

BROCK UNIVERSITY LIBRARY



3 9157 00827896 5

Learning and Healing: A Wellness Pedagogy for Aboriginal Teacher Education

John Hodson

Department of Graduate and Undergraduate

Studies in Education

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Education

Faculty of Education, Brock University

St. Catharines, Ontario

© June 2004

JAMES A GIBSON LIBRARY
BROCK UNIVERSITY
ST. CATHARINES ON

Abstract

During the last 30 years Aboriginal peoples in Canada have made steady progress in reclaiming the responsibility for the education of their young people, especially in primary and secondary school. In comparison the education and or training of adult populations has not kept pace and many socioeconomic and sociocultural indicators demonstrate a continued confinement of those populations to the margins of the dominant society of Canada. It is the adults, the mothers and the fathers, the grandmothers and grandfathers, the aunts and uncles that are the first teachers of the next generation and the nature of these relationships replicates the culture of unwellness in each subsequent generation through those teachers.

There are few examples in the Aboriginal adult education literatures that give voice to the educational experience of the Learner. This study addresses that gap by exploring the perspectives embedded in the stories of a Circle of Learners who are, or were enrolled in the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education program at Brock University. That Circle of 10 participants included 9 women and 1 man, 6 of whom were from various *Anishinabek* nations while 4 represented the *Hotinonsbó:ni* nations in southern Ontario. They are an eclectic group, representing many professions, age groups, spiritual traditions, and backgrounds. This then is their story, the story of the *Learning and Healing* pedagogy and an expanded vision of Aboriginal education and research at Brock University.

Acknowledgements

Many of our traditions and ceremonies include a group of people who are intermediaries. They are the Sacred Helpers who act as mediators between one reality and another-guiding us, educating us, and encouraging us. The vision of the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education Program has only become a reality because of the work and sacrifice of the many talented women and men who have given tirelessly of themselves and deserve to be acknowledged and described as Sacred Helpers. They are too numerous to mention here but are acknowledged in full in the appendices of this work.

To my wife and partner Janie. You showed me that wellness was not an illusion. You sacrificed the child of your heart, the Women and Wellness Conference, to come to Brock University to do this work. Without you none of this would have been possible.

To my daughters Katie and Erin: I am, and have always been proud of you both. My love and respect for you knows no boundaries.

To Michael Manley-Casimir, Dean of the Faculty of Education at Brock University: I know that you have taken many personal and professional risks in support of the creation and continuance of this program. You will always be known by your deeds. Dr. Sybil Wilson and Dr. Sandra Bosacki nya:whe for their guidance and direction.

Nya:whe to my sisters, Linda Macgregor and Marg Raynor who offered support, prayers, medicines, humour, and your spiritual insights at our lowest moments and Carmen Robertson who worked shoulder to shoulder to make this program possible. Nya:whe to Merle Assance Beedie, Anishinabe Elder, teacher and friend: You have been an important part of my journey and my healing

Nya:whe to Dr. Eber Hampton, mentor, supporter and friend. Your work has inspired a

generation of Aboriginal educators.

I also acknowledge and humbly thank my ancestors who have directed me from the spirit world through my dreams. They have come down from the sacred mountain and have surrounded us, protected us, prayed for us, and fought for us.

Kina Nbanwemaa - All my relations.

Table of Contents

	Page
Abstract	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Figures.....	vii
 CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM	 1
Introduction - My Story.....	1
Background to the Problem.....	3
Statement of the Problem	8
Purpose of the Study.....	8
Questions to be Answered.....	8
Rationale.....	8
Importance of the Study.....	9
Scope and Limitations of the Study.....	10
Outline of the Remainder of the Document.....	11
 CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	 12
The First World Response to the Legacy of Colonialism: Attempts at Transformation.....	12
Canadian Attempts at Aboriginal Transformation	17
Healing Does Not Begin With Them, It Begins With Us.....	19
Beginning With Our Spiritual Realities	21
Healing Our Own Realities: What Does Work?	23
Learning and Healing: A Pedagogy of Healing and Wellness.....	27
Grounding A Learning and Healing Pedagogy in the Literature: An Explanation of Medicine Wheel Teachings.....	30
Beginning With the Spiritual Imperative	32
Understanding the Emotionality Inherent in a Learning and Healing Pedagogy	34
Our Intellectual Realities in a Learning and Healing Pedagogy: The Clash of Epistemologies ..	40
The Knowledge of Our Past Decolonizes Our Futures	44
Actualizing Our Physical Realities	46
Conclusion	48
 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	 50
Overview	50
Description of Research Methodology.....	51
Research Plan	53
Pilot Studies	56
Selection of Participants	57
The Talking Circle	57
Data Collection and Recording.....	58
Data Processing and Analysis.....	59
Methodological Assumptions.....	64
Limitations	64
Ethical Considerations.....	65
Restatement of the Problem.....	65

Summary of the Chapter	66
CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS	67
Acknowledging the Origins of Vision.....	67
Overview	69
Recognizing the Importance of Relationships: Fear and Building Community	70
Integrating New Knowledge: Validating Experience and Ethnostress.....	74
Acting in a Different Way: Sacrifice and Change.....	79
Conclusion	95
CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	100
Summary	100
Recommendations.....	102
The Converging Realities that Shape the Next Generation of Educational Activity.....	103
Where Is Brock University Now?	107
Where Does Brock University Want to Go?	109
How Does Brock University Get There?	112
Conclusion	114
References.....	116
Appendix A Glossary of Terms	122
Appendix B Acknowledgements	124
Appendix C Letters/Forms sent to Participants.....	126
Appendix D Ethics Department Approval Form	130

List of Figures

	Page
Figure 1. The Four Aspects of Self Medicine Wheel.....	31
Figure 2. The Stages Necessary for Successful Endeavour Medicine Wheel Teaching.....	63
Figure 3. The Learning and Healing Medicine Wheel.....	97
Figure 4. The Vision of the Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education....	111

CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM

Introduction - My Story

This study is a chronicle of the voices of Aboriginal people who have recently graduated from or are currently candidates in the first cohort of the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education program (ABADED) at Brock University. Their stories describe how their Aboriginal educational experience, grounded in a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy, encouraged the healing of themselves, their families, as well as their teaching practice and by extension their Nations.

My own story is irrevocably intertwined with the narratives of ABADED Learners. This work is also a chronicle of my healing journey and helps to illustrate Aboriginal experience and knowledge. Like many others I did not willingly choose to begin my healing journey. It was the imminent loss of my wife and children after years of my abusive behaviour that forced me to begin this journey. It has been almost two decades since that time and looking back on those early years I can remember very clearly the rage that was my reaction to the idea of personal change, a rage that sprang from my fear.

In my own experience nothing is more terrifying and resisted with more vigour than personal change or moving from unconsciously responding to life to consciously living. My healing journey has been a process of reflection about self, about family, and about community and the casting off of well-entrenched unconscious beliefs and values that I eventually recognized as untenable. It is a process that leaves one feeling vulnerable and insecure because what was understood to be fixed and unchangeable is now understood to be in flux and changeable.

I distinctly remember a point in that journey where I began to transcend the view that I was losing my identity and began to understand that I was consciously constructing a new

identity. I do not wish to suggest to the reader that I moved effortlessly through the various turns, hills, and valleys along the way. On the contrary, every new level, every new depth to be plumbed was vigorously resisted on my part. Only through the support, love and encouragement of others and yes, on occasion, the real threat of losing my family, was I able to continue to stumble along the wellness path.

Constructing my identity also involved dealing with my ethnicity and understanding how that ethnicity shaped the person that I was and might shape the person I wanted to be. Acceptance of that ethnicity and cultural heritage was by no means immediate nor was it an easy process as I was heavily influenced by my family's ethnic denial that spanned some three generations and is a direct outcome of their colonial experience.

Among my own ancestors, the experience of colonization fractured my family, separated the men and women from their traditional roles, lands, and culture resulting in alcoholism, imprisonment, and dysfunction at many levels. I recognize that these realities are a part of my ancestry. I understand how they came to be but I refuse to be a victim of the past.

This is only one part of my legacy. There is another aspect bequeathed by my ancestors that demonstrates strength of character, healthy survival skills, and an instinct to empathize with others. As my understanding of those turbulent times increased I began to appreciate how traumatic the experience was and I now refuse to judge their decisions because I have no way of knowing the conditions under which they lived and what they had to do just to survive.

My identity has been formed through a process of making sense of my own experiences, and accepting that my identity is inevitably linked to that of my ancestors. The

process has not ended; I am still working on making sense of my past and figuring out who I am.

Although each healing journey is unique, over the years I have heard many commonalities and similarities contained in those stories told by other Aboriginal people who are pursuing their own wellness. We all share a common bond that is the foundation of all our stories and that is that Aboriginal peoples around the world are linked by our colonial experience that was externally constructed to eliminate our cultures and absorb the human remnants into the greater society. I have also begun to understand that the wellness of a Nation begins with the healing of the individual.

Background to the Problem

All Indigenous peoples alive today have inherited a social reality that is rooted in the colonial experience of their ancestors. According to many educators and writers (Battiste, 1998; Deloria, 1999; Smith, 2002; Smith, 1999), the colonial experiment did not end in the early years of the twentieth century. In contrast, the literature suggests that colonialism is an ongoing reality that is conceived by governments, business, and industry for the express purpose of stealing lands, extinguishing cultures, often the people of those cultures, and absorbing the survivors into the greater society or marginalizing them to a position of servitude.

Countering this continued process of colonialism are numerous Indigenous peoples movements, including the American Indian Movement of North America, the African National Congress of South Africa, the Sandinistas of El Salvador, and the Zapatista Movement in Chiapas, Mexico—all dedicated to the pursuit of self-determination, the maintenance of culture, traditional lifestyles, and the right to live on their traditional lands. One does not have to look very hard to see the links between these movements and the

dominant society's often-violent response when those movements threatened the status quo. Many third world civil wars, military dictatorships, death squads, and other unimaginable horrors that the people of the West have witnessed on their nightly television news during the last 40 years are examples of those responses.

Aboriginal people here on *Turtle Island* have not emerged unscathed from our colonial past. That is, our contemporary socioeconomic and sociocultural inheritance is the outcome of the unprecedented efforts of every level of government for the last 200 years. During the last 100 years, the Nation of Canada, bolstered by the *Indian Act*, has worked tirelessly to develop assimilative tactics that separate Aboriginal peoples from their traditional economies, spirituality, languages, medicine, gender roles, and even our children for the express purpose of gaining control of lands and resources and absorbing the survivors into the greater society.

A Statistical Snapshot of that Colonial Legacy in Contemporary Canada

Canada continues to pursue the goals of colonization. Aboriginal peoples are largely separated from their traditional land bases, subsisting on tiny islands of the most marginal lands and gain little from whatever resources are extracted by mainstream business and industry. Resolution of Aboriginal land claims are so contrived and one-sided that a settlement can literally take a generation to complete. James Prentice (as cited in Goyette, 2001), a white Calgary lawyer and past co-chair of the Indian Claims Commission from 1994 to 2001, admitted that "There is, in my opinion, no other area of public policy in Canada or perhaps in any Western democracy, that operates in this manner" (p. A6).

Understanding the human cost of colonialism can be approached through the endless statistical studies of Aboriginal realities. This mind-numbing exercise can never accurately

reflect or even allude to the human tragedy in which Aboriginal people exist from birth to death.

When compared to other Canadian babies, Indian babies are twice as likely to die in infancy and three times as likely if those babies are born to Inuit parents (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996a, p. 127).

Indian women born in 1990 will die 6.5 years earlier than other Canadian women, while Indian men will die 7 years earlier (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996b, p. 120). Our young people are twice as likely to die from injuries sustained in motor vehicle accidents, or drowning, or in house fires, or homicides, or suicides compared to other Canadians. In some age groups that ratio widens to an astonishing four to one (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996c, p. 153).

In 1996 only 12 per cent of our young people completed their high school education (Jackman, 1999, p. 22). Only 22% of high school dropouts (15 to 24) will return to high school; another 11 per cent will take adult upgrading while 63 per cent will not return at all (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996d, p. 488). The unemployment rates of Aboriginal youth are more than double that of non-aboriginal youth, 31.8 per cent versus 15.1 per cent (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996e, p. 184).

In contrast to these statistics Aboriginal enrollment in colleges and universities is on the rise. In 1997 Indian and Northern Affairs Canada reported that, "In the mid-1960's there were about 200 Status Indian students enrolled in Canadian colleges and universities. By 1997-98 that number has soared to about 27,000" (p. 1). That glimmer of hope must be tempered by the fact that Aboriginal university graduates increased from 2 to 4 per cent between 1986 and 1996 and in that year 18 per cent of other Canadians graduated from

university. At that rate of increase Aboriginal people will reach 1996 mainstream parity in seventy years (Clatworthy , Hull & Loughram, 1995).

In short, every social or economic ill that can be quantified clearly demonstrates that Aboriginal peoples exist in a third world reality that is buttressed by levels of communal trauma unknown to the greater community of Canada and nowhere is this reality more pronounced than in Aboriginal adult populations.

Over the last 25 years Aboriginal peoples have made giant leaps in reclaiming the responsibility for the education of children. Today many communities, urban and rural, have band/community-operated primary and secondary schools, Aboriginal teachers, school boards, principals, and cultural programming embedded in their curriculum. The results have been encouraging with humble increases in high school graduation and more of our people entering postsecondary education.

Generally, Aboriginal adults have not benefited from these evolving educational realities and because of that we still lag far behind other Canadians in many areas as evidenced by the many social or economic indicators referenced earlier.

This and other converging realities highlight the need for a teacher education program for those who work in the teaching and training of adult populations, including the steady expansion of education and training programs directed at those populations at Aboriginal institutes, universities, and community colleges.

At the same time fully one-third of the Aboriginal workforce are employed to provide services to adult populations and many of them have some aspect of that work that can be described as teaching or training (Statistics Canada, 2003). Nurses, youth workers, health workers, band workers, literacy trainers, life skill trainers, police, and fire persons all have

some component in their work that is educational and because of that they have an opportunity to encourage and effect change in their adult constituents.

The experience of many Aboriginal educators (see Battiste, 1998; Castellano, Davis, & Lahache, 2000; Deloria, 1999; Hampton, 1995; Hill & George, 1995; Tafoya, 1995) has demonstrated that Aboriginal adults engaged in education or training require an environment and a pattern of doing that is significantly different from the prevailing mainstream model if Aboriginal people are to be successful in those pursuits.

Our historic relationship to education and training has been one that at the very least can be viewed as traumatic (see Milloy, 1999; *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Looking Forward, Looking Backward*, 1996) and at worst the primary means by which the mainstream has undertaken the cultural genocide of our Nations.

In more recent times this relationship has not improved and is evident in the continued low levels of graduation, completion, or success of our best and brightest who, on entering a foreign education or training environment, predictably fail in their endeavours and return to their families and communities further burdened by the stigma of “failure” eroding the sense of hope that we place in our future generations.

It is the cumulative legacy of our colonial experience that is the primary reason for the dysfunction in our communities. What counters this reality is an expanding, organic and broad-based healing and wellness movement that is international in scope and motivated by traditional values and cultures, as well as an understanding of wellness that is both holistic and decolonizing in nature. At its very essence the Aboriginal healing movement is about personal, familial and community change through a process that is at the same time, simultaneously learning and healing.

Statement of the Problem

There are few examples in the literature related to Aboriginal adult education that give voice to the Learners' experience of their education. I have attempted to address this gap in the literature by exploring the perspective of a group of Learners who are or were enrolled in the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education (ABADED) program that is grounded in an Aboriginal pedagogy. That subsequent narrative will provide a greater understanding for the processes of healing and wellness in the Learners' environment and how that experience informs their teaching practice.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions and experiences of the stories of Aboriginal adult Learners enrolled in the first cohort of the ABADED. An examination of those stories will reveal how and to what degree the individual wellness of the Learner impacted her/his family, teaching practice, and community life.

Questions to be Answered

There are four questions that will guide this exploration, including:

- How did participation in the program affect the Learner?
- How did participation in the program affect the Learner's family?
- How did participation in the program affect the Learner's teaching practice?
- How did participation in the program affect the Learner's community?

Rationale

In Canada, Aboriginal adults exist within disproportionate socioeconomic realities that closely resemble those of the third world. That reality is largely intergenerational in nature, passed from one generation to the next. Breaking the intergenerational cycle of dysfunction

and promoting healing and wellness in Aboriginal adult populations is the greatest problem faced by Aboriginal peoples in the 21st century.

My interest is simply to illustrate the relevance of an alternative pedagogical construct, rooted in our traditional values and beliefs, that forms the basis for an Aboriginal adult teacher education program designed to address the core issues relevant to Aboriginal adult populations. Pedagogy of this kind has the potential to disrupt that intergenerational cycle of dysfunction and promote personal, familial, and communal wellness in our communities.

Importance of the Study

Although Aboriginal needs are well represented in the descriptive literature dealing with Aboriginal education, there are few examples of an educational program designed to promote community-wide healing and wellness and none that rely on a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy as a basis for an adult teacher education program. Currently, there are no studies designed to determine the validity of this pedagogy with the view of understanding how and under what conditions healing and wellness is impeded and/or quickened. This study has the potential to inform the practice of other Aboriginal educators dealing with adult populations.

In addition, at this time Aboriginal peoples are at the beginning of the second generation of Aboriginal teacher education programs in Canada (see chapter 5). Native Teacher Education Programs (NTEP) or Aboriginal Teacher Education Programs (ATEP) have been designed to accredit Aboriginal teachers at the primary level and to meet the needs of the legislative criteria of various provincial education ministries and do little to address the real needs of Aboriginal children. Through this study, I have attempted to add to that literature and go further to inform the next generation of teacher education programs through the promotion of healing and wellness.

Scope and Limitations of the Study

The scope of this study is limited to the area of Aboriginal adult education and the education of Aboriginal adult educators. Although certainly related, Aboriginal adult education and training needs are distinctly different from those of Aboriginal children. In North America the body of knowledge related to the education of Aboriginal children (see Battiste & Barman, 1995) reflects a quarter of a century of development while the literature dedicated to Aboriginal adult education reflects the emerging discipline that it is. Because of this disparity I will periodically refer to the literature dedicated to the education of Aboriginal children whenever relevant and instructive.

In addition, the reader will note a distinct lack of references to non-aboriginal mainstream literature and theorists. My intention is not to disrespect those eminently worthy academics, theorists, and writers, rather it is my belief that the answer to the contemporary realities of Aboriginal peoples living on our Mother the Earth lies within us and our traditional ways of life. By “traditional” I do not mean that we return to our old ways of living that we experienced prior to contact with Europeans. What I mean is that the wellness of all Aboriginal peoples depends on casting off the dysfunction that is the outcome of our colonial experiences and returning to our traditional cultures, values, and beliefs. Given this then I choose to limit this study, for the most part, to the voices of Aboriginal peoples. This includes Aboriginal educators and writers as well as conversations with Elders, along with various teachings that I have been privileged to receive, and finally my own experiences as I have pursued my healing journey.

For other Aboriginal peoples who review this work I know that you will see your own realities within these pages. To quote the oft-heard phrase from my *Dayak* brother Trii, who

recently completed his MEd at Brock University and traveled to many of our gatherings and Ceremonies with me while he was in this territory: “All same!”

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

Chapter 2 creates a contextual reference for the reader that includes a substantive selection of the literature, oral traditions, and experiences of this author relevant to Aboriginal adult education.

Chapter 3 explores the methodologies used in this qualitative study of the voices of Aboriginal adult educators and trainers.

Chapter 4 includes the analysis and discussion of the findings, which represent the voices of those Aboriginal adult educators and the identification of the commonalties and themes embedded in those stories.

Chapter 5 is a recommended holistic vision of Aboriginal education and research at Brock University. This vision builds on the success that is evident through the voices of the Circle participants and extends the *Learning and Healing* pedagogy across the University and Aboriginal communities.

CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

A First World Response to the Legacy of Colonialism:

Attempts at Transformation

Many of the nations that had shed their colonial status and moved to independence during the twentieth century found it difficult to ignore the socioeconomic and sociocultural disparity between the original peoples of their nations and the dominant culture. Led by many of the wealthier English speaking nations of the West, a broad range of initiatives have purported to address the symptoms of colonialism in an effort to transform the reality of their Indigenous populations while ignoring the underlying beliefs and values that continue to form the basis for the disparity between the dominant and the dominated.

In 1995 post-apartheid South Africa enacted the *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act*. The ensuing Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings provided a platform for the stories of the gross human rights violations of the Apartheid Era holding those responsible to public account for their actions and at the same time granting wide amnesty to those who made full disclosure. At a colloquy held by the Joan B. Kroc Institute (2002), Charles Vila-Vicencio, former TRC Research Director noted that

...the TRC emerged as a bridge between the old and the new. The only other options appeared to be a blanket amnesty or Nuremberg-type trials, neither of which would have been likely to work. A blanket amnesty would have left victims without any recompense or even public acknowledgment of the wrongs done to them, which would have led to further eruptions of violence. (Lessons from South Africa's TRC, 2003, para. 4)

Vila-Vicencio admitted that the ability of TRC to transform the realities of the dominant and dominated South African cultures was questionable, as "many South Africans

remain ambivalent about the TRC, given how the past remains present in the form of poverty, oppression and crime” (Lessons from South Africa’s TRC, 2003, para. 6).

Walkom (2000) notes that in the early 1990s the Australian government appointed a Council of Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) and throughout that decade worked “...toward a so-called reconciliation document – something that would have had the moral, if not the legal, effect of a treaty” and, “would have included a formal apology... for past injustices” (p. B2).

Sullivan (2000) takes up the story

...the target was reconciliation by Jan. 1, 2001-the 100th anniversary of Australia’s birth as a nation ... on the eve of a major ceremony to mark reconciliation between black and white Australians, the prime minister’s stubborn refusal to apologize for the mistreatment of generations of Aboriginals threaten[ed] to tarnish a decade of work. (p. A22)

Then-Prime Minister John Howard objected to the language in the reconciliation document that apologized to Aboriginals for past injustices. “He argued that an official apology would confer “cross-generational guilt.” In Howard’s defense, he only reflected the will of his constituency as CAR research found that “many Australians [were] uneasy at the idea of collective blame. But the research also shows Australians overwhelmingly believe Aborigines have been mistreated” (Sullivan, 2000, p. A22).

Armitage (1995) exposes the roots of the intransigence so prevalent in the Australian experience when he writes that

These views [of Australia] constitute a rejection of Aboriginal society – a rejection which has been part of Australian Aboriginal policy in both the eighteenth century ... the nineteenth century. Those who believe that genuine respect is due Aboriginal

peoples despair at how those of European descent continue to assume that they have the right to subordinate all interests to their own. (p. 39)

Unlike that of their Australian cousins, the *Maori* relationship with the *Pakeha* is governed by the *Treaty of Waitangi*. From the signing of that document in 1860 until 1975 there was a vast difference in the ongoing interpretation of the document by both signatories. The Pakeha view has been that the *Treaty* is a historic document of cessation of Maori lands and rights while the Maori believe that they agreed to a partnership that continues to frame the relationship between both parties.

Over the next century the assimilation of the Maori was the goal of the dominant society or as one British official (cited in Caulfield, 2002) put it, “aiming at a double object, the civilization of the race and the quieting of the country” (p. 6). Like the Canadian and Australian experience, education was the primary tactic employed to achieve that goal and, after three generations of unrelenting assimilationist education and supporting legislation, Maori culture and language was at risk of disappearing and the people were marginalized to the very edges of the society.

By the early 1980s the degree of cultural and political marginalization spawned what Graham Hingangaro Smith (cited in Caulfield) described as a “revolution of political consciousness.”

In 1982 Maori elders came together for a *major hui* (large gathering) [italics added]. One of the main concerns was the imminent prospect ... of the death of the Maori language. In discussion at this gathering, the idea that Maori communities should revitalize Maori language by developing immersion preschool language nurseries was developed. As a result, Maori elders and leaders went back to their respective communities, families, and tribal groups and began to develop what has become

known as the *Te Kohanga Reo* initiative: to take preschool children into total immersion Maori language nurseries ... It is important to understand here that the idea, the initiative, and the implementation of this language revitalization revolution of 1982 may be significant not so much as a language revitalization initiative, but as a major shift in the thinking of Maori people with respect to no longer waiting for a “benevolent” Pakeha society to deliver on Maori aspirations. (p. 7)

Over the intervening years this small but significant act of cultural resistance has spread from preschool, to primary, secondary schools and into the realm of higher education. The related cultural renaissance has encouraged the articulation of *Kaupapa Maori* theory or Maori philosophy, which embraces the two key principles of the revitalization of knowledge, culture/language and the development of increased levels of Maori academic achievement at all levels that now underscores and informs all interactions between the Maori and the Pakeha today.

The degree to which the Aboriginal peoples in South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand capitalize on the transformative initiatives of the dominant societies and promote real socioeconomic and sociocultural change within their communities has been tempered by numerous local realities. Those realities include a lack of tribal homogeneity and differing political, social, economic, and cultural aspirations. Treaties also play a significant role in the transformative impetus. Some of the nations overviewed have no treaties with their Indigenous peoples, while others have only one to contend with, and still others have a multitude of treaties that were undertaken to form the legal basis for the relationships between Aboriginal and colonial. However, dominant governments have consistently subverted, ignored, and otherwise set aside those same treaties in the rush to create their nationhood and build economies. Only in the closing years of the twentieth century have

those same governments been forced by their own judiciary to grudgingly uphold those original agreements. But again there are many instances where Supreme Court decisions have been subverted by newly enacted legislation or those decisions have been interpreted in favour of the dominant agenda (see Donald John Marshall Jr. *v. Her Majesty The Queen*, 1999). What is consistent across all contemporary post-colonial experiences has been the reliance on education as the primary tool of decolonization.

It is a mistake to assume that colonialism is an anachronism to be relegated to the unenlightened nineteenth or even twentieth centuries. Recalling the contemporary Maori experience in New Zealand, educator Graham Hingangarao Smith (2003), suggests that colonialism has not ended but rather taken on a new guise prompted by the “free market reforms of the 1980s.” Smith contends that these reforms and the associated neo-liberal mythology of “equity, democracy, individualism and choice” were created to, “maintain the status quo of the privileged class and maintain the existing hierarchies.” Another Maori educator, Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), would encourage us to be wary of buying into the growing post-colonial discourse, which suggests that the colonizers have left. “There is rather compelling evidence that in fact this has not occurred. And even if they have left formally, the institutions and legacy of colonialism have remained” (p. 98).

Similar market reforms in the United States brought similar pressures to bear on Indian people, prompting Vine Deloria, Jr. (1994) to reflect that

... this pressure was disguised under the argument that all people, being citizens, should enjoy the same basic rights. Thus where Indians have preserved hunting and fishing rights, the right to self-government, tax exemptions on land, the power to zone reservation lands, the cry was to bring about equality, there was no corresponding effort to provide these things that allegedly all Americans enjoyed. (p. 5)

Canadian Attempts at Aboriginal Transformation

Decades of intransigence and neglect by the government of Canada culminated in the dramatic and horrific events in what have become known as the Oka Occupation. After decades of encroachment by the surrounding non-aboriginal communities and an ever-dwindling land base, the Mohawk community of Kanesatake Quebec (as cited in MacLaine & Baxendale, 1991, p. 12) made repeated attempts to halt the expansion of a golf course onto their traditional burial grounds by the nearby resort town of Oka. After exhausting all available legal options, barricades were thrown up and the land in question was occupied by an armed group of the Mohawk Warriors, women, and children in April of 1990.

The ensuing standoff literally galvanized world opinion as night after night the media broadcast images of well-armed contingents of the Canadian military squared off against a few Mohawk Warriors. In the end, one officer of the Sûreté du Québec was killed, numerous charges were laid, there were riots in nearby cities, and sympathetic highway barricades were erected across the nation.

On the whole Canadians didn't like the horrific images of brutality because it conflicted with the popular understanding of Canada the "good," Canada the "tolerant," and they responded by bringing unparalleled pressure to bear on the Federal government to address the needs of Aboriginal peoples and transform their realities. Wright (1992) recalls that "Hundreds of Canada's most prominent citizens and organizations took out a full-page in the *Globe and Mail* condemning the government's action and demanding the recall of Parliament to discuss the crisis and the demands of the First Nations for sovereignty" (p. 34).

Shaken from their complacency by the violence of those conflicts and wishing to be seen to do something, the Federal government established the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in August of 1991 with a broad and all-encompassing mandate.

The Commission of Inquiry should investigate the evolution of the relationship among aboriginal peoples (Indian, Inuit and Métis), the Canadian government, and Canadian society as a whole. It should propose specific solutions, rooted in the domestic and international experience, to the problems that have plagued those relationships and which confront aboriginal peoples today. The Commission should examine all issues which it deems to be relevant to any or all of the aboriginal peoples of Canada ...

(1996, p. 2)

Aboriginal peoples in Canada placed great hope in the subsequent *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* and the visionary plan encapsulated in that body's volume "Gathering Strength," now referred to in many Aboriginal circles as "gathering dust." That comprehensive plan proposed to deal with the core issues of governance, land, and resources as well as economic rights that give rise to the dysfunction left by the colonial policies of the past and continue to this day.

It has been more than 6 years since that report was issued and most would agree that little has changed in the interim. Aboriginal peoples can only conclude that the Federal government has chosen to manage the Aboriginal problem in Canada and utilize the tactics of delay, minimization, and litigation rather than co-create a vision of nationhood that is better suited to the new millennium.

And so the contemporary dysfunction so well-delineated in the Assembly of First Nations' (AFN) constitutional report *To the Source* (as cited in Cairns, 2000) connects the legacy of colonialism to the same values and beliefs so evident today.

[Canadian policies,] have left an ungodly mess, one that our people spoke about in pain and anger ... White values, white institutions half-killed us and are killing us now. We were a proud and independent people; we have been reduced, through Euro-Canadian intervention, to poverty and massive social, familial, and personal distress. (p. 34)

Healing Does Not Begin With Them, It Begins With Us

There is an *Anishinabe* story that recalls that at the dawn of time when the Creator breathed life into the two-leggeds, He created four colours of humanity; a light-skinned nation, a yellow-skinned nation, a red-skinned nation, and a dark-skinned nation. The story recalls that each nation received a fundamental gift from the Creator that would become the foundation on which their respective civilizations were established. The yellow-skinned peoples received the gift of relationships, the red-skinned peoples were given the gift of holism, and the dark-skinned peoples the gift of complexity, while the light-skinned peoples received the gift of movement. The story recalls that as long as those nations remained close to the Creator and each other, those gifts were mutually supportive, complementary, and worked together. There came a time when each nation moved away from the Creator, with the last to leave being the red nations and, since that day, those gifts have become the primary point of disunity among the four colours of humanity and the root of the dysfunction in their own societies. The story ends by recalling that there will be a time when the Creator will call all nations back to Him and that the first to respond to that call will be the red nations who will lead the way for the others to follow.

The attempts of South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Canada to change the realities of their respective Aboriginal peoples have met with little success (see Armitage, 1995). For the most part those attempts have been limited to changing the socioeconomic realities of those peoples while ignoring the core issues that give rise to the dysfunction in

which the oppressor and the oppressed exist. It is only by addressing those core issues that real change will occur, but to expect the dominant nations to take the lead in that process means that they must surpass the limitations inherent to the socioeconomic model in which those nations are mired.

Canada, like many other nations, does not currently have the political will to address Aboriginal issues in this way. To pursue this course means that Canada will have to confront the woefully inadequate system of beliefs and values on which the society is based and which AFN concluded in the constitutional report *To the Source* (as cited in Cairns, 2000) would “contribute greatly to the healing of Canadian society ... [and its] ideology of power-grabbing, money-grubbing, exploitation, and divisiveness [which] is bankrupt (p. 34).”

Canada is not sufficiently motivated at this time to lead or actively participate in a process of this magnitude for a number of reasons. Canada’s continued viability as a nation state does not depend on a national reconciliation movement. Nor does Canada stand on the threshold of civil war and/or social disintegration, making the collective trauma to the national psyche associated with such a process a more viable and palatable alternative.

It should be clear to all Aboriginal peoples that Canada is unwilling to experience the collective trauma that is the natural outcome of confronting the illusions of a national mythology of values and beliefs that has destroyed our communities. It is simply unrealistic for Aboriginal peoples to expect Canada and Canadians to confront the core issues that are part of the colonial past, understand how that past influences the present relationships with Aboriginal peoples, and by doing so heal and liberate our shared futures.

Paulo Freire (1970) understood the starting point of mutual liberation when he wrote that

This, then, is the great humanistic and historical task of the oppressed: to liberate themselves and their oppressors as well. The oppressors, who oppress, exploit, and rape by virtue of their power cannot find in this power the strength to liberate either the oppressed or themselves. Only power that springs from the weakness of the oppressed will be sufficiently strong to free both. (p. 26)

Paulo Freire understood that real and fundamental change would only occur through the efforts of oppressed peoples themselves. In Canada then, the responsibility and the power to change our shared realities does not reside in the hands of the oppressor; it resides in the hands of the oppressed.

Thus, it is imperative for Aboriginal peoples on Turtle Island to come to terms with the fact that we must heal our own realities. To fully comprehend the magnitude of the task ahead we must understand the underlying motives that drive the Canadian colonial enterprise and key among them is the Christian missionary movement. This is the starting point from which we can begin to come to terms with the core issue on which we must focus our energies.

Beginning With Our Spiritual Realities

European Christianity has had an influence in this territory, now known as Ontario, since the 1600s when the Recollects and the Jesuits (as cited in Parkmen, 1997; Sioui, 1999; Trigger, 1990) began their various missions among the *Wendat Confederacy*. Over the next four centuries in Canada the imposition of Christianity on Aboriginal peoples has been relentless and Aboriginal peoples have been the pawns in an unholy chess match between competing Christian sects in an effort to ostensibly win souls to Christ and civilize the savage. No other tactic of this missionary zeal has and will continue to have a more lasting impact on Aboriginal peoples than the residential school system in Canada.

Milloy (1999) recalls that

Of all the initiatives that were undertaken in the first century of Confederation, none was more ambitious or central to the civilizing strategy of the Department [of Indian Affairs], to its goal of assimilation, than the residential school system. In the vision of education developed by both church and state in the final decades of the nineteenth century, it was the residential school experience that would lead children most effectively out of their “savage” communities into “higher civilization” and “full citizenship.” (p. 22)

It is not unreasonable to describe the residential school era as the Aboriginal holocaust of Canada. To fully comprehend and relate the totality of the subsequent impact of this experience is well beyond this author’s capacity and the scope of this study. To put it into perspective and fully appreciate the impact of this holocaust will take decades as we are only now beginning to tell the stories and make meaning of that experience.

How that experience is connected to our current realities is best described through the words of Chief Ed Metatawabin (as cited in the RCAP) of the Fort Albany First Nation who told the then-Minister of Indian Affairs in 1990 that

Social maladjustment, abuse of self and others and family breakdown are some of the symptoms prevalent among First Nation Babyboomers. The “Graduates” of the “St. Anne’s Residential School” era are now trying and often failing to come to grips with life as adults after being raised as children in an atmosphere of fear, loneliness, and loathing. Fear of caretakers. Loneliness, knowing that elders and family were far away. Loathing from learning to hate oneself, because of the repeated physical, verbal or sexual abuse suffered at the hands of various adult caretakers. This is only part of the story. (1996, p. 376)

What then are we to conclude when we consider this experience and view the vast and sad panorama that is the residential school era? Surely, it is too simplistic to suggest that the primary motive of the residential school era was the Christianization of the savage.

An alternative view is that the primary outcome of the Federal government and the various sects of Christianity has been the elimination of an epistemology and an intergenerational continuum with the metaphysical that was a part of the natural experience of the Aboriginal community. This has forcibly disconnected us from our traditional spiritual experience, leaving us functionally rudderless in the corporeal world and without a framework for behaviour. I will address this epistemological conflict in more detail later in this chapter.

Our resulting collective dysfunction then, is the physical manifestation of our collective spiritual disconnection that is a direct outcome of our experience of colonialism. Or simply put, the outcome of our colonial experience is a disease of the spirit.

Healing Our Own Reality: What Does Work?

The Healing and Wellness Movement in Canada

As is our custom, I begin this section by recognizing and acknowledging the existence of a vital and diverse movement that is dedicated to the healing of our Nations. It is a movement that is grounded in our traditions and cultures and receives its authority and inspiration from the grass roots of our communities. It is a movement that is in many instances led by women who are directing their energies, creativity, and knowledge at numerous local and national projects and endeavours.

This movement should be understood to be a contemporary response to a contemporary social reality as the pursuit of personal wellness and wholeness has always been the supporting framework of our cultures and can be observed in our ancient

ceremonies. The cultural diversity of Aboriginal peoples means that the movement is not homogeneous in nature but interpreted and actualized based on local conditions, culture and tradition. Nonetheless, Aboriginal peoples in Canada are linked by the commonality of our colonial experience that continues to this day. The most blatant and violent examples of that mindset can be observed in the Oka, Gustofson Lake, and Ipperwash conflicts. The more insidious, and perhaps destructive, can be seen in the decades-long land claims process, or the unilateral approaches of the Federal government on almost every aspect pertaining to the Indian Act.

At the conclusion of 4 years of research, hearings, and submissions, the RCAP completed a final volume entitled *Renewal: A Twenty-Year Commitment* that outlined a plan for fundamentally transforming the relationship between Aboriginal peoples and Canada. A key component of that plan was the establishment of a \$350 million healing fund and an independent Aboriginal Healing Foundation (*The Foundation*) that would

... begin to meet some of the healing needs of Aboriginal people affected by the Legacy of Sexual Abuse and Physical Abuse in Residential Schools Including Intergenerational Impacts. (p. 2)

During the last 3 years *The Foundation* has provided financial support for hundreds of initiatives that support the healing of our Nations. Typical of these initiatives is the Native Women and Wellness Conference-East.

The Native Women and Wellness Conference-East

The woman is the foundation of which nations are built, she is the heart of her nation. If the heart is weak, the people are weak. If her heart is strong and her mind is clear, then the nation is strong and knows its purpose.

~Art Soloman (cited by M. Stevens, personal communications, January 21, 2003.)~

In 1994 two Aboriginal women from Barrie, Ontario were inspired after attending the Women and Wellness Conference in Saskatchewan and responded by organizing The Native Women and Wellness Conference-East (*the Conference*).

Today, the organizing Committee of the Conference has enlarged significantly and includes a diverse group of women from many communities, age groups, and backgrounds. As those women have given they have also received in expanded skills, abilities, and self-confidence and have become leading voices in the area of the healing and wellness of women.

This year (2003) will see the ninth Conference and from humble beginnings that endeavour now attracts hundreds of Aboriginal women and a growing number of men every year to address their personal, familial, and communal wellness issues. Usually held over a 3 day period at a major hotel in the Barrie/Toronto area, attendees are exposed to a warm and inviting environment where those working on behalf of the organizing Committee welcome them respectfully. Creating and maintaining a safe, respectful, and supportive environment is a constant concern of the Committee.

Each Conference is dedicated to exploring some social issues that currently exists in Aboriginal communities. Residential schooling, substance, and physical and sexual abuse have all been explored at the Conference by speakers that recall their stories of struggle with that particular issue in their lives. As might be expected, many of the stories are often difficult to hear and can trigger an emotional response in a participant who recalls a similar memory that has long been suppressed. To deal with the possibilities of emotional triggering,

the Committee recruits female counselors, identifiable by the turquoise vests that they wear, and reserves a number of private healing rooms for those who require the support of a counselor to cope with a personal crisis spawned by a Conference experience.

As one might expect, a women's conference comes complete with children. In response, the Committee offers safe and competent childcare on site each year.

Evenings are reserved for entertainment and laughter. Well-known Aboriginal artists share their talents and their stories with the participants. The one constant at all of the *Conferences* from the beginning has been Cecelia Firethunder, a respected Lokota comic and social activist. Firethunder, known for her earthy and outrageous style of humour, conceives her work in support of the Conference's themes in such a way as to both entertain and educate.

Emphasis on addressing the spiritual needs of all who attend has reflected the realities of location and participant openness and acceptance. Inclusion of ceremony has grown as the participants have moved past their fears that are grounded in the legacy of a predominantly Christian background that taught that traditional ceremonies were akin to devil worship. Moving from what could be described as humble spiritual beginnings, today's Conference is grounded in the spiritual necessities of the people and includes a number of Sweat Lodge Ceremonies open to those who are interested in participating.

One would think that the atmosphere of the Conference would correspond and reflect the horrific subject matter. Instead, one is struck by the amount of laughter in the hallways and in the various sessions.

To those unfamiliar with Aboriginal ways of learning and teaching, the Conference is much like any other conference but what is happening is a pattern of traditional Aboriginal education in a contemporary setting. Spiritual acknowledgement and ceremony, a focus on

creating a safe environment, relationship building and support, laughter, the emphasis on women and family, the reliance on the oral tradition by sharing personal stories that deconstruct a particular aspect of a person's life, are all traditional forms of teaching and learning, in this case dedicated to the healing of the participants.

Much of what I know about learning and healing originates from my experiences and observations as a helper at the Conference, my ongoing involvement in our ceremonies, and gatherings, and my discussions with Elders, men, and women actively involved in education and the wellness movement. It is with this understanding in mind that I proposed to bring the healing and wellness movement and the underlying values and beliefs into the training of Aboriginal adult educators who will in turn use it in their practice.

Learning and Healing: A Pedagogy of Healing and Wellness

The second part of the strategy was to develop curriculum on healing principles which could be used towards credit for university and college courses. The curriculum would also be used for hands-on training of caregivers in the communities.
~Cal Morrisseau, *Into the Daylight: A Wholistic Approach to Healing*, 1999, p. 80~

Learning and Healing, as a pedagogical pattern, is a spiritual endeavour, and because of this nature, resists our attempts to fully comprehend and communicate what *Learning and Healing* means, how it transpires, and under what conditions. *Learning and Healing* embraces a distinctly Indigenous understanding of personal growth that is not intended to further problematize Aboriginal peoples by suggesting that we are in some way unwhole or incomplete. Instead, *Learning and Healing* should be viewed as a wellness model that understands that we are all on a healing journey and that journey to a large extent is in our control. We can approach a deeper understanding by considering the patterns and underlying motivations contained in our traditional ceremonies. The Sweat Lodge, the Sun Dance, and the Vision Quest followed by many Nations or the *Hotinonsbó:ni* Condolence Ceremony, all require us to consciously sacrifice our physical and material selves to seek

spiritual insight and restore the balance within ourselves and in the world around us. If in these sacred endeavours our motivations are pure and worthy, we will receive assistance from the spirit-world, but that assistance is rarely provided in the way that we would expect. Often the assistance comes in the form of tests that, if we choose, help us to grow in our adherence to our spiritual values.

When we are immersed in a process of *Learning and Healing*, we have an opportunity to not only create a relationship with ourselves but also with others who are likewise engaged. These heart-to-heart relationships organically expand into mutually supportive communities of like-minded people who can flourish and continue their own healing journeys in an environment that is safe and respectful to all.

The natural outcome of this environment is the opportunity to begin the process of decolonization, of gaining knowledge and an understanding of what we have experienced and how it has shaped us today. This process is dualistic in nature and offers opportunities to connect and deconstruct both our historic and contemporary realities to discover why we are the way we are and how we have incorporated the values and beliefs of the colonizer into our lives. At the same time we gain insights that encourage us to leave behind those alien values and beliefs and to discover a new relevance and confidence in our traditional values and beliefs, which we naturally begin to incorporate into our everyday lives.

As a result we begin to move through our lives in a different manner, making different choices, demonstrating different behaviours; some refer to this as “walking the good red road.” There is also a perceptible change in our way of being that is noticed by others around us. As we make changes in ourselves our spirits become stronger and more whole. That expanding wholeness affects the world and creates change although we may be unaware of that occurring.

It must be understood that a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy is not imposed on an individual as residential schooling was imposed on us. Nor is the degree to which one is successful in pursuing wellness qualified, quantified, or otherwise judged by anyone other than the individual engaged in the process. Rather, *Learning and Healing* is entirely an individual process of self-discovery, actuated and controlled by the individual for the benefit of the individual.

Learning and Healing recognizes that this process of discovery begins with the premise that Euro-Canadian values and beliefs, as they currently exist, have no functional utility for Aboriginal peoples. Our point of departure must begin by acknowledging that Aboriginal people and the Federal government of Canada exist within a dysfunctional co-dependent relationship from which we need, to the absolute degree possible, to extract ourselves. Certainly, there are limitations to this extraction that are grounded in the fiduciary relationship established through the *Indian Act*. Our goal is to discover how colonialism has impacted on our selves, our families, and our communities.

The structure of education, as we currently understand and practice it, discourages this process of self-discovery. The role of the Aboriginal adult educator/trainer is to facilitate this process by co-creating an environment that addresses the spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical. Only then will individuals have the opportunities for reflective analysis that encourages new understandings and new ways to move closer to wellness in their lives.

Learning and Healing is not new educational theory, nor should it be considered emerging knowledge. *Learning and Healing* is the contemporary expression of our traditional forms of education which were conceived as a way of promoting and maintaining balance in the individual, the family, the community, and the Nation.

Grounding a Learning and Healing Pedagogy in the Literature:

An Explanation of Medicine Wheel Teachings

Until recently my home was in *Anishinabek* territory, it is only in the last few years that my family and I have relocated in *Hotinonshó:ni* territory. Because of this my traditional teachings reflect the teachings of the Anishinabe rather than the Hotinonshó:ni. My use of Anishinabe teachings is not meant to imply superiority, nor by engaging them in this study do I elevate them above the teachings of other Nations. I have been told that every Aboriginal Nation has its equivalent to the Medicine Wheel that reflects the epistemology of those cultures. Over the years I have been exposed to Hotinonshó:ni teachings and *Mikámaq* teachings, to name a few, and I recognize and acknowledge them as both sacred and holistic in their inception and contemporary relevance. Simply put, Medicine Wheel Teachings are what I have been taught and what I know and they have and will continue to assist me throughout my life.

It is best for the reader to conceive Medicine Wheel Teachings as a series of interrelated circles that in and of themselves form a larger circle. Each Medicine Wheel Teaching within the circle is a self-contained and comprehensive teaching that connects and relates to the circle on either side. Each Wheel is bisected into four quadrants and it is understood that the Creator resides at the centre of those quadrants. For the purposes of this chapter I choose to review the literature that supports a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy based on the Medicine Wheel Teaching that speaks of the four aspects of self (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. The four aspects of self Medicine Wheel.

This particular teaching contends that a human being has a spiritual, a physical, an emotional, as well as an intellectual reality. For the individual to be in balance, each aspect of that individual must be in balance and any impact on one reality has an impact on the whole. Few human beings can attain this balance in their lives and the pursuit of this balance is the lifelong pursuit of wellness. It seems fitting that a teaching conceived to express the need for one to continually seek balance throughout life should become the organizing principle for a literature review that supports a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy.

Beginning With the Spiritual Imperative

Chickasaw educator Eber Hampton (1988) is quite emphatic when he writes that “the first standard of Indian education is *spirituality*” (p. 19).

Hotinonshó:ni educator Taiaiake Alfred’s (1999) call for the restoration of *Kaienerekowa* among the Hotinonshó:ni Nations reflects a similar understanding that begins by acknowledging the spiritual and moves outward to others and to the earth. Alfred writes that “the spiritual connections and fundamental respect for each other and for the earth that were our ancestors’ way and the foundation of our traditional systems must be restored” (p. xiv).

Alfred’s understanding is echoed by Hampton (1988) who relates his Nation’s “central prayer as, ‘Help me for my people’s sake’” or, “Pity me ... for all my relatives” (p. 19) while some Anishinabe pray, “kina nbanwemaa,” which roughly translates to mean “all my relations.”

The nature of Aboriginal spirituality begins with the sacrifice of self for the benefit of one’s relations which includes all of creation. Recalling a fast, Hampton tells of his dawning realization of an expanding consciousness that placed him as part of a greater totality.

On the second day of the fast, as I prayed I began to ask myself, 'Who are my people?' Over the following days my identity expanded from my own skin outwards to family, friends, relatives, Indian people, other humans, animals, growing things, to finally reach the earth itself and everything that is. (p. 20)

Hampton's expanding awareness of his relationship with all of creation is a repetitive theme among all Aboriginal peoples and speaks to the connection between the land and the spirituality of the people.

In pre-contact times, Aboriginal education did not separate spirituality from the learning experience as we do today in the dominant school system. We were and still are spiritual beings experiencing a physical existence that was gifted to us by the Creator. That reality still surrounds us, envelopes us, nurtures us, and we in turn can acknowledge that reality through prayer that sacrifices ourselves for the benefit of our families, our communities, our Nations, and eventually to all creation.

Lakota educator Vine Deloria, Jr. (1991/1994) sees that much of contemporary Aboriginal education as it is now practiced, "is a barrier to a permanent revival of tribal religions" (p. 247). If we do not begin to include our traditional approaches to spirituality as the central supporting element on which we hang and arrange our education experience we risk realizing what Deloria predicts:

... as more Indians fight their way through the education system in search of job skills, their education will increasingly concentrate on the tangible and technical aspects of contemporary society and away from the sense of wonder and mystery that has traditionally characterized religious experiences. (p. 247)

Aboriginal Learners and educators attempting to embrace their spirituality as an active part of the educational experience face a difficult task fraught with fear and doubt about

contradiction and incoherence. Mikámaq educator Marie Battiste (cited in Battiste & Barman, 1995) believes that to allow those emotional responses to dictate our actions will “lead us to structures and systems that resemble the old assimilationist models” (p. xiv).

Understanding the Emotionality Inherent in a Learning and Healing Pedagogy

Anger is an emotion of powerlessness.
~Georges Lopez, *The Toronto Star*, April 6/03 p. A4~

The Sub-Opressors Among Us

To understand the primary origin of the conflict that arises from the emotional responses described by Battiste we must turn to Freire (1970) who wrote that

... during the initial stage of the struggle, the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation tend themselves to become the oppressors, or “sub-oppressors.” The very structure of their thought has been conditioned by the contradictions of the concrete, existential situation by which they were shaped. (p. 27)

Our collective experience of colonialism has shaped our contemporary selves, our identities are subconsciously interwoven with our dysfunction and we fear change because we cannot comprehend what change will bring. For Aboriginal people the tenacity with which we hold on to our individual and collective dysfunction can have disastrous results. Intergenerational blood feuds, community schism, and violence are all common realities.

Young (2003) wrote that

In our quest for identity, we sometimes make ourselves into deadly clowns, believing a host of ridiculous ideas which become so important to our lives that we shun friends who disagree and, at a mass level, destroy whatever is alien in pursuit of some noble purpose. We will kill people, even ourselves, to vindicate our belief system. (p. F9)

If the first standard of Aboriginal education is spirituality, we need to acknowledge and understand the emotional response related to raising that standard in our educational

experience. Conflict and conflict avoidance is a common reality in contemporary Aboriginal communities and is inevitably part of the experience of Aboriginal educators who are engaged in any form of adult education. Celia Haig-Brown (1995) suggests that this type of “work is often fraught with conflict [which] must be recognized as a productive aspect of that work, not as a personal shortcoming” (p. 262). Taiaiake Alfred (1999) adds that the “reality is fearsome in its demands, responsibilities, and burdens” (p. 80). While Maori educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) moves beyond the notion of mere conflict and reflects levels of anger and the sense of powerlessness that pervade Aboriginal lives and brings the reality into sharp focus. “There is also a naïveté about the real-life ‘dirtiness’ of political projects, or what Fanon and other anti-colonial writers would regard as the violence entailed in struggles for freedom” (p. 186).

Today many Aboriginal communities reflect a religious disunity that is so prevalent in the dominant society. For generations adherents of one Christian sect have been pitted against another Christian sect and many families today are divided along Christian or Traditional spiritual lines as a result. Overall, the subject of spirituality is connected to such raw emotion and pain that any discussion on the subject is to be avoided at all cost, and yet our traditional understanding was quite different.

Responding to the conversion arguments of an early Christian missionary, Seneca orator Sagoyewatha (as cited in Wright, 1992) admitted in part that the Hotinonshó:ni religion “teaches us to be thankful for all the favours we receive; to love each other, and to be united. We never quarrel about religion” (p. 232). Our contemporary religious conflicts are the outcome of our colonial experience and we need to return to the understanding so elegantly related by Sagoyewatha and recognize that our spiritual diversity is just a matter of individual expression. In the end there is only one religion and that is the religion of the

Creator. Marie Battiste (1998) captures the challenge of Aboriginal educators and Learners when she writes that:

As Aboriginal people approach the 21st century, the need is great for a transformed education that enriches our character and dignity, that emerges from one's own roots and cultural experiences, from which a voice once powerless can be raised, and where diversity is seen as an asset, not a source of prejudice. (p. 8)

The other most often heard objection to a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy is that it somehow transgresses the traditional ethic of non-interference. Of this ethic, Hotinonshó:ni psychiatrist Dr. Clare Brant (as cited in Ross, 1992, p. 12) explains that

The Ethic of Non-Interference is probably one of the oldest and one of the most pervasive of all the ethics by which we Native people live. It has been practiced for twenty-five or thirty thousand years, but it is not very well articulated This principle essentially means that an Indian will never interfere in any way with the rights, privileges and activities of another person This principle . . . is all-pervasive throughout our entire culture. We are very loath to confront people. We are very loath to give advice to anyone if the person is not specifically asking for advice. To interfere or even comment on their behavior is considered rude.

Cal Morrisseau (1999), referring to the pre-contact Anishinabē understanding of non-interference recalls “the ethic of non-interference allowed members of society to experience life in each their own way, thus creating a reality based upon their own experience” (p. 5).

In pre-contact cultures, non-interference was an appropriate ethic within the context of a well society where conflict or dysfunctional behaviour was minimal. During those times conflict among the people had the potential to threaten the survival of the community and therefore could not be ignored.

That is not to say that conflicts did not arise; Voget (as cited in RCAP, 1996 a) wrote of the Hotinonshó:ni:

Strenuous efforts were made to reconcile the persons and the families of victim and offender, for the consequences of the blood feuds that prevailed among them [the *Hotinonshó:ni*] were kept fresh in their memories through recitals of the Great Law. (p. 60)

In effect, those who reject *Learning and Healing* on the basis that it transgresses this ethic are at the very least supporting the status quo and perhaps even further enabling the dysfunction in our communities. Cunningham (as cited in Cruikshank, 1994) pointedly writes:

... what one says when one declares neutrality (or objectivity) is that one is quite satisfied with the present organization of social relationships and the distribution of resources in society. Those who “have” in society rarely see the need for change as clearly as those who “have not.” (p. 136)

Our pre-contact institutions dealt with conflict in a very different way than the European. Our cultural imperative was about restoring the balance and encouraging the wellness of individuals and the cohesiveness of the community. If it was determined that an individual was unable or unwilling to work toward her or his wellness and that individual threatened the survival of the community, make no mistake, the community response could be swift and merciless. Banishment was commonplace, as was taking the life of an individual who was chronically unwell and disruptive.

We cannot separate our ethic of non-interference as it existed in pre-contact times from 200 plus years of colonial oppression and suggest that the ethic still has utility today. To do so is to deny the current state of our communities. The communal nature of our

ancient cultures has been morphed by our assimilation experience to a point where conflict of any kind is to be avoided at any cost no matter what the consequences. This has created a fertile environment in which destructive behaviours can and do flourish.

Even our medicine institutions have not survived unscathed. I recall hearing a well-respected *Anishinabe Pipe Carrier* wistfully lament that abuse of women would cease if every man claiming to be a Pipe Carrier took an aggressive stand against the abuse within their sphere of influence. In effect the man was saying that Pipe Carriers have the respect of their communities and their voices are listened to. They also have the responsibility to maintain traditional values, which includes the protection of women and children. Yet the reality today is that many would rather turn a blind eye to abuses of all kinds than interfere. All of this is to say that the ethic of non-interference is only relevant within a community that is functional and well; it never has been a societal imperative.

Those who invoke the ethic as a means to discredit a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy are either unaware of the context in which the ethic existed in pre-contact times and exists now or are themselves in denial. *Mushkego Métis* writer Kim Anderson (2000) alludes to the emotional pitfalls involved as we seek to know how our colonial experience has impacted on our current realities.

Our losses and our need to reclaim our original ways can lead us down the dangerous path of romanticizing, generalizing or essentializing our heritage and traditions. We may unwittingly seek to lodge ourselves in a perceived golden age of our ancestors. We must therefore be attentive to the incredibly complex nature of tradition and how we use it. (p. 34)

Struggle and the emotional realities tied to that struggle are an ever-present operational reality. We must understand and come to terms with the fact that a *Learning and Healing*

process means examining the layers of our colonial experience to comprehend the cumulative impact of that experience, and by doing so move past what comes naturally.

Through this examination we seek to comprehend how the assimilation policies have caused a radical shift away from our traditional values and toward Euro-Canadian values that are now woven into the fabric of our worlds. These values are now part of an underlying warp that is almost obscured by the overlying weft of despair.

Learning and Healing is a disruptive process. To press the metaphor even further, there is a common and natural fear felt by those engaged in a process that seeks to reveal the warp and discover how mired they really are, will result in the further destruction of the fabric of their worlds. It follows then that those who embrace a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy in their work must be prepared for the inevitable conflict that arises from those who would reject it out of that fear.

Celia Haig-Brown (1995), recalling a conversation with Marie Battiste writes:

... these issues of conflict are often misinterpreted among Native educators who tend to personalize their conflicts. The fact that transformative work is often fraught with conflict must be recognized as a productive aspect of that work, not as a personal shortcoming. (p. 23)

Our Intellectual Realities in a Learning and Healing Pedagogy:

The Clash of Epistemologies

The white man does not understand the Indian for the reason that he does not understand America. He is too far removed from its formative processes. The roots of the tree of his life have not yet grasped the rock and soil. The white man is still troubled with primitive fears. The man from Europe is still a foreigner and an alien. And he still hates the man who questioned his path across the continent.
~Luther Standing Bear, Lokota. (1933). *Land of the Spotted Eagle*.~

A friend recently shared a dream that he had about me. In that dream he was given two words that he was supposed to tell me. One was the word “Staff” as in *Eagle Staff* and the other was the word “Pipe.”

My friend asked if those words had any significance to me. They acted as memory prompts and I recalled a situation and a connected dream of my own that included the passing of an actual Eagle Staff to my friend’s uncle and another dream in which I was given a *Pipe* by people from my past who had passed from this physical existence long ago.

In my dream I had the opportunity to study that Pipe and on waking I completed a detailed drawing of the unusual design, which I eventually constructed. Over the next 4 years I rarely used that Pipe in my prayers. If I were to reflect on why, I would have to admit that I questioned my worthiness but there was also a sense of incompleteness. Something else needed to be done before I could use that Pipe as a means to connect this corporeal world with the incorporeal world.

After I shared my dream of the gifting of an Eagle Staff and my Pipe dream, my friend asked me if that Pipe had been awakened. I admitted that it had not and my friend, who is a *Pipe Carrier*, offered to convene that Ceremony on my family’s behalf.

I have waited for 4 years for that next step in my healing to occur and that Ceremony came at the culmination of 4 difficult years through which I have been tested repeatedly.

For some who read this they will say it is a quaint story but irrelevant to this work. Others will react more strongly and consider it to be devil worship, and still others will question my sanity; but this experience, those dreams, that Ceremony are part of my way of knowing. I tell this story because it demonstrates the fundamental difference between an Aboriginal epistemology and the dominant epistemology of the greater society. The tension between these two epistemologies is at the heart of the conflict between Aboriginal peoples on Turtle Island and the first Europeans who landed on our shores and it continues today with their descendants.

It is difficult to imagine any two epistemologies that are more fundamentally and dramatically opposed than that which had its origins in Europe and that which evolved on Turtle Island. Willie Ermine (1995) captures the fundamental differences between each when he describes, "One was bound for an uncharted destination in outer space, the physical, and the other was on a delicate path into inner space, the metaphysical" (p. 101).

Today this epistemological focus on outer space and the physical has become the foundation for the dominant Western society and a dominant reality. It is a place where knowing only occurs within the confines of the physical world. It is a place where only what can be observed, measured, counted, touched, and weighed is valued.

It is where the myth of objectivity exists and contends that somehow those who are attempting to know can get outside of, or otherwise separate themselves from their experience in the process. Of those who subscribe to this myth, Freire (1970) writes, "To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic" (p. 32).

It is the place where, Ermine (1995) observes “Western science, the flagship of the Western world, sought answers to the greatest questions concerning our existence and our place in the universe by keeping every thing separate from ourselves” (p. 102).

In comparison Ermine contends that Aboriginal epistemology

... is grounded in the self, the spirit, the unknown. Understanding of the universe must be grounded in the spirit. Knowledge must be sought through the stream of the inner space in unison with all instruments of knowing and conditions that make individuals receptive to knowing. (p. 108)

My progenitors sought to understand the universe while being part of the universe, “... by exploring existence subjectively; that is, by placing themselves in the stream of consciousness” (p. 104). “The fundamental understanding was that all existence was connected and that the whole enmeshed the being in its inclusiveness” (p. 103).

It is an inclusion that embraces both inner and outer worlds and other beings in which Deloria (1999) includes, “... dreams, visions, and intraspecies communications, when they are available, as a natural part of human experience” (p. 67).

It is partly through our Ceremonies and Rituals that we can connect to this journey, which, Ermine writes, “are corporeal sacred acts that give rise to holy manifestations in the metaphysical world. Conversely, it is the metaphysical that constructs meaning in the corporeal” (p. 106). It follows then that a system of education that forcibly disconnects the teachers and Learners from their traditional metaphysical experience will exist in a corporeal world that has little meaning. Elizabeth Minnick (as cited in Battiste & Henderson, 2000) adds that “it is in and through education that a culture and polity, not only tries to perpetuate but enacts the kinds of thinking it welcomes, discards and/or discredits the kind it fears” (p. 6).

Battiste & Henderson (2000) observes the resulting societal wasteland that is a direct result of this metaphysical disconnect created by education as we now practice it.

Eurocentric curricula isolate the known self; instead of creating communities, they reinforce specialized interests among students. These curricula teach that knowers are manipulators who have no reciprocal responsibilities to the things that they manipulate. These students may know a body of transmitted knowledge or a set of skills but they do not know how to learn or how to live in freedom. Often these students have no inner sense of truth or justice. (p. 88)

Vine Deloria, Jr. (1999) suggests that a system of education that separates knowledge of skills from knowledge of self is a health risk for Aboriginal peoples because it

... raises severe emotional problems as they [Aboriginal peoples] seek to sort out the proper principles from these two isolated parts of human experience. The problem arises because in traditional Indian society there is no separation; there is, in fact, a reversal of sequence in which non-Indian education occurs: in traditional society the goal is to ensure personal growth and then to develop professional expertise. (p. 139)

Marie Battiste (1998) believes that

... as a result, disconnected from their own knowledge, voices and historical experiences, cultural minorities in Canada have been led to believe that their poverty and powerlessness is the result of their cultural and racial status and origins. In effect, their difference is the cause of their impoverishment state. (p. 7)

The subconscious but clear message to the dominated engaged in Eurocentric education is one of cultural inferiority and second-ratedness, which encourages powerlessness, self-hatred, and anger.

Taiaiake Alfred (1999) alludes to the need for the decolonization of our teachers and their role in promoting a process of decolonization within our communities.

People who can shape ideas, translate, and create language will be essential to the process of decolonization, once we have created an informed and critical polity by increasing the general level of education in our communities. (p. 142)

Bringing the subconscious legacy of our colonial experience to our conscious minds and discovering that our ancient intellectual heritages are more relevant today than ever before should be the goal of all Aboriginal educators. This decolonization of our communities begins with the intellectual pursuits of decolonization and cultural affirmation of our teachers.

The Knowledge of Our Pasts Decolonizes Our Futures

Today, all Aboriginal people on Turtle Island are the descendants of colonized peoples and the entirety of that colonial experience was designed to eliminate our cultures and absorb us into the world of the colonizer. Not many would successfully argue with this statement; the historical record alone overwhelmingly supports it. But what does it really mean to us today? If we are in essence the inheritors of our ancestors' colonial experience, what exactly have we inherited?

Some would suggest that our inheritance has been a culture of oppression the results of which can be seen in the staggering levels of dysfunction at the individual, the familial, the communal, and National levels. For the most part we are unconsciously accepting of this cultural reality. It is the norm: We live it, we understand it, it is what we know. Taiaiake Alfred (1999) refers to this state of being as "the 'colonial mentality' [that] is the intellectual dimension in the group of emotional and psychological pathologies associated with

internalized oppression” which “prevents people from seeing beyond the conditions created by the white society to serve its own interests” (p. 70).

In his landmark work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Paulo Freire (1970) observed that ... the oppressed, who have adapted to the structure of domination in which they are immersed, and have become resigned to it, are inhibited from waging the struggle for freedom so long as they feel incapable of running the risks it requires. (p. 29)

For education of oppressed peoples to be meaningful, Freire understood that the process of learning must “confront [their] reality critically, [while] simultaneously objectifying and acting upon that reality” (p. 34). It is through this type of assessment that we turn our unconscious realities into a conscious awareness and understanding for our colonial inheritance.

All of this activity is involved in deconstructing the legacy of colonialism and walking on a healing path, which is part of a decolonization process. Decolonizing means growing to understand our colonial past and the legacy that we are left with in our communities, our families, and ourselves. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) outlines the absolute importance of decolonizing when she writes, “our colonial experience traps us in the project of modernity. There can be no ‘post-modern’ for us until we have settled some business of the modern” (p. 34).

Although the levels of abuse of all kinds in our communities are unimaginable, few are looking past those physical manifestations that permeate our communities and attempt to come to grips with the roots of this dysfunction. The common root that connects all Aboriginal peoples on Turtle Island is our experience of colonialism, but that experience has not been homogeneous in nature. Every Nation has the opportunity to peel back the layers of that experience to understand how the experience affected them as individuals, families,

communities, and Nations. It is through this process of decolonization that we reveal the core elements of our cultures and the disparity between our traditional beliefs and values and our contemporary selves. This revelation allows individuals to see themselves in a non-threatening way and to make changes, as they are willing and able to do so.

Actualizing Our Physical Realities

The physical realities of Aboriginal peoples are a testament to our colonial experience and a defining characteristic in our communities today. We labour under disproportionate levels of diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, obesity, HIV/AIDs, and substance abuse that are directly attributed to the radical change in our diets, our poverty, our levels of inactivity as well as the ethno-stress that is so prevalent that it has become the norm (see Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1996, 3, pp. 107-201). Ironically, our very physical existence can be considered dangerous to our own health and this is the milieu in which we subsist.

There is both a private and public component related to being engaged with a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy. The private element is best understood to be a dual process of decolonizing our lives and physically realigning our lives to reflect the associated deeper level of awareness that places us outside the dominant physical milieu.

I recall coming to a realization that my colonial heritage included the intergenerational destruction of my family through alcoholism. I could look back at my mother, my aunts and uncles, to my grandfather and great grandfather and see a bottomless alcoholic well of misery and destruction that generations of my family had immersed themselves in. I could look back further and see how alcohol had and still plays a key role in the destruction of our peoples. Eventually I had to look at myself and see that I was unconsciously recreating what I had observed and through that observation what I had learned. My reflective analysis was

coupled with an awakening spirituality that created a greater consciousness around the issue of alcohol that generated a physical response. Eventually I reached a point when I could no longer rationalize the consumption of any alcohol in my life. I couldn't spend one more dime on an industry that plays such a huge role in the destruction of so many lives. The reader should not assume that this short personal story is indicative of the time involved in this process of giving up alcohol, which in reality took a number of years.

My expanding awareness created by reflecting on my past and connecting that past to my own life, resulted in my moving past those unconscious assumptions to the physical and public act of abstaining from the consumption of alcohol. Over the years I have followed a similar path in my non-ceremonial use of tobacco, one of our most important *Sacred Medicines*.

Those around us do not witness our internal struggles; they only see the physical manifestations that are the result of those struggles. Few measure us by our struggles, most measure by our failures. I once asked an Elder why and this is what she told me.

Visualize a pile of crabs in a bucket, crowded, standing on one another living off the meager resources in that environment. Eventually one crab manages to grab onto the top of the bucket and pull itself out of that environment. Do the other crabs push her up? No they grab onto her and pull her back down.

The Anishinabek say that the red nations received the gift of "holistic vision" and sometimes I think that this is the reason we are so observant of others. We are "watchers," we watch everything and everyone around us. And yet we are conditioned to expect and I think, hope those around us will fail.

Sometimes pursuing our physical wellness means moving outside those ways and standing up for what we believe and being prepared to say this is not right no matter what the cost.

Conclusion

A number of first world nations made attempts to transform the realities of their Indigenous populations late in the twentieth century. Australia, Canada, New Zealand, and South Africa have all made efforts to reconcile the socioeconomic malaise of their respective Indigenous populations that is a direct result of 200 plus years of colonial rule and assimilationist policies. Attempts to transform these contemporary realities that are so closely linked to the colonial experience have realized limited success because they have not addressed the core issues related to the loss of culture, which is the natural outcome of the concerted effort at cultural elimination.

In response to this and to the threat of cultural and linguistic extinction, some Indigenous peoples, notably the Maori, are mobilizing in an effort to revitalize, invigorate, and renew their cultures through numerous education initiatives that place language, values, and beliefs at the centre of the enterprise.

In Canada the expression of the cultural reclamation has been driven by a grassroots wellness movement that looks to understand how colonialism impacted Aboriginal lives spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. What drives this quest for understanding is a process of decolonization that includes cultural affirmation and inculcation. This process is the framework for the theory of *Learning and Healing* that supports the ABADED program at Brock University. This teacher education program is designed to encourage the wellness journey of the candidates through a process of decolonization and cultural affirmation and increase the skills and capacities relevant to the

education of adult populations. ABADED takes the position that educators of adults can play a significant role in promoting healing and wellness in their communities through their work as educators of adults. In addition, the ABADED program encourages candidates to recreate their wellness experience in the lives of the individuals they work with by bringing *Learning and Healing* into their teaching practice.

This research study is an attempt to better understand how and to what degree *Learning and Healing* theory impact the ABADED candidate, their families, their teaching practice, and, by extension, their communities through the stories of a group who were part of the first cohort of the ABADED program.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Overview

In 1988 Eber Hampton wrote in his EdD dissertation that “the lack of a theory of Indian education not only hampers research; it also impedes the practice of Indian education” (p. 11). Given that Eber proceeded to ground his subsequent research in traditional teachings that he received as a boy, I suspect what he meant was there was little written theory at the time. Over the last 15 years there has been an expanding body of research dealing with Aboriginal education theory coming from Aboriginal and non-aboriginal scholars alike living across our Mother the Earth. And yet that expanding body of knowledge has not been overwhelming in its growth. Perhaps Aboriginal educators are too involved in the “doing” of Aboriginal education, leaving little time to devote to explaining to others what they are “doing.” I suspect that at least part of the reality stems from the difficulty for Aboriginal researchers to carve out a space for their cultural approaches to education and research within the academy. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) understands a similar situation when she suggests that the space for Maori research “is severely limited as not only has it had to be wrested from the state, but from the community of positivistic scientists whose regard for Maori is not sympathetic” (p. 189).

The Aboriginal epistemological struggle for recognition by the positivistic state and positivistic authorities plays itself out in limiting the expression of Aboriginal education that is grounded in our cultures and ways of knowing. This limits our ability to move the discourse beyond theorizing, beyond a discussion of best practice into research that reflects and would inevitably support the validity and inclusion of a different pedagogy that can be seen as being in competition with the mainstream.

This study begins with the premise that the ABADED program is one of a few university teacher education programs in Canada that transcend barriers and limitations and is grounded in an alternative way of knowing.

Description of Research Methodology

On the first page of her book *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* Maori educator Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) admits that “from the vantage point of the colonized, a position from which I write, and choose to privilege, the term ‘research’ is inextricably linked to European imperialism and colonialism” (p. 1).

Smith’s words mirror my struggles in writing this chapter and I admit that I have had difficulty in reconciling the needs of the academy’s culture with the needs of my culture. This struggle has meant that I have sought compromises between both ways of knowing, always realizing that periodically those compromises will not fully satisfy the needs of either culture. Throughout this experience I have sought guidance by framing my work within the confines of the “Aboriginal Ethical Use Statement” developed and used extensively as a guiding principle within the confines of the ABADED program (Hodson & Raynor, 2002).

The Aboriginal Ethical Use Statement is intended to recognize, value, and embrace Aboriginal principles, which are interpreted, understood, and expressed in different ways by various Nations. This knowledge is an integral part of the cultural heritage of the First Peoples of Turtle Island and is to be shared as a gift from the Creator for the benefit of all. Fair and principled use of these teachings must be done in a way that respects their origins and intentions. (p. 5)

Accordingly, I have resisted the inclusion or discussion of any ceremonial information and therefore certain aspects of the narrative may appear brief or even vague. One might find this position at odds with the spiritual backdrop so prevalent in this work. I ask the

reader's indulgence and consideration in this regard as I firmly believe that knowledge of this nature is gained through an elaborate contextualized learning experience and that learning is not within the scope of this study.

For many Aboriginal societies, the Clan system is the fundamental organizing principle around which the society is structured. Clans are part of the Aboriginal democratic tradition and assume positions of privilege while accepting certain responsibilities that are unique to that Clan. Members of each Clan are duty-bound to participate in a consultative process that clarifies the issues, and elucidates a clear understanding of any given situation. From inception the ABADED program has relied extensively on consultation with the Aboriginal community, whether seeking direction during the initial visioning and developmental stages (see Kompf & Hodson, 2000) of the program or seeking ongoing advice from the community through Brock's Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) and sites that currently host classes. The ABADED program has embraced this fundamental building block of Aboriginal community and it seems fitting that this fundamental Aboriginal cultural tradition be maintained during this research study by using a Talking Circle (*Circle*) methodology as the primary means of engaging that consultative tradition.

At one level this Circle methodology can be understood to be what Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to as grounded theory "that provides a procedure for developing categories of information, interconnecting the categories, building a "story" that connects the categories, and ending with a discursive set of theoretical propositions"(p. 150) that will establish a clearer understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the ABADED program. At another level this methodology creates a reciprocal relationship between the researcher and the participants who see their cultural norms embedded and respected in a research study and their thoughts and feelings heard, many for the first time (see Castellano, 2000). In

addition, the consultative interaction engages a synergy that encourages participants to build on the words of another, or have their experience validated through the experience of others within the Circle. Thus Aboriginal communities move away from being the subjects of research to being partners and active participants in that research, which has the additional benefit of building local capacity and familiarity with research (see Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Freire, 1970; Linda Smith, 1999).

Research Plan

This study then, is designed to bring a deeper understanding of the experience of Aboriginal Learners engaged in a *Learning and Healing* experience that forms the pedagogical underpinning of the ABADED program at Brock University. This qualitative approach is an attempt to understand how that experience impacted upon the Learner's wellness, and moved out into their family, and their community through their practice as teachers and/or trainers of Aboriginal adults.

Aboriginal cultures recognize that the natural outcome of a process devoted to understanding is the establishment and strengthening of personal relationships. This cultural imperative is a driving force within a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy and within this study. That co-constructivist approach includes the researcher as an active participant in the process that seeks to reveal a shared understanding as a group rather than as researcher and subject. This experience is further enhanced through the inclusion of ceremony, prayer, and other cultural protocols. This study will employ a Circle approach as a way of actualizing these cultural imperatives. This approach moves away from the interviewer and participant approach so prevalent in mainstream research to a more consultative approach.

I take my lead in this design from Eber Hampton's (1988) description of being unhappy with his initial research design and the eventual "happy solution ... to drop most

of the questions from the interview schedule and to encourage the participants to elaborate by my active listening and co-operation” (p. 12).

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are recognizing the potential that applied research has to change the socioeconomic and sociocultural realities of Aboriginal communities. In essence their efforts are about envisioning an alternative conceptualization of research in such a way that the enterprise is grounded in Aboriginal cultural norms. In some instances this has generated tribal protocols that protect Aboriginal communities from unscrupulous researchers or safeguards to traditional/cultural knowledge and perhaps most importantly, assures that any research is reciprocal in nature, bringing benefits to both the researcher and the participant or the participant’s community (see Battiste & Henderson, 2000). This Aboriginal conceptualization has driven the realignment of the procedures and ethics protocols of research funders and universities to better reflect Aboriginal concerns and aspirations (see Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council, 2003). There is however, a notable lack of debate related to the actual hands-on doing of Aboriginal research and this has prompted me to develop a research design that embraces traditional approaches to research, like the Circle, as well as embracing technological solutions for the collection, transcription, and analysis of the data.

Collecting and recording the stories of the participants was one area in which I wished to engage a more modern alternative than audio recording that relied on cassette tapes. I recognized that this analog approach severely limited the quality, quantity, and the transcription of the recording. I was very interested in looking at digital recording equipment and, as luck would have it, another Brock University student provided the entry point into this new technology. I am part of the traditional Pow Wow drum group Wü Nimkiika (Gathering Thunder) that includes a number of Brock students. Steve Baranyai is Anishinabe

completing an undergraduate degree in business and he is also a member of the same drum group. Steve is an audiophile who enjoys collecting the songs of other drum groups as he travels from one Pow Wow to another throughout the summer months. Steve was also frustrated with the limitations of analog tape systems and he decided to invest in a Sony Walkman minidisk system (model # NEDM707) and he readily shared his new toy with me and explained how versatile this new technology is. For those unfamiliar with this technology, it records on a 3 inch recordable disk that can be uploaded to any computer and electronically “washed” to eliminate any extraneous sound, equalize the levels of output, and maximize the overall quality of the file, which in turn is downloaded onto a standard CD for transcription. What this means is that the final product is extremely uniform in nature and can be easily and quickly manipulated at the transcription phase without the limitations that are inherent in the mechanical nature of tape and analog recordings. The technology is also very small, approximately half the size of a package of cigarettes, and one disk will record 5 hours, eliminating the bother of halting the discussion to run over a cassette. This meant that the technology did not intrude into the proceedings and because of this I believe the reliability of the stories related to the participants was increased because they were less apt to edit themselves because they were being recorded. Like anyone my age, learning to use new technology is a challenge so I engaged Steve and his equipment to record the Circle proceedings, clean up the file, and create CDs for the nominal fee of \$100.00.

Most methods of transcribing audio recordings can be tedious and time-consuming. I investigated the possibility of technologically skipping that stage by employing a voice recognition software solution like Dragon Naturally Speaking, that would allow me to listen to the recordings on a headset and repeat what I heard to my computer, and thereby create a transcribed text file. Although the technology does exist and is successfully used by many

people with physical disabilities, I discovered that the software requires some time to learn and adapt to the user's speech patterns. Not having that kind of time to invest, I opted for the standard approach of listening to the recordings and manually transcribing what I heard in a Microsoft Word text file. I had completed roughly half of the transcription when I realized it was going too slowly so I employed my daughter Erin to complete the other half of the transcription. Every evening I would review Erin's work and listen to the recordings to assure transcription accuracy.

Early on in the process I had to decide whether or not to leave the transcribed narrative as I found it, or to add to it to clarify what I thought was being said or referred to. I decided to basically transcribe the recordings as they were adding as little as possible to clarify issues for the reader. The final transcriptions that included my clarifying additions were sent to the participants for their review and comment.

Pilot Studies

My primary goal of the pilot study was to determine if the four research questions struck a balance between the correct degree of open-endedness to allow the participants latitude in their discussions but not too prescriptive as to stifle the natural flow that is part of a Circle environment. I asked two graduates of the ABADED program to visit me in my office and asked them to respond to the four questions. I was pleased to note that their responses were all most immediate, open, and they were naturally inclined to build on each other's ideas, creating an insightful discussion. Listening and then considering what I had heard, I concluded that their responses were very similar to other less formal discussions that I have had with ABADED Learners in the past. This, combined with the fact that both the Learners had already graduated from the program and would not be tempted to embellish on

their experience, I was confident that the process and the questions would result in a rich, meaty, and reliable discourse.

Selection of Participants

It had been almost a year since that first cohort completed the five core courses of the ABADED program. During that intervening period those candidates had an opportunity to reflect on how their experience of the program had impacted on them, their families, and their communities.

The 10 participants were randomly selected, literally picked out of a hat, from the entire first cohort of the ABADED program. The resulting sample included those Learners who had completed their degrees or certificates and those Learners who are still completing their undergraduate work. I have chosen not to include an extensive description of the participants to protect their anonymity. Instead, I have included standard demographic information including age, gender, employment background, previous education, and national identity within the narratives in chapter 4. My rationale is simple, Aboriginal communities are very small and everyone knows everyone else. Some of the stories include radical, by Aboriginal standards, statements, revelations, or criticisms that may place some of the participants at risk of reprisal if they were to be identified.

The Talking Circle

The four questions described in chapter 1 act as prompts to guide the resulting consultation within the Circle. In effect, the experience of the Circle is the primary research instrument and because of the unpredictability of that experience it is difficult to validate or quantify. Eber Hampton (1988), however, describes a similar natural experience when engaging Aboriginal participants in his research. "They [the discussions] constituted neither question-and-answer nor a critical discussion but a reflective discussion that enable the

participants including me, to build our thoughts together in a cumulative or some time exponential way” (p. 13). This type of “reflective discussion” rather than “critical discussion” is more conducive to Aboriginal communication styles.

In addition, the Circle relies heavily on the intuition and timing of the researcher to probe, link ideas, or ask for further explanation from the participants as a way of assisting them to focus their consultations and their revelations.

Data Collection and Recording

After the participant group was selected I contacted them by telephone and informed them in detail of the study and of the proposed date for the Circle. If they agreed with the focus of the study and were available, they were asked formally if they would accept an offering of tobacco. If they agreed to participate they were mailed a package of information that again detailed the study, and provided directions to the location, as well as a participant release (see Appendix B). If for any reason a participant was unable or unwilling to attend the Circle another candidate was randomly selected to replace that first participant. As is the accepted Aboriginal tradition, the participants were assured that they would be reimbursed for their travel expenses and fed prior to the Circle being convened.

Site selection for the Circle was a critical consideration and primarily based on enhancing a non-institutional, non-academic environment, and thereby increase the overall comfort of the participants. The location selected was the Roots 4 Peace Sharing Centre (R4P), located on Six Nations of the Grand River territory. R4P positions itself as a mini-conference facility and ceremonial grounds that offers a large comfortable meeting area, a full dining facility, and was geographically central for most participants. The spiritual reality of Aboriginal peoples is highly diverse in nature and therefore it is logical to assume that the participants would align themselves with a number of those spiritual traditions. R4P

embraces all spiritual traditions and is therefore understood to be neutral ground by the community at large. In general, R4P is deemed to be the most conducive to the overall spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and physical needs of the Circle.

The spiritual needs of the participants were addressed at the onset of the Circle by completing certain Ceremonies from both the Hotinonshó:ni and Anishinabē traditions. In addition, the participants were invited to initially introduce themselves and to speak about anything that was on their hearts or minds. The details of the study were again explained to the participants by myself, with the assurance that they were welcome to decline to participate even at that point in the process without penalty.

Finally, the Circle participants were given and received tobacco as a token of the burgeoning relationship and the spiritual nature of the endeavour.

I anticipated that the Circle consultation would go on for a least 3 hours, which it did and the proceedings were digitally recorded and that the resulting transcripts were then sent to the participants to assure validity. Participants were encouraged to review the transcripts and to point out any incongruities, inconsistencies, errors, or omissions that they noted.

Data Processing and Analysis

The majority of the CDs from the Circle were transcribed by myself. However, once again my lack of time to complete the task forced me to employ my daughter Erin to transcribe the final one third of the data. Each evening I would check the accuracy of Erin's transcription against the recordings and make any necessary corrections. The final transcription was then uploaded into Ethnograph Software Program v5.0, which is ideal for managing and manipulating large amounts of descriptive textual qualitative data. As the Circle methodology is somewhat akin to a focus group where the stories of the participants follow a logical progression loosely framed by the four research questions, the data were in

chronological order and could be included almost verbatim. For the purposes of this study I have chosen to identify the dominant themes within the narrative and provide an explanation and analysis of those themes.

Finally, I have adopted Patton's (1990) three-stage approach to the analysis of data, which includes:

1. Content analysis to make the obvious, obvious;
2. Interpretive analysis to make the hidden obvious; and
3. Critical analysis to make the obvious and hidden dubious.

A reflective and detailed review of the transcription helped to identify the dominant thematic threads that cut across and tied the narrative together. These "threads" were allotted identifying codes that were subsequently included in the transcription file that was created in Ethnograph. The program allowed me to easily separate and study these dominant thematic threads that were evident in the narratives and by doing so develop a deeper understanding for those themes and the associated phenomena. There are four obvious and repetitive themes that were evident in the narratives, including:

- The participants' direct or indirect reference to their "fear," both prior to entering the program and throughout their experience of the program was a constant. To overcome that "fear" the participants repeatedly recalled a process that began with "acknowledging" their "fear" and then seeking support to overcome their "fear" by "building community" in the classroom. I used the code (AFBC) to identify all references to these phenomena.
- In describing their ABADED experience, participants consistently recalled diminished levels of stress when compared to their antecedent mainstream education, which meant they carried less ethnostress into their family situations. The

predominant recollection was “forgiving” themselves for past behaviour that came out of their “ethnostress” and undergoing a consciousness-raising process that included “validating experience” by giving voice to the experience of themselves, their fellow Learners, and through the Aboriginal voices on video or through the written voices of other Aboriginal peoples. I used the code (FEVE) to identify all references to these phenomena.

- The narratives demonstrated an increased personal “commitment” to the phenomenon of “sacrifice” and “change.” In many instances the severity of the interplay between these three variables depended on the capacity or life circumstances of the participant. In the less severe examples the participant “committed” to “sacrifice” old behaviours that clashed with and could no longer be sustained because of their new consciousness. During those times participants recalled feeling conflicted about behaviour that arose from unconscious reaction and resolved the conflict by better aligning their future action to their new awareness. The outcome of that alignment was a fundamental “change” in the life of the participant. In at least one notable and severe instance the participant’s “commitment” to making a personal “sacrifice” meant her activities placed her in direct opposition with the dominant culture of her workplace and the eventual “change” was a loss of employment. More importantly, however, was the significant and long-lasting “change” that will better that participant’s community for generations to come. In this instance I used the code (CSC) to identify all references to these phenomena.
- Finally, the participants recalled that they responded to a new and heightened “awareness” by “envisioning” a “new self,” which they attributed to their collective

experience of the ABADED program. In this instance I used the code (AENS) to identify all references to these phenomena.

In addition, my review of the transcripts showed that the experience of the Circle participants included a hidden theme that was the Medicine Wheel Teaching (see Figure 2) that recalls the natural stages that are essential to every successful human endeavour. This particular Teaching recalls that every human activity begins with a *vision* or an idea. If that vision is to become a reality, certain *relationships* must be established and certain kinds of *knowledge* must be gathered that is related to that *vision*. Finally, the *action* stage where activities are undertaken that are directly related to making the *vision* a reality. It seems fitting that this particular teaching that was offered by an Elder at the first Wildfire Gathering in 1999 (see Kompf & Hodson, 2000) should be an important inclusion in the effort to explain the theory of *Learning and Healing*. In this instance the Circle participants began their learning journey in a program that was fully envisioned through the efforts of the Aboriginal community who were part of the Wildfire Gatherings. To be sure, the Circle participants entered the program with a personal vision that would include multiple dimensions but their journeys began at the relationship quadrant of the wheel subsequently moving to the knowledge and action quadrants. The entire *Learning and Healing* experience culminated in a new unique 'vision' that was formulated by each of the Circle participants.

Finally, I propose and present the Learning and Healing Medicine Wheel (see Figure 3) that brings together the prevalent themes drawn from the narratives, the Stages of an Endeavour Medicine Wheel (see Figure 2) as well as the personal, familial, communal, and teaching practice variables to elucidate the intra and interrelationships in the theory of *Learning and Healing*.

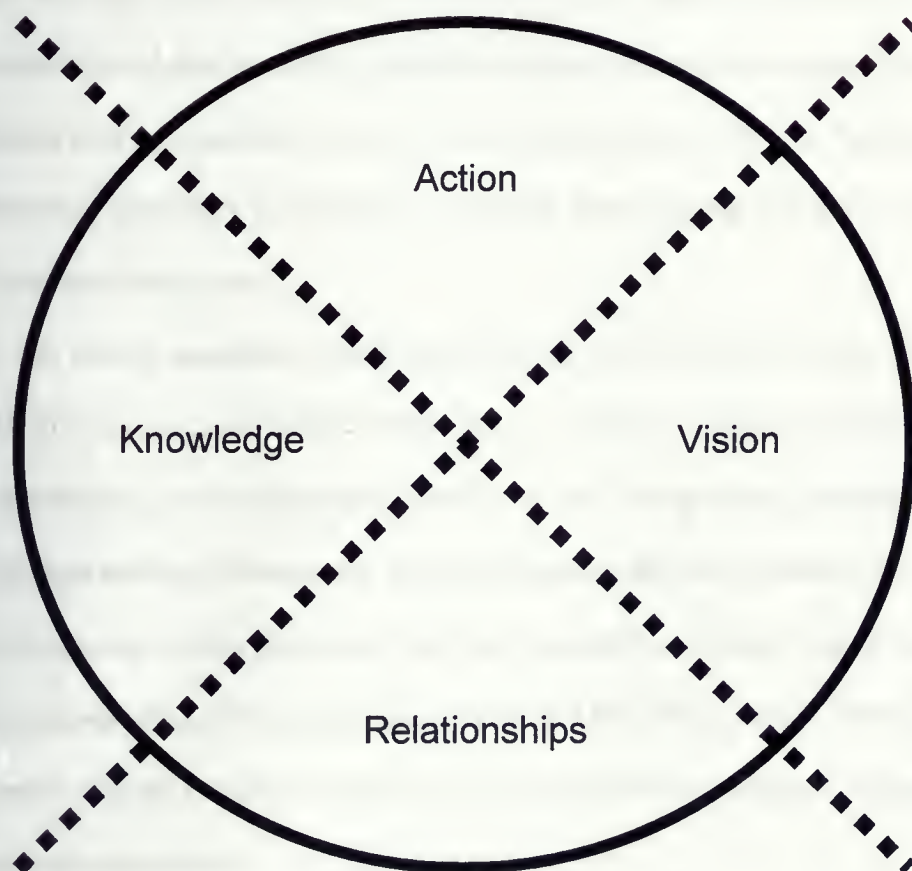


Figure 2. The stages necessary for successful endeavour Medicine Wheel.

Methodological Assumptions

The healing of any nation must begin with the healing of the individual. A program of teacher education that is grounded in a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy engages the whole individual spiritually, emotionally, physically, and intellectually in a decolonizing process that reveals the impact that colonization has wrought on the individual, their families, their communities, and their nations. A *Learning and Healing* pedagogy recognizes that an individual who has experienced this process of consciousness raising will continue to replicate that experience in their lives, their family, their teaching practice, and through that practice, their community.

The primary assumption underlying this study is that Learners engaged in the ABADED program, and therefore immersed in a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy, will have experienced changes in their personal wellness within their spiritual, emotional, intellectual and physical realities. Furthermore, this study assumes that those Learners are to some degree conscious of that change and to a degree are able to articulate and co-construct a fuller understanding of that experience with other ABADED Learners. Finally, this study recognizes that the creation of a spiritual environment will be conducive to that type of sharing and consultation.

Limitations

Although this methodology proposes to rely on significant representation of the total cohort, the sample only includes representation from three of the four classes that made up the first cohort of approximately 39 Learners enrolled in the program at that time. This decision was based purely on geographic consideration as the fourth class lived approximately 3 hours or more away, making it unreasonable to expect them to participate.

It is unreasonable for the reader to assume that I can be in any way objective about this research. On the contrary I fully acknowledge that my involvement from inception, to creation, and to the research and analysis of the ABADED program places me entirely in a subjective position. As often as I could, I have reproduced the words of the *Circle* in their entirety and because of this the reader may find chapter 4 to be rather dense or complex. This approach is culturally appropriate as Elders and other traditional people have taught me that it is rude to interrupt someone when you have asked for their thoughts on an issue. In both instances I ask the reader to draw their own conclusions from the voices and the stories of the participants and to recognize that this is a thesis that reflects Aboriginal cultural norms.

Ethical Considerations

This study stringently adhered to Brock's guidelines stated in the Principles of Ethical Research with Human Participants. To maintain confidentiality all participants are identified by either pseudonyms or by their Indian names depending on the discretion of the participant. Copies of the approved and signed Informed Consent Forms are included in Appendix C for the reader's review.

Readers of this work should recognize that in the interest of maintaining anonymity participants are referred to by pseudonym and periodically a greater insight into the participants and their experience has been sacrificed by leaving out information that might impact negatively on that anonymity. I would argue that this extra precaution is necessary to protect the anonymity of the participants from reprisal.

Restatement of the Problem

There are few examples in the literature related to Aboriginal adult education that give voice to the Learners' experience of their education. I have attempted, through this study, to

address this deficit by reflecting the perspective of a group of Learners who are or were enrolled in an Aboriginal adult teacher education program that is grounded in an Aboriginal pedagogy. That subsequent dialogue will build a greater understanding for the processes of healing and wellness in the environment and teaching practice of those Learners.

Summary of the Chapter

This chapter details a qualitative research design that strikes a balance between Aboriginal culture and mainstream research culture while maintaining the rigours of both traditions. This design builds on the work of other Aboriginal researchers and authors (see Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Hampton, 1999; Smith, 1999) who have written extensively on research issues among Aboriginal peoples.

The design relies on a version of a *Talking Circle* for data collection and as the primary means of encouraging reflective discussion among the participants. The outcome of this discussion will be a co-constructed and holistic understanding that reflects the experiences of the participants and the applicability of *Learning and Healing* as a pedagogical pattern for Aboriginal adult teacher education.

The 10 participants in this research were chosen randomly from among the year 2000 cohort of Learners enrolled in the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education program and have completed the core courses related to their degree. Over the last year that cohort has been pursuing their work as Aboriginal adult educators and trainers and it is assumed they themselves as well as their families and their practice will have experienced some impact that can be traced back to their exposure to a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Acknowledging the Origins of Vision

The initial vision of the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education (ABADED) program sprang from a number of intersecting experiences, insights, and realities in my life. I was a community college Instructor in the province of Ontario in 1995 and during that time the provincial government attempted to increase the involvement of the Aboriginal community in all of the Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology (CAATs) through the implementation of the Aboriginal Education and Training Strategy (AETS). For the colleges to access AETS funding, they were required to partner with the surrounding Aboriginal community and, as one of the few Aboriginal Instructors at my college, I was involved in that effort.

At the same time I was an undergraduate in Brock University's Bachelor of Education in Adult Education program and I was able to focus much of my research and writing on Aboriginal education and making sense of my experience as an Aboriginal educator and Learner in mainstream postsecondary institutions. By this time in my life my wellness journey was well underway and part of that journey included the exploration of my ethnicity and how the realities, which are associated with my Aboriginal heritage and colonialism, could be linked to my experiences early in life. Although not fully articulated at that time as *Learning and Healing*, I recognized the need for an Aboriginal teacher education program that was grounded in a pedagogical construct that embraced a consciousness-raising approach that assisted in bringing a new understanding of who we are as Aboriginal peoples.

The resulting ABADED vision was initially expressed in a proposal to Brock University's Faculty of Education in 1995 and although the proposal was cordially received by then-Dean Terry Boak and I was encouraged to explore the idea with the Aboriginal

Education Council at Brock and a number of key Aboriginal individuals engaged in the AETS strategy throughout the province, it was clear that it was not time for such a program.

The vision languished for the next 4 years until I received a telephone call from Dr. Michael Kompf, asking me if I was interested in discussing the 1995 proposal with the current Dean of the Faculty of Education, Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir (see Kompf & Hodson, 2000).

Elders have taught me that if a vision is to move into the corporeal world and become a reality it must move through three successive and related stages (see Figure 2), including building the necessary relationships, acquiring the related knowledge and then, and only then, moving to action where the vision becomes reality. It was this understanding that informed and guided the resulting Wildfire Consultations and through them, the vision of the ABADED program became a reality.

From an Aboriginal perspective the vision is not the most important stage in the process of creation. Presumably anyone can have a vision and therefore it is not reasonable for me to claim sole responsibility for the creation of the ABADED program. Rather it is the communal nature of the experience, where many hearts and minds participate in the realization of the vision that is paramount.

Much like the double helix configuration of human DNA, one vision leads inevitably to another vision that is connected and related to the first vision. In this instance it is the Circle participants that influenced a related and expanded vision that is outlined in chapter 5.

Overview

I smudged and smoked and prayed before I began this chapter, as we smudged and smoked and acknowledged all of creation in our prayers before we began our discussions around the Circle on that Wednesday evening of 23 September in 2003 at the R4P Sharing Centre located at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory. Although I do not fully comprehend the ramifications of those spiritual acts, I do know that prayer and ceremony have the effect of centering us and establishing a spiritual environment that cuts through all of the fears and misgivings that we carry to any endeavour. I have been told by Elders and others more knowledgeable in our sacred ways than myself that, by acknowledging the sacred we open a portal to the spirit world from which we gather strength and through which our ancestors will stand behind us, support, protect, and guide us if we are prepared to let go of our need to control and open ourselves to that experience.

That Circle of 10 participants included 9 women and 1 man, 6 of whom were from various Anishinabek nations, while four represented the Hotinonshó:ni nations in southern Ontario. They are an eclectic group, representing many professions, age groups, spiritual traditions, and backgrounds. Some had completed the five core courses of the ABADED program and been awarded Program Certificates. Others were still completing their degrees while still others had completed their degrees and had moved on to graduate studies and some of them have begun to envision doctoral work as part of their futures. What unified them all is that they are part of the first cohort of the ABADED program and some part of their professional work includes the education of Aboriginal adults. This group came together to close a circle that began in 1999 when the Wildfire Circle gathered to delineate a vision of the ABADED program. They came to tell the stories of their experience of that vision so that others might learn from their experience and by sharing,

they might encourage others to pursue their own healing journeys and thereby promote the healing of our Nations.

The Circle spoke openly, naturally, and from the heart, moving effortlessly through each of the four research questions that framed this study, including:

- How did participation in the program affect the Learner?
- How did participation in the program affect the Learner's family?
- How did participation in the program affect the Learner's teaching practice?
- How did participation in the program affect the Learner's community?

That evening was full of laughter and some tears as they recalled their struggles and their successes. Hearing their stories was a truly humbling experience for me. I choose the word "humbling" very consciously in this instance because it is still difficult for me to accept that I participated in the creation of a teacher education program that had such a profound healing impact on such a diverse group of Aboriginal peoples.

This then is their story of their *Learning and Healing* journeys.

Recognizing the Importance of Relationships: Fear and Building Community

How did Participation in the Program Affect the Learner?

To fully comprehend the Learner's experience we must recognize that the program had an impact on the Learner from the beginning. Participants spoke at length of their experience before applying to the program. The most common element of that experience, recalled by all, was fear. Even though the majority of participants had some exposure to post-secondary education at the college level, a few at the university level and all had years of professional experience in the field of Aboriginal education, few could envision themselves successfully pursuing university studies. Auntie Em, a 52-year-old

Hotinonshó:ni woman with 20 years of experience in education captured this universal theme of the Circle by simply stating, “I was afraid of failure” (p. 1).

Boop, a 38-year-old Hotinonshó:ni woman, recalled that after 12 years in the Early Childhood Education (ECE) field, she needed a change. “I didn’t know what direction to take until that day I went to the [Six Nations] Polytech[nic] and met with you [John] to look things over ... I was like scared of taking a university course [I didn’t know] if I could make it” (p. 3). When I recall that first meeting with Boop, I remember how literally terrified she appeared and how gently I had to probe to just minimally comprehend those fears and encourage her to apply. A careless remark or intimidating body language on my part may have frightened Boop away at that early stage.

At another critical point Boop’s fear of failure was seemingly realized after she submitted her first assignment:

I remember my first assignment, I didn’t do as well as I thought I should but she [the facilitator] supported me. [We] had a lot of conversations and she [the facilitator] went the extra step to pull me back in because I was ready to give up. (p. 3)

Recalling a similar experience, Auntie Em admitted, “I think in our group we were very fortunate to have the same instructor [facilitator] and the same group. So we really bonded and it made a Friday and Saturday, even though you were tired and didn’t feel well, [it was] just exciting to go to class” (p. 5).

The sensitivity demonstrated by that particular facilitator made the difference between Boop succumbing to her fear of failure and subsequently dropping out, or Auntie Em attending a Saturday class after a busy week at work. All three examples clearly demonstrate the need for individuals who play key support roles within the ABADED

program to be sensitive, easily accessible, willing to listen and to offer support and encouragement.

This type of relationship had to extend beyond the facilitator or recruiter and into the classroom. That is, multiple curriculum opportunities were needed that encouraged the creation and maintenance of supportive relationships between the Learners. One way that this was achieved was by mandating the creation of a “greeting” in the first class of the first course that would be undertaken at the beginning of every subsequent class throughout the program. This opening was a response to the diverse cultural and spiritual realities of ABADED Learners and the culturally inappropriate nature of mandating specific ceremonies prompted the creation of the more generic greeting. Each group was free to create their greeting as they saw fit. The only direction that was provided was that a greeting had to be inclusive of all and that a greeting could evolve and change over time as the group saw fit. As might be expected there was a range of responses to this activity. Some groups took very formal approaches to their particular greeting by using traditional ceremonies like the Hotinonshó:ni Thanksgiving Address or Smudge Ceremonies, or Talking Circles, others used music and poems, while others rejected the notion of a greeting altogether. From my observations there were three factors that influenced and shaped the greeting decisions. The first and perhaps most important factor involved the propensity of Aboriginal peoples to perceive discussions around the issue of ceremony or spirituality to be divisive in nature and therefore a direct threat to the creation of strong relationships that would support them in their studies. The second factor came out of this general reluctance to engage in a consultation about the greeting which created a void that was usually filled by the more dominant personalities in the classroom who were able to influence the group decision against a greeting. The third factor involved how comfortable

the facilitator was with the idea of ceremony in the classroom. If the facilitators were uncomfortable with the idea themselves, they were unable to assist the group as they grappled with the other two factors, preferring to take the path of least resistance, which usually meant no greeting.

My own observations and anecdotal reports suggest that the groups that engaged in a formal approach to their greeting that included ceremony and prayer functioned at a different level than those that did not. By “different level” I mean that they were especially supportive of one another, which established a trusting environment where the Learners felt free to step out of their comfort zones and stretch themselves spiritually, emotionally, intellectually, and physically. This phenomenon can be observed in the words of Auntie Em, Rose, Dory, and Jimmi-Jo who represent two separate groups that adopted a very formal approach to their greeting.

Rose, a 49-year-old female support worker at the postsecondary level, recalled that “on the days when we spent a lot of time in the [talking] circle ... [we discovered] that we did most of the work in the circle” (p. 5).

Auntie Em, who was in the same group as Rose, believed that “what really helped us a lot was the sharing circle that we did every time [we met]. I mean it took an hour and a couple of times it took three hours but we were ready to work and achieve what we had to achieve on that day” (p. 5).

Dory, a 39-year-old Anishinabe woman, former university support worker, and current graduate student entered the program with an undergraduate degree. Dory readily compared her group’s experience in the ABADED program with her previous experience of university in this way:

... this was the first time for me since I began university that I experienced that kind of classroom. I'm very shy and I was used to being in a large class or lecture halls ... [with] no one asking me how my family was and me not knowing people and it was good to see, to know people were on the same wavelength as me. It opened my eyes (p. 5)

Perhaps the most profound recollection that demonstrates the power of the greeting phenomenon should be attributed to Jimmi-Jo, a 42-year-old Anishinabe woman who is a long-time educator and community activist.

With our class I found that we were all going through something and we needed that [talking] circle. That was the biggest component, that support circle, because we went through so much stress. There was a lot of change during that period that we were together and so a lot of healing came from that and that support for our work. It was the same thing [for me with] the stress I was going through at my work, they [the group] basically ... pulled me through that [time]. (p. 6)

These types of supportive relationships, where the Learner was able to seek and receive support from the group during stressful personal times without the fear of ridicule or judgment, were fundamental to the creation of a learning community that encouraged open discussion and self-reflection, which in turn encouraged multiple and often deeper levels of self-awareness.

Integrating New Knowledge: Validating Experience and Ethnostress

Experiencing stress was a recurring theme among many of the participants as they recalled their earlier experience of education and compared that to their experience in the ABADED program. Antone, Miller, and Myers (1986) suggested that "ethnostress occurs when the cultural beliefs or joyful identity of a people are disrupted. It is the negative

experience they feel when interacting with members of different cultural groups and themselves” (p. 7). Hill (1995) believes that this cultural dislocation is the primary reason for such social problems as alcohol dependency, child abuse, and chronic unemployment, and contributing to numerous psychic and intellectual scars that interfere with the inability to learn (p. 68).

For the most part ethnostress can be understood to be the subconscious response of an Aboriginal Learner who is immersed in a mainstream educational experience that is naturally grounded in a conflicting epistemological reality that promotes an alien value system. For example, mainstream education, like mainstream society, stresses individual achievement while Aboriginal societies stress communal achievement. The stress emerges from the conflict between the innate values and beliefs of the Learner and the values and beliefs that ground mainstream education. How that stress is actualized by the individual varied but the importance of making sense of and knowing what that previous educational experience was about was valued by all the participants.

Gramma B, a 24-year-old Hotinonshó:ni woman working in ECE spoke of her new knowledge in this way.

I just had a conversation with a parent of a kindergarten-age child and it was only the child's second full day at school and already he's been labelled as a problem. And I told her, "Don't even tell me, you need to go talk to that teacher because how can she know that? We've had that child for four years at daycare, how can she say that after two days in her class?" So those attitudes are sinking down to our earlier level. ... they [teachers of Aboriginal people have to] get a picture of how we learn, and understand that we learn different[ly] and that's OK. The teachers need to learn how to teach in a different way. Right now it's the students that have to adapt to how the

teacher teaches and our kids have to learn how to learn from that teacher. And the sooner that we as educators can figure out how to teach those students the best way ... the better it's going to be for everyone. This course just validated that for me because when we went off reserve for high school ... we were never taught [in the] way that we learned best. So we just kind "a got by on a wing and a prayer," some of us graduated and some of us didn't. (p. 9)

This new knowledge, coupled with an increased self-confidence prompted participants to take action that was markedly different from the past and in many instances consciously break with activities that conflicted with that new knowledge. One participant who made this choice was Boop who recalled how she resolved the conflict between her past and her present.

[At] the same time I was in the NTEP program and the [ABADED] program, and I remember leaving that last semester because I was done ... it was conflicting [with] what I was doing here [in ABADED] to what I was doing with them. I remember writing my last [NTEP] journal entry and it was, like, three pages long with all my feelings, like, "I guess this program is not the direction I need to go and the philosophy that you're going by is not what I believe in." Before, I would never do that. I would just quietly walk away, but I wrote three pages on my feelings and handed it in and said "This is what I felt" and I left the program. So for me I could feel that ... what Jimmi-Jo [said] and what you were saying too, is that there is a difference. I listened to those School Days programs [a local radio program dealing with education at Six Nations] station and things on the radio and thinking, like, "Are they going to get it yet?" Like I'm waiting for a [positive] sign ... to come from

the education system. I'm still trying to read and keep on track with what's going on in our community for the children and it's a scary place. (p. 8)

Dory's understanding echoes a similar experience.

It [the ABADED program] opened my eyes a lot too. I value a university degree. I thought it was a good thing; I mean I still do, but this program changed the way I think about it. I now recognize the whiteness and the power and the privilege of education and why it doesn't work for Native people and why it starts when you are a kid and when it carries on as an adult. You carry all of these things through your cycle of life and your learning cycle and if I was exposed to that [understanding] early on maybe I wouldn't be so shy and timid and afraid ... my learning was so much more enriching and so fulfilling for me to have that degree and that experience. (p. 6)

Jimmi-Jo encapsulated her understanding in this way:

It [the ABADED program] validated who we are as Aboriginal people and that it [being Aboriginal] belongs in [and] that it fits into ... education and that education isn't just the way mainstream teaches it but everything about who we are is education and it's a natural process. So that's what it did, it validated that

John: Was it something that you innately knew? Like this is what I am, this is what I am about, and this is what I know from what I've been taught. It just validated what you were, what you knew, what you were taught?

Jimmi-Jo: It validated what I felt inside and it took away a fight that I had to have.

Like there was always something there that I had to hide or fight about. Just like when I went into that job at the school, it was a fight because I approached things different or seen things different. It took that away, where I didn't have to fight, it removed that wall, I guess. It brought down that mainstream wall, that hurdle. (p. 8)

Boop, Dory and Jimmi-Jo's words demonstrate very different responses to the ethnostress they experienced in their previous educational experience. Boop's past response was to "quietly walk away" from conflict. Dory's response was to be "shy and timid and afraid" while Jimmi-Jo describes an internal conflict that was related to an ever-present sense of doubt about the validity of her cultural knowing. Each woman underwent an individual process of decolonization that encouraged the examination of their subconscious lived experience and a realization of how colonization shaped that experience. What emerged from that consciousness-raising experience is a more integrated person, a wiser person who now understands why their community is the way it is, a more knowledgeable person.

This type of consciousness raising is not without its risks. For many the horrors related to our colonial experience are still very fresh and the related trauma lies just below the surface. Creating a safe environment that encouraged the taking of personal risks and an internal support system that engaged when the trauma surfaced was only one part of the equation. Mandating wellness or quantifying a Learner's level of healing was rejected, as this runs counter to the fundamental beliefs of our cultures that embrace the individual's right to control their lives. The Learner was in control of their experience and could be successful in their studies whether they chose to plumb the depths or stay on the surface. Integrating multiple opportunities to examine and validate the colonial experience from many perspectives was a significant aspect of the curriculum, as was connecting to issues of cultures, beliefs, and values that were embedded in the ABADED program. Of special interest is the response to the written word of other Aboriginal peoples. Boop explained her feelings about interacting with this key component of that decolonizing process that was a significant part of the course materials.

... the [reading] material, it connected, like you could read through it and you made a connection somewhere in your personal life, like what was going on with the ...community. And so you ... connected with an experience and it just made it easier, like that learning process was a lot easier, because you were able to connect, or you had [gone] through it or you knew someone that had gone through it . . . (p. 16)

What emerges from the words of these women is a rich account of their personal decolonizing, where their learning is culturally aligned and ethnostress is eliminated. From this springs a new knowing that is based on the validation of their cultural heritage and a related sense of empowerment to take action in a markedly different manner than before their experience in the ABADED program.

Acting in a Different Way: Sacrifice and Change

Academically

Acting differently permeated many aspects of the participants' lives, including their individual academic success. Although almost a secondary concern to all participants, it was clear that the validation of their lived experience was distinctly related to their academic success. Participants spoke extensively about how their new understanding of the colonial nature of education created diminished levels of ethnostress and this made room in their lives to create academic success.

The words of Auntie Em neatly demonstrate this relationship when she recalls her response to receiving an A on an early written assignment: "I was ready to take on the rest. It was a lot of work, though, there were times when I thought, I don't want to read this, or, what's this have to do with anything? But at the end [of the program] the bigger picture had a lot to do with yourself" (p. 1).

Once they had encountered academic success they were able to replicate that success in many different ways and in many different academic environments. Anowara, a 45-year-old elementary teacher replicated her success in another Aboriginal university program and related her story in this way.

I worked in education around the edges as a bus driver down here, but in Toronto I was an AV technician in high schools so I was always on the edge as support staff and I never thought of myself as a teacher; but in some ways I was always involved with the students and with my own children, teaching them. This [program] gave me the confidence to go on and apply to an NTEP program. So [through] the intensity of the adult education I was familiar with it and when I went on to [the other university] and we had six weeks of intensive classes so the courses in adult education helped me that way.

John: Was there a defining moment when you went, "I can do this!" When you overcame the fear?

Anowara: When I got to [the other university], because the content of the courses in adult education were very similar to the NTEP program, so when I had to do a course outline I said, "OK, I know how to do that." But ... [NTEP] is a lot more structured than adult education ... it was more like, "This is how you can have it but you can create your own." So in teacher's college it is a lot more structured. They have a specific format they want you to follow and each course has something a little different but that format is still there.

John: Do you recognize that you created your own success?

Anowara: It was the program that gave us the confidence to do other things or go on. (p. 2)

Replicating success was not just relegated to other Aboriginal programs or courses. Anishinabe nini, a 47-year-old male working in a support role in the college system, spoke about his mainstream experience as he completes his undergraduate degree.

... what I'm taking right now, it's a biology course and it's totally different from Native philosophies, but I've accepted that as part of my healings too. I want to be knowledgeable about it, and it's something I'm interested in. It's cancer cells, biology of cancer cells and it's very interesting and something ... I'm not really experienced [in], but the [ABADED] course's behind [me] so it's not that scary.

John: So do you have the skills and the self-confidence, because that's something I've been hearing, to be successful in that mainstream course, outside of a Native environment?

Anishinabe nini: Yes, and I think probably the ... [ABADED] program helped me the most ... and courses after that, I took Iroquoian history, Iroquoian culture, and did very well in it ... I just loved it. (p. 10)

Surrounded by supportive relationships and empowered by their newly integrated knowledge, participants felt encouraged to take different action in multiple areas in their lives. This actualization began with the individual's academic success and naturally moved out to the participants' families.

How did Participation in the Program Affect the Learner's Family?

Bucephulus, a 45-year-old Hotinonshó:ni grandmother and graduate student recalled the results of an educational process that integrated her knowing and eliminated the ethnostress experienced in the past.

I was asking my husband about this, my poor long-suffering husband, who's been lectured over the years that I've been going to school. I was in university, I did

college, I did all this stuff and I'd come home and I would lecture him on some obscure point and tell him "this is what the teacher said and this is how it should mean this" and I would get so stressed out over it. I could learn it, I could, but I was always struggling. But when I got into this [ABADED] program, I wasn't struggling anymore. It was like "yah, that's right, yah, of course, well, I knew that." And then after a while it was like, "hey, I did know that, maybe I'm not so dumb after all." But I asked my family what did you think when I started taking courses? And they were like, "well, you were a lot less stressed out, you were a lot easier to get along with"... [that is] because I was learning things that were compatible with my philosophy, with the way I look at things. It wasn't a fight to learn anymore and a lot of it was simply accepting what I already knew, which I hadn't given value to before because it went against everything I was being taught at the university level or the college level. So this [the ABADED program] helped me be a calmer person because I became a more integrated person. I not only had knowledge, I could recognize it and then I could feel free to use it instead of hiding it in favour of something else. So yes, I became a lot calmer, a lot easier. I became less reactive with my kids and a better parent and a "perfect" grandmother. (p. 14)

Gramma B connects her different way of being a parent to her experience of the ABADED program in this way:

With me it [ABADED] had an impact. I think because I'm a single parent to three boys and sometimes it is rough; they were all teenagers at once. And so I think it's helped me become a better parent.

John: How?

Gramma B: Just for being able to not react, just to let it go. Like, give them that space. It's helped me to be able to treat them as young adults. That was tough for me as a parent too. Like how do you treat your child that you've raised, as an adult just because they're an adult now? Like how do you do that? I didn't know how to do that. But I think taking that course has given me that ability to treat them as adults-like I'm still their mom, but they're not little kids anymore. So it's given me that ability to just relax and let them, even though I know it's not the best choice that they're making, but it's their choice and let them live out the consequences of the choices that they're making. Whereas before I would be right in there like, "You know what? [I recall that she literally put her foot down as she said this] Don't even think about it!" But now they're given that space and now I think they can appreciate it and we have a much better relationship.

John: Do you recognize that that is a very traditional approach to child rearing, for that age group? Recognizing that they [your children] aren't necessarily making the best choice, but they have the opportunity to do that and to learn from that experience? That's a very traditional approach to raising kids.

Gramma B: It was hard for me to get to that stage. It was really, really hard for me to get it to that stage.

John: So make the connection for me if you would. How did the program help you make that leap, or was it just the right time in your life?

Gramma B: No, I think it was a combination. I think I needed that knowledge to come to me and it came to me through the courses that we took. I don't know if I would be the parent that I am today had I not been able to become enrolled in this course. And it was really meant to be for me to be in this course because there wasn't

any funding for me to take this course. We were trying to jump through all these hoops to get to the right place where the little money pot is and so then we jump through this hoop and, no, so we jump through there and eventually I was, like, enough with it, the heck with it, and then I got the phone call, "Your funding is approved, you can take this course." So to me that was a message, this was meant to be, I'm supposed to be in that course. And that was another message to me when it helped me become a better parent, like that information was sitting there waiting for me to get to it. It was waiting, that's all. (p. 12)

Anishinabe nini added to Gramma B's words in this way:

That's the best part of an education, like she [Gramma B] says, it keeps you busy, it keeps your mind occupied But when we got education with our Indigenous philosophies behind it that's what keeps us busy 24-7, once you take it in this course you're thinking about it constantly, [it] helps you be a better parent, better brother, a better uncle, a better mother because it's continuous-it's something they have to keep doing, keep thinking about. And that's where those philosophies come from, their Elders say, "You have to start living that and you have to start thinking that, that holistic approach to it, we have to live all that." So that's what I mean by better people, and that's where it's had an impact for me.

Nanny a 49-year-old Anishinabe woman added this to the discussion.

That's me too, my girls are in their 30s now but they were in their 20s when I went to college, first took Native Child [program], that taught me so much because I left home when I was 17 and my kids didn't grow up here [on reserve], but my grandchildren are growing up here and that's cool, but now me too. Even now that they're in their 20s and 30s, I am learning to listen to them and they're teaching me

and we're learning together still. And I thank these courses . . . I didn't know who I was. I didn't know I was Native until I was in grade seven or something, and I still don't know very much. But our relationship was better, and my relationship with my grandsons. And they know they have blonde hair and blue eyes and they know how to smudge and they dance and everything. They know Ojibwa. I don't know anything. So I had trouble with that one too. So I'm a teacher to my kids and they're teaching me and it's the same with my grandchildren, so it's awesome to be here. (p. 13)

It is difficult for this author to accept that the ABADED program alone is responsible for the improved ability of Bucephalus, Gramma B, or Nanny to parent or grandparent. Nonetheless, all 3 participants recalled that the diminished ethnostress was an outcome of their educational experience, enabling them to act differently and this was observed and commented on by their families. A further explanation includes the participants' increased sense of control, perhaps as a result of their education because it did not conflict with their natural way of knowing as education had conflicted in the past. A greater sense of control within their learning environment meant that less stress was felt by the Learners and translated into a diminished need to seek stability in the intimate confines of their families. In their past experience of education they were unable to satisfy that need for stability in the natural chaos of ordinary family life they reacted by attempting to impose undue stability and control over their families, which only had the reverse and unwanted outcome of creating a cycle of instability.

This reactive cycle was the normative response to the ethnostress experienced in the past and influenced their family's wellness. That cycle was interrupted by the new educational experience of all 3 women and allowed them to "be" mothers and

grandmothers in a more traditional way. This cycle of negative reaction replaced by reflective action is clearly evident in the words of Anishinabe nini, who recalled that, prior to his experience of the ABADED program he was "...more reactionary ... I used to react more and now I sit back more and I analyze things or put it all together, things that I read about or what I wrote about and understand better ... I sit back with more confidence; [that's what] my partner tells me" (p. 11).

How did Participation in the Program Affect the Learner's Teaching Practice?

As might be anticipated, the response to this question varied widely and seemed to be influenced by many variables including where the participants were in their teacher careers or where the participants were on their healing journeys or how close they were to their traditional cultures. Some of the more seasoned and experienced educators like Jimmi-Jo were able to refine their practice through the experience.

When I look back it helped me organize a lot of stuff and I already had a lot of that understanding and fought for it. I think that's what I was in-I was in one of those fights to have Aboriginal ways of teaching and respect for our kids in our school. So I was in the middle of that fight that people in our circle supported and help me through it and what the course helped me do is organize and pull all that stuff together when we developed our curriculum and to use some of the terms, the academic terms, like creating the learning outcomes. That was the biggest thing, was that learning outcomes. Even though I had done a lot of planning where you set your goals and objectives and all that stuff, that one word stuck with me "learning outcomes." Just using that word(s) carried a lot of weight. So it helped me in that way on a personal way ... (p. 5)

At the other end of the spectrum was Boop who, shortly after the completion of the ABADED Certificate, was able to secure a teaching position in a locally offered Early Childhood Education (ECE) program.

... I started out with just a course outline and that's all. They gave me no textbook, nothing. I started out from scratch. What a confidence builder. I had to do a lot of research on my own and after I finished that course I was, like, holy shit! It was awesome and my relationships with the students and the impact that I had and the conversations that were going on and the things I was observing; I come back to the office and [thought] holy shit, this is some good stuff! And my excitement for it made me strive and I worked harder to build my curriculum and the things that I wanted to see happen I pulled out a lot of the notes that I did [in the ABADED program]. I did a lot of research back to when I did the curriculum design; I had to do a lot of that just to refresh my memory, pulling notes and things from all over the place what other people did and interpreting it, redid it the way I needed it. Even the way I facilitated the program that I was doing was based on a lot of the student conversations and let them take ownership to what was going on in the classroom. I could even see that growth. So yah, it's a rewarding experience.

John: Did you teach ECE differently than you were taught ECE?

Boop: Definitely!

John: Better?

Boop: Yes! I had more respect for them as individuals, what they had to offer. It wasn't just, you were a student, just a number, and here's the information do what you can. It was healthy struggling time, taking the extra time to sit and talk. A lot of

times it was after class that they would come one-on-one to talk to you about things that were going on and just taking that time for them.

John: Did you replicate how [your facilitator] work[ed]?

Boop: Very much so. She had an impact. So for me it changed everything. (p. 3)

When Boop entered the ABADED program she was not a neophyte to post-secondary education as she entered the program with a college diploma. Her past educational experience included the completion of an ECE program and involvement in an NTEP program that she subsequently left because it conflicted so drastically with her experience in the ABADED program as has been mentioned earlier in this thesis. Boop made a conscious choice to sacrifice and transcend both those learning experiences and pattern her entire teaching *action* on what she encountered in the ABADED program.

How did Participation in the Program Affect the Learner's Community?

The participants' experience and definition of community was very different. Boop's story includes a willingness to sacrifice her comfort by moving away from established patterns of teaching that are associated to her earlier experience of learning. It is reasonable to propose that there will be an associated impact on the community of children and parents as those students enter the profession. However, not all of the stories reflect this type of tenuous impact.

When speaking of her new position in employment training Auntie Em clearly projected a hope for change in the future combined with an enthusiasm and confidence that would direct her future actions.

... I left that [educational] environment and entered a new environment. I'm now working with adults who are on social assistance and I have an opportunity to create ... this is the first time I've really been able to pull on the [ABADEDED program] in

designing things. So I have to restructure Job Search Workshops, I have to develop workshops. So I have to pull in everything I did and look back on the resources from the second course. I'm going to have an opportunity to sit and design. I'm not with clients at all. I in a room doing research, getting on the Internet, and doing what I have to do to help people. It gets down to the self again. We can have all the best work programs, the best training programs, but if people aren't taking care of themselves or [address] any barrier that comes up [in their lives] they aren't going to be ready to go to work, or go here and seek childcare or transportation. I've really been looking at that to see how can I create something. They've been doing something, but it's almost like putting a mainstream Ontario Works but not really- because we're on reserve it is different. Why aren't people coming out to Job Search and get off of welfare? So that's going to be the next seven months for me and really pull on the stuff that I learned in the [ABADED] program. (p. 18)

Other participants observed a more tangible change in their work environment.

Anishinabe nini observed the changes at his postsecondary institution and again directly connects the ABADED program to that change.

I can see the changes in the [Aboriginal] professors at the college. I work as a support person at the college and I've seen big changes because everybody there has been involved in the Brock program. I've seen it in action, seen many things change, many good things . . . It's brought in new thoughts and new philosophies, [we've brought in] guest speakers we've heard in the Brock program. It's kind of like that biology course that I'm taking: I was thinking while I was sitting in one of those lectures-they were talking about the biology of a cell and the genesis of cancer and how a tumour cell hijacks a blood vessel that the tumour needs to feed on. It's kind

of like our education system-the way it was that tumour cell is being fed to us through those lines of blood. That's the way I see it in that classroom that made me understand the whole process a lot better. (p. 15)

The actions taken by Gramma B and the subsequent changes experienced in her ECE community seem to be instantaneous and profound in nature.

[ABADED] happened to me at a good time. I had just stepped into a supervisory position so it really helped me to facilitate even staff meetings because we do have a staff of 30 people and sometimes our staff meetings didn't accomplish very much. It was a waste of time, more or less, so it helped me be able to facilitate staff meetings where staff came away with something. They had input, they had an opportunity to build an environment, and we worked hard at building that environment where the staff would feel comfortable about sharing their ideas and having what they said valued. So this class helped me a lot with our staff and our workplace. It came at a good time for me. Very valuable, very valuable. Invaluable to our [ECE] program. [ABADED] help(ed) us to grow into the positions that we had inherited. It was a real help and as we learned through our weekend classes and then we would go back to work and we'd try some of the things and it works. It's very valuable. (p. 6)

In some instances there were real dangers when a participant chose to act differently and move outside what was considered to be acceptable by their community. Few of the participants' stories illustrate the complex issues related to social change more effectively than Jimmi-Jo's story. During the time Jimmi-Jo was enrolled in the ABADED program she was also employed in a band-operated school. When asked to recall how the program affected her community, Jimmi-Jo responded by saying, "They ran me out of town" (p. 19). Jimmi-Jo's story is offered in its entirety both as a tribute to that woman's strength

and as an illustration of the resistance to wellness that exists at critical levels within our communities and the complex nature of change. In spite of the opposition that originated at senior levels of the school and through Jimmi-Jo's personal sacrifice, a process of community recollection and creation occurred that will have an impact on her community for generations to come.

Jimmi-Jo: They ran me out of town (laughter).

John: Are you kidding or are you telling the truth and laughing about it?

Jimmi-Jo: Both, I guess. No, I chose to leave, it was too stressful. But there were some people in there [the school] that played games to make it very uncomfortable for me. So in a manner it was two people in high positions that were really threatened by what I was doing. And like I said I went through all the channels and was really nice to people But things were happening, and I was at a low level, I wasn't at a managerial level, but it was a couple of people at a managerial level, that from what I've heard and seen they didn't like. Not so much that they didn't like what was happening, but they didn't like that it wasn't happening around them. So that type of stuff that happens in our communities pushed me out of there, on top of all that stress that's created with change. But what did happen too was, while I was there things did happen, and it showed people that who we are can be integrated into that educational system and it showed them how. So it was like a road map, it was left there for them. And I had some people tell me that worked in the school, it [the mural] opened a lot of doors . . . I was assured by spiritual people that it was meant to stay there. So that was a big job just getting it there, but it's there for the kids, and it feels good knowing that it will never be taken away from them.

John: Tell me about the wall [mural].

Jimmi-Jo: Well, the mural that talked about our [Anishinabe] creation; so it was a whole group of people from our community that came together and pieced together our story right from creation to original man walking and the populating of the nations, and then the flood and then it starts recorded history when the Europeans came. That part was a very small part of that mural, which was surprising because that was the only story that we used to know was the recorded history written by outside people. So it's [the creation of that mural] turned around and our kids will know who they are I think it was Marlene Brant who said that "education is cultural transmission." So it's [education] more than shovelling facts into their heads, it's producing little people, it's producing our societies. So when you look at that, if we raise our kids through an education system that has that confidence, that self-esteem, that pride in who they are, then they can go anywhere. They can take those values and beliefs and they can have all that stuff rammed into them but they will make sense of it through that cultural context and they can go work anywhere in the world that they want and they can use it [those experiences] and shape it in their values. They can be scientists or engineers but they can do it in a way that their values and culture guide them and hopefully make this world a better, healthier place. When I worked with the kids that's what I push them to think that way, that they could do anything and that their culture and values could carry anywhere to guide them. It [ABADED program] helped me to instill that in some of the kids but it also helped put that mural on the wall so that people who come forward now will continue to feel that way. That's the impact that it [the ABADED program] had and that it helped to have in our community. (p. 19)

This woman's story exemplifies aspects that are foundational to the Aboriginal understanding of the universe that includes both a corporeal and a spiritual reality. At the heart of Jimmi-Jo's story is the individual sacrifice that arises from her corporeal struggle to connect her community and her traditions to her school and the education of those children. There is also a spiritual reality connected to that physical struggle that is a constant inclusion in our spiritual ceremonies, like the sweat lodge, sun dance, or vision quest. From that physical sacrifice comes change and a greater good, usually for our families or our communities. For those engaged in those ceremonies there is a duality that arises from their sacrifice that both thoroughly tests them and when they prevail they grow as spiritual beings and bring tangible and intangible benefits to their community.

In Jimmi-Jo's case, that tangible was the act of a community piecing together the fragmented creation story and capturing that story in a mural that will inform generations to come. It was a communal consciousness raising that situates the European in a small part of the greater story of the Anishinabek that spans tens of thousands of years and by doing so challenges the dominance of that contemporary view.

Our traditions tell us that we are alone in our sacred struggles but we are not unsupported, the sweat lodge has its convener, the vision quest has its guiding Elder, these Sacred Helpers support us, pray for us, watch over us, help us to make sense of our experience. Jimmi-Jo's Sacred Helpers included her fellow Learners from whom she drew strength to prevail against incredible pressure as well as gaining insights from those around her. Like our sacred ceremonies, Jimmi-Jo's learning environment was carefully co-constructed to increase the sense of personal safety and respect, which encouraged this type of profound and intimate engagement among those Learners. That learning was reciprocal as Jimmi-Jo's work experience was not separated from the learning experience.

Instead it was an integral and integrated part, a real-time example of a *Learning and Healing* experience for Jimmi-Jo and those around her, a catalyst where all could grapple with their similar experiences and by doing so situate them in the greater colonial context.

Jimmi-Jo: I didn't go in or approach that [job] in a way that I was fighting. I did things in a win-win way. I wasn't battling with people but they were battling change and battling something different and that control that you have is what you were taught in mainstream education. I came in with something totally different, just being myself, an Auntie to the kids, not an authority figure to them. That threatened them. (It) threatened the way they knew how they related to the kids. Also I pulled community [in] and that threatened them and because they didn't have the community support as much as I did but they wouldn't take the time to utilize the means or the forms that I had [established] to relate to community . . . Most never took advantage of that even though they wanted, needed that relationship to community, they wouldn't take that step because they were too stressed out trying to stay in the confines of the boxes they were taught to stay in. So that is what a lot of the battle was [about]. (p. 6)

As Jimmi-Jo experienced, there are those among us who would resist, sometimes violently, any degree of action that attempts to challenge the status quo. Typically those sub-oppressors resist change because change challenges their values and beliefs and threatens them on a personal and fundamental level. As Freire (1970) explained, those sub-oppressors among us subconsciously believe that they have the most to lose personally and professionally because they are at the pinnacle of the imposed systems of the colonizer (p. 27). They can be the administrators, the chiefs or councilors, the teachers, or the principals and they have become experts within those systems that are designed to maintain the

status quo of unwellness in our communities. They have learned to negotiate with and manipulate the ear of power and because their words and ideas are familiar, they are able to marginalize or eliminate those voices that express alternative views and ideas.

For the colonized, the experience of colonialism has left us with a culture of silence that abhors and tenaciously resists the meaningful examination of our lives. Aboriginal peoples are so racked with pain that we dare not examine even an iota of our pasts or our present for fear of unleashing a flood of emotion that we fear will consume us. It is a place where silence in the face of calamity is the normative response and silence creates fertile ground for abuse to take root and flourish. Jimmi-Jo found her voice and continued to speak her truth throughout her sacred ceremony and in the end Jimmi-Jo did leave her community and the school in which she worked, but her sacrifice needs to be viewed against the greater panorama that is the healing journey of her community.

Conclusion

The theory of *Learning and Healing* does not imply or in any way suggest that Aboriginal peoples are unwhole or incomplete, nor does the theory look to mire Aboriginal people in a mindset of eternal victimization. *Learning and Healing* is a wellness model that recognizes, as do all Indigenous cultures, that the individual is on a lifelong healing journey and that journey is to a large extent in the control of the individual. This is an important distinction that can be observed throughout the narrative. What dominates and cuts across each Circle participant's story is the consistent integration of a new way of being, a "weller" way of being that was connected directly to the *Learning and Healing* experienced by the Learner. To be sure, that integration and the associated actualization are not homogenous in nature and vary widely depending on the capacity and

circumstance of the individual but the process of integration was uniform and dominated by four formative phases:

- Acknowledging their fear and overcoming their fear by building community and actively seeking support within that community.
- Forgiving themselves for past behaviour that is related to ethnostress and overcoming that stress by undergoing a consciousness-raising process that included validating experience by giving voice to themselves, fellow Learners, Aboriginal writers, and video participants.
- Committing to the phenomenon of sacrifice and change, which meant committing themselves to their new consciousness and sacrificing old ways to change themselves, their families, or their communities.
- Awareness of undergoing an envisioning process related to ABADED participation that involved the emergence of a new self.

The reader should not be lulled by the neatness of the preceding list or by the related Learning and Healing Medicine Wheel (see Figure 3) that the experience of the Learner is somehow antiseptic in nature. The reality of *Learning and Healing* is more closely related to the experience of birth with all its associated blood, sweat, and tears, where the contractions that precede the birth of a new life are not consistent or constant but arrive on waves that are dictated by circumstances beyond control or prediction. The *Learning and Healing* journey is an organic experience and therefore chaotic and dynamic in nature and the participant does not move through each quadrant in an orderly manner, investing equal amounts of time and energy in each.

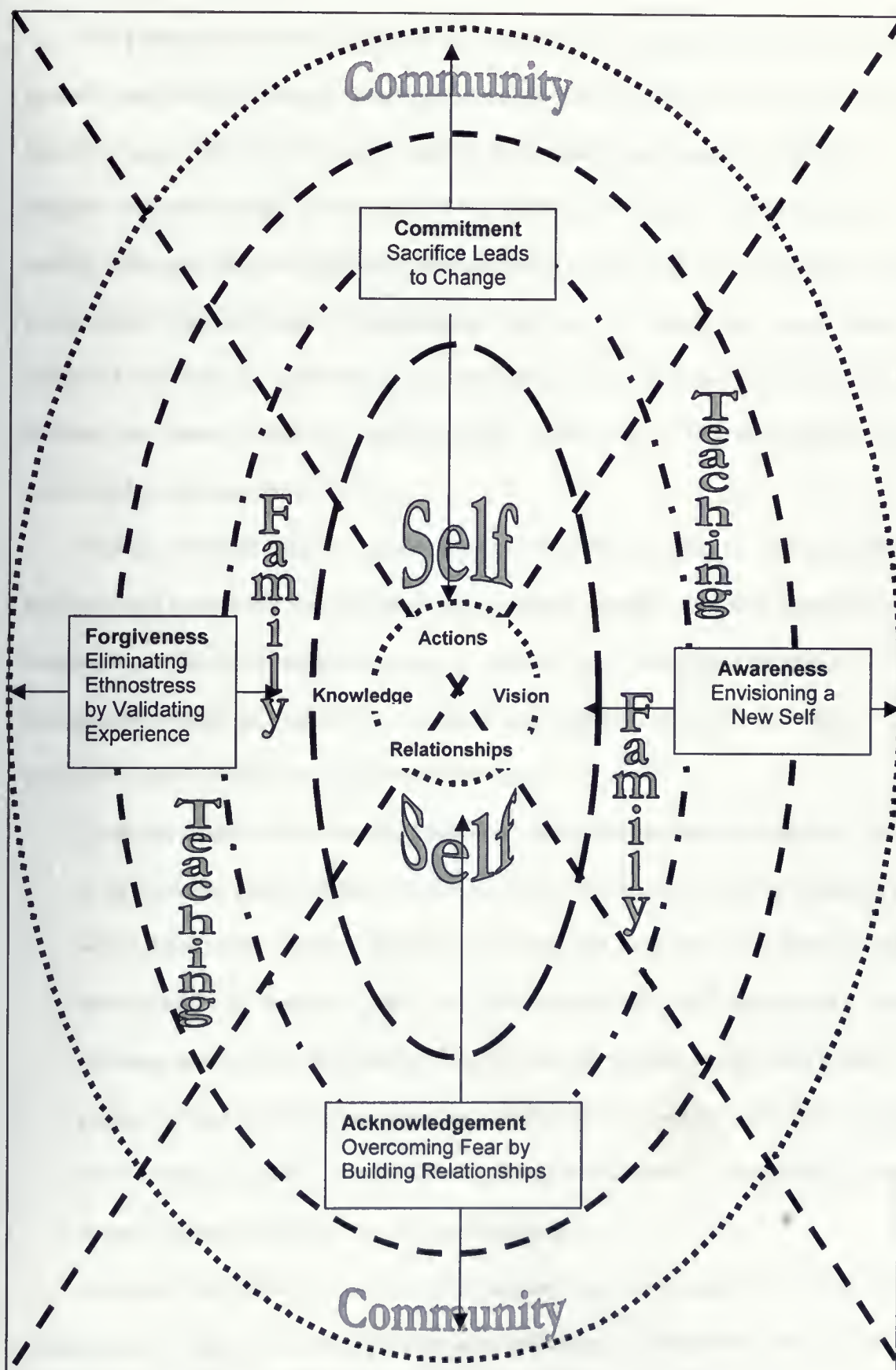


Figure 3. The Learning and Healing Medicine Wheel

The participants' stories suggest that the theoretical construct of *Learning and Healing* is primarily responsible for the significant changes to their lives. In the end it was the Learners who were responsible for every step forward in their wellness journey and the ABADED program was only a catalyst for change. It is the totality of the Circle's experience with one another, with what they saw and heard from the videos or read in the literature that created an alternative vision for them and their futures. That alternative vision was shared with and nurtured by their fellow Learners and, once established in the hearts and minds of those Learners, they were compelled to make that vision a reality in their lives, their families, their work, and by extension, their Nations.

Perhaps Anishinabe nini's comparison of the ABADED program to a disease infecting the Aboriginal community and effecting change is an apt metaphor and more appropriate than we know. Can the metaphor be engaged in another way? What impact does an undergraduate degree grounded in an Aboriginal epistemology have on the university offering it? Dory's answer can provide some insight.

There are so many structures that keep us not well in the academic community. I'm ... at [a] university (and) they don't like to hear [the] ideas that I have to say. I mean, I'm saying them, which is a big step to me. They don't like what they see as foreign. Let's turn the tables on them for a while. They will resist that, they will be scared of it. They will want you to leave (and) they will kick you out. Having the strength that I feel [to persevere] because of what you have done [John] and what we have all done. It's going to be a struggle to keep a program like this going and to create ... bigger things, bigger dreams, bigger fights. There is more coming. (p. 21)

In a sense Dory alludes to part of my *Learning and Healing* experience as the ABADED program has developed and during the formative years since. It is true that I have fought

many battles since the inception of this ABADED program. Sadly, most of the protagonists have been my own people who have attempted to gain personally by manipulating circumstances in a way that is in direct conflict with the wellness and healing agenda associated with the ABADED program. In each circumstance those who attempted to see me eliminated were themselves eliminated or discredited through their actions and subsequently marginalized. There is an old belief that contends that those who practice bad medicine will initially appear to be successful but at a point that bad medicine will turn on them and come back four times stronger. I know this to be true.

Those battles were tests that included a spiritual reality as well as a healing reality that mirrored the Circle's experience. Throughout each of those tests, just when I was ready to give up all hope, when circumstances were the darkest, I would receive a call from an Elder or a Medicine Person or I would receive a medicine or a spirit dream that would assure me I was on the right path and to have courage to prevail. I had the choice to connect to the healing opportunity by following a pattern of activity that was the same on each occasion and began with an acknowledgment of my own fears, connecting to my experience, making a commitment to personal change which culminated in a new awareness of self. Like the Circle, I am a different man today than when I began this journey in 1999.

Dory's words also include a prophetic quality when she suggests, "there is more coming." The door to healing and wellness opens only one way and once opened it can never be closed.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Summary

There are few examples in the literature related to Aboriginal adult education that give voice to the Learners' experience of their education. This study addresses this gap in the literature by exploring the perspective of a Circle of Learners who are, or were enrolled in the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education program (ABADED). An examination of this Circle's stories, the associated perceptions and experiences has demonstrated how and to what degree the underlying pedagogical construct, *Learning and Healing*, has influenced the wellness of the participant, and how that influence has moved into the family, teaching practice, and community of the participant. This exploration has also identified an associated *Learning and Healing* process that is common to the experience of the participant and delineated that process through the creation of a Learning and Healing Medicine Wheel.

Today, there are over 100 Aboriginal people across the province of Ontario continuing their healing journeys toward wellness and influencing their families and their communities through their work as educators. By Aboriginal standards, this level of enrollment is considered to be a triumph but when compared to mainstream enrollments and the related financial model, that triumph decreases in significance. I will delve into this reality later in the chapter.

What then are we to conclude from this study? Does the theory of *Learning and Healing* promote wellness in the life of the Learner? Within the context of this research, the answer to this question has to be an unequivocal and resounding, yes.

ABADED Learners were able to overcome their direct or indirect "fear," both prior to entering the program and throughout their experience of the program through a process that

began with “acknowledging” their “fear” and then seeking support to overcome their “fear” by “building community” in the classroom. Contrary to the Learner’s previous experience of education, the ABADED program connected the Learners to their cultural norms by teaching through culture. Reconnection to culture eliminated the subconscious “ethnostress” so prevalent in previous education and created room for *Learning and Healing*, which naturally moved out from the Learner to family and community. By giving voice and “validating experience” of themselves and those around them, ABADED Learners’ consciousness was raised, which created opportunities to “forgive” self.

Learners also recalled an increased personal “commitment” to the concept of “sacrifice” and “change.” In many instances the severity of the interplay between these three variables depended on the capacity or life circumstances of the participant. The Learners recognized that their experience in the ABADED program resulted in a new “awareness,” which prompted, “envisioning” a “new self.”

In short, the ABADED program can be seen as the proverbial pebble dropped in a pond that results in a healing ripple that will wash over family, teaching practice, community, and by extension, a Nation for some time to come. Must we be content merely with a ripple? Does the theory of *Learning and Healing* have the potential to become a tidal wave that washes away the post-colonial realities of Aboriginal peoples? Can the vision be extended?

Aboriginal peoples in Canada are recognizing the potential that applied research has to change the socioeconomic and sociocultural realities of Aboriginal communities. In essence their efforts are about envisioning an alternative conceptualization of research in such a way that the enterprise is grounded in Aboriginal cultural norms. In some instances this has generated tribal protocols that protect Aboriginal communities from unscrupulous researchers or safeguards to traditional/cultural knowledge and perhaps most importantly

assures that any research is reciprocal in nature, bringing benefits to both the researcher and the participant or the participant's community (see Battiste & Henderson, 2000). This Aboriginal conceptualization has driven the realignment of the procedures and ethics protocols of research funders and universities to better reflect Aboriginal concerns and aspirations (see Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council, 2003).

The balance of this final chapter presents a holistic vision that seeks to extend the theory of *Learning and Healing* from teacher education into Aboriginal research at Brock University for the benefit of all peoples. The roots of this vision are firmly ensconced in a paper entitled "Where Do We Go From Here: Envisioning Aboriginal Education & Research at Brock University" written by myself and Dr. Merle Richards late in 2003.

Recommendations

Looking Back to Look Forward

Thirty years ago, the National Indian Brotherhood, the forerunner of the Assembly of First Nations, produced a policy statement, *Indian Control of Indian Education* (RCAP vol. 3 Gathering Strength, p. 436). This document was a call for Aboriginal control of Aboriginal education, which spawned a generation of activity toward the realization of that vision. The cumulative nature of that generation of activity can be summed up in one sentence. Aboriginal peoples had to build from the ground up by creating funding agreements and infrastructures, programming, curricula, teachers, principals, school boards, schools, and postsecondary institutes. Aboriginal people established relationships with institutions of higher learning, acting as advisors to senior management and faculty, informing and shaping Aboriginal programming whose graduates would hopefully go on to address the more serious deficits in their respective communities. The result of those endeavours can be partially observed in the huge increases in postsecondary enrollments from 200 in the mid-

1960s to over 27,000 in 1996 (see Post-secondary education for status Indian & Inuit, 1997). This glimmer of hope must be tempered by the fact that Aboriginal university graduates increased from 2 to 4 per cent between 1986 and 1996 and in that year 18 per cent of other Canadians graduated from university (Clatworthy, Hull & Loughram, 1995). At that rate of increase Aboriginal people will reach 1996 mainstream parity in seventy years.

The Converging Realities that Shape the Next Generation of Educational Activity

In spite of a growing and authoritative body of knowledge (see Battiste, 1998; Castellano et al., 2000; Hampton, 1995; Hill & George, 1996; Tafoya, 1995) that connects successful completion of education to culture, the gap between theory and practice continues to be the experience of most Aboriginal peoples engaged in education. It is the eradication of that gap that will be the goal of Aboriginal education over the next generation in Canada and the outcome of that activity will be the revitalization of Aboriginal languages, cultures, traditions, values, and beliefs in a contemporary educational setting and in our communities.

Brock University has begun to bridge the gap between theory and practice by developing the multidisciplinary ABADED program in collaboration with the Aboriginal community in Canada. In addition, Brock is one of the few institutions in Canada, others being Trent University and First Nations University, that has built a number of strategic relationships with Aboriginal communities across the country. Key to that effort has been the Aboriginal Education Council (AEC) at Brock, which represents the diverse Aboriginal community in the Niagara region. The AEC is the best ally of Brock University and creates a sense of legitimacy in the eyes of the Aboriginal community in Canada as well as providing guidance and direction internally. In short, the AEC is the best ambassador that Brock could

have and without that body's support and guidance, programming will not be relevant to the needs of Aboriginal peoples or be financially successful.

For Brock, Aboriginal education is an opportunity that is limited by the fact that only 4% of the overall population of Canada is Aboriginal. Maintaining program viability means identifying other disciplinary groups within that population, finding the common ground between them, and reflecting that commonality in program design. This multidisciplinary strategy has the added benefit of breaking down the real and perceived barriers between disciplines and builds bridges of understanding, while allowing candidates the flexibility to focus on the specifics of their disciplines. The entire experience provides a broader and deeper educational experience for the Learners.

The Changing Reality of Aboriginal Research in Canada

In an era where knowledge is the engine that drives this nation's economy, the importance of Aboriginal ways of knowing and the unique perspective of Aboriginal peoples has gained increasing credibility at every level of society, including the academic world of research and higher education. Historically, the collection and dissemination of Aboriginal knowledge have been the domain of non-Aboriginal scholars but this is a changing reality and at present, there is a modest but steady increase in the numbers of Aboriginal scholars teaching, researching, and publishing numerous works dealing with Aboriginal knowledge (e.g., Alfred, 1999; Anderson, 2000; Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Castellano et al. 2000; Morrisseau, 1999; Stiffarm, 1998).

At the heart of this expanding discourse is an epistemology that is Indigenous to the Americas, which at times, conflicts with the positivist or dominant worldview. It is this Indigenous epistemology that has illuminated numerous alternative patterns of living that are gaining credibility among many disciplines within the academy and society at large. Ideas that

were once understood to be untenable, such as environmentalism, holistic medicine and sentencing circles, and *Learning and Healing* theory can all be traced back to their roots in Aboriginal knowledge.

Recognizing the potential of this untapped intellectual resource the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) has recently declared Aboriginal research to be a strategic priority. The ensuing consultation with the Aboriginal community has resulted in *Dialogue on Research and Aboriginal Peoples* (Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council, 2003, pp. 1-37).

Aboriginal development (the term used at the time to designate Aboriginal research issues) was understood as “an issue that is growing among several federal departments [and an area that has] been identified by the federal government as one of its priority issues.... Drawing on consultations with the academic community in 2001, it was recognized that a very wide range of Aboriginal research themes were possible: cultural heritage (art, language, traditions); Aboriginal governance; health care; community development and healthy living; erosion of Aboriginal cultures; the role of Aboriginal women in traditional culture and modern society; Aboriginal identities vis-à-vis the 1995 Indian Act; best practices in developing Aboriginal communities.

SSHRC’s dialogue has focused on a number of factors that impede positive and full development of the research potential represented by Aboriginal researchers and their respective knowledge traditions:

- Lack of career opportunities for Aboriginal scholars;
- Lack of respect for Aboriginal peoples and their knowledge traditions;
- Lack of research benefits to Aboriginal communities; and

- Lack of Aboriginal control over intellectual and cultural property.

The second approach envisions a set of measures on SSHRC's primary mandate – promotion of knowledge opportunities available through collaborative initiatives such as –

1. Creation of strong research partnerships with Aboriginal communities (via community organizations);
2. Supporting research in Aboriginal systems of knowledge; and
3. Strategic investment in the research capacity of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal researchers interested in careers in Aboriginal research.

Clearly, fundamental changes to SSHRC policies as they relate to Aboriginal research are imminent and the scope of that change is much wider than just financing more research directed at Aboriginal peoples. The underlying motive of this shift is best captured in the thrust of the associated discussion paper: “more research by and with Aboriginal peoples-not more research on or for Aboriginal peoples” (see Rock, 2003). Over time this new direction will be actuated through various administrative measures and new programming designed to strengthen Aboriginal research across SSHRC, which will in turn significantly change the research culture in Canada to better reflect Aboriginal cultural norms and address contemporary needs. Universities that partner with Aboriginal communities and align research policies to reflect Aboriginal needs and realities will be well-positioned to take advantage of the new paradigm.

Brock has made significant inroads in building strong relationships with Aboriginal communities and bridging the gap between theory and practice through the development of multidisciplinary programming which also increases financial viability. This convergence of existing relationships, Aboriginal programming and a new research paradigm creates an

opportunity for Brock and the Aboriginal community to build on the success related to *Learning and Healing* in the ABADED program by co-creating an expanded vision of the future that links teaching and research to socioeconomic and sociocultural change.

Where Is Brock University Now?

The Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education Program

The Faculty of Education has successfully designed, created, and positioned a Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education program (ABADED). The video-supported, site-facilitated, distance model designed for Aboriginal adult educators is a viable educational alternative that attracts candidates from many disciplines including business, education, health, literacy, and industry. This diverse group is accessing culturally relevant teacher education when and where they need it, at a competitive price while upholding the scholarly and academic traditions at Brock.

At this time, 5 of a possible 15 courses have been created and delivered. Most degree candidates take courses from other universities as “Letter of Permission” students. However, the remote geographic locations and lifestyle of these candidates preclude many from accessing those additional courses and completing their degrees. From inception 5 years ago, the ABADED program has experienced steady enrollment, high levels of retention, and gratifying numbers of undergraduates moving into graduate studies. Anecdotal reports strongly suggest that those Aboriginal graduate students have the necessary skills, cultural knowledge, and wellness to be successful in their endeavours. At the heart of this success is a program that is grounded in a *Learning and Healing* pedagogy that is a catalyst for personal, familial, and community change. Many Aboriginal Elders, educators, and scholars strongly believe that the solutions to the socioeconomic and sociocultural problems experienced by Aboriginal peoples lie in their ability to be conversant in both their own and mainstream

ways of knowing. This program is one of the few examples of that integration and because of that, the ABADED program is gaining increasing respect among Aboriginal peoples in Canada.

The Native Teacher Education Program

Brock's Native Teacher Education Program (NTEP) has trained and accredited a generation of Aboriginal teachers at the junior and primary level in Southern Ontario. Aboriginal communities are undergoing significant changes that will in turn prompt changes to that program. Significant among those changes are the extreme shortages of qualified Aboriginal teachers, especially in remote communities in Ontario, which is partially a response to the explosion of Aboriginal populations where one third are children aged 14 or under, far higher than the corresponding share of 19% of the non-Aboriginal population (Census: analysis series, 2001). One jurisdiction of the Nishnabe Askii Nation (NAN) in northwestern Ontario requires 100 new teachers at the primary/junior level and the upgrading of an additional 100 over the next 5 years if they are to meet the needs of their expanding populations and changes to certification (Brian Hawker, personal communications, January 12, 2004).

These changes to certification are a result of the devolution of responsibility for Aboriginal education from a Federal to Provincial jurisdiction and the changing nature of Teacher Certification in Ontario, which has left Aboriginal teachers without an undergraduate degree in certification limbo, especially at the elementary level.

The combination of SSHRC's new strategic initiative and the needs of the NAN related to primary/junior teacher training needs have prompted a proposal to the Research and Development Initiative at SSHRC in partnership with NAN.

Where Does Brock University Want To Go?

Envisioning Aboriginal Education and Research at Brock University

This vision of research and education (see Figure 4) builds on the success of the NTEP and the ABADED programs and embraces the four factors that will influence the next generation of Aboriginal education activity.

First, smaller Aboriginal populations require programming that is relevant to a wider cross-section of Aboriginal disciplines to be able to attract Learners and maintain financial viability.

Secondly, the vision is holistic in nature and provides Aboriginal candidates the most flexibility and opportunity at Brock to pursue their disciplines as well as their cultural aspirations.

Third, through the Aboriginal Education Council (AEC), the vision places the Aboriginal community and research in the centre of the enterprise and connects that research and the various degree candidates. By doing so, the Aboriginal community moves away from being the subject of research and becomes an actual participant in that research (see Battiste & Henderson, 2000; Smith, 1999).

Finally, the natural linkages between teaching and research have the potential to strengthen every Faculty of the University through the interaction with a Centre for research that encourages change within Aboriginal communities.

Creating the Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education

The Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education (the Centre) is conceived as an organic inter-faculty research and teaching entity that expands to include other Faculties as needs are identified and resources become available (see Figure 4). This

phased approach to growth encourages new Faculties and their respective students to participate in a collaborative interdisciplinary environment.

The overall purpose of the Centre is to establish a University-wide focus that connects Aboriginal and mainstream scholars, researchers, and post-doctoral and graduate students to Aboriginal peoples and communities in a culturally appropriate manner for the express purpose of furthering the understanding of the complex socioeconomic and sociocultural issues of the day, and creating new and innovative programming and solutions that promote the healing of those realities that exist within Aboriginal communities.

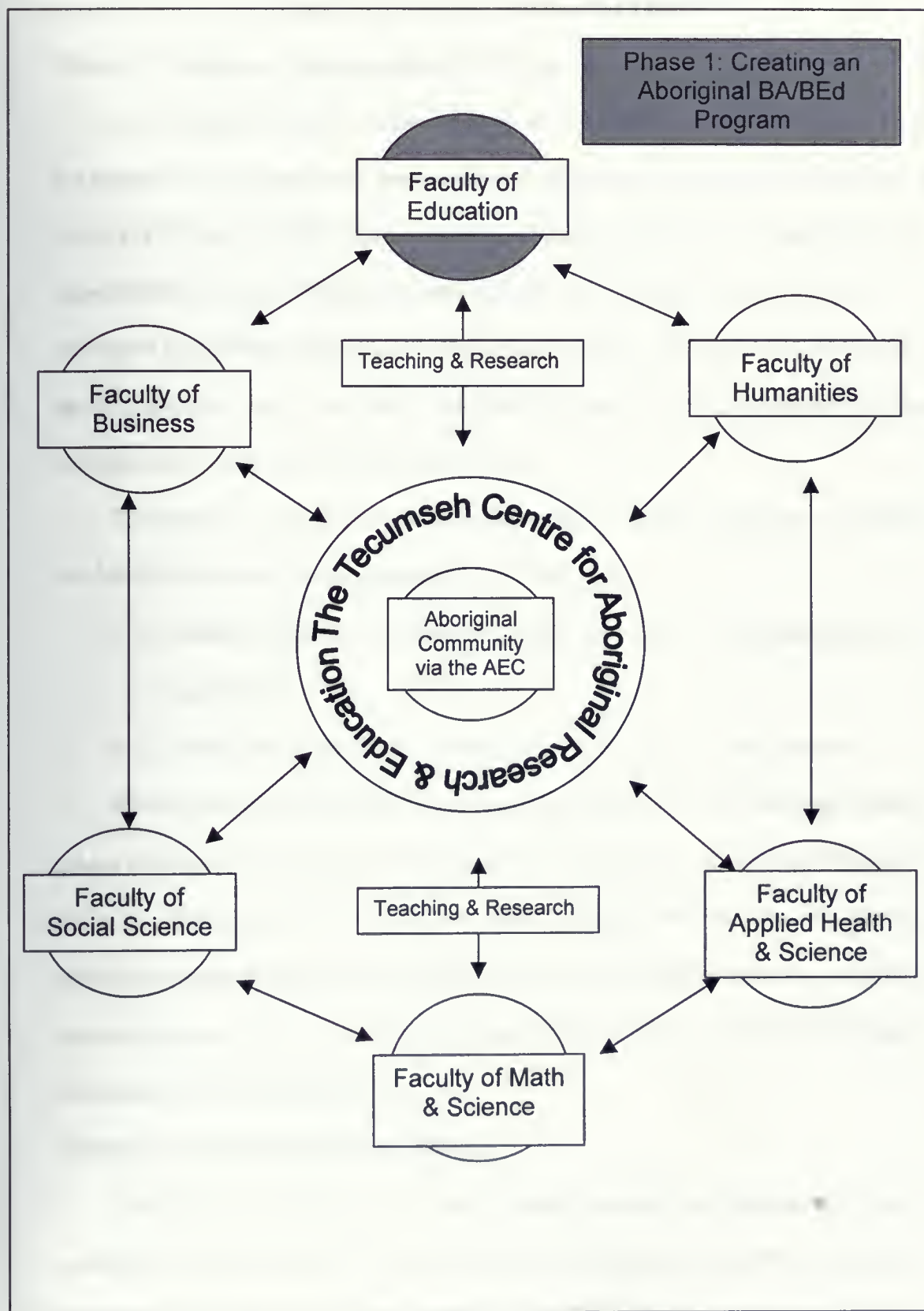


Figure 4. The Vision of the Tecumseh Centre for Aboriginal Research and Education.

How Does Brock University Get There?

Phase 1: Creating an Aboriginal BA/BEd Program

An Aboriginal equivalent to the mainstream's BA/BEd program offered at a distance is a unique way to address these new realities and open up new recruiting opportunities for Brock's NTEP and ABADED programs. It is with this in mind that Dr. Merle Richards approached the Ontario College of Teachers (the College) proposing a concurrent Aboriginal BA/ BEd program that combines the NTEP and ABADED. The College has agreed in principle that the proposal would meet the needs of the legislation and has offered to support the endeavour at a number of levels.

This reality creates two new groups in addition to teachers of adults that would find the ABADED program to be relevant to their careers:

1. Elementary teachers currently employed who do not have an undergraduate degree, and
2. New elementary teachers entering any NTEP program in the province.

When offering an ABADED degree that addresses the needs of three representative groups of the population that includes current or new elementary teachers or teachers of adults, it is important to keep this reality in mind. Statistically, teachers who are currently practicing or wishing to enter the profession will be predominantly female who return to university later in their lives. This strongly suggests that a degree offered locally on a part-time basis is an attractive alternative.

Strategies for Expanding Course Offerings

Aboriginal communities are investing in numerous culture and language inclusions to curriculum in their schools. This important trend is clearly demonstrated by an impressive initiative underway in the Cree communities of James Bay. The Cree government has set a

goal of total Cree language immersion that begins at the preschool level in the fall of 2004 and continues over the next decade. To address the associated shortfall of teachers of the Cree language, the Omuishkego Education Office has developed the Cree Language Teacher Accreditation Program (CLTAP). This program was designed by Cree educators and meets the requirement of the College for a language teachable. By accrediting this type of programming and offering it locally through a local language educator, Brock has the opportunity to offer additional undergraduate courses and create new revenue streams at little additional cost.

Other strategies include establishing relationships with other universities to offer additional courses to complete the ABADED degree. These consortiums have the potential to create new course offerings at zero cost to Brock, and offer a new and dynamic program to the consortium partner as well as a clear degree path offered at a distance to remote communities. This tactic is relevant to out-of-province applications as well. As of June of this year, Brock has an agreement in principle with the First Nations University of Canada (FNUC), previously known as Saskatchewan Indian Federated College, to offer the ABADED program in that province in the fall of 2004.

In this instance it is not about creating new courses to offer ABADED Learners, rather it is about consulting with our various stakeholders to understand their community's needs and better utilizing the existing resources at the community level and/or within the Faculty of Education to fulfill those needs.

Creating New Courses at Brock

In a review of the 2000 cohort that included 148 Aboriginal and mainstream candidates it was revealed that those Learners required an additional 277 course credits if they were to complete their degrees. If Brock were to fulfill just 50% of that cohort's needs,

it would realize an additional \$142,000 in gross revenue. Of the 3-year, one-context course credits (science, social science, and humanities) that ABADED degree candidates must complete, anecdotal reports suggest that the science credit is the most difficult for Learners to locate and complete.

If We Build It Will They Come?

In the fall of 2002 the Centre for Aboriginal Studies and Teacher Education (CAS) offered an Aboriginal Culture course (ABST 2M96) at Six Nations Polytechnic. A collaborative minimal cost promotion effort between CAS and the Centre for Adult Studies and Distance Learning (CASDL) resulted in a class of 10 Learners who required that course to complete their degrees. All of the Learners are Brock students and roughly half of them are enrolled in the ABADED program.

The following winter CAS offered an Aboriginal History course (ABST 2M96) at the same site. CASDL expanded the promotional effort and underwrote the cost of a small print advertising and direct mail campaign focused on the surrounding community, NTEP and ABADED learners. The results were additional 11 Learners, 2 of whom applied and were accepted into undergraduate studies as part-time Learners. Both efforts generated approximately \$35,000 in additional tuition revenue as well as assisting those Learners to complete their degrees.

Conclusion

This vision builds on the success of an undergraduate program that is grounded in an Aboriginal pedagogy, *Learning and Healing*. If this vision is to become a reality, Aboriginal and mainstream educators and administrators will have to recognize and step outside their comfort zones to engage an epistemological construct that is significantly different from their own. It will not be an easy task. Fundamental change is always difficult and disruptive

and it is always easier to find reasons not to do something that is different. The simple fact is that the contemporary socioeconomic and sociocultural reality of Aboriginal peoples is a reason for all Canadians to be ashamed and to ignore that reality is to condone and allow the reality to continue.

Perhaps the most significant way to counter that reality is through the education of Aboriginal peoples. The entire Aboriginal community in Canada is poised to begin that next generation of education. Brock University and the Aboriginal Education Council can take a leadership role in that endeavour and help to heal Aboriginal nations.

I will end this thesis with a story that was related to me by Merle Assance Beedie, a formidable Anishinabe Elder. Merle was once involved in negotiations with a number of mainstream academics and administrators, attempting to have them do things differently and address the educational needs of Aboriginal Learners. Finally, exasperated by their intransigence, Merle, who is normally soft-spoken, stood up and asked, "What is the use of all those letters after your names if you cannot help to change the reality of our people?" Consequently, the meeting's tone changed significantly and instead of finding ways for why a thing could not be done, those academics and administrators began to find ways things could be done. In the end those same academics and administrators made space for an Aboriginal intellectual tradition within the walls of their institution and both sides have since benefited.

"kina nbanwemaa"

References

- Aboriginal Healing Foundation. (2000). *Program handbook* (2nd ed.). Ottawa, ON: Author.
- Alfred, T. (1999). *Peace, power and righteousness: An Indian manifesto*. Toronto, ON: Oxford University Press.
- Anderson, K. (2000). *A recognition of being: Reconstructing Native womanhood*. Toronto, ON: Women's Issues Publishing Program.
- Antone, R. A., Miller, D. L. & Myers, B. A. (1986). *The power within people: A community organizing perspective*. Deseronto, ON: Peace Tree Technologies.
- Armitage, A. (1995). *Comparing the policy of Aboriginal assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Battiste, M. (1998). Enabling the autumn seed. Toward a decolonized approach to Aboriginal knowledge, language and education. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 22(1), 16-27.
- Battiste, M., & Barman, J. (Eds.). (1995). *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Battiste, M., & Henderson (Sa'ke'j), J. Y. (2000). *Protecting Indigenous knowledge and heritage: A global challenge*. Saskatoon, SK: Purich Publishing.
- Cairns, C. C. (2000). *Citizens plus: Aboriginal peoples and the Canadian state*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Castellano, M. B. (2000). Updating Aboriginal traditions of knowledge. In G. J. Sefi Dei, B. L. Hall, & D. G. Rosenberg (Eds.), *Situating Indigenous knowledges: Definitions and boundaries* (pp. 21-34). Toronto, ON: U of T Press.
- Castellano, M. B., Davis, L., & Lahache, L. (Eds.). (2000). *Aboriginal education: Fulfilling the promise*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Caulfield, R. A. (2002). *Strengthening Indigenous higher education in Alaska: Some insights from Aotearoa/New Zealand*. Unpublished manuscript.

Census: analysis series. (2001). *Aboriginal peoples in Canada: A demographic profile*. 8. Ottawa: Statistics Canada

Cruikshank, J. (1994). Cost recovery: The current challenge. In M. Brooke & M. Waldron (Eds.), *University continuing education: Current challenges and future opportunities* (pp. 74-83). Toronto, ON: Thompson Educational Press.

Deloria, V., Jr. (1970). *We talk you listen*. Toronto, ON: MacMillan Press.

Deloria, V., Jr. (1994). *Indian education in America: 8 essays by Vine Deloria Jr.* Albuquerque, NM: American Indian Science and Engineering Society.

Deloria, V., Jr. (1993). *God is red: A Native view of religion*. (Rev. ed.) Golden, CO: Fulcrum.

Deloria, V., Jr. (1999). *Spirit and reason: The Vine Deloria, Jr. reader*. Golden, CO: Fulcrum.

Donald John Marshall, Jr. v. Her Majesty The Queen. (n.d.). Retrieved June 13, 2004, from http://www.lexum.umontreal.ca/csc-scc/en/pub/1999scr3_0456.html/

Ermine, W. (1995). Aboriginal epistemology. In M. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.). *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds* (pp. 101-111). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Fraser, G. (2003, April 6). The education icon: Retired teacher a star beyond Cannes. *The Toronto Star*, p. A4.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Goyette, L. (2001, November 18). The girl in the snow: What Canada must do to repair some old and deep wounds. *The Toronto Star*, pp. A1, A6.

Haig-Brown, C. (1995). *Taking control: Contradiction and First Nations adult education*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Hampton, E. (1988). Towards a redefinition of Indian education. In M. Battiste & J. Barman (Eds.), *First Nations education in Canada: The circle unfolds* (pp. 5-42). Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Hill, D., & George, P. (1995). *Aboriginal access to post-secondary education: Prior learning assessment and its use within Aboriginal programs and learning*. Deseronto, ON: First Nations Technical Institute.

Hodson, J., & Raynor, M. (2002). *Aboriginal teacher development: Beginning our journeys*. St. Catharines, ON: Centre for Aboriginal Research & Teacher Education.

Hodson, J., & Richards, M. (2003). *Where do we go from here: Envisioning Aboriginal education & research at Brock University*. Unpublished manuscript.

Jackman, P. (1999, March 25). More Native students completing their educations. *The Globe and Mail*, p. 22.

Joan B. Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies. (2003). *Lessons from South Africa's truth & reconciliation commission*. Retrieved February 2, 2003, from University of Notre Dame Web site: http://www.nd.edu/~krocmst/conoquy/issue1/research_SA-truth.html

Kompf, M., & Hodson, J. (2000). Keeping the seventh fire: Developing an undergraduate degree program for Aboriginal adult educators. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 24(2), 185-202.

MacLaine, C., & Baxendale, M. (1991). *This land is our land: The Mohawk revolt at Oka*. Montreal, PQ: Optimum Publishing.

Milloy, J. S. (1999). *A national crime: The Canadian government and the residential school system, 1879 to 1986*. Winnipeg, MN: The University of Manitoba Press.

Morrisseau, C. (1999). *Into the daylight: A wholistic approach to healing*. Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Parkman, F. (1997). *The Jesuits of North America in the seventeenth century*. Lincoln, NB: University of Nebraska Press.

Patton, J. H. (1990). *Qualitative evaluation and research methods*. (2nd ed.). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Post-secondary education for Status Indians and Inuit. (1997, November). *Indian and Northern Affairs Canada*, 1.

Rock, D. (2003, November 10). Report on recent SSHRC decisions to implement an Aboriginal research agenda. Message posted to Ref-links electronic mailing list, archived at Aboriginal_research@yahoogroups.ca

Ross, R. (1992). *Dancing with a ghost: Exploring Indian reality*. Markham, ON: Reed Books.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. (1996 a). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Gathering strength*. 3, 127. Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. (1996 b). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Gathering strength*. 3, 120. Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. (1996 c). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Gathering strength*. 3, 153. Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. (1996 d). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Gathering strength*. 3, 488. Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. (1996 e). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Perspectives and realities*. 4, 184. Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Royal Commission on Aboriginal peoples. (1996 e). *Report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples: Renewal: A twenty-year commitment*. 5, Ottawa: Canada Communications Group.

Sioui, G. E. (1999). *Huron Wendat: The heritage of the circle*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Smith, G. H. (2002, April). *Beyond Freire's political literacy: From conscientisation to transformative praxis*. Paper presented at the meeting of the AERA Conference, New Orleans, LA.

Smith, G. H. (2003, February). *Creating Indigenous spaces in university settings*. Paper presented at the meeting of the Indigenous Education Network and the Department of Adult Education, OISE/ U of T, Toronto, ON.

Smith, L. T. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*. Dunedin, NZ: University of Otago Press.

Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council. (2003, February). *SSHRC's dialogue on research and Aboriginal peoples: What have we heard on what should be done?* Ottawa, ON: Author.

Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council. (2003, July). *SSHRC discussion paper: Opportunities in Aboriginal research*. Ottawa, ON: Author.

Stiffarm, L. A. (1998). *As we see ... Aboriginal pedagogy*. Saskatoon, SK: University Extension Press, University of Saskatoon.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: Grounded theory procedures and techniques*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Sullivan, R. (2000, May 25). Australia's attempt to reconciliation undermined by PM: Refuses to apologize to Aboriginals for mistreatment by Europeans since 1788. *The Toronto Star*, p. A22.

Tafoya, T. (1995). Finding harmony: Balancing traditional values with western science in therapy. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 21 (Supplement), 7-27.

Trigger, B. G. (1969). *The Huron farmers of the north*. Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Jovanovich.

Walkom, T. (2000, March 12). Fire of resentment burns underground: Australia built on the legal fiction that the Aborigines don't even exist. *The Toronto Star*, p. B2.

Wallace, P. A. W. (1994). *White roots of peace*. Santa Fe, NM: Clear Light Publishers.

Wright, R. (1992). *Stolen continents: The "new world" through Indian eyes*. Toronto, ON: Penguin Books.

Young, A. (2003, January 19). Public policy too often driven by ill-informed opinions. *The Toronto Star*, p. F6.

Zimmerman, L. J., Zimmerman K. P., & Bruguier, L. R. (2000). Cyberspace smoke signals: New technologies and Native American ethnicity. In Smith, C. S. & Ward, G. K. (Eds.) (2000). *Indigenous cultures in an interconnected world*. St. Leonards, Australia: Allen & Unwin.

Appendix A

Glossary of Terms

Aboriginal Institutes	Usually associated with a First Nation, these Aboriginal Colleges provide various education services to their community including diploma and degree programs in partnership with mainstream colleges and universities.
Anishinabe	The Ojibwa word for themselves. Roughly translated as “the good people.”
Anishinabek	The Ojibwa word for their Nation.
Chickasaw	One of the five civilized tribes that was move from their traditional territory by President Jefferson on what became known as the “Trail of Tears.” Today the descendants of those nations live in Oklahoma.
Dayak	One of the Indigenous peoples of Indonesia.
Eagle Staff	Said to be the original flag for Native peoples.
Hotinonshó:ni	Iroquoian word meaning, “people of the longhouse.”
Kaienerekowa	The Great Law of Peace that is the founding law of the Six Nations Confederacy.
Lakota	The Sioux name for themselves.
Mikámaq	The Mic Mac name for themselves.
Maori	The indigenous people of New Zealand.
Métis	In 1982 the Federal government amended the Constitution to include people of mixed heritage (the Métis) as one of the three Aboriginal groups in Canada.
Mushgego	The Cree name for themselves.
Pakeha	Maori word that describes the dominant culture in New Zealand.
Pipe Carrier	Men or women can be Pipe Carriers. A Pipe is considered to be sacred and may be used in specific Ceremonies and have specific healing properties.
Royal Commission On Aboriginal Peoples	The Federally appointed Royal Commission produced a five volume review of the reality of Aboriginal peoples in Canada, including a 20-year plan to right the socioeconomic difficulties that have existed in Canada for over 100 years.
Sagoyewatha	Sagoyewatha (He-Keeps-Them-Awake), also known as Red Jacket, was a noted Seneca orator and statesmen who was born around 1750 in what is now the state of New York. Sagoyewatha passed away in 1830.
Sacred Medicines	There are numerous Medicines that are considered to be Sacred within Aboriginal epistemologies. Usually used in conjunction with Ceremonies and gathered, cultivated and stored with the assistance of other Ceremonies.
Te Kohanga Reo	Maori preschool language nests.

Tobacco	Considered a Sacred Medicine by many Aboriginal cultures tobacco is also used as a gift when requesting assistance in an important endeavour.
Turtle Island	This is the English translation of the traditional Aboriginal name for North America, which reflects both key aspects of many Aboriginal creation stories and the fact that a map of North America looks somewhat like a great turtle.
Wendat Confederacy	Referred to by the early French colonists as the Huron. The traditional territory of this confederacy of four nations was located in what is now central Ontario until late in the 17 th century. Their descendants now live in Quebec and Oklahoma.

Appendix B

Acknowledgements

The Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education Degree Program would not exist without considerable support and trust from those involved. I wish to respectfully acknowledge and thank the generous support and guidance of the Wildfire Circle members. Without them this opportunity and discourse would not be possible.

The Wildfire Circle

- Merle Assance Beedie**, Elder-in-Residence, Georgian College
Athol White Eagle Hart, Elder, Newmarket
Verna Hill, Elder, Fort Erie
Rene Abram, Executive Director, Ontario Native Literacy Coalition
Doug Anderson, Native Literacy Coordinator, Ministry of Education & Training
Kato Badry, Métis Training Initiatives, Toronto Métis Council
Beverly Bressette, Association of Iroquois & Allied Indians
Nancy Cada, Native Trainer
Brian Charles, Community Liaison, Georgian College
Jan Donio, TV Ontario
Jonathan Diabo, Coordinator-Employment Training, Native Canadian Centre of Toronto
Donald R. Fiddler, En'owkin Centre
Sally Gaikezhayongai, Chair-Greater Toronto Area Aboriginal Education Council
Basil George, Serpent River First Nation
Eber Hampton, Saskatchewan Indian Federated College
Brian Hawker, Education Consultant, Union of Ontario Indians
Rick Henderson, Chief Administrative Officer, Southern Ontario Métis & non-Status Indian Association
Bruce Herney, Brock students & ADED facilitators, Saugeen First Nation
Sandra Herney, Brock students & ADED facilitators, Saugeen First Nation
Karen Hill, Program Coordinator, Grand River Polytech
Michael Kompf, Faculty of Education, Brock University
Chief Doug Maracle, Association of Iroquois & Allied Indians
Murray Maracle, VP, First Nations Technical Institute & Chair of the Aboriginal Institute Consortium
Linda McGregor, Teacher
Della Meness, Co-Chair of the Aboriginal Circle on Post-Secondary Education in Ontario
Christine Migwans, Adult Education Coordinator, Kenjégewin Teg Educational Institute
Sandra Moore, Aboriginal Education Coordinator, Sir Sanford Fleming College
Brian Murphy, Wabi Sabi Creative Inc.
Terry Restoule, Union of Ontario Indians
Merle Richards, Aboriginal Education Council, Brock University
Dr. John Roberts, Executive Director, Canadian Métis Council
Carmen Robertson, Graduate Intern, Faculty of Education, Brock University
Linda Staats, Director, Grand River Polytech
Wendy Sturgeon, Niagara Chapter of Native Women

Paulette Tremblay, Assembly of First Nations, Education Sector
Claudine Van Every-Albert, Aboriginal Education Council, Brock University
John Waring, Graduate Intern, Faculty of Education, Brock University

Appendix C

Participant Confirmation Letter

XXXXXXX XXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX
 XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Thursday, August 21, 2003

Sago, Ahneen XXXXXX:

This letter will confirm your participation in my graduate study and to provide additional information that will allow you to participate in this study.

As I related to you in our recent telephone conversation, the purpose of this study is to investigate the perceptions and experiences imbedded in the stories of learners in the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education program and through that investigation determine how and to what degree those experiences and perceptions promoted individual, familial and community wellness.

There are two components that relate to your participation including:

1. Participating in a Talking Circle with nine other learners who were part of the 2000 cohort of the program. The resulting consultations will be audio tape-recorded.
2. Transcriptions of the audio recordings and initial analysis of the information will be provided for your review and comment.

I anticipate that the Talking Circle will take approximately three hours and because of this time commitment the Circle is planned for Tuesday September 23 from 6:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. at Roots for Peace, 1217 Second Line in Hagersville Ontario (see enclosed directions).

It is anticipated that your review and comment of the transcription and initial analysis of that Circle will take you approximately two hours.

Here is a sample of the interview questions that I would like the Circle to consider:

- How did participation in the program affect you as a learner?
- How did participation in the program affect your family?
- How did participation in the program affect your teaching practice?
- How did participation in the program affect your community?

It is my belief that your participation in this reflective consultation with others who have shared a similar experience will assist you to build a fuller understanding of

your own experience, expose you to one approach to scholarly Aboriginal research and assist future Aboriginal researchers.

As is our shared custom you are not obliged or required to answer any question or speak within the confines of the Circle if you do not wish to do so. In addition, your participation in this study is on a voluntary basis and you have the right to withdraw your participation at any point without penalty.

Maintaining your anonymity within the confines of this study is paramount. You will only be referred to with a pseudonym in the transcripts, which will only be available to me as will be the recorded tapes.

The Research Ethics Board of Brock University has officially approved this study (File # 03-003) and copies of the completed thesis will be available for your review in May of 2004.

Finally, your travel expenses will be reimbursed and a luncheon will also be served at the conclusion of the Circle.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge and thank you and your family for participating in this study.

Miigweech/ Nya:whe

John Hodson
Home: (905) 371-9428
Work: (905) 688-5550 ext. 4757

Informed Consent Form

Title of Study: Learning and Healing: A Wellness Indigagogy for Aboriginal Teacher Education.

Researcher: John Hodson

Name of Participant: _____

I agree to participate in the research study described on the attached Information Letter. I understand that my participation involves the following activities:

1. Participating in a Talking Circle with others from the 2000 cohort of the Bachelor of Education in Aboriginal Adult Education program at Roots 4 Peace Centre, 1217 Second Line on Tuesday September 23 from 6:30 p.m. until approximately 9:30 p.m.
2. Reviewing a transcript of that Talking Circle.
3. Reviewing a preliminary analysis of that transcription.

I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time for any reason without penalty. I understand that there is no obligation to answer any questions. I understand that I will be reimbursed for my travel expenses at the rate of .29 per kilometre and that I will be offered a light refreshment at the conclusion of the Circle.

I understand that all personal data will be kept strictly confidential. Only John Hodson will know my full name. I will be identified with a pseudonym in the transcript. Any identifying details associated to me will be disguised in the final thesis report and that that report will be available to others outside Brock University.

I also agree to keep the names of the individuals participating in the Talking Circle as well as the content of their discussions confidential.

Please check one of the options below:

☐ I agree to be re-contacted for my permission if a secondary analysis of the information that I will share should arise.

☐ I do not wish to be re-contacted for my permission if a secondary analysis of the information that I will share should arise.

Date: _____ Participant: _____

This study has been reviewed and approved by the Brock Research Ethics Board (File# 03-003). If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact the Office of Research Services (905) 688-5550 extension 3035 or the Thesis Supervisor, Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir in the Faculty of Education at (905) 688-5550 extension 3710 or via e-mail at manleyc@ed.brocku.ca.

Sample of Feedback Letter

XXXXX, XXXXX, XX, 2003

Ms XXXXX XXXXXX
XX XXXXXX
XXXXXXXX ON, XXX XXX

Sago, Ahneen Ms XXXX:

I wish to say nya:whe and miigweech to you for generously giving of your time, feelings and thoughts during the recent Circle here at Brock. Your generous participation will assist other Aboriginal and non-aboriginal scholars in better understanding the educational needs of future Aboriginal learners as well as expand the body of knowledge related to Aboriginal adult education.

You will hear from me shortly about the transcripts derived from the audio tapes recorded at the Circle. If you have any questions please contact me.

The Research Ethics Board of Brock University has officially approved this study (File # 03-003) and copies of the completed thesis will be available for your review in May of 2004. If you require additional information you may wish to contact the Office of Research Services (905) 688-5550 extension 3035 or my Thesis Supervisor, Dr. Michael Manley-Casimir in the Faculty of Education at (905) 688-5550 extension 3710 or via e-mail at manleyc@ed.brocku.ca.

Miigweech/ Nya:whe

John Hodson
Home: (905) 371-9428
Work: (905) 688-5550 ext. 4757
jhodson@ed.brocku.ca

Appendix D

Ethics Department Approval Form



Brock University	
Senate Research Ethics Board	Extensions 3943/3035, Room AS 302
DATE:	July 29, 2003
FROM:	Joe Engemann, Chair Senate Research Ethics Board (REB)
TO:	Michael Manley-Casimir, Education John Hodson, Education
FILE:	03-003, Hodson
TITLE:	Learning and Healing: A Wellness Indigagogy for Aboriginal Teacher Education

The Brock University Research Ethics Board has reviewed the above research proposal.

DECISION: Accepted as clarified.

This project has been approved for the period of **July 29, 2003** to **December 31, 2003** subject to full REB ratification at the Research Ethics Board's next scheduled meeting. The approval may be extended upon request. *The study may now proceed.*

Please note that the Research Ethics Board (REB) requires that you adhere to the protocol as last reviewed and approved by the REB. The Board must approve any modifications before they can be implemented. If you wish to modify your research project, please refer to www.BrockU.CA/researchservices/forms.html to complete the appropriate form **REB-03 (2001) Request for Clearance of a Revision or Modification to an Ongoing Application.**

Adverse or unexpected events must be reported to the REB as soon as possible with an indication of how these events affect, in the view of the Principal Investigator, the safety of the participants and the continuation of the protocol.

If research participants are in the care of a health facility, at a school, or other institution or community organization, it is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator to ensure that the ethical guidelines and approvals of those facilities or institutions are obtained and filed with the REB prior to the initiation of any research protocols.

The Tri-Council Policy Statement requires that ongoing research be monitored. A Final Report is required for all projects, with the exception of undergraduate projects, upon completion of the project. Researchers with projects lasting more than one year are required to submit a Continuing Review Report annually. The Office of Research Services will contact you when this form ***REB-02 (2001) Continuing Review/Final Report*** is required.

Please quote your REB file number on all future correspondence.

