

**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO RESILIENCE
IN ABORIGINAL PERSONS WHO ATTENDED
RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS**

Rosemary Ayton Nichol

**A Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
In partial fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Social Work
University of Manitoba**

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**Factors Contributing to Resilience in Aboriginal Persons Who Attended
Residential Schools**

BY

Rosemary Ayton Nichol

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
of
Master of Social Work**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines factors that promoted resilience in Aboriginal people who attended residential schools. The research identifies, from the participants' accounts the factors that helped them to endure the experience and compares risk and protective factors described in the life stories to the factors identified in existing literature. The research is qualitative, based in grounded theory using the oral history method for gathering the data. The findings are intended to expand the knowledge base of resilience research. A small sample of four women and two men who attended residential school between 1939 and 1966 were interviewed. The participants were identified by independent others as successful survivors of the residential school experience. All the participants are members of First Nations from Alberta or Saskatchewan and five of the six attended residential school for a minimum of seven years. Five of the six are now living well; the sixth is experiencing some side effects from the residential school experience.

Protective factors common to other resilience research are identified in the participants' stories. These factors include long-term marriages, a lifelong interest in education, high intelligence, and primarily cooperative coping strategies. The participants emphasized the protective nature of a happy and nurturing early childhood and the importance of their spiritual beliefs to their current well being, particularly their belief in their traditional Aboriginal religion. This research suggests that self-image can be enhanced in adulthood and this appears to be a result of spiritual beliefs and an appreciation of Aboriginal history and ancestors.

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*When you step upon sweet briars they will come up
later on. they always bounce back with gentleness... You
don't have to give up It's not the end of the world.*

Paul.

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CHAPTER ONE OVERVIEW OF THE STUDY

This thesis examines the factors that contributed to resilience in six First Nations' members who attended residential school. While this is not a study of the residential school system, the residential schools are the context in which the children experienced the stressors that challenged them to be resilient. Large numbers of Aboriginal children across Canada, for generations, were sent to the residential schools that were mandated by the Federal Government. These schools were legislated by the Federal Government and operated by religious groups that received funding to support them. This nation-wide scheme was launched in 1879 when Sir John A. Macdonald appointed Nicholas Davin to research the residential schools that existed in the United States (Miller, 1997). Residential schools were established in Western Canada in the 1800s and remained in existence until the late 1960s (Miller, 1997).

During the period of time that the participants of this research attended residential school Aboriginal children with Indian status, not Metis or other mixed-blood, were obliged to attend. However, there are anecdotal reports of Metis children being sent to the residential schools if their parents were considered unsuitable to care for them (conversations on Alberta Metis Settlements, 1999; Miller, 1997, p.313.). The children were usually taken to the schools when they were about seven years old, although some were much younger when put on the trucks by accident (conversation with a residential school graduate in the Yukon, 1989). The children were taken to the residential schools sometime in September and returned to their homes in July. Some of the schools were no more than twenty miles from the child's home but others were more than a hundred miles

away. Regardless of the distance the children were not initially allowed to return home during the school year, although they were allowed to receive their family as visitors in a visitor's parlor. Later in the schools' development the children were allowed to return home at Christmas and Easter if the parents could pay for the transportation.

This research does not claim to address the politics or intent behind the creation of residential schools. This has been done and continues to be done by qualified researchers (Miller, 1997; Chrisjohn, Young & Maurum, 1997). However it does consider the long-term survival of six children sent to residential schools in Alberta and Saskatchewan between 1939 and 1966. Readers will be able to read the stories of the participants and draw their own conclusions about the lives that these children lived in the residential schools deciding for themselves if these children, now adults, are resilient

Respected academics have examined the phenomenon of residential schools and the destruction of Aboriginal communities. This resilience research is linked to the research on residential schools as it asks a small sample of adults who attended residential schools how they believe they managed to survive and not be destroyed by the experience. Analysis of their stories then attempts to identify further protective factors and to induce new constructs for research. The questions this research asks are: is it possible to identify personal characteristics that appear to have positively encouraged resilience: were there experiences, prior to attending residential school, that appear to have encouraged resilience: and, were there factors outside the residential school experience that appear to have positively affected resilience?

The first requirement is to establish that these participants were resilient. Resilience has two primary requirements. The first is that the participants faced

experiences they perceived as threats to their wellbeing. The second is that those threats were sufficient to challenge their ability to survive as healthy people. Most early studies of resilience described children who lived in homes where they were abused or neglected, where there was extreme poverty, or where a parent suffered from serious mental illness. The children in those studies were judged as resilient if they were able to overcome those disadvantages. There were a variety of ways in which the children overcame those disadvantages including: bonding with extended family members, neighbors or teachers; establishing a successful marriage-like relationship when they were older; avoiding exposure to further risks, and keeping or re-establishing a positive self-image.

The children in this study were not neglected or abused by their parents, their home was a loving place where the children's needs were met. Yet by the requirement of the legal system at that time, they were removed from their family and placed in hostile environments where they were physically abused, denigrated for their ethnicity and their beliefs, and even fed inadequately.

The individuals who participated in this study were identified by third parties as role models in their communities. Currently they all have positions of responsibility either in their Aboriginal communities or in the larger community. These positions of responsibility are as Elders, as spiritual leaders, or as helpers working to better the lives of Aboriginal people. Several of the participants are active in at least two of those categories. The participants in this research were looking back across their lifespan as they are all aged between fifty and seventy and the day they entered school was at least forty years ago.

Originally seven people volunteered to be a part of this research but, the day before the interview, one of the volunteers said she could not participate, she could not talk of her experience. The remaining participants are two men and four women, their identities are protected by the use of pseudonyms. Readers will note that some participants ages are known exactly, other participants identified themselves as being within an age range (e.g. 50 – 55) and their ages are inexact. Paul was born the third boy and sixth child of twelve children, four boys and eight girls. He was fifty years old at the time of the interview. Amory is now aged between fifty-five and sixty. He was born the eldest of his family with five siblings, three sisters and two brothers. Claire was born one of ten children and is now approximately sixty-eight years old, a widow for 16 years. Velma is fifty-eight years old and was the fifth born of six children, with three older brothers and one older sister, one brother is two years her junior. Sophia is a woman of about sixty years the first girl born to her parents, she had a brother six years older and a half-sister who was younger. Maria was born the fifth child of fifteen, three boys and twelve girls, and was fifty-five years old at the time of interview. The participants told the story of their lives before, during and after life at the residential school. I hoped that these adults, who are now living well, might help us understand how they coped with the experience, and what allowed them to surmount that potential risk.

Resilience is best envisioned as multidimensional, a process in which individual characteristics, such as temperament and intellect, combine with the individual perception of experiences. The factors that determine resilience cannot be reduced to a checklist of individual characteristics and positive and negative experiences. Using a question and response method of interviewing, such as a survey or questionnaire would have limited the

information gathered. The use of a qualitative and inductive method for research offered the best opportunity to gather information in depth. With thick-description text it is possible to analyse the information, seeking new patterns that might lead to new theoretical concepts (Glaser, 1992). Existing research has identified factors that may be considered risk-creating or protective factors (Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992), but research cannot predict the individual experience of the factor or its consequences.

The participants were asked to tell their life stories. An interview guide was created so that if at the end of the interview key hard data was missing (e.g. numbers of siblings, ages at entering school) the interviewer was cued to gather that information. As there was an interview guide, the format of the interviews may best be described as semi-structured. Interviews ranged in length from one hour to two-and-one-half hours and the participants spoke of as many aspects of their lives as they could comfortably. The interviews were taped and transcribed, the transcripts were analyzed by identifying meaning units and then themes were developed.

In a separate step the transcripts were summarized, expunging matter that participants had specifically directed not be public information and details that would have allowed for the identification of the participant. Copies of the summaries were then sent to the participants, in a process called member checking (Tutty, Rothery & Grinnell; 1996, p. 131), together with follow-up letters inviting them to comment on the accuracy of the summary. Only one participant, Sophia, sent a written reply to the follow-up letter and summary. In her letter Sophia said she had decided to leave the summary as it is, as her comments represented how she felt that day. One participant, Velma, in a telephone

conversation. said she could not find the courage to read the summary at this point. Each participant has asked to receive the final version of this paper.

The nature of the research allowed facets of life that the participants considered important to their experience and survival to be emphasized. At the same time it was also possible to analyze the interviews to identify other common experiences across the participant group as well as those factors identified in earlier studies as promoting, or challenging, resilience. By reading the interview summaries readers can come to their own conclusions on the risk factors and protective factors that these participants faced. The participants were willing to have their stories told and some even suggested that they did not require confidentiality. I thank them for allowing me, and others, to hear their stories and examine the factors that made it possible for them to endure the experience and in reaching later life be living well and liking themselves.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Resilience research is the examination of the growth of humans towards the goal of being fully functioning, mentally healthy adults, and coping with the challenges of day-to-day life, despite the experience of threats to that competence.

Murphy and Moriarty (1987, p. 16) describe individuals who cope well as "...cognitively capable, affectively expressive and effective, attitudinally responsive in a wide variety of ways". Open and friendly, they are able to tolerate frustration and anxiety and ask for help when they need it. When confronted with situations they cannot handle they retreat to a safe place and take time "to recuperate, make use of self-comforting devices, to play traumatic experiences out, and, if necessary, to transform unpleasant reality through the means of fantasy". Children who cope well were seen as balancing their needs with those of adults (p. 17).

Coping behaviour and resilient behaviour can be indistinguishable and resilience is not always recognised, although the individual may be identified as competent. Some individuals blossom into fully competent adults as a result of being raised in a healthy supportive home. These are the young people whose parents model competence for them and allow them to try their wings, failing and succeeding while in a supportive environment. But, because they have not been tested, the resilient label cannot be attributed to them. A second group who may not be recognised as resilient are those young people whose risks are not known, children who survive in homes where alcoholism, violence, neglect or mental illness (as examples), do not come to the attention of authorities.

The History of Resilience Research

Initial risk researchers were intrigued with mental illness, such as schizophrenia, and whether a child would "inherit" the disease from their parent (Silva-Wayne, 1995). It was clear that some children did become schizophrenic, but many did not. Research concentrated on identifying risk factors that might leave the child vulnerable to the mental illness. As research broadened to include other consequences than mental illness, risk factors continued to be emphasised.

Much of the examination was retrospective, depending on the recall of individuals or the accessibility of written records, once the problems had been identified in adulthood. Some longitudinal studies have been initiated, such as Werner and Smith's (1992) study in Kauai. These studies allowed a prospective examination of children, which was relatively unbiased, the sample being identified prior to problem development. The child's environment was catalogued and analysed for any identifiable events that could be linked to later consequences. The existence of volumes of prospective data also allowed for the identification of factors that seem to protect the individual from negative forces. The existence of protective factors implied that there might be an interaction at play, forces that work on each other and mitigate, or perhaps exacerbate, eventual outcomes.

Werner & Smith (1992) suggest that the progress of enquiry has been from the consideration of individual biological risk factors and stressful life events, through stages where the effects of single risk factors were emphasised, to one that considers the interactional effects of multiple stressors. More recently researchers have concentrated on positive factors that reduce possible risks, or allow for positive adaptation.

There was a phase in the early research when children who did not develop emotional and coping problems when confronted with extreme stresses were called "invulnerable". Those that did develop problems were labelled "vulnerable". In fact there is no such thing as an invulnerable child (Anthony, 1987), but there are children whose emotional limits are not pushed to the breaking point by challenges that others thought would break them. We now realise the importance of the interactional effects of personal characteristics, environment, experience, individual or multiple risks and protective factors (Rutter, 1987; Murphy & Moriarty, 1987).

Defining Resilience

Resilience has been defined in many ways, reflecting the struggle to understand the phenomenon and the process. According to Beardslee (1989) resilience is "unusually good adaptation in the face of severe stress" (p. 267). Greenbaum and Auerbach (1992) define it as the ability to reach out for support, and to maintain positive, supportive relationships throughout life. It has been described as the ability, in adulthood, to have mature, intimate relationships and be adequate parents (Anthony, p. 283). It has also been described as the ability to "live well, love well, and believe well of the future" (Garmezy, 1974).

More concretely it could be described as the ability to cope with life's challenges, on a day-to-day basis, no matter what your age. In this last definition of resilience we must ensure the developmental age, and intellectual capacity of the individual, is considered in order to know what is possible.

Rutter (1987) suggests resilience is a process that involves the galvanising of protective mechanisms when the individual experiences situations of risk. Werner and Smith in their earlier publication (1982), define resilience as "the capacity to cope

effectively with the internal stresses of their vulnerabilities and external stresses" (p. 4). In their later publication (1992) they define resilience and protective factors as:

the positive counterparts to both vulnerability, which denotes an individual's susceptibility to a disorder, and risk factors, which are biological or psychosocial hazards that increase the likelihood of a negative developmental outcome in a group of people (p. 3).

Greenbaum and Auerbach (1992) differentiate between risk, an environmental threat; vulnerability, an individual constitutional weakness; buffering, a constitutional protection present in the individual; and resilience, the ability to recover from an adverse event. Rutter (1987) writes that it is important to distinguish between vulnerability, lack of vulnerability, and protective process. The first is a negative state, the second a neutral state, and the third is a positive state. An example of a protective process is shyness. Shyness is a protective process for delinquency: shy individuals are much less likely to be delinquent. The term "protective mechanism" can be used when the effect comes from the positive aspects of a variable, such as in the case of a good marriage which is a positive factor when considering the variable "quality of parenting".

Factors Affecting Resilience

Rutter and Rutter (1993) raise the concepts of resilience and vulnerability to a new level of complexity with the consideration of individual characteristics, individual reactions to stressors, environmental interactions, and the matrix of possible consequences to the individual. This is complicated by the effects of individual behaviour on experience, and the effect of that experience in encouraging or discouraging the initial behaviour. For example, aggressive behaviour by a child elicits hostile behaviour, in turn the hostile behaviour reinforces the initial aggressive stand.

Individual risk is described as the result of the process of layering individual genetic codes over coding shared by all human beings. On top of the genetic codes is layered individual experience. The range of that experience, from ideal to negative, is the result of the particular interaction of personal characteristics and environment.

At the very least resiliency requires that the child take an active stance towards an obstacle or difficulty...The capacity to bounce back requires the ability to see the difficulty as a problem that can be worked on, overcome, changed, endured, or resolved in some way. (Demos, 1989, p. 4).

Risk Factors

Risk is conceptualised as a process, as is resilience: it is both objective and subjective with facets that are external and internal to the individual. Dependent on the individual mind and its processes, the same risk may be seen as trivial by one person and as a disaster by another.

An individually perceived barrage of hazards...because the risks are also internally represented, the actualities, bad enough in themselves, undergo transmogrification and may become grotesquely alarming (Anthony, 1987, p. 4).

Some of the hazards are chronic and always present, others are the result of life events. Cohler (1987, p. 366) suggests that there are three major types of life changes that take place: normal transitions, such as going to school or getting married; "unexpected and generally adverse accidents of fate; and, those encountered in the performance of major life roles". The unexpected adverse changes are less disruptive if they come at an appropriate point in life (such as losing a spouse in old age). In order to cope with these disasters people turn to support systems, groups of individuals who have experienced the same problem (such as specifically mandated support groups - or with chronological changes members of their own cohort), or their own previous experience, to get them through. Often these

resources are unavailable to a child, who is isolated in his/her attempt to deal with adversity, and without the life-experience that might increase adaptive skills.

Werner and Smith (1992) classified their subjects as resilient only if they had been challenged by a minimum of four "risks". Various authors have identified many risk factors. These risks vary from the particular personality characteristics of the child, to the characteristics and stability of the child's family, their socio-economic level, or even the number and ages of siblings. There are certain factors that are greater risks for male children than females, and others for which the possibility is reversed (Werner & Smith, 1992). There are risks that exist for infants that are no longer risks once they become children, and the opposite is also true (Coie, Watt, West, Hawkins, Asarnow, Markman, Ramey, Shur & Long, 1993, p. 1014). There are risks in the environment, such as poor nutrition, sub-standard housing, and bad parenting (Greenbaum & Auerbach, 1992). An important risk factor is poor two-way interaction between the parent and child (Rende & Plomin, 1993).

Rende and Plomin (1993) warn that we cannot look simplistically at familial risk and evaluate siblings as resilient or vulnerable. They explain that our examination of the individual and the environment is insufficiently specific to be able to determine which environmental experiences are shared and which are non-shared. They also differentiate between distal and proximal risk, that is risks that are environmentally based and those that are present within the individual. Finally, they suggest that the familial genetic pool is diverse enough that each sibling may have significantly different attributes (pp. 531-2) so that their tools for problems solving and reacting to risk will differ. A child that appears resilient may have experienced a different home environment than a sibling, due to birth

order, sex, or the time of birth in the developmental history of the family. In this way siblings may experience both a different parental environment, as well as having personal characteristics that are more or less protective.

According to Rutter (1987) we cannot assume that factors (or variables) are inherently risky. It is the individual's experiencing of that factor that will determine whether it was a risk (p. 317).

Protective Factors

Protective factors are the antithesis of risk factors and exist within the child, the family, the school and the community (Benard, 1991). These include key adults having high expectations of the child, caring and supporting the child, and encouraging the child to participate and be involved. This can be true of one or all three environments.

Garmezy (1987) suggests that there are three broad categories of variables that have been identified as protective factors across several studies (p. 166): the personality of the child, a supportive family atmosphere, and a supportive external system that encourages the child's coping efforts. External systems might include schools, the community at large, another adult, a sports system or a cultural group.

Beardslee (1989) identifies a close confiding relationship with someone in early life as a key to resilience. Other significant indicators include an easy temperament, and the individual's response to risk situations. These, he says, are "expressed in certain coping styles, in positive self-esteem and in control of one's surroundings" (p. 267).

The experiencing of support from warm caring adults is key to the development of resilience in a child, as is an initial significant attachment to a caregiver. Continuing warm and caring support (not necessarily with the same adult), vital in the years of childhood and

adolescence. is a protective factor throughout the lifespan - even if the relationship does not take place until adulthood (Greenbaum & Auerbach. 1992; Werner & Smith. 1992; Rutter & Rutter. 1993).

Factors that reduce risk include: high socio-economic status; high IQ (which appears protective, but also a high number of stress factors seemed to lower IQ); parental stability and parental cohesion: being female is more protective than being male: an easy temperament as a child: a child's ability to elicit positive responses from adults facilitates resilience. negative responses predict vulnerability: a good marriage as an adult: the ability to plan. this affects future choices for better or worse: turning points can arrive at any point in life. again for better or worse (Garmezy. 1987; Rutter. 1987; Werner & Smith. 1982).

Models and Traits of Resilience

Authors have identified resilience as an interactive process and tried to identify key aspects of that process. A positive outlook is extremely important:

The central component in the lives of the resilient individuals...which contributed to their effective coping in adulthood appeared to be a confidence that the odds can be surmounted. Some of the luckier ones developed such hopefulness early in their lives in contact with caring adults. Many of their troubled peers had a second chance at developing a sense of self-esteem and self-efficacy in adulthood, sometimes even by virtue of apparent chance encounters with persons who opened up opportunities and gave meaning to their lives (Werner & Smith, 1992, p. 207).

Anthony (1987, p. 27) suggests that there is a spectrum from vulnerability to invulnerability which can be divided into four categories:

- Hypervulnerables. those who succumb to the least stress.
- Pseudo invulnerables. these individuals are vulnerable but their environment is extremely over protective and therefore they are not tested.

- Invulnerables, those who have experienced trauma but who bounced back and became resilient.
- Non-vulnerables, who cope in any average and expectable environment.

This is contrasted with the theoretical concept of a continuum of vulnerability created by Murphy and Moriarty (1976). These researchers describe primary vulnerabilities (physical, temperamental, cognitive and personality abnormalities) and secondary vulnerabilities (those that are acquired during the developmental phases). Vulnerability is cumulative and becomes visible at later stages of childhood. Then there are the threats of the environment, both physical and interpersonal, where the child's personality fit with the primary caregiver is of paramount importance for the child's optimal survival.

Garmezy, Masten and Tellegen (1984) describe three generic models of the affects of stress (experienced risk) and personal attributes on adaptation. The first they call the "compensatory model". In this model stress "can be counteracted or compensated for by personal qualities of strength..." (p. 102). In the second model, "the challenge model", stress enhances competence so long as it is not so severe as to be overpowering. Stress acts as an inoculation, which immunises against future stress, if the individual survives the inoculation. In the third model "immunity-versus-vulnerability" personal attributes, both negative and positive, moderate the affect of the stress. Those people who have "negative" attributes, which might make them vulnerable, experience a greater threat from an event than those with "positive" attributes, which might make them invulnerable.

Rende and Plomin (1993) stress that we must be careful when we identify individuals as resilient as, even within sibling groups, there are non-shared experiences. If a child from a sibling group does not exhibit the vulnerability of others, it may be because

they did not experience the same risks. The risks may have been from a non-shared genetic inheritance, which increased vulnerability, or from a non-shared environmental experience. For example scapegoating is a well-known phenomenon, as is favouring a particular child, both of which are non-shared experiences.

Benard (1991) suggests that resilient children have problem solving skills that allow them to negotiate in a dangerous environment. They also have a strong sense of autonomy, self-esteem, and internal loci of control (Benard, p.4; Anthony, 1987, p. 7). Other abilities include those of distancing oneself from the problems of their parents and surroundings, and a sense of a positive future. Anthony states that the resilient use a greater range of coping mechanisms, which are "...flexible, purposive, selected and oriented toward present reality and future thinking..." (1987, p.14).

Participants in the resilience research of Silva-Wayne (1995) demonstrated what she referred to as "protective thinking" (p. 615). Protective thinking has many aspects, including the ability to keep thinking positively and to believe in self, as well as the ability not to think about painful things. Protective thinking also includes the idea of self-reliance, a quality with which many of the participants identified. Anthony (1987, p. 7) suggests that some people use repression of their awareness of stimuli as protection, and that "repression is associated with better recovery or bouncing back".

Beardslee (1989, pp. 271-272) identified five steps that he believes contribute to the resiliency process that he calls "self-understanding". These five are: adequate, thoughtful appraisal of the situation; a realistic appraisal of the individual's capacity for action, and the consequences of that action; the ability to act when it is appropriate; a developmental perspective, that is the perspective is appropriate to the age and maturity of the appraiser,

and; the ability to understand what had happened. This process is similar to that alluded to by Demos (1989), a problem solving process which is mediated by the developmental stage of the individual and their sense of self. A major mediating factor may be the ability to recognise what the individual can change, and what they cannot - knowing where the locus of control lies for different problems.

These questions of personal characteristics lead to the first question of my research, is it possible to identify personal characteristics that appear to hinder or to positively encourage resilience?

Greenbaum and Auerbach (1992) and Anthony (1987) believe resilience is reinforced by initial successes in the child's attempt to mediate the environment to its advantage. To be resilient you must have been tested and consider yourself to have successfully handled the test. Thus resiliency is a combination of protective factors and successful handling of challenges (Benard, 1991). But as Benard also notes:

...tipping the scales from vulnerability to resilience may happen as a result of one person or one opportunity...one family member, one teacher, one school, one community person that encouraged their success. (p. 19)

Risk can be mediated and resilience promoted if the individual has access to a support system (Benard, 1991). Risk can also be mediated by altering the risk, or the exposure to the risk: reducing negative chain reactions, perhaps by learning: increasing self-esteem and self-efficacy: by providing good personal relationships: and by developing decision making skills allowing for careful examination of choices at turning points (Rutter, 1987). Rutter (1987) emphasises the point that mediating mechanisms can reduce risk impact by altering the risk, exposure to the risk, and by ensuring that secondary or tertiary effects neither build on the initial negative effect, nor result from attempts to diminish the

original risk. An example of the latter would be the iatrogenic results of institutionalisation, or removal from the biological home.

The number of risks that a child faces and the chronicity of those risks, together with the age at which the child faces the risk, will interact with the positive attributes of the individual and their environment to determine the damage the child will carry into adulthood. Anthony (1987, p. 283) suggests that for children exposed to chronic abuse from a very young age there are very few who escape without harm: "It is unlikely that any children remain unscathed if they experience chronic maltreatment during the early years of their life". This is especially true if mothers are psychologically unavailable to their child (p. 284). For these children intervention by outside resources may be the only hope: "We do not believe that many children can develop coping skills and be emotionally healthy in a chronically abusive or neglectful environment" (p. 286).

These observations prompt my second research question: were there differences in experiences prior to attending residential school that differentiate between resilience and its absence?

Rutter and Rutter (1993) argue that for many developmental stages there are larger windows of opportunity than have been previously expected. Not only do they state that most developmental stages are longer than we thought, but also that there are innumerable opportunities to improve on early development throughout life. They cite examples of good relationships (such as marriage), the birth of children, and chance respectful relationships with teachers and others as significant turning points.

This leads to the third research question: were there factors outside the residential school experience, before/during/after, that appear to have positively affected resilience?

Resilience or vulnerability is a very personal outcome, and we are capable of only limited predictions of individual results. The challenges faced by people who experienced residential schooling are individual and subjective (Chrisjohn, 1997, p.170). Some of the students demonstrate resilience in their later years; others do not. Some may have paid a price for their resilience, a trade-off that they may now question. The personal narratives of the, now adult, students can allow us to better understand the complexities of individual survival. We have much to learn from these survivors, if they are prepared to share their stories and their insights with us.

Consequences of Resilience

Is resilience 'normal'? Or do those children who master threatening environments exist at the extreme end of the continuum of survival, and what price might they pay for that survival? These questions have not yet been addressed by research, but Anthony (1987, p. 7) touches on the topic when he refers to a coping mechanism of withdrawal and distancing. Withdrawal and distancing (also called cognitive and physical avoidance) is a coping strategy favoured by children and adults dealing with intra-familial problems (Brodzinsky, Elias, Steiger, Simon, Gill, & Hill, 1992). Anthony suggests that this mechanism can be narcissistic and result in the inability to feel deeply for others, and the need to put self first. Occasionally protective mechanisms may have negative consequences in adult life, although protective in childhood. Some children and youth may need to be encouraged to reject and re-tool behaviours that were useful when they were children but which do not serve them well later (Anthony, 1987, p. 7; Demos, 1989, p. 16).

Summary

The authors who have researched and written on risk and protective factors, resilience and vulnerability, have offered suggestions as to cause, effect, and remedial alternatives. It is clear that any attempt to build resilience must take into consideration a plethora of influences. It also seems clear that resilience and competence are very much the same thing. The attitudes and behaviours that demonstrate competence in a person, who has not experienced serious risk, would be the same as those one would hope to see in a resilient person who had.

Factors affecting resilience have been identified as the individual's characteristics, experience, and the influences of other persons and systems in their environment. Individual factors include: temperament: reactions (impulsive or thoughtful); coping behaviour (style and the variety in the repertoire to choose from); and cognitive ability (understanding what is happening, weighing alternatives, and responding appropriately). Positive influences in the environment include the existence of a relationship with a supportive and caring adult, a supportive school, group or community environment. Long and Vaillant (1989, p. 209) identify the role of opportunity in long-term success.

If the full needs of the person are to be understood there must be a means of assessing and identifying needs and strengths to be built on, and proven interventions that work. While it seems investigation is bringing us closer to significant answers, the process that results in resilience is not clear. We assume that if we can identify resilient behaviour and analyse its key parts those parts can then be taught, or otherwise instilled, into young people and adults who seem to lack them. This seems possible, at some levels, given learning and counselling theory and the individual potential for change.

We know risk, as perceived objectively by an observer, may be experienced subjectively in many different ways. Factors including age, sex, cognitive capacity, earlier learning, previous experiences, and existing support systems, influence that subjective experience. Resilience is a complex phenomenon, which may be best described as a multidimensional matrix of individual and environmental factors with unlimited possible alternatives of experience and opportunity. There are encouraging indications that there are opportunities to foster resilience throughout the lifespan.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This research can be described as multiple individual case studies with the information gathered through the oral history tradition. The research is inductive in the nature of grounded theory, with the findings driven by the information gathered from the participants. Grounded theory also allows analysis of gathered data (Glaser, 1992). This type of research, through analysis of thick description accounts, hopes to develop new conceptual thought that will lead to new theoretical constructs.

The information and opinions given by the participants have driven the content and the conclusions of the work. This is instrumental research, intended to provide insight into an issue or refinement of theory and the participants, survivors of residential schools, were selected "because (they are) expected to advance our understanding of that other interest" (Stake, p. 237), that "other interest" being resilience.

Participants in this research are all survivors of the residential school system but this is not a study on residential schools. Much good and interesting research has been completed in the last ten years on the subject of residential schools. There continues to be debates on the intentions of their creators but there is no doubt of the reality of their existence and what their existence meant to the young Aboriginal people who attended them. Chrisjohn and Young (1997) and Miller (1997), among others, have written extensively on the stated and hidden intent of the residential schools and these accounts are available in forms that the public can easily access and understand. Miller (1997) traces the development of residential schooling from the 1880's to the 1960's when they were phased out (Miller, 1987). In the 1960's they were replaced by a boarding home system for those

children who had to leave their neighbourhood schools to attend higher grades and experiences of those children also merit study. The participants of this research describe their experience of the change of the residential schools to day schools in the mid-to-late sixties.

Whatever the intention of the creators of the residential schools the reality was frightening. Children were separated from their parents at approximately the age of seven. Some were accidentally put on the trucks much younger than that. When the children arrived at the school they were punished for a variety of reasons, not the least of which was that they could not understand the new language. The punishment was often brutal much beyond the punishment a child of any culture would have received in a healthy home. The children often were underfed and hungry and yet the staff visibly ate better than the children. The children were also emotionally abused and their history, culture and spiritual beliefs were ridiculed. This was the reality for the majority of the children. Furthermore some children, both male and female, were sexually abused. None of the participants in this research experienced sexual abuse in the residential school and one participant specifically commented that she felt the lack of abuse was a factor in her ability to survive. Some of the children in the residential school literature reported anger towards their parents as they believed it was their parent's fault that they were sent away (Manitoba Joint Committee on Residential Schools, 1994). One of the participants in this research mirrored those feelings. Today he has forgiven his parents and believes they were convinced they had to send him and his siblings away to the school.

Although the children were spared sexual abuse the remaining problems that the children had to deal with were daunting. With the help of the participants in this research

there is the opportunity to explore how they managed to survive during their school years and why they feel they are well now.

Sample and Recruitment

Recruitment to the study was by a modified snowball approach. Third parties were told the description of the research, and that the researcher wished to interview residential school survivors who were 'living well'. 'The term 'living well' was explained to third parties and participants in terms of the ability of the individual to function well, but also as the ability to maintain an appropriate level of social interaction, develop significant support relationships and been seen by the community as a good role model. The intention was to interview survivors who felt they were currently living well. This was done to screen for a sample that had the potential for being judged resilient.

Living well at the time of the interview did not imply that the individual had endured no harm from the experience – or that the individual had always been living well. One of the participants identified by others as living well had recently experienced a significant challenge to her wellbeing and did not, at the moment of the interview, consider herself well. That participant had been identified by others as living well and judged herself to have been living well until four weeks before the interview. Despite her condition at the time of interview I decided to retain her in the sample.

Initially seven participants had agreed to be interviewed, but the day before the interview the seventh participant telephoned the researcher to say she felt she could not participate. At the time of the interview the participants were aged between fifty and seventy. Four of the participants were women; two were men and only one participant had spent less than eight years in residential school.

All participants accepted a gift of tobacco before the interview began. All participants signed a consent form (Appendix A) and were shown the list of topics to be covered (Appendix B). Participants were asked if they would like their tapes, transcripts, and/or a copy of the final report. All the participants requested a copy of the final report.

Confidentiality

Participants were assured that only the researcher would know their identities. It should not be possible for readers of the research to identify participants as there is insufficient identifying information included in the summaries and the names have been changed. It is not likely that the individuals could be identified from their residential school experience as they attended various schools at various times in two provinces.

Interview structure

Interviews were individually based with the participant being invited to tell their life story. Participants understood that the purpose of the research was to explore the participants' perception of how they believed they survived the residential school experience, and how their life was before and after the experience. The list of general cues were shared with participants at the beginning of the interview to ensure the lifespan was covered. Because of the sharing of cues, I believe these interviews might be best described as semi-structured.

The cues included participants definition of living well; family of origin and time before school; their current families; their experience of the residential school; the transition to the non-school world; adult experiences and; spirituality if any. Spirituality had been added as, in an earlier research project carried out by the researcher, spirituality had been

mentioned by resilient individuals. However, it was never necessary to use this cue as participants raised the topic early in the interview.

Limitations of the research method

There are still arguments in the literature as to the usefulness of qualitative research, particularly case studies. However, there are sufficient supporters of this method to consider its value in exploratory research to be well established (Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Rothe, 1993; Yin, 1989). Also retrospective studies, as all those based on the oral history tradition must be, are vulnerable to questions of validity and reliability and this research is no exception. It is also important to point out that the conceptualisation of resilience is idiosyncratic.

There was an attempt to carry out member checking to validate the content of the summaries. Each participant was sent a copy of their summary together with an envelope addressed to the researcher and money for postage. The accompanying letter (Appendix C) asked participants for their comments on the summary. Only one participant (Sophia) sent a written reply and she chose not to make any changes. The researcher spoke with another participant, Velma, on the telephone and she had not been able to bring herself to read the transcript. While there were few responses to the attempted member checking, participants had the opportunity to make changes and comments. I hope the assumption can be made that they therefore did not wish to make changes and that the non-response can be construed as an acceptance of the content.

In an ideal environment the data gathered on each individual (unit of analysis) would have been triangulated with data from other sources (Yin, 1989, p. 40). In this research, it is possible to triangulate general experiences, as all the contributors described similar

experiences. Validity is addressed through the nature of the thick description generated in the interviews.

The research format allowed for extensive exploration of the topic, so that factors were exposed, and the amount of information provided through the process will make it easier for other researchers to analyse the findings. I believe the stories the participants told had significant similarities and therefore the experience can be accepted as valid, even though the small size of the sample may preclude generalisability of the findings.

Problems of reliability may exist for researchers who might try to replicate these interviews with these participants. The interview process itself may have changed the individual's interpretation of their experience and a future researcher may receive different answers from the contributors once they have had the opportunity to reconsider their memories.

The participants in this study volunteered to participate and they were given the opportunity to drop out at any time. I felt that all the participants were as honest as they could be with me about their experiences. As I am not Aboriginal, and only one of the participants was known to me before the research, it is possible that some of the participants could not be as honest with me as they might have been with another, or they may have been more honest. I did not feel the participants were particularly guarded in their comments.

The subject of their experience at residential school is still one that moved the participants. All of the participants still have strong feelings to express, several of the participants cried openly, others averted their eyes and the researcher did the same. At another time they might be more or less open with their emotions.

Analysis of the Data

A qualitative approach was taken to data analysis. The interview tapes were transcribed and the first paper was analysed for the purpose of coding. The line coding process broke down the dialogue into meaning units. The second stage, axial coding, then grouped the phrases with other related phrases until the initial codes appeared stable. Subsequent analysis of the other transcripts could have resulted in additions to the initial code categories but in this research the data sets were so similar that they resulted in no new categories being added after the first transcript was analysed.

The reliability of the coding was established by one transcripts being coded blind by both the researcher and the thesis advisor. The consistency achieved a 70% level.

Once the coding was complete the transcripts were summarised, ordering the comments of the participants from their earliest memories to their most recent, for ease of reading. The summaries were returned to the participants for their comments (member checking). Only one of the participants commented and she wrote that the transcript should remain as written.

CHAPTER FOUR

INDIVIDUAL STUDIES

This chapter contains summaries of the individual stories of the participants. I offer the summaries without further editing because I strongly believe that these stories should be available to readers much as they were told to me.

Amory

Amory was born the eldest of his family with five siblings, three sisters and two brothers. Amory is now aged between fifty-five and sixty. He has been married for more than thirty years to a member of another First Nation and they have raised four children. Amory has spent his life learning in formal and informal settings; he did not reveal the level of his formal education. Today Amory works within the criminal justice system in a position of high responsibility and is actively promoting practices that are appropriate for Aboriginal people.

Amory was raised by his grandparents, if he had not attended residential school he would have spent longer in his grandparents' home. Amory spent from age seven and a half to almost sixteen in residential school then the school was converted to a day school that he attended to complete high school.

Both Amory's parents attended residential schools and his grandfather attended an industrial school until the age of sixteen. Amory stated that in the days of industrial schools and the early days of residential schools Aboriginal people who continued with their education were threatened with loss of their Aboriginal status: "*My grandfather went to what they would call an Industrial School. For years there was a fear among our people to learn to read and write, because one of the sections of the Indian Act said once*

you learn how to read and write you lose your status as a treaty Indian. [Some] intentionally failed...”

Amory’s father was the reserve police officer and was the person who enforced attendance, and so Amory had no doubt that it was necessary for him to attend the residential school. Speaking of his father Amory says, *“Father was kind. Father was affected very, very heavily [by residential school]...My father stressed education.”*

As Amory was the oldest in his family, there were no older siblings already in school. But his neighbor’s children attended the school and *“It was my mother’s school, my father’s school, they kind of prepared us. ‘This is what you are going to experience’. Grandfather was the one that – he told me ‘This experience is something that you’re probably not going to like, but grow from it.’ That’s who raised me...my grandparents. Among our people there are ways...parents are required to give you daily skills, practical skills, workmanship. When it comes to the more important teachings of life...[there is] placement with grandparents”.*

Amory listened to his grandfather: *“The teaching was key to my survival”.* Amory was taught that every negative experience has a positive side and that it is important to discover that positive side: *“understand first of all yourself, how the experience helped you to become a strong person...would balance the negative...I was fortunate and so I took many of the painful experiences and turned them into a very positive growth experience [this] allowed me to become stronger and to keep moving forward.”*

Amory’s grandfather had a profound affect on his development. By Amory’s account Grandfather was a very spiritual man, a philosopher and spiritual leader in his

community. His grandfather told stories to educate his people, in the same way that parables are told in Christian religions. The young Amory not only benefited from his grandfather's instruction to him but he also used to hide in the room when his grandfather told stories to adults. When it came time to go to school Amory already saw himself as being a source of strength to the other children.

The school that Amory attended was run by the Catholic Church and was only twenty miles from his home. Although that was a relatively small distance, the children were only allowed to return home for the summer months.

On reaching the school Amory's hair was cut, now Amory emphasizes the point that he will not cut his hair. While Amory's parents and grandfather spoke English he knew none of the language when he went to school. Speaking his Aboriginal language was cause for punishment, which was usually the strap. The little children were strapped because they did not understand English and so were not obeying the orders of the staff.

Amory remembers *"I knew nothing but my native language when I went to school. Day one, actually the first month, I was in all kinds of trouble. I didn't know English so my not knowing the English language resulted in my getting the strap almost every other day until I learned. That was one of the things. To salute the missionaries every time they went by. If you forgot to do that, that got you the strap. You eat the food that was prepared for you no matter how terrible it was, how bad it was, you ate whatever was on your plate. You didn't sleep with your hands or arms under the covers...Even in the winter. I thought that was immoral."* If the children's hands were under the covers *"you get a rude awakening in the middle of the night if one of your*

hands is under the covers. You're either hit with a big book, stick, pool cue, strap or belt."

"They had two straps that they used at school. Once was a big black strap, I think they got it off a conveyor...real thick. The other one was a thin little red one, similar to the radial leather that they belted, thin and heavy. It was reddish in colour...unknowing to the authorities at the time we developed a game. Rodeo has always been a part of our community. Horses, every time we got the strap or got selected to enter the strap [competition]...at the point they make you cry is when you fall off the horse. They never knew anything about this. Some of us would actually do things to get the strap so we could get to this rodeo.

Amory explained that this is an example of a very painful experience that they turned into a game and they grew from it. Amory also took pleasure in his own revenge. One of the punishments meted out was to work in the kitchen helping to serve food to the staff. Another was working in the barnyard. Amory comments: *"our punishment a lot of times was carrying food out...the mistake they made was they also punished me to work in the barnyard. So I served the soup with a big smile many times – turned that into a positive. More soup father?"* Amory laughed, *"That gave me pleasure I suppose in being able to pay back and get a good feeling of justification. Okay, punish me again. Your soup will be better next time!"*

Amory comes from a society that is still very intact. In his youth he knew where he fit in his community. *"So we had to know our people, our clans, and other clans. So you went to school, you recognized who's your father, who's your grandparents, which clan you are from. And we began to separate into clans at boarding school. Again*

unknowing to the authorities this was happening.” The clan structure became the support structure at the school: “...always take care of your clan. Always share, especially when food was scarce. We never starved to death because I could get into any door at boarding school, including the storage room (laughing). I would take the food out of there, feed the others. I never heard stories where people had a very difficult time – not us - because of our clan. And we would never tell. If somebody got caught, nobody would ever tell. Just the code of the clan, your people.”

The clan system formed the base for other games. One of the games was running away from the school to their home, and then coming back without getting caught. *“I was a runner, I made it home many times. That became a game, running. Not so much to run away from the school, but to run in a challenge – and this is one of the things that happened between clans. Who can get away the most? Go home the most times and not get caught? You get caught you lose stature from your clan, peers, among your brothers, sisters. It was a way of getting respect. So we even had this system at the boarding school. And this was unknown to the authorities. We reinforced each other, helped each other...our traditional ways. So again, yeah, I only lived twenty miles from the school; I got the strap every time I ran. I got the strap if I ran home to my parent’s home because my father was a policeman and he would give me the strap. So it was double jeopardy for me. So I ran to Grandpa’s. Grandpa never touched me, never laid a hand on me. He just was a traditional teacher. Father learned physical force, I don’t know where - I suspect at boarding school. So he was very strict and I had to experience those two worlds. So every time I ran...they would use senior students, senior boys usually to form the posse, the chase group.”*

Amory linked this story to the traditional upbringing of Aboriginal young men:

“One of the traditional things is...a warrior’s coup. You ride into the enemy camp and you take your coup stick...and you hit the enemy’s teepee. If you can ride out of that camp without getting killed you gain much stature because of your courage, because of your bravery, and because of your skills you will get away. Those skills were entrenched in us as little people by the time we got to boarding school...I would actually inform the senior boys ‘I’m going to run this week. I won’t tell you which day but I’m going to run this week. I dare you to catch me.’ They would try their darnedest to try and catch me...it might cost [them] their dessert for a month if [they] didn’t catch me. So it was kind of a wager”.

Through defiance and bravery Amory and the others gained stature. Amory also felt the responsibility for protecting his sisters once they were in school: *“we weren’t allowed to go to the girls’ side of the residential school. I had three sisters at boarding school...we weren’t allowed to go; we weren’t allowed to see them at all, only at church. And I’d ask my sister ‘How are you doing? Can I get you something?’ Because I was the oldest in my family it was my responsibility to watch over them.”*

Amory lost his mother when he was twelve whereupon all the females of his clan became his mothers or grandmothers.

As the school was a Catholic school the children were taught the Catholic faith. *“We all had to learn how to be an altar boy. Everything is in Latin, the whole mass. So we had to learn, to memorize, the Latin. Later on I studied Latin, I know the language. These celebrations, there’s one called the Benediction...a small chapel with the whole student body, an aisle along the wall...the priest and the altar boys with the priest going*

along this wall saying their prayers...we had a game with the candles during the entire service, and the object was to try and keep your candle lit all the way around. Everybody is going to be trying to blow out your candles as you're going along the wall. (Amory laughs) If you can make it all the way around the church without getting your candle blown out, you gain stature; you gain respect among your class. And many boys never did make it".

The little boys missed their mothers, and the older boys were not inclined to mother the younger ones. But later on there were mentors and the intermediate boys would look after the little ones. There was a lot of abuse at the school but because of the systems that Amory's clan developed they managed to protect their kin. *"We had...in our clan ways...in our society ways...there is always a warrior society. At boarding school we formed a warrior society and we went undercover to protect...you're on the watch, so and so is getting abused...Nobody knows who was in this society. It is a silent society and an undercover society"*. Amory commented that there was little abuse when he was at the school as they tried to monitor it. The warrior society also tried to feed the hungry and pass messages from the boys to their sisters.

Amory still has a momento of one of the warrior attacks. On Halloween night there was a party at the school. *"People made pretty funny costumes. So after we went to the dormitory to go to bed we weren't supposed to talk. The adrenaline was going because of this fun evening that we had. We had to tell stories...so anyway the sister, the nun who was our supervisor at the time said 'If you boys are not quiet the devil is going to come in here'. Quickly I rounded up my soldiers and I said...this devil guy that they talk about. Just in case he comes we should be prepared. At that time they used to issue*

school shoes at that boarding school. They had to be 5 lbs each! Very heavy shoes (laughing). That was the only weapon we could get hold of and about twenty of us hid behind the door, and we always had one lookout. The lookout said there's somebody coming. We said what does he look like. Horns! That's the guy. He's coming! That's the guy! I don't think we can defend ourselves! He came in and we beat the hell out of him...ripped his horns out and tail. And the tail that I ripped out is the one I dance with to this day".

"A few minutes later the nun, who had warned us, told us that the devil was coming [came in] and now I'm proud of myself 'Yes sister he came. He's laying over there'. Now about a half dozen nuns came in, and a priest, and they dragged this thing out of there. The next day we saw one of the priests coming down the sidewalk. He was all black and blue. I told my guys, I think I know who that devil guy was."

"To this day I dance with that tail...It's what you tried to do to me at boarding school, now I'm dancing with your tail...only warriors can recount tails of bravery, tails of accomplishment...I tell that story once in a while."

When Amory was told about the residential school his parents said he had to go they said *"this is the law, we don't want anybody to go to jail so you have to experience this. As much as it is painful for you, it's going to be painful for us. It won't last long."* Amory comments *"They kept saying 'it won't last long.' It lasted eight years...there [were] times when I thought 'When is this going to end...this is long.'"* Although he tried to make the best of the situation Amory could not protect himself from all the anxiety and pain: *"So things were tough...made me stagger a little bit, but I got back on my feet".*

Amory worked very hard to look at the positive side of the experience. he says he had to:
“Otherwise it crumbles you. It crumbles you...”

When the residential school was converted to a day school Amory continued to attend. It was easier to be at the school when he left every day. It seems that he has been learning, both formally and informally, ever since.

In his twenties he met his wife, a member of another First Nation. They agreed that they would respect traditional values and raise their children in the traditional way. Amory and his wife have a successful marriage of more than thirty years and they raised four children, who now have given them grandchildren. Amory speaks with respect of his wife and says he places her on *“a very high pedestal”*. This, he explained, is the way of his people. The women have a very special role.

When Amory was young he was taught the traditional ways: who the clan mothers were, the grandmothers, and the relationships of the clans to each other. Today he and his wife still attend traditional gatherings and are fully involved with Amory's First Nation.

On his current spirituality Amory comments: *“I'm comfortable praying in a sweat lodge, synagogue, temple, church, as long as I get to pray in the way that He listens to me and I respect the person who prays. Among everything else that we learned as young people, respect the individual – fire and brimstone teachings we got, we took them in stride. Okay, that's your way I'll take it for now...but I have this way.”* Amory's grandfather told him not to mix the religions but let them *“walk side by side”*. Amory comments: *“I have Japanese friends I have Hindu friends...don't impose your way on*

them". Amory lives the life of a very spiritual Aboriginal man but is also very involved in mainstream life.

As an adult Amory has studied the reasons for the residential schools: the intent of the government, the roles of the missionaries and the reality of the schools. He has come to his own conclusions as to how this tragedy happened.

Living well to Amory requires "*a deep sense of spirituality...at a very young age we get taught the ultimate human achievement is peace, peace is living well*". Amory spoke of his work to achieve that peace: "*...planning peace, that I could gain the goal that's been set...How am I going to find that smile that all the old people have? That feeling of contentment. Where do you find that? And if I try, I can get there. Like a long journey.*"

Claire

Claire is approximately sixty-eight years old, a widow for 16 years. She and her husband, a Metis, were married for more than thirty years before she was widowed sixteen years ago. Claire and her husband married when she was 18 and he was twenty-four. Together they raised four daughters. Now there are grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Claire has worked outside the home as a counsellor in drug, alcohol, and corrections environments for twenty-seven years. She continues to work part-time as an elder and to work for the wellbeing of Aboriginal women. Claire attended residential school from the age of 7 to the age of 16.

Claire was born one of ten children. She was the only one of her siblings given to her step-grandmother and her husband to raise. The grandparents were "*very traditional people*". The grandmother was a midwife, and the grandfather (Claire calls him

'Grandfather' although they were not related by blood) was involved in traditional religion and led the Sundances on the reserve.

"It was only myself that lived with my grandparents. They weren't even my real grandparents either. My grandmother, the one I knew as my grandmother was my mother's stepmother, because her father had married that woman and then her father died and then she was just left with her stepmother. And so it was her stepmother that was my grandmother and then the old man that she married...so they were the only two grandparents I knew in my whole life".

Claire has very warm and loving memories of her grandparents and her childhood prior to residential school.

"I can remember when my Grandmother died it was about, I was about nine years old I think...I was actually brokenhearted when she died because...she took real good care of me. I remember doing lots of good things with her...I used to go berry picking with her, and she used to sit me by the camp when we were living in a tent...and I had long hair and she used to braid my hair and wet my hair with tea, and all that.

...Whenever my Grandfather had to Sundance, she used to dress me up in my Sundance regalia and I used to dance beside her."

The two-month summer holidays away from the school were also fun.

"...We did lots of interesting things...we used to play with each other, my brothers and my sisters...and some of the things that we did with our parents, like going out and picking Seneca roots and things like that.

We used to go traveling all summer long on horses and wagons and just enjoy the summer with our parents. And sometimes we would go to Treaty Days.

And my childhood was very happy. There was no abuse, no abuse from my brothers or my father. And I didn't get abused from my parents and I didn't get abused from my grandparents. It was a happy childhood. I had a very happy childhood, which is probably part of the reason why I'm so successful with my life. I didn't experience that kind of abuse.

Other siblings were already at the residential school when Claire was sent. It was made clear to Claire that she had to go to school:

"I was told about it, you know, that I had to go to school and, no matter what, I had to go to school...So my mother prepared me for, you know, going to school and all that, and then they took us all to the agency, and then we just waited for the truck to come by. And the truck came and all the kids were there with their parents. And then we just got hauled into the truck and away we went."

Claire's mother spoke English and had attended residential school herself, although Claire's father hadn't: *"He was illiterate...but a very wise older man. He didn't go to school. He was still very wise. So my mother did go to the residential school herself...I think she went there until she was 16 years old, and then when she was 16, you know in those times marriages were arranged."*

Claire did not speak English when she was sent to school. Of course she also knew only her traditional religion, which was not understood by the priests and nuns at the school. *"...They tried to call our traditions down. They tried to call it paganism and all that, and there's no paganism to it. And, I think, it's just more or less sort of a respecting the earth, and the creations of the Creator, provided for us on this earth."* At

the time, though. Claire was too young to have a perspective on the different religions. Claire became a good Catholic at the time but rediscovered her traditional religion later.

Claire was not aware of feeling anger against the authority figures while she was at residential school.

...Later on I felt some anger because I realized then that what happened to some of our...like I didn't experience any sexual abuse, but I did experience leg strapping, and like this nun especially one time she took her frustrations out on me. And I didn't know why she was - she was mad at me and I didn't know why...I was working in the second floor I think at that time and I was in the bathroom, and she came in the bathroom and she was mad about something, but I don't even know why...she...started yelling at me and then I was standing there looking at her...and then all of a sudden she says to me, well, answer me, and I couldn't answer her, I was just stunned...then all of a sudden she took her hand and backhanded me...I started crying and then she kept telling me to answer and if I didn't answer she'd wallop me on my mouth again and then she says answer me and I'd say, and I was crying, and said how can I answer you when I'm crying...then she'd whack me again. Oh that was a horrible experience for me...I never forgot it during my lifetime.

...I used to think about her, and I'd say to myself, someday I'm going to grow up and someday I'm going to come back at you if you are still alive, and I'm going to make you pay for what you did to me because you did it for nothing...when I got out of residential school I kind of forgot about her, and I never did see her again...

This was not Claire's only experience with violence. The strap was the punishment of choice in many residential schools. On one of those occasions Claire was

strapped until her wrist bled. *"...I guess one of the girls told him that he made my wrist bleed...he mentioned it the next day to the class that, he says, 'I hear one of the girls had a little bleeding from her wrist...and you know so what I did wasn't that serious', it was serious for me but didn't seem to be serious for him"*.

Claire remembered that occasionally some girls turned on the nuns. *"...some of the girls didn't take it...one of them, she just took her fist and she just kind of, you know, kind of hit the nun right on the chest. And one of them, they used to have those bonnets, one of them just grabbed her bonnet and just pulled it right off of her. And then I remember another girl that, she used to be pretty stubborn, but the nun was going to give her the strap, so she just, she just ran away...and the nun chased her downstairs. The nun caught up to her and like she took a ruler with her after that girl – and this girl, she just kind of, all of a sudden, turned around and she grabbed that ruler from the nun and she just broke it right in half...and away she ran...they used to get into trouble if they did that...they were punished for it. But sometimes, you know, you couldn't help it. You had to get at those nuns too because they were so mean to us"*.

Claire was glad to see the girls retaliate, because she felt the nuns deserved it. The nuns used humiliation as a punishment, for example for losing mittens or hats. *"...if we couldn't find our tam to go to church with then they would make us wear a little toque, which was kind of funny, and everybody laughed at you when you wore that little toque to church. And sometimes they used to make us stand up in the dining hall and they make you stand in the middle of the floor if you lost something that you weren't supposed to lose, like mittens for instance...So they made us go through all kinds of*

punishment, embarrassing situations, and sometimes they used to scold us too but they didn't care, they didn't even see how we felt."

Claire felt she got support from her sisters and from the other girls at the residential school. *"I had sisters in the residential school with me and I always went to them for support, or when something happened to me always went to them and they supported me quite well. Even from other girls they supported me well. So and sometimes friends, too, you know, like making friends with other girls...we supported each other, I think, well. The girls, you know, I don't think they were mean with one another..."*

At age 18 Claire married a 24 year-old Metis. They had been married for thirty-three years when he died. Claire's husband had been in the armed forces and was *"already kind of educated to the world by the time I came into his life...I really didn't know much about the world and stuff, or what went on...I just kind of looked after my children, and I always had things ready for him when he came home"*.

When Claire speaks of her husband it is with respect. *"...he left a legacy...he was aware of what was going on with the native people...he was a fighter too...he was a good provider, you know. He always made sure that we had a roof over our heads and we had food on the table...he always managed to provide for us and to look after us like that, and he was a very responsible person...and when we started becoming aware of what was going on with the native people, then we both started kind of working towards that area...he started fighting for issues and things like that...I think he opened a lot of doors for the Treaty Indians and also a lot of doors for his own people...he seemed to have the gift of the gab, you know. He was a good speaker, so then he started fighting for all those*

issues and he accomplished a lot, you know, for his people, not only for his people but for Indians too."

Because of her marriage Claire was forced to give up her status as an Indian, something she didn't question until later. Recently she regained her status through Bill C-31.

Claire has returned to her traditional religious roots:

"I wasn't practicing my traditions at that time because I had been away from it for so long and I was mostly just going to church all the time, you know. I was really a good, very good, Catholic at one time because that's what I was taught since I was seven years old...I became a good Catholic and then I did all my church duties and everything. And it wasn't until about, about maybe 1973 or 74 that I started taking a look at the traditional way of doing things. And then I started, when I realized, you know, that we did have a way for ourselves that had been practiced for thousands and thousands of years I suppose. And I started taking a look at it, and I started telling myself 'this is the way of our people and this is the way it's always been with our people and so I'm going to go into it, and I'm going to start going to sweats, and I'm going to start going to ceremonies, and I'm going to start learning about it', and so that's what happened. I started going to sweats and I started learning how to do it, and I started understanding more. And when I started understanding our traditional ways, I kind of didn't go to church as much anymore and started learning the ways of our people and I thought, you know, this is very good for me, you know. It has no conditions on it...it doesn't tell you what you have to do...it doesn't tie you down to anything. You just do it on your own. And so that's what I did, and I started learning about my traditional ways...I started

getting involved with some Elders, and started learning from some Elders...and now, today, I use my own knowledge of what I've learned from Elders in the past and I do elder work now too...I learned from my people and so I practice those ways now more so than the church. But you know, mind you, I can't deny that Bible - and I don't think I'll ever deny it because it's the word of God, and it teaches good things about God...but our traditional way of doing things, I found that it had a lot of powers especially the ceremonies. They are very powerful and I have received some very powerful healings..."

"I didn't bother going to church for a long, long time. I go once in a while now, but I just feel it's not necessary for me to go every Sunday because I talk to the Creator every day. And I always thank him for my life and thank him for all the things that he's provided for us on this earth."

Claire does not think that she looked very far ahead when she was a child in the residential school, and yet she seemed sure of what would happen to her.

"...never thought of how I was going to handle it or anything...all I know is that I was put in a residential school and then I had to get along with what was handed to me. I never thought, you know, ahead when I was in school because I was just accepting to what was going on at that time...I knew that I was going to eventually get married, because in those times it was a matter of just finding a husband, getting married and having children. And I knew I was going to get married sometime but I didn't know when...at the age of 17 that's when I met my husband. By the time I was 18 I was married already. But I never had, no, my mind wasn't thinking that way, like to think ahead of what my goals were going to be in life, and when I started having children I was just kind of looking after my children".

Claire's experience with education in the residential school did not dampen her enthusiasm for learning. In fact she asked to stay on past the usual leaving age of the school, which was sixteen. She was aware that the girls who stayed on had extra privileges, like not having to cut their hair, but when she spoke to the priest he told her she would have no special privileges. So she decided to leave.

"I wanted to keep on going to school after the age of 16. And then I told a priest that I wanted to come to school, he was the principal for the school at that time...He had given special privileges to the ones who were 16, if they wanted to carry on their schooling. When I asked about it he said "You're going to have to do like the rest of the girls" which meant that I had to cut my hair and I didn't get any special privileges. I had to do like the rest of the girls. So I thought well, you know, I don't want to do that. When they were giving others special privileges, they didn't want to do it to me, so I'm not going to go back to school, so I didn't go back to school."

Despite the initial discouragement from the residential school, during her lifetime Claire has studied a wide variety of subjects at the college level, from counseling and community development to theology. Most recently she completed a creative writing course which has given her satisfaction.

Claire became aware of racism when she left school. It was particularly hard to deal with when her children were targeted. During her life Claire found a way to deal with all people and move past the racism.

"When living in X I kind of started to resent the white people who were living there because I was going through a lot of discrimination myself and so were my children."

“...my children weren't being treated like any other children, like some of the neighbors, they didn't want to have anything to do with my children at all because they were little Indians...that used to bother me, that used to hurt me and I began to get these feelings inside of myself where I started to hate them too...then I used to say to myself, what am I supposed to do to prove myself to these people that I wanted to live like a decent human being? And yet they won't look at me like a decent human being, and that really got me mad inside. And I think that's when I started waking up to the fact that there was something wrong with the system, that there was something wrong with the white system and there was something wrong with our system. And that's when I started realizing things, like away from the reserve and not with my people that I started realizing things that were going on. And then when I started realizing those things, I began to feel all kinds of things inside of me. I began to hate, I began to not want to have anything to do with white people and that's how bad my own discrimination began to be. Every time a white person would walk in our house, I had to just get out of the room and go in the rear room and just hide there because I didn't want to be bothered with them. But, of course, my husband, he was a little different and he knew the white people in X and they knew him and then he made friends with some of them...”

Claire had already identified the importance of her spirituality in her life. Claire identified other factors she believes helped her to become the person that she is today. The first is her happy childhood, without abuse *“I had a very happy childhood, which is probably part of the reason why I'm so successful with my life. I didn't experience that kind of abuse.”*

The second is her determination *“And I think my own determination about doing things is what got me to be the way I am today, like being healthy and being able to keep an open mind about things and all that and I think that’s what keeps me going. It’s just determination that I want and I’m going to do it and it doesn’t matter what I’m going to go through, I’m going to do it and all that so, and I think that’s one of the things that always kind of kept me alive...”*

Claire’s strength was tested when her husband died: *“Because of the fact that I spent more of my time with him than I did with my parents ... it was really difficult for me, and I didn’t know what I was going to do after that. But, somehow or other, I just managed to pull myself up out of that and re-determine to become a lot more independent than I was in the past.”*

When she was a child, Claire did not consciously have a plan for handling her situation. *“Actually, I never thought of how I was going to handle it or anything and like I, all I know is, that I was put in a Residential school and then I had to get along with what was handed to me...”*

Currently Claire is still working part-time as an elder and continues to work for her people, especially to improve the situation for women, like herself, affected by Bill C-31.

Velma

Velma is fifty-eight years old, and has been with her husband, a European immigrant, for thirty-four years. They have three daughters. Their eldest daughter was given up for adoption, as they were not yet married when she was born: they reunited with her in 1992. Their daughters are aged from 28 to 31, and have children of their own.

Velma was the fifth born of six children, with three older brothers and one older sister: one brother is two years her junior. Three of Velma's siblings still live on the reserve where they grew up. Velma has worked for most of her marriage, at first in an administrative support position: later she worked with Aboriginal people in correctional settings, both jail and probation. Currently she works with Aboriginal students in the school system.

Velma is still deeply distressed when she speaks of the residential school. Her distress has been heightened in the last few months through a change in her work environment. The organisation she works for moved locations, to a building that resembles the residential school. The interior of the building is partitioned into small cubicles that isolate workers, and to enter the building it is necessary to use an electronic key. This gives Velma the feeling of the building being locked, and the cubicles make her feel isolated from human contact. Velma believes this physical environment has made her re-experience many of the feelings she had at the residential school.

Velma's parents were farmers on reserve land. Her father attended residential school when it was called the 'Industrial School'. He graduated from Grade 8 with farming knowledge and the ability to mend farm equipment. Velma says her mother was a "half-breed", her grandfather was non-native, a Protestant minister. Being non-status, Velma's mother did not attend a residential school. Speaking of her parents and life at home, Velma said: *"I just loved it at home. I really loved it at home. My mom and dad were successful farmers. My dad went to, they call them Industrial Schools, and so he went to...I think Red Deer Industrial School...but there they went to school very little, but did a lot of work on the farm so when he came back from there, he was really successful."*

I mean he fixed threshing machines for ten miles around. The Irish people, the Scottish people, the Ukrainian people, everybody came to Dad...to have their threshing machines fixed, their old tractors fixed. Because he knew what to do...I remember turkeys and sheep; I remember cows, Calves. I mean, you know, so in other words a lot of milking. Horses, Shetland pony, a collie by the name of Lassie – real original! But he pulled us. He would take us to the mailbox. There used to be – the mailman used to come out to the reserve, and there's a mailbox out there, and he dropped off the mail, and he had a little buggy and in the winter, a sled in the wintertime, in the summer a buggy. And you could hear the bells. You just listened on the ground and you could hear for miles”.

Velma was considered Protestant and was sent to the nearest Protestant residential school, approximately two hundred miles from her home. The children were returned at Christmas and Easter only if their parents could afford to pay the transportation. Otherwise they remained at school until the end of June. Prior to going to school Velma says she can remember that she knew the names of the first eleven flowers that bloomed in the spring, and their order: “...the Crocuses, the Lily of the Valley... You know it was those things, and my mom...today I don't know where was the first flower...here in an urban setting it's different, but out there I knew. Because my mom had some Ojibway in her she, it was in her to do biting, and she used to show me how to... You folded these great big leaves that grew into shape and you could make these designs with your teeth. And you could make flowers and things like that. And I was getting really good, then when I came to [residential school] these teeth here were taller, longer than the others. All of a sudden the dentist filed my teeth down. I was just so disgusted. He said it was to

make me look good. But I had one tooth that kind of stuck out and it really was good for making patterns... ”

Velma did not meet any of her grandparents. She says she blames the residential school for robbing her of the chance to meet her one surviving Grandfather. She says that her older brothers did meet them: *“They met the grandparents. There was one grandfather left. I ended up in the residential school and I never saw them. I never saw one grandparent ”*, Velma sobbed.

By the time Velma went to school the students attended all day, unlike her older brothers and sister who had to work half a day either inside the school, or on the school farm. One of Velma’s brothers attended residential school to the end of Grade 8; one ran away and didn’t return to school. The third brother continued with school through Grade 12, and with federal sponsorship, continued on to get a degree. Velma’s sister finished Grade 8. During Velma’s older brothers’ and her sister’s time at school native people were still threatened with loss of their status if they attended school beyond Grade 8.

Velma’s parents didn’t tell her when it was her time to go to residential school, and she didn’t realize that it was time. *“I remember we were going, it was such a privilege to go to town because we went by horse and wagon – whatever – horse and sleigh, so it was such a privilege...and it was an overnight thing right, because it took one day to get there. Gosh there were so many of us ”*. Velma is crying as she tells this story. *“I wasn’t told I was going to residential school. I didn’t know it was that time. Who cares about months, years, days? I was seven. Good heavens, maybe I was eight. I remember my younger brother coming too, no not the first time...the second year I went he had to come ”*.

"When I got to the residential school...you know my mom had some Ojibway in her, so our dolls were made from grass and they had no faces. So if you were sad your doll was sad with you. It wouldn't be the smiling thing looking at you. If you were sad you know, you could imagine the face on your doll. You cut your hair when there's death in the family. You get to the residential school: they just cut our hair...what horrible feelings (crying) you're far away from home, they've cut your hair. Who died? One year they put gasoline in our hair...because everybody was deloused. Public baths! I lived by the lake. Good heavens I was in the water all the time! Mom didn't have bedspreads but she had white sheets she covered our bed with. We had to be deloused, dirty..."

Velma found the circumstances of personal care embarrassing at the school. There was no privacy, the washrooms had no doors: children were bathed four to a tub when they were little. The girls had to sleep head-to-toe, two in a bed, which Velma says resulted in getting kicked during the night. *"Before that, you know, you just kind of live modest...and when you get to the residential school you're standing there naked, you're trying so hard to look away, look up. There were no doors to the toilets. I mean, even on the reserves we had doors on the outhouses. Here we were, here were these toilets...there was no privacy."*

Velma had to learn to eat different food, and to eat when she wasn't hungry. As time went by satisfying hunger was a problem, and the children would steal bread to try to fill their need for starch. *"You didn't eat when you were hungry, you ate at a certain time. That's when you're supposed to be hungry...at home it was all this home made bread and it was fantastic...bread, cinnamon buns...ice cream, meat...we had an underground cellar inside the house. An underground place where we kept cream for the*

milkman to pick it up. All of a sudden, here you are and you're eating this – bread, supposed to be bread...and you're feeding hundreds of children. You can't have hot food that's for sure. I can understand that.” Sometimes the bigger girls would take the smaller girls' food.

There was one good time of year at the school. That was when the Choke Cherries were ready to be picked. *“I just love Choke Cherries. Because that is one good time we had at the residential school in September. They would take us Choke Cherry picking and we would all go, all the girls would be on the side of the road picking Choke Cherries. I've got two Choke Cherry trees in my yard here. Those are the good memories of the residential school, and that was in September. But we were so bloody lonesome they had to do something. They had to get us over the wire fence. And we were out there, and they couldn't control our talking. They couldn't control our language. We could speak Cree.”* Velma has managed to maintain her Cree language throughout her life, despite the fact that she considers herself to be a ‘Cement Indian’ now.

After several years, in Grade 3 or 4, Velma missed the date to return to the residential school. Her parents and Aunt and Uncle and their families had gone to a place to pick Seneca root. The cows were herded with them and the two families lived in two tents. Velma could not remember how long they were there, but when they returned they were to attend a day school on the reserve. Velma thought she had escaped the residential school. But she and her friend were both molested by the day school teacher when they stayed behind to clean the blackboards.

Velma did not know that her friend had been molested, she discovered this when she ran to the girls' outhouse to get away from the teacher – and she discovered her

friend in there. *"I ran to the outside bathrooms. I did because no boys are allowed in the girls' bathroom, and there was my friend sitting in there...while she was sitting in there I told her what happened and she said 'me too'. I said 'where was I?' Where was she? You know, we're supposed to be together...from there we took off. We just took off and went to see my grandfather. He wasn't really my grandfather but an elder. And we went to him and we told him. And after we told him he said 'get away, go home, go straight home.'* Next thing I know I was on the, [my friend] and I were on the train to the residential school. *That's how I got back to residential school."*

In the residential school Velma attended, the girls slept in three dorms: the 'little girls' dorm, the intermediate dorm, and the 'big girls' dorm. Promotion from the intermediate dorm to the 'big girls' dorm happened when the young woman menstruated. Velma menstruated very late and had to be transferred to the 'big girls' dorm so that she had time to do homework. *"I was in the intermediate dorm a long time. And so when I was in there...I tried very, very hard to mind my own business. I just – my cousins, my friends were...you did try and have friends, but I tried very hard to be scattered in case they didn't come back, because nothing was permanent. I think it was a way to protect yourself maybe, I don't know."*

Velma's strategy to handle life at the residential school was, at first, to be passive and try not to get into any trouble. As for her relationships with the other girls, *"...you tried to be friendly. You learned to get along. You learned to say nothing when you saw something happening. You were to mind your own business...You just ignored things. Yet, you know, when we're small, there were little gossip things. You know, a way to learn"*. The girls did little things to be rebellious – and probably the staff didn't even

notice: *"We were allowed to go for a walk. Now to go into the sweat lodge, to go in anywhere, my dad used to go into a sweat lodge, and you go in a certain way."* Velma was referring to the tradition of walking anti-clockwise – the opposite of the European tendency to walk clockwise on a circuit. *"...I know at the residential school, boy I tell you. I walked this way on that path, and the majority of us walked this way on the path. Because, I guess, it was such a silly little thing (crying)"*.

When she was thirteen, Velma and a friend ran away. They headed for the nearest town, St. Albert. *"I remember one time I ran away from the residential school. We crawled in the ditches. My girlfriend and I were crawling in the ditches, and then when we couldn't see the school, we crawled over the road – and then again we crawled in the ditches. And then we, I don't know what you call them, but back home we called it a road lodge, but anyway, we went into this road lodge and we just stayed low, low, low in the ditch. My goodness, we kind of stood up. I know what a gunshot sounds like, when it's going by you. I hear a gunshot...who shot it? I don't know. Maybe they thought, maybe it was hunting season? I don't know. Maybe they were trying to kill deer or something, I don't know. Or maybe there was a farmer? Maybe it was somebody from the residential school? But somebody shot at us. Anyway, then we started running because now the residential school we thought couldn't see us any more. And we ran and ran and ran, and we made it as far as St. Albert. But we'd never been to St. Albert. Well we didn't know which way to go, right? We didn't know which way to go...we're walking down the main road in St. Albert and I didn't know that was the main road...anyway we were taken back and we lost privileges. Couldn't watch TV, we had public TV every Sunday. We could not watch Ed Sullivan!"*

Velma experienced physical cruelty and hardship at the residential school. She was hit by the teachers on her hands, as were all the children. Velma believes the punishment she suffered permanently damaged her fingers. She was humiliated by the lack of privacy, and hurt by the lack of permitted contact with her brothers, who were in a completely separate part of the school. She was also taught that her parents were 'pagan', and native people were ignorant and dirty. The children were told that their parents were 'no good'. This had a damaging effect on Velma's relationship with her parents for a while, until she was old enough to see the truth.

Velma remembered: *"I remember when I was in Grade 9, and on the way home and Dad said one time...he said, by then I'd already learned, you know, I'd already been taught that our way was paganistic, and heathens and savages and the wrong way. Our religion, at the sweat lodge, we couldn't talk about them. Things were outlawed; you know what I mean. So things happened underground back home, right? And anyway I remember my dad once say to me – you know of course in Cree... 'My girl, help your mother prepare for a feast, a meal. Cook, help your mother cook. We're going to have a sweat'. And I remember telling my dad, 'Ha! That's so paganistic.' We were taught that the way we lived was wrong (crying) and of course we were so removed from it for ten months of the year. You believed it."*

Velma was not sexually abused at the residential school, but she says she knows it went on. Her brother also told her he knew it was happening. The minister who was the principal of the school lived on the grounds. Some girls used to go to the principal's house to clean it. Velma believes the girls were touched inappropriately when they were

cleaning. Some of the girls seemed to have "*phenomenal privileges*" and she and others thought they heard male voices in the dormitories.

When Velma was older she was serving porridge at breakfast, and told the supervisor that she wasn't feeling well. Shortly after that she fainted and banged her head on the concrete. The supervisor's reaction was to escort her to the dorm and lock her in. No treatment was offered.

In one terrifying incident, a female staff member beat Velma. The staff member pulled Velma into the hallway and "*kicked and beat the living daylight out of me*". Velma never found out what provoked the beating, although she feels that there was probably a sexual motive.

Despite her experience at school, Velma did well academically and attended the residential school until the end of Grade 10. Then she transferred to the high school nearer the reserve. Velma's parents believed in education and encouraged their children to go to school.

Velma tells the story of deciding to leave school at the beginning of Grade 11: "*I tried to quit in Grade 11 when I was back home. I thought 'Oh yippee do. I can stay home. I'm going to quit school.'* I told my mom and dad. *Oh, my God they went to town at 8 o'clock in the morning, and I was supposed to...anyway they left me home and I had to milk all the cows...I had to separate the cream. I had to wash the separator, scald it, and put the cream away, put the milk away. When I was complaining in the afternoon they weren't even home yet. That was about 4 o'clock or 5 o'clock and the cows are mooing again and they wanted home. So now I had to go up there and do it again* (laughing). *Oh boy, I tell you. I think I was home three days!*"

“‘You never want to marry a farmer’, is what I said: ‘I’m going to marry a rich man. I don’t care if he’s very old. I’m going to marry a rich man’”.

“I knew then what poverty was, and yet there was happiness...there were turkeys, there were chickens, I remember pigs...but you had to work so hard to put food on the table for Grade 11 and 12. I didn’t know there was so much work. And I was complaining about what I had to do at the residential school!”

Velma graduated from Grade 12, the first native person to graduate from her school. Her elder brother graduated from a different school. Her parents were proud of her, and the whole family attended her graduation. Her brother had been too embarrassed at being an Indian to allow his family to attend his graduation.

During the summers between her last years of school, Velma was sponsored to work at a hospital in Edmonton. She was encouraged to become a nurse. At the time she wanted to be an ‘air stewardess’ and nursing was a good way to get an entry to that job. But circumstances conspired against her and she left nursing school just before graduation. So Velma went to business school, and learned secretarial skills.

During her first job, Velma and her co-workers used to admire the men outside, who were admiring the women walking by. One of those young men would eventually be Velma’s husband.

It was a tough relationship at first. Velma suffered abuse from people who would shout at her boyfriend about the “squaw” he was walking with. And Velma’s husband was not ready to settle down for several years. By the time they did marry Velma had given up their first daughter for adoption, and was pregnant with their second. But their marriage has lasted.

After eight years of employment, and the birth of their third child, Velma gave up her job and stayed home. She stayed home for five years with her children. Then she went back to school, in 1979, to study Correctional Justice. During this time Velma rediscovered that she is an intelligent being. Also, while working with inmates in tough correctional settings she rediscovered her native roots, the traditional religion, and the fact that the native way is a good way. Velma learned through native presenters who came to the prisons to talk to the native inmates.

Velma was also a probation officer for 3 years before she was approached by a school system to come and work with school age children. She has now been working in the school system for 15 years. As Velma says she is working with “...*cement Indians who must compete in the urban environment.*” Velma has seen some success in her time, with young people who graduated from the school system coming back as post-graduate students to talk to the little ones about going to university.

Velma managed to stay strong all her life despite the challenges she has faced. But she has noticed that she carried the notion of being a ‘dirty Indian’ into her home – with the result that she cleaned like crazy so no-one could accuse her of being dirty. Also she used to tell her children how lucky they were to be able to come home after school each day. But, she says, they really didn’t understand what she meant. Velma says her husband has had a difficult time understanding why, sometimes, things that happened upset Velma. Now Velma says that he seems to understand what she went through, and why at times she might have been so emotional at times.

Now Velma follows the traditional ways as much as possible in the city. She keeps sweetgrass in her car, and attends powwows and gatherings when she can. But the

residential school memories that she carries inside her are currently causing her great problems. The move of her employer to the facility that seems similar to the residential school has shaken her foundation of well being. Velma has always considered herself to be strong and living well and she has few bad habits. Now she has to work out what to do about the work environment, and the memories and feelings that have resurfaced. Her distress is obvious, and it is affecting all aspects of her life. Velma is hoping that getting more contacts with her home reserve, and time, will help her through. But at the time of this interview the outcome was unclear.

Maria

Maria was born the fifth child of fifteen, three boys and twelve girls, on a reserve in Saskatchewan. Maria is now fifty-five years old and has been married for more than thirty-two years to a member of an Alberta First Nation. Together they raised four children in a traditional Aboriginal atmosphere. Maria has a graduate degree in education, and carries out academic research that is relevant to Aboriginal people. Maria attended a day school on the reserve until she was 14. At fourteen she had to go to residential school, and from residential school further away to attend high school.

Maria's mother "...never went to school a day in her life. Her family roamed the plains, and her family was a very small family. They were the Sioux who came to Canada, their grandparents came and when her father grew up and lived, they roamed the plains until he bought a homestead. And eventually this homestead became the reservation, and my mother grew up with her father and her grandparents roaming the plains of southern Saskatchewan....she was forced to go to boarding school but she was very unhealthy. She was sickly as a child, so her, my grandfather, went to pick her up

and he brought her home. And she never, ever, went to school. As a result she never learned to read and write, except what she learned from us.” Maria’s father did go to boarding school: *“he was at boarding school, he had, you know, he had very negative experiences like his parents did.”* Maria’s grandparents, on her father’s side, attended residential school until they were sixteen, then the authorities arranged their marriage, and sent them to live on a reservation. The authorities did not take note of the fact that the “couples” came from different Nations, or spoke different languages, and so Salteaux, Sioux, Cree and Ojibway were mixed on one piece of land.

Maria remembers her family life as warm and loving. The celebration of the traditional religion was not strong in the home *“but I would say the universal basis of spirituality or religion, love, caring, sharing, all of those qualities, they were all taught to us...I think it was that core of having family, mother and father, loving and caring, and living the way we did in the community where our family unit was the strongest thing...we have an Indian word for it...it means the family unit, but it means more than that. It means...you can’t really get the whole philosophy of the term and meaning – that our brothers, our sisters, our grandparents, our aunts, our uncles, our cousins, all share and care...”*

The four children born before Maria went to residential school from the first day of school, but by the time Maria was old enough for first grade there was a “day school” on the reserve. This meant that for the first years she could stay at home and attend school. Maria believes that she had that opportunity because *“my parents, who loved us so dearly, allowed us to go to the day school because it was there”*. Maria feels now that she was very lucky to be there, and to be living on one of the reserves that had a day

school, although the resources at the school were very limited. *"I think it was, for me, when I look back at my experience there...the grades were 1 to 8 all in one room, one teacher...no library...it was a wonderful experience except for not having the opportunity to...I can compare what I had access to and what I didn't. So the system was...it hindered learning...I mentioned a library because reading was so important and yet you had no books to read. At home we had no books because we were poor"*.

Unlike the children who left home at six or seven, Maria's memories of family life are more complete, and she commented on the separation she experienced from the older siblings who were sent away: *"...being at home from Grade 1 to Grade 8 was so beneficial for me. And my older brothers and sisters, like I said, they didn't have that. And so that...when we were growing up, we didn't really know them. We weren't really close to them because even now today I still think of my older brothers and sisters, and my younger ones, because they were so far behind me in age...I am still trying to find out who they are and what they have done."*

When Maria finished Grade 8 she had to choose, to leave school and end her education or to go to residential school. *"That was my choice. So I chose to continue in school...And I was so afraid to leave home. Although we were a big family, we had such a close knit...."* Although it was so long ago, Maria cried when she remembered the pain of the separation. Her pain was so great even though the residential school was no more than fourteen miles from her home and she was fourteen years old. For as long as she wanted to continue her education Maria would have to stay away from home. *"After I was sixteen, and at sixteen if I wanted to quit I guess I could have. But at the time...my older brothers, two of my older sisters were already there so I was really glad...I was*

happy that they were there so I could go to them for, when I was lonesome...to have them there to kind of ease the fear. But leaving home...". Maria had heard bad things about the residential school, and that was part of her fear and sadness. Her father and her paternal grandparents had bad memories of the residential school system. But just the fact of leaving the reserve was also threatening.

"If you are 14 and you have to leave home, and all we knew was the reserve. And in those days too, you know, it was so different. Being on the reserve was a very unique lifestyle...later, after growing up...I questioned why were we the way we were? And we were afraid of what? The teacher that we had, or the teachers who came in? We were always afraid of them. We were afraid because of their power over us, the power over, you know, we had Indian Affairs. We had Indian Affairs agents all the time. They were all non-natives. And they were so – whenever a teacher came, in fact when we were young children, when we had a non-native person come to our house, we all scattered and took off. We never stayed around. I guess our fear was to take us away to boarding school. Our fear was to remove us from our home because we knew of social workers and social welfare, and there were always those people, those people had the power. So we recognized that, as young as we were. And they were – we feared them. In town, we were close to a town, of course we did our grocery shopping there...I learned early, at an early age – when people, when my parents had to buy a car, to buy groceries, sometimes to have credit, those people in power were always non-native people. So it wasn't a good beginning to trust non-native people and I think that was one of my biggest fears."

Maria's people were more tenuously attached to their land than most Aboriginal people were. Their ancestors had come to Canada from the United States, and their right

to the land they lived on was constantly being questioned. The people were not allowed to sign treaties, although they finally did have "designated lands". Maria feels this constant threat, in the background of their lives, contributed to the unsettled and powerless feelings that she had. *"...I remember when I was 8 years old, because this was part of my fear when I was 8 years old, an Indian Affairs agent came and said 'You know you are leaving Canada, you are going to the United States.' Such devastating news to think that we're going to pack up and go where? The United States? How far is it? How are we going to live there? Who are we going to live with? ...And it was such a fear. And then when I questioned that later on, it came up many times while I was growing up...and still today it's still being discussed...Now that I'm grown up and I'm independent now I know how to behave, I know how to live off the reserve...but before when all you know is your home and your land...there's so much fear to being displaced."*

Regardless of her fear Maria wanted to be educated and consciously tried to be successful in the residential school environment. *"The only strategy I could remember while I was there was to be obedient, compliant you know, to get through. In order to get through, to follow the rules. Because if you didn't follow the rules you'd get kicked out...people who ran away a lot, they were kicked out. And if you were kicked out before you were 16 nobody cared. You were gone. And when you went back home there was no school. In our situation there was no school to go to."*

Some of the young people on the reserve didn't want to go to the residential school. As their strategy they deliberately failed grades in order to stay at the day school until they were sixteen, and could legally leave school. Maria commented on the situation: *"They'd fail, you know, two years in grade 8. And if they knew they were in the*

third year in grade 8, they'd fail again, just so they could stay there and they didn't have to go to the boarding school. But in my case I wanted, I thrived for education. I wanted to go on. And so I did."

When she did start school Maria did very well: *"I skipped, when I went into grade 1. I said there was grade 1 to 8 there. I went to school late, I went to school when I was 7, and I stayed in Grade 1 half the year, and went to the next year the next semester...then I just advanced all the way and I didn't want to fail. I wanted to keep going. I was motivated to keep going. So as hard as it was to leave home, I felt I could handle it. So I went to boarding school."*

The residential school was only fourteen miles from the reserve, surrounded by Saskatchewan prairie: *"it was near our reservation, so we were so fortunate"*. The family was able to visit the children who were at the school. Maria even recalled their mother baked a birthday cake for one of her brothers – and took it to the school in her buggy. Of her mother Maria said: *"she went to visit them whenever she could"*. It was the same boarding school that her father attended and her grandparents.

Things took an unusual turn for Maria and her family when she and her sisters were thrown out of the residential school. Maria thinks it was in the fall, her father came to get the girls because their mother was very sick and in the hospital. *"...Our mother was very sick and he came to tell us, and he had our smaller brothers and sisters with him. And when he came to get us, there was a big gate where we were supposed to stay...Well as soon as he parked his car in the driveway, all the kids notified one another 'somebody's here, somebody's here'. And we all went to look because, of course, there had been some parents coming to see some students. So we wanted to see who it was, so*

when one of us found out it was our dad, of course we told one another. We all ran out and we crossed through that gate and when we crossed that gate to see our dad, the nun came running along and she said 'You're not supposed to go out of this gate, you know'. And we did, and my father said 'They came to see me with the kids.' And the little kids, the baby of the family, were in the car with him...As a result we got kicked out. So we had to go pack our things and we went home. And when we got home the two older sisters just took over the house right away, because our mother had been gone for a while. But you know we didn't know she was sick. We didn't know she had surgery. We didn't know she nearly died. And so when we got home we all pitched in, looked after our little brothers and sisters and our dad."

Maria's mother was in hospital for six weeks, but survived.

The priest, who was the principal of the school, came to the family's home and apologized for sending the girls from the school, and asked them to return. Only Maria and one other sister returned. One of the sisters gave up her education to stay home and care for their mother and the family.

The sister who returned with Maria to school was in Grade 11. This sister played an important role in Maria's survival at school. *"I looked up to her as, you know, I guess like a big sister and a mother, and somebody who could hug me and, you know, comfort me because I cried a lot...that helped, it really helped."*

Maria's experience at residential school was different than that of her father and grandparents. She attended school all day and was not expected to train as a housekeeper or farmer. They did have chores though: *"We went to school all day but we had chores after school and first thing in the morning. And we did all the, come to think of it...we*

cleaned up after ourselves...we had to make our bed, clean our bathroom, clean our dormitory. We had no cleaning staff in those days. They had cooks, they had hired cooks and hired people to look after the farm...in my time they had farm help, they had a baker, they had cooks in the kitchen. And then the rest – then they hired teachers, of course, and their supervisors, but none of them were native...there were no other natives at all around. And they were all nuns supervising us and there were Brothers supervising the boys, and our whole school was divided...right in half and the girls had one side and the boys had the other side. And there was a big fence dividing us with padlocks. And you couldn't climb over the fence...you can't cross sides."

Maria did receive an education at the school, but there was a price to pay. Maria discussed her losses: *"I think loss of family. Loss of language, because I left home when I was 14 and I never ever went back, so as a result I have had, I could not speak with anybody on a daily basis in my language. You know all our languages are different, even if I married...our language would be different...I couldn't practice my language. As a result I lost a lot of it. I am not a fluent speaker but I could understand now...I have lost connectedness with my grandparents. I lost connectedness with my aunts, my uncles, and now when I go back I'm like a visitor."*

The separation of the boys from the girls was also an unnatural experience that can have long term consequences for the young men and women.

As Maria spent time at boarding school she found herself becoming shyer about mixing with her own people: *"...I remember we were, we became shyer and shyer too. To go back and mix...with our own people. And the reason for that I guess is having different experiences. And because of separation you lose that tie with people...and then*

when you go back and try to reconnect, and I didn't experience that until I got older, that they were welcoming us back...but when we were younger we didn't see it that way. And now we all want to go back. You know, after you grow up and get an education, that's always foremost, forefront in your mind that you're going to go back and help your own people. And I haven't met anyone that hasn't thought that - our First Nations people - going back to share what you have learned."

Indian Affairs' policy changed and Maria had to continue her education at a public school. In order to attend school she had to move to another community and live in an assigned family home. She was shy, forced to live with a non-native family, and had to get used to a life off reserve. Maria was the only member of her family who finished Grade 12 at that time. Since then sisters and brothers resumed their education, some have degrees and others attended community college. Maria's and her siblings' children are now graduating from Grade 12, university or college.

Maria's continuing education meant that she did not return to live at home after going to residential school. On leaving high school, Maria experienced the life of a teenager - parties and alcohol. Alcohol never appealed to her though, and was never a problem.

Maria and her husband married in the Catholic Church when they were both in their early twenties. Maria's birth family practiced traditional religion in the home: *"It wasn't strong, but I would say the universal basis of spirituality or religion, love, caring, sharing. All of those qualities, they were all taught to us."*

Maria and her husband decided to live their lives, and raise their children, with traditional Aboriginal values and teachings: *"...after my husband and I got married, we*

chose to go the traditional way, it was the sixties...we went through the hippie era. We weren't involved in it, but we knew it was going on. And within the Indian communities it was our time, too, of uprising and speaking out. You know, contradicting the Federal Government policy and all of this stuff. That was all happening with many people. In the seventies, the early seventies, was Wounded Knee – and all over Canada and the United States our Indian people were finding their voices. We were tuning into what was happening and my husband and I, at that time, decided we would...follow the traditional way. So we just sort of, we didn't totally leave the church, but we started to follow our traditional ways. And from then on it was like that all the way until now, and that's over thirty years...we had the grounding. So we just continued on and we raised our children that way, and we have been a very, very happy family. And again, sharing love and understanding with them. That was our belief. And...went back to our cultural teaching, the way it was, the way of living, way of life."

Maria attributes her survival through the residential school experience, and subsequent separation from her family, to her family: *"I think it was that core of having family, mother and father, loving and caring and living the way we did in the community where our family unit was the strongest thing...."* On living well today Maria commented: *"I keep going back to knowing how to love. Knowing how to care. Knowing how to share. Knowing what is the responsibility because of the love. I think that's what makes it – the way our beliefs are...that's what made us, helped us to come this far. And whatever we have experienced in our past has been overcome because of our traditional teaching, our traditional upbringing. Although I skipped it somehow*

along the way, I mean I missed some of it, I continued to go back to learn...to learn and to grasp and to pull it together... ”

Paul

Paul was fifty years old at the time of interview. Born one of twelve children, four boys and eight girls, he is the third boy and sixth child. For his first three years he lived with his parents, then he was given to his grandparents for a time he estimates as around three years. He has been married for thirty-one years to a woman who was not born a member of a First Nation. He and his wife have two sons. Their two daughters were killed in a car crash sixteen years ago.

Both of Paul's parents attended residential school. Paul attended residential school from the age of seven and stayed until he was sixteen. At that time he transferred to a day school and lived at home. Paul finished Grade 12 and took further training in the medical field. Today he is a spiritual leader and works in the counseling field, primarily with Aboriginal people.

Paul was sent to residential school when he was seven. He has very vivid memories of his life before school. In that life there were horses and buggies, and no television.

“I have very vivid memories of up to six years old. And those were the best years of my life when I was with my parents and family. And what I remember about that is the old teachings. I'm old enough; I'm 50 years old. And I still remember the horse and buggy days, the Model Ts...my grandfather used to drive to church driving his horses. And I think also that was part of my life where my grandfather had this little wee sweat lodge, and we used to go sit in there with him. And so up to six years old that was part of

my life, even before. And yet I remember going to church with my grandfather ...my parents gave me away for, it must have been about three years. I was sent to live with my grandparents. I don't know if it was because of the Cree language or teachings of the Elders, but I guess I'm very thankful. That was one of the greatest gifts they could have ever given me. I think that's the source of where I kept my language, because I speak very fluent Cree, and I never have forgotten it. The other thing was because of that I love old people and I see their wisdom.

...[The other children] stayed home but I got to see them all the time. Weekends, other days...people used to visit one another a lot. That was the old days. People don't do that nowadays. There's no connection with family. And that's amazing. I think about this quite often. People just, in this world of automation, do not have time for one another...But in those days, just family, being with family, doing things together as a family. I remember we used to go catch suckers in the creek for instance...You're not only having fun there but you're feeding your family. I remember my mom taking us out, teaching us the way of survival. She used to set up these snares for the prairie chickens that danced on the hill and I was usually up first thing in the morning just to see what we had caught the next day. That was really something to look forward to. Or else she'd take us out in the bush, take some snare, teach us how to make a wire snare and just how high to put it up off the trail, and on the trail, and just how you should tie it - and it's stronger if you use two strands. Like a lot of patience. And getting rewarded by the morning".

Paul tells stories of hunting with his brother, using dogs to catch molting ducks, and hunting birds and gophers with slingshots: *"I get very excited when I talk about it*

because it brings me back.” From his grandfather he learned to make bows and arrows: “...I knew that bow and arrows were supposed to go fast and I used to watch my old man. My grandfather made a bow and arrow once and I was watching, very interested, and I saw what kind of trees he was using...Then I saw how straight the willows, that they took for the arrow, and just about what size and how he put the feather top side in. So, aha, time making it, and all that, the placing of the sinew so, aha! You don’t rush to [do] my job. You do it properly. So there I was getting discipline”.

Paul was part of a large family: *“We had a little one-room shack and I don’t know how we all sat in there, but we used to lay out blankets on the floor, or some stuff, and bunks. But we all sat, we were real happy. The greatest gift I ever got was we all loved one another, we still do. We all loved one another and I think that was a source of strength in family togetherness. We were not always that rich. A lot of times we were hungry...my father worked hard, still even when you worked hard, the off time, that maybe? And what us guys, brothers, did to bring in the food, that’s why the rabbit, the chickens, the ducks. And we didn’t have fridges so a lot of time we dried a lot of our stuff...Because of a large family, the food didn’t spoil. You eat it. And so we were hunting that way. And the other thing I learned in the old days was, my mom was a traditional medicine lady, kind of, and I learned certain things like how to live off certain roots like wild onions, rice from tiger lily plants. Stocks from bull rushes, and other plants. And so I also know how to make stews out of these things. And if you boil them like, nettles, if you boil them they make very good spinach...I loved it, and enjoyed that life...”*

Paul described his life at home before going to his grandparent's house at age 3:

"It was a lot of fun. The other thing, because we were so many in the family and there was little ones, my oldest sisters, there was two oldest sisters, for instance, one took my older brother Oscar who is only two years older than me and she kept him, she raised him practically as her own boy, helping out."

"Annie was the one that kept me probably until about 2 or 3 years old and I kind of grew up with the rest of them. But it's, kind of, we had surrogate mothers in our sisters. So, we had a lot of fun things to do. The funniest thing I ever heard was, one time, I guess, my other sister that was raising my other brother took me and threw me in a tub of cold water. So to get even my other sister took my other brother and threw him in a tub of cold water, and stuff like that. We still knew we loved each other. And then I remember we used to have mud fights. That was our toy. We had things that my father carved like wooden cars or wooden little horses. Those were our toys and I remember we tied ropes to one another. One of us would be the horse and the other one would be the rider. Of course, you're running behind your brother, the rope was our reigns, we would pretend. One would have a little willow stick. That was the game. Of course we had, there were so many of us kids, that we played a lot of hide and go seek and there's a lot of trees around, they knew how to hide, we'd sneak up on them. So those were just some of the good memories..."

As Paul was the sixth born, he already had two brothers and three sisters at the residential school – except that his eldest brother was needed at home and left school early. For the rest of them, they attended school from the age of seven until they were sixteen or older. They returned home only for Christmas, Easter, and summer holidays, even though the school was no more than twenty miles from the reserve.

Paul described his memories of going to school:

“And so the next memory I have is when I was seven, one day, I was brought to church. I just remember seeing the church and all of a sudden I see all these big yellow buses. It looked like there were many, but it could have been only about two buses, or three buses. And so I seen all these kids walking in the buses. And all of a sudden I was held by the hand and led into one of these buses and I didn't know really what was going on...And all of a sudden – I can't remember whether it was my mom, I think it was my mom, she gave my hand to this person on the bus. I can't remember whether it was a man or – somehow I don't know, and my mom started walking away. And that was the first traumatic experience I ever felt about being abandoned, like all of a sudden my mom's gone, I'm trying to go and they wouldn't let me go. I can't even remember being told about going to school. I just remember being shipped away and I was crying. I was crying a lot. And I had long hair at that time. And then they, it seemed like they take forever in a small child's mind. And even though I knew my brothers and my sisters were there, I didn't even, it seemed like they were strangers to me. I don't know what it is. I felt so alone. I felt so alone.

Paul described some of his first experiences: *“So when I got to this place, I guess it was residential school, the first thing they did was chop our hair, and I can't remember much. I just know that, I just, there were a lot of demands.*

I couldn't understand us getting a slap for not understanding. Like, I only knew Cree. I didn't know English. And it seemed like a horrifying place, total strangers, a lot of little boys like myself. I can't remember much. I remember, I don't know whether it was the next day or two days after, and they brought us to this classroom and we were just led like

little sheep and they brought us to this classroom. They started saying, doing, I guess it was a language, foreign language I didn't understand. But they were mumbling, da-da-da-da-da-da, over and over – and I guess it was the rosary – I didn't understand it. But we got into the routine of gathering in our room. Everybody had to be real quiet. There was a great big room...these nuns were talking to us. I never really understood them”.

Paul remembers being slapped in the face for whispering, being strapped when he soiled himself when he was not allowed to go to the bathroom, and the general cruelty. He also recalls the embarrassment of having his pants pulled down in public, in front of girls and boys, when being strapped. Not only were they embarrassed by exposure but also, in direct contrast to that deliberate public exposure, they were taught to be embarrassed about their body through such rules as always showering in underwear. Paul feels that the obsession with covering up the body, taught at the school, spoiled his life in a significant way, making him unnaturally shy and ashamed of his body.

Paul described how use of the Cree language was treated: *“...they didn't allow us to talk in our language. We were whispering, all of a sudden maybe you either get a slap on the head, or the side of the face, and told to be quiet. Speak in English and put your hand up when you...speak. So I hated it. I hated it.”*

Paul expressed her feeling about the nuns: *“...most I remember these nuns, these women that wore veils, they were so mean. Man they were mean.”*

Dress at the school was a uniform, khaki clothes for in school and coveralls for outside. *“all the time we had to try and keep clean. You got punished if you didn't.”*

Paul described how he coped with what he experienced. *“...If you can call it coping, I guess it's the survival. I just basically wanted to mind my own business. I*

started noticing. I guess maybe I was big. I started noticing if I did what I thought they wanted that things were good for me. I didn't have to worry too much. I could avoid the pain. The other thing is it was brainwashing in a sense. There were certain stars, coloured stars – sticky stuff these nuns used to use. If you're a good boy, you're with this group of elite boys. All the silver stars. If you are bad you get red stars, or if you're halfway in between you get blue stars. And then if you're really super good you get on top of this star the gold star. So you can actually see your name up there – I'm a good boy...I hate that now. I never used that again...I guess it was supposedly an initiative to get us, or keep us controlled...common psychology... ”

The extended and repeated separation from his parent's upset Paul. “...The residential school, my parents did not come that often. Very seldom they came to visit us. Whether they couldn't afford to hire somebody – that was a sad thing for me. I'd see other parents, and they had a parlor a visiting room. And sometimes if the parents would ask for their kids to go out on pass and they'd 'leave' them to town, but I hardly saw my parents. They would just come, at that time maybe once a year to visit us...I got to go [home] at Christmas and Easter, but even that – things slowly were not the same as they were before. There was something lost. Although the, apparently, love was still there, I still liked to talk with them and with my siblings, but there was a kind of sadness there. And when the older kids were all gone, when like my parents used to drink – but not that much, my dad never drank before that much, but when all the kids were in school, my dad started drinking heavily, both my parents did.

...And so when I used to see that, I'd see my dad hitting my mom and stuff, I said I never wanted to associate myself with alcohol, I didn't know that as I was seeing those

behaviors I was becoming an adult child of an alcoholic. And so I fell into that title while I was away at residential school."

Paul described how he felt, at the time, about the Catholic faith, the nuns, and what he was shown of Christianity: *"...I had so many bad memories, and because I had been forced to go to church 365 days a year – for two years I wanted to have nothing to do with the church. I left the church when I left the school. I left the church for a period of almost three years, and – and to this day there are others out there that never want to have nothing to do with the church. Why do people who claim to be Christian and working for God, why did they have to be so mean...I think I was very physically and mentally abused. I thank God that I – I was physically abused in the way of being slapped a lot on the head and – although not sexually abused that I can remember."*

But the nuns and priests were not the only ones to abuse the children in the school. *"...It's hard to figure – I was mistreated by one of our people that was a supervisor, where he used to like degrade us. He used to take us by the ear, bring us pretty close to his buttocks and fart on us, and stuff like that. And I remember that. I just hated this guy with a passion. And that guy is alive today on the reserve. I don't talk to him. He comes to church and I shake his hand...I'll love him as a person because of what I believe, but I cannot stand him. There's a part of me that can never forgive".*

Paul described the role this person had at the school: *"He was...a man. Yeah, and he was an advocate of the nuns or priests. He was there for the money, for himself and a tyrant, dictator. And one of the things that I remember he always stated 'You can call me Master', call me Master! And so it was very significant later on sometime later on in the future...all of a sudden there was another guy that came to work. I had graduated into*

the big boys by this time. And that's another separate department in that school, it was the big boy's room...So the first time I remember...I said 'Hey, Master! Are you the new Master?' And he looked at me and says 'What's your name?' I said 'Paul'. He said "Paul", and I said 'Yes.' And he says 'I want you to know there's a Master up above, and I can never be that Master, just call me X. My friends call me X.' He treated me like a person, a human being. I remember that, and he was one of the better supervisors that I had."

Both the supervisors that Paul described were Aboriginal. Paul wonders if perhaps his interest in the guitar and music is not a direct response to the fact that the second supervisor played the guitar and sang.

Paul was quite well behaved when he was at school. Paul admits that part of his good behaviour was probably because of a fear of the strap. Other children got into much more trouble than he did. Some ran away from the residential school. Once he was sixteen – the official age when you could leave – Paul decided to leave the school. In fact he ran away: he got on a bus and went home.

The school sent the Indian Agent after Paul. The Indian Agent at that time was a black man. The Indian Agent came to the house. Paul can't remember him knocking at the door but he did enter the house. *"...I don't think he said much to my dad, but he came up to me, grabbed me on my shoulder and had my sleeve. And says 'You're coming back to the school.'" I had had an opportunity to tell my dad I left the school, I wanted to come home to stay, and I was willing to go to day school if I didn't have – I just wanted to be free of this school. I said 'Remember you told me when I was 16 I could do what I want – as long as I finished my grade 12?' So my dad seen this guy who took my sleeve*

and pulled me up from the couch...and my dad stood up face to face with this man and says 'You touch my son again, ever, and I won't be responsible for whatever I'm going to do to you.' And this guy, I'd seen a little of the strength of this coloured guy, and my dad just told him 'You leave this place and I don't want to see you again.' I went to the day school. I loved my dad forever."

Paul was upset for years by the question of whether or not his parents really had to send him to the residential school. *"There was other kids that went to school in town, those on the buses, but I knew that there was kids that had parents who had them go on a school bus to town. I guess those are the parents, by choice, who didn't believe in the residential school. They didn't believe in it. There was people like that...I think there was people that held their ground and nobody could force them. I know a lot of people were forced. My dad because he was a residential school product, and so was my mom. And they were led to believe that they didn't have a choice in the matter. They were led to believe, that's the key words...to have a freedom or right, I'm sure they would have said no. But somehow they got talked into, and sweet talked into, saying – I can just visualize it 'Oh, your kids will be educated. Your kids will have – they'll have nice clothes.' I don't know what kind of promises they made...I think it was a process where – that you're to go over and that domineering society...lack of empowerment. Even before you could begin to say no, it's like a bullying thing. Obey or else!"*

Paul finished High School, gaining a Grade 12 diploma. Later in life Paul qualified in a health-related area of work, and now is a spiritual counselor and, among other things, helps organizations and individuals understand cross-cultural issues.

On leaving school. Paul did not walk a straight and narrow path: *"I experimented. There was many, many bad years with the alcohol. Basically, I guess, peer pressure. I guess thinking that everybody that's cool does this – looks for a good time and parties on the weekends. Women, wine, women and sex...I experimented once with drugs, and because of a real bad trip on one cigarette...I never, ever, wanted to touch it again. It cured me...I just stayed with the alcohol. And that's another story...this alcohol stage led on to the initial meeting of my wife. Wine, women and song, falling into a relationship, a very bad one because we were both needy people with unhealthy behaviors, coming from dysfunctional families, each carrying a bag of garbage...and we learned from that. We still go through that. For [my wife] and me, alcoholism was a key source in our lives until I hit rock bottom – and an automobile accident where I lost two girls and one sister."*

Paul's little daughters and his sister were killed in a car accident. Paul was driving. Paul, his wife and their son, all survived. After the accident Paul had thoughts of suicide: *"I had thoughts of suicide. I blamed myself for many years...I give it to the Creator. Somehow he had a purpose for me, the death of my daughters – a real purpose. It's somehow, somewhere later, much, much later in my life I learned to forgive myself. Remember when I first started this interview, I said we must do things with yourself. So I learned to forgive myself and know that the real issue, the real cause of this accident was the disease of our people. And once I was able to forgive myself I could start living life again, and learn again that these children were given to me for a short time."*

After the accident Paul and his wife decided to have another child. It was very difficult for them but after trying for a long time using both traditional and allopathic medicine and much praying, a second son was born. The two boys are now 28 and 14.

Several of Paul's siblings have had problems with drugs, attempted suicide, and violence. Two of Paul's sisters are now dead – the one killed in the car accident, and another who died of a drug/alcohol overdose. Cousins have also died in car accidents or in hit-and-run accidents while walking on the highway.

Paul feels the violence and ruined relationships are a result of the residential school experience: *"These are some behaviors that I associate with the School. One of loneliness, and dysfunctional families. My other brother that had about five relationships, now, he is in his fifth marriage now. He's doing good now, but I remember when he got shot, twice, in the chest – almost died the second time. So I see that violence."* Paul worked with his brothers to get them to give up alcohol, *"they finally saw the light, so they have had sobriety for, at least, within the last five or six years"*.

In a short period after the death of his daughters and his sister, one of Paul's brothers died from natural causes, and his wife had losses in her family as well. Paul and his wife now have what he calls a good marriage, the terrible losses they endured seemed to make them closer: *"So we went through a lot of grieving things, where you just clung to each other – and survived. It's a sad story but that's what makes us so strong today"*. Paul and his wife, at the time of the interview, had been together thirty years *"And we are each other's friends, we're each other's counselors"*. Paul credits his wife with helping him through reprocessing his residential school experience *"A lot of times my wife and I talk about residential school, she's my greatest supporter. That's basically a lot of my*

strength because of a supporting friend, a person that listens to me as a counselor, a person who walks with me – is my partner in life as well.”

The subject of racism is always present, given the experience of children in residential schools. Paul comments: *“I take individuals as individuals...If you cut anybody that’s got skin...a yellow man, a black man, a white man, and you look underneath that skin, there’s red blood and we all bleed the same.”*

Paul accepts his current balance in life, but emphasizes that he has had to overcome a hatred for women, and a tendency to use women. This hatred he believes came from the cruelty and abuse of the nuns at the residential school. He also has had to fight different addictions. He says: *“I wasn’t always what I am now. I’ve changed a lot. I had that choice to change.”* Paul’s battles with addictions and negative behaviour were hard fought, but he seems to have won.

Interestingly, Paul differentiates between “good” nuns and “bad” nuns. The nuns at the residential school were from a different order than the nuns who lived on the reserve. The nuns who lived on the reserve were “good” nuns, who Paul remembers as gentle and kind. One of Paul’s sisters was a member of that order for many years.

Paul attributes his success to his personal philosophy and his spiritual beliefs, and to his wife. As well he gives some credit to the “good” supervisor at the school: *“I guess that glimmer of hope, he only said that one statement. It was very significant for me and it was like I’m freeing you. I’m freeing you from abomination, or whatever is possible...already he was leading me to the Creator. Even then I took note and I just had to work it out. It was like a giant jigsaw puzzle to put together”.*

Paul restated the importance of his family and the love he got from them, even though his older years at home were not as happy as his young childhood: *"Love of family, love from my dad, walking tall. I just don't like the alcoholism. I didn't like it. But I saw them as real people, as they were, and I loved them as a family."* His parents, *"They were together for life. I saw my mom's strength: they were together for life. They never talked about divorce. We have good solid family values. Same thing with my parents, regardless of what was their downfall. They stayed together. And so that same family support, that value system...you have that. It kind of affects a person, like it's that love. I would say it's love, and I'm trying to think about why do kids fail at foster homes? Because their parents didn't stay together, they're split up. And when families are split up, all of your strength is gone. You're doomed to failure."*

His family gave him: *"...freedom of the spirit. Remember I was telling you about the drum is the heartbeat of the people? I danced when I was a kid...I guess within the last ten years, I picked that up again, and I'm a dancer again. I'm a warrior."*

Paul speaks a lot of his father: his pride and love for his father. He has only turned away from one thing his father told him, and that is 'men should not cry'. One lesson he learned from his father was about strength: *"The other thing my father did say one time is that it takes more of a man to walk away from a fight, physically. When he walks away not to be a coward to himself or to others. That is real strong discipline right there...my dad, I knew was a man, a very tough one. And if he was able to walk away like he showed me he didn't have to be chicken. It takes more – it took me a long time to figure that out. It takes more of a man."*

Paul defined living well as “...to have a life...where I would have a healthy mind, a healthy body, emotionally stable and spiritually sound...Having some supernatural to believe in like a Creator. And just to be very aware of all those areas and to balance out in all four”. Paul explained some of his philosophies and beliefs:

“I like talking about healing because that’s one of the key goals to survival is healing and all those holistic viewpoints. Healing, listening and observing. I’ve had a lot of influence during the years from the elder teachers of my choosing, whom I thought were good role models for me. And so in paying attention and actually living those things that I had that were good, it’s really made me to be a strong person, and I have seen the truthfulness of their teachings, the wisdom of their teachings. So that is something I’ve never been sorry for.

And not only that, like it’s believing in myself. I’m just going to start from one of the greatest teachings...one elder, he says ...the greatest gift of all mankind is love. And if you do not have love you will never have peace. And just that one statement says so much because it’s so true. And I can identify that also with the commandments that I learned in Catholicism. The first great commandment is loving God as yourself, and the other one is loving your neighbor as yourself. And so, even though you cannot always like people’s personalities or people’s behaviors, you can love them regardless.

...One of the sayings that I’ve thought about and I’ve read about is ‘the greatest enemy of mankind is yourself.’” And so everything must start with yourself. One must learn to love themselves first – and be within themselves. Know yourself so you can be your own best friend...one must learn to respect oneself...everything is to begin with yourself. Then when you have begun with yourself, and you truly begin, when you love

yourself you love the Creator. You love your parents. You love your wife. You love others. And the same with all the other values that I went through. So when you can strive to work on those values, then the peace and the love comes. I am not saying, or stating that I got to be a perfect individual, because knowing also and being aware that no human being is ever perfect. However, to walk the good path in the best way you know how to do it, to receive that balance. Also realizing that in psychology, like in the white world, one often hears about life is not roses or things like that, you know. So I learned from the Elders that life is full of obstacles and that the good path is the hard one to walk. If you take the easy way then, in a sense, you are kind of cheating yourself. It's easy to steal, for instance. But you have to pay the consequences. You get caught. It's easy to lie. But then you're cheating yourself...

So those values when you're honest and say even in living, when you earn your dollar honestly, then you value what you have. You've earned it. You've earned not only a living that's satisfactory to you, but because the good that person can get out of that is a good feeling that comes from within "Hey, I did this by myself, and I feel good about it". So I guess that's what this interview is all about. It's how I survived through the years...being proud of who I am as a person, being proud of my identity. Like the Elders say - even though we have life, a way of life, the way of life in as far as the cultural way, and the native spiritualists, and being proud of who I am and believing in my culture... when I walk it, it's a whole set of values that teach me to survive without having to be rich financially, but to be rich in spirit.

...The sacred and knowing how to connect with all those things, learning to appreciate the elements, the life giving forces, the fire, the water, the earth, the air and

the wind. And when you can live with those kinds of elements, and how they play a part in our lives...those are the basic needs for survival for any human being. It also affects the body, no matter which way you look at it. So to connect all things and put them into perspective. At the same time not entirely letting go.

Paul follows his traditional religion: he runs a sweatlodge and is a pipe carrier. His religion is a fundamental part of his life. Paul prays every morning, on rising because, he says, *"I value the Creator's gift of life and every morning, as soon as I see daylight I think, wow, I'm alive for another day. I'm alive for another day so I thank God, right now."*

Every year Paul fasts for four days, without food or water: *"a person gets to tune their mind, get a strong mind...the body gets weak however [you] learn to appreciate the light forces that feed it. Your spirit is very strong because that's what you are mostly depending on...you meditate a lot and then your emotions, you can sit down quietly and meditate and where your emotions are coming from, what it is that makes you the type of person you are. So I really believe in that and the physical weakness, the things experienced make one appreciative of what life is composed of, not taking things for granted. The physical drawback of sacrificing your strength to gain, for the mind.*

Paul's philosophy in life is demonstrated by the story of his first fast: *"When I was fasting the first time, and I went to choose a real grassy area, which I had, which was going to be real comfortable. I'm looking for it, I'm going to have a, I'm not going to make it too hard on myself. That's the being I was in the first time. And I thought well I'm going to build my hut there and I took the tarp over and I'm going to be comfortable, I'm going to make, well I was told not to make it too big. You're there to suffer. So I*

made it very small. Well, my grassy area turned out to be, what the grass had - which was, a large ant pile. I took hold of a red ant pile. And that's where I learned that you have to have a strong mind because the first night, the first day I got eaten up. The next thing that I found out was my site, as comfortable as it was in the grassy area, I did not have the shade of trees. So the sun cooked me in there. So I learned the power of the sun and no shade. And the next thing I learned was how I have to stay cramped up in this little hut, so I learned the power of discomfort and you know after kind of sleeping in a fetal position for the night, three or four days, you get very cramped and uncomfortable. So this is some of the things I mentioned you learn in the fast. So one of the biggest gifts I ever received from a fast was the gift of discipline, self-discipline. And so that's part of survival and what makes me strong as a person.

Despite his commitment to his traditional religion, Paul still participates in other religious celebrations: *"Although it was a bad experience for a while at residential school...I have not entirely let go of the teachings in Catholicism and the Christian aspect. And so I walk that path also, where I go to church...with my family on Sundays, and I help out in Christian oriented workshops or retreats, whatever you want to call them. And I sing gospel music and that feeds my spirit, the gift of song, the gift of song on the guitar and I consider it as a gift given from my Creator. The gift of song that drums the heartbeat, I really believe the heartbeat of our people, because whenever the drum, I hear the drum, it just gets my heart.*

The dancing and the sweatlodge are all part of Paul's spiritual whole. From these he gathers his identity: *"I found myself, no matter what the odds are, I'm going to survive. And I believe in that...real richness comes from deep within. And if you believe*

that, if you have that faith and believe that, I don't think anything's impossible with that spirit. The oneness with the Creator."

Paul commented on his personal philosophy: *"I always believed there was learning in everything. The values that I put on myself – if you make mistakes in life, learn to let them go, but learn from them. Take them as positives. Take them as an education. So instead of making a mistake and feeling down...I will look at it, think about it and let it go and continue. I'll do this better next time or I won't make the same mistake twice. So that's a driving force within me. And the other thing is what is the problem now, and this was one of the elder's words, when you look back upon it later – and laugh about it because it was not such a big problem after all. So I don't take things to heart...And that's part of the training I have in my many years"*.

"...To be kind in everything that I do. I want to be the best at whatever I do. So I like always the thought of gentleness, to be that sweet briar in the wind. When you step upon sweet briars they will come up later on, they always bounce back with gentleness...You don't have to give up. It's not the end of the world."

Sophia

Sophia is a woman of about sixty years. Sophia has been married for forty-one years, and she and her husband, a European immigrant, raised five children. Sophia and her older brother were raised by her maternal grandparents; a half-sister (a different father) was raised by paternal grandparents and lived a different life. Sophia was raised Protestant; her sister was sent to Catholic school. Sophia's grandmother did not learn to speak English, but Sophia refers to her grandfather as being very well educated. Sophia has worked in the areas of addictions counseling and native court work and continues to

work as an elder. Recently Sophia was selected, because of her dedication to Aboriginal persons and her wisdom, to play a key role in the reorganization of children's social services in her region.

Sophia now follows traditional religious practices and also attends church. Sophia can remember her grandparents praying to the Creator, and also remembers a division on the reserve between Protestants and Catholics.

Prior to being seven or eight years old, Sophia remembers very little. She believes she was about five when she was first sent to residential school. *"It wasn't until I was about seven, eight years old that I can remember. But I think what I remember is the war years. Like the things that we were told in school, the war and all that. So it affected the families at home as well. So I think that had an impact on our lives. I can remember back what the families had to do in order to survive, or to survive for families they had at home, because most of the children from the age of 6 years to 16 were in a residential school. But they had to provide for their younger children, or the ones that had left residential school. So I can remember about that.*

Sophia does remember a few events when she was very small: *"I do remember...when I was about 2 years old...Wabamun Lake is where we lived in the spring, and my grandma, my uncle, the family...I guess they'd catch fish in the net and then they'd dry them. So there was a creek I guess that runs out from the lake, and then there were some logs set across so you can walk across and go over to where they were doing the stuff. I was to stay at the cabin, not our house but it was a cabin that they'd go back to at that lake...but anyway I wandered off, I decided to see where my grandma was and my aunt. So I started walking on the rails that were across the stream and I fell in.*

But I guess, they said I didn't scream...they just happened to see this red hat that I had, a tube like, bobbing up and down. And they saw me and took me out of the water, and that was it. But it was, I think it was, from then on I had a fear of water. I remember things like that when I look back...I can remember a Christmas, and I must have been very young too, but we gathered at the church there on the reserve. And it was Christmas Eve or Christmastime anyway, and I remember getting a doll, and it was not these soft ones that we get, but they were kind of a flat...kind of hard. You hit them hard they crack. And I remember getting a doll like that, I was so happy. So that was a good memory that I had. But the fact that I broke, I cracked the doll later on...it had an impact, like I loved it and here I broke because I was rough with it. But I remember things like that. But also I think the family's closeness, my aunts and uncle lived with us or close by us, and they had some kids the same age as myself and my other aunt wasn't married. So there was always that closeness that I can remember."

"I can remember the things that we did together, I guess as a family. Like when we went to pick berries together or it was a kind of a family thing, whenever we did something, it was a family thing. If it was time to wash clothes or whatever...we had this kind of a pond...so we hauled water, and like they made a big deal to wash clothes! And it was a picnic for us that we just played. So things like that I can remember. It was fun, it didn't seem like a chore, those we packed water and that, but it was fun."

Talking of the first while at school Sophia says: *"I remember my mom, but it is just vaguely now, and even my grandmother before going to school, because whether I block that off or what – even the first parts of school are just a blur"*.

The residential school that Sophia attended was a long way from where she initially lived with her grandparents. And then her grandfather moved the family from the reserve to the Rocky Mountain House area as he had a good job with the railroad. This meant that to travel to the residential school in Edmonton Sophia had to travel all day on two separate trains. Of the journey Sophia says: *"Nowadays...an hour drive...but at that time it was such a long day. And then my grandfather moved...as I say my grandfather. I think he got a job on the railroad. like he was always working...but he wanted to provide for his family so he moved out here by X and got a job from the railroad. Although after moving off the reserve we weren't entitled to health care benefits...They [the railroad] paid for medical like through their group. That stuff all came under that."* From X the journey was much further to the outskirts of Edmonton: *"So when my grandfather, when they moved to X...we'd leave about 7 o'clock in the morning...The journey would take about 12 hours."*

The students would leave home in September and wouldn't go home until June. *"We didn't have Christmas, Easter, nothing at all. We didn't. I can remember like when I was a child it wasn't until I must have been in my teens when this different principal came and took over."* Sophia believes he was a principal in another Residential school before coming to Edmonton, and when he took over things changed: *"If we wanted to go home for Christmas holidays, then the family would pay for the train fare – and that...allowed us to go home for Christmas. I remember having our first Christmas holidays..."*

Sophia's family members used to visit her at the school. By a coincidence the school, while a long trip from home, was on the route that her relatives traveled to visit other family members.

"Since we had relatives...my grandmother, or whoever or aunt, whenever they go to visit...would come by train and then stop on their way to...or on their way back. They'd come with a cab there and stay overnight, and then go home. So we'd see them probably once a year. I think any of the family members, though, you know, we'd see them maybe three times a year or four times a year."

Sophia believes that her grandparents encouraged her to go to school. Sophia's grandmother didn't speak English and Sophia got the feeling that, as the grandchild, she was expected to learn. *"I think she in the back of her mind thought...what we learned was that anybody that didn't go to school, didn't have an education, didn't talk English was stupid...I didn't want to be stupid, and yet at the same time, whether my grandmother felt like that or what – I also became embarrassed because my grandma didn't speak a word of English, and the same with my dad...my grandfather was well-educated and he used to interpret in courts and translate. But I remember my grandma, I guess it was just kind of an understanding like she didn't really like come right out and say 'you have to', 'you must' or 'this is the best thing for you now'. It was I think because she hadn't had that opportunity. That I think in a way maybe just to comfort us as we were in school. Because my brother ran away from school"*.

Sophia told of the September sadness, when they returned to school. *"The kids ran away from school when we first go back in September. That would be the saddest time because the children, you know, were taken away from their families for the first*

time. It would be such a sad time. You'd see little kids in the corner, or behind the door weeping and that, so missing their grandmas. So when I think back [making education seem important] was that just some kind of a support you were given to ensure that you'd stay there? When I think about it now, was there consequences...if you didn't stay in school? When I think about it now, I'm sure there was...I think [she] encouraged us to stay there until we were 16...sometimes she'd give us talks...I think in order that we would stay in school, to ensure that we stuck to school...I remember some kids would come home ...they'd be brought back by the principal".

Sophia felt that when she went home and showed her grandmother what she had learned, that she had learned English and other Indian languages, that her grandmother was proud of her. Her grandmother *"would say how good I did, and on the other hand, my grandfather would want to make sure we were treated alright"*.

Sophia experienced meanness and cruelty when she was at school. As with most of the schools, at the school Sophia attended the children were separated – boys from girls. The boys and girls had different experiences. Sophia felt that the girls did not lose their mother figures as the older girls were inclined to take care of the younger ones. *"When we went to school the older girls became moms and did what they learned as a child – they cared for them [the little ones] combed their hair...we didn't have a father figure but the mom figure was there. And then when we went home for summer holidays, of course the parents did. They nurtured us – it seems as though it's just a couple of months and yet it had an impact on me"*.

Sophia, as a child, looked at the two ways of rearing children and decided that her children would be raised kindly. At the same time, she knows that she was influenced by

the rules and discipline of the school: *“that’s how I was going to raise my kids, that’s what I was going to do. And yet at the same time there’s been school stuff and I think about it. Like when my kids were in school, I wanted them to obey this and that. ‘You be in the house by 8 o’clock’ and that...It was 8:30 they’re not in...Ten o’clock you better be in bed because when we lived at X our children had to get on the school bus at 7 o’clock in the morning. So I can remember those things and I laugh when I tell the kids, well I looked like an army sergeant I guess!”*

“At school we weren’t even told, we just accepted the age group went to bed at 8.30, 9 or whatever. All got washed and went to bed. We said our prayers and then we were locked in there for the night...we went to bed. We didn’t go to sleep, but we went to bed.” The children did not have supervisors in the dorms with them. The means of control was to lock the doors so the children could not get out.

Sophia tells the story of one Christmas at the school: *“Christmas holidays, we didn’t go home then. But I remember we were told Christmas was upon us. ‘You better be good if you want Santa to bring you something.’ So we were at our best behavior. I remember I was anyway. You know...they told us to sleep, go to bed and go to sleep. Well that’s what we tried to do, because Santa was going to bring us something. I remember them saying that, and then telling us that Santa Claus was coming down the chimney and all that. And all these thoughts, you know in our heads. But the way that school, it was like a T-shape. Over here...the lavatory, here a T-shape...long chimneys where you could look down. We were looking down and a couple of the girls wanted to watch Santa Claus come down. And it was the moonlight night so we sat by the window...we were crowded into the bedroom...so we sat on the north side of the window*

there and looked out and we sat there and looked at the chimney. We sat and sat and then we heard this yell down the hall...so we popped in our bed and pulled the blankets up and then the bells come and somebody opened the door and said Merry Christmas...Santa Claus going around. But even that was a learning thing for me you know. I was not going to tell my kids that Santa Claus came down the chimney, I'm going to tell them the whole purpose of Christmas, or what Christmas is really about...but it taught me even at that age...it seems like I always wanted to have a family. I always wanted to teach a family the truth; I was going to teach my family. That also was a learning thing for me. But we didn't get any presents".

At the residential school Sophia attended staff cut the children's hair when they arrived. While Sophia remembers that hair was generally cut, she does not remember her first experiences at school. She does not know why.

The children were not supposed to speak their Indian languages, and there were children from many areas in that school and the children spoke different languages. The consequence for Sophia was not that she lost her language, she learned to speak other Indian languages as well as learning English.

In order not to be punished for speaking their languages the girls would set up lookouts to warn of approaching staff. One day the lookout system failed and Sophia was caught speaking Cree (one of the new languages she had learned). The staff member slapped her across the face and dragged her around by her hair.

The unnecessary cruelty struck Sophia as very wrong. Even as a child, she says, she learned that the way the children were treated was not right. Sophia decided that she would treat people with kindness: *"I want to treat people the way I wasn't. I think that*

was in my mind almost like throughout school and things weren't right or we weren't happy. We weren't treated right, and in the back of my mind it was like 'I'm not treating people like this.' That was even as a child... "

Sophia left school and returned to her family. The tradition then was that families would influence the choice of the person that the young person would marry. But Sophia stood firm on choosing her own spouse. She chose to marry a young immigrant. The couple lived in towns, off reserve land. Of her marriage Sophia says there was a lot to learn, but she feels her spiritual beliefs helped her.

Sophia developed expectations of behaviour, from the teachings at school and from her family: *"When I was in school, the things that we were taught...I had a mind set of how people should live, in my head...when I got married and then we lived in towns...I became aware people didn't actually live like that, like it was a shock. How could this person be drinking all week and then go to church? So I guess I, that really kind of did some undoing. So therefore I didn't go to church for many years because I felt that they were hypocrites...because the church had really had an impact on me...when I became aware of this it...almost a devastating thing. I just bothered me so therefore I withdrew from going to church for many years. And then I guess I had a spiritual awakening and I went back to church again, and still go to church now. I had to take a look at myself and my walk and not look around at people but my walk with the Creator."*

Sophia believes her father showed her an example of what spirituality was all about: *"Like I think my dad, the one that left, you know he always maintained that there's one Creator, one God...I think his walk was very strong. It reinforced my belief..."*

Sophia now combines her religious practices in a way that satisfies her although she saw some conflicts in her spiritual development. She can remember there were two European religions practiced on the reserve, and the division was clear between them: *“There was Protestant and Catholic. So they were all aware there was a division in there. And it was that division with pretty well what minister got there, or what priest got there...So I can remember like I was almost Catholic versus Protestant...and that is how it worked – and the Catholics had their own graveyard and the Protestants had their own graveyard. And I can remember a few years ago when I was thinking about that, I just couldn’t imagine something like that. I thought when you were buried, you’re buried...So when I think about my history back before the minister or missionaries came by...there was none of this...when the missionaries came along, and now this was kind of a mind set, that the Catholics weren’t good. And yet a Catholic family would be a cousin of mine, or whatever. But in our mind [at school] we were made aware, the staff didn’t come right out and say ‘they are this’, but in a way. Like it came across Catholics were stupid, like we were superior. And I imagine they were, Catholics were told the same thing...almost kind of a hatred...you know.”*

Sophia remembers the priests, nuns and ministers on the reserve as respectful of the traditional religion. On the reserve traditional practices were allowed until the government prohibited the Sundances. Where Sophia’s mother lived there were no European churches and she remembers they practiced the traditional religion. Sophia also remembers her grandmother being very strong in her traditional faith, and thinks that may have made an impression on her.

Sophia describes living well as living well spiritually, but it also includes good health. *"I get this from my spiritual background and that has helped me throughout. I think that's what keeps me strong, spiritual support. Whatever support I had from my family when going through school: I guess they must have prayed a lot for us because they had to be separated from us. They would have prayed to the Creator that we would be able to go through this"*.

Sophia has had one serious challenge to her health; she was diagnosed with cancer. But, she says her belief in the Creator is strong and when the doctor told her of the cancer she says it felt okay. She felt it would be alright.

Sophia did not only work at home. She worked as an Addiction Counselor and as a Native Court Worker, and supervisor of the area's Native Court Workers. Sophia was a key member of the regional committee to redesign children's services. Today she still works as an elder, and cares for her grandson one day a week. Sophia believes she is living well, and defines that as a combination of good spiritual and physical health *"I get this from my spiritual background and that's helped me throughout...I think that's what keeps me strong...spiritual support"*.

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Reading the individual stories, the reader is struck by the similarities in the experiences of the participants, and yet none of the participants were in the same school at the same time. Only two of the six people who told their stories to the researcher know of another's participation in the research.

Is it possible to identify personal characteristics that appear to have positively encouraged resilience? Were there experiences, prior to attending residential school, that appear to have encouraged resilience? Were there factors outside the residential school experience that appear to have positively affected resilience?

Before addressing the questions it is necessary to establish that these children faced sufficient recognized threats to be considered resilient. These participants suffered neither primary vulnerabilities (physical, temperamental, cognitive and personality abnormalities) nor secondary vulnerabilities (those acquired during the developmental phase) as identified by Murphy and Moriarty (1976). They began their residential school life without apparent problems.

Researchers working with resilience have usually studied populations whose threats to wellness existed in the home or the home community. The children for study were seen as needing to identify external sources of support and nurturing to fill the gaps left at home, and to minimize threats when possible by use of their intellectual skills. These participants experienced a different situation. Their homes were safe and warm places where they felt loved but they were removed to a dangerous and cold environment

that threatened their wellbeing. They were allowed to return home for two months a year and for most participants this cycle repeated for a minimum of eight years.

Not all the participants were tested to the same extent. For example Maria could be identified as the least tested as she remained at home until she was fourteen when she made a conscious decision to be educated and to face a world where she did not speak the language, a world about which she had heard bad things. Once at school she had older sisters to support her for the first year and yet even with some of the extra buffering she experienced Maria feels she suffered from separation, isolation and long-term distancing from her family and relatives which she is still working to remedy today. Not the least of her losses was the loss of her language through the extended period she spent first in residential school and then in boarding homes in order to finish grade 12.

The participants all made it clear that they were not sexually assaulted in the schools. Several stated that they believed that if they had been sexually abused their ability to be resilient would have been compromised.

I believe the participants demonstrate resilience. They more than met the "least" test for resilience "the ability to see the difficulty as a problem than can be worked on overcome, changed, endured, or resolved in some way" (Demos, 1989, p.4).

The participants identified their first challenge as loneliness and sadness at being separated from their families and described seeing many little children crying at school when the year began in September. Two participants described in detail their distress at being taken to school for the first time and all the participants described being forbidden to speak their language and their problems because it took them some months to understand English. The participants also perceived the practice of cutting hair as

traumatic. One participant explained that for her the cutting of hair was linked to the death of someone close. Neither of the male participants today cut their hair.

The participants detailed vicious physical punishment and incidents of unnecessary physical cruelty. The children's self esteem was attacked by messages that Indians were dirty, ignorant and pagan. These messages resulted in some of the participants reporting temporary doubts about their parents or grandparents values and worth as people. All the participants described the separation from brothers or sisters and opposite sex cousins at school as inappropriate and the lengthy separation from their parents and grandparents was very painful. Another long term effect reported by one participant is the result of inappropriate excessive modesty, which still affects his life today as he will not remove any clothing in public - even to swim.

One participant disclosed risk taking behaviour once he left school, including alcohol abuse. This participant lost one brother and two sisters to deaths that he believes were directly related to their experiences at residential school. One of his sisters died in a car crash with his two young daughters when he was the driver. He remembers his parents drinking and domestic violence in his home once the last child was taken to the residential school and he believes that the drinking and violence were a direct result of the residential school system.

These are some behaviors that I associate with the school. One of loneliness, and dysfunctional families. My other brother that had about five relationships, now he is in his fifth marriage now. He's doing good now, but I remember when he got shot, twice, in the chest – almost died the second time. So I see that violence.

Paul.

A participant said he used to question whether his parents needed to send him to the residential school. Today he has forgiven his parents but that belief was the source of considerable anger when he was younger. The other five participants did not experience that anger as they believed their parents had no choice but to send them to school.

Participants experienced other challenges in life: one was sexually assaulted when she briefly attended a day school, another faced widowhood in her early fifties. One of the women gave up a child for adoption when she became pregnant before marriage. Although she later married the child's father she was unable to get the child back. They were finally reunited when the child became an adult. Marriage outside the First Nations community created an extra challenge for three of the women who have recently reclaimed the Indian status that they lost through their marriages to non-Indians.

Participants easily identified two factors in their lives that they felt were protective, other factors that earlier research found to be protective in other populations were also present but were not identified by the participants.

The participants were unanimous in identifying their family of origin and happy childhood as a key protective factor. All the participants described, with love and emotion, a family life before school that gave them a warm and nurturing experience and a feeling of their importance in the world. Grandparents and/or parents were their guides and mentors. For several of the participants, brothers or sisters and cousins were also key resources to survival both in the residential school and afterwards. The support of warm caring adults and a significant attachment to a caregiver are both identified by earlier research as protective factors (Greenbaum & Auerbach, 1992; Werner & Smith, 1992; Rutter & Rutter, 1993; Benard, 1991).

The participants identified their spiritual beliefs as important to their wellbeing, making repeated references to spirituality and a good relationship with the Creator. One of the participants, the one who feels the least attached to her heritage, wishes to further increase her attachment to her Aboriginal spirituality. The participants came to their adoption of the traditional religion by different routes. Claire and Velma were initially reawakened to their heritage through adult education classes; Maria mentioned the 1960's movement and specifically the events at Wounded Knee as a learning phase for her. Paul rediscovered his heritage when he turned away from alcohol and went seeking for answers, whereas neither Sophia nor Amory spoke of significant periods when they were without their belief in their heritage.

The participants' accounts also describe other factors that were present that earlier research suggests may contribute to resilience, even though the participants did not directly identify these factors. All the participants married young and stayed married, raising families of three or four children. Becoming a parent has been identified as a potentially protective factor as has a long-term positive relationship. (Garmezy, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1992; Rutter & Rutter, 1993).

Only one participant revealed a tendency to risk taking behaviour once he left school. The tendency, or ability to avoid risk has been identified as a protective factor that results in the person facing fewer threats to wellbeing and a lack of compounding of those threats (Rutter, 1987). One participant disclosed that she withdrew somewhat from her surroundings and was reluctant to have special friends as they might leave. This tactic is identified by Anthony (1987, p. 14) as withdrawing and distancing.

At an early age these participants made a commitment to education and all the participants referred to family expectations that they would do well at school. Not all the participants went on to receive university degrees but they all pursued both formal and informal education after leaving Grade 12 and as adults they continue to learn. Being open to learning is another factor identified by researchers as promoting resilience (Garmezy 1987; Rutter, 1987; Werner & Smith, 1982). A further protective factor is having respected others set high standards for the individual and believe in their ability to achieve (Benard, 1991) and all these participants described grandparents or parents expectations that they would do well.

The children needed to develop a coping style to help them process their experiences and give them some feeling of control over their day-to-day lives. The participants developed styles of coping that suited their personalities; five of them saw what was necessary to avoid pain and generally did what was required. There were times when small rebellions were necessary to show the children that they had some power, but the rebellions were not intended to be discovered by the staff, so that punishment could be avoided.

One rebellion was to speak their native language, and all the participants spoke their own language whenever they could and in one participant's case she learned more Aboriginal languages while at school in order to better communicate with the other girls. By the use of elaborate warning systems and ensuring that they were out of earshot of the staff they usually escaped punishment. One participant described a situation where the warning system failed and she was slapped and dragged around by her hair.

Participants described situations where some of the other students physically attacked staff they enjoyed this vicariously - especially as they would not be punished. However, one participant described what she referred to as a "silly" rebellion. The girls made sure, when they went out to walk the exercise path, that they walked in an anti-clockwise direction as they had learned in ceremonies at home. The teachers were apparently unaware of the significance of the direction that they walked and did not bother them.

On the whole the children decided on a cooperative strategy to avoid trouble, but there was one exception. One participant and his clan members deliberately flouted all the rules. They challenged the system constantly, and in the challenge came the proof that they were stronger than the system. In some of the challenges they humiliated the priests without the priests' knowledge. The system would not break this boy, although he said that there were days where he felt he was losing his ability to endure. This participant's strength came from his defiance and his proven ability to overcome the power of the school. Garnezy, Masten and Tellegen (1984) write of the "challenge model", where stress enhances competence so long as it is not so severe as to be overpowering. To an extent this participant is an example of the challenge model, but his deliberate pushing of the boundaries and invitation of negative consequences goes beyond the intention of that definition.

Some of the children were raised in families that already had generations of graduates of the residential school system and yet, according to the testimony of participants in this research, the earlier generations had survived to be competent. The older generations were able to give the children the environment required for good

emotional development until the children were sent to school. These participants had a mixed history of parents and grandparents who did or did not attend residential school. Four of the women had a primary female caregiver who did not attend residential school and three of the women had one or more male parental figure (father and/or grandfather) who did attend residential or industrial school. Both of the parents of the male participants had been in the school system. Many of the grandparents also had been in the residential schools, and at least two of the grandparent couples were "matched" by the staff at their school, a common practice at that time.

The apparent wellbeing of the families with parents and grandparents who had attended residential school is intriguing. Some of these participants had at least one parental figure who did not attend residential school, but it is not possible to tell if that made a difference to the quality of the child rearing. With further research using a larger sample and an intergenerational analysis of residential school graduates it may be possible to identify a level of intergenerational risk which can be tolerated within a family system and still allow the system to function adequately.

Both word and action of the school staff told the children that Indians were dirty, ignorant and pagan. Some of the children believed it for a while, but today all the participants recognize the value of the history and culture of their people and are proud of their heritage. Some of the participants seemed to recover their positive self-image as Aboriginal people as adults, while others seem not ever to have lost it. Two of the participants report rediscovering the value of their heritage through adult learning experiences, and a third sought traditional solutions when he felt he needed help. Being

able to hold on to a positive self- image, or rebuild it, is a key factor in long term resilience (Werner & Smith, 1992).

I have to note that at the time of this research one of the participants was fighting a depression apparently resulting from post-traumatic-stress-disorder. Her predicament after so many years shows that resilience is not necessarily an impenetrable shield, but hopefully her resilient tendencies will help her to regain a state of wellbeing at a later date.

Addressing the Questions for Research

The first question for research: is it possible to identify personal characteristics that appear to have positively encouraged resilience? Through use of their powers of observation and understanding, key aspects of their intelligence, the participants were able to discern what actions would bring them more than usual levels of punishment. They were then, to an extent, able to decide whether or not to avoid that punishment. All punishment could not be avoided as it was too pervasive, but there was a level at which the children had some control. Only one of the participants did not consciously avoid punishment most of the time. With rebellions carried out in such a way as not to be noticed it was possible for the children to have the satisfaction of beating the system in small ways. One of the male participants described an attitude different from all the others: he "took on" the system, seeming to need repeated proof that the system had not beaten him. But he acknowledged that there were times when he wondered if he would make it as "it seemed long" (Amory).

Two of the girls did not dwell on their plight. They looked beyond the school experience to the life as wives and mothers that they knew they would have. This "future

thinking” was identified by Anthony (1987, p.14) as a protective factor. One of the women described forgetting about the revenge she had hoped to take out on a violent staff member. Only one of the participants allowed his anger to become self-destructive once he left school and he was the one who felt that the school took his positive self-image.

Although each participant did not demonstrate all the same personal characteristics, characteristics that appear to have been factors in the resilience of these participants include many of the factors identified in other resilience research. Those characteristics such as: intelligent analysis of the situation, identifying the locus of power, the ability to plan, cooperative natures, and the ability to maintain or rebuild self-image.

The second question for research is: were there experiences, prior to attending residential school, that appear to have positively affected resilience? The participants all have identified their happy and safe childhood as key to their survival. Their happy childhood was possible because their family was still healthy despite the fact that some family members attended the residential or industrial school system, and for most of the participants their homes and home communities continued to be supportive places to which they could return. Child development research has repeatedly proven that the quality of a child’s early life is a significant predictor of future outcome.

The third question for research is: were there factors outside the residential school experience that appear to have positively affected resilience? The participants identified their spiritual life as a significant factor in their resilience and several of them described the learning and considering processes that took place before adopting the traditional religion. Other protective factors common to findings in resilience research are; long

term marriages: becoming parents: and the high expectations of significant adults. To these we can add the personal characteristics already mentioned of a positive self-image, a lack of risk-taking behaviour, intelligence, and openness to learning.

Implications for Research and Practice

The purpose of this research is to expand our knowledge of resilience in order to generate new theories, or reinforce existing ones, resulting in an improvement in social work practice. Research findings are not always easily translated into practice guidelines.

The participants identified two factors that they believe have promoted their resilience. The first was a happy childhood. They were fortunate to be born into families that had healthy members despite any previous involvement in the residential school system. As a happy childhood cannot be offered by later interventions, this research further emphasizes the importance to practice of initiatives that help parents provide a nurturing environment for their child's early years.

A further dimension of this factor that may have effected these children was that they came from homes where they saw their parents and grandparents as competent people and loving parents. Even Paul, who saw his parents slip into excessive alcohol use, remembers his parents before that time and respects their memory. When these participants were presented with images of Indians as dirty, pagan and ignorant, in the schools or in society at large, it is conceivable they could contrast these images with memories of their parents and grandparents who were none of those things. When the images of their relatives as valued people were matched with later positive learning about Aboriginal history, culture and religion, these participants could have had a powerful construct on which to build their positive self-image. Further research may show that the

significance of a healthy home life is a two-fold factor in the development of the individual self-image not only because of healthy nurturing, but also because the individual knows that there is a family history of competence. This memory of competence can be used to advantage in building the individual's self-image.

The second factor the participants identified is their spirituality, particularly an attachment to their traditional religion. The practice of their traditional religion was a conscious decision of all six participants. Five of the participants are significantly attached to the traditional religion and one is peripherally attached, but looking for ways to increase that attachment. Some participants described coming back to their traditional religion as a process of learning and acceptance. It seems probable that in order to practice their traditional religion it was necessary that the participants respect their history and culture. If a respect for history and culture is a necessary prerequisite for adopting the traditional religion, might the former be adequate for the development of a positive self-image without the latter? It raises the question of which factor promotes the positive self-image? Is the positive self-image a result of a strong spiritual life or is the inverse true?

Part of the challenge of the findings of resilience research is that there are still many questions about how factors that are linked to resilience actually work. For example a long-term relationship, perhaps marriage, has shown itself to be a protective factor, but we do not know why resilient people have long term relationships. Are they better at picking their mates, or are they more flexible or accepting in a relationship than those who are not resilient? If we were to take as a goal of our practice 'to influence the longevity of relationships in order to create resilience' our efforts would probably still

miss the point as we do not understand the link between resilience and long term relationships. We can now recognize resilience, and current research is creating questionnaires that may predict it, but we still do not fully understand it.

Many protective factors, directly or indirectly, develop from the child's genetic heritage or childhood experience. The child's environment in utero, the birth family's socioeconomic factors, the mother's ability to nurture, access to necessary medical and mental health care, these are only some of the factors that will influence the child's wellbeing. Social workers have always worked in the larger environment to influence systems for the betterment of society, and we must continue to do so to ensure that all children have the opportunity for a healthy start in life. We must continue to work actively in the areas of economics, public health, education and support for parents, and access to medical and mental health services.

As social workers we learn that we work with environments that are both external and internal to our clients and one of those internal environments is spirituality. The participants stressed the importance of their spiritual beliefs to their wellbeing, and revealed that they came back to their traditional beliefs through awareness of the value of Aboriginal people and an understanding of their history. This raises two potential areas for work for social workers with Aboriginal clients, and this principal also transfers into practice with clients from other ethnic groups. The first area for work is the rebuilding of a positive self-image through learning, in this case the learning of Aboriginal history and the achievements of ancestors. The second area is that of the role of spirituality in positive self-image and general wellbeing. Social workers who anticipate working with Aboriginal people need to know the history and achievements of their client's ancestors,

and must also be familiar with traditional Aboriginal spirituality. Non-Aboriginal social workers may not be able to impart spiritual and historical information credibly to Aboriginal clients but they can develop contacts with Elders and others who can help with that work.

Addressing the realm of spirituality, if it is addressed at all, has been by the few social workers who expressed comfort at dealing with the topic. Most of us have been squeamish about being involved in other's spiritual life. Nevertheless, it is clear that for many people their spirituality is an important dimension of their being, and as social workers we should not avoid addressing it. To ensure we have maximum effectiveness we need to become comfortable with the topic so that we can address our clients' needs and facilitate their finding the support that is necessary for their wellbeing.

This research encourages social workers to continue their concentration on healthy beginnings for children and to include spirituality as an area for exploration when dealing with their clients. The participants' stories have corroborated the experiences of residential school attendees reported in Miller (1997), Chrisjohn et al (1997), and the report of the Manitoba Joint Committee on Residential Schools (1994) and add to the body of knowledge of resilience research.

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APPENDIX A CONSENT FORM

**Factors Contributing to Resilience in
Aboriginal Persons Who Attended Residential schools
Participant Consent Form**

I am asking you to take part in a study on resilience. Resilience is the ability of people to deal with stress and go on to be a success in their day-to-day lives. This study is confidential. only I will know both your name and what you said.

You can stop your participation at any time. If you want you can see the report when it is finished.

Taking part in this interview is not supposed to give you stress. But, if you do find it upsetting, I will help you find the counselling resources you need. Also, if you would like, I can contact you one week after the interview to see if you feel you want support.

Please fill in the block below if you will take part:

I agree to participate.

Name: _____

Address: _____

Telephone #: _____

Date: day/month/year

Signed

Researcher Name:

Status: M.S.W. student, University of Manitoba, Winnipeg, MB.

Address:

Telephone:

APPENDIX B INTERVIEWER GUIDE

Interview guide

The italicized headings may be used as cues. The subheadings are a checklist to help the interviewer ensure that all the necessary hard data (e.g. siblings, age of going to school) is collected. Any of the hard data not gathered in the general flow of the interview should be gathered at the end.

What is living well:

- the participant's description of living well
- participant's retrospective on how they have come to where they are

Family of birth and time before school:

- description, parents, siblings
- relationships with family members that are remembered as significant
- affective memories of family

Current family:

- spouse(s)
- children
- significant others

The school experience

- age of enrolment in Residential school
- details of the Residential school – distance from home, opportunities for visitation of/to family, length of residence
- significant others also at the school
- general description of the school experience
- experiences noted as negative
- experiences noted as positive
- individuals within the school experienced as negative
- individuals within the school experienced as positive
- outside influences during the period of residence: persons: events
- remembered affect

The transition to the non-school world:

- on leaving school: hopes: fears: attitudes

Adult experiences:

- significant experiences after school-leaving, general description
- experiences noted as negative
- experiences noted as positive
- other individuals experienced as negative
- other individuals experienced as positive

Spirituality:

- cultural or spiritual influences during the lifetime experienced as positive/negative

Participant's summary

- revisit participant's retrospective on how they have come to where they are

APPENDIX C LETTER INVITING COMMENTS

20 April, 2000

Dear

It has been almost a year since you kindly gave me an interview, on the subject of residential schools. And I must thank you again for being so kind as to speak with me. I really appreciate that you were willing to do that.

Now I have almost finished transcribing the life stories that people shared with me and I would like you to have the opportunity to tell me where I have left out key information, or where my understanding is wrong. Or even to add thoughts that you have had since. As I am required to keep your information confidential, you will notice I have given you a different name in the manuscript. If you would like a different name just let me know what name you prefer.

It isn't necessary for you to do anything if you are satisfied with your story. But if you want to add things that you have thought about, or correct any of my information, please let me know. Also there may be aspects of the story that you feel should be emphasized more than I have. I would like the stories to be as accurate and meaningful as possible. Thinking further, are there any other consequences of the Residential school experience that I should write about?

I am sending you a copy of what I have written from your tapes. If you wish to write all over it, or send me back another paper with your comments, please feel free. I have sent you an envelope addressed to me, but because I cannot buy Canadian stamps here I have sent you \$5.00 US to cover postage.

If I do not hear from you I will assume that you do not want to add to, or change the manuscript.

I will be sending you the completed thesis as soon as my committee approves the final version. Thank you again.

Sincerely,

Phone:

e-mail