

**SPIRITUALITY IN HELPING OTHERS:
LEARNING FROM FIRST NATIONS ELDERS AND COUNSELORS'
ALCOHOL RELATED EXPERIENCE**

by

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Abstract

This phenomenological study describes my understanding of spirituality in helping others. The purpose of this thesis is to reflect on my experience as a public health nurse in Japan by learning about First Nations participants' attitudes toward spirituality and helping others. My question in this inquiry is: how does spirituality emerge in the participants' ways of helping others in relation to alcohol related concerns? To answer this question, I conducted conversational interviews with First Nations Elders and counselors — Alden Pompana, the late Mary John, Robin Chouinard, and a Carrier person who wishes to be called 'Frog House Opinions'. The interpretation of my interviews was facilitated by a phenomenological approach that enabled the cross-cultural dialogues between First Nations participants and a Japanese person to seek a shared understanding of spirituality. As a result, this thesis demonstrates that helping relationships can promote 'spiritual growth' for helpers, when healing and helping become communal and mutual. I hope that this thesis brings an opportunity for helping professionals, to reflect on their involvement in the healing process of others, and to find their own meaning in their work.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to Val and Kawano-san,
the beauty of whose lives is always in my mind.

This thesis is also dedicated to my friend
who motivated me to live in the way I wrote in this thesis,
with love and respect for self and others;
he made me realize that it would not always be easy.

Chapter One – How Did I Start My Journey

This thesis is a record of my inner journey. It is a journey that is helping me learn about myself as I interact with the world. The primary purpose of this study is to reflect on my personal experience of spirituality as a public health nurse in Japan with regard to helping others. This reflection is contextualized in the framework of First Nations attitudes toward spirituality and helping others who have alcohol related challenges. In this inquiry, I ask, “How do First Nations persons express spirituality through their ways of helping others?” I interviewed Four First Nations elders or counselors in the *Dakelh Keyoh*, the territory of the Carrier Nation — two Carrier, the Late Mary John and a Carrier person who wishes to be called ‘Frog House Opinions’, and two non-Carrier, a Dakota and a Cree person, who reside on *Dakelh Keyoh*, Alden Pompana and Robin Chouinard. They are my guides in this journey who helped me to answer this question by telling their stories of helping people who have alcohol related challenges and by sharing their beliefs about spirituality. I, as a Japanese person, learn from these First Nations people who have different cultural backgrounds. Thus, this thesis does not represent an outlook of only one specific First Nation, even though *Dakelh-ne* beliefs, Carrier beliefs, are expressed through the participants’ experience, as well as mine, in this journey. Using a phenomenological approach, I seek a shared understanding of spirituality by exploring diverse experience and beliefs through a multi-cultural perspective.

In the first chapter, I introduce myself to describe the background of this learning journey: who I am and what are my preconceptions and assumptions that shape the questions and interpretations in this study. In the second chapter, I present how I approached this inquiry, discussing research methods, ethics, and limitations as well as

the theoretical framework of the phenomenological approach. In the third chapter, I share the information in the literature that prepared me for interviewing the participants and for interpreting what they told me. The fourth chapter introduces the words of the participants and how I understand them, and the last chapter describes what I have discovered through this learning journey. I want to invite you to share my journey in the hope that my experience will convey something that speaks to you echoing with your own experience.

The Beginning

I grew up in Japan during a time of rapid economic growth, and a time when Japan had gained an identity as a democratic nation after World War II. The mass media and educational system repeatedly showed the Japanese war atrocities in repentance for Japanese Imperialism, and consequently, humanitarian activities were also promoted through this movement. The more influential the Japanese economy became in the world market, the more Japan was required to take an active role in foreign affairs in such areas as global economic development, intervention in wars and disputes, and aid in the areas of health care and natural disasters. As a result, international cooperation and development assistance became main concerns for the Japanese government. It was a major shift for a government that had previously been concerned solely with domestic affairs. The humanitarian movement in Japan greatly influenced me throughout my childhood, and I dreamt of a career in humanitarian activities.

However, as I became older, I became aware that humanitarian ideals are ‘easier said than done.’ While post-war Japan advocated humanitarian ideals, it also experienced nationwide disputes over pollution, exploitation of laborers, and military affairs. These disputes sometimes resulted in riots. Moreover, the exploitation of natural resources and

labor forces, in the name of economic growth, has threatened the domestic and international ecosystems and human rights; such exploitation may promote capitalism and globalization that often results in the destruction of natural environments and in the inequality among the ‘developed and underdeveloped.’ By exploring these sociopolitical issues, I realized that, in part, they are promoted by our ethnocentric ways of thinking and ‘desires for more’ lifestyle. Consequently, I reflected on my own way of living in relation to these considerations, and I became eager to live according to my personal ethical principles.

Awareness of Social Factors and Interest in the Inner Self: What Is It to Be

Healthy?

My innocent idealism changed during my first education experience in cross-cultural policy studies at Chuo University in Japan. The cultural studies and postmodern¹ theories, which I encountered there, helped me to realize that each culture inherits its own wisdom for solving problems. I questioned the idea that “the developed world possessed both the talent and the capital for helping backward countries to develop” (Foster 1999: 349). I was also introduced to the structural and historical problems of domination, alienation, and class conflicts.² I learned that poverty and disease can be byproducts of “developed countries” when they marginalize the power of local societies and their inhabitants into a state of being “underdeveloped.” This marginalization seems to be

¹ Even though I did not clearly recognize it, it was later through my Master’s degree at UNBC that I became more aware of the influence of postmodernism on my thought. One can refer to Rosenau (1992) for further discourse about post-modernism and its impact on social science. In nursing literature, Cheek (2000) and Watson (1999) adopt postmodernists’ thoughts in nursing research, while Reed (1995) proposes to overcome the fragmentation postmodernism has brought about.

² This idea can be seen in Critical Theories that examine the political and economic forces in a given historical situation (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000, and Marcuse 1989). This theory examines the dynamic interaction between individual consciousness and social mechanisms of integration aiming at social action for changes (Fromm 1989, Habermas 1989, Marcuse 1989, and Morrow 1991).

promoted through the exploitation of rural markets under the global expansion of capitalism which greatly perpetuates colonial “metropolis-satellite relations” (Frank 1984: 101) in order to maintain the prosperity of the developed countries. This relation brought to my attention the possibility that the services and aids we bring may negatively impact upon positive aspects of local traditions that have functioned for generations in a particular sociocultural context of a given society.³ My concern was that this impact could result in strengthening the dependency of those considered “underdeveloped” on the hierarchical order that helps the “developed” to retain their advantages in obtaining human, natural and technological resources.

My concerns led me to this inquiry: How can I promote the health of the people without forcing them to be ‘healthy’ in the way *we* believe they should be? This question corrupted my dream of helping others in foreign countries, and required me to re-establish my self-identity and worldview. I started by asking myself these questions: Is working *for others* always hypocrisy? Who am I in relation to others? Why is it possible for some individuals to overcome difficulties caused by their circumstances and attain a stronger sense of well-being in a world of conflicts and inequalities, and others not? What is it to be healthy in this contradictory situation? How can we as health care providers not weaken the potentiality and power of a person while being aware of the great influence of society on that person?”

³ This notion is relevant to Functionalists’ perspectives that see every culture as equally perfect in the context of functioning (Homans 1941, Malinowski 1931, Monaghan and Just 2000, Radcliffe-Brown 1939, and Scupin 2000). In spite of the contribution of Functionalism to the liberation from ethnocentric views of cultures, it is also noted that Functionalists ignore the class struggle and individual factors for social change and often result in preserving racism (Amselle 1993, Bromley 1987, Brozi 1992, Just 2000, Marcus 2002, and Smelser 1990).

Unfortunately, no matter how many questions I asked, I could not find satisfying answers. I was not able to explain how some people are able to transcend challenging circumstances through an understanding of sociopolitical themes. In addition to this unsuccessful effort to explain a person's health merely through a social context, I was also experiencing struggles in my relationships with friends, family, and self; this turned my inquiry inward. I became eager to understand where my problems stemmed from and how I could overcome them. I started looking into the personal experiences of myself and others because individuals' experiences provide powerful evidence of the human potential for transforming negative circumstances into a source of personal growth. I wanted to understand and see the complexity of human life through my own experience. This questioning process led to my decision to become a nurse, because it would enable me to witness a variety of personal healing processes through relationships with patients.

Exploring Existence through Experience

At nursing college in Japan, I learned about the physical, mental, and social aspects of health. I started answering my questions by exploring how I was being inspired by the people I encountered everyday. I also came upon several books that have greatly impacted my outlook on life during my education in nursing: among them were "Man's Search for Meaning" (1962) by Viktor Emil Frankl (1905-1997) and "Nausea" (1964) by Jean-Paul Sartre (1905-1980). They demonstrate that human existence is greatly conditioned in circumscribed conditions, and thus existence can be contradictory rather than complete and invariable. Ultimately *I* am the one who decides because the choices are mine and I am responsible for *my* existence as it is in *my* hands. In other words, we as human beings are constantly in the process of learning about ourselves and

becoming ourselves in a way we choose rather than existing perfectly, and we, not others, society, nor a Higher Power, are responsible for our beings. This notion of existence gave me great hope and encouragement, because it indicates that I can also become the person whom I want to be.

After I graduated from nursing college, I chose to work as a public health nurse because of my interest in the cultural and social aspects of health, and in the everyday life experience that exists beyond the clinical setting. I worked primarily in the mental health field during my two-year career in Japan. This experience kept me questioning my views of society and human life as I encountered people with various mental illnesses and problems, such as schizophrenia, depression, neurosis, anti-social personality disorders, and experiences of child abuse, domestic violence, and addiction (both victims and perpetrators). As I listened to the perspectives of those people and their families, it became clear that many of these problems coincided with the expression of unmet needs related to a personal sense of worth, sense of meaning in life, and feelings of being able to love and be loved.⁴ Moreover, I often found that their pathological symptoms and behaviors functioned as mechanisms to control others in order to fulfill their unmet needs. It seemed to me that these individuals were hiding their needs for meaning and love behind distrust and hostility.

Working with those individuals and their families was challenging. Most of the time, approaches that relied solely on medication or counseling did not produce positive

⁴ This idea parallels Frankl's (1962: 102-103) notion of "existential frustration" and "the existential vacuum" (108-110): existential frustration is an inner conflict, in which a person's will to meaning is frustrated; the existential vacuum is a person's state of not knowing what he or she wants to do. Frankl (1962: 102) defines "existential" as follows: "(1) *existence* itself, i.e., the specifically human mode of being; (2) the *meaning* of existence; and (3) the striving to find a concrete meaning in personal existence, that is to say, the *will* to meaning." He named his counseling approach "logotherapy." Logotherapy aims to orient a person to be fully aware of the meaning of his or her life

changes, and we, the helping professionals, rarely saw the illness ‘cured’ or the problem ‘solved.’ As a newly graduated nurse, I was afraid that I did not have enough ‘professional knowledge and skill’ to ‘solve’ these difficult problems. Also, as a young person, I often had no ‘answer’ for those who asked me ‘the meaning of his life’ or ‘her reason to live.’ This led to a growing sense of helplessness which resulted in my ability to be more honest about my limitations while furthering my sincere effort to understand another person by referring to my personal experiences and feelings. As a result, my work as a public health nurse grounded and facilitated my personal process of self-reflection and promoted an understanding of myself, and more broadly, human life in general. Surprisingly, it seemed to me that the attitude of being honest with myself made the helping relationship more effective by establishing trust and openness between myself and those I was trying to be of help for.⁵ This realization changed my perception on helping others and my way of working with people. Accordingly, I became more comfortable with my work and found myself inspired through sharing another person’s growth and healing.

Of the several problems that I encountered during my career, I became interested in the problems of alcohol and drug abuse, eating disorders, and abusive relationships. The process of overcoming these problems is marked by fluctuating success which repeatedly ‘betrays the expectations’ of helpers. “Build a clear boundary as a professional,” became a common motto of helping professionals. I understood this professionals’ rule as a guide to prevent a helper from being ‘over-involved’ in another

⁵ My perception of the helping relationship corresponds to Carl R Rogers’ (1902-1987) approach to the facilitation of personal growth. Rogers (1961: 33) states that “I have found that the more that I can be genuine in the relationship, the more helpful it will be.” Rogers’ philosophy of client-centered therapy has influenced many theorists and practitioners in psychology and nursing.

persons' problems and trying to take control over their life on behalf of solving a problem. It was also believed by professionals that boundaries would enable a helper to set the limit: in the helping relationship with those who depend on substances, a helper needs to be aware that taking care of their problems as they wish may result in removing their chances to face the problems caused by their substance abuse and be responsible for their actions.

However, I wondered, if this boundary-making rule is effective; why are professionals burning out due to a sense of being helpless? In addition, the professionalism that is supposed to arm helpers with "objectivity" and "professional knowledge" caused conflict with my belief that being honest and reflective as a helper makes the helping relationships more effective. Furthermore, professionals' "objective" judgment of another person was often incompatible with my belief that every person has potential for positive change if he or she wishes. My frustration between these two different perspectives of helping others made me further question how I can be of help for the people who have substance abuse problems.

During this time of exploration and questioning, I often encountered statements that medical and counseling approaches were of no use for those who abuse substances. In order to know what would make their healing possible, I went to workshops, meetings and lectures about substance abuse and abusive relationships. In spite of the health profession's inability to deal with these problems, a number of people were overcoming their problems through the Twelve Step Program of Alcoholics Anonymous [AA]. The participants in the Twelve Step Programs often talked about discovering their unmet needs that had been compensated by abusing substances or engaging in abusive

relationships. Their process of overcoming the problems seemed to be a sincere exploration in knowing themselves and their relationships with others. I also encountered people who were able to stop abusing substances, or change aggressive behavior toward family, without any professional help or even the assistance of the Twelve Step program. Their new ways of living seemed to be a rebirth of a totally different person, creating new relationships in harmony with the self and others. The transformative processes of each person were as diverse and unique as each human life is diverse and unique. Thus, it seems to me that overcoming substance abuse problems is the result of personal growth in the life-long process of finding one's self identity. As I witnessed people's life process of struggling and healing, I reflected on my personal experiences. This reflection further inspired me on a journey of knowing the self in relation to the world.

I perceived this process of overcoming substance abuse as spiritual, since the transformation that one experiences through this process cannot be categorized as merely physical, mental, or behavioral processes. Rather, the changes seem to emerge through every aspect of a person and turn him or her into a more balanced and integrated individual. I have also observed that there is a transpersonal dimension in healing — interaction between a person and a helper is based on personal feelings and beliefs. This dimension is often underestimated by health care professionals who prefer “scientific” or “objective” approaches. However, since the “professional” approach is often helpless with regards to substance abuse, it seems to me that the transpersonal dimension is a key to an effective helping relationship with those who have substance abuse problems. I further suppose that because of this transpersonal aspect of healing, helping others relates to my own growth. Without being able to explain this adequately due to the conceptual

framework that I have been trained in through my nursing education and career, I assumed that this dimension had something to do with so-called ‘spirituality.’

Japanese Spirituality and Beyond

I started seeking to understand spirituality more clearly. In Japan, we do not have a single equivalent word for the English term “spirituality.” Thus “spirituality” has been translated into different words and often is used without being translated (Kasai 2003, and Daiguji and Murata 2003). According to Kasai (2003), the use of the term “spirituality” in Japanese newspapers and magazines is largely limited to authors who discuss caring philosophy in education, counseling and nursing; the Japanese population in general, rarely uses the word “spirituality.” Indeed, I often felt uneasiness when discussing “spirituality,” even with caring professionals in Japan. People seemed to be uncomfortable or indifferent to incorporate spirituality in understanding a person’s health and healing due to ambiguous feelings and attitudes toward religion: both strong commitment to religious beliefs and practices on the one hand, and skepticism against religious authority and ideology on the other are present among the Japanese.

I assume that this ambivalence towards religion is the result of the disillusionment in religion because of religious propaganda and authority during World War II. The Japanese military regime during World War II successfully promoted Japanese Imperialism by advocating the idea that the Emperor was a direct descendant of God. The Japanese religious qualities of harmony and sacrifice were utilized to promote colonization by the Japanese army throughout Asia in the name of forming a unity among Asian countries against “Western individualism and rationalism” (Henshall 1999:112). When Japan admitted defeat in the war, the Japanese had to face the fact that our God

was not the God, but a human being, and that the ‘honorable’ war caused the sacrifice of a huge number of lives and left great damage instead of “God’s glory for Asian unity.” In the democratization process, led by the United States of America after World War II, the Emperor system of Japan was preserved due to the consideration that deprivation of the Emperor system would cause serious emotional damage to the Japanese social consciousness. Yet, I believe, the experience of disillusionment has caused skepticism about religious ideologies and resulted in a general preference for secularism among the Japanese. Religious enthusiasm has been seemingly replaced with the devotion to reconstruction of the country through the development of technology and the economy.

Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that Japan has not completely taken leave of religion. Japanese customs are still deeply rooted in the traditional beliefs of Shinto⁶ and Buddhism⁷ as they permeate the morals, lifestyles and aesthetics of Japan. In addition, people’s belief in spirit, a soul that is separable from human and animal body, is persistent. As a person who grew up in Japan, these beliefs and practices are a part of me. Shinto taught me to sense, worship, and tune into the sacred life in nature. Machida (2000) explains spirituality of the Japanese very well as referring to the beliefs of Ainu and Shinto. According to Machida (ibid), the concept of Gods for both Ainu and Japanese is more of the vibration of the life that is omnipresent behind every mortal, rather than the Higher Power who advocates morals. This infinite life can never be

⁶ Shinto is regarded as Japanese indigenous religion, which was related to the Creation myth of Japan. Shinto was politically utilized to justify the Emperor’s divine lineage for political reasons historically (Henshall 1999, and Littleton 2000). Through the separation of religion and politics after World War II, Shinto survived through Japanese custom, associated with purification, making a wish and animistic worship of sacred spirits in every object, especially in nature, such as trees, rocks, and springs.

⁷ After Buddhism was introduced into Japan by a Korean king in 587 A.D., it has been developed into diverse denominations that are unique to Japanese Buddhism. Thus, various beliefs exist within Japanese Buddhism. It is beyond the scope of this study to explain all these diverse beliefs, and I confine myself to describing how the various ideas intermingle within my personal philosophy. Littleton (2000) and Siklós (1988) provide a good introduction to Japanese Buddhism.

destroyed and enables every finite life to exist; be it plant, animal, human, and even tool. This vibration of the infinite life is sensed through one's direct experiences. On the other hand, the beliefs of Buddhism that I was exposed to in my childhood, such as karma, reincarnation among humans and animals, deliverance and compassion, have developed into my ideals of living respectfully, in temperance, with self-discipline, and kindheartedness.

Among diverse teachings of Buddhism, Zen philosophy has greatly influenced my outlook on and attitude toward life. A description of Japanese spirituality by Japanese Zen practitioner and philosopher Daisetsu Suzuki (1870-1966) illustrates Zen beliefs very well. According to Suzuki (1972), spirituality is related more to human nature in the present life rather than to the afterlife or the Higher Power. Spirituality resides in the depth of one's mind and integrates the duality of the mind from the person's physical being and emotional being — and only through the integrating force of a spirit, one's mind senses, thinks, intends and acts through its genuine nature. Suzuki (1972: 126) also asserts that transcendence of the 'good-bad' dichotomy is a distinctive feature of Japanese spirituality: spirituality emerges in the dissolving of a border between conceptions of good and bad by denying what is conventionally conceived to be good and bad. Hence, according to Suzuki (*ibid*), spirituality emerges in unconditional love, embracing both good and bad.

Even these seemingly contradictory ideas about spirituality —animistic beliefs in spirits and Zen's focus on the present state of the human mind— coexist in my personal beliefs harmoniously. In other words, I was raised in a religious environment where a person can flexibly integrate different religious concepts and practices. This flexible

attitude toward religions is shared by many Japanese people. Research demonstrates that Japanese people are likely to hold more than one religious affiliation: the total number of religious affiliations is almost the double of the whole Japanese population (Ishikawa 1993). Without the establishment of a state religious authority after World War II, the Japanese have been allowed to explore diverse religious traditions and integrate a variety of domestic and imported religious beliefs into personal belief systems.

While being influenced by a variety of religious beliefs, each person in Japan is free to develop his or her own understanding of spirituality. In the research on the concepts of spirituality described by the Japanese, the following ideas are mentioned as spirituality: reverence for nature, connection to ancestors, inner strength, and sense of, but not necessary faith in, the Absolute Power.⁸ This research also demonstrates that, among the several concepts of spirituality, the Japanese tend to highly value “inner peace / serenity / harmony” and “inner strength,” rather than “religious rituals” and “control over one’s life by the Higher Power” (Kasai 2003: 152-153). It is also observed in Japanese literature that Japanese authors tend to describe spirituality as “good mind” and relate spirituality to ethics rather than belief in the Higher Power (Shimazono 2003, Motoyama 2001, Nakajima 2001, and Yuasa 2002 & 2003). These facts illuminate that, underlying the general hesitancy about expressing individual religious beliefs, the Japanese experience and express spirituality in a highly elastic and personal way while maintaining traditional beliefs. Even though I had some ideas about spirit or spirituality based on my personal beliefs as I have described above, these ideas were not enough to

⁸ This research was conducted for World Health Organization [WHO], “WHOQOL and Spirituality, Religiousness and Personal Beliefs” (WHO 2002), which is preliminary to the discussion about the addition of “spirituality” to the definition of health.

provide me with a clear understanding of why I perceived my experience of helping others as being spiritual. My search continued.

It seems to me that the concept of *Ki*⁹ may explain spirituality in health in a Japanese context. In the tradition of Oriental Medicine, *Ki*— the life energy of the universe — has a major role in maintaining and promoting one’s health. *Ki* permeates into a human body, and helps a person function as an integrated entity. Health can be understood in terms of flow, strength, balance and harmony of the person’s *Ki*. As well, symptoms of one’s body “are regarded as a sign of disharmony and/or disequilibrium of the mind and body in a unique being consisting of one unit” (Chang 2003: 104 &112). This concept has been a foundation for many Oriental therapies such as acupuncture, acupressure, and massage therapy.¹⁰ *Ki* is also regarded as affecting human relationships in Japanese culture: each person has his or her unique tone or vibration of *Ki*, and the personal energies interact and create a relational vibration between the persons.¹¹

In order to maintain and promote one’s health, the life energy within the person needs to be in harmony with the life energy that flows everywhere through all entities in the universe: achieving oneness in tune to the omnipresent life energy facilitates and vitalizes the energy flow of a person (Chang 2003: 109). This means that healing occurs when an individual restores the harmonious connection to the life energy within and

⁹ Chang (2003: 103) notes that *Ki* in Japan is closely related to *prana* in Hindu and India, *fohat* in Tibet, *pneuma* in Greece, *mana* in Kahuna, *bioplasmic energy* in Russia and *bioenergy* in the West, while *Ki* in Korea corresponds to *chi* or *qi* in China and Taiwan. According to Chang (2003:104), “*Ki* is commonly viewed as energy, force, vitality and strength” and this “universal unitary life force or vitality is believed to flow through all living systems” in many Eastern cultures.

¹⁰ The concept of *Ki*, or the similar concept of the energy system, in a human body is also recognized in Western therapeutic approaches: such as healing touch, reflexology and Reiki are well- known healing approaches of this kind in North America. American nursing theorist, Martha Rogers (1914-1994) has developed the theory of Unitary Human Beings, which parallels the concept of *Ki*: Rogers (1970) explains health of a person in terms of an interacting energy field between the person and environment.

¹¹ This idea is distinctive in the Japanese expression, “*Ki ga au*” — each other’s *Ki* matches — which means to get along with each other.

beyond the self. Based on the interviews with Korean therapists who utilize *Ki*, Chang (ibid) states:

Connecting the channel of *Ki* between human beings (the practitioner and the recipient) and between human beings and the universe is perceived to be a fundamental way of vitalizing the power of *Ki*. *Ki* flow is activated by connecting *Ki* between human beings and the universe, rather than pouring *Ki* out of the practitioner into the recipient during the process of touch therapy.

In this context, healing is achieved through the interaction of the life energy within a patient and between the patient and the healer. Both the recipient and healer take an active role in promoting this healing process. Also, due to this interactive nature of healing, rapport between the patient and healer connects and activates the life energy of the two people (Chang ibid). The idea of healing as interrelational seemed to support my intuitive thought that helping others enhances the helper's spirituality. However, my impression was such that the concept of *Ki* fell short of explaining spirituality in my experience of helping the people who have substance abuse problems. Since *Ki* theory mainly applied to physical therapies in contemporary Japanese society,¹² the application of *Ki* to mental health phenomena requires careful examination to avoid misleading explanations. I started wondering if there would be another conceptual framework that I could refer to for an understanding of spirituality in my work. My question remained unanswered.

My Start as a Learner: What is Spirituality in Health and Healing?

While I was exploring spirituality through my work as a public health nurse, my dream to work with the people in an "underdeveloped" country was obscured. During the second year of my career as a public health nurse, in the year 2001, I personally joined a

¹² "*Ki chigai* " — *Ki*-disorganization — was often used to refer to a psychiatric patient in Japan. However, this word is regarded as discriminatory language because it has become laden with negative stereotypes of mental illness.

field trip to Myanmar (Burma) and visited a Japanese Non-Governmental Organization's community health service program in operation. Before the trip, I did not recognize this opportunity as a step to my old dream goal. Rather, I intended to have a meaningful summer vacation by seeing the world from a different perspective. Myanmar had been isolated under the economic sanctions of the United States and European countries, and by the tourism boycott campaign led by the Democratic Party in Myanmar. I witnessed that this political situation resulted in poor infrastructure and increased the country's vulnerability to disasters, starvation, and disease. However, the citizens of this country gave the powerful impression that they have attained their strength and a sense of well-being, regardless of the harsh conditions around them. They seemed to live peacefully and vigorously with hope, contentment, a solid sense of identity, and a code of conduct based on Buddhism.

The people and their ways of life contrasted with contemporary Japanese society. Even though Japan is enjoying economic prosperity and a high standard of medical services, deterioration in mental health seems to be manifested in child abuse, addiction, Hikikomori,¹³ and general unhappiness. These problems are frequently attributed to the stress and discordance resulting from a modern lifestyle and the decrease of spiritual or religious beliefs and practices that can provide us with morality, purpose in life, hope, identity, awe and respect for the whole universe. It is true that we have benefited from modern knowledge and technology. However, the beliefs in modernity need to be

¹³ Hikikomori is a lifestyle in which a person, usually young, retires from social life and stays in his or her room refusing to step out from the house during daytime for more than six months without psychosis as a main reason for that retirement (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare 2004). A Hikikomori also refers to a person who has that lifestyle. In 2002, the public health centers and the centers for mental health and welfare, nation wide had a total of 14,069 inquiries and consultations, both new and continued, about Hikikomori (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare *ibid*).

scrutinized, since the “modernized” society is creating emptiness in a person’s soul.¹⁴ During this trip, we also had a chance to visit a cenotaph in a temple where local priests look after the ‘spirits’ of both local people and Japanese who died during World War II. Regardless that a Japanese Army invaded the area under the pretext that it would release Burma from being a British colonial occupation, the local priests welcomed us warmly and respectfully. They served us tea and sweets, and talked about the importance of peace and friendship. In the colonization process, the Japanese believed the ‘superiority’ of Japanese and in the mission to take control over Asia. However, being with the priests, I clearly recognized that there had never been superiority or inferiority between different cultures or races. This was the moment of peace and humility in which I realized that we Japanese needed to learn from the strength, generosity, serenity, and friendship of people in Myanmar. This was one of the most peaceful moments in the trip.

Through this trip, I identified myself again as a learner rather than a solution-provider. As a Japanese person, I wanted to share the Japanese experience of rapid modernization and the subsequent struggle with spiritual emptiness. As a Japanese person, I wanted to share the learning from our history that religious ideologies could be used to drive the mass population into fanaticism, as well as the learning that the loss of religious beliefs could cause a sense of lack in our soul. It was my hope that this sharing relationship would establish a partnership in which the linear concept of “development” or “superiority” would melt away into a mutual process of learning beyond a unilateral relationship of delivering and receiving help. I assumed that this sharing would help

¹⁴ This situation echoes with Frankl’s notion of “the existential vacuum,” which I mentioned earlier in this chapter. Frankl (1962: 108) explains that the existential vacuum arises from a two-fold loss, the loss of animal instincts and the loss of the traditions: “No instinct tells him what he has to do, and no tradition tells him what he ought to do; soon he will not know what he wants to do.” Frankl (ibid) notes that this is “a widespread phenomenon of the twentieth century.”

people in the “developing” countries to maintain the values they attribute in their traditions that have enhanced their spirituality and sense of well-being. I also hoped that this sharing would help the people in the “developed” countries, most of whom had lived in colonial states, to overcome their spiritual distress after their successful ‘progress.’ Hence, I felt that an understanding and enhancement of spirituality for well-being is necessary for the whole of humanity as it is undergoing transformations of “developing-for-more.” This realization reminded me of my old dream with a new vision — my dream to *work for* the people in “a backward situation” had changed to a desire to *work with* the people to share our experiences and visions for the future of humanity.

Because of this realization, I yearned to learn about the spiritual aspect of health, especially from people who have gone through devastating changes brought about by external forces. Due to the worldwide commercialism of culture, as well as the absence of the state religion in Japan, there is much freedom to explore other belief systems, both domestic and foreign beliefs. As a result of religious freedom, a variety of books and lectures are easily accessed, and I started reading books and attending workshops to know more about spirituality: I explored various approaches to spirituality such as anthropology, ethnology, philosophy, psychology, the new age approach, art and literature. In this exploration, I encountered Native American philosophy. It seemed to me that in Japan, Native American philosophies represented the wisdom of harmony and balance for those who were concerned about discordance, destruction and isolation in the modern society (Brown 1993, and Carter 1986). Native American concepts of health as well-being, and their interpretation of spirituality as connectedness, and the congruence between their worldviews and healing approaches, impressed me (Brown 1993, and Wood 1974).

Moreover, social and cultural aspects of alcohol related challenges and healing among Native Americans also drew my attention (Day 1998). Furthermore, I became interested in First Nations in Canada because of Canada's image as a pioneer in the field of health policies and multiculturalism. I wondered how Aboriginal people were experiencing alcohol related challenges in a country that had innovatively developed health promotion and multiculturalism at the policy level. This is what led me to decide to come to Canada to learn about spirituality in healing at the UNBC First Nations Studies Program.

Learning in the *Dakelh Keyoh*

In the early days of my education at UNBC, I encountered several critical arguments about acculturation, commercial adaptation, and academic interpretation of Aboriginal knowledge (Battiste and Henderson 2000, Jocks 2000, Morrison and Wilson 1997, Smith 1999, and Whitt 1999). Consequently, I questioned my intention to study First Nations traditions, and my position as an outsider. My situation of being away from my customs, beliefs, people, language, and nature in a foreign country enhanced my sense of 'being nowhere.' Even though I had believed that I would never lose my identity wherever I go because I belong to my inner self, I felt I was disconnected from the ground in which I should be rooted. I felt I was just wandering up in the air without knowing why I was here and where I was going.

After one year of wandering, without any conviction of what I was doing in Canada, I stayed at the Ormond Lake Cultural Healing Camp for five weeks during and after my UNBC Internship. The Ormond Lake Camp is located west of Prince George in the Central Interior of British Columbia. While the primary aim of the camp is to offer an addiction recovery program using psychological intervention and First Nations

cultural activities, some of the participants take this program as an opportunity to reconnect themselves to their culture, family, and community. The participants stayed at the camp for a week and took part in several activities which were planned flexibly according to the participants' expectations. These included workshops, a talking circle, sweat lodge, fasting, berry picking, fishing, hunting, beading, and making traditional crafts and sacred objects. While the Ormond Lake Camp was located in the *Dakelh Keyoh*, the participants and workers and healers were a combination of *Dakelh-ne* and other First Nations. During my stay at the camps, the participants came from several nearby communities, including Prince George, Fort St. James, Burns Lake, Stoney Creek, Nadleh, and Stellaquo, and sometimes even from Alberta and the United States.

I worked as a volunteer, helping in a variety of ways. This position as a volunteer worker offered me a perfect reason to be there and made it easy for me to be involved in the camp. Mainly, I helped in the daycare, taking care of babies, making crafts and playing games with the children. I really enjoyed this opportunity, as I was often fascinated and inspired by the beauty and strength in the children. I also helped in the kitchen and with cleaning, which gave me an excellent opportunity to learn about the everyday life of the people through jokes and casual conversation. Moreover, I had several opportunities to join the workshops with the guests. My background as being non-First Nations, non-Canadian and non-counselor made me a unique layperson at the camp, and unexpectedly helped me to come to know the First Nations people. Many people were willing to teach me their local knowledge and language and showed an interest in my culture and language. This sharing and mutual learning enabled me to become closer to the guests and the staff at the camp.

This camp was also personally meaningful. The most striking moment came to me unexpectedly when I was making a craft after the hectic work schedule of the day. I was concentrating on my fingers with the pleasant tiredness and the sense of satisfaction that came from physical work, feeling as if the craft was a part of my fingers. The only thing in my mind was a wish that the craft would bring happiness to someone who was going to have it as a gift from me. The room was quiet and a few people were there. A man was singing in his own language and I felt that everybody was comfortable to be themselves in this place. The rhythm and warmth of the songs set me to humming. Spontaneously, my wish for a particular person's happiness turned into a prayer for everything surrounding that person; it became a prayer for peace and happiness of all, including myself. This powerful moment gave me a strong sense of being myself: "I am true to myself. I am happy with what I am sensing, hearing, smelling, touching, feeling, and doing. I am happy with who I am." The past and future became integrated into the present moment. I understood my struggles in the past as a process that led me to the present moment, the moment that I saw a new meaning in my life. The sense of isolation and worthlessness that I had been experiencing turned into peace. This sense of being myself as an integrated whole flowed within me naturally and I lost the fear and doubt that I would lose this harmonious moment in the future. I perceived this moment as healing of my spirit because of its striking feeling of peace; fearlessness and renewal had powerfully transformed my understanding of the self in the world. Regardless of the culturally and personally unique nature of spirituality, I experienced that we, who had different cultural and historical backgrounds, were still able to communicate, through our 'spirit,' openly to each other. Through this experience, I understood that this communal

relationship could enhance our spirituality, which is a powerful source of healing. When spirits commune with each other there is healing.

Toward Where My Heart Is Destined

The Ormond Lake Cultural Healing camp was also a powerful source of insight into First Nations healing and spirituality as it exposed me to the First Nations traditional practices and the life of the *Yinka-dene*, who live in the territory of the Carrier Nation. The experience made me recognize the importance of the First Nations values and practices for overcoming alcohol related challenges. First of all, First Nations traditional routines such as hunting, fishing, picking herbs and berries, and making tools and crafts affirm the First Nations personal identity as they affirm the collective identity. The traditional activities offer positive experience of their own culture and bring confidence and pride in the individuals as First Nations, replacing identity that was once degraded through the negative personal experiences of “being Native.” These practices also draw one *into* the sphere of communication with the self and with others and *out of* the dysfunctional relationships that had been clogged up under the influence of alcohol and related problems. In my understanding, the Aboriginal traditional healing practices used at the camp, such as the fasting, Sweat Lodge, Talking Circle, and Smudging, encouraged the participants to renew positive ways of looking at themselves and others as a part of a whole. This new perspective on the self and others frequently resulted in fostering the healing process of the guests.

In contrast, I recognized that the clear classification and the linear logic of individualistic mainstream medical and psychological approaches to treatment may conflict with the First Nations holistic views that respect the healing aspects of

connection, harmony and spirituality. My sense of the conflict between the First Nations approach and the dominant psychological and medical methods to healing awakened my interest in the perspectives of First Nations Elders and counselors. I wanted to learn from those who are knowledgeable and thoughtful with regard to health beliefs and practices among First Nations. Thus I decided to ask a small number of Elders and counselors about their views on overcoming alcohol related challenges, especially as related to the role of spirituality in a healing process, as the basis of my thesis. This topic seemed to meet “the need of First Nations” to be represented in academic research, while it remained in accordance with my question of “why the experience of helping others enhances spirituality.” I decided to come back to the Ormond Lake Camp to interview the first participant from the *Stellat’en* First Nation in Frazer Lake area, who wishes to be called “Frog House Opinions”. I had a vague foreboding for the first interview, and I did not know why.

In the first interview, I started asking about the role of spirituality in the healing of people who abuse alcohol. I explained to ‘Frog House Opinions’ that I was aiming to understand the benefit this would have for First Nations. During the interview, I became uneasy: I felt myself being defensive in spite of my effort to be sincere. After the interview, I wondered where my uneasiness came from. I thought about what this first participant, whom I just finished interviewing, had told me at an earlier date when I asked him to participate in my study: “You can’t learn by mouth, by ears, by eyes, or by here, in the brain. You have to learn by heart.” I found that I was not speaking from my heart in the interview, trying to represent myself as *a researcher* who was doing something beneficial *for* First Nations. I was afraid to be a researcher who “abuses” First Nations

spirituality for her own benefit without giving anything in return. I also feared that my thesis would be academically and practically useless. My wish to contribute something to First Nations was sincere. However, I did not want to continue my research while fear was leading me in this inquiry. I had to stop the interviews until I could discover what my heart really wanted to learn. I needed to start learning from and through my heart.

I reviewed my inner journey, wishing to gain a clear mind and a source of courage. As I was trying to overcome my fear of being useless, I recalled my identification of myself as a learner who has been searching for her way to engage with the world. This identification was one way that I had found to transcend the “underdeveloped-developed” dichotomy and build a mutual relationship of sharing and learning. The presumption that I had developed through my work also came to mind: healing is interrelational and spirituality has something to do with the interrelational aspect of healing. Through my work, I also had developed a sense that helping others was connected to my spirituality, a connection which I was not able to explain within my understanding of spirituality in Japan. The people, especially those who were trying to overcome substance abuse problems, inspired me in my efforts to elaborate on my unproven assumption. After recollecting all these ideas that brought me to the First Nations Program at UNBC in the first place, I reconnected myself to the strong sense of being a learner. By being honest to myself, I believed that I was able to be honest in relation to the participants and First Nations community that would be represented in my study. I believed that this sincere relationship with First Nations participants would result in transcendence of the potential power relationships within research, health care, developmental work, and also with

regard to the socio-historical heritage of colonization. I remembered the words of Lila Watson, an Aboriginal woman from Australia (in Faith and Pate 2000: 147):

If you have come here to help me,
you are wasting your time.
If you have come here because
your liberation is bound up with mine,
then let us work together.

Hence, I decided to explore how helping others relates to a helper's spirituality, which has inspired me throughout my personal journey to learn about myself in relation to the world. Accordingly, I clearly recognized that I wanted to know why and how my spirituality related to and interacted with my work as a helping professional. After the long search for what I really wanted to learn, I found that my heart was destined towards where my spirituality was: what is spirituality to me, and how it related to my ways of being in the world.

In this way, I learned in the *Dakelh Keyoh* as Saulteaux Elder, Campbell Papequash (in Waldram 1997: 81) is relating:

LEARNING: You will learn whatever you decide that you want to learn.
Learning can't be told. It has to be experienced

- by Sight
- by Listening (hearing)
- by Smell
- by Taste
- by Touch
- by Something You Do
- and by How You Feel about What You Do

In the next Chapter, I introduce how I set out on this learning journey in the *Dakelh Keyoh*.

Chapter Two – Setting out on a Journey: An Inquiry into Spirituality

This chapter aims at explaining how I approached First Nations spirituality and attitudes toward helping others and conducted this research as a Master's thesis. It introduces research considerations such as ethics, methods, limitations, and the theoretical framework of a phenomenological approach.

Research Considerations

Research has not always benefited Indigenous people — they have often had negative experiences of being involved in research that forced ethnocentric perspectives on their ways of life, knowledge, belief and identity without having an opportunity to speak for themselves (Battiste and Henderson 2000, Smith 1999, Ervin 2000, and Lipson 1994). Research on alcohol related challenges among Native Americans is one example of this negative impact of research. It is noted that the deficient orientations of researchers that place emphasis on the high rate of alcohol abuse and the inefficacy of alcohol treatments has resulted in the pervasive negative stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples, such as the image of the “lazy drunken Indian” (Beauvais 1998, Duran and Duran 1995, Garrett and Carroll 2000: 379, Heinrich et al. 1990, Jilek-Aall 1981, Long and Nelson 1999, Maracle 1993, Steckley and Cummins 2001, Stubben 1997, and Waldram 1997). However, one major circumstance has been largely underaddressed: how colonizing forces — such as government, institutionalized religion, and Western medicine — created the “Aboriginal health crisis” by introducing epidemics, historical trauma, and Western medical beliefs and practices that were not applicable to Aboriginal beliefs and social systems (Hart 2002, Kelm 1998, and Duran and Duran 1995).

Under these negative orientations of research, the resilience of First Nations who have gone through the destructive impacts of colonization has been ignored too often (Long and Nelson 1999: 92). Accordingly, research on First Nations has often resulted in paternalistic policies and services (Kelm 1998). In addition, there are ethical issues that I needed to carefully consider before, during and after my research process: the topic in my research, “spirituality,” “alcohol related challenges,” and “healing” may be too personal and sensitive to be explored in an interview.

Warning about the negative research impacts on Indigenous communities, Linda Smith (1999), in her book “Decolonizing Methodologies” (1999: 115-118), asserts that research on Indigenous communities needs to promote the process of transformation, decolonization, healing and mobilization of Indigenous peoples. The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples Ethical Guidelines (*in* Battiste and Henderson 2000: 138-140) is helpful in understanding ethical considerations for research with First Nations. The guideline is summarized in the following key concepts: 1) benefit to the communities; 2) informed consent and confidentiality; 3) partnership through consultation and contribution; and 4) avoidance of homogenization. In order to meet these ethical criterions, I made a form which outlines the purpose and procedure of my research in the information letter before beginning interviews, and I asked the participants to sign the consent form if they agreed to take part as participants (Appendix A). The participants could remain anonymous in the final research findings unless they wished to have their names used. One participant, ‘Frog House Opinion,’ wished to be anonymous and suggested his pseudonym, expressing that his opinion was reflecting his clan and house opinion. In addition, considering the limitations of my cross-cultural study, I opened up

the process and results of this research to the participants for their scrutiny: I interviewed each participant twice if they were willing in order that I could consult the participants about my tentative understanding of the first interview. This promotes a dialogical relationship in which further questioning, answering and interpreting helped me to reduce my bias, and to obtain more information and narrative. Because of these careful ethical considerations, the potential risks for the participants in my research were overcome. The UNBC ethics committee approved the proposal for this research on June 8, 2004. Copies of this thesis have been distributed to the participants and will be housed at the UNBC Geoffrey Weller Library with their permission. My research results, by being made public, will hopefully provoke further discussion, interpretation and affirmation about Aboriginal knowledge on spirituality in healing and helping others.

The prevention of potential negative effects for First Nations has also been a major concern in my inquiry. In indigenous or traditional societies, access to sacred knowledge is usually restricted to particular individuals within the community (Battiste and Henderson 2000). Hernández-Ávila (2000) and Jocks (2000) criticize the exposure, exploitation, and representation of Indigenous sacred knowledge and objects by outsiders. At the First Biannual Indigenous Scholars' Conference of Autochthonous Scholars, Wilson (1995:62), who is a member of the Cree nation and works as a director of education for his home reserve in Manitoba, confesses "a wistful feeling" in sharing sacred knowledge and land with those who are not his people. At the same conference, Tafoya (1995) emphasized the importance of sharing their stories at particular times and places, and addressed the problems of making videotapes and publishing. In order to respect their ways of protecting their knowledge and their feelings about sharing it, I

informed the participants that participation in my study was completely voluntary and any subjects in the interviews they could put off limits.

Moreover, the phenomenological approach facilitates prevention of simple homogenization. Max van Manen (1997) states that, from the phenomenological perspective, objectivity means that the researcher is oriented to the object and remains true to it. In order to show my orientation in this study clearly, I have identified my preconceptions, assumptions and beliefs about spirituality and healing. This identification enables me to remain open and sensitive to internal and external scrutiny, which is relevant to the issues of reflexivity and the influence of the researcher on the research and participants (Cohen et al. 2000, Creswell 1998 and Plager 1994). The identification of my preconceptions also helps me to be aware of my own preconceptions, as well as the limitations due to my cultural biases. This awareness allows me to address participants' subjective views, both respectfully and directly.

The tenets of phenomenology and my stance in this study as a respectful learner enable me to bring a cross-cultural perspective to this study. However, one ethical consideration remains: as an international Graduate Student who is going back to her home country, how can the results of my research directly benefit First Nations? This condition requires me to maintain a sensitive and humble attitude during and after the research process so that this study will be able to raise awareness of and respect for First Nations' concerns and perspectives. Furthermore, I believe, what I have learned from First Nations peoples will demonstrate to the readers my participants' strength and resilience. This thesis is a hopeful message about healing and helping. When we share this hope, I believe we can liberate ourselves from either colonizing or colonized attitudes.

Participants

The participants in this research are Elders and counselors who live and work in the *Dakelh Keyoh*. Among the people who were recommended by my supervisory committee members, I interviewed three participants who agreed to give interviews for this thesis. I added another participant through a connection I made at the Ormond Lake Cultural Healing Camp. These participants have distinctive experiences in helping others who have alcohol related challenges, and they have been actively involved in First Nations traditional practices. The time limitation and accessibility were also considerations in choosing the participants. In total, I interviewed four persons; one female and three male. Reflecting the diversity of the current Aboriginal communities in this region, two of the participants are *Dakelh-ne*, one is Cree and one is Dakota decent. These participants have different cultural backgrounds and specialized knowledge and experience in helping people who have alcohol related challenges in the *Dakelh Keyoh*. The small number of participants and the diverse cultural background limits the study; it is not specific to a particular First Nation. However, this condition enables me to look into the depth and wholeness of their personal experiences, and to seek the shared themes that are commonly embodied in the diverse experience and beliefs of the participants (Creswell 1998 and van Manen 1997).

The Map: The *Dakelh Keyoh*

This study was conducted in Prince George and nearby communities located in the Central Interior of British Columbia. Prince George is called “the northern capital of British Columbia,” and I call it “a mill town.” The economy in this region depends on the forest industry to a great extent (City of Prince George). The *Dakelh-ne*, also known

as Carrier people, have been taking care of this land that people rely on for their livelihood. According to the 2001 census of Prince George, 7,200 people indicated an Aboriginal identity, while 76,000 indicated non-Aboriginal identity (Statistics Canada 2004).

Erickson (1997) notes that, according to oral histories, the *Dakelh Keyoh*, the Carrier territory, stretched from Anaheim Lake in the south to Takla Lake in the north, and from the Rocky Mountain in the east to Hagwilget in the west. *Dakelh-ne*, the Carrier people in local language, means ‘people who travel by boat’, which indicates their expert navigation techniques (Erickson 1997, Furniss 1993a, and Hall 1992). An Elder from Burns Lake, whom I met at Ormond Lake, told me that the *Dakelh-ne* called the people who live in the *Dakelh Keyoh*, *Yinka-dene*, regardless of where they are from, as this term means the ‘people of the land.’ Each community of the *Dakelh Keyoh* has its own name: the *Yinka-dene* near present day Prince George are *Lheit’le*, Stoney Creek are *Sai’kuz*, Fraser Lake are *Stellat’en*, Fort St. James are *Nak’azdli*, and Burns Lake are *Nedut’en*.

At the time of first European contact, the population of the *Yinka-dene* was estimated at 8,500, which was the highest population density of any Subarctic Athapaskan group (Furniss 1993a, and Tobey 1981). The population declined drastically under the influence of epidemics introduced by Europeans, such as smallpox, whooping cough, and measles (Furniss 1993b: 35-36). The population, as estimated by the trading posts, fell as low as 1,538 in 1890, and even lower during the 1920s, but has increased since then (Furniss 1993a, and Tobey 1981). According to the 1992 Census (Furniss 1993a), the Registered Indian population in this region, including the people who have

married into the *Dakelh Keyoh* from other communities, is a little over 9,000, even though there are many *Yinka-dene* who are not included in this Census because they are not officially registered in a Carrier band.

The *Dakeh-ne* matrilineal and exogamous clan system of ancestral bloodlines has influenced every aspect of their life. They subsisted in harmony with their environment through hunting and fishing, with supplementary gathering (Malinowski and Sheets 1998, Erickson 1997, and Tobey 1981). The clan provided the members with supports for livelihood, ceremonies, and any crisis that occurred. The society was organized quasi-hierarchically through the Potlatch / *Balhats* system. The *Balhats* ceremony is the core of economic, social, spiritual, and judicial activities, and it involves all clan members (Erickson 1997).

The *Dakelh-ne* are said to believe that everything has a spirit and is sacred (Erickson 1997, Furniss 1993a, Malinowski and Sheets 1998, and Tobey 1981). This belief permeates all aspects of life and forms the standards of behavior and the principle and procedure of rituals. In terms of health, according to *Dakelh-ne* tradition, it is necessary to maintain good relations with these spirits for survival, health and success. Thus, having a clean body, mind, and spirit is essential for their health (Allan 1997, Erickson 1997, and Furniss 1993a). Health and spirituality are not separable. Illness is considered to be caused by 'bad' or unbalanced energy in one's spirit, because whatever energy one produces, either positive or negative, it will come back to the person (Allan 1997 and Erickson 1997). In this context, to be healthy is to be happy all the time, because thinking about having an illness enhances the chance of having an illness: an Elder, Annie Mattess, says, "we live according to how we're going to be healthy"

(College of New Caledonia 1997: 60). According to the *Dakelh* Health Issues Project (College of New Caledonia 1997), healers in the *Dakelh* area work with this energy. For example, herbalists treat physical symptoms using the spiritual power of various plants and shamans deal with illness caused by bad spirits using dreams and rituals. However, regardless of the presence of healers, people are expected to look after themselves and learn what they can do to maintain their health, including obtaining a knowledge of herbs.

Christianity, which was introduced by Europeans at the time of contact, has become a part of the spiritual beliefs and practices among many of the *Yinka-dene*. Through my internship experience at the Ormond Lake Cultural Healing camp, I observed that the time-honored values of sharing and respect, and the traditional beliefs of spirituality have survived and become integrated with Christianity and other First Nations traditional practices. I believe the strength of the *Yinka-dene*, who have gone through colonization, comes from this dynamic process of integration based on the virtues of their tradition.

Data Collection

Fontana and Frey (2000) and Kvale (1996) state that an interview is interaction between a participant and an interviewer in which the two people interchange their views and negotiate the interpretation. The conversational interview opens a door for this interactive formulation of interpreting the idea under investigation. As Harrison et al. (2001), and Patton (1987) note, this interview method also enables myself as the Graduate student to explore and gather rich narratives, and to bring my experience into the interactive relationship with the participants. I combined the conversational interview approach with an interview guide. This interview guide was composed of fundamental

questions and subject areas to explore so that I might collect systematic and comprehensive narratives in the limited time of the interview (the questions are presented in Appendix B). During the interview process, my questions kept evolving because each interview recalled something in my personal and professional experience, as is noted in Creswell (1998). This reflection brought a deeper understanding to what I wanted to learn from this inquiry, and therefore I adapted the questions for the next interview.

I interviewed four participants, and all of them agreed to take the second interview. Each interview ranged from thirty minutes to one and half hours. The interviews were audio-taped and transcribed by me. Because of technical problems, I was not able to record two interviews. One of them was the first interview, and I covered the lost interview in the second interview by confirming what I recalled from the last interview. For the other interview I lost, I conducted a third interview since the lost interview was the second interview and I wanted to make sure that my memory was correct. Thus, I conducted nine interviews in total. I wrote notes immediately following each interview. These notes included summaries of the interviews, my personal interpretation of them, and any additional information. I told the participants that they may request a copy of the audiotapes and transcriptions of his or her interview at any time.

Areas of Inquiry

According to Takeda (2004), Husserl explains that we explore the parts and surroundings of the object to perceive something, and that through gaining fragmented pieces through research, we construct a whole picture. Attempting to get a picture of spirituality in helping others, I explored the following issues in and around spirituality

and helping others: personal healing experiences; the role of culture in the healing of First Nations; First Nations traditional healing practices; impact of colonization; and the resilience of First Nations communities. The depth of inquiry in each area was different in each interview due to the nature of the conversational interview that respects the participant's background and interest in the natural flow of the conversation.

Analysis

I interpreted the transcriptions by conducting a thematic analysis. As Kvale (1996), van Manen (1997), and Silverman (2000) suggest, I carefully read the transcription several times while identifying the sequence and frequency of related topics, and I sought themes that were embodied in the transcription. The following themes have emerged; "morality," "humbleness," "humility," "respect," "acceptance," "unconditional love," "spiritual experience," "prayer," "peace," "letting go of negative emotions," "trust," "sharing," "personal growth," "choice and commitment," and "the notion of spirituality as being personal." These themes are categorized into the following topics of the conversation: "helping others," "spirituality," "healing," "traditional practices," and "culture." Accordingly, the connections among these themes in each category were sought so as to interpret the meaning of the parts in relation to the whole. I also consulted philosophical and psychological literature (Brown 1983, Frankl 1962, Kamiya 1980, Maslow 1999, Rogers 1961, and Whitehead 1967), personal stories of First Nations healing experiences (Maracle 1993, and Waldram 1997), and my field notes, as sources of rich insights into understanding of the themes. Through this analysis process, I describe how spirituality is expressed in the First Nations ways of helping others.

Limitations of This Study

I am aware of the limitations of this study. First of all, I may have barriers in understanding what the participants told me. The differences in the cultural and historical background, and my lack of experience in First Nations communities, could have restricted my understanding of what the participants explained to me. I also encountered a language barrier. While I conducted this research in English, some concepts of First Nations may not be fully translated into English. In addition, I had difficulties in understanding and expressing some of the ideas in the English language since English is not my native language. Moreover, I was not able to follow up on the topics that I found insightful, because it was sometimes difficult for me to understand the participants' statements and respond to them effectively. My transcription of the interviews had some unclear words because of my language limitation.

Secondly, a large part of the literature I used on spirituality in helping and healing is derived from psychology, social work and nursing research. Although there is a large body of literature on spirituality in disciplines such as philosophy, anthropology, religions, and sociology, I was not able to refer to this literature as much as I would have liked because of the broadness in scope. It is needed for future studies to articulate spirituality across different fields of study and to integrate those studies in order to create a cohesive understanding of spirituality in health. Together with other studies, I hope my thesis can be a part of ongoing discussions on this subject.

Thirdly, I am not representing a First Nations outlook, even though I hope this study illuminates the strengths and virtues that First Nations spirituality represents. This is a cross-cultural study that explores the common features of spirituality beyond the

differences using a phenomenological method. As a Japanese person, I carry my own values and beliefs which are rooted in my particular life experiences in Japan explained above. Thus, this study represents my understanding of spirituality which is contextualized in a limited number of First Nations persons' experience and beliefs. Another limitation results from the philosophical nature of phenomenological study (Creswell 1998). While I believe philosophical understanding of their work is a basis for health professionals' practice, the phenomenological method in my study may not be able to stress appropriately historical, political, and economic factors.

To mediate these limitations and give a more comprehensive picture of healing and alcohol related challenges among First Nations, I have reviewed the literature on the history of alcohol use among First Nations, the influence of alcohol related challenges on First Nations society, the variety of theories and treatment methods that are applied to alcohol related challenges among First Nations, and the impact of Aboriginal culture and community initiatives on healing of those who have alcohol related challenges.

The limitations of a phenomenological approach — a philosophical study that has less emphasis on historical, social, and cultural particularity — can become advantageous when they are clearly recognized and mediated with other approaches. Helping professionals encounter and work with unique individuals who have different perspectives and beliefs. A phenomenological approach fosters mutual understanding between those individuals and professionals, both of whom are the aggregates of historical, cultural and personal particularity. Furthermore, as Takeda (2004) states, a phenomenological approach is a basic attitude of our consciousness to examine an

unknown. Philosophical understanding of spirituality in health provides assumptions and frames of reference for further studies with diverse approaches.

Phenomenology and Research on Spirituality in Healing

This thesis is part of my personal journey of learning how I interact with the world. A phenomenological approach is the theoretical framework with which I have been learning about myself and others. Simply stated, phenomenology is a philosophical attempt of explicating an object by examining how we perceive and interpret the object. Husserl (1859-1938), a central figure in the development of phenomenology, examined the act of human consciousness to explain why and how we are convinced of X as X , as is described in Takeda (2004). Accordingly, he discovered that objectivity is our subjectivity's collective conviction about an object based on the belief that others are also convinced to conceive of the object in the same way as we are. In other words, the collective subjectivity constitutes what that object is in our life-world (Takeda *ibid*). Based on the understanding that objects in our life-world are constructed subjectively, phenomenological approach explains a phenomenon by examining how we perceive and interpret the phenomenon as we experience them. I have been taking this approach in my learning journey — seeking to comprehend who I am in relation to the world around me through the exploration of personal experiences and the interpretation of what I think and how I feel about those experiences.

Furthermore, I apply a phenomenological approach to this study due to the following tenets of this approach: according to the phenomenological understanding that an object in the life-world is constituted through and in each person's subjective act of perceiving and interpreting, to completely separate objectivity from individual

subjectivity is unlikely. Accordingly, phenomenology requires us to reexamine a take-for-granted view as a subjective perception, and asks how and why we perceive the object in that way (Takeda 2004). This also means that there is no invariable objectivity, assuming that objectivity comes from our subjective act of consciousness (Takeda *ibid*). Instead, phenomenology encourages us to explore the shared sphere of understanding by interpreting diverse experiences of our subjective world (van Manen 1997). In a phenomenological inquiry, the diverseness in our subjectivity, such as our worldviews, beliefs, and understandings about a phenomenon, are taken for granted as coming from the historical and cultural particularity. Rather than modifying diverse ideas to fit into a uniform category, the phenomenological approach encourages us to look for a shared sphere which comes out of diversity in order to establish mutual understanding without rejecting or devaluating incompatible beliefs and ideas (Takeda *ibid*). In this sense, as Takeda (*ibid*) asserts, phenomenology can be a way to overcome the conflicts between different beliefs that claim the rightness for their own systems. Phenomenology can provide us with a point of departure from which to examine the endless dispute over absolute legitimacy, and encourage our consensus on and awareness of diversity in our worldviews and beliefs.

By extracting commonalities from the diverse subjective interpretations on an object, we form the agreement on what the object is or on “the essence” of the object (Kim 1999). When a phenomenologist uses the word, ‘essence,’ it can be controversial because it gives an impression of a singular or invariable truth. However, for phenomenologists, the essence of something is not the absolute truth in it, but rather the common or collective understanding of the object that convinces us of what it is. The

essential features will function as a shared background for our communication. Plager (1994: 72) notes, “We understand and interpret something as something, because we have this background of shared human practice. Without familiarity of the shared background of our world, all would be rendered meaningless and unintelligible.”

Because of these tenets of phenomenology — transcendence of the subjective-objective dichotomy and the exploration of shared understanding out of diversity — the phenomenological approach is suitable for the inquiry into spirituality. The phenomenological approach enables us to look for a shared understanding of spirituality, in which a concept has various interpretations and there has not been an agreed definition of it among researchers. When it comes to religious or spiritual beliefs, we have a number of different perspectives and opinions due to cultural and historical particularities. Through exploration of spirituality by means of accessing personal experiences and beliefs in a phenomenological framework, we are able to look for shared qualities of spirituality, recognizing diverse understandings as being equally meaningful to individuals. This is, I believe, a starting point for the dialogue between those who have different worldviews and beliefs toward mutual understanding on spirituality. Furthermore, Nursing theorist, Watson (1989: 231-232) notes that the spiritual dimension of a person lies in the subjective understanding of one’s experience and meaning in life, and thus a phenomenological orientation helps nurses understand the person’s spiritual dimension. As well, Goddard (1995: 810 & 814) asserts, phenomenology, which has a philosophical orientation, is appropriate to examine the metaphysical concept of spirituality.

The phenomenological approach also enables me as a person with a non-First Nations background, to share understanding of spirituality with First Nations. While Smith (1999: 137-140) notes the significance of the insider's perspective for research among Indigenous peoples, the fact that I am a non-First Nations person is inevitable. A phenomenological approach does not exclude my 'otherness' in this study due to the premise that a researcher's subjectivity is unavoidable. Rather than trying to separate objectivity from subjectivity, phenomenology believes objectivity and subjectivity are not mutually exclusive because both objectivity and subjectivity are inherent in the interacting relationship of the researcher with the participant and the 'object' of his or her inquiry (van Manen 1997: 20). Thus, it validates that a researcher can access the participant's experiences, subjectively searching for a shared sphere of understanding which is formulated intersubjectively between the participants and the researcher (Kincheloe and McLaren 2000, Plager 1994 and Schwandt 2000). In this way, the phenomenological method allows me to construct an understanding of spirituality with the First Nations participants without trying to erase my "otherness," and my cross-cultural perspective can even be helpful in illuminating spirituality within multiple perspectives.

Interestingly, there are similarities between the principles of phenomenology and the Native American philosophy and ways of knowing. Vine Deloria Jr. (1999: 67) states that individual experiences constitute common knowledge:

... tribal knowledge systematically mixes facts, and experiences that Western science would separate by artificial categories. In tribal systems there is never a sense of disorientation within the tribal understanding of the world.

According to Deloria (1999: 48), this collective knowledge is an accumulation of individual experiences which is used for making conclusions based on the relationships between things rather than for trying to define something by its essential or inherent characteristics. Native American methods of constructing collective knowledge are based on the belief that “there were no ultimate terms or constituents of their universe, only sets of relationships that sought to describe phenomena” (Deloria *ibid*). As well, the phenomenological approach accesses and interprets personal experience in order to facilitate the consensus on what the phenomenon is. Because of this similarity, I believe, the phenomenological method enables me to approach First Nations persons’ experiences respectfully and deeply.

In this study, I identify myself as a learner who explores First Nations spirituality through my subjective act of reflecting on my own feelings, beliefs and experiences, rather than as a person who evaluates or concludes what First Nations spirituality is from an objective perspective. Due to these tenets of the phenomenological approach, I am able to respectfully incorporate my own philosophy, which stems from a different cultural background, into the interpretation of First Nations understanding of spirituality and their attitudes toward helping others who have alcohol related challenges. The phenomenological approach helps me to pursue a deeper understanding of spirituality by reexamining and developing my subjective ideas. Thus, the phenomenological approach enables me to learn through and from my heart as ‘Frog House Opinions’ told me to do.

Chapter Three - Background Information for the Journey

In this chapter, I invite the reader to share the background information for the journey in which we explore spirituality in helping others with the guidance of First Nations Elders and counselors. The information helped me with clarifying what I wanted to learn from the participants and with interpreting the ideas the participants explained in the interviews. The topics I explore in this chapter are Aboriginal spirituality, review of research on spirituality in health and healing, First Nations and alcohol related concerns, First Nations worldview and healing, and the theories and approaches that have been applied to alcohol related challenges. Before exploring these topics, I will explain how I understand and use the terms in this study.

Use of Terms

Spirituality

In this thesis, I use the word 'spirituality' as the human tendency, or rather, the human need, to perceive oneself as an integrated being through meaningful and harmonious relationships with the self, others, nature, significant activities and beliefs and the Higher Powers. However, it is important to acknowledge that the understanding of spirituality is tied to personal beliefs and experiences, and thus, the definition of spirituality is diverse and personal. Hence, through the following description and analysis of the interviews, interpretation of spirituality will be articulated in the various ways the participants understand and express the term. My aim in this thesis is not to define spirituality, but rather to describe spirituality by interpreting the participants' articulations of spirituality as expressed in their ways of helping others.

Spirituality and Religiousness

Even though the term 'spirituality' overlaps with, and is frequently used as a synonym for, religion, spirituality involves broader concepts. While spirituality overlaps with religiosity, and some people may express their spirituality through religious beliefs and practices, the concept of spirituality is distinctively broader than religion in scope (Burkhardt 1989, Dyson et al. 1997, Goddard 1995 and 2000, Krippner and Welch 1992, Malinski 2002, and Oldnall 1996). 'Religion' generally refers to a system of social organization based on a common set of beliefs and practices (Dyson et al. 1997, and Krippner and Welch 1992). Burkhardt (1989: 71) states:

In nursing practices, attentiveness to spirituality goes beyond a focus on religiosity. Spiritual care needs to be based on a more universal concept of inspiring rather than focusing around religious concepts. Spirituality is a broader concept than religion or religiosity. Spirituality involves a reflection on and coming into relationship with one's experiences. Spirituality is of the essence of one's human nature, whether or not it is expressed through religious beliefs or practices.

Oldnall (1996) mentions that, due to its broader scope, spirituality is associated with various activities in and aspects of our life which stimulate individual expressions of meaning as attributed to one's lifeworld — such as art, food, humor, hope, happiness, crying, suffering, dancing, and relationship. As well, Tanyi (2002: 503) notes, spirituality of atheists and agnostics is related to "a strong belief in significant relationships, self-chosen values and goals instead of a belief in God." Malinski (2002:284) further states that religion has little to do with spirituality when it is divisive; on the other hand, spirituality emerges in unity and caring human qualities which hold potential for healing:

Spirituality is the broader, inclusive term, whereas religion can be narrow and exclusive. Religion is mediated experience of the sacred; spirituality is direct

experiencing of the sacred. Spirituality is a unitive experience without boundaries or divisions. It is about caring for self, others, the natural world, and all that live within in, and about healing. Healing energy is the creative potential continuously flowing throughout the universe. Healing involves being aware of, sensitive to, and cherishing wholeness for self, others, and the environment apart from disease conditions, traumatic situations, or the like. Cure may not be possible in all situations, but healing is the potential inherent in all situations. (Malinski ibid)

Alcohol Dependency

DSM-IV (Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – Fourth Edition, 2000), characterizes alcohol dependency as the following: (1) Physical symptoms such as withdrawal syndrome and tolerance; (2) the psychological aspects of a persistent desire, but unsuccessful efforts to control alcohol use; (3) behaviors related to alcohol such as great deal of time consumed in alcohol related activities and consequences of alcohol use; (4) abandonment of important activities because of alcohol; and (5) constant alcohol use despite of awareness of one's alcohol related problems (Roth and Fonagy 1996).

According to these definitions, alcohol dependency is a word that encompasses physical, psychological and behavioral aspects of an individual who is addicted to alcohol. In this study, "alcohol dependency" is used to specifically describe the dependency that alcohol chemically causes in one's body as well as emotionally in one's mind. Also, I often use "alcohol dependency" in the descriptions on AA, because their membership is based on their acknowledgement that the members have admitted that they "depend on" alcohol (Alcoholics Anonymous World Services [AAWS] 2001).

Alcohol Abuse

On the other hand, alcohol abuse is characterized by recurrent alcohol use regardless that one's alcohol intake causes physically hazardous situations, dysfunction in one's role at home and/or work, and alcohol-related legal problems (Roth and Fonagy 1996). The

concept of alcohol abuse focuses on the excessive use of alcohol, and does not necessarily include tolerance, withdrawal, or a pattern of compulsive use. Alcohol abuse refers to recurrent and significant adverse consequences related to the repeated use of alcohol (Ringwald 2002). In this study, “alcohol abuse” means a person’s act of taking alcohol to the degree that it becomes “a problem” to oneself and to others, and those who abuse alcohol may not have established alcohol dependency.

Alcohol Related Challenges

It is important to acknowledge that the above definitions of alcohol dependency and alcohol abuse are based on particular perspectives that may connote that alcohol related concerns are the ‘problem’ of individuals. Talbot (2003:6) notes that “alcohol abuse,” “alcohol dependency,” “addiction,” and “alcoholism” are value-loaded terms and chooses to use “alcohol problems” as a less value-laden term. Furthermore, May (1999: 228) also states that the term “alcoholism” mainly denotes only “alcohol-dependent or chronic drinking behaviors” and often fails to address the broadness of alcohol related concerns. I use the term, “alcohol related challenges” in order to include a wide range of concerns that intertwine with alcohol related issues, such as other substance abuses, domestic violence, child abuse, anti-social behaviors, and suicide.

There is another reason for my choosing the term “alcohol related challenges.” During my career as a public health nurse, I realized that “alcohol abuse” does not affect only the individual user. The causes, course and results of a person’s problematic drinking are closely related to others, such as his or her partner, family, and community. All too often, these others need healing as well as the person who drinks. And the healing of the significant others often promotes the process of overcoming his or her

problematic drinking. In this sense, healing of a person who drinks excessively is connected to the others who share the alcohol related challenges. Since I often worked with those others as a public health nurse, I consider their healing as a significant part of the individual's overcoming alcohol challenges. Thus, I use the term "alcohol related challenges" in the discussion on healing, as a term that can refer to the healing of the people who are affected by another person's or by one's own alcohol related issues.

Aboriginal Spirituality

Aboriginal Worldview and Spirituality

Beck et al. (1990), Vine Deloria Jr. (1999) and Williamson (1999) state that Native Americans believe that everything has a spirit, and thus everything must be treated with respect as everything is sacred. Deloria (1999: 42) introduces the words of A. McG Beede, a missionary on the Standing Rock Sioux Reservation, as an early and accurate observation on the worldview of the Western Sioux and Chippewa peoples:

The Western Sioux believed that each being, a rock for instance, is an actual community of persons with ample locomotion among themselves, and such locomotion not regarded as circumscribed or restricted, save as the maker (oicage) of the whole gives to each species his own sphere. And, they reasoned, this limitation is merely in body (tancan), the mind, intelligence, and spirit of each is privileged to range, through and blend with totality by gaining a right attitude toward Woniya (Spirit)....

And I should have said, the fact of a rock, or any object, being a community of locomotive persons, was based on, or concomitant with, the belief that not a few of their people actually had the ability to see into and through a rock discerning its make-up, similarly as we look into a community or grove of trees. I have known many Indians believing they possessed this ability — and not regarding it as anything remarkable — and there was no occasion for doubting their sincerity.

Deloria (1999: 43) states that we may substitute "spirit" with "energy" in modern science theories about what constitutes the world. However, he further notes that there are fundamental differences between Aboriginal worldviews and the understanding of the

world that is derived from modern science, regardless of the profound similarities between them.

According to Deloria (1999: 33-34 and 43-48), Native Americans see the universe as a living entity, recognizing that everything has a spirit and the continuum of life is universal. In other words, everything in this universe is connected through spiritual power. Tinker (1996: 540) notes:

All of the created world is, in turn, seen as alive, sentient, and filled with spiritual power, including each human being. The sense of the interrelationship of all of creation — of all two-legged, four-legged, winged, and other living, moving things, (from fish and rivers to rocks, trees and mountains) — may be the most important contribution Indian peoples have made to the science and spirituality of the modern world.

Deloria (1999: 43-48) states that the notion of a living universe furnishes their worldview with morals. This moral universe makes the Aboriginal worldview distinct from scientific theories and other world religions. In the living universe, everything has a spirit as a manifestation of the universe, and each entity has a moral responsibility for the whole. Thus, according to Deloria (1999: 43-47), traditionally, Native Americans tried to see the proper moral and ethical road that humans should take, because they knew that what a person did had immediate importance for the rest of the world:

In the moral universe all activities, events, and entities are related, and consequently it does not matter what kind of existence an entity enjoys, for the responsibility is always there for it to participate in the continuing creation of reality (Deloria 1999: 47).

Therefore, Deloria (1999: 44) asserts that the understanding of the world never “exists apart from human beings and their communities” or “stands alone for it’s own sake.”

Furthermore, Deloria (1999: 39) questions a scientific attitude of denying the notion of a moral universe:

The present posture of most Western scientists is to deny any sense of purpose and direction to the world around us, believing that to do so could be to introduce mysticism and superstition. Yet what could be more superstitious than to believe that the world in which we live and where we have our most intimate personal experience is not really trustworthy and that another mathematical world exists that represents a true reality?"

Deloria (1999: 38-39) states that this recognition of the universe as a living and moral entity is the basis of Native Americans worldviews:

Reality for tribal peoples, as opposed to the reality sought by Western scientists, was the experience of the moment coupled with the interpretive scheme that had been woven together over the generations. If there were other dimensions to life — the religious experiences and dreams certainly indicated the presence of other ways of living, even other places — they were regarded as part of an organic whole and not as distinct from other experiences, times, and places in the same way that Western thinkers have always believed. Indians never had a need to posit the experience of a "real" reality beyond the senses because they felt that their senses gave them the essence of physical existence in enabling them to see how the other creatures behaved. Life in other dimensions was not thought to be much different from what had been experienced already.

Deloria (1999: 44) concludes that Native Americans understand the world through "individual and communal experiences in daily life, in keen observation of the environment, and interpretive messages that they received from spirits in ceremonies, visions, and dreams." In this Aboriginal worldview, Williamson (1999: 40) states, the spirit world is strongly connected to the everyday world by providing guidance in the lives of human beings and thus, every entity, event and occurrence has spiritual significance as an expression of the living universe. In short, Aboriginal people perceive spiritual energy as permeating all animate and inanimate objects and every human experience. This spiritual energy provides guidance and knowledge from the moral universe. Therefore, the life of Aboriginal peoples is inseparable from spirituality.

Regarding the treatment approach to substance abuse, McCormick (2000: 28) notes that Aboriginal spirituality helps a person go beyond the individual self and connect

to the rest of the creations. According to McCormick (2000), creation in this notion is not just living creatures; the concept of creation extends to family, community, culture, the natural world, and even the spiritual world. This cosmology formulates a distinctive feature of Aboriginal spirituality — connection to the land, relatedness of everything, harmony and respect between all things, and the importance of community to a person's spirituality.

Connection to the Land

According to Steckley and Cummins (2001) and Williamson (1999), a strong connection to the land is one of the major characteristics of Native American cultures, representing their ways of living and spirituality. Williamson (1999: 36) states that for Native Americans the land is more than geographic territory; rather it is a sacred, living entity with its rhythms and cycles that speaks to humans in many ways. Deloria also indicates that the connection to the land is a Native American way of fostering spiritual awareness: “The natural world has a great bond that brings together all living entities, each species gaining an identity and meaning as it forms a part of the complex whole” (Deloria 1999: 357).

According to Williamson (1999: 540), places are powerful because they are believed to be and experienced as alive. By acknowledging the life in the land, Native Americans identify sacred places; the sacred place is “where power, wisdom, or the meaning to one's life can be accessed from the spiritual world” (Williamson 1999: 36). Thus, as Tinker (1996: 540) explains, a sacred place is a manifestation of the Sacred Mystery or the Sacred Power. Furthermore, understanding the connectedness among parts and whole, the destiny of the land is tied to humans and other entities. Deloria

(1999: 56) also notes that sacred places are regarded as sacred because there, individuals are required to be respectful and self-disciplined.

Williamson (1999: 18) explains a motif of connection to the land that commonly appears in a number of Native American creation stories: “Humans, according to these stories, were the last to be created. As the final creation, they were given the roles of servants and caretakers of the rest of the creation, not lords or masters.” Moreover, Williamson (1999:18) notes that their strong connection to the land can be seen in the Medicine Wheel teaching:

In the teaching of the four colours of humans, each group was given by the Creator different elements of Mother Earth for which to be responsible. The white people were given the task of taking care of the air. The black races were endowed with responsibility for the water. Yellow people were responsible for fire and, finally, the red race was given the obligation of taking care of the earth. ... the land has become a preoccupation with Native peoples.

Thus, their connection to the land brings Aboriginal spirituality to a place of respect and moral responsibility as well as to the powerful experience of a living universe.

Relatedness, Harmony and Respect

Many authors, such as Beck et al. (1990), Duran and Duran (1995), Garrett and Carroll (2000), Lowery (1998), McCormick (1995 and 2000), Poonwassie and Charter (2001) and Tafoya (1995), note that relatedness or interdependence is an essential concept for Native Americans. According to Deloria (1999: 357-358) and Williamson (1999: 18 and 36-37), Aboriginal spirituality is based on the understanding that every entity is equally meaningful and valuable in constituting the living universe, while other religious traditions tend to regard humans as being dominant over or superior to other forms of life. This egalitarian nature of Aboriginal spirituality comes from Native American principles of relatedness. Deloria (1999: 357) explains that this principle of

relatedness forms Aboriginal spiritual beliefs: “All species, all forms of life, have equal status before that presence of the universal power to which all are subject. The religious requirement for all life-forms is thus, harmony, and this requirement holds for every species, ours included.” Thus, Aboriginal spirituality encourages a person to maintain the harmony with all things as a part of the whole.

Beck et al. (1990:12) write that “all beings are related and therefore human beings must be constantly aware of how our actions will affect other beings, whether these are plants, animals, people, or streams.” This notion of relatedness means that individuals need to have respect for others to engage in constructing the harmonious whole. In this sense, Native American values are beyond a ‘good or bad’ dichotomy. Beck et al. (1990:15) state, “Among the Native American sacred traditions, the idea of good and evil is not as important as the problem of balance and imbalance — or harmony and disharmony.” Maintaining balance and harmony requires a mutual respect for others. Deloria (1999: 50-51) notes: “The willingness of entities to allow others to fulfill themselves, and the refusal of any entity to intrude thoughtlessly on another.” Deloria (1999: 51) also asserts that mutual respect in the philosophy of Native Americans is a function of both personal and communal identity:

Respect in the American Indian context does not mean the worship of other forms of life but involves two attitudes. One attitude is the acceptance of self-discipline by humans and their communities to act responsibly toward other forms of life. The other attitude is to seek to establish communications and covenants with other forms of life on a mutually agreeable basis.

According to Deloria (1999: 51), the concept of mutual respect is based on the understanding of life “as a tapestry or symphony in which each player has a specific part or role to play.” Thus, each individual must be in one’s proper place and play one’s role

at the appropriate moment (Deloria *ibid*). In this sense, respect is an essential component of Aboriginal spirituality that includes the maintenance of harmony in a living universe.

The Importance of Communities

Tinker (1996: 539) asserts that Aboriginal spirituality is inseparable from the local community:

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of American Indian religious traditions is the extent to which they are wholly community based and have no real meaning outside of the specific community in which the acts are regularly performed, stories told, songs sung and ceremonies conducted.

According to Tinker (*ibid*), this strong connection between individuals and community comes from the fact that a personal identity is deeply rooted in the community:

The key concern for Indian people in preserving the authenticity and healthy functioning of the relationship between the individual and the community is the question of accountability: one must be able to identify what spiritual and sociopolitical community can rightly make claims on one's spiritual strength.

In addition, Aboriginal spirituality is not separable from everyday-life in the community, because it permeates every aspect of human experiences in the living universe that holds moral content. Tinker (*ibid*) explains this as follows:

Thus the social structures and cultural traditions of American Indian peoples are infused with a spirituality that cannot be separated from, say, picking corn or tanning hides, hunting game or making war. Nearly every human act was accompanied by attention to religious details, sometimes out of practiced habit and sometimes with more specific ceremony.

A link between individual worship and community is important and necessary for both individual and community well-being: "Worship makes the individual and community receptive to the blessings that are available if both are responsive to the world around us" (Beck et al. 1990:22). These bonds between individuals and communities are maintained and reinforced by spiritual ceremonies. Tinker (1996: 539) also states: "Even

when an individual seeks personal power or assistance through such a ceremony, he or she is doing so for the ultimate benefit of the community.” According to Tinker (ibid), personal misbehaviors can bring trouble and misfortune to the community because personal behaviors affect other community members through spiritual powers that infuse and bond the individuals.

Tinker (ibid) states that this strong tie to the community is distinctive in

Aboriginal spirituality:

The communitarian nature of Indian ceremonies represents a key distinction between Native American religious traditions and modern Euro-American religious traditions and modern Euro-American New Age spirituality, with its emphasis on radical individualism.

Various kinds of violation of Aboriginal spirituality are described by authors such as Deloria (1999: 305-338), Jocks (2000), Battiste and Henderson (2000), and Smith (1999).

For example, Tinker (1996: 536) notes the violation of Aboriginal spirituality by the people who are not rooted in the community:

Unfortunately, the traditional symbolic relationship between the individual and the community, exemplified in ceremonies such as the vision quest, has become severely distorted as a shift in Euro-American cultural values has begun to encourage the adoption and practice of Indian spirituality by the general population no matter how disruptive this may be to Indian communities. The resulting incursion of Euro-American practitioners, who are not a part of the community in which the ceremony has traditionally been practiced, brings a Western, individualistic frame of reference to the ceremony that violates the communitarian cultural values of Indian peoples.

As mentioned in the previous section, Aboriginal spirituality is tied to the destiny of the community through its members. This awareness is crucial for the survival of Aboriginal communities. Thus, it is necessary, even for non-community members or those of non-Aboriginal heritage, to acknowledge that personal use of Aboriginal spiritual practices

and beliefs may cause destructive impacts on Aboriginal communities because our lives are interacting due to inevitable global intercourse in every aspect of our lives.

What Has Been Discussed about Spirituality: Insights from Research

Significance of Spirituality in Health and Healing

While spirituality was considered to be a part of health and healing before the twentieth century, it has become increasingly separated from the 'scientific' health research and practice for decades (Dyson et al. 1997, Goddard 1995 and 2000, Jitsukawa 2001, Larimore et al. 2002, McSherry and Draper 1998, Nagai-Jacobson et al. 1989, Newman 1989, Oldnall 1996, Ringwald 2002, Tanyi 2002, and Thoresen and Harris 2002). Scientific approaches towards medicine tend to omit the notion of spirituality, because experiences and interpretations of spirituality are highly subjective, and thus diverse and often intangible (Tanyi 2002). In addition, spirituality is a multidimensional concept that consists of inward, horizontal, and vertical dimensions of connectedness: an inward connectedness to oneself, horizontal relatedness to others and the natural environment, and a vertical relationship with God or a Higher Power (Baldacchimo and Draper 2001, Dyson et al. 1997, and Reed 1992). Reed (1992) also concludes that components of spirituality intersect with traditional categories of science because the notion of spirituality relates to social, psychological and physical aspects of a person. Thus, it is difficult to explain this wide conceptual framework of spirituality within the language of 'science,' which is used to validate criteria that can be measured by specified and "demonstrable" knowledge in which only one standard is recognized. Health practices and research based on Western science tend to regard spirituality as 'non-scientific,' and therefore as invalid (Battiste and Henderson 2000). Furthermore, as is

noted by Deloria (1999) and Waldram (1997), it is important to be aware that applying scientific hegemony, which confronts subjectivity with objectivity, may lead to the risk of underestimating or misinterpreting the personal meaning of spirituality. In addition, scientism is likely to ignore the cultural and historical context in which spiritual beliefs and practices have particular meanings.

However, general awareness of the non-material dimensions of health that transcends the 'physical-mental' dichotomy is growing, as anxiety, discontent, frustration, nihilism and social maladjustment prevail in a society that has achieved economic development and progress in science (Ando et al. 2001, Khayat 2001, Tanyi 2002, and Yuasa 2003). For instance, the number of articles that contain the words "spiritual" or "spirituality" in the titles I searched through MEDLINE¹⁵ is increasing: out of 4,421 articles written on spirituality and health during the past fifty-four years, from 1950 to 2004, more than half, 2,447, were published during the last six years (Accessed by Umeda Feb 22, 2005). As well, the proposal that spirituality be added to the definition of health at the WHO in 1998 proves that the demand for adding spirituality into the concept and practice of health is expanding worldwide.¹⁶

In the resurgence of spirituality in health, those who do 'scientific' research, which generally omits the notion of spirituality, have started to reexamine the role of spirituality in health and healing. Several researchers have attempted to measure spirituality as a health determinant by using various scales to identify the effectiveness of a 'spiritual approach,' a fact that provides empirical evidence (Brush and McGee 2000, Carter 1998, Feifer and Strohm 2000, Mathew et al. 1996, Underwood and Teresi 2002,

¹⁵ MEDLINE is the largest online database that covers all areas of healthcare, such as medicine, dentistry, nursing, health services administration and nutrition.

¹⁶ Kasai (2003) and Khayat (2001) report the details of this proposal and discussion process at WHO.

and WHO 2002). These researchers' attempts to demonstrate empirical evidences show the resurgence of spirituality in science. McShery and Draper (1998: 686) state that while "the relevance of spirituality has tended to be diluted and sometimes lost" in scientific approaches, scientific inquiry has potential to formulate concepts, theories and laws about spirituality in health by going through "all the stages of theory development in a scientific manner." On the other hand, authors such as Nagai-Jacobson et al. (1989) and Ringwald (2002) assert that measuring spirituality by applying scales is likely to ignore the uniqueness of personal experiences and expressions. 'Science' needs to stop claiming absolute legitimacy, and stop devaluating the subjective world of a person that does not easily fall into the uniform category which the scientific approach favors. Only when the scientific approach moves beyond such categorical attitudes, I believe, can it enhance our understandings of spirituality through clarification and support with empirical evidence.

Spirituality in healing has drawn more attention through its role in the success of AA, which states that spiritual awareness is the only way to overcome alcohol dependency. A number of authors, who examined AA's Twelve Step Program, have concluded that there is a positive relationship between spirituality and recovery from alcohol dependency (Alsup 1997, Brush and McGee 2000, Carroll 1993, Carter 1998, Galanter 1999, Kissman and Maurer 2002, Kurtz 1979, McGee 2000, Okundaye et al. 2001, Ringwald 2002, and Swora 2001). Yet, it is also noted that people of Aboriginal heritage prefer a different healing approach together with or apart from the Twelve-Step program because of the impact of colonization on their alcohol consumption, and because of the distinctiveness of their healing approaches and spirituality (Beauvais 1998, Duran

and Duran 1995, Hart 2002, Heinrich et al. 1990, Jilek-Aall 1981, Kurtz 1979, Lowery 1998, Mäkelä et al. 1996, Marlatt et al. 2003, McCormick 1995, Poonwassie and Charter 2001, Stubben 1997, Waldram 1997 and G. Walters 2002). It has been noted that the approaches which are based on First Nations spiritual beliefs and practices, as well as being initiated by Aboriginal communities, are the most successful in facilitating healing among First Nations (Abbott 1998, Maracle 1993, McCormick 2000, Poonwassie and Charter 2001, Thomason 2000, and Waldram et al. 1995). The Shuswap Band of Alkali Lake is the most successful and well known example of community-healing. Before the healing project in 1970, 100% of the citizens in Alkali Lake were users or abusers of alcohol. In 1985, they achieved 95% sobriety¹⁷ (Ben 1991, and Alkali Indian Band 1986). The success of First Nations approaches indicates that First Nations spiritual beliefs and practices have powerful healing qualities for those with alcohol related challenges,¹⁸ and I believe that First Nations healing practices and philosophy can help people from different cultural groups to learn about spirituality for their own healing. However, it is also necessary to remember that spirituality and healing practices are not able to be readily generalized: the awareness of the particularity that comes from the diverse cultural, social and historical background needs to be recognized.

There are as many concepts of spirituality as there are people on Earth — generalization may negate the diversity of personal interpretations of spirituality.

¹⁷ Ivy Chelsea, who is from Alkali Lake community and a daughter of Andy and Phyllis Chelsea, reports that the current Alkali Lake sobriety rate is approximately 70 to 75% due to the long term influence of Alcohol related challenges that are passed on to the successive generations (Ivy Chelsea, Interview July 14th, 2005).

¹⁸ Maracle (1993) and Waldram (1997) vividly explain personal healing experiences among First Nations, and illuminate how spirituality relates to one's healing process: Maracle (ibid) conducted interviews with First Nations asking about their experience of alcohol related challenges and healing, while Waldram (ibid) focuses on spirituality and healing experience in Canadian prisons.

However, I believe we are able, and indeed, required, to share and enhance our mutual understanding of spirituality. By sharing understandings of spirituality, people start working together toward integrating spiritual aspects into health practices, which has been left behind in the development of materialism and science. In the twenty-first century, we have started to acknowledge those things that contribute to well-being, which are not merely physical longevity, psychological sanity, nor material prosperity. Now is the time for us to reexamine what spirituality means to us.

Spirit

Spirit is described in many ways. The Random House Dictionary of the English Language (1987) gives twenty-six definitions for this word — such as the principle of conscious life; the vital principle in humans, animating the body or mediating between body and soul; the incorporeal part of humans; the soul regarded as separating from the body at death; conscious, incorporeal being, as opposed to matter; an attitude or principle that inspires, animates, or pervades thoughts, feeling, or action; the divine influence as an agency working in the human heart; God. Evolutionary anthropologist, Edward B. Tylor (1832-1917) explains two domains of the concept of spirit that have developed into ‘the civilized religions’ (Tylor 1873). One is an idea that a soul can exist after destruction of body, and the second is that the higher ranked spirits and deities have control over human life. On the other hand, within the context of Zen Buddhism to which I have referred earlier, spirit has more to do with the present state of a human mind rather than with a soul after death or a Higher Power. Often times, authors focus on different aspects of spirituality according to their personal beliefs and worldviews.

Although there is no universal definition of “spirit,” it is helpful to refer to where the word comes from. The word “spirit” originates from the Latin word “spiritus,” or “spiritualitas”, which means breath or spirit (Ando et al. 2001: 2, and Stuart et al. 1989: 36). The scriptures of various traditions regard spirit as “the breath of the Divine flowing through us” or as “a flame that burns but does not consume, a still, small voice, an inner light, truth, and patience” (Stuart et al. *ibid*). From this traditional perspective, spirit can be described as “a ‘spark’ of the Divine within each of us that animates our body and mind” (Stuart et al. *ibid*). In the current nursing literatures, spirit is summarized as “the vital life force which motivates people and influences one’s life, health, behavior and relationships” (Baldacchino and Draper 2001: 834, and Stuart et al. *ibid*).

The Concepts of Spirituality in Health and Healing

According to Morioka (2001:33), the word “spirituality” connotes the concept of both an entity and relationship: an entity that is beyond the individual, and a relationship which enables an individual to sense and commune with the entity or with a dimension beyond the self. This framework is useful to understand the connections among diverse notions of spirituality.

The notion of an entity that is beyond the individual is found in the concepts of God, Higher Power, Sacred, Great Mystery, Creator and so on. Furthermore, when we see a spirit as “the breath of the Divine flowing through us,” spirituality can be understood as dwelling within an individual. In nursing literature, authors such as Baldacchino and Draper (2001), Goddard (1995), Malinski (1994 and 2002), McSherry and Draper (1998), and Nagai-Jacobson et al. (1989) describe spirituality as a vital and integrative force or energy within individuals. The energy that encompasses a whole

person is essential for one's health in terms of holism that sees health as of wholeness and equilibrium within a person (McSherry and Draper 1998 and Oldnall 1996). Baldacchino and Draper (2001:834) also explains that harmony within one's spirituality will result in a more balanced state of physical, mental and social well-being and helps the person to find meaning and purpose in life because spirituality unifies and vitalizes all aspects of the person. In this sense, spirituality is a transcendental force within a person that unifies, "rises above, and impinges on all aspects of a person in an intimate and meaningful way," integrating the person as a whole (McSherry and Draper 1998: 689). In other words, spirituality enables an individual to transcend a fragmented temporal self, and develop into a more integrated and balanced character, and creates harmony and equilibrium within the person (Oldnall 1996). This transcendental force beyond the individual does not have to have a Godlike existence; rather it is an inner resource of the person that enhances one's senses of wholeness. Because of its integrative aspect, spirituality is described as the essential part of the person (Baldacchino and Draper 2001 and Watson 1989)

The notion of relatedness as a conceptual framework for spirituality is also profound in the definition of spirituality: spirituality relates to the relationship through which one can transcend a fragmented temporary self (Baldacchino and Draper 2001, Brush and McGee 2000, Burkhardt 1989 and 1994, Dyson et al. 1997, Krippner and Welch 1992, Morioka 2001, Narayanasamy and Owens 2000, and Reed 1992). This transcendental experience of connectedness often brings a person a sense of worth, meaning in life, and a reason to live (Dyson et al. 1997, Oldnall 1996, and Tanyi 2002). Reed (1992) clearly describes spirituality as follows:

[S]pirituality refers to the propensity to make meaning through a sense of relatedness to dimensions that transcend the self in such a way that empowers and does not devalue the individual. This relatedness may be experienced interpersonally (as a connectedness within oneself), interpersonally (in the context of others and the natural environment), and transpersonally (referring to a sense of relatedness to the unseen, God, or power greater than the self and ordinary resources.

Burkhardt (1994), who conducted interviews with women in Appalachia, concludes that spirituality is manifested through connections with the past and future, and the significant relationships one has with the Ultimate other, nature, other people, and the self, as these connections enhance a person's positive sense of self and inner strength. Dyson et al. (1997) also note that the relationship that accompanies unconditional acceptance is a source of love and relatedness, which are the key components of spirituality.

The connectedness emerging from spirituality fosters meaning in life. Okundaye et al. (2001: 67) state that spirituality can be found in "the person's search for a sense of meaning and morally fulfilling relationship between oneself, other people, the encompassing universe, and the ontological ground of existence." Krippner and Welch (1992: 5) state that spirituality resides in an awareness of a broader life meaning that goes beyond the immediacy of everyday expediency and material concerns." Tanyi (2002) also explains that spirituality involves a personal search for meaning and purpose, which entails beliefs, values, and practices that give a meaning to life and results in inspiring and motivating individuals to achieve their sense of wellness. The process of being aware of meaning in life is experienced as the wholeness of what it is to be human (Okundaye et al. 2001), and furnishes the person with uniqueness and individuality (Dyson et al. 1997, and Oldnall 1996). Since the cause of alcohol abuse is often regarded as linked to one's sense of meaningless or emptiness in life (Denzin 1993, Frankl 1962,

McCormick 2000, and Ringwald 2003), this aspect of spirituality is frequently emphasized in the literature about the healing of people with alcohol related challenges.

In addition to meaning in life, the notion of spirituality in terms of transcendental connectedness also develops the link between spirituality and personal transformation and growth (Baldacchino and Draper 2001, Brown 1983, Kasai 2003, Reed 1992, and Tanyi 2002). Baldacchino and Draper (2001: 835) state, “spirituality may serve as a dynamic, integrative and creative life force to instil hope and motivation towards change and coping,” and thus, “interpret crisis in a ‘growth-producing way.’” Accordingly, a crisis situation can be seen as “a choice point” which provides us with an opportunity to expand our consciousness and experience more fully the reality of our lives by going through the conflicts. Baldacchino and Draper (2001: 836) also describes crisis as a chance to “make the individual aware of the personal incompleteness which may result in a longingness to find existential meaning.” While this spiritual awareness of longing for meaning may have negative influence causing inner conflicts with preconceived beliefs, values and goals (Tanyi 2002), when the person can integrate and transcend the inner conflicts he or she can achieve personal transformation into a more integrated person. In this sense, a crisis caused by alcohol related challenges can be an opportunity for a personal growth, when the person achieves a more integrated sense of self through the harmonious connection with the self and others as he or she goes through the struggles. Spirituality, as a transcendental and integrative force, creates harmonious connection within the self and with others and promotes this transformation. And, the interrelational aspect of spirituality powerfully facilitates this transformation because it is a source of harmonious connection.

The Interrelational Aspect of Spirituality in Health

In the nursing literature, there are many authors who illuminate the interrelational aspects of spirituality and healing. Margaret Newman (1989: 4), for example, expresses that nursing includes the interaction of the energy fields of a nurse and a patient:

The second activity that the nurse can engage in, to bring about attunement to higher consciousness, is the process of sensing into one's own being. This sensing is consistent with a holographic model of intervention, which is based on the premise that the world we live in functions like a hologram (i.e., each part contains information about the whole). In the case of a nurse interacting with a patient, the energy fields of the two interact and form a new pattern of interpenetration, spirit within spirit.

Narayanasamy and Owens (2000) assert that the caring relationship between a patient and a nurse is based on mutual partnership. They conclude that nurse's personal involvement in patient's spiritual needs tends to result in better patient care, as well as enhanced role satisfaction and moral for the nurse. Burkhardt (1994) has found that spirituality is experienced in caring connection with the self, others, nature and Higher Power, which supports that caring itself can be a way of experiencing one's spirituality.

Jean Watson (1989: 66), who has developed the theory of transpersonal caring, also emphasizes interrelational relationships in nursing:

In a transpersonal caring relationship, a spiritual union occurs between the two persons, where both are capable of transcending self, time, space, and the life history of each other. In other words, the nurse enters into the experience (phenomenal field) of another and the other person enters into the nurse's experience. This shared experience creates its own phenomenal field and becomes part of a larger, deeper, complex pattern of life.

Watson (1989: 71) also notes that transpersonal caring relationships give nurses an opportunity to "call upon the inner depth of their own humanness and personal creativity as they realize the conditions of a person's soul and their own." Thus, she encourages nurses to explore their own spirituality to enhance the caring relationship (Watson 1999).

Nagain-Jacobson et al. (1989: 19) explain holistic nursing as being equally transformational and spiritual for both nurses and patients:

... the practice of holistic nursing involves the spirituality of both nurse and client and is transformational for both. ... there is a difference between imposing one's values and beliefs and acting out of those values and beliefs. Because persons do, in fact, act out of their philosophical and spiritual beliefs and values — the nurse no less than the client — it is helpful for nurses to understand their own "life stance." By recognizing self as a spiritual being who experiences, reflects on, and explores the meaning of one's own spirituality, the nurse develops abilities as a practitioner of holistic nursing care.

Lauterbach et al. (1998: 102-103) also assert the interactive aspect of caring by stating that a nurse's act of self-reflection promotes positive transformation of both the nurse and the care receiver:

Developing the habit of self-reflection enables one to uncover other dimensions of experience, such as the hidden (as well as the explicit) meanings of behavior, experiences, values, thoughts, and feelings. ... Understanding meaning and experience as well as building better connections and interactions are possible among reflective practitioners. Herein lies the potential for transformation that becoming a self-reflective practitioner creates.

Joyce Travelbee (1926-1973) is another nursing theorist who asserts interrelatedness in nursing. Travelbee (1971: 119-155) developed the "human-to-human relationship model," in which the nurse and ill person are perceived to interrelate to each other as unique human beings, rather than as "a nurse and a patient."

In the context of alcohol related challenges, there are some authors who articulate the interrelational aspect of healing. Some authors assert that the sharing of experiences, feelings and hopes takes a major role in overcoming alcohol related challenges (Kurtz 1979, Nealon-Woods et al. 1995, Okundaye et al. 2001, and Ringwald 2002). Wallen (1992) addresses that working with the people who have substance abuse problems can provoke the personal issues of the helping professionals. Through helping others, helpers

may remind and reflect their “own emotional difficulties or painful family histories” (Wallen 1992: 133). Furthermore, from Native American perspectives on addiction and healing, Lowery (1998: 131) clearly states that the interconnectedness is a powerful source of healing, because the understanding of the relationship with all gives meaning to one’s life and health. Lowery (ibid) further writes:

One can see the path to healing and one understands how to bring others along. For healing cannot be done alone or only at the physical level. Healing is communal; and the communal and the relational is the spirit.

In addition to these authors, the experiences of First Nations elders who work in the prison system (Waldram 1997) as well as the experiences of AA members (AAWS 2001), demonstrate that the experience of awakening one’s own spirituality can lead that person to help others with connecting to spirituality, and likewise, one can connect oneself to his or her own spirituality through helping others.

However, most of the current studies focus on the spirituality of those who have problems, and not enough attention has been given to the experience of helpers (McSherry and Draper 1998). This study explores how helpers’ spirituality is expressed in their ways of helping others to illuminate the mutual relationship between healing and spirituality.

First Nations and Alcohol Related Concerns

Discussions on Causes of Alcohol related challenges among First Nations

There are several opinions about the causes of alcohol related challenges and researchers have not reached an agreement. However, it is noted by Saggars and Gray (1998: 206) and Satzewich and Wotherspoon (1993: 147-150) that many of the treatment and intervention methods for Aboriginal alcohol related challenges are derived from the

view that the cause of those challenges stems from individual qualities or/and Aboriginal cultures. We need to understand alcohol related challenges in a broader framework that encompasses underlying factors that affect alcohol intake among First Nations. Maracle (1993: 2) states as follows:

[A]lcohol or alcoholism is *not* the problem. Neither is it *the* greatest problem facing native people today. Alcoholism is just a symptom of the fundamental problems facing native people — problems that cannot be solved by half-measures in isolation.

Saggers and Gray (1998) state that the cause of alcohol abuse cannot be attributed to individual psychological dysfunction, considering the great prevalence of alcohol related challenges among the indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand and Canada who have similar experiences of colonization. Accordingly, Saggers and Gray (1998: 206) conclude that the cause of alcohol related challenges among Indigenous peoples in Australia, New Zealand and Canada is related to the complex web of political-economic relations that surround aboriginal individuals and communities:

psychological problems of many individuals and the nature of contemporary indigenous cultures cannot be adequately conceptualized without taking account of those broader political and economic forces. In this regard, the factors underlying alcohol misuse and alcohol-related harm are the same as those underlying other health problems.

Satzewich and Wotherspoon (1993) and Saggers and Grey (1998) emphasize that the economic forces of capitalism, together with social inequalities against subordinate groups, contribute to the excessive alcohol intake and alcohol related challenges among Aboriginal people.

On the other hand, it is noted by authors such as Douglas (1987), Duran and Duran (1995), Lowery (1998), Stubben (1997) and Thomason (2000) that racism and deprivation of traditional culture and ways of living through the colonization process

have caused grief, anger, and loss of 'spirit' which has resulted in the prevalence of alcohol abuse among Native American communities. Waldram (1997: 46) describes that long-time exposure to traumatic events, such as physical, mental, and sexual abuse, violence, racism, and identity crisis, tend to be one of the root causes of alcohol related challenges, and notes that this affects the whole community: "The experience of trauma then becomes the lived experience of a whole culture." Jilek-Aall (1981: 147-148) summarizes the causes of alcohol abuse among the Coast Salish First Nations as follows:

Overcrowding, unemployment, alienation, identity confusion, bitterness over alleged or real discrimination, poverty, family disintegration, all these harmful conditions which are exacerbated and perpetuated by alcohol abuse, keep the Indian frustrated, and alcohol provides an illusory escape from a seemingly hopeless life situation.

The residential school experience is one of the most prevalent factors related to alcohol related challenges among First Nations. Residential schools aimed to Christianize and "civilize" Aboriginal people by separating children from their families, languages, and traditional beliefs and practices. Authors such as Hodgson (2002), Kelm (1998), Lederman (1999), Steckley and Cummins (2001) and Waldram (1997) report the frequency of physical, mental and sexual abuse that occurred in residential schools. It has been demonstrated that these experiences of abuse, family disintegration, and cultural dislocation resulted in a loss of a sense of security and belonging, and in low self-esteem, depression and resentment; this has developed into the on-going cycle of trauma in First Nations communities (Douglas 1987, Duran and Duran 1995, Kelm 1998, Lederman 1999, McCormick 2000, and Waldram 1997).

Moreover, Duran and Duran (1995) and Lederman (1999) note that dishonored treaties and paternalistic policies has caused a sense of helplessness and loss of control

over their own life among Aboriginal peoples. According to Duran and Duran (1995), Waldram (1997), and K. Walters (2002), this inequality and marginalization contributes to the “atmosphere of fatalism, frustration and tension” (Jilek-Aall 1981: 147), and enables alcohol to prevail within First Nations communities. At the heart of these various factors which affect Aboriginal mental health, McCormick (2000: 264) emphasizes that the disconnection from traditional cultural values has often led Aboriginal people to a sense of meaninglessness, which has caused many people to turn to drugs and alcohol. According to Marlatt et al. (2003), Stubben (1997), and Waldram (1997), Aboriginal people live in two worlds, ‘Aboriginal and Western,’ which is a phenomena that often causes the loss of a frame of reference. This situation in turn often results in identity crises. Furthermore, they note that the stress of forced assimilation has made Aboriginal descendants vulnerable to alcohol abuse.

Historical Overview of Alcohol Use and Policy among First Nations

According to Jilek-Aall (1981), Saggors and Gray (1998), and Waldram et al. (1995), alcohol was introduced to the First Nations in eastern Canada around the 1670s by the French traders, and reached the West coast in the early 19th century. Waldram et al. (1995: 137-138) explain that traders from the companies, such as Hudson’s Bay Company and North West Company, used alcohol as a gift item as well as a trade item in order to attract Aboriginal hunters and trappers and entice them away from rival companies’ posts. Mancall (1995: 23) further states that this rivalry was promoted by the competition for the land between the British Empire and France. During the opposition against the French, the British Empire wanted to appropriate the skills of the Aboriginal people into the English world through trade relations. Many Aboriginal groups were

positioned as purchasers and suppliers that enriched the British Empire within the system of commerce.

Saggers and Gray (1998) and Waldram et al. (1995) note that Aboriginal people did not have experience with alcohol before European contact. According to Maracle (1993) and Saggers and Gray (1998) the contact with the hard-drinking colonialists, as well as the traders' scheme for incorporating Aboriginal people into business relationships, resulted in promoting heavy drinking patterns among First Nations. Waldram et al. (1995: 137) state that the consumption of alcohol was at first primarily a trading post activity and alcohol dependency was rare. After a while, the First Nations trappers and hunters started bringing whisky back to their own communities. Maracle (1993: 19) describes that the trade company would even have a party for the whole settlement, supplying the food and as much liquor as they could drink. Jilek-Aall (1981: 147) explains that since the potlatch was banned in 1884, First Nations people of the Northwest Coast held whisky feasts, in which great amounts of whisky and rum were consumed instead of food. In the emergence of alcohol related challenges that followed this pattern of excessive drinking, the colonial government encountered a paradox: "liquor lured Indians to the British, but drunken binges undermined Indian communities and made individual Indians less reliable hunters and allies" (Mancall 1995: 159).

According to Maracle (1993) and Waldram et al. (1995), the Federal government prohibited possession and use of alcohol by 'Indians' through the Indian Act of 1868. Maracle (1993) and Moran (1997) described the negative effects of the alcohol prohibition through First Nations personal experiences. Waldram et al. (1995: 94) describe the impacts of the prohibition on First Nations as follows: 1) it created a new

class of legal offences; 2) increased conflicts with the police; 3) exploited financial property by middle-men; 4) developed patterns of binge drinking; 5) prevented First Nations from developing appropriate internal social control, 6) produced a sense of alienation and low self-esteem; 7) and created the stereotype of ‘drunken Indians.’ Maracle (1993:44) also points out that the law against Indian drinking was “a convenient social control measure that could be arbitrarily used by Indian agents and the police against whomever they wanted to target.” In addition, according to Maracle (1993) and Saggars and Gray (1998), by enacting the prohibition with the enfranchisement policy, the Indian Act aimed to extinguish Aboriginal rights and to assimilate Aboriginal people into mainstream society: if a person abandoned his or her Indian status, he or she was allowed to drink alcohol.

Maracle (1993) states that the alcohol prohibition formulated binge-drinking patterns among First Nations:

Of course the law didn’t stop or prevent Indians from drinking, but it did change the way they drink — for the worse. Since Indians were forbidden to buy liquor, they frequently resorted to drinking other far more dangerous intoxicants. The law also reinforced a destructive drinking culture that Indian people evolved after their first contacts with hard-drinking soldiers and scheming fur-traders. Since they were not allowed in bars or taverns and since they were not permitted to possess alcohol in their homes, the law forced them to become furtive and drink in bushes and back alleys. More ominously, Indians also had to guzzle their beer, wine or liquor as quickly as possible to keep from being arrested. (Maracle 1993: 44-45)

Maracle (1993) and Moran (1997) state that the returned Aboriginal soldiers brought about the change in the Indian Act in 1953, which allowed “Indians” to drink off the reserves. However, this change did not stop the binge-drinking patterns. Moran (1994 and 1997) described that the *Yinka-dene*’s alcohol consumption was greatly influenced by this alcohol policy. In the book, “Stoney Creek Woman,” Mary John, a

Dakelh Elder, describes how “[p]eople would drink as much as they could before closing time, because they knew that once they left the beer parlor, the only place they could drink was in some back alley or beside the railway tracks” (Moran 1997:130). Mary John (Moran 1997: 130) noted that her people had a chance to vote on whether or not liquor could be brought to the reserve in 1961, and they voted to allow liquor in their community. According to Maracle (1993), in 1970 the law allowed First Nations to buy and possess alcohol ‘in town.’ However, the reserve bands still needed to vote to allow it on reserves, and it was not until 1985 that all reserves were automatically able to buy and possess alcohol unless the band council specifically voted against it. According to Maracle (1993), almost two hundred out of six hundred local First Nations governments have voted not to bring alcohol to their reserve since 1985.

First Nations Worldviews and Healing

As is quoted earlier, Beck et al. (1990: 15) notes that “[a]mong the Native American sacred traditions, the idea of good and evil is not as important as the problem of balance and imbalance — or harmony and disharmony.” This idea is applied to their understanding of health. According to Duran and Duran (1995) and Adelson (2000), Native Americans see health in terms of balance and harmony, rather than through the health-illness dichotomy. Garrett and Carroll (2000: 381) also explain that the wellness of a person comes from balancing out one’s life in relation to others:

the wellness of the mind, body, spirit, and natural environment are an expression of the proper balance and harmony in the relationship of all things. If one disturbs or disrupts the natural balance of relationship, illness in any of the four areas may be the result. This is one of the primary reasons for keeping one’s life energy strong and clear in relation to others and the natural environment.

The final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP] (RCAP 1997: 19) also states that for First Nations “[h]ealth comes from the connectedness of human systems – body, mind, emotions and spirit.”

Garrett and Carroll (2000: 381) also indicate that a person’s health is a manifestation of his or her own vision:

In Native American culture, the term *Medicine* refers to “the essence of life or an inner power” that creates every living being’s particular way of life and presence, a way that is chosen in spirit and lived out in physical form so that person may learn in mind, body, *and* spirit. Our choice of the way in which we focus our time and energies in each of the directions reflects our values and priorities and is the manifestation of our own vision. (Italicized by the author)

In this sense, health is a person’s “unique way of being” that cannot be valued by a standardized measurement, and each individual is responsible for his or her “way of being,” including health. Understanding the Aboriginal worldview that seeks to benefit the whole, Williamson (1999: 37-39) notes that individuals are responsible “for maintaining the emotional, mental, physical and spiritual balance that [promote] strong and thriving communities.”

Garrett and Carroll (2000) use the Medicine Wheel to explain the cause of substance abuse. According to Garrett and Carroll (2000: 381-382), substance abuse occurs when an individual lacks a sense of any of the following four dimensions in the Medicine Wheel: East represents belongings, South stands for mastery, West corresponds to independence, and North symbolizes generosity. By “being out of step with the universe and its sacred rhythms,” a person’s inner power is unfocused or poorly focused, and he or she loses clear vision of his or her place in the universe. This disharmony breaks the Circle of Life in the Medicine Wheel, which consists of four layers of circles: the inner circle that has four dimensions of spirit, natural environment, body and mind;

the second circle as the family/clan; the third circle as the natural environment; and the fourth circle as the spirit world. Thus, a personal problem of abusing alcohol is also destructive for family, clan, the natural world and the spirit world as noted by Garrett and Carroll (2000:381):

To enter the cycle of substance dependence is to step away from the Sacred Circle and to bring destructive energy to the Circle, to oneself, one's family/clan, and all one's relations by not living in a Good Medicine way.

These Native American perspectives on health and substance abuse demonstrate that healing for Aboriginal people is relational, rather than merely personal. Garrett and Carroll (2000) note that an individual cannot attain well-being without being in step with family, clan, community, natural environment, and the spirit world, because each person's life interweaves everything in the living universe. In other words, the wellness of a person is directly influenced by the degree of harmony a person has with everything in the outer world through the interconnections among them, as well as within the person's physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects.

Aboriginal Views on Healing

As noted above, Native Americans traditionally view health as harmony and balance within the self and in relation to all other forms of life, and therefore healing is a process of restoring this harmony. This process is a path to recapturing one's wholeness in relation to family, community, environment and the spirit world as noted by Tafoya (1995) and Lowery (1998). This healing process is more communal than individual; therefore it powerfully affects the person as well as the rest of the world. Garrett and Carroll (2000:381) explain this idea from a traditional Cherokee perspective:

Well-being occurs when we seek and find our unique place in the universe and experience the continuous cycle of receiving and giving through respect and

reverence for the beauty of all living things. Stated another way, everyone and everything was created with a specific purpose to fulfill, and no one should have the power to interfere or to impose on others the best path to follow. Our chosen way of life shows how we focus our energies and how we seek a sense of harmony and balance among the interaction and interrelation of the Four Directions with other living things.

In this sense, the healing of those who have alcohol related challenges is not simply a matter of abstinence — it is a matter of transcending one’s self so that one’s previous focus on drinking is averted and refocused on the self in relation to others and community. Waldram (1997: 207) addresses that according to Aboriginal spirituality, healing of Aboriginal individuals is collective and includes healing of the community and the whole culture:

Aboriginal spirituality can be seen as a therapeutic system that emphasizes the need to heal Aboriginal *people* as a collective through the healing of each individual (this is the essence of “sociocentric” approaches), in contrast to Western treatment that focuses on the individual alone. ... Indeed, the healing of both self and community becomes their *responsibility* as Aboriginal persons.

Unlike the narrow focus on the self in relation to alcohol, the new focus has a broader scope that perceives the self in relation to family, community, nature, the spirit world, and thus, the whole universe. This perception encourages a person to restore a sense of harmony and balance within the self and between the self, others, and the whole community, which can result in overcoming alcohol related challenges.

Culture, Alcohol Related Challenges, and Healing

Lowery (1998) summarizes Aaron Antonovsky’s (1923-1994) idea of culture and health by stating that culture is a significant means by which a group of people can manage tension because it provides a sense of coherence, lawfulness, comprehensibility, predictability, and the ability to accurately judge reality. Accordingly, Lowery (ibid) asserts that the acculturation forces of colonization cause an experience of “the world

turned upside down”: due to denial and deprivation of traditional beliefs by the acculturation forces, Aboriginal people often lose their frame of reference that provides them with morals, firm identities, and reasons for everyday experience. Long and Nelson (1999) and Mancall (1995) also state that acculturation makes a group of people vulnerable to stress and tension, which are factors in alcohol related challenges that can prevail in a community: “Indians drank in part because the world they knew was eroding around them” (Mancall 1995: 8). This acculturation was politically reinforced through the prohibitions of First Nations traditional practices. Jilek-Aall (1981: 146) explains how the ban of the potlatch affected the First Nations: “To a larger extent, therefore, when the potlatch disappeared, Indian culture disintegrated and life on the reservations became dull and boring; apathy and despondency took hold of the Indian people.”

Native American cultural attributes need to be taken into consideration in the discussion on First Nations alcohol related challenges and their healing. Poonwassie and Charter (2001: 67) list important values among most First Nations individuals and communities: non-interference; non-competitiveness; desire for harmony within the group and community; acceptance of responsibility for one’s actions; acknowledgement of the wisdom of others; distancing of problems; emotional restraint; and sharing. Garret and Carroll (2000: 382) note that these cultural attributes can be factors that preserve substance abuse. For example, the First Nations attribute of noninterference prevents the community members from imposing one’s will on another and often results in lack of family or community sanctions against substance use. Another example is their value of collectiveness; it is difficult for an individual to reject the sharing and generosity of one’s peers when offered alcohol because the harmony with others have priority over individual

interests. McCormick (2000: 26) also examines two cultural barriers that hinder First Nations from obtaining help from mainstream treatment programs: first, they often feel shame in admitting they have problems; second, they are likely to have difficulties in establishing trust and intimacy with the workers in the mainstream treatment approach.

Even though First Nations cultural attributes can be obstacles to accessing healing resources, culture can play a powerfully positive role in a person's healing if it is carefully integrated into the healing approach. Duran and Duran (1995) explain that culture offers a symbolic system that helps an individual to transform one's destructive emotion into more positive and constructive mental activities in the context of that particular culture. According to McCormick (2000), who adopts the existential explanation of alcohol abuse that is addressed by Frankl (1962), alcohol abuse may come from existential anxiety that arises from failure to find meaning in life. McCormick (2000) states that reconnection to Aboriginal culture, community, and spirituality can be an effective step in First Nations healing processes because collectively oriented First Nations cultures are more likely to provide sources of meaning to an individual. Chandler and Lalonde (1998) and Health Canada (2003) demonstrate the significant role of culture in the healing of First Nations; Chandler and Lalonde's study concludes that cultural continuity considerably lowers suicide rates among First Nations in British Columbia. The cultural congruency in this study includes a huge area of community life: community self-government; control over a traditional land base; presence of band-controlled schools; community control over health services; presence of cultural facilities; and control over police and fire services.

Understanding that the confusion and stress caused by “living in the two worlds” can lead Aboriginal people to use alcohol, it becomes apparent that it is important to balance out the two different worldviews. Supernault (1995: 126) states:

The journey into wisdom is a warrior’s path. Living in this world means finding a balance between the two cultures that we live in, Native and Non-Native. One option is biculturalism: using the best of two cultures. We cannot survive just on Native values in today’s society.

Stubben (1997) further notes that Natives with meaningful roles in both traditional and modern culture are the least prone to substance abuse, and those who are marginal to both traditional and modern cultures have the highest risk for substance abuse. Furthermore, traditional approaches may not be effective for people of Aboriginal descent who are more comfortable identifying themselves with non-Aboriginal society (Garrett and Carroll 2000, McCormick 1995 and 2000, Poonwassie and Charter 2001, and Stubben 1997). Therefore the acculturation level of the individual needs to be considered to find a more effective approach for him or her.

Culturally Congruent Approach to Alcohol related challenges Among First Nations

Poonwassie and Charter (2001) and Stubben (1997) note that there are no ‘fixed’ Aboriginal approaches to healing. Thomason (2000) also states that the healing approach should be “tribe-specific,” rather than “pan-Indian.” However, Garrett and Carroll (2000), Poonwassie and Charter (2001), and Waldram (1997) state that regardless of diversity among Native American beliefs and practices, there are common values that can be applied to approaches for most Aboriginal peoples. Waldram (1997:219) asserts that Aboriginal people “must be viewed in the first instance as having a multiplicity of

cultural identities, with varying orientations to Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian cultures. Yet all can find something meaningful in Aboriginal spirituality.”

According to Beck (1990), Duran and Duran (1995) and Tafoya (1995), Native American worldviews are holistic and emphasize a process rather than content, while Western worldviews are reductionist-analytic and operate in linear ways. Moreover, Poonwassie and Charter (2001: 64) note that Aboriginal worldviews are founded on “a search for meaning from a metaphysical, implicit, subjective journey for knowledge.” This knowledge is supposed to promote personal and social transformation, which results in harmony with the environment and has a spiritual dimension. On the other hand, Western worldviews emphasize “the physical, explicit, scientific and objective journey for knowledge” (Poonwassie and Charter *ibid*) and aim at controlling others rather than being in harmony with them.

McCormick (1995) summarizes the differences between Western and First Nations approaches based on intensive research on healing factors with regard to First Nations in British Columbia: 1) a First Nations’ approach aims at attaining and maintaining a balance among all dimensions of the person, while Western therapeutic approach overemphasizes one dimension, such as feeling or cognitive modification; 2) First Nations focus on interconnectedness rather than autonomy; 3) First Nations’ healing requires one to transcend the ego instead of strengthening it; and 4) a First Nations approach seeks to interpret reality, while a Western approach seeks to transform it.

McCormick (2000) states that First Nations healing occurs through a reconnection to Aboriginal culture, community and spirituality. McCormick (2000) further notes that

spirituality is the only way for humans to connect with the rest of creation beyond the self.

Accordingly, McCormick (1995) lists fourteen categories of healing approaches to First Nations healing: 1) participation in ceremony; 2) expression of emotion; 3) learning from a role model; 4) establishing a connection with nature; 5) exercise; 6) involvement in challenging activities; 7) establishing spiritual connection; 8) gaining an understanding of the problem; 9) establishing spiritual connection; 10) obtaining help or support from others; 11) self-care; 12) setting goals; 13) anchoring self in tradition; and 14) helping others. Furthermore, McCormick (2000) concludes that cultural wholeness is both a preventive and curing agent, and that reconnection to cultural values and traditions should be the core of substance abuse treatment among Aboriginal peoples.

Poonwassie and Charter (2001: 67-69) note that story telling, teaching and sharing circles, ceremonies, and role modeling are the traditional approaches to support and healing that are commonly observed in Native American communities. According to Poonwassie and Charter (2001: 67), story telling enables a group of people to share information and to solve problems. A storyteller is not interrupted by listeners, and listeners are encouraged to learn by listening to the stories “how to accept responsibility for their actions and how to acknowledge the wisdom of others” (Poonwassie and Charter *ibid*). Teaching and sharing circles are a powerful means to transmit values, in which all knowledge is considered to be valuable. These practices are deeply rooted in First Nations values of individual responsibility, respect for others’ autonomy, non-competitiveness, and harmony. There is no expertise or authority, and trust among members is nurtured.

Poonwassie and Charter (2001: 68) note that Native American ceremonies are not merely intended for the healing and growth of individuals, but are also beneficial for the health and development of communities:

Ceremonies are the means and the method for establishing social networks, connecting with the natural environment, reconnecting personally and anchoring oneself, helping others and being helped by them in return, developing a sense of spiritual connectedness, learning traditional teachings, and storytelling.

At the individual level, ceremonies develop self-confidence and a deeper spiritual understanding of oneself, which, in turn, helps a person to confront personal fears and to meet difficult personal goals. Another Native American approach to healing is role modeling. According to Poonwassie and Charter (2001), role modeling is a way of teaching and helping others and also incorporating traditional values through transmission of knowledge. In the process of modeling, non-interference and harmony are respected, and a person is not judged or criticized, but instead receives feedback. Poundmaker's Lodge and the Nechi Institute in Alberta (Obomsawin and Canell 1987, Poonwassie and Charter 2001, and Waldram et al. 1995) are some of the best known treatment centers that use these traditional approaches in addition to the Twelve Steps approach to help those who have substance dependency. The book "The Way of the Pipe: Aboriginal Spirituality and Symbolic Healing in Canadian Prisons" (Waldram 1997) also describes how the First Nations healing approach of "symbolic healing" is used to promote the healing of First Nations prison inmates.

Duran and Duran (1995), McCormick (2000), and Poonwassie and Charter (2001) conclude that community initiated approaches are considered to be the most successful for overcoming alcohol related challenges among First Nations. The success of community initiated approaches is reasonable in light of an understanding that the well-

being of a First Nations person is attained through, legitimated by, and devoted to the community. In addition, strong family and community influences can work as peer pressure to help an individual refrain from alcohol if the whole community is working toward overcoming alcohol related challenges. Moreover, initiation of solutions by community members can reduce the sense of helplessness that is caused by the loss of sovereignty and the experience of marginalization during the colonization process and today. Involvement in a community initiated program is more than participation; it is to be afforded a role and place in a community, thus providing a person with a firm identity and a life purpose. Furthermore, these programs can provide opportunities to pass on the traditional knowledge and practices of the community, which is a reconnection to the wholeness of the community.

In conclusion, culturally congruent approaches to overcoming alcohol related challenges provide First Nations with effective ways of dealing with their problems by connecting them to a stable and reasonable ground of reference. This reconnection to their own culture will eventually foster positive and sound feelings of being a First Nations person. This positive feeling is a source of strength to deal with stress, formulate identity, explain experiences and provide meaning in life. Personal healing transmits to other community members, and even other forms of life in the universe as Tafoya (1995: 27) notes:

That is part of healing, not just ourselves, but our sick planet, and human beings are symptoms of our planet. That is the healing process that goes on; it is not only working on ourselves, but also those small steps we are taking toward healing something much larger, Mother Earth. So what we are doing here is a sacred thing, and I cannot emphasize that enough.

What Has Been Done So Far

Influence of Alcohol Related Challenges on Health among First Nations

Health Canada (2003) and Siggers and Gray (1998) note that it is difficult to measure, with accuracy, the prevalence and impact of alcohol related challenges among First Nations communities, and to make a comparison with these factors among the non-Aboriginal Canadian population, because of the limitations of the surveillance methods. However, some data are available for estimating the prevalence and impact of alcohol use among First Nations.

Health Canada (2003) reports that 73% of First Nations perceived that alcohol was a problem in their communities in the 1991 Aboriginal People's survey. Furthermore, the top cause of death for First Nations during the period of 1991 to 1993, representing over one third of all deaths, was related to injury and poisoning that often caused by violence, suicide and accident while intoxicated: it is noted by authors such as Fox and Long (2000), Frideres and Gadacz (2001), Health Canada (2003), Siggers and Gray (1998), Satzewich and Wotherspoon (1993), and Waldram et al. (1995) that the injuries and deaths that are caused by accidents, suicide, violence and homicide are often related to the use of alcohol, drugs, and solvents. According to Health Canada (ibid), suicide is the leading cause of the death of Aboriginal people aged 10 to 44. In 1991, the First Nations' suicide rate was 27.9 deaths per 100,000 people, which was 2.1 times that of Canadian populations. Fournier and Crey (2000) note that 74 percent of these suicides were committed while the victims was intoxicated, compared with only 36 percent of a comparable sample of non-Native suicides.

Alcohol abuse poses a great cost for future generations. Health Canada (2003), May (1999), Siggers and Gray (1998), and Waldram et al. (1995) state that heavy drinking often induces domestic violence and child abuse, thus leading to family breakdown. Consequently, dysfunctional families are not able to provide enough attention and care to children, as Hodgson (2002) and Lederman (1999) note. Moreover, excessive drinking of pregnant women can cause a permanent injury to the brain of the infant — Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD). Siggers and Gray (1998) and Waldram et al. (1995) state that behavior characteristics of FASD make a person fit poorly in his or her environment and often results in ongoing failure and frustration and can be a risk factor for alcohol abuse.

Mainstream Theories about Alcohol Related Challenges

According to Leland (1976) and Thomason (2000), there are more than forty contrasting theories about the causes and courses of alcohol abuse, but they have yet to reach an agreement. For example, Denzin (1993), Levin (1990) and Ringwald (2002) state that the cause of alcohol abuse is a complex interaction of neuropsychological, psychological, sociological, pharmacological, cultural, political and economic factors. In this section, I cite some of the frequently cited theories that have been used to explain alcohol related challenges. This section has two purposes. One is to understand the influential theories that have formed dominant discourses about First Nations alcohol related challenges. The second purpose is to make a comparison between Western theories and Aboriginal perspectives, which I have presented earlier in this chapter.

Genetic Theories

Genetic theories propose that alcohol abuse is the result of genetic and /or physical factors. Denzin (1993) notes that recent genetic research emphasizes an interactional relationship between hereditary and environmental factors, rather than providing a mere genetic explanation. Denzin (ibid) and Saggars and Gray (1998) explain that genetic theories include the arguments of adverse reactions to alcohol, and the notion that the innate factors that allow large quantities of alcohol to be ingested are biologically inherited.

In the book “Firewater Myth,” Leland (1976) strongly criticizes the application of genetic theories to Aboriginal alcohol abuse. Leland (1976: 1) explains the Firewater Myth that “Natives are constitutionally prone to develop an inordinate craving for liquor and to lose control over their behavior when they drink.” Leland believes that this myth is responsible for fostering the harmful stereotype that Native Americans cannot avoid becoming dependent on alcohol once they drink. Saggars and Gray (1998) state that there is no firm evidence that biochemical and physiological differences cause excessive drinking and determine patterns and consequences of drinking. May (1999: 229) also notes that alcohol metabolism related to genetics is an individual attribute rather than the trait of an ethnic group. Furthermore, Mancall (1995) and Ringwald (2002) insist that genetics alone do not determine how or why an individual chooses to drink, and that ultimately an individual chooses to drink rather than being preconditioned by a genetic trait for abusive drinking. Waldram et al. (1995: 95-96) assert that socio-economic and cultural factors could overcome the physiological condition:

Even if there are substantial genetic differences in alcohol metabolism among ethnic groups, it remains to be seen if such differences are in reality translated into

differences in social response, the frequency of abuse and the potential for successful interventions. On the other hand, the demonstration of metabolic differences does not mean that the problem of alcohol abuse is immutable and that broader strategies addressing social and economic determinants are necessarily futile.

Authors such as Denzin (1993), Leland (1976), Mancall (1995), Saggors and Gray (1998) and Ringwald (2002), agree that even if genetic factors exist, the genetic predispositions are mediated by cultural and social factors.

Psychoanalytic Theories

Levin (1990) explains that early psychologists, such as Freud (1856-1939) and his successors, attribute the causes of addiction to id-super ego conflicts (Freud and Otto Fenichel 1897-1946), the regression to orality (Karl Abraham 1877-1925), and a mood alternation to the cycle of infantile hunger and satisfaction (Sandor Rado 1890-1972). Later psychological theories have shifted their focus from the ego-self to the dynamic relationship between a person who abuses alcohol and the other, and therefore new theories have been developed — the Dependency Theory, the Power Theory and the Epistemological Error Theory. Denzin (1993) and Levin (1990) explain that the Dependency Theory sees excessive drinking coming from an unfulfilled desire for dependency, while the Power Theory explains that the desire for power urges an individual to drink. Lastly, the Epistemological Error Theory assumes that alcohol breaks down the barriers between self and world, which enables a person to exploit and correct one's epidemiological error, the gap between the self-conception and the reality of the world.

Psychoanalysis is helpful in finding and analyzing a problem in an individual as a psychological abnormality or disorder behind the symptoms. However, I assume that this approach often results in ignoring the strength and potentiality of the person by giving

professionals authority over the person. In addition, Saggars and Gray (1998) assert that psychoanalytic theories, which emphasize individual psychopathology, attribute the causes and courses of alcohol abuse without addressing social and economic forces that greatly influence the drinking behaviors of individuals. This lack of awareness often ends in blaming individuals for the failure of intervention or treatment programs.

Behavioral Theories

Behavioral theories examine the drinker's social, psychological, cultural and environmental factors that induce drinking. The Tension-Reduction Theory sees drinking as a learned means of reducing anxiety, and the Pleasure Theory emphasizes the intense pleasure alcohol produces to make the drinking habit an addictive way of pursuing pleasure (Denzin 1993 and Levin 1990). The Learning theory regards alcohol as a conditioned stimulus and drinking as a conditioned response. Denzin (1993) and Levin (1990) explain that an individual is supposed to be free from excessive alcohol intake by avoiding the identified events that precede the alcohol intake. However, as Denzin (1993: 38-40) notes, behavioral theories ignore physical causality, personal meaning in using alcohol, and individual intentionality, and fail to explain self-destructive behaviors.

Anthropological / Socio-Cultural Perspectives

Anthropological theories perceive alcohol abuse in social and cultural contexts. Denzin (1993: 42-43) introduces the Time-Out Theory as an example of the anthropological approach. The Time-Out Theory demonstrates that societies prescribe and permit the use of alcohol by using a time-out period, in which alcohol is ingested. By explaining the influence of society on individuals' thoughts and behaviors, this approach shows us that the ways and effects of alcohol consumption on the drinker's personal and

social world vary from society to society. Anthropological studies also illuminate that the cause of alcohol abuse comes from one's dilemmas and conflicts in society. From this socio-cultural perspective on alcohol intake, Denzin (1993) notes that a materialistic society, regardless of being Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal, promotes the use of alcohol as a means of changing temporal consciousness about the self and to help the individual to deal with emotionality, failure, success, and competition. This interpretation of alcohol use indicates that individuals abuse alcohol as a means of mending or overcoming the gap between reality and their self-ideals as psychoanalytic theories and behavioral theories.

The broad perspectives of these theories help us to understand alcohol related challenges in social-cultural contexts. However, as Denzin (ibid) states, it is also necessary to address the uniqueness of personal experiences and thoughts that greatly affect drinking behavior and overcoming alcohol related challenges as well as the great influence of collectivity for Aboriginal individuals.

Alcohol Abuse as a Spiritual Disease

Based on the examination of the experiences of those who abuse alcohol, Denzin (1993:7) concludes that “[e]very alcoholic I observed drank to escape an inner emptiness of self.” AA calls this human attempt of avoidance as a symptom of a “spiritual disease” (AAWS 2001). According to AA (AAWS 2001), a person abuses alcohol so as to transcend his or her limitations and seeks to control undesirable contradictions by means of consuming alcohol, which gives the person a sense of being Almighty. Therefore, Alcohol Abuse is a symptom of spiritual craving. Carl Jung (1875-1961), according to Denzin (1993:54) and Ringwald (2003:32), states that an alcohol abuser craves a spiritual

wholeness by means of alcohol that is contradicted by drinking: the Latin word *spiritus* means alcohol as well as spirit.

I believe that this notion of alcohol abuse corresponds to the idea of the existential vacuum, or existential frustration as noted by Frankl (1905-1997). According to Frankl (1962: 107-110), the existential vacuum is the situation in which people are overtaken by “the feeling of the total and ultimate meaninglessness,” and “haunted by the experience of their inner emptiness, a void within themselves.” Thus, “alcoholism and juvenile delinquency would not be understandable unless we recognize the existential vacuum underlying them” (Frankl 1962: 109). McCormick (2000:26-27) adapts Frankl’s existential explanation of alcohol abuse to First Nations. He explains that First Nations consumption of alcohol is a survival mechanism, through which people of Aboriginal ancestry attempt to deal with “existential anxiety” — the state of being powerless and hopeless due to the devastation of traditional cultural values and way of life.

Mainstream Treatment Approaches Applied to First Nations Alcohol Related Challenges

I will introduce some, if not all, mainstream approaches that are frequently applied in healing programs oriented to First Nations alcohol related challenges. I am aware that these do not represent all mainstream approaches. The approaches may be discussed and used in combination with others to increase the flexibility, and thus the effectiveness of the program or intervention.

Detoxification

Detoxification can be the first step to recovery. A detoxification program provides the individuals with adequate hydration, nutrition, medication, and often

education based on the Twelve Step programs through an inpatient program that keeps them away from the substance they are addicted to. Abbott (1998) notes that detoxification is an effective process for Native American for treatment of alcohol dependency, because many of them come for treatment during the serious and later stages of their drinking, experiencing poor nutrition, and more dangerous and complicated withdrawal symptoms. However, detoxification is merely a certain period of isolation from the addictive substance. Thus, it is not likely to provoke changes in the individual's perceptions and attitudes regarding the self and others, or to provide life-skills for coping with life without alcohol. Abbott (1998) notes that the individuals often end up with repeated admission to the detoxification program. This is because most of them tend not to follow up detoxification with the referral to post-detoxification recovery programs for the continuous support after discharge, and therefore go back to their old lifestyle of drinking.

Pharmacotherapy

According to Abbott (1998) and Keller (1986), one of the most common drugs for the treatment of alcohol abuse is disulfiram, which is the active ingredient in Antabuse. When a person drinks alcohol while ingesting disulfiram, "a reaction of flushing, nausea, vomiting, sudden sharp drop in blood pressure, pounding of the heart, and a feeling of impending death" occurs (Keller 1986: 31). The person usually takes disulfiram regularly preceding alcohol intake to resist the temptation to drink. In addition to the adverse psychological effect of alcohol, Abbott (1998) notes that using disulfiram helps the person to resist peer pressure without experiencing severe rejection. It might help First Nations who find it difficult to reject peer pressure to take alcohol. Although pharmacotherapy

helps individuals to refrain from drinking alcohol, the decision to take the anti-alcohol drug is an individual decision: if one wants to drink, he or she can simply neglect to take the prescribed pill. As a matter of fact, Roth and Fonagy (1996) conclude that pharmacotherapy is just a placebo, and there has been a low rate of patient compliance with its prescription.

Behavioral Treatment

Behavioral theories aim to identify high-risk situations preceding alcohol intake (Denzin 1993, and Roth and Fonagy 1996). Based on the identified risk factors, behavioral treatment attempts to help individuals to manage or avoid the risk factors of alcohol abuse. According to Abbott (1998) and Roth and Fonagy (1996), behavioral treatments of alcohol abuse include peer-managed self-control, improved social skills, and cognitive-behavioral skills training. Some of these treatments aim at reinforcing positive conditioning that prevent one from drinking. Others attempt to condition an individual to be averse to alcohol by providing negative stimuli with alcohol intake, such as the use of disulfiram as described above.

The outcomes of behavioral approaches have been studied and the effectiveness is noted by Abbott (1998), Galanter (1999), Nealon-Woods et al. (1995), and Roth and Fonagy (1996). However, Abbott (1998: 2625-2626) states that there are very few studies on behavioral approaches to alcohol abuse within Native American cultures. Consequently, research on the behavioral approach has mostly been completed within the mainstream cultural group. Thus, behavioral approaches, as Abbott (1998) notes, often need to be modified to meet the need of First Nations, considering the historical and

social factors that affect their alcohol abuse and their unique approaches to health and healing.

Alcoholics Anonymous

Currently, the Twelve Steps program of AA is the most dominant recovery approach to alcohol related challenges worldwide. According to the AA General Service Office (accessed through Alcoholics Anonymous General Service Office official homepage), AA had 2,066,851 members and 104,589 meeting groups in approximately 150 countries as of January 2004. As well as treatment of alcohol abuse, the principle of the program — the Twelve Steps of Alcohol Anonymous — has been applied to other addictive and abusive behaviors and disorders, such as drug abuse, eating disorders, gambling addictions, and abusive relationships.

As I mentioned earlier, AA views the cause of alcohol abuse as the distortion of a person's spirituality in relation to God or a Higher Power; in other words, alcohol abuse is the result of over-reliance on the self instead of on a Higher Power (AAWS 2001, Keller 1986, and Moyers 1997). AAWS (ibid) states that even in the struggle to overcome alcohol dependency, the person will cling to his or her self-will, not God's will, to reach abstinence without admitting his or her powerlessness over alcohol. Thus AA (AAWS 2001: 62) defines alcohol abuse as a symptom of a spiritual disease, in which the person dislocates him or herself in a God-like position, "to play God."

Based on this understanding of alcohol abuse, AA (AAWS 2001:85) asserts that one cannot truly recover from alcohol dependency without a spiritual conversion:¹⁹

¹⁹ Swora (2001: 9) explains that by "a spiritual conversion" AA means that "not-drinking is not a matter of individual will power or 'self control,' but a matter of God removing the obsession with drink. To attempt

We are not cured of alcoholism. What we really have is a daily reprieve contingent on the maintenance of our spiritual condition. Every day is a day when we must carry the vision of God's will into all of our activities. "How can I best serve Thee—Thy will (not mine) be done."

In this way, as noted in AAWS (2001), Feifer & Strohm (2000: 633), and Nealon-Woods et al. (1995:311-312), AA requires the members' spiritual conversion toward absolute dependence on a Higher Power, because only a Higher Power can relieve the spiritual disease. Therefore, AA identifies their Twelve Step program as a spiritual program.

The Twelve Step program consists of a guideline, the Twelve Steps of Alcohol Anonymous and regular meetings. At the first stage of this program, Steps One to Three, AA members are required to accept incompleteness of their selves and surrender to the Higher Power. Next come Steps Four to Nine. During these Steps, they amend for harm done to others and ask the Higher Power to remove their defects of character. In Steps Ten through Twelve, they continue the self-correction through prayer, meditation and work done for other members.

AA (AAWS 2001) defines itself as spiritual rather than religious because its membership is completely open to anybody who wants to sober up, regardless of the person's religion. AA names its concept of God as *God as we understood*. In addition, Mäkelä et al. (1996: 49) note that AA maintains its unity and ideological consistency under the Twelve Traditions of Alcohol Anonymous without gurus, authorities, hierarchies and exclusive leadership that can usually be found in religious organizations. By placing a Higher Power as the only authority, the Twelve Traditions emphasize equal status of the members and the single purpose of overcoming alcohol dependency.

to not-drink on one's own, according to one's own limited human abilities, is not to be sober, but merely dry." Thus, Kurtz (1979), Moyers (1997), and Nealon-Woods et al. (1995) state that the Twelve Step Program aims at "spiritual growth" rather than just abstinence.

Together with the principle of anonymity, which also protects members' privacy, these organizational principles serve to prevent individual egoism. As AAWS (2001) and Mäkelä (1996: 49) explain, AA assumes that egoism is the main problem of those who abuse alcohol. Anonymity prevents an individual from becoming a celebrity out of the struggle with alcohol related challenges.

AAWS (2001), Kurtz (1979: 179), and Ringwald (2002) state that AA's attempt at incorporating non-Christians, atheists and agnostics by being spiritual rather than religious has been successful. Garrett and Carroll (2000) and Maracle (1993) note that there is a positive effect of AA on Native Americans. Maracle (1993) further demonstrates that AA's Twelve Step approach has allowed First Nations spiritual practices and beliefs to be included within its program and thus, has been adopted by almost all First Nations treatment centers in Canada. On the other hand, authors such as Kurtz (1979: 178-182), Mäkelä (1996: 127), and G. Walters (2002:54) state that AA does not attain religious neutrality completely, because it maintains the evangelical Christian ideology, such as powerlessness and incompleteness of humans, absolute dependence on God, and salvation that come from the founders' Christian background.

Abbott (1998), Duran and Duran (1995), Heinrich et al. (1990), Lowery (1998), Stubben (1997), and Thomason (2000) note that a treatment approach merely based on Western science and religion often does not appeal to First Nations. Kurtz (1979), Mäkelä et al. (1996), Stubben (1997) and G. Walters (2002), state that AA is not always appropriate for people of Aboriginal ancestry, because AA's evangelical Christian ideology, anonymity, exclusion of non-alcoholics, attempts to influence the behavior of others, and limited meeting times are unfamiliar to the beliefs and practices of some

Aboriginal persons. Furthermore, Abbott (1998) notes, there are Native Americans, such as the Hopi and Alaska Natives, who have little use for A.A. Jilek-Aall (1981) also describes how the Salish in the Northwest coast in Canada adapted AA's approach by modifying it to fit their unique needs, such as the inclusion of non-drinking community members and the use of real names. The choice and application of the approach is up to individuals and groups. However, I also believe that AA provides us with evidence that 'spirituality' is a powerful healing force for those with alcohol related challenges.

Religion

Abbott (1998) notes that various religious sects that impose a strict adherence to abstinence have dealt with alcohol abuse among First Nations. Jilek-Aall (1981: 148-149) explains that the Churches' attempts to keep First Nations away from drinking were not always successful:

Established churches and evangelical sects have at least at times been successful in converting drinkers and have helped them to start a new abstinent life. But Indians easily become disappointed with the religious practices and social attitudes of White congregation members and usually become disenchanted, leaving the Church and again taking up their old drinking habits.

Abbott (1998:2627) and Jilek-Aall (1981:148-153) describe religious approaches to Native American alcohol abuse, such as the Handsome Lake Religion, the peyote cult, the Shakers, and the Indian State. As well, these movements were influenced by and/or incorporate Christian beliefs, practices, and authorities.

For example, the Shaker Church among the Coast Salish people, who live in southern British Columbia and in the State of Washington, had a great impact on encouraging abstinence among First Nations in that region. Amoss (1990) and Jilek-Aall

(1981: 150-151) state that the Shakers' movement originated in the beginning of 1880s. John Slocum, a Coast Salish man who was believed to have died, came to life with a message from Heaven for his people, "announcing salvation to Indians who would repudiate gambling, drinking, and smoking and reject the ministrations of native shamans" (Amoss 1990: 633). Next time he fell ill, "his wife Mary went into a violent trembling spell and, laying her shaking hands on her husband, cured him instantly" (Jilek-Aall 1981: 150). Jilek-Aall (ibid) explains that because of this miraculous incident, shaking came to symbolize healing, and attracted many people to be the members who practiced "the strictest morality, sobriety and honesty." Amoss (1990:633) notes that both Christian and Aboriginal ideas are reflected in Shaker's doctrine and practices:

Although moral and ethical behavior is considered a matter of the individual's conscience, the prohibitions on drinking, smoking, and gambling instituted by John Slocum remain an essential part of Shaker practice. ... Shakerism affirms a life after death, but overwhelming emphasis is on living this life well. By avoiding the contamination of sin and the disrupting effects of anger, a Shaker hopes to be always ready to receive the power of God. By participating actively in the "shake" Shakers continually renew contact with the power and extend its influence to others.

According to Amoss (1990:638-639), Shakers successfully helped people overcome dependence on alcohol or tobacco for many years, and started helping people to overcome drug abuse during the 1970s. Amoss (1990: 629) notes that there were fewer than one thousand active members in the 1970s.

Jilek-Aall (1981: 151) describes how the Shakers were absorbed into other religious organizations or movements in the attempt to cooperate with Christian authority:

In the 1930s came a final split into two factions; those who wanted to emulate Christian Churches (long ceremonies with Bible reading, “White” Hymns, piano music and English language) and those who wanted to keep the Indian tradition (short services with more shaking and dancing, use of indigenous languages and strong emphasis on healing practices).

According to Jilek-Aall (1981: 151), the group who had friendly relations with the Church invited the church members to their services and often attended church. This branch of the Shakers eventually converted to become a specific Indian Church. The other group of the Shakers that distances itself from Christian churches has had a difficult time maintaining its identity as a separated Native movement. Jilek-Aall (1981: 151) notes:

The other branch subscribes to anti-White attitudes. There is a pronounced feeling among these Shakers that their religion belongs to the Indians. But currently even this brand of Shakerism is losing adherents. Indians who want to stress their Indianness are apt to participate in the revived spirit-dance ceremonial which holds more prestige among the Indians of today than the Shakers Church.

This experience of the Shakers, I believe, shows how Aboriginal peoples have been influenced by and have cooperated with authorities while trying to maintain their identity and healing practices.

Above I have explored much of the information written in the literature about spirituality, alcohol related challenges, and healing. Now, I would like to share what I have learned in my journey from First Nations Elders and counselors regarding spirituality in healing and helping others.

Chapter Four – Words of the First Nations Elders and Counselors

In this chapter, I introduce the words from the interviews and articulate the themes of healing, spirituality, and helping others which emerged in the transcription of my interviews with four First Nations persons: Mr. ‘Frog House Opinions’, the Late Mary John, Mr. Alden Pompana, and Mr. Robin Chouinard. I describe the themes in two sections, ‘*healing as a personal growth*’ and ‘*spirituality in helping others.*’ In the first section, I describe healing components, and in the second section, I examine how spirituality is experienced and expressed in the First Nations persons’ ways of helping others. These two sections are intended to illuminate shared themes that can be found in both the healing process of those who have alcohol related challenges, and in the experience of spirituality of their helpers. In the analysis section of this thesis, I referred to philosophical and psychological literature (Brown 1983, Frankl 1962, Kamiya 1980, Maslow 1999, Rogers 1961, and Whitehead 1967), and personal stories of First Nations healing experiences (Maracle 1993, and Waldram 1997); I referred to this information in order to gain insights for finding themes in the transcriptions and for making connections among those themes. I quoted statements from that literature to support the interviewees’ narratives as well as my own interpretations of those narratives.

The Guides

‘Frog House Opinions’

‘Frog House Opinions’ is a *Dakelh-ne* who resides in the Fraser Lake area. Our first interview took place at the Ormond Lake Camp in Nadleh:

I live in Stellaquo. My reserve is, we call ah, Stellaquo people, Stelat’en First Nation, and I live in Stellaquo since 1980. I transferred from Nadleh reserve. So when you interview here, I feel like at home. (‘Frog House Opinions’ Interview)

I first met him at the Ormond Lake Camp, and my supervisor for the internship at the camp introduced me to him for this study. While he married into the Caribou clan, he carries traditions and values of his mother's clan, the Frog clan. Understanding that his opinion reflects the Frog House values, he wishes to be called 'Frog House Opinions' in this study. He himself has gone through alcohol related challenges, and left his "addiction life" through a treatment program when he was fifty-one years old. For him, healing experience at a treatment center was more than a matter of becoming abstinent: it was a personal journey in which he reconnected to his spirituality, both Catholic and First Nations. After he encountered the Sweat Lodge ceremony at the treatment center, he started learning First Nations spiritual beliefs and practices. Since then, he has been a part of the Sweat Lodge ceremony for twenty-two years.

My first interview with him was focused on the role of spirituality in healing of those with alcohol related challenges, and we explored the factors that have affected First Nations people with regard to alcohol related challenges and the healing of those problems. Thus, many factors of alcohol related challenges and healing programs were discussed; these included poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing, lack of parenting skills and dysfunctional family relations primarily stemming from relative isolation introduced through the Residential school system, lack of control over the reserve policy and registration, and healing programs that don't meet the needs of First Nations due to the policy driven administrative structures. For the second interview, he took me to a Catholic Pilgrimage, the Rose Prince²⁰ Pilgrimage. In the interview, we focused more on

²⁰ Rose Prince was a Carrier person who was well known for her love and caring for children. After she died young, several people experienced miraculous healing at her grave yard ('Frog House Opinions' Interview, June 25th, 2004).

his own experience of healing and helping others. He passionately devotes himself in the Catholic beliefs as well as his clan's values and practices; they are wholly integrated into his spirituality.

Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' was my first interviewee. His honest and straightforward opinions in the interview guided me to realize that I had a fear of not being "a useful researcher" and helped me to become more honest as a learner in this inquiry. He has been greatly supporting the Ormond Lake Camp through his song and prayer in the Sweat Lodge ceremony. He told me in the interview, "*there is one of the things I try to do about the Ormond Lake Camp, is that try to make these pipe carriers strong and try to talk about Carrier wellness how we get to there, how to try to teach it. That's what I want to do.*" At first, it seemed to me that he was a quiet person who sat by the campfire in silence, contemplating and listening to people. As I have got to know him through interviews and volunteer work at the Ormond Lake Camp, I have learned that he has a great sense of humor and enormous passion in his beliefs and his contributions to the betterment of his community.

Mary John (1913-2004)

The late Mary John is a well-known and respected *Sai'k'uz* or *Dakelh-ne* Elder in Stoney Creek. She introduced herself, saying:

I am Mary John senior, because we have Mary John Jr., my daughter in law, and I have lived in Stoney Creek, I was raised in Stoney Creek, although my, I was born in Fort George, Prince George area, you know. My mother was from there, so I was raised here in Stoney. I got married in 1929, to Lazar John, who passed on, now he is not with me anymore, so I have a lot of children, 9 children I have, yeah, in Stoney. (Mary John Interview)

She lost her husband's nephew and his wife in an accident: while they were heavily intoxicated, they fell asleep on the railway track and were hit by a train. Since then, she

stopped drinking and hoped to be a good example for other people in her community. Her life story is told in the book, “Stoney Creek Woman: The Story of Mary John” by Bridget Moran (1997). It recounts her experiences of *Dakelh-ne* traditional lifestyle, of her residential school experience, of discrimination, of the loss of family members, and of poverty and alcohol related experiences. After working at the hospital off reserve in Vanderhoof for thirteen years, she taught *Dakelh-ne* language and culture at the Catholic school there. Moreover, she was involved in the Ormond Lake Camp as an Elder and the Native women’s organization “Homemakers Club” in her community; she also participated in the lawsuit against a hit and run death of her community member. She was awarded the Vanderhoof Rotary Club’s 1978 award as the Citizen of the year, an honorary degree at UNBC in 1996, and the Order of Canada in 1997.

She was a very warm and kind person; just sitting next to her, people would easily feel at home. When she talked, her voice was firm, and her attitude showed her honesty and respect for others. In answering questions, her words were straightforward and simple with strong and clear messages. When I visited her at her house for the first interview, this warm attitude helped me at a point when I was having a difficult time finding participants, and was feeling discouraged in continuing this study. After the interview, she said, “You Japanese people also have great respect for others,” and we shared some ideas about our customs. Being with her, I felt welcomed. My second interview with her was postponed sometime due to my own health, and also the death of her son. Four weeks after the interview, Elder Mary John passed away at the age of ninety-one.

Alden Pompana

Mr. Alden Pompana is a Dakota person from Manitoba in his mid-60s, and is currently a spiritual adviser and counselor at the Native Healing Center in the Prince George Native Friendship Center as well at the First Nations Center at UNBC:

My name is Alden Pompana. I am originally from Sioux Valley, Manitoba, that's where I was born, a little reserve. And I took all my, I was in the Residential School for 8 years, and I took my training in Manitoba for alcohol and drug counseling, and I am here today. I work here in Prince George since 1992. I am an alcohol and drug counselor. Now I work under the different title, I am, what they call, spiritual advisor. And I am also a counselor. And I have been doing this for quite a while now. Drug and alcohol was something, that kind of work we have to have in B.C., and I moved out here in 1979, I moved from Manitoba to come and work in Okanogan at a treatment center. ... I have been in B.C. ever since. And I like B.C. It's a nice country, nice big mountains and a lot of good people. I met a lot of good people. ... A lot of difference but people, like, I am come from Dakota, Dakota people. That's where I am. My ancestry goes back to South Dakota and North Dakota, Montana, Minnesota. I still have a lot of relatives in that area. I was born in Manitoba, and when I came to B.C, I thought, "oh, different", eh, because people out here spoke different language, like where I worked first, mostly Okanogan Indian and Shuswap Indians. And, so, there was some adjustment I had to make. This is Carrier country and now I work with the Carrier people. But you know, there is differences, but I think, we get interrelated and free of mind, and the barriers can be overcome, you know. Like I don't understand the Carrier language, but I am slowly learning a few words here and there. (Alden Pompana Interview)

He himself overcame his substance abuse related problems through AA's Twelve Steps program, which was the only place that he could go in his residential area at that time; he has been abstinent for thirty two years. He related to me how he came to help others as a counselor:

I was sober for 2 or 3 years, and I was talking to this man, and he said that, I was telling him that people used to come and see me all the time, you know, even when I was drinking. People always wanted to talk to me, but I could not understand why. But he told me, said that "maybe that's what you should be doing, talking to people, counseling." So I had opportunity and I took two years program in Manitoba to be a drug and alcohol counselor. And two years, and lots of training, those are really good. And I got my certificate and qualified as an alcohol and drug counselor. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Mr. Pompana has a calm demeanor and smile that shows his warmth and humility, which has been earned through his life experiences. He carefully listened to me and answered my questions in a gentle manner; I felt like I was talking to my own grandfather. I interviewed him at his office.

Robin Choinard

Mr. Robin Choinard is a Plains Cree from Saskatchewan in his mid-20s. He is currently a youth worker at the Prince George Urban Aboriginal Justice Society. He introduces himself as follows:

My name is Robin Chouinard. My grandmother is the Late Mary Anne Carter. Our family originated from the Onion Lake Saskatchewan, which is a Cree Reserve, located about 40 miles from Lloydminster, which is also known as Border town, so. I come from Cree people, Plains Cree, and I have resided in B.C. for the majority of my life. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

As will be introduced in detail in the following sections, he grew up in an abusive household and even experienced imprisonment. Even though he endured all these hardships as a young person, he maintained a strong positive connection to the traditional practices and beliefs of his people. When we discussed about helpers' need for self-care, he stated:

Basically singing is one of my parts of, I guess, my self-care plan, whatever you choose to call it. For somebody else, it maybe, art, you know, like my wife, we have a lot of animals. We have horses and stuff, right? That's hers. You know, like, I am starting to learn how to play guitar as well. But a lot of times, my singing is cultural music. You know, rattles and drums and stuff. Yeah, just basically, their teaching that is given to me from my uncle is the way they explain in what singing means, you know, and significance of singing. It fits with what I believe, like, my own personal little belief system that I have. Remember? we discussed the morals and stuffs like that, and basically I kinda, comply it to myself, and I use it as a tool, you know. As well, it's just my love. I love singing, you know. When I get away from, I guess, people, and stuff like that, I take off into the bush, and we love bush everywhere, and I just go and hung up myself or,

you know, I'll go and pick medicines in the bush, and stuff like that. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Mr. Chouinard is a sincere and energetic young person. His outspokenness and clear-cut opinions greatly inspired me as a person who works in a similar field. Even though he initially gives the impression of being a “tough guy,” I was often impressed by his compassion and tenderness in understanding other people. Both his personal experiences and the traditions that have been passed on to him affect his way of helping youth as they go through similar experiences. I interviewed him at his office.

Healing as Personal Growth

Through the interviews I conducted with the four participants and my nursing experience, it seems to me that the healing of people who struggle with alcohol related challenges is more than ‘recovery’ or ‘problem-solving.’ It is more of a process of personal learning or growth that affects people in every aspect of their lives. Mr. ‘Frog House Opinions’ expresses that his healing started at the treatment center, and that treatment for him is an individual journey, a way of experiencing personal growth. He describes what his healing was like in the struggle with alcohol related challenges:

That's where they teach me that I have weaknesses, and in the treatment center, I have weakness in the alcohol, I have weakness in me, being selfish, by anger. ... If I listened to my grandfather, I would have learned it quicker (laughing). But I learned that way when I was 51 years old, I learned. Some of the things that how you will be a good person, that was what I have been practicing in all my life, but I wasn't good to my family when I was drinking, I wasn't good to myself, and good to other people when I was drinking. I was in the drinking world. I just wanted that. I worked hard to just to drink. I don't know why. And when I went to treatment center, I learned why. They teach ... your personal goal, ... how you get stuck in your addiction, whatever it is or your weaknesses. Whatever it is, you recognize it for the first time, and at that time, because you don't have a strong prayer life in your addiction life, you recognize that the Creator is the one that helps you, not you. Being from what yourself that you become the better person. That is the, recognize the Creator gives us wellness, although when you are drinking for many years, the Creator still gives you that life. You recognize that.

... I was a drunken person, then the Creator still love me (laughing). That's how I felt when I first sober up after that treatment, I tried to put my life back together by how I should be. I know I was very old when that happened. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

I designate the following themes from the interview transcriptions as the healing components that can be widely seen in the healing experiences: choice and commitment; acceptance; letting go; humbleness; love; the spiritual experience; Aboriginal traditional practices; nature; peace; and helping others. By exploring these themes I believe that I can shed light on the heart of healing, in which we, helpers, are interactively taking part. Even though the individually listed healing components often overlap, I examine each component in order to place emphasis on each.

Healing Components

Choice and Commitment

For most of the people who need help, overcoming alcohol related challenges cannot occur by waving a magic wand, so to speak, which changes everything all at once. Rather, it is a long and slow process of decision-making and maintenance of positive changes throughout one's life. Physical addiction to substances, like alcohol, is very difficult to overcome. For many, it is hard to make the decision for positive change until confronted with serious physical problems or ultimately tragic events. However, it is ultimately the individual who makes a decision to make and maintain positive changes toward overcoming alcohol problems. Mr. Pompana explained that people chose either a destructive lifestyle on "the Black Road" or a decent way of living as a Native person on "the Red Road":

Well, we have a choice eh. Everybody has a choice, I mean, I chose to walk the Black Road for many years in my life, and it nearly killed me. So I had to decide a different way. And I remember the Elders telling us that there are two roads in

our life, two roads we can choose from, eh. We can choose either the Black Road or we can choose the Red Road. So for myself, I choose the Red Road, and I am happy with that. I am happy with that. My family is happy. My families are all grown up now. You know, they have families of their own, grandchildren. Yeah. (Alden Pompana Interview)

How people maintain the positive change is diverse. Elder Mary John and her friends emphasize the importance of peer support to resist the temptation of alcohol and “drinking-pals”:

They do anything for you to get started again, you know. You have to be strong. And you have to go with people who will help you, who don't drink. Look for the company, you know, and be with them. That will [get] you. (Mary John Interview).

Mr. Pompana describes that which has kept him in his chosen course of sobriety and action as “commitment”:

I guess my commitment to myself. I made a commitment to myself that I wanted to change my lifestyle, get off the Black Road and stay in the Red Road. That's personal commitment that I made, that I, you know, I don't wanna, never go back to the Black Road again, because it nearly killed me. And I wanna have a good life. (Alden Interview)

In fact, Mr. Pompana found that maintaining a good lifestyle is easier than living with alcohol related challenges because it gives him serenity:

The Red Road is a good road. It's the opposite way of the Black Road eh. Well, the Black Road is the road of self-destruction eh. Usually, somebody on the Black Road, they are obviously on the road of self-destruction. They are likely involved in alcohol, drugs and whatever. But you come to the Red Road eh, you know, and you are trying to do the right back. Then the Red Road offers serenity, peace of mind eh, and offers a kind of heal our old wounds so that we can go on with our life and be free from all these things that make it really hard for us to live with, okay? So now I have been on the Red Road for 32 years now. I have no drugs or alcohol. I don't smoke, eh. I don't drink coffee, and I don't drink pop and you know. This is me, because for me I decided I wanna do, change my lifestyle, you know. ... And so I had to make a lot of changes in my life, and in order for me to continue to walk on the Red Road. Okay. So that's what I have done, changes my life, and I stick into that. And because it's a lot of easier eh, the Red Road is a lot easier when you look at it very clear, you know, and all have this clear you know,

when you do not have hung over, and high from smoking. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Their decision and commitment are supported and strengthened by other aspects of healing I examine later in this section.

Acceptance, Letting Go, and Humbleness

The healing starts when people acknowledge the problems they need to deal with and begin learning about the self that has been drowned by alcohol abuse and related problems. This is exploring one's identity. Alden explained the importance of affirming a positive identity for healing through the use of the Medicine Wheel teaching:

Yeah, balance eh, trying to balance out our lives, emotionally, mentally, physically, and spiritually. You know, and the first part is, I put identity, who we are personally. I think that's a very important thing. We have to know who we are in order to feel good, because our identity gives us, gives us motivation for life, eh. I feel good about who we are and motive to strive for, you know, anything that we want in the life. Because I think that we don't have, if we have an identity problem, then we might feel lost eh, might feel we don't belong, and you know, people don't understand those, you know. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Many First Nations persons who went to Residential school often experienced the imposition of negative self-image and/or the split of identity between First Nations and non-First Nations worlds, which is likely to result in an identity crisis:

Like myself, I, one time in my life, I was ashamed that, I was ashamed when I was in Residential School eh. I didn't really like myself at that time, eh, 'cause ah, Residential school tried to change me to something that I wasn't. Yeah, you know. ... we couldn't speak our own language, eh, when we went to school, we couldn't speak our own language. We couldn't practice what we knew, eh. They said, "You do this way." (Alden Pompana Interview)

In spite of the Residential school experience which caused Mr. Pompana an identity crisis, his relationship with his Grandfather and Dakota culture greatly influenced his perception of the self and made Mr. Pompana who he is today:

Even though, you know, I felt I am alienated, I guess, from, you know, when, because I went home in a summer from Residential school and I didn't feel at home, maybe I didn't belong here, eh. ... it was not for my Grandfather, eh, I think, give me a big difference in my life, eh,...My grandfather taught me a lot of things, to be proud of who I was. ... My grandfather told me, "you are the Dakota man." You know, "you're gonna be a Dakota." That's the work that changed that era. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Mr. Chouinard also notes the importance of the connection to one's culture in fostering positive identity:

Myself, 'cause I come from my own experience, I had a friend who took the time with his wife to take me hunting, to take me fishing, it's not to say that you are going out to kill stuff, it's, I mean, (giggle), first 2 years, we didn't get anything, you know, but the thing is, is while you're walking through the bush, you know, "what is that?", and he'll explain it to you. You know, you're starting to learn some, you're starting to get a little bit of self-esteem, "hey, I do know something!" You know, and to me, that if you can provide an aspect like that, the young person's life, I almost guarantee you, you're gonna see the difference. You know, and that's my thing, you know. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

For most of those who need healing, the sincere exploration of the self is not easy. While 'sobering up' cannot assure a better life, a better family, a better job, or a better self, drunkenness provides a shelter from emotional pain, from a sense of helplessness, and from anxiety about the future. Furthermore, once the people do begin to face alcohol related challenges linked to traumatic events, the emotional pain is often unmasked. It is an astounding and grief-stricken moment when a person realizes that the responsibility or cause of the problems is within the self (Kamiya 1980: 119-120). The anger, sorrow, fear, shame, guilt and remorse are now turned toward the self. At this grievous moment of knowing and accepting the self, these emotions have to be let go in order to start the healing process. Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' clearly expresses this:

Your mind can only focus on the things you see, your mental mind always focus on the things you see, and when you see weakness, at that point, you have to let those weakness go. ... You have to let them go, not focus on it too much. ...The peace comes from the Creator, when you release some of your hurt, or what are

really hurting. Let go some of that, let the Creator take it from you. Sort of lighten of your load. That's where you find the peace. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

Mr. Pompana also notes as follows:

When I hear one of my men there, one of the men praying there, he's crying there, going through something. How is it like to hear, especially young men, eh, to hear them praying and give thanks?, 'cause I think that's where humbleness starts, and enable to do that, when we begin to shed a coat of shame, you know, take that coat of shame off, take off, give it to the Grandfather, he will take care of it. (Alden Pompana Interview)

As Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' and Mr. Pompana relate in the statements above, one can accept the self when he or she gives the hurt and the weakness to the Higher Power. The acknowledgement of a power greater than the self promotes one's awareness of human incompleteness, which results in the abandonment of one's willfulness over the inconsolable emotions. This helps the person to stop over-criticizing defects in human beings, both self and others. It also promotes the transcendence of human limitation by shifting the power over limitation to the hands of something greater than the self. As a result, one can become liberated from ego-bound emotions such as anger, disappointment, fear, self-pity, shame, and guilt, all of which can distract one's mind and energy from dealing with present problems (Kamiya 1980, Kissman and Maurer 2002, and Rush 2000). Thereby, the Higher Power gives individuals peace and strength to let go of the past and accept themselves as they are. This relieves some of the anxiety people feel about the future and allows them to 'let go' of emotional burdens. This is an act of reorientation of the self in a more holistic worldview.

This shift in self-perception makes the person humble, as Mr. Pompana relates in the statement above. The acceptance of the self includes acknowledging one's imperfection and negative emotion that are bound to one's vulnerable ego. This self

awareness leads to the recognition that one is a human being who cannot possess complete power over one's own life, or any other's life, which can result in a broader perspective towards life. At this point, one is simply thankful for life: "*Although when you are drinking for many years, the Creator still gives you that life. You recognize that*" (*'Frog House Opinions' Interview*).

The process of letting go of self-harming emotions leads to self-affirming, and thus positive identity. Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' told me his own experience:

They [the therapists] were using affirmation, affirmation of the weak person. ... To say you are a good person, that's affirmation, to me. And when somebody is hurting you, it's gotta be in affirmation. You have to understand, acknowledge about their hurt, their hurt. ... A lot of people are still in the treatment center and still there, still trucking their hurt. I went to treatment and Medicine man said "let go some of the things that drag you down, let it go. Get better what you wanna be." ... I can't fix it, for myself, all my life. I have to change into other things that I want to enjoy and do. I shouldn't be leveled as a problem, change that to other things. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview*)*

One accepts the self through affirmation by letting go of the ego-bound emotions.

Likewise, one releases ego-bound emotions by accepting the self as he or she is in the present moment. This acceptance is not egoistic. It is, instead, related to opening oneself to others: "Each person is an island unto himself, in a very real sense; and he can only build bridges to other islands if he is first of all willing to be himself and permitted to be himself" (Rogers 1961: 21). This acceptance connects the one to the self in relation to others and gives a person a source of humbleness, peace and love, which can result in changes toward healing.

Developing a broader perspective through self-acceptance and release of ego-bound emotions opens up one's mind to people and situations around her or him, which shifts the focus away from the self alone. One can view him or herself as existing in

relation to others as a part of the whole. Once consciousness is released from the ego and opened to the world, it will provide the individual with awareness that others are also suffering from their own hurt and weakness. Acceptance, at this point, is extended to others, and people can relate to others with humility. Humility facilitates the awareness that there have been people who still give joy and support regardless of their hurt. Mr. Pompana relates this to “unconditional love.” In the face of unconditional love, we, mere human beings, can transcend our egos to achieve selfless acts. This further reinforces a humble and grateful attitude toward life.

Love

Overcoming trauma is a large part of the healing process for many of those who have abused alcohol because, all too often, alcohol related challenges are related to traumatic events. Trauma causes fear of being hurt again, which often results in distrust of the self and others. This makes it difficult to open up the traumatized person to love of self and others. However, when one experiences feelings of loving and being loved, love replaces the pain of trauma. Mr. Pompana explains love using the Medicine Wheel:

Well, like I said, you know, I use the Medicine Wheel, when I talk to people, eh. We came into the world after 9 months being in a womb. When we came into the world, there are only two things that we knew, eh. That's all we knew was that, all we knew was love and trust, love and trust that's all we knew, eh. Love and trust our parents. ... So by the time we're able to talk and, you know, from the age about...2 to about 12, they say, anything traumatic happens in our lives, eh. ... somebody got abused, or some, you know, one way or another. ... How to say, uh, I guess, the innocence was betrayed, you know, and the love was betrayed, too so. So it's very hard to ... feel good, when something like that happened in our life eh. You know, like myself, I was in Residential School when I was young, eh, it was age 15, eh. All those things are happened in my life, you know, all went back to that time, eh, you know. Like a scar, I was wounded, eh, many times, eh, yeah, so. But love, you know, in spite of all the things that happened in our lives eh, our Elders are saying, “We can go back. We can find that love and trust again. It's still there.” (Alden Pompana Interview)

The word 'love' is a loaded term with many subjective meanings. Alden relates love to trust and acceptance:

People who, in spite of what I have done when I was alcoholic or whatever,... they accept me who I am today. ... I think that's where the unconditional love comes in, eh, you know. To love our children is like in that way, and to love our people in that way too, eh. You know, not to judge, you know, because who am I to judge somebody, you know? All I know is that the Creator loves me and, you know, just go from there I guess. (Alden Pompana Interview)

To accept someone is, in other words, to trust a person based on the understanding that humans cannot avoid weakness or error; however, at the same time, there is still a chance to correct one's mistakes and transcend one's limitations, if he or she wishes to do so.

In addition, love is often related to the Greater Power. Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' and Mr. Pompana both mention that they found themselves "in God's love." 'Frog House Opinions' states: "*I did go through my fears and sorrows, but it was always in love of God. The God is love. The spirit of God is love*" ('Frog House Opinions' Interview). Kamiya (1980) writes that the wisdom and sense of mercy one finds after intensive self-reflection and suffering are so amazing that it seems to be the work of somebody beyond the self, such as the God. When a person who abuses alcohol feels that he or she is forgiven, and is indeed still alive, despite alcohol related challenges, the person often acknowledges that he or she is alive due to the power of 'something greater than the self.' At the moment of encounter with the greater power, one is humbled and changes one's perception of the self and life in general, being freed from personal self-interest, and being filled with affection and respect for others. And they become willing to help others.

This unconditional love is powerful enough to refuse self-rejection, and affirms self-acceptance. Through self-acceptance, a person can begin to love him or herself. Mr.

Pompana notes that love and trust with regard to others begins with loving and trusting oneself:

... how can we love anybody, if we don't love ourselves, eh? Or how can we trust anybody if we don't trust ourselves? You know, how can we like anybody if we pretend that we like ourselves? So that was comes back to us, eh, as individuals, human beings. We need love, eh, love and trust in our lives, eh. (Alden Pompana Interview)

As we see with acceptance and humbleness, when one humbly accepts and loves the self, he or she is opened up to others. Now one can see that people trust and love him or her; likewise, he or she can still trust and love others. Healing can transform the pain of trauma into the ability to experience love and trust.

Spiritual Experience

Spiritual experience can be generally characterized by the perception of the Greater power accompanied with overwhelming emotions. However, spiritual experience is difficult to define because it is very personal and cannot be fully described with ordinary language; only the person experiencing something spiritual can intuitively perceive and interpret the meaning of that experience (Brown 1983 and Kamiya 1980). In the participants, Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' implies that spiritual experiences can be a powerful force to lead a person toward healing:

God showed me his power five times in the scripture. The experience ...made me a better person, because the words of God in the bible, it talked to me. ... Something you can never experience everyday, but when the Creator talks to you, ... it opens your eyes. It comes really slow to recognize. That's what's happening. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

Spiritual experience is one of the peak experiences as described by Maslow (1999). According to Maslow (1999:98), peak experience is characterized by "a special flavor of wonder, of awe, of reverence, of humility and surrender before the experience as

before something great.” A person in the peak-experience is godlike, “particularly in the complete, loving, uncondemning, compassionate and perhaps amused acceptance of the world and of the person” (Maslow 1999; 102). Maslow’s explanation of peak experience is similar to Mr. ‘Frog House Opinions’’s description of prayer:

To be in the spirit of the Creator, you have to be like him. That’s why, when you don’t have love for your neighbor, or your family, then something is wrong. So we can have love for the Creator when it’s like that. ... when you pray, it has to be pure, [because] the God is pure. And, in your way, you talk to the God about love from your lips or your mind, just makes nothing. It doesn’t mean anything for you. But if you say from your heart, you mean what you say to your heart, to the Creator, then it makes something about how you understand. You try to be in life of the Creator, when you are in human form, try to be like him. That’s when prayer makes you pure. ... It just works. (‘Frog House Opinions’ Interview)

Maslow (ibid) explicates that peak-experiences provide a person with a loss of fear, anxiety, inhibition, defense and control, and changes the person’s view on the self, others, and relationships with others. This experience has therapeutic affects by lessening or eliminating neurotic symptoms.

However, for most people, spiritual experience cannot be the final destination. Rather, it directs and encourages a person to live according to one’s values and accomplish one’s life purpose (Kamiya 1980). At the Ormond Lake Camp, I heard some of the people discussing how difficult it is to continuously live spiritual lives on a day-to-day basis. The healing process and the struggle with alcohol related challenges are arduous, and the changes caused by a powerful spiritual experience must be continuously reinforced. Physical and mental dependency, peer pressure, and intermittent emotional pains, all must be addressed. A person who has had a spiritual experience may recall the intense feelings in the spiritual moment, such as the sense of being uncondemned, compassionate, accepted, loved and loving even in the midst of struggle.

Traditional Practices

As the participants often note, there is much diversity in the interpretation and performance of Aboriginal traditional practices:

Basically, like, the sweat lodge, and again, these are, this is what I have been taught about it. Within Indian culture, or aboriginal culture whatever we call it today, there're a lot of different features depending what area you are come from, a Sweat Lodge can mean something totally different in B.C. than it does to me in Saskatchewan. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

The aim of looking at the First Nations traditional practices in this thesis is not to provide a detailed account of the practices themselves; my focus here is to demonstrate how First Nations use and experience traditional practices for the healing of people with alcohol related challenges. If more general or detailed information on the practices is desired or required, there are many articles and books to refer to, such as Beck et al. (1990), Brown (1953), Duran and Duran (1995), Hart (2002), Lyon (1996), Roberts et al. (1998), Stevenson (1999), Waldram (1997) and Waldram et al. (1995).

The Medicine Wheel is an expression of the basis for the First Nations' way of life. The practices in the *Dakelh* tradition, such as the Sweat Lodge and Potlatch (*Balhats* in Carrier), are also based on the concept of the Medicine Wheel ('Frog House Opinions' Interview). Mr. Pompana, a Dakota person, uses the Medicine Wheel model to talk with people about wellness. Looking at the Medicine Wheel, he tells the people to find themselves on the wheel, to locate themselves in their lifecycle of the Medicine Wheel and to determine what is their task to deal with at that moment in the lifecycle. In this way, the concept of the Medicine Wheel provides them with the understanding of the self and their orientation within the world, and teaches them to balance all aspects of the self in harmony with the whole:

I am trying to create a wellness in the person, you know. I make them understand that, you know, there is 4 quarters to our lives, there's 4 quarters like a piece of pie, and the first quarter, you know that's 0 to 25, and the next quarter is 25 to 50, eh, then 50 to 75, and then 75 to 100. That makes a complete circle, eh. Okay, I want to talk to somebody's wellness, tell them to find themselves, you know, how old they are, you know, find themselves on the wheel, eh, and what they have to do, eh, you know, like the wheel is made up of 4 main things, eh. That's, the first part is emotional part of us, you know, how we feel about each other and how feel about our selves, you know. The next part is mental how we think, you know, how we think about the world and wellness and how we think about ourselves, and you know, families and whatever. Okay. The next part is physical being. And the, physical is, you know, ourselves are the bodies, how we look at ourselves physically and to be, I guess, to be thankful for our physical beings, eh. And the last part is spiritual, spiritual part of us, eh. ... You know, we have beings within us. Okay, but sometimes when we are drinking and doing drugs and get away from that. We stop believing and like a higher power, you know, like the alcohol and drugs become a Higher Power. ... You know, it has this power, you know, but the power is negative, eh. It's not spiritual, you know, not spiritual and positive. (Alden Pompana Interview)

The Sweat Lodge is the most frequently mentioned spiritual or healing practice that helps people with alcohol related challenges. This ceremony cleans the mind, body, and spirit (Alden Pompana, 'Frog House Opinions', Mary John, and Robin Chouinard Interview):

They use the Sweat Lodge for cleaning their bodies, cleaning their mind, that's spiritual, spirituality is there. They sit in the Sweat Lodge and sweat. Somebody, like lots of people who are alcoholics, they use the Sweat Lodge, too." (Mary John Interview)

The Sweat Lodge symbolizes a mother's womb (Alden Pompana and Robin Chouinard Interview). Since a mother's womb is a protected place, people can bring up issues that cause great pain in order to deal with them in the Sweat Lodge. And the heated rocks brought in to the Sweat Lodge helps to wash the pain away:

The significance of the Sweat was, like, going back into your mother's womb, maintaining that connection, you know, with your mother in that aspect is where you are safe, you know, within the womb, I mean, you always had somebody looking over you, protecting, and it was a safe place for you. You know, you weren't exposed to any negativity, you know. It provides you safe comfortable

place for you to, I guess, address some issues, problems that you have. And, as I mentioned before the significance of, the way I was taught, was the significance of the heat, you know. Sometimes you get very hot in it. The elders that I have talked to say that we go to a Sweat, we go for a healing, but healing doesn't come without pain. And that's where the heat comes in, okay. And after we experience that pain, the sweat comes and washes you off. So you don't carry that anymore. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

In addition, the experience as characterized as being in the Mother's womb helps participants to realize that as the Mother's children, all are dependent on and connected to each other. Through prayer, people give thanks to all those things on which their lives are dependent. This gratitude is also expressed to the self:

The way I do is, like the first round I always give thanks for all the gifts that we have in a life, you know, and what I mean by gift is, ah, ourselves, I guess, you know, because we have many gifts, you know, we have generosity and we have humbleness, you know, and we have a big thanks for being grateful, and all these are gifts that we have, eh. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Here, from the gratitude for all the things that surround the self, one finally comes to humbly accept him or herself and give thanks for one's life.

Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' defined the Sweat Lodge ceremony as "a prayer thing:"

We will pray for four directions of wellness, we pray for the animals, we pray for the earth, we pray for the water, we pray for the people around us to keep us well. We pray to the Creator that he keeps giving us these things. ... We are praying in the Sweat Lodge to recognize that. We pray for the men, we pray for the women, and we pray for the water, and we pray for all around us. The Creator gives us that. We just keep telling to give us to teach us forgiveness. That is what we are doing in the Sweat Lodge. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview).

Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' also describes the Sweat Lodge ceremony as "a personal God thing" which contributes to one's wellness, and explains that it is a way to reach the Creator:

So peace comes from when I humble myself before the Creator with the hot rocks and the water, the water ceremony thing, being there makes me humble, that's

why I go to the Sweat Lodge to humble myself before the Creator. I am not so good after all, I have to tell them that all the times to give me the strength. ... The Sweat Lodge is just the way to get the Creator, connected with the Creator. And it's you, you do that to your own self. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

Through prayer in the Sweat Lodge, people disclose their problems and release the negative emotions caused by the problems with the help of heat, water, steam and the sweat, and give thanks to everything related to them through the connection with the Mother. This is the moment when one feels something beyond the self and feels humble before that power.

Prayer is a big part of First Nations' life. Traditionally, prayer is not confined to ceremonial occasions but is performed everywhere in First Nations daily life:

You can go in there [church], and you know meditate or pray. But our old people, Elders, used to pray even out in camp fire. ... It just turned out that they're back, going together, and start praying in Carrier, you know, language, everyday, everyday, morning and night. (Mary John Interview)

Mr. Chouinard further describes how the relationship with the Greater Power is personal:

Aboriginal people have a big philosophy, is, is that whatever you pray about is between you and whoever. It's not my business. You know. How could anybody tell me how to think or how to pray? You know. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

He further explained this idea to me, when I told him that I had difficulty in praying in English in the Sweat Lodge:

Before we had an Indo-Canadian people. Like a, some east Indian people, they come into the Sweat with us one time, and they were really struggling with talk or pray, because they were trying to pray in English. You know and they don't have a grasp of that language. And my dad, he said, well, he says, "you, normally, you communicate with your brother whatever in your language. You don't need to accommodate us. Talk to him in your own. You know, like a, and 'cause my dad would say, "you know, I speak Cree", he says "I'm not gonna translate it for you, because it's between me and Him". (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Prayer is not intended to demonstrate the self or to preach to others; prayer is ultimately personal, although it includes prayers for others.

In addition to the Sweat Lodge, there are other practices First Nations people often use to promote healing. Smudging, for example, is purifying oneself and giving thanks (Alden Pompana and Robin Chouinard Interview):

We smudge to purify our minds, bodies and spirits, eh. And again giving thanks for visions, eh. ... Thanks for our visions, our eyes. And give thanks for the ability to smell, you know, the ability to taste, and ability to speak, okay, and the ability to listen. Okay, then we smudge ourselves like this. We smudge here because this is where the, you feel up here (place his hand above his head), you can feel the, right in the middle, right in the middle, you can feel the, feel something, yeah. ...That's, cause your mind, eh. That's where your mind does it, you know, the brain. So we all give thanks to the Creator for our minds (Alden Pompana Interview).

Furthermore, Mr. Chouinard notes that the Talking Circle is held for talking about a particular topic. In the circle, the participants talk without any interference, and allow others to speak as long as they want.

Participants mentioned that in the colonization process, religious institutions tried to deprive *Yinka-Dene* of their traditional practices. Elder Mary John explained that the religious institution misunderstood and discredited *Dake-ne* traditional beliefs and practices:

Spirituality is really really great in our culture. You know, years ago, they think we were pagans or something, but still, in, before that religion came to our country, like, to our religions are still had a respect for God's creation, everything, it's made for us, and respect each other. (Mary John Interview)

She also referred to the prohibition of the potluch:

Only the Catholic religion used to be against Potluch, that was the only thing they were against. ...They think we are wasting. We are giving, we are not wasting. We never throw it away as wasting, but giving it to people. That's what we, our culture is. We have lots to give. That was thing about Potluches. You prepare for that. Your clan members, they put it in a potluch, if the member of the clan, you help out, you know. That's what it was. (Mary John Interview)

Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' also explains the impact of Church on the *Dakelh-ne* traditional practices:

Our Carrier people never practice that when the priest came around in this area, and they wanted us to go to Church. That's what they did. They left the Sweat Lodge over in the mountain, and never really practiced it. They went to the church. My grandfather never taught me about the pipe or the Sweat Lodge. ... While they practiced at home, they didn't teach us. ... Some of our Elders, or my grandfathers' age, which is about my grandfather must be born about 1850, around that era, they used to practice the Sweat Lodge. When ... we became Christian and Catholic, they stopped going to. I am not saying that they stopped going to the Sweat Lodge, but they did for themselves, they didn't teach us, they didn't teach me. So I went to Alberta, and I learned about the Sweat Lodge, and I came back. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

Now the Sweat Lodge denotes the reconciliation of Aboriginal culture, beliefs and practices:

To me, my own opinion, It [the Sweat Lodge] is a reconciliation stage where we learn some of the values from different nations, and trying to create it back on our own, because our own people were institutionalized when we were young. So most of the schools, we go to the Cree nations and different nations in the world, the United States and somewhere. And we try to pick the good parts of how we look at wellness, and practice it within the Carrier, in the Carrier belief. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview).

The reconciliation of culture through re-adoption of Native American traditional practices connects a First Nations person to the whole Native American culture and history, identifying the person as a successor of the Native American traditions, which results in an affirmation of identity as a Native person. Furthermore, Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' is trying to establish *Dakelh-ne* wellness and hand it down to successive generations in his community as I quoted earlier. This is a transformation of himself and his community, in which he goes beyond his own healing to assist the healing of all in his community.

Mr. Chouinard also told me of his awakening experience in which he and Christian priests transcended their historical relationship through traditional practice:

When we go back to Alberta, and when we fast, there were four catholic priests who come and fast with us. They don't come to try to convert us. They come because that works for them. Okay. They don't encourage anybody from the church that they, that they practice that to come and fast with this Indian man. These guys are cool. They do it for them. You know, and I think it's so neat. ... And, say, White people come so far, like not all over, the few, come so far from the victim and oppressor state, to actually practicing a ceremony together, you know, because there're tons of Aboriginal people who go to the church, right? And very rarely you see these church people coming and participate, you know in Indian ceremonies. And the thing I found amazing that when I was fasting with these men, they were men, they were people. You know, they joke, they laugh, they swear, they stub your toe just like you. You know, and that, I thought was, that was such an awakening for myself. There may be hope for the world yet, you know. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Mr. Chouinard's experience demonstrates that First Nations traditional practices can help First Nations and non-First Nations move toward mutual understanding and companionship beyond the missionizing and colonial state. This mutuality is connected to each other's healing and growth.

Nature

The participants in the interviews indicated that nature helps us to orient, situate, and contextualize ourselves in the broader realm of the planet, and thus, offers healing experiences:

You humble yourself in your practice and in your everyday, because truly, "who are you?" "You are nothing" (laughing), you know, in the broad, in the big [scheme of things]. I mean, go to the Queen Charlotte Island, you will find out. You go and stand by big trees. ... We took the kids and went for a walk through the bush. It can be ... the size of this office. I am nothing, you know. Look at how small I am. ... That's basically what that means. You humble yourself. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Nature draws attention to omnipresent forces of healing, and offers a location to facilitate healing:

When you look at the Creator, and even though you can't touch it, in the Sweat Lodge, or even when you are outside, you know the Creator is giving you the wind

that you can feel, giving you the light to live, you can understand that. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

These statements clearly show that Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' perceives the sacred through every entity in nature — “everything has a spirit.” This spirit is a healing force. Regardless of what kind of problems one has, where one is from, or how one chooses to identify oneself, nature can powerfully integrate an individual as a part of nature: as humans, we depend on and belong to nature; we are a small part of a larger whole. To repeat an earlier point, this realization affects our humbleness, gratitude, and peace, which are the sources of healing.

Peace

Peace was also described in discussions on healing with some of the participants.

Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' describes how he feels peace in the Sweat Lodge:

So peace comes from when I humble myself before the Creator with the hot rocks and the water, the water ceremony thing, being there makes me humble, that's why I go to the Sweat Lodge to humble myself before the Creator, I am not so good after all, I have to tell them that all the times to give me the strength. So the Sweat Lodge, the songs and the drums. It's through these ceremony practices that give you some kind of wellness about spirituality. The Creator gives you that. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

The statement above indicates that peace is attained when we accept ourselves with our inadequacies, and trust that our weakness and suffering are taken up by something greater than ourselves. Mr. Pompana feels peace by being on the Red Road and helping others. He states that the peace that comes from being on the Red Road sets him free for his healing journey:

...the Red Road is a good road. It's the opposite way of the Black Road eh. The Black Road is the road of self-destruction eh. Usually, somebody on the Black Road, they are obviously on the road of self-destruction. They are likely involved in alcohol, drugs and whatever But you come to the Red Road eh, you know, and you are trying to do the right back. Then the Red Road offers serenity, peace

of mind eh, and offers a kind of, heal our old wounds so that we can go on our life and be free from all these things that make it really hard for us to live with.
(Alden Pompana Interview)

Mr. Pompana's statement shows that acting according to one's morals and beliefs adds peace to one's life, despite the difficulty in living according to one's morals. The following statement of Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947), a British mathematician, logician and philosopher, supports Mr. Pompana's notion of peace, indicating that peace encourages a person to remain in one's chosen course by releasing him or her from the bonds with past or future:

It [peace] is not a hope for the future, nor is it an interest in present details. It is a broadening of feeling due to the emergence of some deep metaphysical insight, un verbalized and yet momentous in its coordination of values. ... it preserves the springs of energy, and masters them for the avoidance of paralyzing distraction. (Whitehead 1967: 285)

In other words, peace provides people who have alcohol related challenges with energy to overcome the struggles and stay in the chosen course of action, avoiding distraction.

According to Whitehead (1967: 286), peace is closely related to tragedy: "Peace is the understanding of tragedy and at the same time its preservation." He further explains as follows:

Amid the passing of so much beauty, so much heroism, so much daring, Peace is then the intuition of permanence. It keeps vivid the sensitiveness to the tragedy; and it sees the tragedy as a living agent persuading the world to aim at fineness beyond the faded level of surrounding fact. Each tragedy is the disclosure of an ideal: — What might have been, and was not; What can be. The tragedy was not in vain. (Whitehead *ibid*)

Peace enlarges one's field of attention because with peace, an individual loses interest in the self and his or her interest is expanded to wider awareness beyond one's own personality (Whitehead 1967: 285). In this sense, those who attain peace through the tragedies caused by alcohol related challenges have a possibility for a wider scope of

consciousness, in which one is aware of pains and sorrow in human life and becomes able to feel empathy with others. This notion of wider consciousness and empathy corresponds to the humbleness and unconditional love mentioned by participants. When suffering caused by alcohol related challenges is turned into peace through the healing process, the hardship attains meaning to the person.

Interestingly, Whitehead (ibid) emphasizes that ‘our civilization’ can be ruthless, hard, and cruel when it lacks peace. I understand this in the context of the healing of the people who are struggling with alcohol related challenges. Their hardship and pain will be meaningful to ‘our humanity,’ as well as their own lives, through the healing process. The peace they have attained is transmitted to the world through their relationship with others— their broader and deeper outlook of life, and their empathy, will speak to others who need healing.

Helping Others

Elder Mary John told me her experience of becoming abstinent and helping others overcome alcohol related challenges:

It was many years ago, before that I used to have occasional drink, you know, when the first time liquor was open to our people, before that we are not allowed to go and buy liquor, or drink in public, because we were thrown in the jail right away, and then that year, when my nephew and niece got killed by train, train run over them. They were passed out on the tracks, and they both died by instantly, and that, that funeral, two covered together. They left three children behind. That's why I thought that's not for us, alcohol, never touch it since, was it how many years ago? (Mary John's friend told her that it was 1950's). Yeah. So, I thought, to give an example to our people, I just don't touch that thing anymore, so that's what I am at now, still, and people, young people spread that you know. That's, somebody try not to drink, they respect them, yeah. ...For me, it was a tragedy. That happened to our family. That's why I did it. And then, I wanted to help out. Just be with them. Go to town, go to the restaurant. Go anywhere without going to a bar, or liquor, or beer parlor. That's the only way, we can help others, you know. Be with them, don't leave them for the temptation they have, you know. That's the way I found myself. (Mary John Interview).

As many people experienced tragedy before making the choice and commitment to being abstinent, Elder Mary John experienced the death of her relatives. Due to the tragic event, she committed herself to being a role model and helping people in her community, which she continued until she passed away on 30th of September, 2004.

When I asked Mr. Pompana what helping others meant to him, he expressed his gratitude for the unconditional love: *“I look at it as paying back for what I have in life today. You know, I have peace of mind, and I feel good about who I am, eh.”* Mr. ‘Frog House Opinions’ also told me what brought him to help with the Sweat Lodge ceremony: *“Why I go there is that I was once like those people that need help there. So I go to support them, especially in the Sweat Lodge, on my Carrier Song.”* He further states:

I think I have been there up healing, not because I am smart at it, not smart at healing, but somebody taught me to my treatment, now I am trying to bring it back. Somebody help me somewhere outside of my Carrier territory, ... bring it to my own people. That’s why I do that. (‘Frog House Opinions’ Interview)

When the mind is opened up and reoriented in relation to the world through struggle, peace and love in life can be achieved, and one often starts helping others to give his or her healing experience back to the people.

For Mr. Chouinard, one of the reasons he became a youth worker was, at first, to empower himself, which has brought him to share what he has learned and experienced with anyone who cares to listen:

... to me, the reason I decided to do this is that, I can’t really say to help my people. When I first started was, it was more of helping myself, educating my peers through what I experience as a young person, growing up in the jail system, growing up in the ministry care systems, not that I was gonna go on a crusade ... and trying to save everybody. I think it was a, more of self-helping when I first started, and after a while it, I don’t know, I just have a love for what I do, you know. And I’ve got to work with awesome people, awesome kids. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

His words remind me of my own experience. Personally, the reason I decided to be a nurse was to learn for myself how to overcome inner conflicts and struggle with others, and I received more than I expected; the joy of learning through my work with people.

As one goes on the healing journey, the struggles and pains that had comprised a great part of one's identity and life can encourage the person to engage in something larger than the self. This new involvement in the broader world is possible, when the struggle with negative emotions and desires are integrated into positive moral guidance that is more essential to one's existence (Kamiya 1980). Helping others, to me, means to engage in 'something larger than myself,' even though I find myself still in the midst of the struggles with my trivial emotions and desires.

Spirituality and Helping Others

When I asked the participants what spirituality means to them, they gave me definitions in varied ways: Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' defines it as "a prayer life thing"; Elder Mary John repeatedly emphasized that spirituality is respect for everything; Mr. Pompana, first, explains that spirituality is "a personal thing" and closely related to one's positive identity. He also relates spirituality to respect, sharing, and humility, and describes it as that which keeps an individual grounded on the right track; and Mr. Chouinard explains spirituality as morals that are completely personal as being expressed in the way we live our lives. Through these different definitions, common themes often emerged in the discussions. These themes are humility, respect, unconditional love, sharing, morality, personal growth, and the very personal nature of spirituality.

Humbleness and Humility

As we see in healing, the broader awareness of the self in relation to something beyond the self, such as connection to others, community, nature, and the Higher Power, makes a person humble. This humbleness is a large part of First Nations spirituality:

Basically in our culture, ... humility is a very very big word. ... whenever people talk or pray, I mean, in front of a group, it's a standard practice, like, of the Cree people, that I know of, is that you humble yourself, they say, because nobody stands on any higher than anybody else. In, in, basically, you could have a doctor, you could have a peasant in the same room. But they are all on the same ground. Nobody is higher than the other. ... They say "I know nothing. I am nothing." You know, they are acknowledging to the Creator or God, or whoever. They are nobody. They are just another person. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Mr. Pompana also explains that humility is a basic part of the tradition of his people; each person is seen as having a unique place in the universe, and traditional healers acknowledge themselves as equal to others in the universe based on the understanding that everyone is equal in relation to God:

We all had a place in life, you know, not everybody was a doctor or medicine man, eh. Some hunters, too, eh, you know. There're some fire keepers. ... Everybody had a place in life, you know. Okay. Same as a woman, too. ... Our people always, the Elders used to tell us, when you pray, when you acknowledge yourself to the Creator, we are always saying that I am just an ordinary person, you know, with no special gifts or anything, ordinary man, eh. ... Healers and medicine man and woman eh, I believe that that's, like I said, not everybody becomes a medicine man or medicine woman, eh. Some are, most of them are born to be that, you know, born to be healer, you know, and that's the gift they have, and like I can't say that that, like, I am a medicine man eh, I can't say that, because I don't think I am (laughing). You know, okay. And maybe somebody told me that, I don't know, ... I don't go around saying that, you know. I never ever say that. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' strongly connects his spirituality to being humble in the Sweat Lodge:

The water ceremony thing [in the Sweat Lodge], being there makes me humble, that's why I go to the Sweat Lodge to humble myself before the Creator, I am not so good after all, I have to tell them that all the times to give me the strength. So the Sweat Lodge, the songs and the drums, it's through these practices that give you some kind of wellness about spirituality. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

This humility is a fundamental principle of First Nations spirituality:

When you have a spiritual, you have ah, maybe, a spiritual life, then, then see a part of that, humility, you know, doing things somebody and not expecting something in return, you know. ... That's good. Yeah. (Alden Interview)

The awareness of humility that precludes each one of us equally in relation to the whole universe, or the Greater Power, leads helpers to the humble understanding of the helping relationship: the helping relationship becomes mutual partnership based on the understanding that the person whom they help is equally important as a same human being. This is the attitude that allows for respect, unconditional love, sharing and personal growth in the helping relationship.

Respect

A humble mind that accepts our dependence on the connections with others may result in respect for others. Elder Mary John repeatedly emphasized that her spirituality is respect: “*a respect for God's creation, everything that's made for us, and respect each other.*” She explained how respect — spirituality — pervades throughout her community:

Yeah, respect is, ah, one great thing among our people. Especially you respect your Elders, respect the people, and that was you know the first thing, to have our respect for everything, you know, even the animals, food that you eat, you know, you don't mess around with. If you have a cleaning of a moose, you undertake every part useful part out of it to use, you know. You don't waste it. Long time ago, it was such respect for animals, really, and even if you women are in menstruation, they don't touch animal's meat or anything. (Mary John Interview)

Mr. Chouinard also indicates that respect emerges in a First Nations person's attitudes and behaviors:

Respect goes beyond holding a door for an Elderly person. You know, it's in a way you present yourself. And I think if you look at this word and really focus on the meaning, deliver yourself, you know, reflecting those meaning. It's just

showing your being. You know, it shows, when you walk in the room, people can see that. You know, and by no means I am saying that I have all those qualities, okay? (laughing) (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Elder Mary John explains that in the helping relationship, respect is manifested in our ways of treating others in the way we want to be treated:

How would I say, my opinion, well, it's just like a, in a person it comes naturally. You know, the way you are, the way you want to be treated. That's how I treat other people. Yeah, it just comes naturally. Yeah. (Mary John Interview)

As well, Mr. Chouinard states that spirituality as morals is expressed naturally through treating others as we want to be treated. Respect for others can be also described as acceptance of others 'as they are':

There're too many people willing to crusade their beliefs or their thoughts on something, right? Nobody is okay nowadays, just letting people be who the hell they are, man, you know. I have a tons of friends who, I mean, they, they hunt, they fish, you know, they are very, they are very, humm, resourceful people, but they, they, it's okay for them to have a beer with their dinner. I am okay, I don't drink. I don't do that, you know, because my belief tells me that it's not an appropriate for me to do that and practice what I do. But if it's okay for them, and they are okay with it, why do I have a problem with it. You know, let people be their own damn people, man. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

This respectful attitude can bring about constructive relationships for healing, as Rogers states (1961:34):

I find that the more acceptance and liking I feel toward this individual, the more I will be creating a relationship which he can use. By acceptance I mean a warm regard for him as a person of unconditional self-worth — of value no matter what his condition, his behavior, or his feelings. It means a respect and liking for him as a separate person, willingness for him to possess his own feelings in his own way. It means an acceptance of and regard for his attitudes of the moment, no matter how negative or positive, no matter how much they may contradict other attitudes he has held in the past. This acceptance of each fluctuating aspect of this person makes it for him a relationship of warmth and safety, and the safety of being liked and prized as a person seems a highly important element in a helping relationship.

Unconditional acceptance does not mean that one must accept another person against one's own morals, values, and feelings. Rogers (1961: 21) also states that acceptance is to have respect for the complexity of life and to have relationships with the self and others based on that respect:

The more I am open to the realities in me and in the other person, the less do I find myself wishing to rush in to "fix things." As I try to listen to myself and the experiencing going on in me, and the more I try to extend that same listening attitude to another person, the more respect I feel for the complex processes of life. So I become less and less incline to hurry into fix things, to set goals, to mold people, to manipulate and push them in the way that I would like them to go. I am much more content simply to be myself and to let another person be himself. (Italicized by Rogers)

In helping relationships, respect is sometimes left behind, as Mr. Chouinard notes:

A lot of community service workers and stuff like that would ... level on that. You know I mean, "very dangerous to be around, make sure you have more stuff," and my approach was don't threaten them. Don't give her a reason to have to retaliate to you. I really think it's all in the nature in how you present yourself, you know. I, I just introduce myself as a human being. ... I mean, they are human beings, man. You know, so I think a lot of it also relates to, and how you live your life, and how you look at people. You know, not what people do, but just look at people for what they are, they are human beings, so. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

How to build a respectful relationship cannot be learned from a 'tip' someone can give another person because it manifests in one's personal nature, as Elder Mary John and Mr. Chouinard indicate. Respect — spirituality — shows itself naturally in a person's attitude and behavior.

Unconditional Love: Trust and Take a Chance

I described unconditional love as the expression of Japanese spirituality; with regard to spirituality, unconditional love goes beyond what is right and wrong, and embraces both. In healing, I posit that unconditional love corresponds to trust and acceptance. Through unconditional love, trusting and accepting, people learn to love and

to be loved. This heals the person. In the interviews with First Nations persons, unconditional love is expressed as understanding, acceptance and trust in helping relationships.

The understanding, acceptance and trust that come from unconditional love suspend one's preconceived judgment of what is right and wrong. This often comes from one's own experiences of doubting and transcending what is commonly accepted as right and wrong by going through struggles. Mr. Chouinard, Mr. 'Frog House Opinions', and Mr. Pompana note that they have gone through the same kind of struggling experiences with the people whom they help. To have similar experiences affects their ways of helping others, as it gives them a deeper understanding of the person they help:

She is a very very, uhm, if you read a court report on her, okay uhm, she is very very violent, okay. ... Understanding who I was as a young person, I had a rap. That's the, they told us as me, basically my criminal record. I grew up in a very violent home. ...I think that's the kind of the advantage that I have in working with. ...There's a lot of underlying issues that, that contribute to who she is now today. ...You know, in her field of work within a sex trade is, it's a survival tactic. I mean, somebody rip you off, you took a bus? You can't, right? (Robin Chouinard Interview)

By having lived through similar situations as a person they help, they may be better able to help the person, because they are likely to see the problems the person is experiencing beyond hasty judgment of right or wrong.

Those who have gone through the healing process or personal learning process also know that there is always a chance to transcend one's negative experiences and perspectives and to give positive meanings to one's life. As I see it, healing is the transcendental experience of the self. Those who experience healing know the paradoxical fact that acceptance of the self turns self-denial, blame, and shame into the affirmation of the self and of life. Those who have gone through their own healing

process know the difficulties in the transcendental process of 'life-affirmation.' I asked Mr. Pompana about boundary setting by professionals who doubt that people will overcome alcohol related challenges. He responded:

When I talk to somebody, I know I have these things in the back on my mind, eh, you know. But when I look at it, I know, because I have lived that, I have lived that already, you know. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Then Mr. Pompana states that he shares his experiences with those people who might benefit from hearing his story:

I am not saying that that has always worked that way, and you know, but, I guess, we have to take a chance, eh, you know. Because when somebody put their trust in you, eh, then, we have to use whatever we can, you know, trying to help that person, eh. (Alden Pompana Interview)

By experiencing similar struggles, Mr. Pompana knows that a person has a possibility to overcome alcohol related challenges by transcending one's rigid identity and worldview that is constructed in relation to alcohol. The trust in the potential for healing of those he is helping results in unconditional love beyond hasty judgment and doubt.

The awareness that right and wrong are more paradoxical than they appear enables us to see and understand a person's inner nature behind his or her visible reactions in the helping relationship. Mr. Chouinard's statement regarding the girl he mentioned in the quote above shows his deep understanding of her:

There's uh, one girl I am particular, I've work with, sexually exploited youth in this town for a number of years. And this one girl I've always told my wife that this is one kid I loved to just kidnapping, and take home and keep her [to put the heroine needle down]. You know, because she, she just strikes me. You know, she is a very very kind nature person. ...She is beyond her addiction, beyond her, her life style of living in a sex trade and stuff like that. [She is] a very beautiful person underneath that. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Since he had a similar personal experience as the young person, he gained a deeper understanding of her potential: her beautiful nature beyond her lifestyle. Knowing and

trusting her nature and potential, he felt urged to help her by any means. Robin's relationship with the girl arises from unconditional love as Frankl (1962), a developer of existential psychology and logotherapy, describes:

Love is the only way to grasp another human being in the innermost core of his personality. No one can become fully aware of the very essence of another human being unless he loves him. By the spiritual act of love he is enabled to see the essential traits and features in the beloved person; and even more, he sees that which is potential in him; which is not yet actualized but yet ought to be actualized. (Frankl 1962: 113)

Those who live through right and wrong know the paradox of life, which transcends right or wrong and embraces both. This is where the unconditional love comes from.

Sharing

Sharing and giving is a part of the First Nations attitude of respect, gratitude, trust and generosity, which are often referred as First Nations spirituality. In ceremonies, such as the potlatch and Sun Dance, people give gifts away to the guests in order to show respect and gratitude. Elder Mary John explains that the potlatch is the *Dakelh-ne* practice of giving:

We are giving, we are not wasting. We never throw it away as wasting, but giving it to people. That's what we, our culture is. We have lots to give. That was thing about potlatches. You prepare for that. Your clan members, they put it in a potluch, if the member of the clan, you help out, you know. That's what it was. (Mary John Interview)

Mr. Pompana also explains giving in the context of the Sun Dance:

I put on the Sun Dance, and at the end of the Sun Dance, I bought a horse. I never rode that horse or nothing, eh. I just bought it, because I knew I was going to give away to somebody. So I bought it before my four years cycle was over. ...the guy brought the horse to the ground where we were dancing. I was gonna give that horse to an older man who I respected and honored, eh. I gave the horse, eh. ...he named the horse Sundance. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Mr. Pompana states that sharing and giving away is a person's spiritual attitude of doing something without expecting anything in return, which he also notes as the expression of humility.

In the interviews, sharing of experiences is often mentioned as a major part of helping others. To share one's life experience is to open one's personal dimension to others. This disclosure often puts persons who open up their lives at risk by recalling old pains, which can threaten established self-identity and worldview, and eventually, hurt the inner self. Thus, sharing is mutual and communal. Mr. Pompana is aware that the people he is helping are taking this risk:

Somebody comes to you, and what they are actually doing is to put their lives into your hands, when they tell how these things are. You know, they confide in you, you know, so I sit there and I listen, eh. (Alden Pompana Interview)

Accordingly, Mr. Pompana shares his personal experiences, respecting and returning the people's trust in him. His act of sharing is based on gratitude for his life as he has gone through similar struggles:

I am not ashamed to talk about it, you know, maybe one time, I was ashamed to talk about things like that. But today, I don't feel that, you know. That's gonna help somebody then, I would share whatever it is that I, you know, sharing my life, eh, you know. (Alden Pompana Interview)

In a helper's disclosure of life stories, people being helped may see the helper's trust in them. This is where mutual trust and hope arise.

Sharing is also based on humility, which is the awareness that everyone is equally valuable and no one is greater than any one else; no one should have control over another person. As well, sharing is facilitated by respect for the complexity of life. This idea reminds me of Mr. Chouinard's criticism about forcing spiritual beliefs on others:

You know, I know who I am, and I know what works for me, but you are still trying to give me a damn little booklet, man, you know. To me, that's crusading. It's all in, again, just how you present yourself, uhm, recognize the fact that, that, ah, we are people. You know, and within my culture, we're nothing in a whole, in a broad [brachium?] of everything, of life, in general, right, all the creation. We are nothing. You know, when you hear a lot of old people pray, they always say that before they say anything, they say, you know, "you humble yourself", you know, they say, "I know nothing, I am nothing," but in today's society, people are, "oh no! you're something, you are something, you would have maybe you're God's child." Shut up and listen. You know. Don't, people think, "you have a low self-esteem." No, I don't. You know, there're too many people willing to crusade their beliefs or their thoughts on something, right? Nobody is okay nowadays, just letting people be who the hell they are, man, you know. I have tons of friends who, I mean, they, they hunt, they fish, you know, they are very, they are very, uhm, resourceful people, but they, they, it's okay for them to have a beer with their dinner. I am okay, I don't drink. I don't do that, you know, because my belief tells me that it's not an appropriate for me to do that and practice what I do. But if it's okay for them, and they are okay with it, why do I have a problem with it. You know, let people be their own damn people, man. You know, and I think if you can bring that to what you do as far as spirituality in healing and stuff, is, the people you are working with is gonna see that. You know, I recognize that, and like I said, it's after while people, they, people are curious, they will ask you questions. And it's all just time. Wait and wait and wait, and when they ask you questions, introduce a little bit of it, so. You see, my perception with spirituality may be way different than you hear from somebody else, or maybe the same, you never know. Right? Somebody would say I am wrong, you know. I don't, I don't, personally I don't do that. Everybody has their own thing. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

When we recognize that each individual has a unique nature, a set of experiences, worldview, purpose and role, we acknowledge that the ways of healing and spirituality are diverse and no one can force anyone to follow a single path. Instead of forcing beliefs, we start looking for shared experiences, feelings, thoughts and knowledge.

The following statement of Mr. Chouinard indicates that sharing of thoughts stems from and leads to a respectful and trustful helping relationship:

I think, just letting the person know they, regardless of the choices they make, you're not gonna run away. ... As I said earlier, explore the different aspects of their decision. You know, and just having a respect, where you will be able to tell them that. You know, say somebody, like, you had a same scenario, young girl working on the streets and stuff like that. Looking at the history, she was sexually

abused by her uncles, stuff like that. Okay, then she decides that she wants to clean up. And her move is, "okay, I am gonna move with my uncle." You know, okay. "Your uncle may be stable now, okay, like, yes, he's cleaned up his life, and he would like to help you. However, there's a danger, this is the uncle who abused you. And you may think you've got passed that. But sometime on your own healing, you're gonna be confronted with it. How are you gonna deal with it when it comes?" You know, it's, I guess it's just having a relationship with that person where you can say anything. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Mr. Chouinard's respectful attitude of sharing is also demonstrated in his opinion about using spiritual beliefs and practices in helping relationships:

There's a huge benefit, if you are able to effectively introduce it. Like I said, I am not a crusader of spirituality either, but if somebody asks about it, you [turn it lights on?]. I will share my experience with them. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Unlike the one-way approach of 'preaching' that would hardly allow the audience to interact with each other, sharing provides a common sphere of communication in which people can comfortably exchange personal feelings and beliefs. This results in facilitating interaction between the individuals who are sharing, and consequently the helping relationship becomes more communal and mutual. This mutual relationship can be a powerful source of personal growth for a helper as well as people who need healing because people's inner selves are opened and interacting with each other.

Morality

Spirituality... very simply and easily, I translated it as morals. ... You have heard before, treat others as the way you want to be treated? To me, that's almost, I guess, spirituality. That's how I translate it, because I just, I believe that, you know, an individual was very moral (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Even though Mr. Pompana did not use the word "moral" directly, his statement that spirituality "keeps the person grounded in the right track" also indicates a moral aspect of spirituality. Morality often connotes the codes of conduct individuals should follow for the collective good, which may result in discouraging individuals; religious morality can

be seen as surrendering one's individual self-love and self-seeking to satisfy the need of the society (Malinowski 1931). However, the moral aspect of spirituality seems to have more to do with enhancement of both personal and collective good.

Mr. Chouinard indicates that spirituality is experienced by living according to morals and promoting personal growth through one's actions:

Recognizing the fact that I come from a very specific tribe of people or specific nation of people, there's ceremony that they run, specific to what, I guess, the Elders have passed on. There're certain rules and protocols, you know, go along with these ceremonies, certain ways of dress, certain ways to act, right, certain duties for different people. You know, I've been participating in all of it. However, I feel that my spirituality also comes from the way I present myself when I am at work, dealing with co-workers. That is why I translated it [spirituality] into morals. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

For Mr. Chouinard, morality is lived through everyday practice and, I believe, pushes him toward a deeper sense of his spiritual being or personal growth. Yuasa (2003) explains that human nature in the latent personality consists of a psychological being and a moral being. According to him, it is the moral being that is the very nature of the human being which holds the innate possibility of one's spiritual growth, and spirituality and morality are unified by one's efforts to reach an ideal personality. Thereby, as Yuasa (2003) noted, Mr. Chouinard integrates his morality into spirituality and enhances his growth through experiences of helping others. The moral aspect of spirituality that emerges in one's way of helping others is connected to personal growth.

Personal Growth

Mr. 'Frog House Opinions' describes that the healing moment can be shared beyond the helping-helped relationship:

But I don't go there to try to heal them, but try to support them. ... A lot of people, not only Native people, every race comes to the Sweat Lodge and most of them for different purpose, never answer for all of them, but when you relate to

the Creator, then I can understand that feelings — why they hurt when their husband died or when being abused or whatever, I tried to understand that, but I never can feel their feeling about their wellness, I can just feel my own wellness. ... It's a personal God thing to your own wellness. I do that for that. ... My focus is what kind of wellness do I have in myself. How can the Creator help me with weakness? ... It's the practice that make me feel good, and sometimes people come back and said I helped them, but I don't help no people, it's just that I become instrument of the Creator. The Creator helps people through my prayer or through my singing. That is what it is. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

When one clearly recognizes that helping others is connected to one's wellness, the helping relationship becomes mutual.

This recognition makes the helpers more open to personal learning through the work of helping others. Mr. Chouinard tells of his experience with the girl introduced in his previous statement:

There's one big thing that I always take from that kid is basically, just like yourself, you've worked in this field for a while, right? And there's sometimes when there's not enough break walls for you to beat your head against, right? because ...like, "why can't these people get it?" You know. And I look at this girl, and, I mean she still, she still works on the streets. She is an adult now. She is a fighter, man, right. She will never give up, right. Somebody, say take myself, for example, if I were to lose my wife, my kids, my job, my vehicles, my home, I would be at a loss. I wouldn't have anything, you know. But here, this girl has absolutely nothing, but she has such a will to live, and will to try. That is what I would take from that. You know. She is a survivor, man. You know, if you really look at her past, I mean, this young lady has lived through every type of dysfunction, abuse, and, you know, that could have thrown any individual? Yet, if you approach her properly, she is one of the warmest people you ever meet, you know. She is extremely, like a lettered. I mean that, I don't know where she's got it from, like, intelligence, man, the girl can read. ... And you ask about that, she says, "I don't wanna be a damn." You know, and there're still little things about her, you know, that she is very strong in, you know although in a social context, she doesn't have anything, you know. I mean in society, more you have, the richer person you are. She has absolutely nothing, but the claws are on her back, you know. And yet, still she survives, man. That's what I take. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Working with this girl became more than helping another person for Mr. Chouinard.

Rather, it encouraged Mr. Chouinard's self awareness and personal growth. It is no

wonder that he loves his work, stating that “*I’ve got to work with awesome people, awesome kids*” (Robin Chouinard Interview). This is in contrast to many of workers who often find the work related to alcohol related challenges hard and weary. Based on the understanding that spirituality enhances one’s own goodness through personal experience, this episode demonstrates that helping others becomes spiritual when the working experience encourages the worker’s personal growth. When a helper goes beyond the helping-helped relationship, helping becomes the helpers’ own growing process.

A Personal Thing

I think spirituality is just a way you make of it. Spirituality is yours. There’s, there’re ceremonies, there’re protocols and customs that come with who you are as a person, and where you come from; however nobody can tell you how you think. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Spirituality has two aspects: one is the public aspect that can be passed on as rules and protocols, and the other is the personal aspect that has to be sensed and earned through personal experience. It is understandable that spirituality which lacks shared morals can easily develop into occultism, and that spiritual experiences that do not share rules or protocols in common with others remain highly personal. On the other hand, when the personal aspect is ignored, there is a risk of abusing spirituality or rendering spirituality meaningless. Mr. Chouinard warns of this: “*a lot of people nowadays, they read a book about it, and they’ll say, ‘oh, I am gonna start running that’. There’s a way that you have to earn that*” (Robin Chouinard Interview). He further states that spirituality cannot be forced on anyone:

You come from a culture that has temples, you know, and myself, I feel, where my temple is the mountain and the bush. You know I love the bush, man. I hunt a lot, but I love to just walk in and around in trees, man. To me, that’s my temple. You

know I found a nice lake way in a back of nowhere, you know, I could sit there for hours, man. And that's my temple. You know, so it's based on some people, you know, you have temples and stuffs, and mine is this. You know, but, I think we need to say 'okay', you know, not say, 'you've gotta come and check mine.' ... That's what I think, it's one of the big struggles. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

The idea that spirituality is personal also stems from the concept that spirituality has more to do with the direct and dynamic experiences of a person. Mr. 'Frog House Opinions''s statement about spirituality demonstrates that he vividly senses spirit in everything:

When you look at the Creator, and even though you can't touch it, in the Sweat Lodge, or even when you are outside, you know the Creator is giving you the wind that you can feel, giving you the light to live, you can understand that. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

What he is referring to is that spirituality relates to the sensing of infinite life in everything, in every component of a living universe; this, together with morals which have been passed on orally and through rituals, is a big part of First Nations spirituality.

Mr. Chouinard clearly states that spirituality shows itself in a person's presence and actions. Demonstrating spirituality through one's actions rather than preaching is the only way to truly share spirituality with others:

I, spirituality, again, again, I think it's just how you carry yourself as a person, as far as preaching to somebody absolutely not. Like a, there's not once I have ever preached anybody that I worked with. I've shared it, some of the customs and beliefs from my people. You know, and I've shared experiences of how I heard of people dealing with these things through. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Interestingly, the notion that spirituality is personal and appears in a person's demeanor and actions overlaps with the participants' principles of helping others, "to be a role model." For example, Elder Mary John notes that to be with people whom we want to help as a role model is the only way to help people overcome alcohol related challenges:

If you want to help them, be with them in their temptation moment, you know. You go restaurant and have coffee with them or socialize with them in other ways. Other than go to the bar with them, you know. That is a big temptation there. People would say, “come on come on”, you know. ... You have to be constantly with them, if you want to help somebody, because temptation is there for them, because sometimes they cannot resist it. ... That’s the only way, I think. (Mary John Interview)

Her attitude of helping others by being an example, and through everyday practice, appears in her understanding of spirituality.

If you are a spiritual person, people look at you and then they, they kind of ah, you give a good example to them, you know, by being that way, you know, by what you do, what you say, you don’t have to be, you know, praise God, praise a Lord, you don’t, you do it to the poor people, needy people, sick people, and that’s the way I see it, you know. A lot of people, [they’re] talk talk talk talk, but they don’t do. You have to do. You don’t just talk. (Mary John Interview)

As well, Mr. ‘Frog House Opinions’ acknowledges that being a role model is his way of helping others:

When it comes to “do I help them?”, I think I do in a big way. I think I help them in a big way because I become a role model or something like this. Some of them, young people, I become a role model because I’ve worked with them for years. I keep going back, and people can make more difference with them, being good people and they are good people. (‘Frog House Opinions’ Interview)

First Nations helpers have been looked to as role models in addition to their profound knowledge, because of who they are and the growth they have accomplished:

That’s why we had the Elders, eh. You know, the Elders and medicine people, you know, medicine women, eh ,... to help those things, whether it’s spiritual or cultural or psychological, I guess, you know. We had a psychologist, I guess. ... Elders, you know, like the one that, you know, live the life and know what it’s like. (Alden Pompana Interview)

These comments demonstrate that helpers’ personal attitudes and behaviors relate to the healing of a person they are helping.

In the field of alcohol abuse treatment and intervention, there are many methods and protocols to examine. Rules and protocols come from numerous experiences and

empirical or theoretical research, which is useful for professionals. However, there is another sphere in which work must be done to help those with alcohol related challenges: a personal dimension of helping others. Ringwald (2003: 32) writes:

If you help addicts and alcoholics recover for a living, you live in two worlds. There is the world of substance abuse and treatment you read about in the newspapers, hear at professional conferences, and see promoted at the top levels of policy and administration. This is the realm where addiction is a brain disease, where the cause is genetic and neurochemical, and where hope lies in a prescription. Then there is the humble place, ground level, where you work. Here, you encourage people to accept their problem, to reach out for help, to review their past and to hope for a future. And for many if not most of your clients, recovery will involve a personal transformation that is spiritual in nature. Those who reject this path should be helped in other ways.

If workers ignore the personal aspect and put full trust in the how-to methods, it results in professionalism. Professionalism can work well for people who trust theories rather than human beings; however, most of the time, when professionalism causes helpers to be impersonal, it is hard to build a mutual relationship of sharing that facilitates the healing forces of trust and love.

Elder Mary John responded in this way when I asked how we can bring the spirituality of respect into the helping of others:

How would I say, in my opinion, well, it's just like a, in a person it comes naturally. You know, the way you are, the way you want to be treated. That's how I treat other people. Yeah, it just comes naturally. (Mary John Interview)

As well, the participants note that helping others is closely associated with a helper's personal dimensions — *who we are as persons*. This honest and deep self-awareness often positively affects one's way of helping others. Wallen (1992: 134) states: "When the therapist has achieved honesty and self knowledge, these motivating factors [one's own traumatic experiences] need not detract from, and may even enhance, the therapist's effectiveness." Rogers (1961: 22) also notes as follows:

Yet the paradoxical aspect of my experience is that the more I am simply willing to be myself, in all this complexity of life and the more I am willing to understand and accept the realities in myself and in the other person, the more change seems to be stirred up. It is willing to be himself, then he finds not only himself changing; but he finds that other people to whom he relates are also changing. At least this is a very vivid part of my experience, and one of the deepest things I think I have learned in my personal and professional life.

In this sense, helping others can be a continuous process of personal learning for helpers through relationships with others — helpers become “knowing,” and being themselves through helping others enhances their ways of helping and facilitates their personal growth further.

I do not intend to deny professional knowledge and skills. As Mr. Chouinard notes in the interview, professionals need to know possible risks and alternatives that may be useful for a person they are helping, and to inform the person of those possibilities. In addition, Mr. Pompana notes that:

That's gonna help somebody then, I would share whatever it is that I, you know, sharing my life, eh, you know. Yeah, but of course I am a man, too, eh, you know, I have to be careful too, eh, you know. So, I, what I have been doing this for so long now, eh, you know, yeah. ... Confidentiality, that's the, for me that's the most important thing, eh, you know, when I working with somebody. And I always tell them that. Whatever you say, stays here, won't go out there. (Alden Pompana Interview)

As the participants state, helping others always includes ethics and responsibilities to avoid any harm for those who are helped and who are helping.

The personal aspect of helping others is closely related to the common motifs of spirituality. Humility prevents extreme professionalism that often places absolute trust in the ‘professional-self’ and in the standardized rules and methods, thus ignoring that each person is equally valuable and unique. Moreover, the understanding of helping others in terms of personal growth gives professionals a sense of meaning in their work. This

prevents the professionals from burning out because of a sense of being helpless, and gives the professionals a positive outlook on their work. In this process of personal growth, we learn and accept the strength and the pain in the self and in others, and as a result, our consciousness is often expanded beyond superficial categories of right and wrong. This leads to the source of unconditional love. The motifs of spirituality in helping others foster the possibility of transcending the self, which leads to healing and growth for both the helped and the helping.

Chapter Five – Reflections: Spirituality in Helping Others

Through the interpretation of the interviews, I have expanded my understanding of spirituality in helping others to comprehend more clearly why I feel a spiritual connection between my work of helping others and myself. In the literature review, I have described two distinctive elements of Aboriginal spirituality — the recognition that there is a spirit in every animate and inanimate thing, and the understanding of the world in terms of relatedness. These elements of Aboriginal spirituality have emerged in the participants' experiences of helping others who have alcohol related challenges. In this chapter, I describe what I have learned about spirituality in helping others by referring to each element of Aboriginal spirituality.

Everything Has a Spirit

According to Aboriginal spirituality, as I noted in Chapter three, spirit exists in everything. I understand that this is the foundation of the First Nations spirituality. The participants demonstrate this spiritual attitude in helping others through acceptance, understanding and love. For example, Mr. Chouinard tells a story about the girl who survived abuse and addiction. Despite the girl's current lifestyle, Mr. Chouinard sees the girl's spirit as her innermost nature that continues to hold her unique beauty and potentiality. The acknowledgement of her spirit led him to a deeper understanding and acceptance of the girl. If Frankl (1962: 113) is right by stating that the spiritual act of love is the only way to grasp another human being at the innermost core of the person, including his or her personality and potentiality, Mr. Chouinard's relationship with the girl demonstrates the spiritual quality of love. Understanding that the girl's innermost nature inspired Mr. Chouinard, it can also be said that working with this girl awakened,

activated and raised his spiritual aspect of love. Consequently, Mr. Chouinard's ability to 'see a spirit in a person' has enabled him to help her.

In terms of Aboriginal spirituality, every action contains spiritual meaning as every entity has a spirit. The participants often stated that spirituality appears in the ways a person helps and works with others. Their statements can be summarized as "*spirituality is how we carry ourselves as a person in the relationships with those whom we are living, helping and working with*" and "*spirituality is to treat others as we want to be treated and it comes naturally in our deeds.*" From the participants, there was a consistent principle of helping others that emerged. This principle is that, by living according to their own beliefs about spirituality, the participants connect to their spirit at a more intense level. This also means that seeing the spirit in another person can result in finding and actualizing the helper's innermost nature, and thus, helping others enables the helpers to get connected to their innermost being. In this way, the helpers' experiences of spirituality are connected with the spirituality of those whom they help, creating a healing relationship.

We are All Relatives

In Aboriginal spirituality, spirit connects each entity, and the sum of all connections makes up the whole universe. In this sense, spirituality can be seen as an integrating force within a human being as well as between human beings. Spirituality integrates and transcends good and bad, as well as the physical, mental and existential dimensions of a human being. This integration and transcendence create balance and harmony within a person, as well as between persons, which is the aspiration of Aboriginal spirituality. In the healing of the people who abuse alcohol, spirituality

integrates assets and deficits of the person, and creates harmony and peace within the person. As I have described in the previous chapters, the harmonious integration of the self enables the person to attain a new perception on the self and others and enables the person to choose a new lifestyle without depending on alcohol.

In Japanese traditions, transcendence or co-existence of ‘good and bad’ is often observed. Hagiuda (2001) explains that Japanese Kanji²¹ for spirit 魂 consists of 云 “to say or to convey” and 鬼 *oni* “an ogre, monster, or demon.” She notes that we human beings ascribe all of the unpleasant human attributes to *oni* to avoid facing our deficits and grotesqueness, while we often forget the fact that *oni* is an envoy of the Gods. Without *oni* in our spirit, there is nothing left for us to “say or convey.” And when the *oni* spirit leaves us, we start thinking that we are perfect and absolute. Failing to acknowledge and accept *oni* within the self, we are not able to accept others’ incompleteness as human beings, or to sympathize with the sufferings that come from their humanness. When our self-identification lacks the awareness of *oni* spirit, ironically, we would end up being inhuman.

This story about *oni* reminds me of a Japanese tale, *Naita Aka-oni*, “The Red Ogre Cried.” Once upon a time, *Aka-oni*, a red *oni* lived alone. *Aka-oni* wanted to make friends with humans, so one day *Aka-oni* built a signboard that said “this is the house of an *oni* with a kind mind. Please feel free to come in. I have delicious sweets and tea for you.” However, humans did not trust *Aka-oni* and never visited him. *Aka-oni* was sad and terribly disappointed. When *Aka-oni* finally put the signboard away, his best friend, *Ao-oni* came to see *Aka-oni*. *Ao-oni* felt deeply sorry for *Aka-oni*, and conspired with

²¹ Kanji is a generic term for Chinese character used in Japan. The letters and meanings are often slightly modified by the Japanese.

Aka-oni to find a way to make friends with humans. *Aka-oni* refused the *Ao-oni*'s plan, saying that it would cause *Ao-oni* too much trouble. However, *Ao-oni* dragged *Aka-oni* to the human's village. *Ao-oni* frightened the villagers and they screamed for help. Then, *Aka-oni* came and beat up the *Ao-oni*. *Ao-oni* ran away and the villagers thanked *Aka-oni*, saying "You are kind, *Aka-oni*, because you kicked out the bad *Ao-oni*." The villagers started to visit *Aka-oni* at his house. *Aka-oni* was very happy. However, as the days passed by, *Aka-oni* started to worry about *Ao-oni* who never visited *Aka-oni* since then. *Aka-oni* visited *Ao-oni* and found a letter from *Ao-oni*. *Ao-oni* wrote, "Dear *Aka-oni*. Please live happily with the villagers. If the villagers found out that you are the friend of the bad *Ao-oni*, they would think that you are also a bad *oni*. So I will go on a journey, but I will never forget you. Good-bye. Please take care of yourself. You are my friend forever." *Aka-oni* cried and cried, but they never met each other again.

For a person who abuses alcohol, the bad *Ao-oni* can be a drinking-self that is trying to ease the pain and to grant the wish of another part of the self, the good *Aka-oni*. In the person who helps others, *Ao-oni* may be a messenger who conveys overwhelming and devastating emotions within the helping relationship; through the experience of being a part of other's healing process, the helper's innermost human nature or latent desires for his or her own healing may emerge. In this sense, *oni* is an envoy from our spirit. As Hagiuda (2001) notes, we, the human villagers, hardly acknowledge and accept the *oni* until we expel and isolate the "bad" *oni* ascribing all the evil attributes to him. In addition, by excluding a part of the self that constitutes our inner voice — such as pain, sorrow, resentment, joy, and wonder in life — we lose contact with our own messenger,

the spirit that enhances our growth and healing. Elimination of *oni* won't make us "absolute."

Even though we are not able to be absolute, we are moral beings as Mr. Chouinard noted in the interview. As observed in the healing processes of those who have alcohol related challenges, spiritual beliefs and practices promote the awareness that a human being is imperfect and small in relation to the larger whole. By acknowledging this, spiritual beliefs and practices encourage the individual to face his or her weakness and problems, and integrate favorable and unfavorable aspects of the person into one self. This is the healing path that leads towards becoming an integrated human being. As Daisetsu Suzuki (1972) notes, spirituality integrates and embraces a human's whole being without excluding the person's 'negative' aspects — *aka-oni* and *ao-oni* live together in harmony with each other, as well as with the human villagers.

The concept of connectedness has also manifested in the egalitarian principle of Aboriginal spirituality — we are all related to each other and equal in constituting a living universe. This awareness emerged in the participants' expressions of their spirituality and their philosophies and ways of helping others, and was expressed through their humility and respect. Mr. Pompana notes that when we have a spiritual life, we humble ourselves and help others without expecting anything in return. Mr. Chouinard also states that we need to humble ourselves in everyday practice, and let others be who they are, because no one is higher or greater than anyone to 'fix' another person. This principle of humility prevents one from trying to create 'the absolute' in the self and in the helping relationship. Instead, humility fosters mutual communication that promotes healing and personal growth.

The attitude of humility that emerged in the participants' ways of helping reminds me of the following words written by a Japanese writer and poet, MIYAZAWA Kenji (1896-1933)²²:

The phenomenon, I, is
one of the blue lamps
of the supposed Organic Alternation Current²³ Light
(A compound of all kinds of transparent ghosts)
one of the Karma Alternation Current Light
that clasps its sound light
restlessly flickering all together with scenery and others
(the light remains, while the lamp vanishes)

(Miyazawa 1951: 10, translated by Umeda)

I believe that each of Miyazawa's stories was a twinkle of "the infinite life," the life beyond the individual mortal life. Thus, by writing, he was connected to "the infinite life" through his spirit. While he had never been successful in publishing his works, he kept writing in the hopes that his stories would become "the genuine limpid-food of yours" and nurture people's goodness (Tanikawa 1951). In other words, the focus in his work was to enhance the goodness of the infinite life that embraces all entities, rather than the personal success in the material world. Miyazawa's broad perception in his work rises from humility, which is a reflection of his own self-awareness in relation to the sacred larger whole.

In terms of Aboriginal spirituality, humility is expressed in the principle that any act, even a personal pursuit for spiritual power, is to benefit the larger whole rather than an individual. The principle of humility is based on the First Nations awareness that each

²² This is a part of the preface by Kenji Miyazawa for the collection of his poems. Kenji Miyazawa is one of the most loved, and studied, authors of children's stories and poems in Japan today. He was a high school teacher in geology and devoted himself to Buddhism. His background is greatly reflected in his worldview as an author (Tanikawa 1951). He did not gain fame before he died at the age of thirty-seven.

²³ I translate *Kooryu Dentoo* in the original text into Alternation Current Light, since the Japanese word, *Kooryu*, in electricity means "alternation current" such as in alternation current generator. However, *Kooryu* usually means "interchanging". I personally interpret that he implies both by using *Kooryu dentoo*. A lamp is an alternated current of the infinite light, interchanging energy with other lamps of all creatures.

of us, or each of our actions, equally constitutes the whole. The participants also express this principle in their motives for and ways of helping others. They state that helping others should not be a means of making personal benefit or fame:

It [the Sweat Lodge ceremony] is a personal God thing to your own spiritual wellness. I do that for that. I don't say, "Well, I am gonna make money for the Sweat." I don't do that. It's away from my mind. ... My focus is what kind of wellness do I have in myself? How can the Creator help me with the weakness? No money exchange from the Creator. ('Frog House Opinions' Interview)

; Although ...I do get paid to do what I do, however, I don't get paid to invite people to share my experience. ... I don't get any credit for anybody's growth. ... That's no credit of me. It's the work they have done. (Robin Chouinard Interview)

Humility nurtures the participants' awareness that, regardless of the difference in the social status or the personal problem, each individual is equally valuable as a person who has a unique role in the broader context of the universe than only the relationship they are engaging in. This awareness is a significant part of Aboriginal spirituality. Thus, the participants help others according to their spiritual principles. In other words, they 'connect to their spirit' through helping others.

Another form of relatedness in helping others is respect, which Elder Mary John emphasized over and over. Vine Deloria Jr. (1999) explains that, respect closely relates to responsibility for one's role in the community, and in effective ways of communication. As well, all the participants emphasized the responsibility for one's own behavior and action. They state that one must live according to one's own moral values and be a role model, thus teaching by example rather than 'preaching to others.' This is their way of being spiritual people, as well as helping others. The participants also indicated that respect is a basic principle for their ways of communication. According to the interviews, respect is expressed in communication with those whom they are helping

through understanding, acceptance, and trust. The communication based on respect fosters mutuality, and consequently promotes the healing process of the person they are helping.

Furthermore, the participants indicate that, without respect and humility, we are not eligible for a mutual relationship of sharing. If the helpers qualify themselves as authorities, which distinguishes them from the others, they will not be able to let anyone into their personal space to share their experiences, feelings and beliefs. On the other hand, when we share our personal space with others, the relationship becomes mutual and communal. This mutual connection in the helping relationship is a powerful source of healing for those who have alcohol related challenges. In addition, the mutual relationship develops the spiritual awareness in those who help and are helped— we are all human beings and are all related to each other. In this way, a helping relationship based on mutuality and sharing expands the spirituality of the helpers, as well as of those who have alcohol related challenges, by fostering humility and respect through a mutual connection.

Your Liberation is Bound up with Mine

During the process of helping others, the helpers are likely to encounter their own challenges. When the helper has not released his or her own emotional pain that arises from personal traumatic experience, being involved in a helping relationship is likely to generate overwhelming emotions within the helper, such as sorrow, fear, and anger that are rooted in one's unsettled personal experience. In addition, the helping relationships may threaten the established identities and boundaries of the helpers, even though they believe that they are already comfortable enough with their identity and boundaries.

In my own professional experience, I often felt that the people I was working with were testing my patience, trust, compassion, honesty, and the consistency in these qualities. I found that I needed to know my limitations and feelings regarding the helping relationship. After a period of deep reflection, I found that only when I clearly and honestly acknowledged my boundaries, limitations, and feelings in the helping relationship, was I able to understand myself better, respect my identity, adjust myself to the person and the situation; as a result, I become a more effective helper. Accordingly, I was able to release the overwhelming emotions in the relationship, such as a fear of being unhelpful, of doing wrong, of being offensive or defensive, and of being disrespectful or dishonest.

While sometimes posing difficult challenges on the side of the helpers, helping people who have alcohol related challenges also creates the possibility for enhancing the personal learning or growth of those who help. Nietzsche (1844-1900) states, in “The Genealogy of Morals” (1956: 149), that we hardly know ourselves:

We knowers are unknown to ourselves, and for a good reason: how can we ever hope to find what we have never looked for? There is a sound adage which runs: “Where a man’s treasure lies, there lies in his heart.” Our treasure lies in the beehives of our knowledge. We are perpetually on our way thither, being by nature winged insects and honey gatherers of the mind. The only thing that lies close to our heart is the desire to bring something home to the hive. As for the rest of life — so-called “experience” — who among us is serious enough for that? Or has time enough? When it comes to such matters, our heart is simply not in it — we don’t even lend our ear. Rather, as a man divinely abstracted and self-absorbed into whose ears the bell has just drummed the twelve strokes of noon will suddenly awake with a start and ask himself what hour has actually struck, we sometimes rub our ears after the event and ask ourselves, astonished and at a loss, “What have we really experienced?” — or rather, “Who are we, really?”

A person who is struggling with alcohol related challenges often has no other choice but to abandon “a man’s treasure in his heart and his knowledge” and to take another path —

a path to come to know one's self by fully experiencing struggle, challenge, regret, despair, rejection, detachment, and, yet, also trust and hope. Through these experiences, one would be able to know and accept the self, including *oni* in the spirit, and this motivates him or herself to make positive changes. This is a path of personal growth that leads the person to a more integrated self. Being involved in another person's process of knowing and integrating the self inspires and motivates the helpers, as Mr. Chouinard has experienced through the work with the girl who has survived abuses and has yet grown in her inner beauty and strength.

Hence, helping others who have alcohol related challenges is deeply related to the helper's personal being. The helping relationship often provides the helpers with the opportunities to reexamine their own personal identities as well as their unsolved personal problems. This means that helping others is a way to know one's self through the companionship with others who are struggling with knowing and transcending themselves, as is expressed in Mr. Chouinard's experience. Wallen (1992: 137) states, that "healing, for therapist and client, is something of a shared path." Accordingly, Wallen (*ibid*) quotes John Welwood, who has named this shared path the "path of the heart:"

In seeing and letting ourselves be touched by the humanness in others, we come to realize that we are not so different from them (at heart). This gives rise to real compassion, considered by many Eastern traditions to be the noblest of human feelings.

This noblest feeling of compassion is expressed differently according to cultures and related beliefs. As noted by Kamiya (1980) and Shimazono (2003), Christianity may call it love. In Aboriginal spirituality, I believe, it can be recognized as respect based on the awareness that we are all equally part of the whole, being related to each other. It can be

seen that this companionship, love, and respect based on humility are the shared path towards healing and personal growth.

Wallen (1992: 137) clearly asserts that helping others corresponds to the spiritual growth of the helping:

Openness and compassion [in helping relationships] involve a detachment from our own suffering, which is the key to spiritual growth. ...by detaching from our suffering, we move to a higher level of consciousness and see our pain in a new context. At this higher level of consciousness, we become aware of the narrowness of our "self" as we experienced it before and instead experience ourselves as a vaster, more inclusive "Self," a point of awareness that encompasses a whole interconnected life process... That awareness is experienced as liberating, both in the everyday sense that we are able to detach from our immediate pain, and in the spiritual sense that we lose our attachment to our own personal ego and consequently become free of fear and more open to participating in a larger whole.

Wallen (ibid) demonstrates that the processes of helping others and healing share the self-transcendental elements, such as self-awareness, detachment, a broader life perspective, a sense of relatedness, and an involvement in a world larger than the self. These ideas in helping and healing have also emerged in the participants' comments as I have described in the previous chapter. Moreover, the previous quote — "we become aware of the narrowness of our "self" as we experienced it before and instead experience ourselves as a vaster, more inclusive 'Self,' a point of awareness that encompasses a whole interconnected life process" — clearly shows that these transcendental elements are the spiritual awareness itself.

It seems that in Aboriginal spirituality, this spiritual awareness that arises from helping others is produced because "everything is related to each other through the spiritual companionship." This can be seen in Mr. Chouinard's experience of fasting, which helped him, as a First Nations person, and the Christian priests of non-First

Nations go beyond the colonized-colonizing relationship toward mutual companionship. In this way, Aboriginal spirituality shows us that “your healing, growth and liberation are bound up with mine because our relationship is built on the relatedness of our spiritual companionship.”

The Journey Continues

Through my journey in the *Dakelh Keyoh*, I have learned that the helping relationship is mutual, and we, helpers, are also on the journey of healing and growing through personal and professional challenges and learning. This awareness has helped me to clearly recognize meaning in my work, which creates humble attitudes and gratitude in me towards my work as a nurse and the people I work with. Through my way of helping others, I hope to share this idea with other helping professionals. I hope it can promote the continuous reflection on our ways of helping others. This reflection prevents professional-centrism,²⁴ and enables more effective intervention and support for the people who are struggling with alcohol related challenges within and beyond First Nations communities. I also believe that an awareness of spirituality in helping others will lead helping professionals to further motivate themselves to use their helping experiences for personal growth and self-awareness as well as an awareness of others through their work as professionals.

The Journey in the *Dakelh Keyoh* was and is also a process of learning about my own culture. Now I can understand more clearly what the concept of *Ki* is in the Japanese context, when I recognize healing as personal growth that can start from and be

²⁴ Wuest (1993) examines professional-centrism from a feminist perspective. She critiques that the idea of noncompliance is the “conceptual imperialism” of the healthcare profession. This ideology expresses the paternalism of “the provider knows best mentality” in the name of scientific objectivity, and denies the significance of class, gender and race in the health practice.

promoted by the healing components of choice, commitment, acceptance, letting go, humbleness, love, the spiritual experience, healing practices, nature, peace and helping others. As I learned from First Nations experience, these components facilitate us to tune our vital energy — spirit or *Ki* — to a harmonious relationship with oneself, others, nature, and the Sacred Power that is one with the whole universe. This harmonious relationship through our spiritual connection is a source of healing and growth. From my guides, I have also learned that the spirit of helpers are expressed through their attitudes and ways of helping others as their own nature. For example, Mary John answered as follows when I asked how we could bring spirituality in our practice: *“It’s just like, in a person it comes naturally. The way you are, the way you want to be treated.”* Robin Chouinard also explained, *“Spirituality, I think it’s just how you carry yourself as a person.”* In this sense, spirit can be understood as the inner character of a person that is unique to him or her and it is expressed naturally through that person’s attitudes and behaviors. This idea of spirit is also related to the concept of *Ki* which is described as the unique energy of the person.²⁵

The guides in my learning journey let me interact with their ‘spirit.’ This experience is ‘a treasure of my heart’ that means more than accomplishing an academic study to me: The honest and passionate spirit of Mr. ‘Frog House Opinions’ taught me to learn by and speak from my heart; Elder Mary John’s warm and respectful spirit permeated her every word and attitude, which encouraged me to continue this journey as a mutual learning process; Mr. Pompana consistently showed his humble and calm spirit

²⁵ This notion of spirit is also parallel to what ‘Frog House Opinions’ explained as “Character Attitudes” in his feedback to my thesis draft. He wrote, “Character Attitudes are beyond the senses of the mind and body. Your Character Attitudes are the treasure of the heart where you will find your spirit” (‘Frog House Opinions,’ Feedback to the thesis draft, August 2005).

that has been gained through his life experience, which led me to have a more balanced and harmonious idea of the complexity of life; and Mr. Choinard's spirit greatly inspired my spirit, echoing my experience, beliefs and feelings in regard to spirituality and helping others, as a person in the same generation who comes from a different culture.

I hope that this thesis enables me to share my learning with people within and beyond *Dakelh Keyoh*. I hope this cross-cultural study is able to shed a light into the strength and beauty of First Nations spirituality. As I have learned, when we are willing to learn from people who have different cultural background and beliefs, we are able to liberate ourselves from a discriminative mindset. This is what I have learned from First Nations people. I will carry this learning with me in the way I interact with the world.

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Appendix A: Information Letter and Consent Form

Information Letter

This study aims at describing spirituality in sharing the healing process of a person who abuses alcohol through the dialogue with Aboriginal elders and healers. I will conduct this study for the purpose of considering how I would take part in others' healing processes by reflecting on my feelings and attitudes in the work with the people who are struggling with addiction. This research is also intended to bring an opportunity for helping professionals to reflect on their work and relationship with the people who abuse alcohol. I am going to interview four to five First Nations people who have experience in helping others and live or work in the Prince George area.

I will ask you about your experiences of helping others who abuse alcohol, and discuss the interrelational aspects of spirituality in healing: How does your spirituality affect the healing process of the people who abuse alcohol? How does it influence your spirituality to take part in the healing process of the people who abuse alcohol?

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary, and you may withdraw at anytime. I will ask you questions about your personal experience and knowledge. If you do not want to answer particular questions, your choice will be respected.

Your participation involves two conversational interviews. The interviews will be tape recorded so that I can transcribe them into written form. In the second interview, I will discuss a summary of our last discussion, and ensure an opportunity for you to add and clarify your comments in the interview. You can decide if you will take the second interview or not. The audiotapes of our conversation will be stored in a secure place for your confidentiality. I will provide you with a copy of the audiotape and transcription if you so desire.

The information you give will be used in my Master's Thesis for the Department of First Nations Studies at UNBC, and you will remain anonymous in the final research findings unless you wish to have your name used. You may access the data and results of this study anytime you want.

The thesis will be housed at the UNBC Geoffrey Weller Library, and you will receive a copy of the thesis if you wish.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me:

Maki Umeda
Address: 964 Johnson St.
Prince George, B.C.
V2M 3A1
Phone: (250) 564-3067
E-mail: umedam@unbc.ca

Or you can contact me at the Graduate office at UNBC: (250) 960-5889

University Contact Information:

Vice-President of Research – Dr. Max Blouw
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If you have any complaints or concerns with this research, please contact Max Blouw, the Vice-President of Research at UNBC.

Consent Form

Do you understand that you have been asked to participate in a research study?
YES NO

Have you received and read a copy of the attached research information sheet?
YES NO

Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?
YES NO

Do you understand that you are free to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time? You do not have to provide a reason.
YES NO

Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?
YES NO

Do you understand that you will have access to the information that you provide?
YES NO

Would you like to have your name included in the thesis that will include information shared during interviews?
YES NO

If you do not want to have your name used, would you like to make up a name?
YES NO

Would you like to take the second interview?
YES NO

I agree to take part in this study.

Participant's Signature Date

Printed name of participant

Witness's Signature Date

Printed name of witness

I believe that the person signing this form understands what is involved in the study and voluntarily agrees to participate.

Interviewer's Signature Date

Printed name of interviewer

This research is conducted by Maki Umeda, a graduate student in First Nations Studies at the University of Northern British Columbia.

Appendix B: Interview Guide

Interview Guide

Introductory question

Please briefly introduce yourself including which Aboriginal community you are from?

Fundamental question (the interrelational aspects of healing)

- I would like you to reflect on your experiences of helping others who abuse or depend on alcohol. Could you think of any experiences in which spirituality helped the healing process of a person who abuses alcohol?
- What did it mean to you to take part in his/her healing process?
- How do you think your spirituality affects his/her healing process?

1) The interpretation of spirituality and healing

- Could you describe to me what spirituality is to you?
- Could you explain your opinion of the role of spirituality in the healing of people who abuse alcohol?
- Do you think your involvement in helping others relates to your spirituality?

2) Traditional healing practices and healing of the people who abuse alcohol

- What kind of traditional healing practices do you think are helpful for facilitating the healing of people who abuse or depend on alcohol?
- What does it mean to you to practice those traditional practices?
- How do you think your traditional practice helps the healing process of a person who abuses alcohol? What is your role in that practice?
- What does your tradition mean to you?

3) Resilience of individuals and families in the Aboriginal community

- What is your opinion of your people's spiritual strength that can be brought into the healing of people who abuse or depend on alcohol?
- How do you think you can bring that strength into the healing process of the people who abuse alcohol?