

Listening To The Spirit Voices:  
Honoring Our Ancient Traditional Ways Of Healing

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## **ABSTRACT**

**This thesis will compare and contrast health and healing as practiced by Western medicine and Cree medicine. In the culture of Western medicine, the physicians are trained through technology and scientific facts; traditional Cree medicine is viewed as spiritual healing through cultural ceremonies and the use of medicinal plants. My aim is to prove that the best path of health and healing, especially for Aboriginal people is by utilizing both Western and traditional Cree medicine which provides a truly holistic approach to our well-being; Western medicine lacks the spiritual aspect while traditional medicine lacks the Western scientific approach. This thesis utilizes Medical Anthropology which provides the structure for bridging the gaps between Western medicine and traditional Cree medicine. This thesis is an example of how Western and traditional Cree medicine can promote health and healing to all people, Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal individuals, families and communities.**

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**A Cree Poem**

*I Wonder About Two Worlds*

*As I sit and smoke the Sacred Pipe.  
I wonder about the White Man's World  
I'm journeying into.  
My cultural world is kind, caring and loving.*

*The White Man's world is filled with greed,  
And a need for power and control  
of all living things.*

*My world, we are a part  
of all living things,  
Mother Earth, Father Sky.  
the four legged ones.  
the creatures that live in the sea.  
the ones who live in the ground.*

*In my world, we are all  
in the Sacred Circle of life.  
In my world, we give  
to Mother Earth before taking,  
this is respect.  
In the White Man's world they take,  
and never replace  
This is called greed.*

*In my Cultural World women are  
Our balance, they, like Mother Earth  
Give life.  
We treat them with a Sacred Respect,  
we love and protect them.*

*The Women is the doorway  
to enter the physical world,  
from the Spirit World, they give life.  
they nurture, and love unconditionally.  
We honor and respect Women.*

*In the White Man's culture,  
the woman, is the property of man.  
How can this be?*

*In the White world, the woman is like a slave.*

*There is no respect.*

*I wonder how my journey will be?  
The books, the teaching,  
this way of life.*

*As the smoke from the Sacred Pipe  
drifts slowly upwards  
to the Great Spirit  
I wonder, what the sign will be.  
Will, my thoughts, my prayers  
be answered?*

*As I look up to Father Sky,  
I see two Eagles soaring  
There is a Medicine Hawk  
in all his glory.  
I know he's heard,  
the answer is here.*

*Thank you Great Spirit  
for all of these things.  
As I sit here and listen  
to the symphony,  
the birds are singing.  
I hear the songs of the wind spirit  
whispering through the leaves.*

*Thank you Great Spirit,  
for the time, you allowed  
me to wonder,  
for now I know.*

*My world, the Indian way of life,  
with all its gentleness and honor  
is where I will stay.*

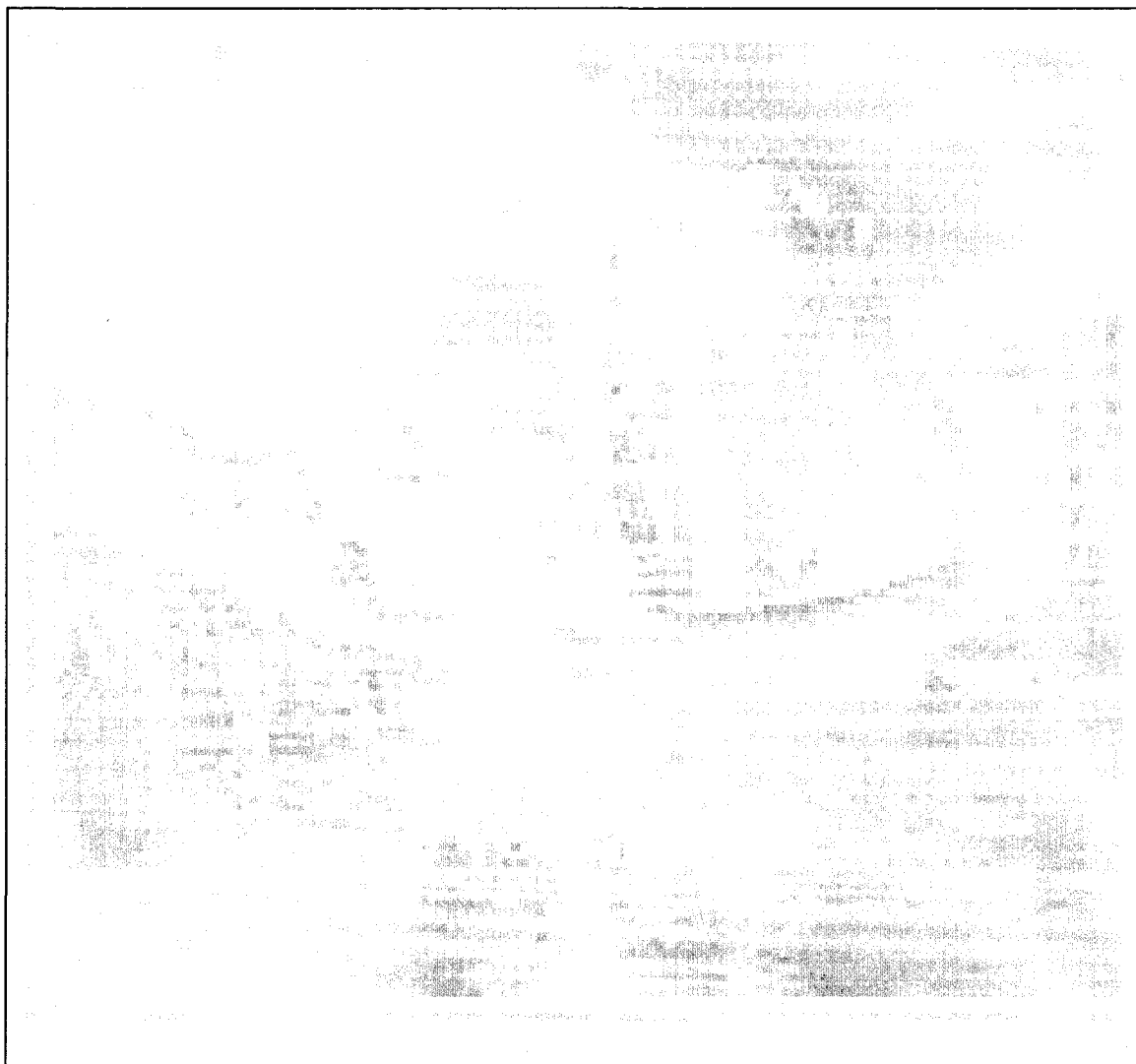
*I will walk in the White World,  
for awhile.  
To learn, to grow and to understand,  
But my world, my culture,  
Is truly who I am.*

***By Earl Henderson, Cree name Calm Wind***

**Opening Prayer**

*Ko tawnan kin naskum tim oh ma neyhew pimatisiwin keymayin hae hae*

*We are thanking the creator for this beautiful Indian way of life*





## CHAPTER ONE

Since the dawn of science four centuries ago, the idea of miracles has made thoughtful people uneasy. Following the eighteenth-century enlightenment, one of the badges of intellectual courage was to dismiss miracles and to consider those who believed in them as traitors to reason... In keeping with this trend, the concept of the miraculous has fallen on hard times in medicine these days. Hard-core materialists have the upper hand in the healing professions; believe the idea of a miracle is absurd. They are convinced that all events in nature are dictated by the so-called ironclad laws of nature, which they claim, cannot be breached: because miracles require a temporary suspension of natural law, by definition they cannot exist. Other individuals, however, suggest that since our knowledge of nature's laws is incomplete, we should be cautious in declaring what can and cannot happen... Phenomenal, even what could be called miraculous, cures are not very uncommon. Like others, I have had cases, any one of which, under suitable conditions, could have been worthy of a shrine or made the germ of a pilgrimage.

(Mehl-Madrona, 2003 p. ix-x)

### INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this thesis is to examine Cree health and healing from a cultural perspective with its main focus on medicine men, doctoring sweat lodges, prayer sweat lodges, talking circles and the values of living in a 'good way.' The thesis is divided into sections that are categorized under six chapters. It is my intention to compare and contrast health and healing as practiced by western medicine and Cree traditionalist. Within these practices, I will draw upon the scholarly works of Indigenous and non-Indigenous writers both from an anthropological and traditional perspective. I will also draw upon my own lived experiences as an observer, researcher, a traditional Cree practitioner, and as an educator. Although we have two world views of "*ethno-medicine*" and "*bio-medicine*" the complexities within cultural contexts are problematic particularly within traditional Cree healing practices. For the purpose of my

argument, I follow the convention of referring to non-western medical practices as ethno-medicine, while references to western medical practices are referred to as bio-medicine (McElroy, Townsend 2004; Brown 1953; and Brown 1998). This thesis explores the potential for health and healing by combining bio-medicine and ethno-medicine thus providing a holistic approach to our well-being. Many healers who practice ethno-medicine assert that bio-medicine does not address the importance of the spirit in healing. The traditional Cree ethno-medical practice involves the Creator, sweat ceremonies and dreams.

The thesis is interdisciplinary by nature complementing Anthropology, Education and First Nations Studies. This perspective imposes a more holistic view of cultures and traditions in education, health and healing as it applies to the individual, the family, and the community. It is also grounded within the practice of Medical Anthropology and its approach to health and healing. Anthropology emphasizes that health and healing are best understood in terms of society's system of ethno-medicine and shows how society defines and diagnoses disease. Bio-medicine usually considers disease as a clinical entity that can be diagnosed and treated independently from its cultural context. Medical anthropology research is broad and holistic with an interdisciplinary framework.

The literature review will draw upon the scholarly writings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people who are familiar with First Nations Studies in health and healing within communities. I will explore the knowledge and spirituality specifically belonging to the Cree use of medicine men, sweat lodges and traditional plants as taught to me by my Elders in combination with values and beliefs of Cree life. I will also discuss how disease is explained and treated within Cree culture and ethno-medical practice.

For the purpose of this paper I want to expound further on the traditional healing of the sweat lodge and the medicines through my personal experience and teachings. I will speak to this further in chapter four. For 25 years I lived a traditional lifestyle, while at the same time had worked in the counseling field for 20 of those years. I have balanced academic techniques and theoretical approaches from a non-Aboriginal perspective and incorporated cultural beliefs such as talking circles and healing circles which assist clients through their healing journey.

A talking or healing circle is a group of people who share stories/feelings when they have the “talking rock” or “talking stick” or “talking feather” and the circle then takes on a life of its own. Healing comes from the energies of all who are engaged in the circle and from the elder who gives the circle direction. An elder is not determined by age, but by the knowledge and wisdom the individual has of the culture and traditions. Elders fill various roles within a community: attending the majority of functions to provide support for the community; teaching, mentoring and holding sacred knowledge. Elders are not involved with drugs, alcohol or family violence. Elders treat spouses and children with respect and love towards everyone who comes across their path. Elders are the pillars within their community.

The goal of this thesis is to bridge the gap between ethno-medicine and bio-medicine for First Nation and non-First Nation people. Many Aboriginal people are going back to their cultures and traditional ways of knowing and being. Their healing takes into account the values and beliefs of culture. This thesis is for Aboriginal people who lost their culture through adoption; by the residential school experience; and the loss of the language, which is the basis for cultural and traditional learning and understanding. Within this thesis, I will use interviews

and letters from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who have accessed both bio-medical and ethno-medical treatment for a variety of ailments. Using their stories as a departure point for discussion from a medical anthropological perspective, I will emphasize the importance of the concept of medical pluralism in determining the efficiency of a holistic approach to healing As Brown states: The demand for alternative medicine may stem at least in part, from the characteristics of the social encounter between the healer and the patient. However, both bio-medicine and alternative therapies seem to require belief as part of the cure (p.13).

The first chapter is divided into three sections. The first section draws upon my personal and educational journey. The second looks at the history of ancient traditional healing by drawing upon the scholarly writings of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The third section speaks to my lived experience as a traditional practitioner, cultural researcher, and as an educator. Within these sections are interwoven perspectives and teachings of respected Elders and traditional Cree practitioners

### **My Personal and Educational Journey**

In the spring of 1997, my Elder, Joe P. Cardinal and I were talking about education. I mentioned that I would like to return to school to study social work. Joe looked at me and stated, “The time is right for you because you have lived and experienced life. You are entrenched in traditional ways, and exposure to university will not sway your thinking.” Joe suggested I attend school until I obtained a PhD. When we had this conversation, my goal was to obtain a Bachelor of Arts degree. I said to him, “Joe, do you realize how old I’ll be if I go for a PhD?” He looked at me, smiled and said “How old will you be if you don’t do the PhD?”

At age 55, I began my post secondary education in September 1998, challenging nine classes in the Social Work Program at the College of New Caledonia and graduated with a two-

year Diploma in 1999. In the Fall of 1999, I enrolled at the University of Northern British Columbia (UNBC) completing an undergraduate degree in Anthropology and First Nations Studies by 2002. In September 2002, I began studies for an Interdisciplinary Masters Degree with hopes of completing by December 2006.

The next step along my educational sojourn was to obtain a Ph.D. My Elder, Joe, said “how old will you be if you don’t do it?” Those words have been inspirational in continuing with my educational journey despite doubts and obstacles met along the way. Now I understand why the educational path is important, not only for myself, but for all people. I have come to understand the more we know, the less we know. Learning is a life long journey with the only limitations being the road blocks we erect, in addition too, the barriers of racism, poverty, and oppression.

Education is a way of healing. Education gives one the knowledge to understand life differently and with that understanding a form of healing is created. For Aboriginal peoples, education can assist them in dealing with agencies and government representatives on their terms, because they come from the same educational background. The Aboriginal person has not only the same base as the dominant society but has their culture and traditional beliefs to assist them in making informed decisions. An Elder once told me that if we follow the Indian ways, that nothing is impossible (Personal Communication, Anonymous, 2004).

When I reflect back on my life as a Metis child growing up in Southern Manitoba, who quit school in grade seven to work on the railway, I would not have imagined the education I have today. As an undergraduate student enrolled in first and second year Metis studies, it was a review of the way I was raised. I would never have dreamt that one-day I would be teaching at a university about Metis people, communities, and their way of life. I shared experiences about

the gatherings at my grandmother's house every Saturday night with relatives jigging and dancing. My father stood on a wooden box calling the square dance instructions. Everyone who played at these dances was either an uncle or a great uncle – our family was large and everyone seemed to play an instrument of one kind or another – they turned my grandmother's washboard in to an instrument, while others played the spoons, guitar and fiddle. This was one aspect of the Metis life that I knew and loved as a child.

My Great Grandmother was Sioux. Her family came to Canada with Sitting Bull after the Battle of Big Horn in 1876. They settled along the Assiniboine River in Portage La Prairie, Manitoba. My Great Grandmother married a Metis man (French/Cree descent). They raised their family in the White Horse Plains northeast of Portage La Prairie. My grandmother always talked about being born in a tepee.

Growing up I had a Sioux connection through my grandmother, Sarah McLennan (nee Gladue) and her cousin, Bessie Waters. They talked to me about the old ways of life; what it meant to be a Sioux person and that I needed to pay attention to the cultural and spiritual ways. Bill and Bessie Waters were kind and loving people who had a great interest in me. Bill showed me medicines, one of which he called Seneca Root. He was knowledgeable in these areas. Bessie was always smiling and telling me in Sioux that I was a "good boy". Bill and Bessie were checking on me because they knew my journey was to become a spiritual person and a Holy man. They had Indigenous knowledge of things yet to come. It happens in dreams or as a sense/feeling of how things will be. It is a way of knowing about events before they happen.

My Cree cousins started taking me to the sweat lodge. It was there that I immediately felt culturally connected. The people were kind and caring, there were no expectations of me, and seemed happy that I was learning the ancient traditional values and ways of the Plains Cree.

While growing up, I often wondered about the medicines First Nations people used to cure themselves of diseases and wanted to explore this aspect of my culture.

One day I met a man named Joe P. Cardinal and his wife Jenny from Saddle Lake, Alberta. They were also Plains Cree. I offered him tobacco and a gift and asked him if he would be my Elder and teacher. He took the offering, thought about it for awhile, finally he agreed. But he had one condition-- I had to listen. I was adopted into the family of Joe and Jenny Cardinal as their son. I have been taught the old, traditional ways of the sweat lodge, which include the doctoring of people in the lodge. My life changed over the next 18 years. I took part in many ceremonies and learnt their sacred meanings.

Participating in a ceremony is opening your self to the spiritual grandmothers and grandfathers, and to everything our ancestors held sacred. Every ceremony has a teaching; it assists people in understanding their role within the tribe. That role is their responsibility; for example, young men learn early to hunt or track game to feed the tribe. There are many lessons to be learned about one's self, healing, how to treat people, humility, and most important of all, respect for yourself and others. These are some of the teachings from this ancient way of life you receive with an open mind and heart.

An example, earning a pipe comes with certain responsibilities. To carry a pipe you first have to earn it by fasting three or four days with no food or water. There is only you, the spiritual grandmothers and grandfathers, and the Creator. The first one earned may be a personal pipe which only you and your immediate family can smoke. There are various kinds of pipes: the people's pipe which is smoked by men and women; a woman's pipe which is made differently from a man's pipe and, in some cases, is only smoked by women, just as in some situations a man's pipe is only smoked by men. People can fast for years and there are times a

person may fast for a pipe and not earn it. One can fast for a prayer, songs or a doctoring sweat lodge which one may or may not earn. The Elders explain this by teaching not everybody is meant to be a pipe carrier or sweat lodge holder. Some are to be helpers or to fill other necessary roles – it depends on what gifts have been given by the grandfathers and the Creator.

There are many accounts of how the pipe was first given to First Nation people. One of the legends is of the White Buffalo Calf Woman. I was taught that the stem represents the male and the bowl represents the female. Once the two pieces are joined, the pipe becomes strong and active—it becomes the direct link between people and the Creator. The bowl represents the world; it is round and creates the balance between male and female energies throughout the world.

After earning a pipe, I then earned a prayer sweat lodge. In a prayer sweat, the pipe carrier uses either twelve or twenty four willows to construct the lodge. As the pipe carrier continues to fast each year, an additional two to four willows are earned. In some cases, a pipe carrier will only earn a prayer sweat. In other cases, a pipe carrier will earn the full 42 willows in order to have a doctoring or medicine sweat lodge. The sweat lodge can serve many purposes or functions—prayer, doctoring, and naming. Everything pertaining to the protocols of the sweat lodge is determined by the Elders and the guidance of the Spirit World (grandmothers and grandfathers) and the fasting of the pipe-carrier. The sweat lodge represents a mother's womb which provides safety and sanctuary for an individual. Because our ceremonies are sacred, I walk a fine line and am vigilant as to what I can and can not share with the general population.

I helped with the sweat lodge by making fires and carrying rocks for seven years before accepting my first pipe and a prayer sweat lodge. One must earn this privilege by assisting in



sweats and ceremonies. The elders will inform you when they consider you worthy of such an honor as having a pipe and a sweat lodge. With the prayer sweat, 32 rocks are used until told by Elders that you are ready to use more. When accepting a sweat lodge I agreed to have a sweat ceremony every week. Some years later, I earned a doctoring sweat (through fasting). In this sweat, people come with different problems—mental, emotional, physical and spiritual or may want to come for a cleansing.

An example of a doctoring is when my Elder, Jenny Cardinal, was in the hospital with cancer. The physicians called her husband Joe to take her home as there was nothing more they could do. Joe picked her up and drove across the medicine line to a medicine man in Wyoming. There she was doctored for ten consecutive days. Upon her return to Canada, she was doctored for another five days consecutively. When she next went to her physician, it was determined that she was cancer free and remains cancer free today. This was 40 years ago. Jenny is now 77 years old. (See Appendix C – Interview 4)

People come to sweats on a regular basis to keep healthy and stay in balance. Our spirits can become negative or depressed from life's challenges. Sweat lodges heal spirits and return's us to a positive state of mind. In the Indian world, as in all cultures, there is both positive and negative. Traditional ceremonies like the sweat lodge, talking and healing circles assist people to understand the world around us in positive ways.

When our spirits become weak or sick we need to return to the sweat lodge to heal to good health. Many things affect our spirits; both happy and sad and sometimes the bad outweigh the good. People come to get a doctoring to heal their spirit and bring back balance and harmony in their lives. An example of this is Rena's story (See Appendix C – Interview 3).

Rena was experiencing negative occurrences in her life—she was afraid to leave her home, she was on crutches and having chest pains. She consulted her physician and was tested for heart problems, cancer and arthritis but her physician could not determine what was wrong. She phoned me and asked for a doctoring. When she arrived, we had a pipe ceremony and the grandfathers advised me that she needed to be doctored in the sweat lodge. Arrangements were made to start a four day doctoring sweat that week. Rena had a spiritual sickness that only a traditional doctoring could heal. After four days of doctoring in the sweat lodge, Rena's life returned to normal—she was able to leave home and attend work, no longer needing crutches to walk and her chest pains disappeared.

The old people say that spirits become sick when there are too many negative influences in our life. An excellent example would be the negative experience of the residential school syndrome and the multi-generational effected. This legacy of abuse impacted families and communities leading to the misuse of alcohol and drugs, which led to family violence, loss of culture, loss of parenting skills, and loss of identity which can all be attributed to spiritual sickness or soul wounds.

For Rena, the doctoring in a sweat lodge using traditional ethno-medicine healed her spirit. Once the spirit is well and strong, we can be healed through bio-medicine. Working together, these two medicines will cure the disease and bring the body and spirit back to good health and harmony.

Elders speak of the concept that each person is given certain gifts. There are spiritual healers and people who heal through their knowledge of medicines. These healers have the gift of being able to communicate with the spirit of the plants. Other healers use different ways of healing by using the gifts they have received from the grandfathers and the Creator. Elders say

that no person can do all things—only the Creator has all gifts. But the Creator gives different gifts to different people so that all people work together to help an individual heal. A person may go to the sweat lodge to get spiritual healing and cleansing of their mind, body and spirit. The sweat lodge holder may suggest they go to another person, as the other person can give them medicines to help with their healing process.

When you earn sacred items, you have an obligation to live a certain life style--no drugs or alcohol, be kind to others, and respect all living things: plants, animals, trees, the birds, and the universe. As I learned more, I understood that these were gifts given to me by the grandfathers and the Creator. I learned to trust the supernatural/spirit world.

Elders informed me that each time a person earns a pipe or sweat lodge, that person will be tested by the grandfathers. An individual may go through turmoil or may experience problems that will test their commitment and strength that is required to be a pipe carrier or sweat lodge holder. If these gifts are abused by being used in the wrong way, the gifts will be taken away. I have experienced this happening to people and I believe it is one of the hardest tests to recover from in a cultural and traditional sense. It was explained to me that this was how cultural and sacred teachings take care of themselves. The grandfathers and grandmothers intervene from the Spirit world.

### **Historical Trauma and Ancient Traditional Ways of Healing**

The core of Native American awareness was the place where the sole wound occurred. The concept of sole wound can best be understood as the trauma suffered by the psyche over half a millennium of systemic attempts at genocide directed towards Indigenous peoples. This core essence is the fabric of the soul, and it is from this essence that mythology, two readings, and culture emerge. Once the core from which the soul emerges is wounded, much of the emerging mythology and dreams about people reflect the wound. The manifestations of such a wound are found and embodied by the tremendous suffering that the people have undergone since the collective soul wound was inflicted half a millennium ago and continues in different diocese even to this day. Some

of the diseases and problems that Native American people suffer are a direct result of the soul wound. The self-destructive behaviors may be a desperate attempt to bring back a harmonious soul. (Duran & Duran, 1995, p. 36)

Over the last 500 years of Colonization, First Nations people suffered from physical, social, and spiritual devastation and a destruction of their traditional ways of life. It was estimated that there were 112 million Indigenous people in the Americas upon the arrival of Christopher Columbus. Within a few centuries the population of Indigenous people dropped to as low as 8 million (Churchill, 1994). Diseases such as smallpox and influenza decimated whole communities taking with them many of their traditional healers, artists, teachers, warriors, and holy men (Churchill, 1994). First Nations people suffered from slavery, murder, colonialism, and being forcibly removed from their traditional lands to make way for foreign settlers. Colonial governments justified these brutal attacks against Indigenous people by characterizing them as savages. They also based their conquests against Indigenous people as being supported by God against the savages who were less than human (Henderson, 2000; p.25-27). It was only through missionaries and conversion that our people could be considered civilized.

For a long period of time, First Nations traditional ceremonies, dances, songs, and Aboriginal worldviews were outlawed in Canada. The punishment could have been death (though not legally sanctioned) or imprisonment. More so than ever, these ways of knowing and being in the modern world have made a tremendous comeback. These are considered rights which are guaranteed and protected under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms (Asch, 1999). First Nations people suffered terribly from the forces of colonization and imperialism in the past, present, and will into the future. In order to start healing from these spirit wounds there has been a renewal and a return to traditional ways of healing. Some of these ways are: sweats,

smudging, talking circles, healing circles, and Indian medicines (Battiste, 2000; Cajete, 1994; Kelm, 1998).

In an earlier issue of the First Nations Messenger Fast Facts, it is noted that:

82% of female respondents in the First Nations and Inuit Regional Health Survey (1999) said a return to traditional ways was the way to promote community wellness. Following this viewpoint, Waldram makes a good point in regards to healing and the use of traditional forms of spirituality, and even speaks to the thesis of this paper in stating that:

spirituality as a form of symbolic healing can be understood within the discourse of oppression, liberation, and cultural repatriation (1997: 217). His observations also speak very clearly, in some ways, to the stated need to return to traditional ways by Aboriginal people who are recognizing that something was, and is, amiss.

A project paper which was prepared for the Aboriginal Healing Foundation (Wesley – Esquimaux & Smolewski, 2004) titled “Historic Trauma and Aboriginal Healing”, gives a historical overview of the devastating impact colonization had on First Nations people which is termed “Historic Trauma Transmission” (HTT). Through the devastating effects of residential school, the Indian act, poverty, racism, and oppression over the last 500 years, First Nations people have passed on to their children and their children unresolved loss and grief issues. This impacts the healing and struggle of Aboriginal people to this very day and it is deeply embedded in the Aboriginal consciousness.

In order to treat these disorders, it is imperative that healing techniques have an appreciation for Aboriginal worldviews and their ways of being in the world. A balanced approach of traditional and modern medicines, doctors, and philosophies, is needed to adequately address the complex post traumatic stress disorder existing as a result of historic trauma transmission and the issues of complex loss and grief of not only loved ones, but of culture, languages, lands, and traditional beliefs.

This historical knowledge in the back of my mind keeps me focused on the work that I do in the sweat lodge. Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples are seeking comfort for their spirit and spiritual wounds in sweat lodges more so than ever before. Mainstream strategies tend to blame the victim and leave out the variables of colonization and the negative impact it had on First Nations, Metis and Inuit peoples of Canada. This “leaving out” of empirical data from professionals does not achieve the goals of healing and empowerment. The renewed practices of traditional medicines and spirituality coupled with modern medicines and approaches can lead to restoring those of us suffering from past and present spiritual wounds.

### **Lived Experience**

When doctoring people in the sweat lodge, I am only the instrument; the grandfathers and the Creator work through me. The people who are being doctored have to believe in the grandfathers and they also must believe that they will be healed through the traditional doctoring in the sweat lodge. The grandfathers are the ancestors and relatives who have gone to the spirit world and now help us to understand healing in a traditional Cree way. This involves regaining balance in our lives by allowing the grandfathers to work with us to give our hurts and pains back to mother earth. The mind is the most powerful aspect of human healing but it must be combined with belief in the Creator, grandfathers and medicines. The other part of traditional healing is the power of prayer from others in the sweat lodge combined with our own prayer.

As an Indigenous educator, I am continually learning from the culture and the environment about traditions. Cree cultural research is not limited to knowledge from books, but is enhanced through lived experience and conversations with traditional elders. It is learned through doing and participation in or through observation of sacred ceremonies. The most

important skill the researcher of Cree culture must possess is the ability to listen and to hear what is being said. Knowledge from oral teachings is not a dialogue, but rather a process of having a quiet mind in order to hear. The listener must learn to be in harmony with their environment in all aspects: spiritually, mentally, physically and emotionally.

I combine my lived experiences as a traditional practitioner and cultural researcher to pass on the knowledge I have gained to those I am teaching. I am able to share what I have learned. These teachings would include traditional Cree cultural protocols. For example, when women are attending a ceremony, they should wear a long skirt. This tradition is to ensure that women are acknowledging the circle of life (also referred to as the sacred hoop) and their connection to mother earth as the givers of life. This tradition also acknowledges the appropriateness of modesty during ceremonies. These teachings would also include the concept of “stillness”. This is the ability to remain quiet and calm for lengthy periods of time. This traditionally signifies discipline and patience within Cree teachings.

## CHAPTER TWO

Indigenous cultures focus upon the community when one person is sick.

The community is only as strong as its weakest link. The sick person is seen as serving the community by offering herself to demonstrate the imbalance and disharmony that has ensued. The ill person is appreciated by having performed that function. When one person is ill, the entire community is ill. My sickness is your sickness, for we are connected. I cannot separate your suffering from my suffering. We are in this together (Mehl-Madrona, p.41, 2007).

### LITERATURE OVERVIEW

This thesis is based on the personal experiences of many individuals and contributes new ethnographic information and understanding of healing. My review of the existing literature helped put the ethnographic information into a broader context. The literature on Indigenous healing draws upon three theoretical approaches for understanding Indigenous ways of knowing and being are manifest in traditional healing. This research is drawn from three broad categories of literature: 1) Indigenous knowledge[s]; 2) Medical Anthropology and; 3) Traditional Health and Healing in the Context of Ethno-medicine and Bio-medicine. Each body of literature is integral to understanding “traditional ways of health and healing.” This discussion will address literature written by both Indigenous and Non-Indigenous scholars, as well as the lived experiences of the author of this thesis.

### Indigenous Knowledge

Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars (such as Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Brant Castellano, 2000; Cajete, 2000; Gardner, 2000; Henderson, 2000; Holmes, 2000; Kawagley, 2001, 1995; Weber-Pillwax, 2001) assert that the essence of Indigenous knowledge is derived from the interrelationships between the spiritual, natural, and human worlds as starting



points to Indigenous ways of knowing and being. These understandings stem from the notion that all beings are interrelated and connected to each other. The nature of such relationships creates an environment that is boundless in experiences and in how Indigenous knowledge is expressed.

In *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage, a Global Challenge*, Marie Battiste and James Henderson (2000) argue that Indigenous ways of knowing share a common framework. This framework includes: 1) knowledge of and belief in unseen powers in the ecosystem; 2) knowledge that all things in the ecosystem are dependent on each other; 3) knowledge that reality is structured according to most of the linguistic concepts by which Indigenous scholars describe it; 4) knowledge that personal relationships reinforce the bond between persons, communities, and ecosystems; 5) knowledge that sacred traditions and persons who know these traditions are responsible for teaching “morals” and “ethics” to practitioners, who are then given responsibility for this specialized knowledge and its dissemination; 6) knowledge that an extended kinship passes on teachings and social practices from generation to generation (p.42). The framework is holistic with the provision that the knowledge that is held and kept for future generations.

Battiste and Henderson (2000) argue that “where Indigenous knowledge survives it is transmitted primarily through symbolic and oral transmissions. In addition, Indigenous languages are a means for communicating the full range of human experience and are critical to the survival of any Indigenous people” (p. 48). Languages are also seen as the “repository of the collective knowledge and awareness of society” (Battiste & Henderson, 2000, p. 56). Furthermore, as Battiste and Henderson state,

Transmitting Indigenous knowledge is intimate and oral...Indigenous peoples view their languages as forms of spiritual identity. In them are the lessons and knowledge that are the cognitive-spiritual power of a certain group of people in a specific place, passed on through the Elders for their survival. Any attempt to change Indigenous language is an attempt to modify or destroy Indigenous knowledge and the people to whom this knowledge belongs (p. 50).

Likewise, Ethel Gardiner (2000) quotes Elders as saying, “language is central to our identity...the land is the culture...and our world view is embedded in our language” (p. 9).

As Marie Battiste (2002) describes “language is by far the most significant factor in the survival of Indigenous knowledge. Indigenous languages and their symbolic, verbal, and unconsciousness order structure Indigenous knowledge,” (p. 17).

The language is an integral part of the culture for which there is no adequate substitution or translation. For example, the Cree word for Creator “natowemah” also translates to “Angel”, “Angel of Angels”, and “the Highest Angel” which then reflects back to “the Creator of all things”. The cultural significance of this word varies depending on the translation utilized (e.g. there are five different Cree language groups – Plains Cree, Swampy Cree, Bush Cree, Northern Cree, and James Bay Cree). Each language group would have a variation for the use of this particular word. Indigenous knowledge in this context varies from tribe to tribe within the Cree Nation. Because Indigenous knowledge is passed down through the generations orally, both good and bad, the complexity of language and its importance cannot be emphasized enough. The concepts are similar, but the variation in the language results in a unique knowledge for each tribe.

Williamson (2000) suggests that language is a social construction of epistemological knowledge and that the structure of the “Inuktitut language reinforces the importance of deep appreciation of humanity” (p. 139). Kawagley (2001) writes:

The Yup'ik language is ...critical because it intimately connects one to the

ancestors and their thought world. This is a spiritual, emotional, and intellectual connections that helps to shape all thinking and behavior (p. 51).

Henderson's (2000), *Ayukpachi: Empowering Aboriginal Thought*, discusses the fluid relationship between the land and language. He explains:

Aboriginal languages express an awareness of a local ecology and are directed to understanding both external life forms and the invisible forces beneath them...The words [of Aboriginal languages] can be equated with the forces or essences of life or spirit, knowledge and thought... Aboriginal people's consciousness and language are structured according to Aboriginal people's understanding of the forces of the particular ecosystem in which they live. They derive most of the linguistic notions by which they describe the forces of an ecology from experience and from reflection on the forces of nature" (pp. 262-263).

Verb-oriented Aboriginal languages acknowledge and respect the constantly changing energy of the land and in doing so create an active relationship with the living energy within an ecosystem (Henderson, 2000c. p. 262). Bill Cohen (2001) views language as a means of restoring Okanagan culture:

The medium for the revitalization of [cultural beliefs] for the Okanagan is 'nsilxwcn' the Okanagan language... The removal of the language is a form of disempowerment and oppression...it is clear that healthy self-identity and self-esteem of individuals are necessary for a community to heal itself, and language is the fundamental way to retain cultural values and instill pride and a sense of community among individuals (p. 14).

The potential disappearance of Indigenous language would result in the true meaning of the culture being lost. The attempt by the residential schools to forbid the use of Indigenous language would have also potentially destroyed the values, beliefs and ethics of the Indigenous peoples. In addition the proper protocols and ethics at that ceremony could be destroyed.

One cannot understate the role of Indigenous languages in the preservation, restoration, and manifestation of new Indigenous knowledge. The sound, the meaning, and the relationships conveyed in the spoken world manifest the very essence of Indigenous knowledge in a way that the written world cannot. Weber-Pillwax (2001) suggests that it is impossible "to 'translate' the

lived cultural effects of philosophies and beliefs that are embedded within and associated with the words and terms themselves. Yet... herein lies the source of the power and meaning of those words and terms” (p. 159). The growing chasm between the spoken word (oral) and the written word (literacy) is one of much interest to Indigenous scholars.

### **Medical Anthropology**

Medical Anthropology emerged as a sub-discipline of Anthropology and many of the authors have acknowledged the limitations of western bio-medical systems and thought. Western bio-medicine trains physicians to focus on the discrete physical ailment that the patient presents without consideration for all the other factors in a person’s life. This then results in complex diagnoses with limited treatment (e.g. medication and/or surgery) and to a large extent, disengages patients from their recovery (Brown, *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*, 1998:124)

Historically, most doctors in the mainstream system viewed the human body as a machine, with the only concern being the specific problem to be fixed. For example, the heart was viewed as a simple pump. If the heart was not working properly, their scientific western approach was to either medicate or operate. The doctors were not trained to consider the cost of health inequity of our people which stems from the loss of land, history, language and spirituality which can be attributed for the most part to the residential school system. Likewise, the Indigenous Cree culture believes the heart and the head is what governs our actions and therefore should they be working independently the person will be out of balance and experience this through disease.

McElroy and Townsend (1996) describe in “*Medical Anthropology in Ecological Perspective*”

Anthropologists know that some societies exert tremendous stress on people, but for a variety of reasons there has been consistent underreporting of “human suffering and discontent”, as Robert Edgerton points out in a provocative book, *Sick Societies* (1992:5). He encourages study of human maladaptation, which he defines, in part, as a society’s maintenance of beliefs and practices so seriously impair the physical or mental health of it’s members that they cannot adequately meet their own needs or maintain their social and cultural systems “ (1996:111-112).

Medical anthropologists often support the notion that the health of Indigenous people must be viewed holistically and at the same time acknowledge the effect that historical trauma has had on the health and well being of those peoples. Kaja Finkler (1998) states in her article "Sacred Healing and Bio-medicine Compared":

Emotional discharges, associated with adverse life events and day-to-day experience are regarded as sickness producing. Most important, anger, usually associated with moral evaluations and conflicting social relations and frequently allied with nerves (*nervios*) is a singularly important etiological explanation of a sickness episode.... (Brown, *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*, p. 122)

### **Traditional Health and Healing**

Current educational models will be investigated for their role in perpetuating the lack of understanding by both healing communities of each other's cultural values and beliefs around health and healing. The educational domain of the development of a model for cross cultural understanding of diagnosing and treating disease will also inform the research. The education of both traditional healers and medical physicians needs to be broadened to include a respectful approach to both systems of health issues and healing. Brown (1998) states in *Understanding and Applying Medical Anthropology*:

"All five approaches in medical anthropology share four essential premises: first, that illness and healing are basic human experiences that are best understood holistically in the complex and varied interactions between human biology and culture; second, that disease is an aspect of human environments influenced by culturally specific behaviors and sociopolitical circumstances; third, that the human body and symptoms are interpreted through cultural filters of belief and epistemological assumptions; and fourth, that cultural aspects of healing systems have important pragmatic consequences for the acceptability, efficacy, and improvement of health care in human societies." (p. 12)

To understand the Cree cultural approach to healing, one must grasp the concept of the four directions, the medicine circle and First Nation cosmology. As outlined by Russell Willier, a Cree Medicine Man from Alberta, at the centre of the healing circle is Mother Nature sometimes referred to as (Mother Earth) and is symbolized by the color green. In the North, the

Great Spirit resides symbolized by the Buffalo, winter and the color white. The East is the home of the Sun symbolized by the Eagle, autumn and the color Yellow. In the South, Thunder resides symbolized by the Mouse sometimes symbolized by the (Wolf), summer and the color Red. West is symbolized by the Wind, the Bear, spring and the color Blue. Willier also delineates the four aspects of life as Education, Planning, Acquisition and Security. (David Young et al, *Cry of the Eagle*, 1989:24)

From a personal experience, depending upon the teachings of Elders, the colors and animals in each direction vary. This happens within Cree Tribes and throughout the nations of North America. The impact of this holistic approach to health and healing is that in most Aboriginal healing systems:

“The world is seen as a place in which harmony and balance exists between and among human beings and spiritual or ‘other-than-human’ entities, and serious illness is indicative of a disruption in this balance. Furthermore, it is apparent that these healing traditions encompass a holistic view of manifestations of illness in the individual...these are not diseases as bio-medicine would recognize them.... Unlike bio-medical approaches, however, Aboriginal medical systems were probably more concerned with delineating the etiology of the problem, since in so doing the type of treatment required became obvious. And since the cause often involved a breach of the normative order, repairs to the moral fabric of society became central to healing activities. Indeed, the communal nature of Aboriginal healing is in marked contrast to the more circumspect practices of bio-medicine. (Waldram et al, *Aboriginal Health in Canada*, 1995:102-103)

To understand the Cree approach to healing is to understand the difference between disease and illness. While disease is classified as an abnormality in the biological functioning of a human system, illness includes the psychological and social dimensions as well. The Cree approach is used here as a case study in ethno-medicine, that is, the combination of cultural knowledge about illnesses and the curative actions required healing those illnesses.

“The four cardinal directions are of great importance in understanding the Medicine Circle. The four directions divide the Medicine Circle into four quadrants, each symbolizing a component necessary for a person’s life.... There can be any combination of the four quadrants of

the Medicine Circle in a person's life. The segments are ultimately connected, and a deficiency in one area has an influence on the rest of the circle." (Young et al, Cry of the Eagle, 1989)

This idea of a deficiency in one area is the Cree way of classifying illnesses and the re-balancing of the Medicine Circle becomes the curative action for healing. The main focus for the patient is to work with the healer and participate in various healing activities required. Ethno-medicine for the Cree peoples is based on the four directions: east (emotional), south (physical), west (mental), and north (spiritual). This will ground the holistic approach from a Cree cultural perspective. It is within this context that I begin to look at the bio-medical theoretical approach (western medicine) which, is grounded in a different cultural perspective as well as to examine the differences and how these worldviews overlap. This indicates the differing approaches to diagnosing and treating disease-- through both bio-medicine and Cree traditional ethno-medicine.

In the Aboriginal world, medicine can be received in many ways. It can be a power or strength as in strong medicine. An example is the "Medicine Line" which is the border between Canada and the United States. During and after the Battle of Little Big Horn, Sitting Bull would bring his people to Canada. When being chased or followed by the U.S. Army, once they crossed into Canada, the U.S. soldiers stopped and would not cross the border after Sitting Bull's people. It was called the Medicine Line because the First Nations people thought there was strong medicine in Canada which prevented the U.S. soldiers from following them. In some First Nations ceremonies, the border is still referred to as the "Medicine Line".

Medicine can also be found in plants that are used for healing. Traditionally, the old people would connect with the spirit of the plant and tell the medicine person how the plant was to be used. From a cultural perspective, the term "medicine" can refer to a power which can be either good or bad. Depending on how it is used in the Cree language and the context in which it

is used. The Elders have taught us that when concepts are explained in our language, they have a much deeper meaning and can be better understood.



## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

He was a medicine man, and I remember that he had to hide in the hills to heal people. It was a great TB epidemic that was rampant everywhere on the reserves. Our traditional people saw this coming in their dreams. But even knowing was not enough. Some of the medicine people, like my grandfather, knew that they could help and did. But they had to hide in the hills to cure people because they weren't allowed to practice what they knew (Johnson and Budnick, 1994: 137).

This thesis examines ways for mainstream medical people and other professionals such as researchers, social workers, teachers, police, and others who have a great deal of contact with First Nations people to be more aware and sensitive to Aboriginal world views of healing and being in the world. My goal is to give critical insight to anthropologists and medical doctors of the necessity of using traditional ways of healing in the treatment goals of Aboriginal people. Indeed, to embrace the notion of combining the two world views and using this knowledge to treat not only Aboriginal but non-Aboriginal people in a holistic approach that incorporates the four aspects of the Cree medicine wheel. The literature and voices of First Nations people and non-First Nations people clearly express the desire to have traditional knowledge included in their healing plans to assist them in rediscovering their personal empowerment.

A decolonization methodology allows me the opportunity to introduce Indigenous scholars who speak to traditional ways of assisting people in their healing journey. This thesis allows me the opportunity to speak to my journey of becoming a traditional pipe carrier and a healer. It has been a long journey and one of high honor through the guidance and assistance of my elders. I have arrived at this place in time that was predicted when I was five years old. Elders speak of the day a medicine woman predicted I would become a healer and educator of people through the vehicle of ancient traditional knowledge.

This research took a qualitative approach that allows the voices and experiences of twelve informants to be heard. Five choose to share their knowledge through the interview method and seven choose the method of writing a letter. Each of them speak to how the sweat lodge and other methods of healing assisted them in their growth. Using field notes and my lived experience as a pipe carrier and holder of a sweat lodge, I also am able to speak of the importance of a balanced approach to healing incorporating traditional and modern techniques that benefit the person requiring medical and spiritual assistance. This research allows me to speak on the benefits of utilizing the knowledge from these two world views.

This thesis highlights my role and responsibilities as a traditional pipe carrier. This is an honor that I hold with the utmost respect. Part of my framework for this thesis is to tell my story and lived experiences of becoming a pipe carrier and the roles and responsibilities that come with this position. This thesis is qualitative in nature and allows for the informants to express their personal views and lived experiences concerning the sweat lodge. I draw upon cultural studies which values the lived experience through expressions of song, poetry, dance, storytelling, quotes from elders, and ceremonies ( Denzin, 2003).

My training in becoming a traditional healer from my elders, and researching literature from Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal writers supporting Aboriginal worldviews, assisted me in performing my cultural duties by incorporating traditional knowledge into the western based knowledge so there would be a better understanding of our First Nations values and beliefs which have been ignored in the past, as well as the present. Having an understanding of medical anthropology and mainstream medical practices which has no appreciation for Aboriginal worldviews encouraged me to take on this research in hopes of assisting the needed bridging of these two world views.

## **Cultural Protocols**

In addition to the formal procedures required by the university to obtain consent as outlined in Appendix A, when working with First Nations one must also consider the necessity of respecting traditional procedures and protocols. After the formal procedures are completed, there is an implied understanding that once permission is given and trust established, then the knowledge can be used in a responsible manner (Archibald, p. 18). To establish a relationship with a First Nations person, there is the need for the interviewer to sit and visit so the person can get to know the interviewer and make a decision as to the trustworthiness of the interviewer. One of the most important considerations is to acknowledge and respect the traditional protocol of presenting tobacco and a gift to the Elder in exchange for information. If the Elder accepts your offerings, there you will have a firm commitment that the interview will happen. If the Elder does not accept your offerings, then there will be no interview. This is a traditional protocol of the Plains Cree, other nations may vary in their protocols.

Time schedules have no place in establishing a relationship with an Elder for it is the Elder who will guide the interviewer in establishing the where and when. When speaking with an Elder, the interviewer must be prepared to accept and be respectful of the Elder's story regardless of the length. It may be necessary for the interview to span more than a few hours.

The interviewer must refrain from attempting to gather information regarding the procedures used in ceremonies. The purpose of the Elder sharing the information is not to provide an instruction manual to the sacred ceremonies, but rather to provide the interviewer with an overview of the process. This observation becomes especially important as a result of the qualitative methodology used in this research. The stories told provide the interviewer with

an account of the impact of the sacred ceremonies and use of ethno-medicine in healing and must be respected as the personal story shared by the interviewee. An ethical interview must be based on respect—respect for each other, respect for traditional ways of sharing information, and respect for the sacredness of the ceremony and the concept of spiritual healing.

My approach was from a traditional perspective regarding the preparation for the interviews. I got to know the people and they got to know me. They would ask what nation I was from, who my grandparents were. This was their way of developing a relationship with me and I respected that. It didn't matter if I was in a hurry or had other things planned. I would work at their pace.

I have experienced people coming onto reservations ignoring the protocol of the “Indian way”, and they were insulted because they did not get their results. They asked, what happened? The explanation was they did not stop at the band office and introduce themselves to the chief and council and explain what they needed and if the chief and council would be able to help them. I explained that they would have to put their time schedule aside, sit and have coffee or tea and visit. This is one example how respect and trust from the people is gained. People need to understand that life on the reservation is different.

On a professional level, I did not have a problem connecting with the people because I did not come with a “steamroller” attitude. Before people will talk, they have to trust you; this takes time and patience. An Elder told me when you work with people always wear your softest moccasins when walking through their hearts, minds, be gentle and respectful. Do not stomp through their life wearing cork boots. This healing process is about them, not about you (Personal Communication, Anonymous, 1996).

## **Qualitative Approach**

“Our legends are like gems with many facets. They need to be read, savored, and reread from many angles. My elders never said to me, ‘This story carries such and such a meaning.’ I was expected to listen carefully and learn why the story was being told. Though guided, I was allowed the dignity of finding my own interpretation. All stories give expression to the most important values of our culture”(Hilbert, 1985, pp. 1x-x).

The qualitative approach to research and information collection is defined as “descriptions in words” (Schensul, 1999, p. 4). In most Aboriginal societies, traditional knowledge is handed down through the generations by various means but in the most part, it is through storytelling and the lived experience. To fully understand and respect the traditional knowledge of ethno-medicine, it is essential that a qualitative approach be utilized to extract this knowledge from the words and life experiences of the storytellers. Aboriginal knowledge is said to be personal, oral, experiential, holistic, and conveyed in narrative or metaphorical language (Costellano, 2000, p. 25). The holistic knowledge referred to require the use of all five senses plus openness to intuitive or spiritual insights and thus can only be shared in a qualitative approach.

The traditional knowledge of how to maintain balance in our lives, how to relate to other human beings and how to practice respect for the Earth which supports us is desperately needed by all people. This knowledge, shared through the qualitative approach of storytelling and oral teaching, sees the physical condition of people as a manifestation of their spiritual health. But it is not only knowledge that is transmitted through this approach—it is also values such as respect and responsibility. If we are to look at the value of this type of research, we must look at the end product—the healing of all aspects of an individual—the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental aspects that determine the true well-being of a person.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### Healing and Doctoring

Most Indigenous cultures, including Native American, believe that all physical and emotional healing is first spiritual healing. Traditional healers use different terms to describe the inner healer, including soul or spirit. Regardless of the method of curing, the cooperation of this inner healer is necessary for achieving wellness. You and this mysterious healer are more important than any herb portion or ceremony could ever be. Likewise, the inner healer part of us initiates the increase in natural killer cell numbers- cells capable of defeating invaders and cancers- that occurs when college students watch Marx Brothers movies or cancer patients improve with placebos. (Mehl-Madrona, 2003, p.65).

From a number of studies which have recently been conducted, it appears that the limitations of pure bio-medicine are hindering the health and well being of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal members of our society (Waldram, Herring & Young (1995); McElroy & Townsend (1996); Brown (1998); Mehl-Madrona (2007)). Many believe that a form of integration between bio-medicine and ethno-medicine is the only way for people to fully deal with all their health issues. This concept has received little attention since 1980 as it affects the Aboriginal communities. A report issued by the First Nation and Inuit Regional Health Survey, 1999, stated that a closer working relationship between traditional healers and physicians is necessary to benefit the well being of Aboriginal people.

I have worked for Native Organizations for ten years, mainly in counseling for residential school abuse, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse. When working with clients (who were mostly Aboriginal), I would use cultural teachings. One of the key aspects for counseling was to know them on a personal level. Another was to learn as much as possible about their culture. I used the knowledge of my Cree culture to find similarities with the client's culture, whether it be Carrier, Cree, Metis, Ojibway or Saulteaux. The most important aspect is being humble and

respectful of a person's cultural values and beliefs, to acknowledge their elders and ask for their input to start the individual healing process.

The organizations I worked for allowed this flexibility to help the clients. In some cases, other native organizations would request me to do a sweat ceremony for them or to talk on the medicine wheel or cultural aspect of drugs and alcohol. My employers never hesitated when another group would ask for me to do a cultural program for their agency.

However, finding a workable system of medical pluralism is fraught with difficulty. Many physicians do not question their patients about the use of alternative treatments, for example: have any "home remedies" been utilized. With respect to the Aboriginal community, many physicians dismiss questions about alternative treatments because for them ethno-medicine lacks credibility. In the same way, some ethno-medical healers may require the patient to discontinue medication provided by their bio-medical healer in order to undergo a healing ceremony. The fact that a patient may be consulting with two different medical systems, without the knowledge of either, may affect their health, and the Aboriginal community's access to its own traditional cultural resources to maintain or restore health, the Aboriginal community has been forced into unfamiliar western medical practices. Janzen goes on to say:

Culture is constantly adjusted to overcome the limits of material conditions – climate, food sources, shelter, and distance – and make the most of available technology. The unique way that a community of individuals organizes itself and marshals its skills, knowledge and energizes to combat disease is thus a very central part of culture (p.3)

One must understand that what people know and believe to be true about the world is learned as they interact with one another through time and in specific social settings. In *Cry of the Eagle* (Young, Ingram and Swartz 1989), Young uses as part of his research a case history relating to his wife. She had accompanied Young on his research trip to study the traditional healing techniques of Russell Willier, a Woodland Cree healer. She became mysteriously ill and

all attempts by bio-medicine had failed. Young sought Willier's help and his wife's miraculous recovery from near death left a lasting impression.

Cree healing culture is reflected in shared meanings and expressed in common language, symbols and other modes of communication. Culture is also affected by shared activities. In the case of Cree people, the sharing of ceremonies, language and oral teaching defines traditional culture. It is in this context that Cree healing can be studied through narration, experience and case studies and a workable and shared understanding of human behavior in specific settings can be articulated.

In the overview of their book, *Cry of the Eagle*, David Young, Grant Ingram and Lise Swartz, share a story of sitting around the campfire with Big Joe Cardinal and asking him questions about the persecution of Indian medicine and religion since the first contact by priests, soldiers, and governments. Part of the conversation is as follows:

*Lise: Can you tell me about what the medicine was like then?*

*Big Joe: People got sick and they boiled roots. I can't tell you the roots because I don't know. Although the people didn't talk or write about it, they knew their roots. They'd leave a little tobacco, dig out the root, and boil it.*

*Lise: Could they cure everything?*

*Big Joe: Lots of things. A lot of people got cured. It was pretty good medicine to the old people. But they are different now. They have a different religion. They don't know what the hell they're doing. (p.12)*

Further into their story, the authors shared more time with Russell Willier. He has been very successful especially in the areas of skin diseases, migraine headaches and backaches. Russell related the following story:

In 1980, an incident occurred that Russell describes as a miracle. The incident caused him to become fully aware of the potential of native medicine and of his own power. The patient was his mother who according to Russell was diagnosed by doctors as having a 'burst stomach' that could not be cured. A Catholic priest was called in to administer the



last rites, and it was agreed that Russell could take his mother home to die. For three days and nights Russell treated her with prayers and herbs. She recovered. (p. 14-15)

Within the Aboriginal spirituality and healing there are many accounts of this type of healing also referred as miracles. Similar stories have been shared with me in the interviews I bring to this thesis, as well as my own healing journey.

### **My Spiritual Journey**

My spiritual journey started when I was a child growing up in Portage La Prairie. I had conceptualized some type of knowledge as a child. As I got older and growing up around Elders, I acquired some of that understanding of the traditional ways. The journey started when my cousins took me to my first sweat lodge. What was I looking for from my ancestors? I was looking for directions to follow the traditional ways of my ancestors.

In the 70's I started going, when sweat lodges were secretive, before the constitution in 1982 when Aboriginal People were guaranteed the right to practice religious ceremonies. I continued to attend the sweats and learned from the elders. After learning, I was able to sit with the singers and started to learn the songs. Later I was asked to be a pipe carrier which I turned down, because I was not ready to handle the responsibilities of holding a pipe.

In the early 80's I had a heart attack and decided to return to the sweats. I was told that this was a kick in the chest to get my attention for me to become a pipe carrier. In 1985-86, I received my first pipe, further down the road I needed to learn about fasting. The grandfathers had told the medicine man that I was too weak. In the early 90's I fasted for the pipe, seven colors, and the medicines. From that point on, I fasted annually (four days) for twelve years consecutively to earn the 44 willows which signifies a buffalo lodge or healing lodge. Over the last eighteen years, I have conducted numerous sweats along with doctoring sweats which assisted in helping people find balance and healings in their lives.

To be true to myself I need to continue on with this *Indian* way of life. This is where my strength and courage lies to work within the non-Indigenous system and to deal with my own illnesses. One of the things that I have learned through this process is that not everyone is meant to be a pipe carrier or sweat holder and that the Elders and grandfathers are in charge. Everyone can not be a medicine man or a holy man. This is not about power but rather about working collaboratively in order to preserve ancient knowledge and culture from persecution.

Since the change in the 1982 constitution, there has been a real cultural and spiritual awakening for Aboriginal people. Now we are permitted to practice as opposed to hiding from the dominant society. For a lot of people who have been trained, as I have been, in traditional ways in following the Elders, this way of life has become a living experience for us. We were taught to have respect for cultural diversity, traditions, and culture and that we are there for the people. Where as today, there are people who will go and buy a pipe and set up a sweat lodge without proper training. From a traditional perspective, these “instant” pipe carriers and healers are not only putting themselves in danger but also the people who are in need of cultural healing. For every traditional person who has been taught the old ways, there is an “instant” pipe carrier and sweat lodge. From a cultural view, we need to ensure that people seeking a sweat lodge are able to trust that the pipe carrier has been traditionally trained. We need to ensure that the people who are searching will be able to recognize the difference between the “instant” healer and the trained, traditional one. You need to ask this person, who his teachers were and then ask around in the Aboriginal community about this person and his teachers. My spiritual journey has taken me along this red road and this is something that I must do on a daily basis. People who are searching will recognize those who live this spiritual life. To live this way of life is to remember that we all have a spirit and that everything is connected to ourselves.

We need to remember that we are a small part of a whole--that we are connected to the land, animals, environment, and wind to each other. We need to wear our softest moccasins and to walk softly within our communities, our families and our environment. This is to signify that we show respect to our cultures and our traditional teachings and knowledge that was passed down to us from our Elders and their Elders. Through our sacred ceremonies we are taught from the spirit voices from our ancestors who have passed on before us. Here in the physical world they passed on this knowledge to our Elders and teachers. This is not unlike an example of a computer backup allowing us to access the pertinent information as we require it and this access is through fasting, sweat lodges and ceremonies.

### **The Traditional Process**

The process for the sweat lodge ceremonies begins by having the desire to learn and to go into the sweat lodge with an open heart and mind. When you are in the sweat lodge, you must have trust in the creator. Whatever you are experiencing emotionally, physically, mentally and spiritually are between you and the creator.

Traditionally when you are preparing to enter the sweat lodge for the first time, you need to have an understanding of entering the womb of mother earth. With the cleansing and the purification within that circle, you are able to leave your pain there so that the grandfathers and the Creator can take care of it. Also, you are acknowledging the four races; red, yellow, black and white. Each one has a gift that contributes to the whole; therefore, we need to respect them all. The four races are represented by the four colors: white for Caucasian people; yellow for Asian people; red for Aboriginal people; and black for African people.

The gift of the white race is technology. For example, cars, electricity, telephones, etc. With respect to bio-medicine, Caucasians have contributed technology such as cat scans and x-ray machines.

The gift of the yellow or Asian people is the oldest recording of medicines and their uses. They are also responsible for healing through acupuncture and the meridian systems in our bodies and how they are all connected. Through this process they are able to increase energy within the body that helps people to heal.

The gift of the red or Aboriginal people is that they were put in charge of the land, the animals and the plants by the Creator. Through their ceremonies, they have been able to connect to the spirit of the plants used as medicines to heal people. The black or African people were put in charge of the water as they have the longest rivers in the world. Within Aboriginal beliefs water is the gift of life which helps us to heal our bodies.

Using the Cosmology or Medicine Wheel, all the races and their gifts balance each other. When dealing with disease, there is not a cultural barrier. But in society each culture practices independently which may or may not slow down the healing process. Should cultures share their knowledge of healing and medicines, it could mean the decline of diseases and illnesses.

In the sweat lodge, you may sense things or see things, you should not fear this because they are present to help and to heal your spirit. Your spirit will give you the ability to counteract anything that affects you in a negative way. The sweat lodge can heal spiritual traumas you experienced throughout your life. These spiritual traumas, which affect your spirit or your will, include the death of a loved one, a divorce, childhood traumas, loss of culture, sexual abuse, family violence and every day life. All of these things affect us spiritually but many people have forgotten the spiritual part of healing. They have dealt with the emotional, physical, and mental but have forgotten the spirit. The sweat lodge brings back spiritual healing so we can heal in all four aspects of our being.

## **The Traditional Sweat Lodge and Healing**

There are numerous stories to draw from regarding the healing process within the traditional sweat lodge from both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. These stories are similar regarding their spiritual healing and well-being. Whatever spiritual traumas had been experienced by these individuals, the sweat lodge has provided them the tools for complete healing that bio-medicine could not. For example:

The first story is that of Bobbi, a 56-year old non-Aboriginal woman who has been attending sweats on a regular basis since January, 2002. (Appendix B letter 1) Bobbi was raised in a semi-Orthodox Jewish family and was the victim of repeated sexual abuse from the age of 4-1/2 to age 10. The family moved away from the abuser. Less than one year later Bobbi's father committed suicide. When Bobbi was 14, her mother suffered a "nervous breakdown" and Bobbi became the adult/parent within the family. Since the age of 8, Bobbi had developed intense addictions to alcohol, drugs, gambling, sex and work. Physically, Bobbi also developed ulcers and was plagued by undiagnosed depression (which was diagnosed as a "nervous breakdown"). This pattern continued until November 12, 2001, when Bobbi made an unsuccessful suicide attempt. Bobbi came to Prince George to start her recovery at the end of November, 2001 and attended her first sweat lodge ceremony on January 1, 2002. Since that time, Bobbi has also worked within the bio-medical system to control her depression. Bobbi has now been free of all addictions for almost 5 years, is more physically healthy than ever and is allowing her spirit to heal within the context of the sweat lodge and other ceremonies.

The second story comes from Trina, a 37 year old Cree/Dene Aboriginal person who grew up living off the reserve. (Appendix B – letter 7). Trina grew up in a dysfunctional family with alcohol and drug abuse and violence. Trina was born addicted to alcohol and cocaine and

was raised by her grandparents, who had 16 children. Trina got drunk for the first time at age 13, blacked out, and struggled with alcohol and drugs all her life.

In 1994, Trina attended a treatment centre for her addictions and discovered unimaginable abuses sexually, physically, and emotionally that she experienced while blacked out from alcohol and drugs. She also discovered that she suffered from verbal and spiritual abuse. Trina used drugs and alcohol to cope with these traumatic events.

When she got out of treatment, Trina sought sexual abuse counseling and continued to see a drug and alcohol therapist. She received assistance from a doctor and many professionals during her journey allowing her to remain clean and sober for five years. Trina relapsed for two years. During that time, she hit rock bottom, lost everything including her son. She decided to get help from her doctor and an alcohol and drug counselor again. Trina was sent to a 28 day treatment centre and that's where she started to deal with the childhood trauma issues. However, she needed to attend an additional Aboriginal treatment centre to deal with her identity issues and addictions. The treatment facility was based on a holistic approach to healing including sweat lodge ceremonies as part of the recovery process.

For 40 days, Trina worked with counselors, therapists, psychologists, doctors and nurses. She also had the opportunity to talk with Elders and others involved in 12-step programs. When Trina was ready to leave treatment, she had learned a lot about herself and her heritage. In 2001, she joined a 12-step recovery program and continued to access counseling. Trina began to attend sweat lodge ceremonies and other traditional ceremonies like fasting, smudging, praying, POW Wows and anything connected to the Red Road to complete her healing process. For Trina, this not only included spiritual healing, but identity healing as well. Today, Trina considers herself to be a proud, caring, loving and respectful Aboriginal woman who has taken a lot of wrong

paths, but today, with the help of the Creator and traditional healing, can live a good clean and sober life. There are many stories of spiritual healing and personal growth that have occurred with the utilization of traditional ceremonies. Some of these stories are contained in the appendices to this thesis.

The common theme that weaves through these stories is about people healing their spirit. When people work to heal their spirit, the emotional, mental, and physical parts of their being all came together. The majority of the participants talk about their higher power helping them to change their lives. The concept of higher power and Creator are the same. The sweat lodge was the venue that brought all the concepts together for these people-- they could make sense of their choices in life and know that change could be made to restore balance.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### IMPLICATIONS FOR BIO-MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS AND TRADITIONAL HEALERS

Healing and doctoring are distinct pursuits. Having tried both, I saw years ago that both were tremendously—and differently—powerful. It is no exaggeration to say that healers and doctors inhabit different worlds. Nonetheless, I became convinced years ago that the ancient and modern approaches to illness can and should be integrated in a way that offers patients the benefits of both. Modern doctors must learn to take their patients on spiritual journeys. Those who do not will miss out on some incredible tools consciousness has developed for our benefit.  
(Mehl-Madrona, 1997, p. 17)

Finding a workable system of medical pluralism is fraught with difficulty. Many physicians do not question patients about the use of alternative treatments, i.e. have any “home remedies” been utilized. With respect to the Aboriginal community, many physicians dismiss questions about alternative treatments altogether because they believe ethno-medicine lacks credibility. In the same way, some ethno-medical healers may require the patient to discontinue medication provided by their bio-medical healer in order to undergo a healing ceremony. The fact that a patient may be consulting with two different medical systems, without the knowledge of either, may empower the patient, but may also lead to contradictions in treatment and possible medical complications. (Waldram, Herring & Young, 1995, p. 212)

Often western medicine is at a loss of what to do next when people are suffering from a terminal “disease” as they call it. Often there is nothing left that western medicine can do for them. One of the people I interviewed was diagnosed with cancer of the bone and of the blood. The bio-medical doctors called her husband to come and get her because there was nothing more they could do for her. The doctors were sending her home to die. She was still young—40 years old. Her husband came to the hospital and drove her to his teacher and Elder in Wyoming.



When they arrived she was carried from the back of the station wagon into the sweat lodge. She was able to walk out of the sweat lodge. She was doctored in the sweat lodge for ten days.

When arriving home, her husband who was also a medicine man doctored her for another five days. Jenny is now 75 years old and cancer free. The spiritual connection and the doctoring in the sweat lodge healed her cancer. Bio-medical doctors had resigned themselves to her death.

The power of traditional ceremonies and traditional doctoring allowed her to heal.

### **Interviews**

Another person who was interviewed, Rena, talks about her healing journey. She was having problems walking which resulted in the necessity for her to rely on crutches. Bio-medical doctors tested her for cancer, heart problems, diabetes, and liver and kidney problems but found nothing; however, her health continued to decline.

She phoned me about her health. We had a pipe ceremony and a doctoring in the sweat lodge which lasted four days. At the end of the ceremonies, Rena was able to move forward with her life. It was the spiritual connection she had and the belief in the Creator and grandfathers which allowed her to heal.

Her illness was not a physical problem; rather it was a spiritual illness which resulted from her relationships with another person. Bio-medicine had ruled out any physical causes for her failing health, and it was through traditional doctoring and ceremonies that the illness was conquered on a spiritual level.

The power of the ceremony gives the spirit the courage to heal through the power of prayer and the sacredness of life itself. In the Cree ways of healing as taught to me by my Elders, the sweat lodge ceremony and the pipe ceremony help us to connect with our ancestors and with the true spirit of healing. These ceremonies are powerful and as the Elders often

remind us, one needs to be mindful and carefully consider what one prays and asks of the Creator and the grandfathers. Prayers are often answered whether we are ready and willing to accept the answers.

A third interviewee, Mr. Fox, had become very ill when he was 49 years old and had begun to develop symptoms of Hepatitis C. The virus was not detected until late stage liver disease resulted in Fox being hospitalized. When he was diagnosed, he immediately sought the help of a medicine man in Thompson, Manitoba. Fox was hoping to be doctored in a sweat lodge ceremony but his liver was only functioning at about 15% at that time. The medicine man did tell him that he was going to get very ill before he got better.

Many ceremonies were performed on Fox's behalf; ceremonies such as sweat lodges, pipe ceremonies, sun dance ceremonies and traditional shaking tent ceremonies. Fox experienced three comas, but managed to recover. His experience allowed for the blending of two doctoring—ethno-medical and bio-medical.

In 1999, Fox had a liver transplant. Just prior to the transplant, he was doctored through a shaking tent ceremony led by a MicMac Indian named Dave from Nova Scotia. Dave used Fox's brother as a conductor and did the doctoring over the telephone because he was 3,000 miles away. At the time, Fox was near death—he weighed 139 pounds, he could not move, could not walk, could not sit up and was lying in bed in a diaper. The doctoring occurred in the evening and the next morning. Fox was able to sit up and the following day he left the hospital. He had his liver transplant the following Wednesday in a 12-1/2 hour surgery. At the completion of his surgery, one of Fox's friends contacted Dave in Nova Scotia to let him know that Fox was going to be alright. Dave, who is blind, thought for a moment and said that Fox was not alright

and there was something wrong. About five hours later, Fox was again rushed into surgery because he was bleeding internally. During the second surgery, the doctors discovered that the new liver had been accidentally nicked when it was being transplanted. Fox kept in touch with Dave and after the transplant had an additional doctoring because there were signs of organ rejection. Dave believed that the rejection was due to Fox not spiritually accepting the new liver and the ceremony was done to allow Fox to take ownership of the new liver. Since then, Fox has continued to do well. Fox knew that without both doctorings—the ethno-medical doctoring to give him the strength to endure the surgery and the bio-medical doctoring of the transplant, he would not have survived. He considers himself a walking miracle.

In conclusion, in Jenny's case, the bio-medical system had no cure for Jenny and handed her a death sentence. Traditional doctoring was not only able to help Jenny survive, but to thrive. Jenny is still alive and cancer free today.

In Rena's case, the bio-medical system had no explanation for her lack of physical well-being. When she sought traditional ceremonies, it became apparent that her illness was spiritually based and that she needed to spiritually cure herself through the doctoring in the sweat lodge. Rena is doing very well today and has had no reoccurrence of any of the physical maladies from which she suffered.

The inability of bio-medicine to help Jenny or Rena must be clarified. When these women included their own ceremonies to heal, their spirits became stronger and were able to fight their disease. The combination of bio-medicine and ethno-medicine complimented each other. When the spirits of the women were doctored in the sweat lodge, it allowed the bio-medicine to work with the ethno-medicine to bring them back to good health and well being in a holistic way.

In Fox's case, it has been eight years since his liver transplant and he is continuing to stay healthy and involved with both traditional and bio-medical healing. In this case, the traditional ceremonies gave Fox's spirit the strength to handle the transplant of his new liver. Here again the two different healing cultures worked together to help Fox back to good health.

## CHAPTER SIX

Within the Indigenous cultures of North America, we send prayers and messages to the Creator, but typically smaller spirits, including our ancestors, mediate this communication. In teachings from my Elders I have learned there are many layers of sacred beings, or spirits. Some are closer to us and can relate to the difficulties associated with physical existence. Others are further removed and may have never experienced life on earth. They may even need spirits closer to us to interpret our needs and wishes. Without the experience of physical existence, these beings cannot so readily answer our prayers. (Mehl-Madrona, 2007 p. 252)

### Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored and described my personal and professional experiences through my journey of traditional healing. In addition, I have been able to incorporate my traditional knowledge into the academic framework of medical anthropology, First Nations studies (the Cree culture) and education. The conclusion that has most readily presented itself through this process is that spiritual healing is at the core of physical and emotional healing. I believe the two different healing cultures can work together.

My own experiences coupled with the experiences of those who shared their stories make this conclusion abundantly clear that medical miracles can happen if one has a strong spirit. Listening to the spirit voices helps me to stay connected to my culture and traditions which are needed to honor the ancient traditional ways of healing in the sweat lodge. The review of literature contained in this thesis also clearly supports that the essential part of our humanness is our spiritual health. For Aboriginal people in particular a strong spiritual connection, along with traditional ceremonies and appropriate bio-medical procedures and pharmaceuticals is the only way complete healing can be accomplished.

In many Aboriginal cultures, healing ceremonies take into consideration the mental, spiritual, physical and emotional well-being of the patient. But it does not end there. The healing includes the immediate family, extended family and community. Bio-medical practices only deal with actual physical or mental ailments that need to be cured. In an ideal world, the ethno-medical and the bio-medical would form a seamless unity to act in the best interest of the patient and to ensure a holistic healing process. As it is today, bio-medicine reduces patients diagnosed as terminal to a hopeless state of mind. Inadvertently, bio-medicine destroys the spirit or the will to fight the disease by offering no hope of a cure.

In the Indian world, the spirit is one of the first elements to be healed. Once that has occurred, there is hope regardless of the disease or the seriousness of the diagnosis. At this point, the emotional, physical and mental elements have a stronger opportunity for healing. Culturally, all life is viewed as being sacred and with that sacredness is the spiritual connection which promotes healing.

While many physicians loathe giving any credence to ethno-medical healing ceremonies, they are quite willing to embrace the 12-Step program used for recovery from alcohol and/or drug dependencies. The 12-step program is based on a strong spiritual connection with a "Higher Power" of the individual's understanding. This connection is at the core of traditional healing and holistic health yet is dismissed by many in the medical field as "witchcraft" or heathenism. The practice of bio-medicine has been developing over the last 200 years. In comparison, ethno-medicine in many cultures has been practiced for thousands of years and has been successful in restoring the spiritual health and physical well being for many First Nations' tribes and bands, despite the cultural genocide since "first contact" with the colonizers. The

traditional healing practices of Aboriginal communities are not exclusive but inclusive of all peoples who come with an open mind and heart to these practices and ceremonies.

### **Recommendations**

The practice of bio-medicine in our country is in chaos due to many factors such as the environment, poverty, obesity, HIV, and the financial emphasis on health care. As the chaos worsens, people will be looking for alternative healing whether it is through ceremonies or through non-western healing practices. It is essential for the bio-medical health care system to embrace other forms of healing which have proven to be effective on a long-term basis if our society is to survive this chaos.

This is especially true of First Nations people—the incidence of diseases such as diabetes, heart disease, HIV, alcoholism, and arthritis is disproportionate to the Aboriginal population. These diseases did not appear until the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and were a result of First Nations people being removed from their cultural foods and way of life through colonization (Mary Ellen Kelm, 1998, p. 3). The more non-Aboriginal people can learn about our ways of being will go a long ways to stop the cultural bullying/blaming of our imposed struggle against racism, poverty, and oppression. The healing from this genocide can only begin by allowing First Nations people to practice their traditions and can only be fully accomplished by the acceptance of a holistic approach by medical practitioners which would incorporate the best of both bio-medical and ethno-medical world views.

In other countries in Europe, the medical practitioners are open to alternative forms of healing. In Scotland and Ireland, medical practitioners use cultural healers to help them with their patients. This is true in some American states where doctor's work with traditional healers

in clinics on the reserve (Payer, 1996). They work as a team, rather than independently (Payer, 1996). In Asia, the Chinese use both bio-medical practitioners and ethno-medical doctors to help with the healing process. In some cases, the healer may be trained in both bio-medicine and ethno-medicine. In these cases, the healer uses bio-medicine, acupuncture, Tai Chi, and Qi Gong to help patients. In Canada, many of these practices are considered to be useless folklore (Personal communication with traditional Chinese doctor). One recommendation that would make a difference in First Nations health care would be for Canadian doctors to explore the option of working closer with patients concerning the use of traditional medicines and ceremonies in their personal healing journey, instead of ignoring or resisting this process.

Three years ago, I was in the hospital with viral pneumonia in my lungs. I had so much fluid in my lungs that I was literally drowning. When in emergency, doctors and nurses asked me when I had my last drink and used drugs. I told them my last drink was 30 years ago and have never used drugs other than those prescribed by doctors. Despite my repeated answers, I was tested for all of these substances.

I was diagnosed with congestive heart failure and C.O.P.D. (Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease) and would have to be on oxygen for most of the day. The hospital was overcrowded and I remained in emergency until they could find a bed. During this time the hospital social worker poked her head into my cubicle and asked if she could find a shelter for me to go to when released. As an Aboriginal man in the hospital, it was assumed I was an alcoholic, a drug user and homeless. These are typical stereo-types First Nations people deal with on a daily basis, which leads to spiritual trauma and sickness, often overlooked or ignored by mainstream medical practitioners and professionals. Racism also takes it's toll on Aboriginal people and contributes greatly to the development of "soul wounds."



When returned home, I was equipped with a concentrator for oxygen and a bag of pills. I felt somewhat hopeless, feeling that my life was limited and almost over. I went to my cousin, who is a medicine man and was doctored in the sweat lodge. I was given traditional medicines to take. In a few weeks, I started to feel better, and decided to visit a homeopathic doctor who provided me with vitamins. After a short period of time, I began to feel a little better. An appointment with a Chinese doctor in Edmonton was made. He is a medical doctor and a traditional healer. I received acupuncture treatments from him to strengthen my immune system, lungs and heart.

Today, I am still using the gifts of the White, Yellow, and Red races to heal. I participate in sweat lodge ceremonies, which keeps my spirit strong and cleanses the toxins from my body which resulted from medications taken for my illness. I am healthier and only need to occasionally use oxygen. I realize that my health may not return 100%; but I know that continuing to use Tai Chi and Qi Gong exercises, will continue to strengthen my heart and lungs.

In summation, by using all these forms of healing together with my cultural healing ceremonies, and listening to the spirit voices of my ancestors, my spirit will stay strong. When my spirit is strong, the combination of bio-medicine and ethno-medicine work amazingly well. I am a living example of this. I believe with all my heart that traditional knowledge found in this thesis can act as the bridge needed between these two healing practices and could facilitate needed health practice changes that would positively improve the personal well-being to all people in these challenging times of under funded health care.

Tako newa nowko magnah

All my relations.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### INFORMATION SHEET

Researcher's name: Earl Henderson  
 Address: University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, B.C. V2N 4Z9  
 Phone No: (250) 960-5820 e-mail: earlzip@telus.net  
 Supervisor's name: James McDonald  
 Title of project: Listening to the Spirit Voices: Honoring our Ancient Traditional Ways of Healing  
 Type of project:  Class Project  Thesis  Faculty Research

Purpose of research: To obtain information about your personal experiences with both Aboriginal Traditional medicine and Western medicine  
 Potential benefits and risks: There are no known risks. The Benefits will include a better understanding of Traditional Healing by the Western medical profession.  
 How was respondent chosen: You were chosen because of your experiences with Traditional Aboriginal and Western healing and healers?  
 What will respondent be asked to do: You will be asked to talk about your experiences with Traditional Healing and/or Western medicine.  
 Who will have access to respondents' responses: The author and the Thesis Committee will have access to your responses. In addition, all items will be stored by the author in his home office as a permanent and public archive of the project. This archived information will not be kept confidential although you may request anonymity in the archive.  
 Voluntary nature of your participation (including participant's right to withdraw at any time): Your participation is totally voluntary and you can withdraw at any time. You may withdraw your information from the project at any time.  
 Whether there is remuneration for participation (remuneration should not be reduced if participant withdraws): Traditional remuneration (e.g. tobacco, gifts and honorarium)  
 How anonymity is addressed: Anonymity will be provided upon request and will be provided through the use of an alternate name of your choice.  
 How confidentiality is addressed: The information you provide will not be kept confidential unless you request it. If you do, then confidentiality will be provided by giving you anonymity in the form of an alternative name of your choice.  
 How information is stored and for how long: All data collection will be recorded and stored in its original format. The interviews will be transcribed verbatim and stored in the written form. Storage of all items will be done by the author in his home office as a permanent and public archive of the project. This archived information will not be kept confidential although you may request anonymity in the archive.  
 Name and phone number of person to contact in case questions arise: Earl Henderson, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9 (250) 960-5820

How to get copy of research results: Copies of the research results will be provided to you upon request. Otherwise the research will be published in the form of a graduate thesis available through the UNBC library. Other publications may be made as well.

Name and phone number of person to call for more information:

Earl Henderson, University of Northern British Columbia, Prince George, BC V2N 4Z9 (250) 960-5594 (program secretary) or

Dr. James McDonald, Supervisor at (250) 960-6688

Any complaints about the project should be directed to:

Dr. Max Blouw, Vice-President Research, (250) 960-5820.

All participants will receive a copy of his or her signed consent form.

**INFORMED CONSENT****LISTENING TO THE SPIRIT VOICES: HONOURING OUR ANCIENT TRADITIONAL WAYS OF HEALING**

Read this sheet carefully and place an "X" in the column that best represents your understanding of what you are being asked to do. If you agree to take part in this study, please indicate this by signing below.

Do you understand that you have been asked to be in a research study?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you read and received a copy of the attached information sheet?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you understand that the research interviews will be recorded?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you understand the benefits and risks involved in participating in this study?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Have you had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> 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 give a reason and it will not affect any medical or other kind of care you are receiving.	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Has the issue of confidentiality been explained to you?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Do you understand who will have access to the information you provide?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No

This study was explained to me by EARL HENDERSON, Researcher

I do  do not  require anonymity

I agree to take part in this study:

Date:

Signature of Research Participant

Printed Name of Research Participant

Date:

Signature of Witness

Printed Name of Witness

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

Date:

Signature of Investigator

The Information Sheet must be attached to this Consent Form and a copy given to the Research Participant.



**APPENDIX "B"****Letter 1**

December 28, 2005

**TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:**

My name is Bobbi Metzner and I am a 56-year old non-aboriginal woman. I was raised in Colorado in a semi-orthodox Jewish family. At the age of 4-1/2 I was sexually assaulted by our next door neighbor (he was 16 at the time), and the assaults continued until I was 10 years old. My mother knew but told me not to tell anyone, so I learned to mask myself at a very early age. I had my first drink when I was 8 years old (some sweet wine) and I learned that it made the masking and the smiling much easier. My family moved from that location when I was 10 so the sexual assaults ceased. I remember feeling optimistic that now my life could be normal again and I wouldn't have to sneak wine anymore. Less than a year later, my father committed suicide. In the Jewish religion suicide is considered to be very shameful and my father was buried in a separate part of the Jewish cemetery. My Jewish friends were no longer able to play with me and my family was ostracized in our community. I once again turned to wine to help me through this new devastation. I remember feeling very angry at God for continuing to punish me and I decided that I would no longer honor the God of my family.

I continued to sneak as much wine as I could and when I was 14, my mother had a "nervous breakdown" and ended up in a mental institution and I was left to fend for myself. When I was 15, I was introduced to marijuana and hashish. I was also introduced to other forms of alcohol and I began having sexual relations with my then boyfriend (and others). I refused to believe in anything at this point except booze, drugs and sex. I managed to maintain my grades, still trying to feel "normal". At 17, I developed a duodenal ulcer which had perforated and suffered a complete mental breakdown. Although, I was carefully examined by Doctors, there was no indication that anything was "wrong" with me.

In 1972, I was introduced to LSD and thought I once again had found the ideal escape. On the one hand, I was going to Simon Fraser University and maintaining a 4.0 grade point average and on the other it was sex, booze, drugs and rock and roll. I did everything possible to not think about me. I went to Law School at UBC and found heaven in Cocaine and more booze and more sex. I became a successful lawyer and continued to lead my double life. I hooked up with one of my clients, got in trouble with the Law Society, lost my license and went to jail. When I got out of jail, I continued with what I knew, which was relocating, booze and drugs. I so wanted to be loved, to be successful, to be normal. I once again relocated, got a new job, had a new relationship and appeared to be very successful and happy. But I still drank, I still did drugs and nothing was giving me what I needed. I then walked into a Casino and found heaven once again in the chaos—the noise, the smiles, the "you are a winner" flashing everywhere. I lost everything.

I got fired and tried to commit suicide by walking into the Fraser River on November 11, 2001. I now know that something saved me from myself. I remember floating on my back, looking at

the stars and checking to be sure I was in the middle of the river so that I wouldn't get caught up on a shoreline. The next thing I remember was that I was scrambling up a bank towards some lights and I was hanging onto roots to try to prevent myself from slipping back into the river. My next memory is being in the ambulance and then my next memory is being in emergency in the Quesnel hospital and starting to violently shake. After I was out of danger for hypothermia, a Psychiatrist came to talk to me. I was able to convince her that I had not tried to commit suicide but that I had been out for an early morning (4:00 a.m.) walk and had slipped into the river and had panicked. I have always been a good liar. She released me from the hospital. A friend picked me up and drove me to my car. I drove home and sunk into a black hole of depression beyond anything I had ever known. I had no booze (I had drunk it all), no drugs and no money. I stayed on my couch for 10 days, I didn't bathe, I didn't eat, I wouldn't answer my phone. Finally a couple of friends came to my door and told me to open it or they would knock it down. They made me bathe and eat and checked on me at least twice a day.

I'm not sure why, but I got in contact with Drug and Alcohol services in Prince George about my gambling problem. I came up, talked to a counselor and was taken to a women's supported recovery house. I told my story for the first time and I could not stop crying. I was referred to a doctor who was also very well versed in addictions. We talked for a couple of hours, he administered some tests and told me I was suffering from clinical depression and probably had been suffering from it since I was 10. He prescribed anti-depressants and continued to monitor my progress very carefully. He was a life-saver in terms of my mental ability to cope with waking up every day.

About a month later, one of the Counselors at the recovery house mentioned a First Nations art exhibit at the Art Gallery and mentioned that Thursday afternoons were free. I had always been drawn to Aboriginal art and decided to go. I walked into the back room of the Art Gallery and sat on a bench which was by the door. There was some Aboriginal flute music playing and I felt calmness at the core of my being that I don't remember ever experiencing before. I walked through the exhibit and wanted to hang on to that feeling forever, but I had to return to the recovery house. I told the counselors of my experience and one of them introduced me to the smudging ceremony. That was something I did every morning and every evening because I found that it helped me remain calm and made me feel peaceful.

On January 1, 2002, I attended my first Sweat Lodge Ceremony with Earl Henderson. I was scared, nervous, excited, curious – an entire prism of emotions. I didn't want to make a fool of myself but I wanted to learn. So I listened and watched. It was very, very hot the first round and I had some strange experiences. I could feel a wolf sitting on my lap and felt protected. I saw an older native man's face hovering in the sweat looking at me with a warm smile on his face. I seemed to know the words to the songs of prayer. It was the first time I had actually prayed (not just pretending to pray) since I was 10 years old (I was now 52). By the fourth round, I again had that amazing feeling of peace in the core of my being and it did not feel quite so hot in the lodge. I knew I had found something, but I wasn't sure yet what it was.

I continued to attend Sweat Lodge Ceremonies every 2 weeks until August when I went to Aurora Women's Treatment Centre in Vancouver. I was there for 6 weeks and during that time was able to do my smudging ceremony every day and to attend one Sweat Lodge Ceremony on

the Capilano Reserve. It was very different than Earl's, but still helpful. It was at treatment that I began to understand why I was the way I was and that I needed to heal myself emotionally, mentally, spiritually and physically.

I returned from treatment and worked with a Native Elder on my addictions. I attended 2 Yuwipi ceremonies and was given an Indian Name "White Hand Woman". And I continued to attend the Sweat Lodge Ceremonies at Earl's. I knew I had begun to heal spiritually and with that came the ability to begin to heal mentally and emotionally. My physical healing took a little bit longer because I had to let myself believe that I deserved to be physically healthy. Eventually, I had to make a choice between working with Earl and working with my other Native Elder because I could not have 2 different teachers. It would have confused me. I did a long Smudging Ceremony and prayed and knew that working with Earl was the way I needed to go.

Since that time, I have continued on my recovery journey. I attend Sweat Lodge Ceremonies whenever they are held. I continue to do Smudging Ceremonies on an almost daily basis. I have learned to be honest about my feelings and to allow myself to feel my emotions. I have attended 3 Fasting Ceremonies in Saddle Lake, Alberta as a helper and it was there that I met the man who was the older Native man hovering in Earl's sweat. His name was Joe Cardinal and he was Earl's teacher. In the four years of my journey, I have come so far because of the healing I have done in the Sweat Lodge and in the connection I have made with the Creator. I have also done a lot of work with Counselors and continue to take anti-depressants. I have allowed myself to heal physically and am trying to learn to lead a balanced life. It is not easy for me because I am so used to addictive behaviors. I have now been clean and sober and slot-free for 4 years. I know that without the healing of my spirit, none of the other healing would have been possible. If I had not found the Creator, the Doctors and Counselors could have only gone so far in my healing process. I believe that somehow the Creator and Grandfathers and Grandmothers found me long before I found them. I truly believe that they saved me from the River that day and have guided me on the path I have followed for the last 4 years. It is the combination of all medicine that has allowed me to come to the point I am at today.

Yours truly,

Bobbi Metzner

## Letter 2

November 20th, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

My two boys and I have been attending the Sweat Lodge since 2001. There are many positive changes that have come into our lives because of living and learning the traditional spiritual and cultural teachings and practices that come with the Sweat Lodge ceremony. When I started attending sweats, I had no idea what to expect, only that I needed to center and balance myself and begin to take care of my family in a better way. I was brought to the sweat by a friend who thought I could benefit from it and I wanted to try something that would help me to heal and be a better mother to my boys.

The previous few years to 2001, I had not been doing very well. I was in an unhealthy relationship, and getting pretty confused and unhealthy because of it and some bad medicine (Indian medicine) directed towards me. I was doubting myself and what I knew about myself, my values, my decisions as a parent. Physically I was getting muscle spasms, my son was getting sick a lot. In 2000, I had an accident and had weird things going wrong on my vehicle. There were a number of unhealthy people coming into my family's life. It was not a usual thing in my life to have all this negativity coming at me. I didn't know why at the time, but it was getting pretty crazy.

The first sweat was one of the most difficult experiences of my life. Physically and emotionally. I was scared but I wanted to heal. When the door on the sweat closed and the round started, I thought I wouldn't be able to last through the heat and I couldn't breathe. They told me to sing and to pray hard and try to stay still to help me withstand the heat I was feeling. It was the hardest sweat the first one. They say it was hard because I had a lot of things I needed to deal with emotionally.

The second sweat I went to was much gentler. As I continued to sweat every two weeks, things started to improve in my life. I started to take more control. I was making better decisions, I let go of unhealthy people, my health and my son's were much better on a consistent basis. I was given lung medicine for my son to use when he was ill and help his breathing problems. The lung medicine improved his health to the point we no longer worry when he is sick as it does not develop into pneumonia or bronchitis. I had also accessed counseling, and I continued to do that, combined with attending traditional ceremonies. Things started getting back to normal in my life, before all the bad stuff and the relationship made my life unmanageable.

Traditional ceremonies, specifically the sweat lodge, work in all areas of my life; spiritually, physically, mentally, emotionally. It balances and gives me strength to deal with what life brings me and recognize and utilize the positive aspects of community, family, extended family, and friends. Some of the methods and results are clear to me as I work through my daily life, other

things aren't that clear. They are spiritual, and the Grandmothers, Grandfathers, and Creator, they help me and send good things my way. They heal me, without even trying it seems. If I stay balanced, continue to follow traditional activities and ceremonies, and life seems to work out for us. Coming from a family where everything had to be analyzed, figured out and controlled, this was certainly a new phenomenon for me. There is a lot of trust involved, but trust that comes with seeing the results for myself and others who follow traditional ways of healing.

Traditional ways of healing are very powerful. In my family, we utilize both traditional and western methods of healing and doctoring. I feel very fortunate to have been taught and to continue to learn about traditional forms of healing from Elders.

This is my story, and I am glad I was able to share it with you.

Sincerely,

Caitlin Nicholson

### Letter 3

July 27, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Vicky Thomas. I am an Aboriginal woman from Wuikinuxv Nation. I have attended sweat lodge ceremonies since 1997 and started following a traditional way of life. There are so many gifts and benefits from following this way of life. When I reflect and look back over the years I know that I wouldn't be where I am if it were not for the gifts I received.

Part of following this way of life and attending sweat lodge ceremonies is following the teachings of the medicine wheel. The sweat lodge and medicine wheel look at maintaining balance within yourself – physical, emotional, spiritual and mental well being.

Physical:

I've lived with eczema since I was sixteen years old. When I was diagnosed with it, the western medical doctor asked a series of questions regarding my life. He concluded based on my health at that time that my eczema was caused by stress. I had many things going on in my life with my parents, their health, and my siblings. My health was otherwise good – no physical ailments. The doctor prescribed medication, which helped clear up the eczema in about one week time. When I started to go to sweats Earl Henderson (Elder who provides the sweat lodge ceremony) passed around bear grease. Earl explained to us that bear grease acts in many functions and is often called the 'Indian version of Oil of Olay'. He stated that we can use the grease to put on our body where ever we have sores or pain, acts a deep conditioner for hair and good for our complexion. I quickly found out that the combination of the bear grease the heat from the sweat healed my eczema. In fact, going to one sweat and using the bear grease clears my eczema while using western medicine takes one week. I tried to use the bear grease at home, but found out that I need the healing from the sweat lodge in order for the bear grease to work. This only reinforces to me the important healing aspects that come with going to sweats.

Emotional:

Before I started to go to the sweats I never talked about my emotions. I was never allowed to express my feeling if they contradicted what my parent's feelings were. I learned quickly to bottle up my feelings and never speak of them. Going to the sweats have taught me the importance of letting go of my feelings and the importance of expressing them. I am not the angry young woman I used to be. This was part of my stress and letting go of feelings and learning to forgive people have been my saving grace. I don't believe that if I attended counseling or self help groups would have had the same effect. The teachings of the sweat lodge are very gentle and that's exactly what I needed. I am a much happier person today.

Spiritual:

Before I started going to sweats I my faith in God/The Creator (whichever you prefer) wavered. I did not have any spirituality in my life. I have always had a mistrust of organized religion, the

history of our people with residential schools, missionaries, misuse of authority... I found that faith from participating in sweats. I have gained absolute faith that the Creator has a plan for all of us, that I don't need to be angry anymore. I am more accepting of things now, knowing that everything happens for a reason. I have learned to let go and trust that whatever happens is meant to happen.

**Mental:**

I have learned that mentally we have the skills in us to go and live day by day. The Creator gave the skills and inner strength to be patient, kind, compassionate, humble, loving, courageous... Earl's teaching state that we are all born with these skills, but we make a choice whether or not we want to practice them. We don't need to ask the Creator for these things when we pray; the Creator made sure we were born with all these skills. I take the time in the sweat to remind myself that I have the ability to be these things, but I make a choice not to. I take the time when I pray to remind myself that I have these skills and need to practice them more. I do not ask the Creator to give me the strength to practice patience, he already gave me that gift. I ask the Creator to walk beside me while I practice these gifts. I am more stronger mentally now.

For me, this way of life (going back to traditional teaching) brings balance in my life. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at (250) 962-7221.

Sincerely,

Vicky Thomas

## Letter 4

February 15, 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Diane Nakamura. I am a 42-year-old woman of Japanese ancestry. During my childhood, I was raised in the Anglican faith as well as Buddhist influences.

When I was a young child my brother and I were orphaned. After losing my parents, I turned my back on God and spent many years in self destruction out of sheer anger towards God for taking my parents from me.

For most of my adult life, I did not feel a sense of spirituality or connectedness to myself, the world and most importantly to a higher power. Although I have had a very successful career and have developed meaningful relationships with people, I had always felt empty inside. I have suffered bouts of depression for years and although these times have been situational, it had nevertheless been painful experiences that I could not understand on an emotional or spiritual level.

I have had friends who have embraced the aboriginal culture and spirituality. I had been invited to take part in sweat lodge with my friend and healer Earl Henderson. I did not venture into this world for years because I was afraid of the unknown. I had been told by friends who practice this lifestyle that they could see spirits in the lodge and were profoundly influenced by the “other side” – where spirits are. Having lived many years of seeing spirits myself and convincing myself that I was “crazy” at times, I did not want to face my own reality. I was indeed stuck in denial and was quite unhappy for a long time.

In October of 2004, I fell into a deep depression. This was the worst depression I had ever experienced and I was at a loss about what to do to help myself. My friend Vicky Thomas spoke to our friend Earl Henderson who encouraged me to come and try the sweat lodge. At this point I had nothing to lose and being afraid was the furthest from my mind.

When I attended my first sweat lodge in November of 2004, I was amazed at the experience. I sobbed during the entire ceremony. Afterwards, I immediately felt a sense of lightness and my depression disappeared within a few days. I did not require medication from my doctor or any formal counseling. I began attending more sweats and increasingly felt grounded and connected to the Creator. I realized for most of my life I had felt alone and empty. I did not feel like I was alone after attending my first sweat. I distinctly felt I was being cared for by the Creator.

In the spring of 2006, I contracted a virus which resulted in sores appearing all over my lips and inside my mouth. This was a very painful episode and despite medication prescribed to me by my doctor, the sores continued to spread. Earl Henderson’s wife Deryl suggested I try aboriginal medicine, specifically bear grease and sage and lemon and sage water. I gratefully accepted these gifts. Within a couple of days the sores on my lips and inside my mouth started to disappear. Within a week, the sores were no longer visible. I was amazed, yet not surprised in the fact that the aboriginal ways truly worked. My faith in this lifestyle only increased.



Not long after this experience, I accompanied Earl and Deryl Henderson and friends to Moberly Lake reserve. Earl's cousin Sandy Cameron doctored Earl in the traditional ways to assist him with his failing health. Sandy and his wife Darlene offered to doctor me as well and I gratefully accepted. At this point I had been on medication for high blood pressure for one year and my blood pressure had not decreased enough for my comfort or my doctor's. After returning home from Moberly Lake, I had a check up at the doctor's. My blood pressure registered normal, something that had not occurred in over two years. My doctor contributed this success to my medication finally working. I knew in my heart that it was because of Sandy and Darlene Cameron and the Creator healing my body and my spirit. The Camerons gifted me with medicines that I smudged with regularly. I was doctored by the Camerons on three occasions and each time my blood pressure registered normal when I returned home. I have not been out to see the Camerons since the fall of 2006. Not surprising, my blood pressure is currently elevated, but thankfully not within a dangerous level.

Having had engaged in the aboriginal teachings and healing, I am the healthiest and happiest that I have ever been in my life. In addition to my improved physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health, I have acquired a new family through the sweat community. I have never felt excluded because I am not aboriginal. The people I have met through the Hendersons and the Camerons have been generous, supportive and accepting people. I am forever grateful to the Creator and my "aboriginal family" for assisting me on my healing journey. I continue to walk this path every day, no longer afraid or depressed. I know in my heart that just because we don't see or hear certain things this doesn't mean we are alone. Feeling and knowing my place in the world and my connection to the Creator has truly saved my soul and physical body.

All My Relations,

Diane Nakamura

## Letter 5

### TRADITIONAL HEALLING AND WHAT IT'S DONE FOR ME.

For a long time I was troubled and did not know why. I have been sober for 7 years and yet there was something missing in my life. I've been to many sweats, a pipe ceremony and 2 yu-weepy ceremonies experiencing all it has to offer. Last winter, I got a doctoring sweat. This is a sweat where I've asked a medicine man to help heal my Spirit, heart and mind. This ceremony lasted for 4day's and the sweat was hot! For 4 rounds,(each round is about 5-20 mins in length). I lay there on my back and the medicine man would fan me with heat using Eagle wings. Each time these wings fluttered over my body it would get even hotter. During this time of intense heat I prayed and the people in the sweat would sing healing songs for me I would ask the grandfathers the grandmothers the creator to have pity on me, for forgiveness, strength, courage & knowledge and to let go of all my fears.

After each round and each day of sweating like this I had suffered, but it was a good suffering. It helped me be a better person. It helped me understand who I was and where I belong in life. It also strengthened my relationship with my wife and children, friends and family especially the creator. All these people in my life can see that I've changed, for example, my self esteem was higher than before . I always thought that I was never important or wanted. I was able to express my feelings more, and can cry without being judged . I can smile and be more social.

I'm not so self centered or selfish anymore I know how to forgive and help when I can. I make sure my wife's needs and my children's needs are met before mine. For my physical part of healing the aches and pains were all but gone. My heart feels blessed and not so heavy.

Traditional healing and the medicines used helped in my life because I believe in it. For others to understand what I've experienced they too must see, hear, feel what traditional healing can do for them and to understand it's strength.

This is the best way I can explain it. Thank you .

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the initials 'AM' or similar, written in a cursive style.

**Letter 6**

December 30, 2005

Re: Healing in the Sweat-Lodge and the way of the Red Road To whom it may concern,  
The purpose of this letter is to describe the impact that healing in the Sweat-Lodge has had on my life and to describe some of the changes I have gone through following the way of the Red Road. Firstly, prior to discussion of my experiences on the Red Road I would like to give a general description of who I am and a brief history of my story leading up to my introduction to Traditional Healing.

My name is Dan Nicholson and I am a white male 42 years old. I have a beautiful family, own a forestry consulting firm and am a forestry professional. I sit on community committees and try to help people in the community in different ways when time permits. That is the first part of who I am. The second part, the real part of who I am is a recovering alcoholic and addict who has found a new path in life that keeps the first part together. I grew up in a violent alcoholic home as a child and swore my whole life that I would never be like my father. I was consistently reminded by my mother that my father had a drinking problem and that I should be careful as well. She also told me that he wasn't a bad man and that the drinking changed him. I grew up with a lot of anger around my father and told myself I wasn't anything like him. I started drinking and drugging as a teenager and it amplified until the age of 33. In that time period I have numerous tragic stories related to drug and alcohol abuse. The long and short of it is at 33 years old I found myself looking in the mirror and realizing I had become exactly like my father...an angry, abusive alcoholic that had lost everything. By everything I don't mean just material possessions like houses, cars, family and work but things more important. Things like self-respect, self-love, self-esteem. I lost all of myself. I damaged my spirit to the point that all things seemed grey and black. I had little to no respect for myself as well as others. I had lost most of my will for living. I had hit my bottom. I was at a point in my life where I was willing to accept help as "my way" to date had been one of destruction, pain and despair.

My healing journey began at a 28 day treatment center for drugs and alcohol. In that treatment center I was introduced to a 12 step program that has become my base for recovery. Since I sobered up I have also sought professional help as well as attended group seminars related to personal growth and recovery. The most significant part in the 12 step program of healing is the ability to find a relationship with a higher power and to actively use that relationship with my higher power in my life. I grew up with Christian values and attended church as a young boy for a period of time. When I sobered up and started to look at a higher power or God in my life I seemed to wrestle with my younger religious teachings. I attended various churches in the first few months of recovery searching for answers and was always left with good feelings but mostly a feeling of not belonging. Since my childhood days my life experiences, my understanding of all people, and my ideas about God had changed. I don't know if they changed for good or bad but they just changed. Around 7 months sober a good friend in sobriety asked me if I would like to attend a Sweat-Lodge ceremony as he had recently got back to traditional healing. I attended my first Sweat-Lodge ceremony within the first year of my recovery in the winter of 1997. At my first Sweat-Lodge Ceremony I was introduced to Earl Henderson who was running a Cree Family Sweat-Lodge. At that first Sweat I felt very welcomed by Earl and his family and I felt absolutely no inhibitions with prayer. I felt comfortable praying to the Creator even though I sometimes wrestle with my relationship with him. I felt a strong connection between myself and my spiritual self. I instantly felt a warm sense of family, friendship and community with the

fellow sweat members. I had no fear, even with my Christian upbringing, that I was praying to anything but a loving, caring God.. ..the Creator of all things. I had a feeling after leaving my first Sweat that I had come home. I had found a method of prayer and meditation that worked for me. I had a new found sense of hope for the future during a very difficult tune in my life. This was the start of my traditional healing journey and my introduction to the Red Road. Over the past 8 years I have continued to practice traditional healing on a regular basis always learning new things about myself and others. I have had the honor of listening to many Elders stories from different nations. My family is connected to our Sweat Family which is further connected to other sweat family's. I have been taught how to heal in the Sweat-Lodge as an individual. I have been taught how to heal in the Sweat-Lodge as a family. I have been taught that the 4 races of the world of white, yellow, red and black(royal blue) are all part of the sacred circle. All races have the right to enter the sacred circle and each brings with it a different

My healing journey began at a 28 day treatment center for drugs and alcohol. In that treatment center I was introduced to a 12 step program that has become my base for recovery. Since I sobered up I have also sought professional help as well as attended group seminars related to personal growth and recovery. The most significant part in the 12 step program of healing is the ability to find a relationship with a higher power and to actively use that relationship with my higher power in my life. I grew up with Christian values and attended church as a young boy for a period of time. When I sobered up and started to look at a higher power or God in my life I seemed to wrestle with my younger religious teachings. I attended various churches in the first few months of recovery searching for answers and was always left with good feelings but mostly a feeling of not belonging. Since my childhood days my life experiences, my understanding of all people, and my ideas about God had changed. I don't know if they changed for good or bad but they just changed. Around 7 months sober a good friend in sobriety asked me if I would like to attend a Sweat-Lodge ceremony as he had recently got back to traditional healing. I attended my first Sweat-Lodge ceremony within the first year of my recovery in the winter of 1997. At my first Sweat-Lodge Ceremony I was introduced to Earl Henderson who was running a Cree Family Sweat-Lodge. At that first Sweat I felt very welcomed by Earl and his family and I felt absolutely no inhibitions with prayer. I felt comfortable praying to the Creator even though I sometimes wrestle with my relationship with him. I felt a strong connection between myself and my spiritual self. I instantly felt a warm sense of family, friendship and community with the fellow sweat members. I had no fear, even with my Christian upbringing, that I was praying to anything but a loving, caring God.. ..the Creator of all things. I had a feeling after leaving my first Sweat that I had come home. I had found a method of prayer and meditation that worked for me. I had a new found sense of hope for the future during a very difficult tune in my life. This was the start of my traditional healing journey and my introduction to the Red Road. Over the past 8 years I have continued to practice traditional healing on a regular basis always learning new things about myself and others. I have had the honor of listening to many Elders stories from different nations. My family is connected to our Sweat Family which is further connected to other sweat family's. I have been taught how to heal in the Sweat-Lodge as an individual. I have been taught how to heal in the sweat lodge as a family. I have been taught that the 4 races of the world of white, yellow, red and black(royal blue) are all part of the sacred circle. All races have the right to enter the sacred circle and each brings with it a different strength. I have been taught that spirituality has been around since the beginning of time. I am learning the significance of spiritual tools like medicines for smudge, feathers, drums, rattles, pipes and tobacco. I am increasingly using some of these tools on a daily basis as they are given to me. I

have been taught lots of different and beautiful things around the Sweat-Lodge way of life. I am learning to trust in the process, I am learning to respect my self and others, I am learning a new found respect for all things on mother earth (organic and non-organic), I am learning how to love my self so that I may love others, I am learning how to be a family man, a father and a husband, I am learning how to be a friend, I am learning how to incorporate the teachings in all areas of my life. I am learning how to walk the walk as opposed to talking the walk. Today, for me to be grounded on the Red Road I must think of these things throughout my whole day whether I am performing business, personal or family work. A few years ago I asked the question "What can I do to better my understanding of walking the Red Road?" I was told that over and above ceremonial traditions with the spiritual tools comes family first. That by being a good husband and father on a daily basis that I am practicing the way of the Red Road. That by praying for myself and nurturing my spiritual health I was looking after myself and others around me. That I have to think of balancing all things in my life to be on the Red Road: the spiritual, mental and physical. One of the most important things I have learned from Traditional Healing is that I have to be responsible for where I am in life. That my healing is ultimately dependent on my relationship with the Creator and my willingness to do all the leg work necessary to help myself heal. That I should challenge myself but at the same time I should be gentle with myself and gentle with others. I have learned that Love is the most powerful thing. Real Love and Respect for Mother Earth and Father Sky. It is shaping and changing the way I think in all areas of my life whether it be family, business or pleasure. All the things I have been taught in my traditional healing journey have improved the quality of my life immensely. I am a human being and the fact is that sometimes I fall short in measuring up to the things I have been taught on the Red Road. It is also a fact that I was taught in the Traditional way that we are human and that sometimes we do fall down but that it is ok too. To be human is to make mistakes, but to learn from those mistakes is where the quality of my life improves. If I can try to learn and practice a little more each day of what I have been taught my life will slowly improve. I am finding a true happiness today that I have never had before. I am able to face fears today that I never been able to face before. I have days that are very difficult still but I have a new and healthier way of dealing with them.

I carry tools today that I never had before... and that makes all the difference. Most important to me today is that I have a loving relationship with a beautiful partner and three beautiful sons. My partner and two of my sons share Cree & Dene ancestry. My family practices traditional healing together and in different ways. My son from a previous marriage has not had the opportunity to attend the sweat-lodge yet but has practiced smudging and prayer since a young age and has heard some of the teachings of the Red Road from a young age. My oldest son just became a teenager and attends sweats regularly. I can clearly see how the sweats have improved the quality of his life as well. In times of anger or sadness he will turn to traditional healing for answers. It is a beautiful thing to watch. I also have a brand new 5 month old son. His mother and I are excited and happy about him growing up with the opportunity to learn Traditional teachings and to honor his ancestry. One of the most significant changes in my life today is the beautiful and loving relationship I have with my partner. Both of us are recovering alcoholics and addicts. I truly believe that without the 12 step program and our communal practice of Traditional Medicine we would have very little chance of success in our relationship. Today, during times of difficulty in our relationship we have a number of tools given to us to deal with these problems and to heal together. More and more we practice as a family the things we were taught in the way of the Sweat-Lodge. More and more I see healthy and positive changes in our

lives. One of the Traditional Ceremonies I have been participating in over the past few years has been the Fasting Ceremony. During my last Fast I had the opportunity to talk to a good man that explained to me that for quite a few years he dabbled in the life of the Red Road and noticed some positive changes in his life but still had many difficulties in many areas of his life. He said that when he finally made a commitment to himself to make the teachings of the Red Road a permanent way of life he noticed beautiful and positive changes in himself, his family and the loved ones around him. I love the beautiful gifts that I have been given in my new sober life. I love the people that have helped me to heal. I love learning from the Elders. I love giving back. I love my family with all my heart and soul. I love the hope and I love the joy that the way of the Red Road brings into my life. The Bear used to be my enemy but today is my brother and I have made peace with him. With the help of the Creator I have repaired many other relationships on my journey. My name is Kanipawin Muskwa Napew. I am a child of the Creator. I pray to the Creator that I can have the strength to make this Traditional Way of Healing a permanent part of my life and that I can continue to heal in a good way. I thank the Creator for people like Earl and the teachers before him that continue to pass on this way of life so that people like myself (native or non-native) can find grounding on Mother Earth and Respect for Father Sky. So that we can find a sense of balance and belonging within self, family and community.

Sincerely,



Dan Nicholson - R.F.T

**Letter 7**

December 30, 2005

Re: Traditional Aboriginal Healing and/or Western Medicine To whom it may concern,  
My name is Trina Harold and I am 37 years old. This is the story of my experience with Traditional Healing and/or Western Medicine. I am a Cree-Dene Native who grew up off the reserve. My grandmother lost her rights when she married my grandfather who is Cree years ago. My family has received their rights back now thanks to Bill C-35 of the Indian Act. I am in the process of getting my rights back for myself and my eldest son. I grew up in a very dysfunctional family with lots of alcohol and drug abuse and a lot of violence. My mother left me at the hospital addicted to alcohol and cocaine! My grandparents took me home to raise me. They had 16 children of their own to raise. So needless to say there was a lot of chaos. At the age of 13 I got drunk for the first time. I blacked out and don't remember what happened. I struggled with alcohol and drugs my whole life.

In 1994 I went to a treatment center for my addictions. In treatment, I was taught a great deal about myself, and why I drank alcohol and used drugs. I was running from myself and my hurts. I grew up experiencing all the abuses unimaginable from sexual, physical, emotional, verbal and spiritual! I used drugs and alcohol to cope with these past events. I started sexual abuse counseling when I got out of treatment and continued to see a drug and alcohol counselor. I was also introduced to the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous. I received help from my doctor and by many professionals along my journey to recovery. I managed to stay sober for 5 years. I then relapsed for 2 years. I had hit rock bottom and lost everything including my son. I decided to get help from my doctor and alcohol drug counselor once again. I was sent to a 28 day treatment center. There I started to deal with some of the issues I had not dealt with since childhood. When the 28 days were up I still had some open wounds. After further discussion with my drug and alcohol counselor we decided that I would go to an all native treatment facility to help me with my addictions and my identity problems. The treatment facility was based on a holistic approach of healing and healing in the Sweat Lodge was part of the recovery process. I stayed there for 40 days where I worked with counselors, therapists, psychologists, doctors and nurses. We also had opportunities to talk with Elders and people who were involved in 12 step programs. By the time I was ready to leave treatment I had learnt a lot about myself and about my heritage.

Immediately after leaving treatment I joined a 12 step recovery program and continued to see a alcohol and drug counselor. In 2001, just prior to my experience in the Native treatment center, I met Earl Henderson and his family at a Sweat at his family home. Earl was very supportive, caring and genuine. My family and I have become very close to him and his family. The teachings of the Traditional Medicine that Earl has shown and taught me are gifts from the Creator. Being Native and not being taught my culture while growing up was hard to believe. I want more out of life so I keep asking and I keep searching the ways of my ancestors. Today I ask the Creator to take care of me and to guide and show me his will. Before I sobered up I doubted the Creator, but today I have a strong faith in the Creator. Today because I walk the Red Road I have a totally different kind of life that I never could have imagined! By going to ceremonies like Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, Fasting Ceremonies, smudging, praying, meditating, pow-wows and anything else related to the Red Road I am enhancing my spiritual growth. These things help me and help my family grow together in a good way. It nourishes my heart and soul with love and happiness. It has helped me release the hurts of the past replenishing with the love of today. I am a different person today because of Traditional Healing. I am a Miracle!

Today my life is enriched with the love of the Creator and not with the negativity of the past. This way of life has given me so much in so many ways. I am so grateful to have such a beautiful man in my life and who walks the same path as I do! To have three beautiful sons that have parents on a spiritual path together brings me happiness. By working on myself with the spiritual tools I have been given and been taught I am not the same woman as before. Today being a part of Traditional Healing has given and shown me self-respect and respect for all people and all things. Today I know it is an inside job. I have to heal from the inside, not from all these material things around me. I did not know this until I started living this way of life. Today I have true caring friends who love me for who I am and do not care what I have done in my past. Having a higher power that I call the Creator has healed me in so many ways. I know who I am today. I am a proud, caring, loving, respectful native woman who has taken a lot of wrong paths, but today with the Creator and Traditional Healing I can live a good, clean and sober life with my partner, my children and my friends. Today I am a rich woman with beliefs, support, love and good strong values that I never experienced before. Today I believe that if the Creator did not put these helping friends in my life I do not know if I would have been able to stay clean and sober. This way of life gives me so much strength from within that I didn't even think I had in me. It has opened my eyes, my mind and my heart. The job I work at allows me to help other woman who have suffered similar life events (abuses). It is very enriching to be able to give back to others what was so freely given to me. I have been also able to bring clients to Earl's Sweat Ceremonies. They also have had a beautiful experience in the Sweat Lodge. I have so much to be grateful for. I thank the Creator for showing me this way of life. I thank him for putting Earl Henderson and his family and other people along the Red Road in my life. I pray that I will always walk the Red Road with my partner and our children and continue with a happy, healthy life.



Mussi-Cho,  
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 iwn Kaw \\  
 Trina Robin Harrold



## APPENDIX "C"

Interview 1 with Fox Morin  
July 29th 2005

Earl: Cree Nation and we were at a international healing gathering. And today July the 28th, I'm going to interview Mr. Fox Morin on some of the health issues that he's been dealing with and how he's been able to overcome or deal with his health in a good way. So here, I'll give it over to Fox.

Fox: Ok. Good afternoon, uh my name is Fox Morin. I am 56 years old. June, I was born in 1949 in Saskatchewan. And uhh the question when did I become ill. It was probably in 1997, earl 98 when I first began to develop symptoms of what they call hepatitis C. I was 49 years old, first time I had ever spent a day in a hospital. I had never been in a hospital prior to that. I was considered fairly healthy. However, I become, become ill in 1998, and that time I was diagnosed with hepatitis C. Uhh...the hepatitis C I had in my system probably from way back in the early 1970's. I had walked around with the virus in my body for all this time. And not knowing because of the lack of symptoms of hepatitis C until late stage liver disease.

So I walked around with this virus for a lot of years, and I, I unknowingly walked around with it. But, I never ever really thought that I was sick. So, uhh when I was diagnosed with Hepatitis C, of course, I didn't know what it was and I had to find out what it was from the doctors and then educated myself with it. So the first thing, one of the first things that I did was I went to a doctor, a medicine man. Up in Thompson Manitoba. And at this stage I was already developing what they call (accedes?) where I was retaining my water and everything else. And it was the beginning of what they call the late stage liver disease. When I visited this medicine man in, in Thompson, Manitoba. We went into the sweat lodge at which time where he was going to try to doctor me and working with the spirits and stuff and uhh. It was at that time that he told me that my liver was too far gone, my liver was probably functioning at about 15% at that time already. And so the answer that I got, was that there was really not too much that they were able to do at that point because of the extent of damage of cirrhoses to my liver. However, the message that I was given at the sweat lodge at that time, that I was, I was to get very, very ill before I got better. And , so I come, I come home with that in my mind, and... excuse me... we umm, we had been practicing and living the red road for a lot of years. At that time already we'd been involved in the spirituality aspect of what we call the red road for approximately 20 years. Just a minute, I'll close the door, excuse me.

And uhh..so talking about the spirituality aspect of western doctoring and indian doctoring and uh the traditional system that we as aboriginal people have in place. A lot of ceremonies were performed on my behalf throughout my, my sickness, throughout my illness. Ceremonies such as sweat lodge, pipe ceremonies, sun dance ceremonies, the traditional shaking tent ceremonies.

And so I was involved, even though I wasn't involved in a lot of the ceremonies, however, there was a lot of ceremonies that were being, that were taking place on my behalf. as a result of my illness. I was to go through 3 comas as a result of my illness, and uh a lot of people with hepatitis C and diabetes usually don't make it through, one of them. However, I made it through 3 of the comas, and, and,...managed to come out of it. But I guess the real experience for me with , with the, and what I always talk about is the blending of the two doctorings.

And I talk about the indian doctoring that I received prior to my liver transplant. I had a liver transplant in 1999. And uhh,, but prior to going into my transplant, I was doctored the indian way through the shake tent ceremony. The shake tent ceremony is known to be probably one of the highest ceremonies in Indian country when you talk about healing. When we talk about working closely with the spirit and the spirit world. I understand that the people who conduct these ceremonies are really not the ones that are doing the healing. However, their spirits work through these people and there are many people in our population that have been gifted with this opportunity to be able to help and work with people and help heal people. So the spirits worked through this one gentleman who was from MicMac indian from Nova Scotia. And he doctored me one evening using my brother as a conductor and he worked through him. And it was a phenomenal, phenomenal experience because here I was laying in bed, on my death bed, weighed a hundred and thirty-nine pounds. I could not move, I could not walk, I could not sit up. And I laid there in a diaper and I was... ok I was near death. I, a lot of people had given up hope, however I still had, and I was clinging on to the message that was given to me in the sweat lodge by the first doctor that I went to see. And that message of course was, was you're going to get very, very, ill before you get better. And when this man went to doctor me, he was on a telephone because he was 3,000 miles away. And he doctored me over the telephone and used my brother as a conductor. Now the thing that happened there was.. I don't know what happened, but something happened. The spirits worked, did their work and understand you know that evening it happened about 7:30 - 8'o'clock, the ceremony took place. And at that point in time I was unable to walk and I shook my hands. I could not hold a spoon to feed myself. Nothing. And after the doctoring, 7:30 in the morning, I woke up and I sat up. And I was to discover that there was a huge red rash right about my liver area. And I woke up my brother, and of course he freaked out and run to the nurses station to call them and they come and the doctors, and the dermatologists were there. Taking swabs of this thing that was on my stomach. A huge rash, and it, it wasn't hurting, it wasn't sore, it wasn't bothering me. But it was just there, and I never questioned it. I, I you know, I just kind of winked at Charlie, because I knew that it was from the evening before the doctoring. And I was to be told later, that the poison and everything from my liver had to have a place to release itself, and that's where it was releasing itself. I was to walk out of the hospital that Friday and uhh, I walked out of the hospital after that doctoring and the following Wednesday, I was to have my liver transplant and I got called in on a Wednesday morning, that was September the 9th, 1999, or September the 29th I'm sorry. And uhh.... But I got called up, I realized that I was still weak, but I was strong enough to you know walk and was feeling quite well. And when I went into the operating room as they were preparing me, people asked me if I was scared, and I said No you know because I had already turned it over to the spirits and I knew that I had people looking over me. I had a strong connection with the spirit world, cause understand I had already been in a coma, I had been on the other side, I had been dead already, and I'd come back and I knew that after that doctoring that, that there was nothing that was going to stop me from coming out of this surgery. So I went

into the surgery, and I think you know, what happened with and why I always say it's so important with the blending of the two doctorings is what happened with the Indian doctoring is that I was given the strength and I was fixed up enough or given strength, or healed or doctored well enough to be able to go through the two operations that I was to go through the following week. I was to go into the operating table for the first time and I was in there for 12 and a half hours. Now when they wheeled me out of there, a friend had a huge amount of people waiting in the waiting room. And one of the people happened to phone this Dave, his name is Dave. That doctored me originally, And this guy is blind, he's been blind for probably 30 years now. And uhh when this friend of mine phoned him and said Fox is going to be ok, they just wheeled him out of the operating room. He thought for a minute and held her on the phone, and he was to tell her, and gave her this message. That he said, no, Fox is not alright. There is something wrong, and there's somethin not right. He wasn't quite sure what it was, but he just knew there was something not right. So 4 and a half hours 5 hours later, I was to discover later, I guess when I come out of the ICU that they had to take me back in, because I would not quit bleeding internally. Now what had happened was, when they were inserting this new liver they somehow accidentally cut it and there was a little cut and I would not quit bleeding, and I was bleeding internally. So they had to cut me back open, and sew up that liver where they accidentally cut it. And sew me back up. So I went through two operations in a span of 24 hours, and come out, come out of there in good shape. After the second operation which was only 4 and a half hours but 5 hours, But I come out of there and I was out of the hospital in eight days. That's been you know, six years ago now. And uhh...but it's all a result and I think it's so important that we talk about, Indian doctoring. Because spirituality, the ceremonial part of that whole concept played a huge, huge role in my recovery.. And, it continues to play a huge role in my everyday life today. Seeing, you know the miracle that, that happened, whether you want to call that, some people, I don't know a lot of people find it hard to believe, but for me I know, I know what happened and I'm like, I don't have to spend a lot of time trying to convince people. You know, because I'm,. I consider myself a walking miracle.

I've been very well looked after you know, spiritually and by that same doctor that originally did the doctoring, Dave. We had to have a ceremony again after my transplant because I was, involved in a little bit of rejection and we seemed to think that I doubted myself which was part of the problem. Because one of the things I was questioning was do I two spirits now, because I have someone else's liver in my body you know. And those kinds of things were, I was questioning. So we went through a ceremony again to take ownership, for me to take ownership of this liver that was given to me. But since then I've had no problems, you know I continue to do well. The only thing now is, you know my hepatitis C is come back. And ahh..but it's not aggressive. It's not as aggressive as it could be. And so I continue to, I continue to practice the spirituality and continue calling on the spirits for their help. And involved and I continue to be involved and get involved in these ceremonies that we have.

Earl: Right, So one of the things you know I'm curious about is that when you first went to the doctor and found out that you had all of these problems with your liver, through the western medicine, what did they say to you? Did they give you any encouragement? Or..

Fox: No, no, the first thing you know when I was diagnosed with hepatitis C, the first thing that my doctor, the doctor that diagnosed me said was, well Frank, or Fox he said, you have hepatitis

C it's late stage liver disease and he said we're going to put you on some kind of medication and you'll be alright for awhile. We don't know how long but you are going to be needing a liver transplant and some point in time. And that was basically all he told me. He didn't say when or what was going to happen or you know, so a lot of this stuff I had to find out on my own. And, like I don't know if you could call it encouragement. But you know I think he, he didn't really want to tell me the worst you know. But I was to discover later, at that time already when I was diagnosed, and it hit me quick. I got very very sick, very ill. It just, he didn't want to tell me that I was going to die. And I don't think any doctor is going to, I, I don't know. but he didn't give me any encouragement either. Not like, not like when I went to the sweat lodge. Because this guy worked pretty closely with the spirit world too, And he told me exactly what the spirits said and that's exactly what happened. I got so, so sick, and I suffered, I suffered terribly. And ahh..but today I'm very healthy.

Earl: One of the things that you know I'm also curious, you know and even from my own experiences, but the medicine men they work with the whole person, like mentally emotionally, spiritually and physically.

Fox: Yes

Earl: Then this is what I think helps people to get well quick. Especially aboriginal people because we have that connection. And with the western medicine they just deal with the ailment, they don't deal with anything else. And, so how was that experience for you.

Fox; Well, that well,.. myself I mean, and then again it depends on the individual you know, and where your belief system is at. I think, you know. Because I mean, (there are a lot of aboriginal people that don't have that belief you know. And we've got to have that belief system in that system. In the medicine in the doctoring that it's going to work. I, I put my life, I think, in that man's hands. I said ok, you're going to doctor me through the shake ten ceremony and the spirits are going to fix me up and make me strong, you go for it. And I, I'm believing, you know, that it's going to work. I know it's going to work. I never once had a doubt in my mind as I laid there in the hospital oh this is all hogwash. Never, because people do. People do doubt and they question you know. Instead of just allowing the natural spirit part of it to do their work. So there are people that doubt, and if you doubt it ain't going to work for you know. I truly believe that. I've had some phenomenal experiences when we talk about spirituality and when we talk about the spirit world. So.. I knew before this, when I was approached and uh, given the opportunity to go through the Shake Tent ceremony. I hadn't known much about it prior to this here. I said well it's gotta work. Somethings gotta, we gotta try everything.

Earl: So you never, you never gave up.

Fox: No, no

Earl: And through the traditional ways, they encourage you not to give up

Fox: That's right, that's right. They,, right from the point that I was told that you are going to get very sick before you get better. To through all ...every time people come and see me, or my

wife would get a message from somebody. They're hanging flags for you at the sweat tonight. There's a pipe ceremony going on tonight. They're praying for you. They're hanging flags. They're offering tobacco for prayers for you to get better. I had people as far away as New Zealand doing ceremonies for me. I didn't realize that there were so many people all across Canada. Every time there was a sweat lodge, people that knew me, somebody would mention my name and offer tobacco. Sun dances. So I was, like I say, I was very, very well taken care of that way. And that's why I think I had more than the one medicine man doing his work that time. I think we had all kinds of medicine people doing their work and praying and offering prayers. I mean I didn't, it was to the point where my mother-in-law had come to the hospital and was going to bring a priest to, to read me my last rites. I had to kick her out of my room. I didn't need that negativity. The other thing was psychologists came up to my room and they tried to tell me that I was depressed. And I kicked them out of my room, because I knew myself, I was 49 years old at that time. And I knew the difference between being depressed and just being angry. Because of being tired of being hurt. And if you were to have seen my arms were black and blue from intravenous. The veins would collapse and they had to find a new one. So I was just getting a little tired of hurting and I was just questioning gee whiz how much more do I gotta hurt, and how much more do I gotta get sick before, when am I going to get better? I was asking that, but I you know they tried to insist, they insisted that I was, and they even prescribed me these drugs. I told them to get out of my room, I ain't takin nothing. Because I was praying, You know I had an eagle feather on my chest all the time. And I'd pray with that. People would come and sing for me. Mom, friends you know, they would come and sit with me and they would come and sing sweat songs and all that. I went through doctorings right there in the hospital. So I mean, uhh..you know if. You know a lot of times if I go and talk to people in conferences, you know there's always that doubt amongst non-aboriginal people. But it happens, and that's the way it is. And the importance, and I believe without that I wouldn't be here today. Without that Indian doctoring, Because I would never, ever been in any shape to go through two, two operations had I been in that condition prior to that doctoring. Never, because I couldn't move, I couldn't walk, I couldn't eat, I couldn't do nothing. I mean people even had to lift my head up for me to take my medication. I had no muscle control in my neck. My brother had to carry me into the bathroom. When I made it, most times I didn't make it. I laid there in diapers. So I mean that's how near death I was, and I came out of it.

Earl: So did how did the western doctors, what did they think about the stuff that you were doing.

Fox: Well, Dr. Bailey, who is, who was my liver specialist. Was all in favour of what was going on. He was in big time, big time favour. And he never once criticized what we were doing, He believed in what we were doing. So much so, I mean that he was he was still shocked about seeing me walking out of that hospital on my own after he seen the condition that I was in. As were a lot of the other people that worked on that floor. And I still go back to the hospital there, on floor and visit them once in awhile. But that they were quite impressed, at what happened and they still kind of talk about it today.

Earl: Yeah, cause I guess this is one of the things that I'm looking at, is that through these interviews and through this research that I'm doing with traditional medicines and western medicine. It's not to see which is the better. It's, it's to, to see who we can bridge that gap in

western medicine and traditional medicine so that our aboriginal people can feel more comfortable going to a doctor. Instead of being intimidated and have that fear. That by going and believing in our own culture and our own traditional ways there is hope. Whereas sometimes the doctors don't give you too much hope at all, when you come down to something that is pretty serious.

So, so I was just curious to see, from your experiences what it was like, and I think that this here has pretty much answered all of my questions. And I guess too, that when you look at your life today, how much it has improved. I mean I seen you at your worst and I've seen you today. And I know if it hadn't been for the traditional medicines, the traditional ceremonies that you probably wouldn't have made it. But it was that stuff that had given you that strength. That built your spirit. And give your spirit that strength, being able to go through all of this stuff. To come out and be happy and healthy as you are today. So

Fox: You know, I think you know, I always talk about when I go and speak, I always talk about, if you don't have any belief and that, I think it's time that you start thinking about having some belief. Because like I say, I talk to a lot of our own people, our aboriginal people who don't truly believe in that system or that stuff. And I always encourage, I mean I don't tell people what to do. But I try to encourage them to really start thinking about that and start taking a look at the belief system and the spirituality and the spirit world. And yeah that there is, there is people out there that are gifted to help us. They are gifted. And there's a lot of them. The spirits work through these people to help heal, to help heal us in whatever, cancer, and we've all heard of people being cured. Cancer and diabetes, and all kinds of other illnesses, our job is to go out there and seek those people, the real ones. Because you need to understand too that there are some out there that are just there to make some money and it's like anything else. So we have to be careful in that area in approaching people also. Most people that do have these abilities and that have been gifted to work with our people. Are, they have a reputation and that follows them. So there's a lot of them out there.

Earl: And I guess if you want to find out who the best ones are, you can ask in the community. Cause community know who's good and who isn't.

Fox: That's right. That's right

Earl: So I guess that ummm, ummm when you were talking about a lot of our people don't believe in this, uhh.. our traditional ways. How is it that we can encourage them to kind of take a look at that.

Fox: Well, I think that for me. In a way, what I generally do, I just try to educate sometimes even individually. And, and if we can educate one person, it's like trying to educate the non-aboriginal people about our culture about where we come from and about what we represent. If we can educate one individually at a time, well you know they're more apt to listen to you, as opposed to trying to talk to a whole crowd of people.

And so I think it works the same with our people. That it's important that they get back to understanding their culture and who they are. Because I think that's part of the problem, a lot of our people don't understand who they are, and what they represent. They have no foundation

And so for me, I mean, I didn't find that out for myself until I was 30 years old. I mean I was a serious alcoholic, drug addict. I didn't find out the indianess in me till I was 30 years old and I didn't discover that, and I didn't really start learning about ceremonies and stuff. But if you talked to me about spirits and spirituality when I was 30 years old, I would have told you, you were crazy take a hike. So I know that there's a lot of people out there like me. And something has to happen in your life that you become, believing in that system. Because there has to be another way other than the way that you're living.

Earl: Yeah, and usually what happens it takes a life-threatening situation for us a aboriginal people to actually start to look at our own culture. And I guess too, that, that fear. By what was instilled into our grandparents, and parents through residential school. Has a huge affect on, on our belief systems today. And but I guess too, getting back to the health and healing, is that, we just need to trust more in our culture and to start asking questions and talk to good medicine people. And find out where we come from and who we are as a people. And I believe in that too.

Fox: Well, I mean all we have to think about a hundred years ago. I mean how did our people doctor ourselves. There wasn't hospitals on every street corner. So I mean we've got to ask ourselves that. From that we should get some sort of judgement as to our people. I mean our people are very gifted. I mean they had knowledge of all the roots and plants. Our hospital was right out here. The wilderness.

Earl: And we walk through every day.

Fox: Exactly, exactly it's something that we need to get back in touch with.

Earl: And I guess you know, if we look at even some of the diseases that we have. Heart problems, that wasn't in our culture a long time ago. A hundred years ago, because the medicine people looked after us. There was medicine doctors, and we knew them as well. And especially diabetes. Diabetes never hit our communities until 40 years ago. And here now it's running rampant.

Fox: 80 % of aboriginal people

Earl: And it's all from processed flours and sugars, and all that, but contributed to it So I guess there again, we need to get back to more of our cultural foods.

Fox: Exactly, traditional way of eating. I was at a conference, and uh, myself I was diabetic, and the thing that I learned there was to try and get back as close to the way the traditional people's style of eating which was meat, berries, fish and wild game. You know, that, so I came home from that conference, and I quit drinking pop. I used to be on ? of insulin. So I quit drinking pop and I quit eating breads and I quit eating sweets and I quit eating potatoes, and my sugar has dropped down to almost normal,. insulin so . Even that alone there is a big indicator as to why we should try to get back to as close to our traditional way of eating Because you know yourself that fast food joint on every street corner. It's so much easier and very convenient for us to stop in there and eat. Yet it's killing us, it's killing our people.

Earl: Yeah and every day, I see the young children running around with pop and chip first thing in the morning, especially at pow wows and those are the little ones that should be

Fox: learning to eat properly

Earl: And learning to eat the proper nutrition the Indian way. Which keeps us safe from heart problems and liver problems, and lung problems and all this stuff. I think that this would be something that we should be looking at in the future as well. . But I think right now, we need to be looking at this, we also need to educate the medical profession on the healing and the healers that we have in our communities. And with our own sweat lodge, our healers, whether it be through herbal medicines or through spirits and the supernatural as they call it. And you know, miracles happen here everyday. Especially in our country. And you see people Coming to these places and going away feeling well. And I've seen these ceremonies myself, where people have come and been doctored. Heart problems that needed bypass surgery, and go home and then they find out that they don't need that anymore after a doctoring, but they may need to come back six months later for another follow up. So I think we need to be, listen to what the medicine people are saying as well as the western professional.

Fox: Well my wife had cancer. About 20,23 years ago. She was doctored, no trace of it. So I mean you know, that there too is phenomenal...

Earl: Could you talk about that a little bit?

Fox: Well

Earl: Share a little bit of that.

Fox: She'd probably be able to tell you that story a lot better. I mean she was told by the doctor that she had cancer in her cervix, and that that they discovered a small batch of cancer and I'm not sure what they told her at that time, but she went to the sweat lodge and got doctored there. And the next time she went back there for to get a check up, it was gone. So she got doctored in the hospital...She was told to keep an eye on it, by the medicine man at that time. But again, that man you and I both know, it was Joe Cardinal. And he always maintained that it wasn't me that healed you. He always maintained that it was you know somebody else taking care of you, you know.

Earl: That's right  
He was the one that was only the instrument.

Fox: Exactly, but it was at his sweat lodge that this happened  
I witnessed that, you know.

Earl: And there's so many other stories out there. We need to take the time to go in and talk to the people. Which maybe through some of this research or through some of this you know, we could encourage them just through the writing. And even Joe.. had said that sometime, maybe



it's time we started to write some of this stuff down, to document it. You know, so that it isn't totally lost. But like he said, it will never be lost because it will come back to somebody. Through dreams, through visions, whatever. So the answers are there. And we still have that close enough connection that we can, we can get these answers if we do things in a proper way. So uhh...so is there anything else that you'd like to add?

Fox: No

Earl: No

Fox: No I wish you luck on your thesis.

Earl: Alright,well thanks Fox.

Interview 2 with Dr. Peter Butt (recorded on speaker phone)  
7:22 pm January 14th 2006.

Earl: The questions are Peter, they want to know like what, ok wait, what your age is, your name and your age, how old you are?

Peter: Yeah, you've got my name, my age is fifty....two.

Earl: fifty – two, ok

Peter: uh no, 51, I'll be 52 on 06, so 51

Earl: Ok, all right, and uhh, and your training has been as a physician

Peter: yeah

Earl: And how long have you been a practicing physician?

Peter: I umm...completed my training in family medicine and then anesthesia in 1984.

Earl: Ok, 84.

Peter: So I've been in practice for what.. 21 years.

Earl: Ok, so..umm, so what type is your practice, and you just answered that, family, right.

Peter: Well I do a variety, and I have done a variety of things, primarily under family medicine.

Earl: Ok.

Peter: Uh, but I did family medicine and anesthesia for six years, and I did six years of emergency medicine with palliative care, for the dying, and then I did, I've,.. since '96 I've been in a predominantly administrative position....northern medical services. Clinically I do addiction medicine and some family medicine.

Earl: Ok, Well, you've got a wide variety of experience there.

Peter: Yeah

Earl: You know as far as medicine is concerned. And ah, and what is the culture of your patients. Are they mostly native or non native?

Peter: Mixed

Earl: It's mixed eh.

Peter: yah

Earl: Would you say more or less? More native or less?

Peter: Uhh, probably around 50% uh, aboriginal. Certainly my..probably that much if not slightly more in the addiction practice. The chronic pain in other practice predominantly non-aboriginal.

Earl: right, ok

Peter: So, it might be 60/40 non aboriginal.

Earl: Right, so yeah

Peter: Up to 50/50

Earl: Right, ok

Peter: that's just a guess-ta-mit.

Earl: Yuh, Yuh So what are your feelings regarding non-western treatments? Do you use them? Or do you encourage people to seek them out?

Peter: It, it all depends on what you consider to be non-western. Uh, certainly there are a lot of, a lot of practices that, that people engage in that I wouldn't discourage. Spirituality is something that I think everyone should pursue and may, in a way that is meaningful to them. Now whether or not that is considered non-western I guess, that is another question. That could be anything from traditional aboriginal spirituality to meditation to more mainstream religion

Earl: Right, yeah, well I guess you know, for the purpose of the paper I'm looking at, you know, more specifically aboriginal. Um, you know compared to, to western. So I mean it, you know like we say spirituality I mean. If you just say spirituality, it has no, no race or color, it's just the way we believe right.

Peter: Right

Earl: Yeah, ok and then with native spirituality.

Peter: ...there are other, other, other modes though in terms of non-western

Earl: Right, yeah, yeah.

Peter: People use herbal medicine and whether it's sort of alternative or traditional. I encourage them to disclose so that I know and if there might be a potential interaction with medication. So it's important to be non-judgmental about that unless of course it's something that could be problematic.

Earl: Right, yeah

Peter: If they're using something for diabetes, then it's helpful to know and simply look at how it works in terms of the mix of other medication and control of the blood sugars.

Earl: Yeah those are the kind of things that I was getting at Peter, is that you know, using our traditional medicine, you know, but being up front with you medical doctor. So that if there is gonna to be a problem with your medications that he will be able to make you aware of them.

Peter: Yes, I've had situations where people on morphine or cumidin? Or artificial heart valve, or chronic atrial fibrillation would take something that had aspirin in it with red willow bark and then they'd run into bleeding problems, so then we'd just have to sort out that if they were going to use something like that it would be better not to have any red willow bark in it because it throws off their coagulation profile.

Earl: Right

Peter: So it, it, it's important to have it discussed.

Earl: Yeah, well, well that's good cause then you, you've basically answered my next question, was that if the answer was yes, do you encourage people to seek out if they are using alternative medicine, ah, you know. Just ah, ah, the reason why you encourage it. Because maybe they feel better, but at the same time, be informed with you...on what they are taking, on that traditional medicine.

Peter: Yeah I guess I, I'm, I'm not in a position where I can encourage them to use traditional medicines unless I know what the outcomes would be. I would certainly encourage them to practice their spirituality

Earl: Yeah, right, yeah

Peter: Ceremony.

Earl: Oh yeah.

Peter: It's umm, as, as a physician I have to be careful that, that I'm aware of the outcome of what it is that I encourage... and that I do no harm, on an ethical basis. So if I don't have specific knowledge of, of the herbs then it's hard for me to actually say, use this.

Earl: Oh, yeah, no I, I understand that part

Peter: In terms of ceremony, then that is something that I would encourage, because it speaks more to spirituality and relationship.

Earl: Right, so, so that's good then. That's basically what I was, what I was, um.. what I've been as., was asking, was that you know like, the ceremonies, they are important. And I guess what I found over this; this study is that there are more aboriginal people using their cultural ceremonies in their health and healing to lead a better and a healthier life. Do you find that as well?

Peter: Uh, absolutely. I'm actually concerned that more aren't,. ...clearly in the addictions practice that I have. I encourage an, an exploration of spirituality, but it, most are in the city. Some have lost contact with extended family or home community and contact with ceremonies perhaps a little more difficult for some of them. Some are, you know, more likely to go to a evangelical church simply because of, it's just down the street, it's accessible or they know other people that are there and they have a support system within it. I, I guess it really comes down to what we call patient centered care. So it's, it's what speaks to the individual. It's important. And explore it through that.

Earl: Cause I know from my own experiences there's a lot of people who are coming to the sweat ceremonies, and the sweat lodges, and the talking circles, and the healing circles. And they're looking for some kind of connection to help them to better understand, the problem they're dealing with.

Peter: Right, right.

Earl: And, and I, and I think that they find that within those ceremonies. And that's been what I've been noticing. And you know I've, I'm..probably assuming that you're seeing the same things, you know in some of your groups and that, when you look at

Peter: By in large, by in large. No it, it depends on where they go and how they, how connected they are when they participate. But the ones who are struggling with addiction. It really depends on how focused and committed they are.. ways. And that's where it's you know the sliding back and forth in terms of using and not using and attending, you know, I certainly will accommodate them, but to attend ceremony? If it looks like they're just using that as a way of manipulation, then umm you know, I'll, I'll say you know. You don't really need ...for two weeks to attend a four-day ceremony, there's something else going on here.

Earl: That's right, yeah.

Peter: Upfront about it.

Earl: Yeah, and I guess that's what most people who are working with addictions or other similarities maybe in mental health you know, see that. You know like with ceremonies, people you know, manipulating and using the ceremony as an alternative to get more drugs I guess. Or more medication you know.

Peter: Possibly

Earl: yeah

Peter: Yeah, one just has to be careful that's all

Earl: Yeah, you just have to monitor it, you know, and see, how they're dealing with it. So, so yeah, so I guess you know what I've, what I've also been finding is that you know a lot of the native people that I have interviewed ah you know, round this traditional health and healing, they uh, they say that they wish that the medical profession and the traditional people could work together. Do you have any thoughts on that Peter?

Peter: I think it would good. I think the more the information is shared the more understanding there is the better. We're trying to provide education around aboriginal healing to medical students. Some of its basic information in terms of the history and the impact of colonization and residential schools. The, get some exposure to elders and then the opportunity if they wish to pursue it to attend ceremonies such as sweats and so on. So they have that as their, in their background. Because in our province of Saskatchewan we anticipate, currently aboriginal people make up 15% of the population. So by 2020 it's going to be closer to 20 to 25% of the population.

Earl: Right, yeah

Earl: Yeah, not, eh hem. Pardon me, and I think that, you know as far as health or healing I think that uh, healing and I guess health care would really benefit the people if there was more culture involved you know, and more ceremony or spirituality, umm

Peter: Some of the hospitals here in the city, St. Paul's hospital for instance, uh, there's an Elder who has a pipe ceremony every Sunday for people that are there. It's not necessarily available in every hospital and I don't think Elders are received or treated on the same level as other uh, umm, church pastors or counselors.

Earl: No, there is definitely a difference there and I know like in the hospital here ah, in Prince, I mean they don't there is supposed to be an Elder's room but it hasn't been fully operational. So, so I don't know, pardon me, what they're going to be doing with that. I know you can't smudge with patients unless you take 'em outside. You know, and then there's always that other thing, can you take them outside to do that? Are they well enough to do that? Or

Peter: And is it cold.

Earl: And is it cold you know? I mean there are so many things...

Peter: You need a smudging room and properly vented.

Earl: yeah, and, and where.

Peter...held up as the barrier.

Earl: right, and I think that, that place could also be used for your pipe ceremony

Peter: Sure

Earl: You know to help people with, with that process you know of...

Peter: Usually it's better if it's up on the top floor of course.

Earl: Yeah.

Peter: That's not something that can always be found.

Earl: Right, so, but I, I, you know but, from what I've been hearing, you know and from a lot of people, is that they, they wish that, that western medicine and traditional medicine, the doctors and then the healers would be able to work a little closer together. To create a better understanding for everyone concerned hey.

Peter: And of course some of the ignorance cuts both ways

Earl: yeah

Peter: There are some healers that tell people not to have any treatment, not to take their medication in the western way if they're going for the other. That can be problematic too.

Earl: Yeah, well where, where I was concerned, when I went to a medicine man and he encouraged me to continue taking the medicine that I was doing but also to inform my doctor what, what I was taking. And show him the medicines that I was taking, so.

Peter: I think that's responsible. As long as you have a receptive doctor, you know. Not everyone does.

Earl: No, the doctor I had previous to his retirement he was pretty, he was really receptive to this. He believed a lot in the traditional ways. And ah, then ah, the new doctor that I have is a younger doctor of course. And, ah, he's not as, he's not as you know, trusting of the traditional ways as my old doctor was hey.

Peter: You'll have to work on him.

Earl: Yeah I just have to educate him slowly, (laughter) you know and talk and explain things as best I can.

Peter: And take your time

Earl: Yeah

Peter: Be like a coyote, you just, a little bit at a time.

Earl: That's right, yeah, yeah. So basically Peter, that was the extent of, of the interview, and I really appreciate your.

Peter: Well that was pretty easy Earl

Earl: Well yeah, I mean it's, I mean it's nothing difficult, it's just every day people stuff

Peter: Yeah

Earl: You know

Peter: You might be interested to know Luis Malmadrone of course is going there, but he, he's working on a study um, well he's applied and hopefully will get a grant to conduct a study, where the intent is to provide greater access to spiritual enrichment in various communities and, and to diabetics and then see if that makes a difference in the control of their blood sugars.

Earl: Oh wow, that would be an interesting study wouldn't it?

Peter: Yeah, so, we know that improving spirituality in spiritual health and well-being improves blood pressure control. That's, that's been well established. No one has shown that it makes a difference in terms of blood sugar control in diabetics. Of course one just has to be very careful going into communities that whatever spiritual enrichment is provided is what the people themselves want.

Earl: That's right yeah it's...

Peter: Let's not be judgmental as to whether it is traditional or Christian or maybe the people need to decide. And that's a big issue for a lot of the communities in the north. Because religion and spirituality could be a source of conflict.

Earl: Yeah, well I think it's a lot like when you get into, you know, the sweat family circle, I mean you got your real traditionalists, and then you have the traditional people who, I guess are way more open to other stuff, you know. Whereas other ones are just really, you know, kind of stuck. Some people I have known are just stuck in the traditional and that's the only thing that works eh. But you know it's like anything else, I think you have to have an open mind. And you have to believe in yourself, but you have to respect what others believe as well.

Peter: that's right, very much so. And model that respect.

Earl: That's right. And that was one of the things that Joe taught us well.



Peter: He did, he was very open in that regard. Having Father Gary go, and I've, I've attended other ceremonies where there have been priests and so on. They certainly add a good element to it.

Earl: Right

Peter: Obviously they're there, because they're, they value it. They, they see the importance of experiencing spirituality in that way. It doesn't detract from their own religious beliefs, it adds to them.

Earl: Well yeah, and, and, but I guess how I explain that to some people who come to me for a doctoring in the sweat lodges that you know they say that you know the church, they're catholic. They want to do this but they have a problem right. And I guess what I, you know, how I explain it to them is that. We're, there is only one god or one creator. And I guess you know different people take different roads to talk to the creator and use different methods but it's still the same person. And then they seem to be ok with that.

Peter: That's right and that's a good way of doing it. It doesn't negate it. It's simply a different path.

Earl: That's right. Yeah, it's like all the, there was different roads that led to Rome. It's a different road that we take to, to our own, our creator of our understanding.

Peter: Yes

Earl: Yeah, so that's how I explain that. And then they, they seem to be really ok with that then. And accept that, and then they're ok right so.

Peter: Good

Earl: So that works out good

Peter: That's great, great

Earl: So anyway Peter, I really appreciate the time that you've taken and what I'll...

Peter: Not at all. It's interesting for me of course because of the sweats that Louise and I have and the people that come um. People don't always know that I'm a physician. It was interesting. There was one, one person who helped us out quite a bit ....spent a lot of time with him. He didn't know I was a doctor (laughter). It was two or three years later that he found out. (laughter). It was really quite humourous, you know. He does massage therapy, and he thought, yeah you seem pretty knowledgeable about these things. It never came up in the conversation. It was never something that I, you know...to comment on or to say. I just assumed that he knew, but it didn't really matter one way or the other so. I thought it was uh, I thought it was complimentary in the sense that it was important to just be human.

Earl: Right, and I have a, you know, I got a similar story you know that happens to me, you know in town, is that some people don't know me. And they look at me because of my age and being aboriginal that ah, that they automatically assume I don't have an education.

Peter: Right

Earl: And, and they start really explaining things and you know and then after a while they find out that I do have a degree and stuff like that. It's really humorous eh.

Peter: Oh it is

Earl: Just on the assumptions

Peter: It's about them, their understanding, and their assumptions. I think that if one is mature and patient and wise and tries to practice these ways. You just let people be themselves and find out in their own way there's no point in taking it personally.

Earl: That's right (laughter)

Peter: You see a lot of people who do of course..

Earl: Oh yeah

Peter: Get quite angry

Earl: Yeah, but no I've, I've just

Peter: ...racist, which of course it is.

Earl: Yeah

Peter: It is racist, but they are people being themselves

Earl: Right.

Peter: And then a good way for them to learn and grow in a way that is natural

Earl: And, and that's how I deal with it. You know. I mean like I've always you know, of the mind that ah, you know, and from my counseling experience that if I don't react to that situation then there can't be a reaction. And then we just kind of laugh it off right.

Peter: And of course, they gain insight as well. In, in a gentle way, they're more likely to pick up on the fact that they were making an assumption that made them look foolish.

Earl: Yeah, I have a lot of fun with it anyway (laughter)

Peter: But I, I haven't integrated as much as I would like my mainstream practice, even my addiction practice with the sweat.

Earl: Right

Peter: People find their own way to the sweat, I find. .

Earl: Yeah, and that always happens, and that's how the sweats are here, I mean sometimes we have 30, 40 people come to the sweat here.

Peter: Oh goodness, that's a very large lodge then.

Earl: It is, uh, and uh. And just before Joe passed away he gave me the last two willows. So I got 42 willows in the, or 44 willows in the lodge now, so. So I have the full lodge. I mean it's a, it's fairly big, and I think one time a year or last year, I think we were able to squeeze in 53 people.

Peter: Goodness gracious, you've got two or three rows in there then.

Earl: We do, we end up with two or three rows around there so, but uh but they continually keep coming back, and they keep searching eh. So, and that was one of the things that he had told me, Joe, was that you know, you know, this is where, you know the sweat, having that kind of a sweat lodge you know, the people will search you out and they will find you, you know, and it's so true. Cause it's so true. Cause I don't, its just word of mouth Peter.

Peter: Yeah, Do you sweat every week?

Earl: No! No (laughter) no I've ah, since I was sick I've only been sweating maybe once every three weeks. And, and we still have 30, 35 people end up showing up coming you know. They hear about it...

Peter: I like to set a date at the time of each sweat for the next one.

Earl: Yeah

Peter: Because Louise and I do it together. I've, I've done one by myself but I prefer her to be there.

Earl: Yeah

Peter: I, I prefer that balance

Earl: Right

Peter: And umm, although I, you know I'm responsible for running the ceremony. She certainly contributes to it.

Earl: Oh yeah

Peter: In many different ways

Earl: Well it was just like for me, for a while, I was starting to get too busy again. And I didn't know if I was going to be here on that Sunday or whatever you know.

Peter: Yeah, Yeah

Earl: So

Peter: You do them Sundays as well.

Earl: Yeah, and I do them on Sundays.

Peter: So do I.

Earl: Yeah, um, because that gives, it gives me a chance to get a day in where I don't have to do anything.

Peter: Yes

Earl: You know, except for today I went up to YCC and worked with the young offenders, did a circle. And then next week I go up and do a sweat with them eh.

Peter: Do they have a lodge there?

Earl: Yeah, they, they asked me to put one up there. So, I just put a little prayer swe...

Peter: They provide the wood and rocks?

Earl: They provide the wood and the rocks. Yeah, so but I put a little prayer sweat up there.

[Beginning of side two of tape]

Peter: Do you get together afterwards and be sociable?

Earl: Oh yeah we have a big feast afterwards as well. And even over at YCC, I mean, the kitchen comes out with their soup or with their uh, spaghetti or you know, or whatever. But I mean it's, it's still, I believe that it's the feast afterwards, that everybody has a chance to sit around and unwind, talk visit and then the staff. The, the youth supervisors get to see, you know, what the comments that these young people are making after a sweat.

Peter: Yes, yeah

Earl: You know and it's really uh, it's really interesting in the amount of healing that it does. It's too bad that there isn't something, um you know, where instead of they have to go back to their homes and communities where they're going right back to the same situation that they left.

Peter: Yes

Earl: You know, that they wouldn't be able to continue on with this type of healing. You know.

Peter: They need access to more sweats

Earl: Right, they do

Peter: with more good Elders.

Earl: Yeah

Peter: With the Elders

Earl: Yeah, so, and even some of the youth, ask Deryl and I when they're out on the street you know, can they still come to the sweat at our home. And I always say yeah, you're more than welcome. You know, so I mean it's there, you know. And people know where to, who to phone you know when they need some help. Or they want to have some direction, they phone us. You know and sometimes we'll have a talking circle you know, with them and the friends that they want or they trust, you know, so. We always have that option for them.

Peter: Right, Right

Earl: Yeah

Peter: How, if you don't mind me asking, and I know this probably isn't, if you don't feel comfortable answering it, that's fine, I quite understand. I was just wondering what you use for the, the doctoring part of it?

Earl: In the sweat?

Peter: eh hmm.

Earl: It was the medicines that were given to me, uh...when did I get that doctoring sweat? I mean, It's got to be at least twelve, twelve, fifteen years ago that I got that.

Peter: Did that come from Joe?

Earl: Yah, Yeah and it's a combination of medicines and beaver castor right and I use that in the sweat and then the eagle wings

Peter: right

Earl: so, so yeah it's uh, it's just that comb, that's the combination that I use. I don't prescribe medicine to, to the people. You know, it's all done through the power of prayer and through the sweat lodge and the doctoring.

Peter: Right

Earl: Where the grandfathers, you know, I'm the instrument.

Peter: Right

Earl: Yeah, and like ah., and I always let them know too, is that, you know, I wasn't the one who healed them it was themselves and the Creator that did that you know.

Peter: Right, right.

Earl: So I guess you know, there again that's the power of ceremony, and the power of the mind, right.

Peter: Yes, very much so. It's interesting how, everyone experiences it, can experience it differently. Everyone has their own experience I think is probably a better way of phrasing it.

Earl: Right

Peter: And um, I'm, although I, I, I still primarily responsible for the songs, which makes it hard to be attentive to other things that are going on. I'm more and more aware of some of the other, well, the lights and..

Earl: Yeah, yeah, and the grandfathers, the activity that's going on in there.

Peter: Yeah, and how other people are doing.

Earl: Yeah, Yeah and that comes... I guess when you... I guess you know from my experience Peter, when ah, I got the doctoring sweat, and when I had my first doctoring. I was getting myself all bent out of shape. You know, how do I know where to, where to use the wing? How do I know that I'm going to the right spot? How do I know? And then I thought about it for a while, and I kind of laughed at myself because I sat down and I smoked the pipe. And it's not about me! (laughter) You know, and I just kind of laughed and I thought well what the heck am I doing, you know.

Peter: I've, I've had those realizations too.

Earl: Yeah, yeah, oh then I'm not alone then.

Peter: Oh no not at all. I had a dream, and I kept on thinking about this dream, it was more like a vision. And I thought about it and I thought about it. Twenty years Earl. Twenty years I'd keep

on thinking about it off and on. And I was walking down the street one day and I was meditating on it yet again. And all of a sudden it came to me what it meant. And it was so obvious. That I thought, god I'm stupid, I'm so damn dense. (laughter). It was just so obvious. It was right there all the time. And I thought, how could I, How could I have missed this?

Earl: Yeah, well. I think you know it's just our training, you know, the way we were raised you know, that we are responsible for stuff. We are responsible to make sure the ceremonies go properly, but when, and we do thing things in the right way.

Peter: Right

Earl: But I believe too that when it comes to the doctoring, that's where the Grandfathers and the Creator take over, because you know, you just have to be the instrument. That hollow tube, that they can, or that hollow bone that they can work through. And, and then you're all over and you're so aware of what's going on, and you don't have to worry about a thing. You know, and I was getting all bent out of shape for no reason you know. And when I told Joe, he just laughed at me you know. He said, he just said to me, he says well he said that's part of learning. (laughter) You know. So yeah well I'm glad that I'm not in this alone Peter.

Peter: Oh no, no and it, I. so much of it to me is an act of faith. I do it in a good way and good things will come of it.

Earl: Well, I guess we're.

Peter: Have you been...(sigh) I don't want to use the word attacked, but have, have there been people that are, that are opposed to..

Earl: Well there have some, been some other aboriginal people who have used medicine against me, if that's the question that you're asking.

Peter: Yes

Earl: Yeah, Yeah, but I, I have uhh protection from Kokum Agatt. And I keep that with me at all times and smudge it every week, and ahh, and then ahh I have a, a relative over in uh, in Moberly Lake. Who used to go to the other Tootosis, Harvey's cousin.

Peter: Edwin

Earl: Edwin, and ah, he's ah got his own lodge now. But he didn't get it through Edwin. He went through someone else. Another Cree person. But they're, he, he's the one that if I need to go and get a doctoring from it's close by and in emergency I can go to him hey.

Peter: Huh, that's good

Earl: Yeah, and I guess that's one of the things that, uhh you know that we always I always try to encourage other pipe carriers, that we need to stay in touch. So that if one is in problems we can all help each other.

Peter: Yes

Earl: You know and that's one of the things Joe often talked about, you know. Being there to support each other and help each other.

Peter: After we moved out here I left the buffalo skull on the altar. I used to take it back with me into the city when ...but it disappeared. Somebody stole it.

Earl: Oh yeah.

Peter: I've, I've got another one

Earl: Yeah, Yeah well this is so nice with what we have here. Like we've got acreage here and the sweat lodge is right out the door off to the left as we get out the door and facing east and the buffalo skull is inside the lodge. And I mean I can go out and I can, it's there, I see it everyday, every time I go outside.

Peter: Oh you have the skull inside the lodge

Earl: Yeah, Yeah, and that's the way Joe had explained to me was that. You know, because I always used to put it away, and he said you know, Raymond always put it inside, the lodge.

Peter: Oh, in between when he wasn't using it.

Earl: yeah

Peter: Ohh. Okay I didn't know that.

Earl: Yeah, he put it..

Peter: I was leaving it out on the altar.

Earl: Yeah, no, he put it inside the lodge. And then I made some of these gates like a square frame with wire mesh.

Peter: yes

Earl: To leave it open so that it airs out so that it doesn't mold.

Peter: No, I just put a board in front that lets air circulate.

Earl: Yeah



Peter: Otherwise it gets moldy inside.

Earl: But that's ah, one of the things that I've done for years now, is had that, make, make a frame and put a screen over it. You know, or just some of that chicken wire. So that it has a, I can open it wide up and let it breathe. And then the skull is inside. Yeah and I mean it's always nice and fresh in there. You know, but the medicine, the smell of the medicine always stays there.

Peter: Yes, yeah

Earl: And that's the neat part about it. So. When we look at the benefits of culture and we. You know everything that we've talked about in this last little while is what the benefits of what we see for ourselves, you know,

Peter: And, and this is, you know, in my mind, it's just peeking under the corner of a blanket, just seeing so, just a small minuscule part of ...so much greater. There's so much to learn and grow in, it's wonderful.

Earl: It is, you know and like Joe said, the more that I doctor, you know, but he told me not to doctor too much because it takes a lot out of you. And for Deryl too, because she's always there supporting me, so you know for both of us it takes a lot out of us eh, when we do the doctorings. Like if we do them every weekend. Every other weekend, you know, so maybe once a month, once every two months, So just when every people ask for it that's when we do it. And that works good for us.

Peter: Good

Earl: Yeah, So, so yeah and then you know and it's always nice to have Deryl with me, when I'm, when we're sweating eh.

Peter: Oh yes, yes.

Earl: To be that support in there, and uh, and this is what I kind of talk about you know in some of the classes is that, you know when you are ceremonies it's always good to have your wife with you. You know, and if your wife follows that same belief, and that same road, it just makes it much more stronger, because you have that balance eh.

Peter: Yes, yes, and they're going to bring a different perspective. And then also um...the compromise, the communication, the relationship is modeled.

Earl: Right

Peter: That's something that's, that makes a big difference. There are so many that struggle within their relationships. To see two people communicating, not being angry, having disagreements, sorting it out, ...makes a big difference I think. And of course there's a

difference there in terms of the balance of, genders and powers, perspective and everything else that's much more respectful, and healthier.

Earl: It is, and, and then this is what culture is about. This is what the Cree culture is about. This is what the tradition is about. Is respecting your partner, your, your wife. And be able I guess to agree to disagree. And not to be angry about it.

Peter: Right, right

Earl: So, so well so anyway it's always nice to have that balance. And that sets a good example who come. And for other people, you know.

Peter: Right, yeah

Earl: so, that, that this traditional way of life has a lot of benefits, right.

Peter: Oh, it's beautiful

Earl: It is, you know

Peter: And it, and it helps, I think it opens the path, opens the, one's eyes to see the Creator in every thing around them.

Earl: Exactly

Peter: And to have that contact, that communication, that feeling of that presence open to them whenever they make the effort to open themselves to it. Uh. It's wonderful.

Earl: Yeah

Peter: It doesn't take an intermediary. I'm careful not to, I'm still trying to work through uh things, whether, you know sometimes I smudge people's offerings for them. Sometimes I encourage them to smudge them themselves. When they bring them in, I have them in front, uh, of me. Uh, I have, have them pass them in like Joe did. And in the third round, I have them in order, so when they're speaking on them I lift them and pray with them while they're speaking, then umm...after that third round,..is it for the fourth round? I think I'll give them back their prayer clothes and have them hang them in the lodge above themselves.

Earl: Yeah, for the fourth round.

Peter: Yeah, and leave them there.

Earl: Yeah, Yeah,

Peter: And they come out

Earl: And what I've seen done too, at Joe's sometimes, he'll give it to them in the beginning, uh you know like if they had uh, like green and white ties made, he'll give them and they can hang that above them. You know, in the first round. They stay there until the fourth round. And then they sometimes take 'em home and hang them on the west wall, or they sometimes put them in the, as you would say, the general population with the rest of them.

Peter: Yeah

Earl: yeah, and I do the same thing here. You know. And I think that this is what people see, or they feel that they have that connection with the spirituality I guess of it, or the sweat lodge, if the pipe carrier does that, you know. So and it depends on the person, hey.

Peter: Yeah, yeah, I well I want people to be able to, do these things for themselves, to feel that they can smudge, that they can pray over cloth and tobacco that they can make their offerings, that they can put them up or out, they can do this for themselves.

Earl: Yeah

Peter: They should be able to in my mind.

Earl: Well no they should be, because their prayers, and the smudging that they're doing, I guess that's part of the foot work that Joe talked about. And that's part of your own journey of becoming stronger and of becoming a more of a spiritual person. And a connectedness to the culture, and the ceremonies. And then that in turn will promote your health and well being. That's how I see that.

Peter: Right, right.

Earl: So now matter how, or I guess I was talking with my cousin, and he speaks Cree fluently. He lives in Vancouver, and uh..he was telling me that you know like if you look at our Cree, Cree culture. He says, everything we do is a ceremony. You know. He says we're always celebrating something. But he says that it always has a purpose and it all comes back to healing or growing,... in all the ceremonies.

Peter: yes, yeah

Earl: So I guess that's why, it's, it's so important that people connect with ceremonies as well as their own physicians. Uh, you know if they're using traditional medicine. Be up front with your, your physician and let him know that you're using this.

Peter: Well it's an opportunity for that doctor to learn and grow.

Earl: Right, and maybe to take down some of the barriers, you know about it. Because the way you know, from when I was doing the research, which I mean some of the young doctors, and my doctor and I had a discussion on this, was that, you know they talk about you know bio medicine, uhh which is the western medicine. And then the ethno medicine. And ah, bio

medicine came from ethno medicine, or traditional medicines (laughter) so there was that cross over at some point.

Peter: Oh yeah of course, so called western medicine isn't just bio medicine, it, it there's a whole gamut because I suppose you get into more of the technical aspects than procedures, with specialties, more of the organ based or systems based approach to care, Where psychiatry, yes there are medications used there but perhaps there's more counseling. The family medicine, it's much more broader and the patient centered model of care that we try to teach, appreciates that the person's experience of their illness is...overlaps with the disease.

Earl: Right

Peter: As we understand it. But it's quite, quite distinct in its' own way. And of course that's determined by that individual themselves and that individual is within a context of family, culture and society and one, one needs to look very carefully at how they view things, what their ideas are, their feelings, their expectations, how this effects their function and try to tease out where the person is at within a larger context, it, it's not just treating an organ.

Earl: No, no, and I guess this is the, the one thing that I'm finding out from the research is that, for aboriginal people, and for our spirituality, the way we believe, uh..there are some diseases that we're more, that effect us more than say the European, but I think too that it's because of colonization, because of maybe the lifestyles that we're living. We're not living our traditional lifestyles anymore.

Peter: Sure

Earl: And ah, you know I think.

Peter: Diabetes wasn't around in aboriginal peoples, until well the 60's.

Earl: That's right. And now we're getting more and more aboriginal people who have a lot of heart disease due to stress related. You know, due to stress. You know, uh which wasn't too, too much involved prior to the residential schools right. So all of this stuff has been, been kind of new to us in the last 200 years, you know. And I think we're, uhh, some of us don't handle it that well yet because our bodies aren't accustomed to it. You know. So, so this is where our ceremonies help us to become stronger, but also gives us the direction and some answers through those ceremonies on how to deal with the disease.

Peter: Yes

Earl: Right, so, that's how I'm looking at it Peter. And that's how I'm seeing the research that I'm finding is looking in that direction as well.

Peter: There's one Elder here that told me, he, he didn't really learn how to live until he made friends with diabetes.

Earl: Yeah

Peter: He had, he had to reconcile himself and make friends with his diabetes and accept that it was there as a teacher, to teach him how to live a better life.

Earl: Right

Peter: How to eat, how to look after himself.

Earl: Right, yeah

Peter: Diabetic for 20 years and doing very well.

Earl: Well, I mean that's a testimony just in itself isn't it.

Peter: Yes

Earl: yeah

Peter: Exactly

Earl: Yeah, and that's also, he's probably doing more cultural things as well. You know

Peter: Yes, well he runs lodges and..

Earl: Yeah

Peter: It's very good

Earl: Yeah it's awesome. Well Peter

Peter: Well thank you Earl. I've enjoyed the conversation.

Earl: I have to, and I think that you know, well I know that I've learned a lot from this and I hope that the readers of my thesis will get as much out of this as I have.

Peter: Oh I hope so

Earl: Yeah, and uhh, but anyway you'll get a copy of this and like I say, it's going to be published or if it's going to go into a book of some sort, you know I'll, I'll be in contact so that we can get these consent forms redone or change things if that's how you want it.

Peter: It'll be fine Earl I'm not worried at all.

Earl: O.K. cause I, I'm trying to do this

Peter: We're pretty open.

Earl: And I'm trying to do this very traditionally, you know with respect to the peoples, respecting their wishes.

Peter: Sure, sure. That's quite all right.

Earl: O.K

Peter: My full permission

Earl: Right on, well thank you so much Peter

Peter: You too Earl. You take care.

Earl: I will

Peter: Ok

Earl: Ok

Peter: By for now

Earl: By now.

Interview 3 with Rena Kinney  
October 9th, 2005

Earl: Ok, today is Monday, October the 10th and I'm doing this interview with Rena Kinney, and we'll... gonna start this interview on how she, when she was ill, and the, the process that she went through. So anyway, I'll ask Rena, how old are you?

Rena: 54

Earl: When did you become ill?

Rena: Oh, that was what, 19.., 1993, so that was what, about 12 years ago., and I went to see the doctor...umm.. our family doctor.

Ahh..I don't know how many times I went back, but we went through all kinds of test. I was tested for TB, heart, high blood pressure, cancer, umm. All kinds of stuff. Umm because of the way my symptoms were going, it was the doctor kept thinking it could be this it could be that. And I got tested for a whole bunch of different diseases. Everything, all my tests came back negative. In fact I went through more than a physical. I guess you could say. They saw every inch of my innards (laughter). And still things were bad. Like I wasn't well. I felt like I was going to pass out. Umm, at really odd times. Sometimes when I was driving. So they checked for blood pressure, they checked for my heart. They thought I was having a heart attack and on and on. Then they checked for TB, and umm. I guess they were checking for native related diseases. Diabetes is another one I was checked for. Nothing ever came from it. They said I was healthy. But I didn't feel healthy. And I knew there was something wrong, we just didn't know what it was. So I guess that they checked me for cancer, and everything else because I smoke. And then I talked to my dad, and my dad was the one that started cluing me in. He said, "My girl, he said, no white doctor will ever find out what's wrong with you, because that's not what you're dealing with. You're dealing with Indian medicine. Indian bad medicine." So that's fine. And I didn't dare ask my dad for help, cause he was sick. He was dieing. And dad died in February of 1994. When I went back for the funeral, we took my dad home to the reserve for burial. And I stayed at my uncle's. And, my mom was sitting there, and my mom said to my uncle. She said, she said to me, my girl, you tell uncle what's been going on. And as I was telling him some of the stuff that had been happening to me, and real weird stuff. Anyways, it was like somebody threw a case of sealers, you know the canning sealers down stairs. It made an awful racket, while I was telling him this. So he jumped up and he ran down and there was nothing amiss. So anyways, he made me finish telling him everything. After he was done, he called my other uncle and one of his sons. They made me sleep on the couch, and my uncle slept on the floor beside the couch and my cousin slept like this. Like they surrounded me sleeping on the couch. And in the middle of the night, the dogs started making an awful, awful racket around the house. Like, and his were guard dogs. So, I got up, I sat up on the couch, and uncle came out. No, he said you get, you lay back down, you'll be ok. And he went out. But before he went out he woke my uncle. My uncle never heard a thing, (laughter). Fine guard he made.

Earl: Yeah

Rena: Anyways, when he came back in, I asked him, what's going on. He said nothing you have to worry about. He said it's ok, everything's ok. But he called my uncle into the kitchen, and I couldn't hear what they were saying. Anyways, my uncle got up after that, and he sat there, and I went back to sleep on the couch. But he sat up all night after that. They guarded me. You know, but at the time I didn't know and I guess they were doing that so they wouldn't scare me. They didn't, they didn't tell me what I was dealing with. They kind of took over like warriors, eh. Anyways, Uncle gave me some medicine, to use so I could come home safely. And that was ok. I got home and things started escalating, after I got home. My physical symptoms, I started losing my ability to write, my umm. I'm right handed and my thumb couldn't hold a pen anymore. Umm, I went to see the doctor and he checked it out. And he said I had. I forget what it was he called it, but I had to have surgery. So he made an appointment for me, I had to wait six weeks. Well six weeks came by and of course they, you know, they put it off, and put it off. And in the mean time, my hand's gettin worse. And then my legs started going. I got to the point, where I, I had to use crutches to go to work. I couldn't walk. Umm..and things just escalated from there, it was like, I guess I was dieing. Whatever medicine that was put on me, wasn't showing up, but my body was telling me there was something wrong. Anyways, and then, it started affecting our finances. Like it didn't matter how much money we were making. We couldn't make ends meet. It was like are uhh, if we had a \$10 dollar bill, it shrunk to a dollar bill. That there, there was no value to it anymore, and we couldn't, we couldn't make a living no matter what we did. And every time we'd get a job, or something, something would happen to ruin it. We'd either lose it because the company would go bust, or we'd have trouble at work. You know, we were just not making it. And the same thing started happening to my kids. They were starting to be affected. You know, it didn't matter what they tried or what they did. It got to the point where, none of us could even afford to buy food. Like, and we would say what the heck is going on. You know, we're making good money here, but it's not stretching. You know, something was..it, it just,... it was irrational.! And uhh. I told my husband, who's white, what was happening. What I suspected was happening was it was bad medicine. And of course he didn't believe me right away. And then I started telling him, well how come we're going through this. How come we can't make our money stretch. I said, when we should be able to. I said in fact, we make enough money to be able to save money I said, and yet we can't. We can't even pay the bills we have. And we didn't have that many bills. And same with our kids. Our kids were constantly coming over to borrow money so they could buy food. Or we'd, you know, or they'd come over to eat at our place or we'd have to give them groceries. And I mean we had grandkids. We didn't want to see our grandkids going hungry. So anyways, that was fine. Then my husband went to work. He finally found a job again. He left, and I don't know what it was but that day, I was scared. I was scared at home. And that's when I phoned you. Remember?

Earl: Yeah

Rena: It was a weekend

Earl: Yeah

Rena: And it took me all day to get up the nerve to phone you, because I couldn't even trust you. I was rock bottom I guess you could say. I didn't know who I could trust. And I remember you telling me, oh good friend come over to your place. And I was thinking no I can't, I'm scared, I



have to drive out there, I'm scared. And you gave me directions to go up there to your place. You lived in College Heights. So I figured, no, I've gotta beat this thing. So I, I kept pushing the fear back. And I took, and I left my place up on the Hart, to go to your place. And the closer I got to your place, the thicker the fog got. Remember how thick it was when you came out. It was just. I got lost! I could not find your place.

Earl: Yeah you were up there 2 or 3 times prior to that

Rena: Yeah, Yeah! Exactly. And ohh..it was and then I knew that fog was not natural. And it was so thick. It was just icy cold.

Earl: Yeah

Rena: It was like I was being prevented from getting to you. And I remember when I finally found your house; it was because I had been praying. And I remember you coming to the door and you could not believe your eyes when you saw all that fog. Cause it had been clear when I was talking to you just prior to that. I mean, it doesn't take that long to get there. What was it, 20 minutes, 25 minutes. And yet, I..it took me longer because of that fog. It was like it was following me. And then I remember we went through the pipe ceremony, and I told you what I suspected, and that's when you confirmed it that the, during the pipe ceremony. But I remember when I come home from there. That was I think the safest I felt in a long, long while.

Earl: Yeah, so then one of the things too, when you were thinking of that and then deciding umm..where and whom did you seek help first. And what was the result, and that was when you first phoned me. And then umm, and then the help that you got you know. You helped, and what help did you decide to seek from the Medicine Man, or that, that Pipe Carrier.

Rena: Well, at the time. When we went through that pipe ceremony. I felt, I could go to my dad. And then I figured, no I can't, because he's sick. This is too big. It had to be someone who was strong, strong enough to overcome. Because the medicine had been working for so long. It was gaining strength everyday. And with my dad being sick I couldn't, no I couldn't go to him. I thought of my uncle, and I figured no, I can't go to him because he's too far away. And that's when I kept getting back to you. So I figured I'd take the plunge and ask you to help me out.

Earl: Yeah

Rena: And, when we went through the pipe ceremony that's when you told me we needed to go through a doctoring ceremony. Well, I'd never been through one so that was another unknown for me. But I knew by that time that that was my only hope because ...my own doctor said there was nothing wrong with me. He started to make me feel like I was going nuts. And yet I was fast losing my ability to work. I was always sick. My family was being affected. I figured well, And I knew, like, from growing up, with my grandmother and that. I, I knew that this kind of medicine would never be found by regular doctors. I also knew that it would get bigger and stronger. And I also knew that I had to find someone that was more powerful, than that medicine. Than the people that sent it. So that's why, when you said about going through a

doctoring ceremony, I figured, yeah, this, it, it felt right inside. You know, comparing it to, to what I knew about traditional medicine and stuff like that and what my grandmother used to say that there were, there was structures in place for our kind of medicine that we do. And there were protocols that we had to follow. And when you went through some of those, like the pipe ceremony for instance. I knew we were on the right track. You know, and the doctoring ceremony. I also knew that that was the right track based on what I had been taught. If you had jumped in say with the doctoring immediately without all the formalities in place like the pipe ceremony and the talking, and stuff like that I knew it wouldn't have worked. So and that's when I decided it had to be you. It couldn't be anyone else. Because everybody else was... out of commission if you will. My uncle was too far away. My dad was too sick. All the people that could have helped me were unavailable. Were not and they were not close enough to me, like geographically to help me out. You were the only one. So and when it was time, and when you told me what I had to do for that doctoring ceremony. If you only knew the problems we hit. It was like someone was trying to stop us at every turn. Just to get the items that we needed to get that ceremony done, or even to get it started was a battle, like to get the food, to get the flags, to get the tobacco. Like it, it's like when I got money I had to hang on to it. And it was like counting pennies to be able to afford to do it. So I knew, ok, that's why. This medicine is working against me, you know. I really believe I would have been dead if I hadn't had done that. And I still don't know where I found the strength to even go through it. Because, by that time I had been so weakened, physically!

Earl: Well that's what happens sometimes you know with this type of medicine. It uhh, it affects you on a spiritual level, and then it takes your wealth and your power, your ability to make good choices, or make decisions. And then it'll affect you physically. And this is why the doctoring is so important. Because it worked on that spiritual level as well as the physical, and uhh..and that's what we got from the pipe ceremony, is that we needed to do that right away. That, you know, cause we couldn't afford to wait.

Rena: Yeah, Well I think the reason why too. Even myself, I knew, it was getting to the point where, it was a do or die. If, if we hadn't had done what we did at that time, it may have been too late. Because I was really far gone by that time.

Earl: Yeah, you were in pretty rough shape. So then if you can, you can describe in detail your experiences with western medicine and the traditional medicine.

Rena: Well, let's put it this way. I found our own traditional medicine, was much better at curing my ailments than white medicine. And, but I think that white medicine played a role too. The fact that it eliminated all the, what could have been natural causes right. And the more it eliminated, the more it confirmed the suspicions I had that this was not natural. These symptoms I was having were caused from bad medicine being placed on me. And even though, I had suspicions about it, it was like I needed that to confirm it.

Earl: Well, and that's the natural process. Because in this day and age, you don't think that this traditional medicine, that can be used for bad things, is, is around. But it's been my experience and a lot of other people's experiences, that you know. Even in this age and time that we're in.

You know, 2005 now, is that that stuff is still alive and well. And I think that this is one of the things that a lot of the native people are realizing that it's still around.

Rena: And that, but further to that, I think it's more prevalent now than before. It was known before, but our people didn't piss around with it because they knew there was consequences to it. But today, our people know too little about where they come from. And they're too greedy. They've been taught too well by the white society. And so they'll use whatever is at their disposal to get what they want.

Earl: Right.

Rena: And when I went through this, part of what came out of that, the reason for the bad medicine placed on me was jealousy. And it was work related. From two work sites. Two different work sites. Now you know, it blows me away, that somebody could try to harm me over jealousy. For work!

Earl: Yeah, yeah

Rena: Like think about it. It makes no sense.

Earl: No, it doesn't make any sense to the people that it's happening too. But to the people that are doing it, it makes sense to them I guess. Because they want, or they think they need what you have, and they'll do anything to get it. Those are the ones that are really dangerous. Because they're. They don't want to work for it.

Rena: Exactly, but the thing is. They can't have what I have (laughter). You know, I didn't even know I had it!. All I knew was that I'd go to work; I seemed to have successes at work. But it was not because, of trying to prove anything. I was just going to work to do my job. Cause I needed the money to live. And that caused jealousy. You, you see what I mean about how far Indian people have lost our, our value system. They no longer valued a team worker. They no longer valued a member of their own team. All they could see was the fact that they wanted whatever it was I had. I still can't see what it was. You know what I mean? And yet they tried to destroy me as a result and they tried to destroy my family. And no amount of white medicine could have cured that because they never touched on the spirit part of me. They never touched, I shouldn't say never touched on the psychological part of me, because they did, because they got to the point where they thought I was being psychosomatic, you know and also they thought I was, what do you call those people that there's something wrong with them all the time?

Earl: Hypochondriac?

Rena: A hypochondriac. Well I was starting to feel like one too. But I knew damn well that there was something wrong, because I had the pains to prove it. You know when you get to the point when you go to work and you can't write. There's something wrong. When you get to the point where you can't walk when you're at work, there's something wrong. I had to use crutches. Like, it's, it's crazy. It sounds crazy and yet it actually happened. And that's why I say. I think

bad medicine is more prevalent today than it ever was before. Because the people, they, they know enough to be dangerous, but they don't have the value system to know how to handle it. It's like; they're like those governments and big corporations. That will steal and everything else to get more power. And that's what this was all about. And that, all, like I didn't realize at the time but it was only after the doctoring ceremony that I started thinking about it, that it started making sense. The jealousy part I still don't understand. Like, I don't think I'll ever understand that. You know, to be jealous of a person at work, enough to try to do harm. Like that don't make sense. If you don't like a person, leave! Or ignore them. You know, there's lots of people I worked with I didn't like. I didn't go out of my way to harm them.

Earl: So can you tell me your experience during the doctoring?

Rena: Can I tell you all of it? (laughter)

Earl: Well as much as you want to share with us.

Rena: Ok, well we finally got it was more that a week or two later that we did the doctoring, when I was finally able to gather everything that I had to gather in order to have that done. Like the flags, the tobacco, the food, the people. Umm that's the other thing we were careful of, who to invite to come for it. Because we had to, you know, we didn't know. We had to trust the people that would be involved in that healing of mine. I remember that first day when, when we met, my husband was still away. None of the family was involved. It was just me. And there was seven people. None of them were my family members. Ohh, I burnt, I burnt so bad. I was almost in tears. It was all I could do not, ... not to quit. It was hell. Like that very first day of the doctoring ceremony and we had to go through four. And I remember after the ceremony I was, I felt so weak, I was just, just burning, really burning. And I remember I talked to you and you said part of the reason for that was because none of my family had been there to take some of the load. And which made sense to me. So that night, my husband got home, he was in New Brunswick. He flew home that night. The day we started he flew home that night. The next day when we had to go again, Bob came, Shawn came, and three of my granddaughters came. The second day was easier. And...I remember the kids, my grandkids, the three of them, the little girls saying. "Oh, there goes another one". They were seeing the spirits but in light form. They were seeing lights playing and these spirits were playing with them. And..(laughs) my husband lost his socks. He couldn't find his socks, because it was in the wintertime and he wore his socks into the sweat lodge. And he had taken them off and folded them and put them beside him. And when it was over he couldn't find them. And my son-in-law had an experience with a buffalo. He never would talk about it. He, he told me there was a buffalo in there. He said that was the first time he was not scared of the buffalo. So umm, but my husband and I talked about it and that, so that was fine. The same night that he lost his socks, the second round of the ceremonies, we went to bed. And the way our bed was positioned. It was like this and our door was right here. Facing out into the living room and kitchen. And in the middle of the night, he woke me up. He was jumping up. And when I asked him what he was doing, cause I mean, it wasn't like he was just getting up. He literally leaped out of bed and he was running out the bedroom door. We had the bedroom door open. And when I asked him what was up, what's wrong. He said an Indian guy just came through the kitchen window and he's going out the dining room window.

So yeah when he said that, I said to him, "How could an Indian guy come through the kitchen window and go out the dining room window? They're not even open. It's the dead of winter." (laughs). Anyways he went out, turned the lights on, there's nobody around. And he was describing to me what he saw, or who he saw. It was an old man, an Indian man dressed in the old ways. Like in buckskins and that and he had long hair, and a feather in his hair, but his hair was white. And he said he come through the kitchen window, and he looked to where we were sleeping. And I said to him, I said "How could you see it, the lights weren't on?" He said, but he said it was light! (laughs). He said and he went through that dining room window. So anyways, we laughed about that. I remember the next day, the third round of our doctoring, I was telling you about it. And you said it was one of the grandfathers that had come to check up on us to make sure we were ok. Cause of the medicine, the bad medicine eh. So that was fine. We laughed about it. And that, and then, my husband he kept coming after that. And it was easier for me. I wasn't burning like I did before. Ohh..that first day was unbearable. But anyways, I started feeling better. Even my hand, my, my writing hand started feeling better. My, my leg started feeling better. I didn't need those crutches anymore. This was the third day. And umm, my uh, my daughters started doing the food. Like cooking the food for everyone that was involved in the doctoring. So it, it became a real family thing. And what I noticed is, the whole family seemed like started coming back together, fighting together, doing things together, working together. And being in a happier frame of mind. Instead of bickering and fighting and that. That third day when we came for the sweat. My husband had everybody looking for his socks. Because before the ceremony started I remember Robin walking in there to look for them. They were nowhere to be found. Those socks were just gone. So I remember when we started the ceremony, we went through the round one. And after the round one when the door was open, my husband wanted to go out because it was hot for him. Cause he was taking on some of the load from me. He found his socks sitting beside him all folded up. It blew him right away. He still can't believe it. One minute they're gone the next they're back. Like everybody was searching for those socks, and they could not find them. And for him to just look down and they're right there. It's impossible. And everybody looking for them and then they come back. And I remember you laughing at him, telling him the grandfathers were playing with him (laughs). And being a white man hey, he deserved it anyways (laughs). Him and his unbelief. That was funny. We still laugh about that. But it still, it still blows him away. And then the fourth day, I remember. Like things seemed to be getting so much better even though our situation, our financial situation was still the same. And yet, we seemed to be able to get the food that we needed to feed everybody. You know we seemed to be able to get the money we needed to get the tobacco and stuff. This was the fourth day. Everybody was much happier. When we went through the ceremony. I think it was the third round. I was lying right next to you and you were fanning that, that eagle feather on me and I remember thinking I don't know what the heck was the big deal the first day, but this is easy. Like it didn't bother me at all, but you made me get up after that third round and you told me, there's something under you. There was that medicine remember?

Earl: Yeah

Rena: And I remember when you took it and wrapped it in sage and put it on those rocks, there was just a blue flame. And that blew me away. Like do you know how hot a blue flame is? And we all watched it. I remember you know, praying that the grandfathers would take that medicine

and destroy it so it wouldn't harm anybody else. And you found it under me. Because I'd been lying on my stomach. And I remember you telling me you saw a flash of light go right through me. And that was the fourth day. And we still talk about that, that flame and that medicine being destroyed and watching it. Like you know when something burns you usually see yellow or red light, but this was blue. It was hot. It was amazing! We couldn't believe it. But ever, from that time onwards things started getting better for us. Financially, we found new jobs. Our money was covering everything that we needed. So... that was the best thing I ever did. But it took time to get to that point.

Earl: So, to conclude, I guess, what is your I guess, thinking around native people, and traditional medicine, working with the western medicine.

Rena: You know. I still have a problem with it. Not per say, like I think both working together is our ideal. You know it's a lofty ideal, but western medicine is all about making money. And I have a problem with that. Being Indian, and Indian medicine you do not pay for. Like with cash. Like we may pay for it through our hard work, through gifts, you know things that people could use. Umm I'm terribly afraid that if the white medicine world were to get their hands on the knowledge that some of our people still hold, they would use for gain, personal gain. That's not what it's all about. Umm, So yeah, I'm still grappling with that particular problem. And yet, I'm also selfish. I would like to see the two work together. You know, because I think we have a lot to offer society. But I don't know. That's the part, they would have to have the same value system that we have in terms of our medicines. And I don't think we're there yet. My god even our own people don't have that. Very few of our people have the value system that we used to have. And that's the scary part. I would love to see both, both medicines work together. But not, not the way it is.

Earl: Well I'm, I guess one of the things that I'm really thankful is that I was taught the old ways. And there's not too many people around that have that knowledge.

Rena: No

Earl: And I guess that's what the old man, when he gave this, the doctoring and stuff for me to do, was to be able to help people like you in that situation. Where western medicine, you know didn't have the ability to find it and so that at least there's people around that have that traditional knowledge.

Rena: That's very important yeah. Like I said, I was told the old ways too. But even though I was taught the old ways. I don't have the gift that you do. And I was always taught that we need each other. You know, so that say if I have a gift, I don't have it all. There is still some stuff there that I don't have that somebody else has. And the reason for that is to teach us that we need each other.

Earl: And that's what kept our native communities together. In the old days

Rena: And strong, because everybody was valued for their particular gifts instead of this jealousy and this greed and this you know, power and control shit, like they do now. Like even our own people have that. We don't have the same value system that we grew up with. And that's scary. And that's why I'm saying, I don't know I would love to see the two; the white medicine and the traditional medicine get together to heal people. But I don't see that happening for that reason. The value systems are too, too far apart. They're too polarized. And for the other, our medicine is not for sale. It's for sharing.

Earl: yeah, that's right

Rena: So, in a way it's good, in a different way it...it's not good. And I remember my dad, he was using traditional Indian medicine for people with diabetes and heart trouble, because he had, he was given the gift of heart medicine. And I remember he talked to his doctor, like the white doctor about it. And I remember that doctor getting so excited about it and telling dad not to quit, to keep on going, because the, the white medicine was in trouble and they couldn't get to all people. And if he could work together with dad to help people out. That was great. How many doctors are there out there, that are that open to healing? You know most doctors are in it for money and prestige and status. You know they're not in there for the healing.

Earl: The people, I guess with traditional medicine the people, is what is important, because the way that I was taught that human life was sacred. And I guess that's why you know when people come to ask for help then you do everything possible to help that person and if you don't have that certain gift then you know of someone who does, then you send that person over there. And it's uh, and it works within our communities that way.

Rena: Yeah it does. It worked for me

Earl: Yeah, and I guess too you know that this is where maybe some of this research will help western doctors maybe to understand a little bit more of aboriginal culture and the traditions of the medicines that we have. And that is what I'm hoping that this research will do, is maybe open up a few more doors.

Rena: Yeah, and the other thing that I don't care about with white doctors, is the fact that, yeah they'll treat you physical, but they forget or they don't know that when there is something wrong with you physical it's because there's something wrong in the spiritual. That's what causes diseases. And they don't bother trying to heal the spirit. So they can heal the physical but what ends up happening is that there's a scab there. And that scab sometimes breaks open again over and over, when the spirit stays sick.

Earl: Yeah, yeah, so I think that uh most of the stuff that we talked about today was real was, good information that can be brought out to the people, and to the people who will read this thesis afterwards, and especially the medical community. And I guess that's why here we are using medical anthropology as a way to bridge that gap between western and traditional stuff. And I'm open, it just opens up a few doors

Rena: We could be the stepping-stone to reaching that ideal that I just spoke about. It would be great, it really would. Because I have, I have a lot of respect for our medicines, because it treats the whole person. Not just the physical or not just that cut, even deep down. And I think that's important, but like I said, I don't have much confidence right now that that can happen. For the reasons I named, and that's you know, they would take our medicine and screw it around so badly, and use it as a power tool to reach their lofty ideal of what prestige, status and money is all about. That's, and this is, our medicine isn't, that's not what it's about.

Earl: No, and I don't think you know, personally, that it would work for medical doctors that way because they don't have that spiritual connection. You know to, some do and some don't. Some are open some are not.

Rena: Well the other thing too, yeah everybody, they all go to school, they go to university and they get trained and this. But not all of them were meant to be doctors. You know, the same way, not all teachers are meant to be teachers. You know, so those are the ones that worry me. You know, if they have the gift of healing, and they become doctors, then they're somebody. But if they don't have that, they're just nobody. But those are the ones that end up misus....  
(Side 1 of tape ended)

(Side two of tape begins)

Rena: With me, whoever it was that used that bad medicine on me, and I think, I think we have a pretty good idea who it is, but we're not mentioning names here. It was jealousy, for; they saw something that I had that they wanted. And they tried to destroy it because they couldn't get it. No matter what they do, they couldn't get it. Because it wasn't meant for them. You see what I mean?

Earl: Oh yeah. And that too you know is I guess, the way that our, our medicines work. Is that a lot of the times, you know the people who have had these gifts have been trained for a long time. Like for myself, I was talking with my cousins and I was thinking that I was only doing this for maybe 18 years. And he told me; he said well you've been actually doing this now for 25 years. And I, I, I never thought of, I didn't think that I'd been doing it that long. But he remembered.

Rena: But see it's something that comes naturally I think and it comes naturally because you were given that ability at, like even before you were born. So you came to this plain, with those abilities, but it's up to us to practice them. It's the same like running. You can become a better runner by practicing running. You know you can become a better mathematician by memorizing you multiplication. And it takes over and over and over doing over and over and over, you become really good at it. And some things just come naturally, and some things come the hard way. You know, we can't go around being jealous of what somebody else has. Cause it doesn't help. Because we'll never have it anyways, cause it... we weren't for it. We got to be satisfied with what we have.

Earl: Yeah, work on the gifts you have.

Rena: Exactly



Earl: And become good at what you do

Rena: Yeah, keep you nose in your own business. There's enough shit there to work with. So that's why, I, you know, I would love to see both medicines, both medicine worlds work together. But I don't see that happening any time soon. Because we need to protect our medicines too, for that reason. Because when you start fucking around with our medicine. We're in big trouble. Because that medicine is like a living entity, and it don't like being fucked around. You know, because that medicine, like us has an ability. And when you start trying to guide that ability to something else, its not going to work, so it comes back at you. So that's why I'm afraid. Like I said, it would be nice. Cause you know modern medicine has a lot of diagnostic procedures that we don't have. And they could diagnose something and then the Indian people could cure that, but you know it sounds simple, but it isn't simple, it's complicated.

Earl: Because you have the pharmaceutical companies wanting this to mass produce it. And when you're working with medicines, medicines is a spirit in our world. And you can't manipulate spirits.

Rena: No

Earl: And this is where the two worlds will collide. Because they don't have that belief in the spirit world or the supernatural. But for us it's there. And we see it all the time. But I guess this is one of the things that if they were able to understand, how important ceremonies were and how important the Sweat lodge, and some of the other healing alternatives could work and enhance the western medicine, we would really be able to. There wouldn't, maybe there wouldn't be so much disease.

Rena: Exactly

Earl: And I guess too, you know that's one of the things that you know, somewhere down the road I hope to work together to some extent

Rena: Well, the way I look at it, is maybe some day but the whole society has to change their way of thinking, their way of seeing, their way of feeling, their value system needs to understand that everything here is valuable. You know, you often hear them saying in the white world, no man is an island. They don't even know what they're saying. That fucking blows me away. You know, they have the words for it, but they don't understand the concept. You know, just like, one day there I was telling people on the Internet, that the so-called weeds out there like those dandelions, that's medicine. And they wouldn't believe me. You know, this one guy wrote back on the chat box there. I'm not going to drink anything that had been pissed on by a dog. (laughs) Like, arrrgh...what do you say. Like you know, they're totally. I don't know their thinking is so narrow. Because I was digging up dandelions one day, the roots. And I made coffee. You can't tell, it tastes just like coffee. And yet, when it starts working inside you, you can tell, because it's cleaning out your liver, it's cleaning out your kidney's you know and yet you can sit there and enjoy it just like a morning cup of coffee.

Earl: Yeah, Yeah, but they don't understand that. But you know, like you say. They just think it's a weed. But there's a lot of medicines out there, I mean we walk across, my grandfather told me he says that our whole worlds, our yards are all medicine cabinets hey. And we go out and we stomp all over these medicines every day and we just don't stop to realize that there's something there for the heart or the kidneys, or the liver, that would help clear because it's natural, more so than what some of these synthetic medicines can do for you. Without the side effects.

Rena: You know, and I guess we're doing our little parts too, because ever since that doctoring ceremony my husband believes more. And when he experiences something now he doesn't shrug it off like he used to. Like take for instance last winter, he had to take a trip down south. And he was tired on his way home. And it got really, really foggy, and he said he doesn't know. At first he was only marginally aware of this light, but he said that light was on his left hand side, of the truck. You know where the ditch is. And that light would move, if he got too close to the ditch, it would move this way, so he could get back on the road. And it stayed with him till the fog lifted. But he said the fog was really thick you couldn't see. And when he got home, he was telling me that, he says to me, he says, "I bet you won't believe me". Typical white boy, hey. And I'm sitting there, and I said to him "After 28 years of being married you think I wouldn't believe something like that?" I said, I said, "when I'm the one that taught you to be aware"(laughs) But yeah, he's, he believes more. Well, he had no choice. After all the things we went through, and the way things got better afterwards, the way things were so bad before. And there was no explanation for it.

Earl: yeah

Rena: Well there is, but I mean it was so insidious, it's so sneaky that bad medicine.

Earl: Oh yeah

Rena: And it makes you think that you're crazy, because it's so irrational. And yet it exists.

Earl: Yeah, it does and you see more of it today. And like you say it's because they know enough to hurt themselves. They don't know

Rena: They know enough, and yet they don't know enough to be, you know, and they're dangerous as a result. It's like somebody picking up a ball of mercury with bare hands. You know what I mean. That's, that's what it is. Mercury is poison. You know that could kill them and yet they're walking around with a ball of mercury in their bare hands.

Earl: Yeah, yeah, it's crazy. So is there anything else you would like to add before we close?

Rena: Umm, I don't think so that's, those are all the main points. I think that I wanted to talk about, I mean there's other stuff that happened but uh some of it is not my stuff, it was experienced by other people. I've named a few like Shawn and Bob's and the kids. There may be other stuff that they're not talking about. And that needs to be kept sacred. And...there's

some stuff for me too I haven't, and I won't because it's irrelevant, but it's very relevant for me between me and the spirit world type deal. But think I talked about all the relevant stuff that needs to be known

Earl: Ok, good. Well thanks Rena

Rena: You're welcome

Earl: And you're invited to come to the defense.

Rena: I would love to be there. (laughs)

Interview 4 with Jenny Cardinal  
July 2005

Earl: So good morning Jenny

Jenny: Good morning.

With this uhh....(pause)

Earl: Okay good morning Jenny

Jenny: Good morning

Earl: Today is July 29th, 2005

And we're doing an interview with my mom and my elder, Jenny Cardinal in her home at her kitchen table

(Jenny laughs)

Earl: And uh I wanted to conduct this interview, we wanted to give her the offering in a traditional way.

Jenny: eh hmm

Earl: And uh, so before we start, I'll just need to get your name, mom and your age

Jenny: uh hmm

Earl: Then we'll go, and when did you become ill with that cancer.

Jenny: uh hmm

Earl: Okay?

Jenny: I give thanks to the Creator and honored to be involved with my adopted son who's interested in the traditional way of life. I was born in Saddle Lake Reservation in a traditional way. I was born in, in the arms of my beloved mother. And my beloved mother was a traditional lady. So I, I've learned from a young age growing up, with all kinds of traditional things. At my age there was no hospitals close by. But we managed somehow how to survive, to be born at home. And well loved, well taken care of. And as I was growing up, I became.. what is known now today as a walk of a great road. Sometime it's difficult, but other than it is rewarding. You don't see the rewards, but you feel that the spirit world is with you. I want to say, this because I, I've grown and I've been raised with, with a simple way of life, from the

heart and caring people in my time of up bringing. I'm seventy-five years old as of this year and I can recall a lot of things my grandparents did. My Moshom was a great inspiration to people of the community. At the time they did care for people. They took care of their own, they didn't rush them to the hospital. And my grandpa was one of the traditional men. Sweat Lodge. Sweat Lodges were there many, many years ago. And... I became the biggest part of this sweat lodge. I had to take care of the doors for my Moshom.. As I was growing up, I ended up in a boarding school. But, that didn't interfere with the way my ancestors lived. Although, the boarding school tried so hard to kill that, that tradition of of language and of the way we lived before. I went to school for eight years. I came home and I never lost my language. Today I'm one of the Cree speaking in the community. Clearly speaking Cree old lady. And I'm, I getting tired by so many things these days. So many people in our community are so sick. So many people are lost. So many young people are taking their own lives. It's kind of sad sometimes. Then I met a nice man, who became my biggest friend, my partner. He became to be a traditional man, in so many ways. Under the directions of Raymond Harris. He went training for 15 years under him. He used to travel in the spring, Every spring my partner would fast 4 days, sometimes 5 nights. And there I became, all over again living like my Moshom. My husband was a... an owner of his medicine lodge and his sweat lodge. There's two different things, a sweat lodge is a sweat lodge for the family. A medicine lodge is where they give themselves to the great one. That they can,try and help people to heal, the illnesses they have. For myself, about 35 years ago, I was put down. I was told I was only going to live... 3 months with cancer. Very bad cancer. I was in the hospital, in and out, in and out. Finally the doctor told me, to go home. Might as well tell me, go home and die. But I guess I had a strong belief, and my husband was very strong at the time. So he packed me in the car, and away we went to Wyoming. And I stayed ten days. I couldn't walk when I left here. That, we drove for two days to get to the medicine man. And we got there in the evening, everything was ready. So clothes and all they wrapped me in a blanket and they threw me in the sweat lodge. I couldn't walk. And there I got doctored. I cried lots, I begged the grandfathers, the grandmothers to help me to heal because I was too young. I didn't want to die. But whatever the lord had planned for me, I was willing to take. So...and I stayed ten days, my husband and I, just the two of us. And every day for ten days.

But the miracle I seen of myself on that evening, after I got through eight rounds, I came out walking. I was able, I had my strength and I slowly progressed, but I was told to stick around and not go any place. So I stayed around camp with Raymond Harris's family for ten days straight. Got doctoring. And I came home like I wanted to fly. I thought I had wings. I wanted to fly home I was so happy. That sometimes I think the doctors predict you too soon to die. And here I am, I'm seventy-five years old, and I'm still doing a lot of uhh..work with my community, also the outside world. Our white brothers. I deal, I deal with a lot of kids. I deal with cancer, people that, women that have been really ridd.. bed-ridden with cancer. And I love to do that work because I went through what they went through. But somehow, I got healed through the traditional healing. I didn't stop there, I carried on. My husband, when we came back after 15 days, I started sweating. I had to go 15 rounds, 15 times, 15 days. So I can get cured. So my husband had to doctor me in his sweat lodge for another five, five sweats. So we had to do whatever I was asked to do. A lot of protocol that I had to do from the medicine man. But I did it. I guess that is why I am still alive. And I'm very happy that I had gone that route of healing, because the doctors predicted me I wasn't going to live. Only for 3 months. And here I'm the

ripe age of seventy-five.(laughter) And I'm still happy that I can be of help. In all directions of life.

And I'm very proud of what my husband had left us. I lost him a year and a half ago with cancer. We fought, we fought all the way to try and keep him. But somehow, I guess the great Lord needed him more than we did. So he took him away from us. And we really miss him, but his love is still around. A lot of people that he had had adopted, from other communities. B.C, States and all over the places he was, he was well known and we really miss him. But we're still carrying on the work he had left for us to do. It's getting people on his annual day, the long weekend of May, we hold fasts for him. Because, before he passed away he told us. I don't want that sweat lodge to die away. So it's carried on. And we are happy to do that for people. Because they keep coming. When is the fast? Is it going to happen this year? What's going to happen the year, you lost your husband? But I think I can say that it's been a real pleasure to have it going and to have people come in because that was his precious month of the year to help people out. Just to be a helper to the people that they can say that life is so important, that we can not forget one moment that we are here for a purpose. When the great lord calls us, he will take us away. But I really always praise him every day. I...When I get up, I, I go outside and stand. And, give him a big, big thank you for me being here today. Because I was, I was told I wasn't going to live, and here I am. And I, I feel that I can do this part of life, of work, that my partner left me. Sometimes it's very hard, sometimes I cry. Because here I am,.. alone. I think I feel alone sometimes, but I have a lot of good friends. A big family that I have adopted. And also my children. Four girls and four boys I had. And I had lost a son in 1974. One of my oldest sons. But I know he's up there helping me in so many ways. And I'm grateful, that I'm still alive. And I'm grateful that I can be of help in certain areas of sicknesses. And I feel that, that I can contribute yet to families and also I, the outside world. I sit with medical doctors, I sit with nurses. I...They are crying for the needs of the tradition, the tradition way of life. A good life that I had experienced. And I'm forever grateful that I am still here. That I can give a little guidance to whoever wants guidance.

And I pray that my son here will have a good interview with me and that he will treasure this, what I have to say. We had adopted him and he's a true, a true son. Because he had went under the guidance of my late partner. To be where he is. He runs his own sweat lodge and he's kind to people and I don't know what I can say more about him because he's a very kind-hearted person. He's, he's the one that don't even say boo to you. If you say boo to him, he just, he just smiles at you know. And I want to say, I'm really grateful that I had, I have a son like him. And that I, I would like to help him and be part of this work that he's doing. And... but sometimes it's very hard to say what you want to say. But I, I feel free today because this is such a great day. Beautiful day. Beautiful things that happened over the weekend. My heart is contented because I had sad feelings to begin with And I was one of the committee member, to host this big gathering. And it, it was a successful thing. That was our first one. We still have to carry on three more years. And we're lookin forward to it. Because it was a very strong conference. And beautiful people from all over the world that we met. I'm really grateful for that. I'm contented today. I feel like we were blessed. Because at, at the end of our conference, at the end of our healing journey in there, we seen this great big eagle that surrounded the sacred place of the gathering. Hopefully that we will carry on and be successful like we did this past four days. It's

been great. It's been a great feeling to know people from all over the world. To meet people from all over the world.

So, I want to say this to Earl, my son. Keep up the good work. And don't let anybody interfere with the way you live. Because we can get along in this world with the western medicine and also the true healing of our ancestors. This came about from our ancestors. They were holy people. In the time of our ancestors. And they were well equipped because they loved one another. They loved as their own brothers and sisters at the time. Today now, I walk, I walk the path of the loving person that I had lived with. And I intend to carry on that way, until the great lord tells me, it's enough, you have to rest. So I'm willing to do, to help my son here and be a guide to him if he asks me. And I don't push my way to try and be, oh I can do that for you. No, I just want to be humble and be kind to the persons that ask me for help and I have that big love for all my children, for all my extended family. For the people that I've met for many years. And I hope that God permits me to be here for awhile. That I can finish my four years of gathering of nations. I really enjoyed what I'm doing. So, I don't know what more I can say to my son. But I know the great, great gift that, Creator is with him and all the grandfathers and grandmothers that had loved this world too, that had, that had respected mother earth. That had used them medicines.

My late mother was a traditional lady. And she died at the age of 98. I used to cry to see her getting up at 2-3 o'clock. A wom.. a patient being brought to her to heal in a traditional way. She never said no, she'd get up at her age and mix up this tea, and smudge the person, and pray at the person to get healed. And many, many did she save, many babies did she save. So I didn't follow her footsteps. In some ways, in little ways, I picked up pieces of what she had done in this world, and she's my role model. She's the person that guides me, not to give up. And she's the person that tells me, keep going my baby, keep going my baby. That's what she used to call me my baby. So I'm happy to talk a little bit about her here. And I really sang my son Earl. And may the good lord guide him and protect him. Hiy, Hiy imstay. Thank you very much Earl for talking to me, guiding me to say what I had to say. Hiy hiy .....

Is that good enough! Boy, it got long.

Earl: (laughs) This is one thing that I, I'd like to ask you to talk a bit more about. Was that, when you talk to the doctors and the nurses. What was their reaction to their traditional ways?

Jenny: Well, you know, outside of home, I don't like to share too many stuff to the medical field, because they're earning by the thousands of dollars. And my husband always told me, he said don't sell. Don't sell anything that we had earned in the hard way. Because my husband earned it in a hard way. Fasting for 15 years, doing this and that. But they keep coming. They keep offering me tobacco. We need explanation. We need to help this person out. What can you offer, to tell us what we can do you know. They,.. they really are sometimes shocked you know. Shocked that this happened you know. I even shared this, this thing that I had cancer you know, and I'm here today. And, uh. Somehow I think it's, it's hard for a professor to believe all these things that we say. But it's up to them if they don't want to believe it. If they want to believe it that's fine you know. But we can't shove it in the throat of a medical doctor. But I know there's

one doctor that really understands is Peter. He...he's got the understanding of what's being a white doctor, and what's being following a traditional way of life. He knows, and he respects a lot of things you know.

Earl: And, and that's you know for me. I just think too that you know, for a lot of years, you know, when I got the doctoring sweat you know.

Jenny: ah hmm.

Earl: Basically, you know, Joe, you know my adopted father said that, said I was the only one in B.C that had that. And uh, that was given to me by the spirits, the grandfathers. So that I could help other people over there. And uhh...but you know the thing is that I, I think about some of the doctorings that I have seen and some of the people that I have doctored. And just their whole being when we're done. It's just like a different person. And uhh...I think the medical profession would have a hard time understanding unless they see it. And then sometimes when they see it they may not believe it.

Jenny: Uh huh. Yeah, yeah right. I understand you. Like uh...I always say. You have to go into that sweat lodge to feel what's been, what's been given to you as a person individually. Like for me. Maybe I should tell my son what's been given to me. As a old lady of my mother passed away, she had taught me this, it's called naming ceremony. See we have some traditional names. I was given that in my vision of, searching my vision, what can I become. What can I do to help. We uhh...we learned under the guidance of my mother how to deal with this. What offerings we can do to the spirit world to guide us. So... anytime when there's a woman or a man that needs a name. They present themselves with tobacco, flags. I want a traditional name. So, right away I don't give that name, but I, I tell them to come to the sweat. You have to do two or three rounds anyway. And, and I have that vision. My mother comes and helps me the night before. This is what you can name this person, and this, this, this and that and so on you know. So that's how I'm gifted right now. I don't want to broadcast it but I know a lot of people come to us. One year just before my husband died, about 3 years, 3 or 4 years ago we were asked to go to San Diego for naming ceremonies. And you know what, we had uh, 35 kids and younger people and older people. They were so in tune that they wanted traditional names you know. There was 35 sitting around in a lawn. It took us all, almost all day to ma.. to find names. (laughter) But my husband helped me, and I had to be the secretary (laughter) So we did all these 35. And we were really welcome in that different tribal Sequoi nation you know. So, that's what we do, and that's so meaningful when a person has a name, because the spirits have that name up there you know, and it's carried on by one person you know. Very unique you know.

Earl: And that's very special

Jenny: Yeah, eh hmm

Earl: This is one of the things that uhh. When I look at the medical profession. Uh, they rely a lot on science... whereas we rely a lot on our beliefs and our spirituality. And umm, a lot of the things we have been taught, you know through the sweat lodges. through fasting, through all of



this ....And it's, it's hard to, I guess for the European world, and the white world to understand this. And I think that, you know, to understand, you know from my own story and what you had said about uh, my adopted father Joe. He fasted 15 years, to become a medicine man. And I fasted for 12 years consecutively to, to earn a doctoring sweat. And all of these things come. But, these, these uh. the amount of time we can't learn in an university.

Jenny: Oh yes, (laughter)

Earl: We as aboriginal people, as First Nations people, we come, we learn by doing, and by experiencing and by watching and listening to our elders. And I think that you know sometimes the western world and western medicine don't understand the amount of training we go through.

Jenny: Yeah, that's right yeah.

Earl: ..to acquire the things that we have. Compared to their, you know, 4 years or 7 years of university. Sometimes we go 12, 15 years, 20 years. But we never stop learning.

Jenny: Oh yes.

Jenny: Like for your father, towards the last, when he asked for a medicine lodge, he had to fast seven days. Seven days. He couldn't walk. He couldn't eat for two weeks. I don't know how he survived, but he was nourished by the great one you know. And it was tough. I thought I was going to lose him for a while. But. he kept a walkin and walkin, praying, he'd go in the bush and pray and smoke. Then he started eating a little bit. Very little though. Two weeks he didn't eat. It was, he said it was a tough journey. Somehow he was taken away from the sweat, from the fasting lodge bringing to the mountains like you know. So that's where he was tested you know. I guess that's where his university degree came. (Laughter).

Earl: Yeah, and I too, you know like when we look at you know, when we acquire gifts from the grandfathers and the creator through our fasting. I, I, I believe that we get tested, to make sure that we can honor those positions, or those roles that we are given or those gifts that we're given. So we're tested to make sure that, that we are able to carry the (?) weight. So I, but I guess the chore for me and for this purpose of this paper, is that I'm to bridge that gap between the traditional medicine and the ceremonies. You know, so that the western medicine has a better understanding. This is why uhh my supervisor, Jim McDonald suggested I use this medical anthropology, because it looks at how we deal with disease within our communities. And uhh. And in our communities when someone is sick, I mean everybody comes and they pray for that person. and through the sweat lodges, and those, those kinds of things help the healing process and the power of prayer like Joe always said was uhh, you know it was the main thing and love and that's what helps to heal....So is there any other thing that you would like to offer for the medical profession around our, our traditional ways?

Jenny: Not really no...If there's anything more I uh...I could carry on I guess. But I, I, sometimes I feel my heart is stopping me you know. That's enough you know, information of this kind. It's so important but, for you since you're studying, you're trying to make it go, but with the blessings of the great spirit and all the grandfathers. I know you're going to ma..make

it. I know you are going to make it and in the field that you want to be, and with the medical people a lot of times I feel that, here we are trying to make them understand. But they have a few of these negative things because certain things are happening in each directions you know. The four directions we respect a lot. We have many, many songs dealing with our medicine lodge. We're not using the medicine lodge, my husband had put it away. But we have a family sweat that we sweat with. Any kind of person that wants to be, be part of the sweat lodge. And I feel that we can be helpers in there. We can't cure anybody. People have to cure themselves. you have to have a really strong faith to go in the sweat lodge, and feel the kindness that there is in the sweat lodge. Because I think my husband ran a sweat lodge for over 40 years, and it was so strong when he left us. We kept it going. He's helping us in so many ways. He keep telling us, keep going, keep going. So he's there for us. Because it was a powerful sweat lodge that he (?)...himself. and he doesn't want to see it die.

So... for me, that's why I'm still sitting around telling the younger generation, be part of it, just be part of it. Some people are scared to go in, but when they experience it differently, they, they take it you know. And the medical profession of people that I know. I sit with, I uhh, believe that they are really trying hard to understand the people of the Indian nation. The people of traditional nations. Of people that are trying to help people to keep going, keep going. But, you know, it's hard to explain to the medical doctors of your feelings of what they do to you. But it's good sometimes to go to them, because uhh..I really had bad feelings towards them for many, many years cause on the account of ... one doctor telling me, you're not going to live long Jenny. He said you've got cancer in the blood and also your bones. Yeah, I used two canes for many years. But then I went and seen a Chinese doctor, and he took my canes right away, he said "Walk, you don't need these", he just took my pains away. But I started walking better ever since you know. And I seen him the other day, and he said "Where's your canes?" I laughed at him. "You took em away, I don't know what you did!" "Yeah, you didn't need them, yeah I knew you didn't need them", he said. But a lot of these doctors believe like that, that Dr. Hunk or whatever he's called. He believes in traditional medicine. He's, he's in tune with it. A lot of these medical people do believe. He said, if you can be healed in your own way, go for it you know, (?).

I'll end this with wishing you the best Earl, my son. And it's been nice having you here and hopefully that this will help you in a, in a small way. That you will have ummm a good average of your writing skills. And...although I didn't read your thesis that you had send me. I never got a chance because a lady wanted to read it and she never returned them back. But hopefully I get them you know. So with that, Earl, my son. Take care and may your trails be kinder and brighter and, and your helpers be with you. Thank you

Earl: Hiy, Hiy, Thanks mom. I appreciate that.

Jenny: We get over time.

Earl: We did pretty good, we did pretty good.

Interview 5 with Phil Gladue.

Earl: Ok, you're recording now

About the, If you want to ask about the, just talk about some of the things that we talked about.

Phil: Oh.

Earl: Yesterday on cultural things and traditional things. And the fact that you've been doing this, on this path for how long. I've been on this path for 25 years. It doesn't seem that long hey, and some of the things that we talked about the other day. I'll let you take it away.

Phil: Yeah I guess from myself Earl is that, I've been on this path probably all my life but not realizing til 1975, actually how to I guess use it for myself. So that, so that I could feel good about who I was. And know where I come from. And know how to balance my life with, all the native traditions and language and the different understanding the ceremonies and connecting my spiritual life with that. Prior to that it was very confusing in a sense growing up. And ah in the Catholic way. Not saying that there's anything wrong with it but as far as I knew that there was something missing. And it was not til 1975, that I started lookin' at my feelings and the thoughts that I had for coming from both cultures eh.

Earl: So, that, that'll bring me to my next question, is uh..what do you think about the integration of traditional medicine and western medicine. How do you feel about using ceremonies along with western medicine for people to heal, from all kinds of disease, you know, what are your thoughts on that.

Phil: Well, my thoughts from my own experiences is that, they're both good. And once I start to understand about the indian medicines and how they were used and respected. And how to respect them. And the western knowledge, combining both together, uhh. Was a bit of a struggle for awhile, but through the ceremonies and through talking to different Elders and, and my upbringing there is nothing wrong with using both. It always was there, but now, to, to able to balance both is probably the next challenge for a lot of us to bring together, to understand basically. And, I guess integrate, I guess the word for me to integrate would.. is uhh, that word for me, I don't fully understand it, but I do understand adapting, because for me to integrate is to leave one thing thing and to become something else. So adapting, we've always adapted to everything in our life, especially to do with the western way of life. We can adapt no matter what comes to us as long as we are connected with our, with our ways of understanding nature and all the natural things that are there. And coming from an Aboriginal perspective

Earl: So that brings me to another question, would be is that, you know when, you know recently in your family you've had,... one of your children come down with cancer. And just with our conversation today. She said that she feels much more safer and more encouraged within the cultural aspect than she does within the western approach to this disease, and I guess you know I wanted to hear more about what are your thoughts were about the way people were

treated who have this disease within our traditional and cultural ways with medicine and compared to the western medicine, and how they treat people with this disease.

Phil: Well I again, coming from the experiences that I've, that I've known and watched and families that uh, that uh that have had this disease, like my wife herself, and she can basically tell you about her own experiences back in the 70's. When she was stricken by cancer, and she overcame it by going the native way, and still today she is very healthy in that area. And ah now with my daughter, having cancer, uh, she's using a lot of our native ways to be able to balance herself so she'll have the strength within her spirit to be able to I guess let her body heal herself as long as she understands how to, to respect all the things that she puts into her, into her, like the food, and medicines that she uses. So with that, the reason why she 's feeling safe I guess is coming from my perspective is that she's connecting with the spirits, the spirituality part of herself, connecting in the native , to native ceremonies where she feels really good and comfortable about her spirit, spirituality, feeding that, feeding that medicine in a natural way, and she trusts that more, and she feels safer that way more, whereas the western medicine, is that uhh, nobody can really give you that answer of how well you are going to get, but your body and your own spirit will connect you to a more safer direction and what she is experiencing now.

Earl: Well, yeah I guess you know like for me, what I believe too is that , you know our traditional ways of healing, our Cree ways is, is helped aboriginal people, the ceremonies help aboriginal people more than the actual medical profession, because it's a, our ways is more of a holistic approach to wellness and I guess this, this is how we deal with disease from a cultural perspective is that you know there's a you know, we have a certain group of people that we sweat with or we go to ceremonies with , and those people who are the ones that are helping us to become stronger. And I guess this is what I'm hearing about your family's situation is where your daughter feels more comfortable because of the support that she has from within that ceremonial, I guess group of people who are here supporting her and praying for her on a regular basis. But she also knows too that this also just doesn't stop with that ceremony, it carries on. Until she's better and even after she's better, it carries on. So our ways, just don't stop once our healing is completed, it carries on even after ... So could you talk a little bit more about your perspective of this?

Phil: Well, from again, from my own experiences, going through a different, different things in my life, I've and not only learning from myself I learn from other people along the way, on the path ..?.. and I've learned so much from all walks of life and people. Different cultures and even the languages, and all those, those are all powerful, I always call medicines. And uhh as long as you connect yourself with who you are as a person , whether it be aboriginal or non-aboriginal , when you connect yourself with your originality then the things that out there, that are out there for you to use, and if you can use them in a proper way , and I do believe our, we can heal ourselves and that is always a personal thing for me and also I respect the personal senses from people who want to go through this journey, and it's a process, It's not something that you can put a pill in you and then it turns into a different direction, but it's the process of your life and it's an ongoing thing until you die, that you need to look at different aspects of your life. And basically the way that I see it, the way I learnt in a very simple way, very simplistic, keeping everything very simple. And my way of going through my life balance was

using the medicine wheel concept, and it has helped me balance my way the best way I can every day. I look at all those four aspects of being human, whether it is physical, emotional, mental, and the spiritual part is the part that I don't worry about as long as I'm working on the three other parts. It's there, we all have it, it's inside us. We're not going to find it out there in a book anywhere, and not even in a pill. We need to, we need to brush up on some of that stuff that's in our way in order to find our spirituality. And then, and once we get to there, then, the healing starts. All the diseases that's within us will start to, will start to improve in many, many ways. And through our ceremonies, and through our sweats and through our doctorings and through our songs, and it just goes on and on, and we start to connect with, with all the natural things that are here for us to use. And so, that way it has helped me to overcome a lot of my, my a lot of my struggles in my life and not, and to understand other, other, not only cultures but other people that's around me. And that's including my family, to be able to support them the best way I can, and I, I find that when, with, with, with, what's happening to us in our family we're having a lot of support in which I'm so grateful for, because that makes us a lot stronger and a lot safer, to do what we need to do, to be able to go through a healing process. That support is so important, and again I say, it don't matter what culture you're talking about.

Earl: Hmmm, So one of the things too, is that we were talking about medicine men and women, and you were explaining to me the Cree word for medicine man, that it doesn't mean a medicine man, that it means someone who heals. Will you be, will you explain that one? The healing process.

Phil: Yes, in our, the way I was brought up and the way I understand it is that we don't medicine man like the English word medicine man, we say it "Muski-ki Eno" which means a person that will help you heal yourself. He'll give you a safe place to do what you need to do to for you. And uhh, and that's the way it has been explained to me and that's how I know it.

Earl: So when ah. Do you see a difference within the medicine man or the person that helps you to heal, in their attitude compared to western doctors, do you see a difference in their attitude and their whole personality towards dealing with you.

Phil: Very much so, I've, I've had a lot of experiences with the western professionalism, and the doctors and I myself went through a whole lot of series with different doctors and dealing with my situation, uhh with a bad back problem for many years, and, yeah the approach from the aboriginal perspective was so, so simple, and those doctors that we have, aboriginal doctors, some call them medicine men, however, each person uses that term. I see that they're more patient, they let you, they, they, they create a safe place for you to do the work yourself. By usin...they help you be giving you the right directions how they use these medicines and when they use them and so forth. And whereas the western doctor will not explain all that stuff to you. They're the ones that are doing all the driving force of what medicines they're going to give you. Whereas again, coming to a aboriginal perspective, its they just direct you and you do the actual work yourself.

Earl: So it's like the old people always say, you gotta do your own footwork, once you understand the process.

Phil: That's right.

Earl: So when we look at this whole business of health and healing and with the ceremonies and dealing with medicine people and western medicine, you know there's a lot of times that we, we use the two of them in combination together. Because there are some things that western medicine can do for aboriginal people or any culture, but there is the time when only our cultural medicines will work for us, in certain instances. Do you want to kind of expand on it a little bit

Phil: Well again the it's using again the holistic, When we say holistic that means that we're connecting with all natural things that are left here for us, all people, for us to use and in a way that we can balance not only our emotions, because that's where a lot of our sickness starts from our emotional side. And over the years we haven't really dealt with that so by the aboriginal perspective, that's the most important part. Where you need to deal with those, those areas. Whereas in the western, you take like the psychology they tell you when to come and deal with those issues at a certain time, but again we might not be feeling those areas at that times. So it, it you need to have time.. there is no such thing as really timing it. Whenever you're ready. Whenever you're ready and in an aboriginal perspective they're there for you when you're ready. They'll wait for you, they won't tell you when to come and deal with those issues, and that's what makes it so uhh, I guess a positive healing, because you're doing it yourself. The western medicine again, and I mean we need that, we need to work with it, we can balance it with our own, I guess go back again to the spirituality part to connect with all that.

Earl: Good, ok so I think we'll stop there for a moment and then we'll take a bit of a break and we'll .....laughter.