www.iirp.edu/article_detail.php?article_id=NDco.—*Eds.*

My Friend Joe

Like hot lava flows from my very soul
Affection and respect I hold for "Dr. Joe."
Ancestors spoke always to cherish the essence of a "good mind";
They foretold of Gifts, like Joe, to humankind.

Like molten lava flowing down the mountainside
He shares his knowledge, with his wife by his side,
Whether with an audience of just one listening ear
He shares all he's learned, "the things" we need to hear.

Because of his "good mind" with humour dry as a bone
Each one of us is much less alone
Like lava cooked, turned to Grandfathers for the Sweat
One Little Inuk is moulded in awe and respect
For the Pipe-Carrier I shall never forget.

As my daughter says, "Thank God that God sent you to me for a mother":
The same sentiment is embraced for this father.
The people to whom the lava has most freely flown,
Is to we, the Aboriginal People, with Joe as our own.

I need to let Joe know how high he stands
For he is the lava spreading to the rest of our land
So the White of the Medicine Wheel can better understand
How our "good minds" are not "low functioning, hard to comprehend."

Because my path crossed with Joe Couture's,
I am more blessed than I was before.
Ancestors and Teachers foretold of such lava sculpture
Moulded and nurtured by Spirit and Culture.

Most of all I will forever treasure
Joe (chairing a meeting) saying,
"I can hear her, but I can't see her."
Little Inuk woman standing up on a chair
With glee, the story forever he loved to share.

And so continues the lava flow
Of Stories told and Stories I know.
Joe says Stories told by Old Men and Old Women
Bring Teachings and Learnings that will never end.
Thank you, Lava Rock Grandfather.

—Elder Sarah Anala, May 29, 2007

Sarah Anala is an Inuit Elder who was born in Nain, Labrador. An hour after hearing of Joe Couture's grave illness, she was moved to write this tribute, which she read to him over the phone shortly before he died. She was guided by Joe to bring to fruition the idea of an Inuit-specific visual and cultural healing and assessment process in Inuktitut. Her late father (in the east) and Joe (in the west) taught her, "You can do anything you put your mind to."

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