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Canada

ALL MY RELATIONS



A WELLNESS WORKBOOK

Correctional Service Canada

Service Correctionnel Canada

A WELLNESS WORKBOOK

Prepared By

NECHI Training, Research and Health Promotions Institute

For

Corporate Adviser, Aboriginal Programming

September 1996

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All My Relations

A Wellness Workbook

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Preface

"[In the last two decades or so] Indian people ... have been experiencing what might be called a revitalization. We have awakened just in time to rediscover something that might otherwise have passed from our memory and from our reality forever. I am referring to our great heritage, our culture, and our values. Fortunately, we woke up in time. But when you wake up, the day just begins, so we still have a long way ahead of us and a lot of work to do now that we are awake."

- Tom Porter, Mohawk

"Everything is related."

- Abe Burnstick, Alberta Elder

Many researchers, writers and criminal justice officials have documented the over-representation of Aboriginal persons in the justice system (Griffiths and Verdren-Jones, 1994, Government of Alberta, 1991a). In Alberta, it is estimated that up to 5% of the total population is Aboriginal, yet it is well-known that police services deal with a much higher proportion of Aboriginal persons as offenders and victims. As well, Aboriginal persons appear in high numbers in the courts. The over-representation continues into the correctional institutions. In Alberta, from 25 - 50% of inmates in Provincial centres are Aboriginal (Government of Alberta, 1991). Conversely, there is evidence that a much lower proportion of Aboriginal offenders are granted parole or temporary absences. The picture painted by this evidence, is not a pleasant one for the Aboriginal community (eg.,York 1990). A relatively small number of people find themselves in a very noticeable and disadvantaged position relative to the justice system.

Coupled with this condition is the evidence of the disadvantaged status of Aboriginal persons in relation to other social indicators, such as employment, education and health (Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, 1992). To further complicate the picture, the Law Reform Commission of Canada (1991:6) reports that Aboriginal peoples "sense of injustice is bottomless .... If the truth be told, most have given up on the criminal justice system."

What emerges from this information is a dreadful picture of despair, frustration and a sense of hopelessness. It leads many persons, whether they are justice officials or concerned citizens, to ask: "Why are things like this? A brief look at some of the historical circumstances that have

influenced Aboriginal people provides at least a partial answer to the destruction of a way of life, the loss of identity, and the breakdown of traditional Aboriginal families and communities.

In the 1700's, the fur trade initiated the erosion of the Aboriginal extended family, in part, because European traders saw the man as the head of the family and would only deal with him. The traditional balance of power and responsibility between Aboriginal men and women was eroded. Europeans also introduced the concept of private property which was unknown in Aboriginal communities until that time. Missionaries travelled west with the fur trade and tried to convert Aboriginal people to Christianity, further hurting and destroying family and community beliefs and ideals. For example, the Christian missionaries believed that Aboriginal people disciplined their children far too leniently, and that Aboriginal beliefs and ceremonies were "devil" worshipping, heathen and pagan practices.

Europeans also introduced disease and famine which further devastated the Aboriginal people. Smallpox epidemics, for example, completely destroyed some First Nations. Across the prairies, buffalo herds were hunted to near extinction by Europeans. The loss of traditional sources of food, shelter and clothing resulted in poverty and starvation. Another destructive force introduced by outsiders was alcohol. To this day, alcohol is believed to affect, directly or indirectly, 100% of Aboriginal people.

Aboriginal communities traditionally celebrated most aspects of life, such as birth, puberty, and entering into relationships. Many of these rituals and ceremonies were outlawed by Federal government policy. As recent as the 1940's, one illustration of this is the "Potlatch Law" which was imposed on Aboriginal people in British Columbia. The social and political devastation resulting from the outlawing of traditional practices may not be readily apparent to people outside the Aboriginal community. Dr. Maggie Hodgson, Executive Director of Nechi Institute, summarizes the impact:

> *"So when the Government of Canada set out their legislation which made it illegal for ceremony, they also affected security, ideology, beliefs, access to resources, healing and justice. It affected the ideas, values and principles on which community health was maintained."*

Mission or residential schools have had their own profound effect, raising many issues yet to be resolved. These schools began in the 1830's and continued until the 1960's. Aboriginal children of school age were removed from their families, by force if necessary, and often transported many

miles away from their homes in order to attend these schools. Amongst other things, the "Indian Act" which made Aboriginal people wards of the Canadian Government, divested parents of responsibility and control over the upbringing of their children.

Residential schools were inadequately built and lacked proper facilities. For example, 30 or more of the children lived in a dormitory with one or two supervisors. This institutional atmosphere meant that the residential school was void of emotional and nurturing contact. The family was replaced by strangers and rules and regulations. As late as the 1950's, children arriving at residential school had their hair cut short and they were deloused - practices that were disrespectful and humiliating.

For some children, being at the residential school also meant being punished for speaking their Aboriginal language. Punishment included strapping, being slapped across the face, having their mouth taped, and hair pulled. This treatment further instilled guilt and shame for being Aboriginal. The children began to deny their culture and family. This process, combined with Christian teachings meant that they had lost any sense of healthy cultural and personal identity. If, and when, these children returned to their families, many of them felt like strangers.

It is estimated that as many as seven generations of Aboriginal people directly experienced the residential school system. Besides the cultural shame, many children experienced physical and sexual abuse, poor nutrition, and inadequate medical attention. The inadequate living conditions in institutional settings away from families and homes forced acceptance and practice of Christian beliefs and values, and the destruction of Aboriginal culture and language have had huge consequences. For example, parenting skills deteriorated. Overall, residential schools deprived generations of children the nurturing and skills they needed to build and maintain Aboriginal families and communities.

Actions by Provincial Child Welfare System also resulted in children being separated from their communities. During the 1950's and 1960's, a significant number of children were removed from their homes. The vast majority of these children were fostered or adopted into non-Aboriginal families.

Over the past 300 years, Aboriginal families and communities have endured multiple losses. Aboriginal people have sometimes turned to alcohol in a futile effort to ease the pain of situations which were beyond their control. Various forms of family violence became another symptom of Aboriginal peoples attempt to gain a sense of self control and power. People who experience oppression and the loss of a way of life will, in turn, oppress themselves and their own people. They will also feel little regard and respect for authority or laws. Suicide and other forms of self-destruction are often the tragic consequences.

Those Aboriginal individuals and families who survived have struggled to overcome the consequences of a devastating history. Ever increasing number of people, for example, live a life of sobriety, stability and service. Some work within their community, especially in human service agencies such as addiction treatment centres. Others assume leadership roles in community, provincial and national organizations. Aboriginal adults are also returning to school and completing technical and university programs across the country. These persons are hailed as role models across the country.

Returning to the issue of Aboriginal people and their over representation in correctional institutions, it is important to recognize that some Aboriginal offenders do successfully re-integrate into society. They no longer come into negative contact with police, courts and correctional agencies. While these successes may not be readily visible to the general public, they are seen as significant within Aboriginal communities. These individuals have overcome great difficulties. Some of these stories will appear throughout this workbook as "Voices: Something to Think About."

These strong stories of individual accomplishment do not mean that the relationship between Aboriginal people and the Canadian justice system is vastly improved. Additional work on the part of various branches of the legal system, for example, Correctional Services of Canada, and Aboriginal organizations and communities is needed.



"Fellowship, communication and walking together is the strength of our Indian People."

- Chief Simon Baker, Squamish

"What should it matter that one bowl is dark and the other pale, if each is of good design and serves its purpose well?"

- Hopi

Towards the end of February, 1996, Dr. Maggie Hodgson, Executive Director of Nechi Institute, and Correctional Services of Canada entered into a contractual agreement. Nechi Institute agreed to provide Correctional Services with a wellness workbook for Aboriginal people. Correctional Services was especially concerned with providing help to Aboriginal people around the experience and the impact of residential school.

Dr. Hodgson gathered together a number of people with extensive and varied Human Service experience in early March, 1996. The purpose of this meeting was to explore the contents of such a workbook. During the discussions, it became apparent that it would be impossible to address the impact of residential school in isolation because the lives of Aboriginal people has been impacted by many other historical and contemporary factors. Separating out any one factor would be contrary to both professional therapeutic knowledge and practice, and Aboriginal values and principles.

All of our life's experiences are inter-connected. Therefore, it was decided the workbook adopt a holistic approach to wellness. This approach meets the needs of both Aboriginal people and Correctional Services of Canada and resulted in ***"All My Relations - A Wellness Workbook, Parts I and II"***.

All My Relations, Part I, begins by addressing the issue of physical, emotional, mental and spiritual safety. This is absolutely necessary prior to an individual undertaking a review of their life, their ***Place in the World,*** past, present and future. This is followed by a ***Communication Skills*** section which will further help individuals to develop self-awareness as well as interpersonal skills.

As the various personal *"Voices"* of Aboriginal individuals demonstrate, dealing with alcohol, drugs and other addictions is also very necessary to their healing and becoming contributing members in their community. ***A Look at Addictions***, which includes ***The 12 Steps***, are intended to help Aboriginal individuals address this issue.

Part I ends with a section on traditional Aboriginal teachings and ceremonies, ***The Spiritual Journey***. Events and situations, such as residential schools, seriously damaged the cultural practices of Aboriginal people. For many, reclaiming the teachings and ceremonies of their people is central to their healing.

All My Relations, Part II, continues and deepens the process of healing by asking individuals to explore ***The Family***, especially their "family of origin." Again, the *"Voices"* of Aboriginal people themselves underline the importance of family, including its extended members. Rebuilding family is another central component of their healing. Aboriginal families are seriously wounded for a variety of reasons, including the forced separations and teachings imposed by residential schools.

Historical factors and contemporary circumstances have resulted in extensive losses over many generations, for example, the loss of language, loss of traditional teachings, and loss of life. The section ***Leaving, Loss and Grieving*** provides individuals with information on grieving and assists them in working through the process.

In recent years, many Aboriginal people have come forward with testimonies of sexual abuse that they and their relatives endured at residential school. Today, sexual abuse also happens in families and communities experiencing pain and violence. The section called ***Sexual Abuse*** reviews the individual's experience with this issue and begins the process of healing, especially through letter writing. Part of recovering from sexual wounding, caused by misinformation, negative attitudes and direct sexual violation, involves learning about male and female sexuality. The final section of ***Part II*** of this workbook, ***Sexuality and Spirituality,*** explores the nature of healthy sexuality and its relationship to the whole person as a spiritual being.

Although this workbook is divided into two parts, each containing four sections, both ***Part I and Part II*** are included under one cover. This insures that the relationship between Part I and Part II remains visible. At the same time, this way of organizing the workbook easily allows individuals to place each part into a separate binder if they so wish. The use of colour further permits individuals to separate out sections as they proceed through the workbook.

As individuals work their way through this workbook, they will notice some variety in presentation styles from section to section in both ***Parts I*** and ***Part II***. This will allow individuals to assess the styles of presentation and provide feedback to Correctional Services of Canada. The authors and Nechi Institute have the understanding that ***All My Relations*** will be field tested. In the end, this will ensure that the workbook will meet the needs of Aboriginal people, especially those involved with the Justice System.



"The Indians don't force anybody to do anything; they tell you the good points and it's up to you to volunteer. Nobody ever forced me to go out and fast or participate in any ceremony. I did it because I wanted to. They made me feel I should, but they didn't force me. The Indians stress the fact that you should believe in something, because if you believe in a principle, you are able to guide yourself toward that principle."

- Henry Old Coyote, Crow

"It's up to you."

- Dr. Joe Couture

This workbook has been written with Aboriginal cultural values in mind; that is, the values of kindness, sharing, respect and honesty. For example, there is the opportunity to make choices regarding topics. The choice of which sections to work through, in part or completely, is also an individual choice.

One of the recurring ideas you may notice throughout this workbook is that even though many decisions are made for people while they are in jail, there are some important decisions an individual can make for themselves. Like choosing to spend some of their "time" growing in a spiritual way. Or choosing to look at how they got into trouble and how they might stay out of difficulty with "the law" and in their personal lives in the future. Individuals can choose to use the time to learn and heal so that they can be givers of wisdom in the Elder years.

This workbook is designed to meet individual needs. For example, individuals may choose to work alone, in the privacy of their cells or living quarters, while others might prefer to work in pairs or groups. There is also the choice of doing the work with a counsellor or Elder. The intention is that each person makes the choice as to what would be most helpful for them.

This workbook takes into account other differing needs. For instance, people have skills in different areas - some like to write to express themselves, others like to draw. There are others who prefer to think about answers in their minds without speaking them out loud. Perhaps that is what is safest for the time being and that is okay. For others, meditation exercises are helpful. Or, you might want to choose a combination of some, or all, of the different kinds of exercises included in this book. Whatever works for the individual is what should be done.

This workbook is also based on the idea of story telling. Stories are important for Aboriginal people. The legacy of the oral tradition is still strong for our people. The stories we tell say who we are and how we make sense of the world around us. What makes stories excellent teachers is that the same story can have many different lessons and that each person can take what she or he needs from the story. A person can read or hear the same story at different times in their life and learn something different each time they read or hear the story. Most of all, stories are powerful because they help us to learn in a way that is respectful and where all parts of our life are interwoven into a whole, like threads weaving a blanket or Métis sash.

"Our experiences in our home of origin, our ancestors' experiences, the Canadian Government's policies in the 1700's and 1800's, residential schools, our parents' upbringing, our home or place of identity, our sexuality, our spirituality, our grief, our hope, our vision - all are related."

- Dr. Maggie Hodgson, Carrier Nation

One of the ways that you will notice stories being a part of this workbook is in the wise words of many Aboriginal Elders and other spiritual people which are interwoven throughout. Their words of wisdom, as well as a series of affirmations and meditations, are collected for you in Appendix III. You will also find examples of how other Aboriginal offenders with a history of violence went about their healing. They tell their stories in the **"Voices"** sections in a powerful way. Hopefully, their words will interest you and reveal that there is a way out of the cycle of imprisonment. Their stories may also assist individuals to view themselves as being worth the effort it takes to move out of that cycle. Part of that effort includes telling their own story. Throughout this workbook, there will be many opportunities for individuals to think about and express different aspects of themselves, to help them understand who they are, and what is of importance to them.



"Culture is the way we live today."

- Abe Burnstick, Cree Elder

"The places we have lived and how we felt about those places - our visit with sexuality and spirituality - these and other things we are in relationship with, reflect our individual culture and how we fit with the bigger picture of community culture. So, if you are not familiar with some of the traditional teachings shared in this workbook, it does not mean you have no culture. Culture is woven in every sentence you write as you reflect on what you remember, your feelings, thoughts and actions."

- Dr. Maggie Hodgson, Carrier Nation

An ancient Aboriginal form of communicating, visiting, resolving conflict, sharing information, teaching, healing, and sharing stories was the talking circle. Talking Circles, also referred to as healing circles, fire circles and women's or men's support groups, have recently regained popularity.

This form of communication, Talking Circles, existed prior to the Europeans and continued through the ages within the realm of Aboriginal spirituality. In ceremonies such as the pipe ceremony, sweat lodge, sundance and smudging the practice continues to grow into even more functions. Recently, the community sentencing process has utilized this technique to assist in the healing of the victim, perpetrator and community. All individuals affected come together to be heard with no fear of repercussions for their thoughts, actions or feelings. This is the main purpose of the healing circle: to bring about understanding through caring, concern and high regard for the person who is sharing their story, their pain or their wisdom. Naturally, the traditional values of kindness, caring, respect and sharing are the basis of the talking circle and are honoured within the process.

Talking Circles are a way for Aboriginal people to support each other through their healing journey. Belonging to a healing circle is one of the ways individuals might choose to share their knowledge and understandings as they work through various sections of this workbook. A brief section (***Appendix I - Talking Circles***), includes information on how to start and participate in a talking circle, and can be found at the back of this workbook.

A final word about the ***"Voices"*** you will hear throughout this workbook. These voices are from aboriginal ex-offenders who volunteered to tell their story to Nechi researchers in 1994: their early years; how they got into serious trouble with the law, how they got out of trouble, and how they stay out of trouble (Solicitor General Canada, 1995). As their stories will demonstrate, this

was not easy to accomplish, but all of them have been out of trouble for at least two years, some as long as 15 years. These are stories of men and women who had committed very serious offenses, served a lot of "time" and eventually became successfully integrated into the community. They have gone from living a life of crime, to being successful students, employees, and family and community members.

The experiences of these people can be very helpful to other offenders who want to change. Their stories are stories of hope, courage and commitment. Through their recovery and healing spirit, they teach lessons and offer guidance to those who want to get out of trouble and stay out of trouble. They give everyone "something to think about". As you read the words of offenders who hurt a lot of people, did a lot of time and learned how to turn their lives around, consider that we can learn much from them.

Most of the ***"Voices"*** will be presented in between the sections of this workbook. If you wish further information regarding the themes which emerged during the original research, it is presented in summary form at the end of the workbook (Appendix 2). This information includes a brief discussion of the most important factors or themes which contributed to individuals getting and staying out of trouble with the law: quitting drinking/drugs, spirituality and culture, being sick and tired of jail looking for a better life, uncovering personal identity and taking personal responsibility, working in therapy and processing personal issues, caring for family, and overcoming the legacy of residential school.

The men and women who spoke to Nechi researchers were hopeful that sharing their stories of struggle and success would help other offenders in the institutions as well as people in the community. Their voices, whose real identity has been changed[1], offer support and encouragement to Aboriginal people everywhere who are on the road to wellness.

[1] Because of the need to respect the confidentiality of the ex-offenders, their real names have been changed. Any specific comments, such as another person's name or a particular place, that would identify the offender or their family or a victim has been changed.

Thanks for having me. I know damn well, the joints are too full of our people now; too many, too many of our people in there, but it is people like, I see a few guys out there today that I did time with and it is people like them and people like me, that will hopefully, have a little bit of influence on maybe on somebody and I think it has. People see somebody like me, that has known me twenty years ago and say, well jees, if that ass hole can do it, I should be able to.

Ron, age 42, Metis; record for break and enter, auto theft, robbery, impaired driving, possession of drugs, trafficking.

I hope this helps, because it's guys talking to themselves, saying it. It would be good too, if you went and did research and put it on paper yourself, but hearing it come directly from different people, is kind of an added little bonus to the end result, how it is going to come out. Just like when we drank, we never stopped at one drink, the more we had the better it seemed and this way too, different people contribute that much more, to what you are doing to help out. That is pretty neat.

I am glad I had this opportunity to come and talk about it. It brought out some emotion, it brought out a lump in my throat again, you know and thinking about it. The hard parts for me, were talking about the losses in my life and also gratitude for finding direction and making it this far and the people that have been helpful to me, so far. There has been a bit of both, remembering people that went, gave their lives and other people that were helpful, in helping others. I think that is the basic concept of Indian-ness, you know, supporting one another, trying to keep others from falling down and in general, people helping one another.

Tony, age 52; Status Indian; record for impaired driving, break and enter, assault, manslaughter.

That is something for me, like I would tell people that are still in jail, it is really a tough road to sober up and how you deal with it out there too, is the coping. It takes a long time to get over, like to stay out of jail, to learn to stay out of there. A person has to learn how to stay out and not go by time, like just living more each day out in the street. Eventually, it adds up, it builds up and trying to learn to cope with a new life too, of having a street life. That is something that I never used to have, I never knew.

Probably what for me, and any suggestions too, as far as all this too, what I was saying earlier, it might be good to make a book. Make a story out of these kinds of things, like these interviews and distribute them in the jails. That is what I was thinking might help. I know for me, if I was in jail, I would rather have gotten something like that, where I wanted to read something like that. It might trigger a story about ex-cons or something. You know, like have that on the book. It might get people to really read it and start reading some of these stories and they realize that they are not the only ones that went through it and going through it and actually to realize there can be a life out there.

You know, I never used to believe I would ever stay out and try and have a steady job, or to make my own living. I never knew those things, but maybe that would help.

Bert, age 42; Status Indian; record for criminal negligence, escape, auto theft, break and enter, assault.

'All My Relations'

A Wellness Workbook

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Introduction - Part I

" ...everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles... The sky is round... The wind, in it's greatest power, whirls. Birds make their nests in circles... The sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The moon does the same and both are round. Even the seasons form a great circle in their changing, and always come back again to where they were. The life of a man (and a woman) is a circle from childhood to childhood, and so it is in everything where power moves."

- Black Elk, Lakota (1961)

"The one who tells the stories rules the world."

- Hopi

"All My Relations" is a wellness workbook designed to meet the individual needs of Aboriginal people. It honours the values of sharing, caring, honesty and respect. For example, there is opportunity to make choices regarding topics. The choice of which sections to work through, in part or completely, is up to you. You may choose to work privately, with a friend, a counsellor or an Elder, or with a group.

This workbook is designed to meet other individual needs. For instance, opportunities are provided for you to write and draw. You may choose to do both, or only write, or only draw. Perhaps you prefer to think your answers quietly to yourself. You can choose whatever way of working suits you.

If you are working in this workbook while you are in jail, there are many important decisions about your day to day life that are being made for you. How much time you spend using this workbook, as well as how you use it, is one decision you can make, at least up to a certain point.

This workbook places great importance on story telling. Listening to stories teaches us about life. At the same time as you tell stories about your life, you are making sense of your life and telling yourself and others who you are. Our stories help make us whole; a complete human being. Each of the sections of Part I begins with the "Voices" of Aboriginal men and women who have spent time in jails across Canada. Each of their short stories, including how they have learned to stay out of jail, shares a part of their life with you.

The first section of Part I is called ***My Place in the World***. This section begins by asking you to look at ways you can make choices which will create a safe place for yourself as you work your way through the workbook. The first step in healing is learning how to take care of yourself.

My Place in the World then goes on to provide you with the opportunity to review your childhood and school years. If you attended residential school, there will be room to explore your experiences and the impact of those experiences on your life today. Reviewing the adult years of your life will include assessing your survival skills as well as the ways you are being affected by the hurts of childhood and adolescence.

Beginning with where and who you are today, this section will also guide you through the process of envisioning your future and taking the steps necessary to live hopefully, day by day. The purpose is to live in such a way that you create a caring and respectful place for yourself in the world.

The ***Communication Skills*** section of Part I presents the Awareness Wheel. This is a tool which will help you communicate with yourself and share with others in ways that show caring and understanding. Learning the Awareness Wheel will require patience and persistence on your part. Once you understand and practice it on a daily basis, you will also find it valuable as a way of solving problems with yourself and between yourself and others.

Part I also includes ***A Look at Addictions***. This section provides you with information on "chemical" and "process" addictions. It also presents you with the opportunity to examine and assess your relationship to various substances and activities, for example, drugs, alcohol, gambling, and anger. ***The 12 Steps*** adapted from Alcoholics Anonymous brings this section to a close. This information is provided in a clear and straight forward manner. Again, there is room made for you to work your way through some, or all, of the steps if you choose to do so. Remember that this section of the workbook, like all the others, is provided for you. It is your choice to complete a part, or several parts, or none of ***A Look at Addictions***.

Part I of ***All My Relations*** ends with ***The Spiritual Journey***. This section explores traditional Aboriginal practices such as sweet grass, sweat lodges, fasting, and pipe ceremonies. The information in this section is concerned with your identity as an Aboriginal person and brings you back full circle to the questions you explored in the first section: What is my place in the world? Who am I? What does being an Aboriginal person mean to me?

Throughout the sections which make up Part I, you will find a variety of ***"Voices"***, stories told by Aboriginal men and women who spent time in prison for serious offenses and found ways to stay out of prison. Today, these men and women live respectfully and productively. Let their ***"Voices"*** encourage and support your healing. The wise words of Aboriginal people, especially Elders, that are included throughout Part II provide you with further guidance.

A few words need to be said about the affirmations scattered throughout the pages of this workbook. Affirmations are positive thoughts about yourself and about life. For example, "I am an intelligent person" and "I can reach out for help." Affirmations replace negative thoughts and beliefs with positive ones. By saying positive statements to yourself, you are challenging the power of negative thoughts and beliefs you have learned over the years. You are planting seeds for your well being. Affirmations can be repeated silently, out loud, or written.

The best times to repeat affirmations are when you are working through the various sections, first thing in the morning and just before you fall asleep at night. Affirmations will help keep your energy positive while you are doing the workbook. They will help you begin the day with a positive outlook and saying an affirmation to yourself before falling asleep will relax and set your mind at ease. The affirmation will also continue to work its way into your mind while you are asleep.

It is important for you to know that you do not need to believe an affirmation in order to say it. Simply repeat it over to yourself several times. The more you say it, the more you will come to believe it. Everyone has the power within themselves to become a positive thinker, to build a better life.

Working your way through various sections of ***All My Relations*** will require willingness, commitment and perseverance. Your work in this workbook is one step towards building a good life for yourself.

THIS WORKBOOK IS NOT MEANT TO BE A REPLACEMENT FOR THERAPY WITH A THERAPIST OR AN ELDER. IT IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE TIME FOR SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE; AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK THROUGH YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCES. IF AT ANY POINT YOU FEEL A NEED, IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED YOU SEE AN ELDER OR A THERAPIST OR PARTICIPATE IN A SUPPORT GROUP. THIS IS ONE MORE STEP TO DEVELOP BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE.

Your Notes:

Voices: Something to Think About

You know, the best thing I heard somebody say the other night and I forget her bloody name on that show and she said it, like in a nutshell, you got to work every day at maintaining your freedom, every day, on a daily basis and you got to work towards staying out, you got to learn to make the right choices. Again, when we talk about choices, we got to learn what is safe for us? Everyone of those guys that sits in prison, they are not stupid, they are just as capable as me, as some of these guys that I see walking around today that I done time with years ago, that are doing good. Some of them have their own businesses, they are working. Everyone of them have that same ability. People say, well, I got no education, this and that and I find those to be just a whole god damn bunch of excuses, you know. I figure, if a person wants something bad enough, they are going to go out and do it. If we put as much effort into staying out of trouble, making the right choices, as we do, as the effort that we do to go and break and enter a place, or to go and steal a vehicle, or something, we would do alright. I know that everyone is capable of doing it, but it is not easy. It is tough, because you know you have so many strikes, we have so many strikes against us, when we get out of prison. Number one, we got a record for one thing. We are Aboriginal. A lot of times, we had an alcohol problem, we had a drug problem and those kind of things are right away, they are strikes against us and yet, when we come into society, we are expected to just do good. That is the generalization of people, on the outside. Why can't these people come out and do well, but they don't take into consideration the strikes that people have against them when they first walk out of prison. People are shunned from their own communities, because they are what they are, they are cons, ex-convicts, so they are shunned from their own community and I think that people have to start understanding a little bit more, even in their communities, that he, these people need a little bit of support, they need a little boost in their life.

Ron, age 42; record for break and enter, auto theft, robbery, impaired driving, possession of drugs, trafficking in narcotics.

I went through it and I set up programs in there, helped a lot of the bros out. You know, to try and stay away from all this shit that was happening inside, because it is not worth it. It is not worth being a so called solid con anymore, a hard con, because all you do is land up in a special handling unit, twenty-four hours a day for the next five years, or even more. It depends how your behaviour is, your attitude. You know, I had enough of that, I changed my ways, because I want to believe in myself. I want to try and make my life worthwhile, without a lot of negativeness or a lot of bull shit as I call it, right.

Tom, age 36; record for assault causing bodily harm, break and enter, murder.

I know, when I first started doing time, there was a dorm in Regina called West G, when I first went in, I went in for two, three months I think. I didn't know what to expect, but when I went there, it kind of felt like echoes of residential school. I seen lots of Indian guys, guys looking out the windows, just like I knew them, even though I hadn't met them yet. I went down to West G and sure enough, I seen about three guys from residential school. They come and welcomed me, welcoming committee, showed me to the bed and introduced me to other guys and pretty soon, I was just one of the guys, right there, we had a card game that night. I felt, in a way, I felt that my first little bit like that, I felt it was abnormal to be locked up, to have my freedom taken away, but at the same time, I seen lots of other guys there, so there was some kind of a routine of identification that we could share together.

Tony, age 52; convictions for impaired driving, break and enter, assault, manslaughter.

I started going to jail quite a bit after that and starting from 1987 up, I noticed myself going to jail every year and I started to think about my life, like what is happening now that I am getting older and why am I getting into more trouble as I am getting older? I looked at my past, like I wasn't in trouble every year, I would stay out of trouble for long periods of time and as I grew older, I was getting in more trouble. The last year I went in for impaired and assault causing bodily harm, I really started to think about my life then, because that was my fourth year in a row at that time. I told myself, I have to change now, before it is too late, because I am getting older and I am supposed to be getting wiser. Instead, everything was going the opposite way for me. I starting thinking about my past, when my grandmother was alive. She used to tell me about the Indian ways and I did follow the Indian ways, times on and off, when I would stay sober. I got into sweats and stuff like that. My last bit, my ex-mother-in-law was working at the jail. She was working with Aboriginal awareness stuff in there and she introduced sweats. I got along okay with her, so she helped me to go to sweats from the jail. I got into all of the programs in jail, A.A. and I think that helped me to stay sober. When I got out, I stayed away from alcohol for that summer. I only stayed around back home for about three months, but then my sister was involved in going to sweats, to help people the best that she can, so I stuck by her and her husband and they helped me to stay sober. I had to really look at myself, you know like where I was leading myself, where I was going and I thought of my kids, my two boys, that they are going to depend on me soon and I don't want them to follow my footsteps. I moved away from home, because I knew that was the only way I could stay sober and not get into trouble, was to get away from back home where I knew everybody. I had a lot of resentments and enemies and I couldn't say no to my friends when it came to alcohol, so I came over here and stayed sober all that summer by myself, because I didn't know anybody who had sweats in the city. I just stayed sober and I worked and then got into volunteer work with the inner city Co-op and Aboriginal school, because I wanted to work with the youth, young kids that were in trouble with the law and I wanted to work with kids like that, to try and help them before they got into real serious trouble.

Ralph, age 36; record for impaired driving, break and enter, assault, theft, mischief, resisting arrest.

Your Notes:

My Place In The World

"In the midst of a land without silence, you have to make a place for yourself. Those who have worn out their shoes many times know where to step. It is not their shoes you can wear, only their footsteps you may follow - if you let it happen."

- Chief Dan George (1974)

All of our life has to do with finding where we belong, with finding our place. First of all, as human beings we have to live somewhere, for example, Regina, Driftpile, Prince George, or Toronto. On the prairies, in the bush, by the ocean, up north; these words describe where we live, or come from. Each of these surroundings have their own make-up of water, air, rocks, birds, and other beings without which we cannot live.

Secondly, as human beings we shelter ourselves in a certain way. We build things: tents, apartments, houses, prisons; all to provide protection and support for life. Each building that we live in holds many more things -- the chair that you sit on, the bed that you sleep in, the stove where you cook food. All of these things, and many more, which surround us and which we use every day without thinking are part of our *place in the world.*

Finally, we live with other people. Our community is made up of different kinds of people; family, friends, co-workers, cell-mates, guards. Regardless of how we feel about the people around us, there is no getting away from the fact that people are always a part of our place. Being a human being means speaking, thinking and acting alongside other people. The most difficult problems in life usually involve learning how to live with other people in harmony.

Taken all together, where we live, how we live, and who we live with make up our place. And to the extent that our place feels right -- familiar, comfortable, and safe -- we feel that we belong. We are at home. Sometimes we do not feel that we fit. We find ourselves living in situations where we do not feel comfortable or safe. Perhaps we feel like a displaced person, a person who is "doing time". Understanding and finding our place is knowing who we are and where we belong; what some people call "identity." Other people call knowing our place "culture," or a way of life.

Stop and think back over your life. A time in my life that was most comfortable and I felt like I fit the best was _____

_____

_____

I felt comfortable then because _____

_____

_____

A time in my life where I did not fit in at all was _____

_____

_____

I did not belong because _____

_____

_____

Where I am living at this time, what I am doing at this time in my life, and who I am living with feels _____

_____

_____

Thinking about our place in the world can be hard work. Finding it can be even more difficult. The old people say that until we know where we come from we cannot know where we are going. In order to work towards creating the right place -- a place that gives us hope for the future -- we must begin by going back to our past. We need to reconnect with our beginning roots, and also, come to an understanding of the life we have lived until today. Only then can we create a vision for our future and work towards building a place in the world that suits us and contributes to ourselves, our family, and our community in a good way.

Before going back to the past, however, we begin with looking at where we are today in order to make ourselves as safe and comfortable as possible. This helps to give us the strength that we need in order to carry out our journey back into the past. This section of the workbook, therefore, begins with, "Building Safety Today", which addresses where you are today and making this place as safe as possible for yourself and others. The next three parts will help you understand who you are today by looking at the past -- your childhood, school, and adult years. The last part in ***My Place in the World*** will look at the future. It will help you work towards building a place for yourself in the world that fits for you.

Building Safety Today

Safety is about support and protection. Without safety, we cannot risk thinking or feeling about our future. Nor can we look into our past. All of our energy goes into "getting by" from day to day. For that reason, the first place we have to pay attention to is where we are today, who we live with, and how we live.

As children, we needed others, especially adults, to provide safety. Children simply cannot look after themselves. As adults, we are in a position to assess our needs. We have more opportunities and resources to meet our needs. We are each responsible to protect and support ourselves as best we can. Safety in jail, for example, can mean adapting to rules and activities that we would not personally choose for ourselves. Protecting and supporting ourselves, in this instance, can involve "playing the game" to assure that privileges we need and want are not lost. The following exercises will guide you towards taking this first step in your healing: building and keeping a safe place for yourself.

Our physical safety includes food, shelter, and clothing. It also includes rules about our behaviour and the behaviour of others around us. Our emotional/mental/spiritual safety includes the freedom to feel, think, and believe without being criticized, judged, abandoned, or rejected. In order to complete this work book in a way which will help you understand and take charge of your life, it is important that you complete it in a situation where you feel comfortable and protected physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. As has already been said, we are never able to protect ourselves completely because some situations are beyond our control and some events cannot be planned for. We can, however, protect ourselves the best way we know how by thinking ahead and planning.

Sit quietly and think about the following questions carefully. What are the rooms I can use to do this workbook? Which room feels the most comfortable to me? Is it a room where I can be alone, is it my cell, is it a room where I have the company of other people, is it the recreation or common room? Am I more comfortable when it is quiet or when people are talking around me? Do I feel most comfortable sitting on a chair at my desk or on my bed? What time of the day feels most safe to me? Is it better for me to work in the evening or the morning? Will I get more out of the workbook if I schedule myself a routine, for example, do some work in this book every

day? How long should I work in the book? How will I know when it is time for me to stop and take a break? What will I do during that break? Who will I share what I do in my workbook with? Will I share in a support group? If I feel a need to talk with someone about my thoughts and feelings as I go through the workbook, who is the person I would feel safe talking with? Do I need to make sure no one sees my workbook? If I feel the need to keep my work secret, how can I do that? Will I write and draw in my book or on loose pages of paper?

After you have thought about these questions complete the following sentences.

Where? I will work in this workbook in _____

_____

_____

When? I will work in this workbook _____

_____

I will stop working when I feel _____

_____

_____

Who? I will share my work in this work book with _____

_____

If I have questions or if I feel the need for guidance I will talk with _____

_____

A safety plan is made up of rules that we create for ourselves which will help keep us comfortable as we go about our day, in this instance, as you go through the workbook. What are called "strengthening rituals" also contribute to creating safety for ourselves. Each of us has our own rituals. Some, for example, find that sipping on a cup of tea helps them to relax. Others find beginning each work period with a prayer helpful. You may find holding a small stone quietly

in your hands before beginning work, and having it beside your hand as you work, helps you feel strong and able to think straight. You may find that sitting on a special pillow, or wearing a certain t-shirt, every time you use the workbook gives you comfort. Hanging a picture of your child on the wall in front of you may give you strength. Whatever you choose, the important thing is to find and do something which strengthens you emotionally, mentally, and spiritually. Creating a ritual for yourself that you can repeat each time you use the workbook contributes to building a place of safety for yourself.

Each time I sit down to work in this book, I will _____

_____

_____

So far, we have been talking about ways to create a safe place for yourself by choosing where and how you work, as well as who you will turn to for support in sharing your thoughts and feelings as you go through the workbook. You have strengthened your place of safety with a ritual. Now it is time to pay attention to the first place we live in as adults -- ourselves. First of all, we live within our bodies. Our eyes give us the ability to see, our ears bring the gift of hearing sounds and silence, our mouth the power of speaking, our nose the gift of breath and smell, and our skin gives us touch; a powerful way of expressing kindness and caring. Beginning every workbook session by settling into your body strengthens your place of safety.

After completing your ritual sit quietly and listen to your breathing. Inhale gently; exhale gently. Close your eyes. Feel them resting in your head. In your own words, say thank you to your eyes for seeing for you. Keeping your eyes closed, move to your ears. Feel your ears resting on each side of your head. In your words, say thank you to your ears for hearing for you. Now move to your mouth, your tongue, and your throat. Feel them resting in your body. Thank each of them for tasting, for swallowing, and for speaking for you. Feel your nose sitting and resting on your face. Thank your nose for smelling and for breathing for you. Feel your hands; the skin on your palms and fingertips. Thank your hands for touching and holding for you. Let yourself feel your feet and your legs. Thank your feet and your legs for standing and walking. Let yourself feel all of your body: Imagine all of your skin, the blood flowing through your body, your lungs expanding in and out, your heart beating, your bones and muscles. In your own

words, give thanks to your body for carrying you through life. Slowly and gently, let yourself feel the air moving around you. Listen for the sounds around you. What else do you notice around your body? Slowly open your eyes and begin working in your workbook.

It is important to remember that this strengthening and centering exercise can also be done at the end of your work time, or any time during your work period. It will help you focus on yourself and your work. It can also calm and relax you.

Another part of safety involves knowing the rules we have to live with. If you are living in an institution or halfway house, for example, some of these rules are official and usually written. If you do not have a copy of the written rules, you will need to ask permission to receive a copy. You cannot take responsibility for keeping yourself safe if you do not know with certainty what the rules are.

The written rules I have to live with:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The consequences of not following these rules are (If consequences vary for each of the rules then list each rule and its consequence):

The written rules which I find the most difficult to follow are

In order to help myself maintain my own safety by following the rules I will need to

All living situations have both written and unwritten rules. In a prison, for example, both inmates and guards have their own unwritten "codes". Sometimes, these codes or rules are not spoken. They may be silent and powerful.

The unwritten rules where I live now:

1.
2.
3.
4.
5.
6.

7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The consequences for breaking these rules are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The unwritten rules that help me stay safe are _____

_____

_____

The unwritten rules that do not contribute to my safety are _____

_____

_____

_____

Safety is always threatened in living situations where anger is used in ways which are hurtful to ourselves or to others. It is impossible to be safe, for example, if we strike out physically, emotionally, mentally, or spiritually at others with our anger. It is abusive to threaten another person with our words. It is abusive to hit another person. It is abusive to cut ourselves with sharp instruments. It is abusive to call ourselves or others a "stupid idiot" or "a son of a bitch".

Anger is always a signal that we feel threatened. It is the emotion which warns us of danger. Sometimes change can feel threatening and we react with anger. Sometimes we get angry because we are frightened of crying, of feeling and expressing hurt. We may want to protect ourselves from "tender" feelings of caring, so we stick with the "tough" feeling of anger.

Anger can also be a warning that others are about to hurt us in some way. In that case, our anger tells others that we are feeling invaded in one way or other. Anger signals "back off." Perhaps, we feel a need for some privacy; to be alone for a period of time.

Anger lets us know that we need to take care of ourselves. Anger itself is a normal emotion which does not threaten anyone's safety. It is how we express our anger that can threaten, or destroy, our own safety as well as the safety of others.

To me anger means _____

_____

_____

Anger makes me feel _____

_____

_____

I get angry with myself when _____

_____

_____

_____

When I am angry at myself, I _____

I get angry with others when they _____

When I am angry with others, I _____

When someone else is angry, I _____

As I am thinking and writing about how I behave with anger - my own and others - I am realizing that I _____

Anger that is expressed in ways that hurts ourselves and others is called "acting out". Sometimes, we act out consciously. We know what we are doing and we choose to keep doing it. More often acting out means that we are not in charge of our actions, we are going through a "knee jerk reaction". Looking back over what I have written about my behaviour around anger, I act out my anger by _____

_____

_____

_____

I am most likely to act out my anger in situations where _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Finding ways to take charge of our anger so we behave in ways that are not hurtful to ourselves and to others takes commitment, practice, and patience. First, we have to want to learn a different way. Then we can teach ourselves to "stop and think" before reacting. We can learn to ask ourselves questions: Why am I so angry? Sometimes learning to express our emotions more honestly is a big help. Physical exercise is another way of helping ourselves. Hitting a punching bag - with mitts on - is a safe way of draining off feelings of anger and rage. Other forms of physical activity which can help include various forms of singing and dancing - whistling, pow-wow, jigging, square dancing, country and western singing and dancing. Making music is another way of releasing emotions safely. Learning to drum or play a harmonica, a guitar or a fiddle, for example, channels emotions into a positive form of self expression and gives us a sense of accomplishment. Walking or talking out anger with a cell mate, or in a support group are other ways of helping ourselves.

The ways I have learned to not hurt myself with my anger are _____

_____

_____

_____

I have learned to protect others from my anger by _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

One of the ways to contain our anger recommended by Lynne Finney (1992, p. 277) is called Cook's Hook - Up. According to her, this technique is designed to calm extreme emotions such as anger and fear. Finney says that it can also be used to raise our energy level if we are feeling depressed. Follow these directions: Sit comfortably in a chair or on a bed with your feet on the floor in front of you. Lift your left leg and place it on top of your right leg so that your left ankle is on top of your right knee. Wrap your right hand around the top of your left ankle. Then grab the toes of your left foot with your left hand.

By this time you may be beginning to feel like a pretzel. The purpose of this exercise is to make a complete circle of your body's energy. The circle will contain your feelings and prevent you from acting them out.

The next step is to place the tip of your tongue up against the roof of your mouth just behind your teeth. Breathe in. When you breathe out, let your tongue drop back to the bottom of your mouth. Let your mouth drop open slightly as you breathe out. Do the breathing in with your tongue at the top of your mouth and the breathing out with your tongue resting on the bottom of your mouth thirty times.

After you have completed the breathing, let go of your ankle and foot, uncross your legs, and place both feet flat on the floor in front of you. Spread the fingers of your hands and touch the tips of each of your fingers together. Rest your hands in your lap with fingers touching (thumb to thumb, etc.). Do the same breathing exercise as you did before with your tongue moving up to the roof of your mouth and then down rest on the bottom of your mouth. Breath in and out another 30 times.

Finney says that if you are extremely upset you may need to do the breathing for slightly longer. By the time you are done, you will feel calmer and relaxed. This exercise may sound silly but do not dismiss it. Try it and see what happens.

As I was doing the Cook's Hook - Up exercise, I felt _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Now that I have experimented with doing the Cook's Hook - Up exercise, I feel _____

_____

_____

_____

In order to keep myself and others safe when I am angry, I will _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

In order to keep myself and others safe when someone around me is angry, I will _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Summary

In this section, you have explored the importance of safety. Review what you have written about creating a safe place for yourself. Underline the parts which strike you as being most important for your safety. Think about the parts you have underlined.

Starting with the most important, make a list which summarizes your support and safety plan:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

I think the part of my plan which will be the most difficult for me to stick to is _____

_____

_____

In order to carry out this plan, I need to _____

_____

_____

I am proud of my plan because _____

_____

_____

The final part of any support and safety plan is reviewing it from time to time. In the beginning, you may wish to come back and review your plan once a week or more often. There are two reasons to review your plan. First, it will let you know if you are keeping your commitments to yourself. It will help you stay on track. The second reason is that as time goes on you may need to make changes to your plan. If your living situation changes, for example, so will your needs for safety and support. If you find it hard to follow your plan, and to meet your needs for safety, you may wish to talk to someone you trust and who you think can help you with it.

I will review my safety plan every _____

If I need help with meeting my safety needs I will _____

_____

_____

"Through ceremonies we help ourselves, help people, help Mother Earth."

- Napoleon Kruger, Okanagan

Take the time to rest and refresh yourself. Say the following affirmations. You don't need to believe or feel the affirmation in order to say it. Saying something over and over to ourselves helps make it happen.

Today I can ask for help when I need it.

I can take care of myself.

I care about myself.

I am proud of myself for working in this workbook.

My Childhood Years

Our first experience of who we are is developed during the first five or six years of life. The ground we see around us, the buildings we live in, the clothes we wear, the food we eat, the words we speak, the way we use our hands and body to express joy and sadness, how we pray, when we pray, who we play with, and who we look to for direction; all of these big and little things, and much more that we take for granted, tell us who we are and where we belong. Our culture and our identity is not something we think about as children - we live it every moment of every day. Whatever our childhood is like it is our world. In this section, you will go back in time to the first five or six years of your life in order to find the root of your life today.

During the first six years of my life I remember living in _____

_____

_____

The time I remember feeling the most content and safe was when I lived with _____

_____

in _____

Close your eyes and imagine yourself back in that time and place. Imagine yourself standing in front of the building you lived in. Spend a few minutes with your eyes closed remembering the outside details. Are there trees around? Is there a fence? Are there any little paths, or a road, or a street? What does the sky look like? Is the country flat or hilly? On the next page, draw what you see.

When I was drawing the outside of where I lived, I felt _____

The things that I remember most clearly are _____

Did you have a favourite place where you played outside by yourself or with friends? Draw a picture of that place on the next page.

The thing that was most fun about playing outside was _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did you have a "secret" place outside where you went to be by yourself to play, to sit, or to cry? Draw a picture of your secret place.

Drawing my secret place reminded me of _____

_____

_____

_____

For the second time, go back to standing and looking at the building you lived in. Spend a few minutes with your eyes closed looking at that building. Do you see a log house out in the country? Do you see an apartment house in the city? Where is the door and the windows? Are there steps leading to the door? Draw your home.

Draw your favourite room inside your home. What are some of the things that were in that room? Put them in your drawing.

Some of the things I remember doing in my favourite room are _____

When I stop and look back at the pictures I have drawn of where I lived as a young child, the things that stick out in my mind are _____

The people who lived with me in that place were _____

When we all lived there, I played with _____

We used to play _____

The person(s) who made sure I was fed and cleaned and dressed every day were _____

My favourite food was _____

I didn't like to eat _____

In the wintertime, I wore _____

_____

_____

In the summertime I wore _____

_____

_____

My favourite clothes were _____

_____

_____

I slept in _____

_____

_____

Draw your bed.

Whenever I needed help to do something as a young child, I went to _____

_____

_____

One thing I remember learning to do that made me feel proud is _____

_____

_____

When I was happy I used to _____

_____

_____

When I felt scared or upset I went to _____

_____

_____

Did anyone tell you stories when you were a young child? _____

Write down some of the stories that you remember.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Writing these stories reminded me of _____

_____

_____

Remembering these stories make me feel _____

_____

_____

Did you go visiting or on "outings" when you were little? _____

Who did you go with and where did you go?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Did the people around you pray when you were little? _____

How did they pray?

_____

_____

_____

Were there special events or times when you were little?

_____

_____

What where they?

_____

_____

Picture in your mind one of these special times or events and draw it.

What is happening in the picture I just drew is important to me because _____

_____

_____

Sometimes we are given different names as a child. Did you have a childhood name? _____

_____

Who gave you the name and how did it make you feel? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The first thing that many of us remember when we think back to our childhood are sounds and smells. Describe the first smell you remember.

_____

_____

_____

Some of the other smells I remember are _____

_____

Some of the first sounds I remember are _____

_____

We also remember the feel of things. It might be the feel of bark on a tree, the feel of a puppies fur, or the feel of our mother's body. Some of the first touches I remember:

_____

_____

_____

As we remember these sounds, smells and touches, we also remember feelings. What different kinds of feelings does remembering the touches, sounds, and smells of your childhood bring back to you?

Draw a picture of yourself as a five year old child. What do your clothes look like? What are you wearing on your feet? What does your hair look like? What is the look on your face?

As I was drawing the picture of myself I felt _____

_____

_____

As I was drawing the picture of myself I was thinking _____

_____

_____

The little person in the picture looks like she/he is _____

_____

_____

I would like to tell the little person in the picture that she/he is _____

_____

_____

Summary

Going back to where we lived as a child tells us who we were in the beginning of our life. It gives us our roots. Take some time now to look back at the pictures you have drawn and the words you have written to describe your childhood.

The parts of my early childhood life that I have not written or drawn are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

When I think about my roots, I feel

My childhood was

During childhood we can be hurt physically, emotionally, mentally, and spiritually in ways that make it hard for us to be strong adults. For example, if we were hurt physically by not getting nourishing food or by being beaten, we may be an adult with various health problems. If we were hurt emotionally as a child, for example, by being ignored, we may grow to become an angry adult who feels unloved and unworthy. An example of a mental hurt is when we have no confidence in our intelligence or our ability. Perhaps that hurt comes from never having been shown how to do things as a child. Or perhaps there was no adult around who took the time to recognize the effort we put into learning and doing helpful things when we were little. Sometimes, we believe we are stupid because that is what we were told as children.

Spiritual hurt is more difficult to identify. It is usually something which breaks our childhood innocence and trust. As adults, we are hurt spiritually if we have no hope and no faith in ourselves or others, and in life. Being separated from, or in some way loosing, our parents at a young age is one way that our trust can be destroyed. Having seen violence between our parents as a child may also weaken our adult spirit because it leaves us fearful of becoming an adult: We are afraid to become an abusive adult and, at the same time, we have no trust in ourselves to become an adult who is capable of acting in ways that protect and care for others, especially the young and the old people.

The hurts I received as a child which hold me back from being a strong adult are _____

These hurts hold me back because _____

When I think about who I was as a child and how I lived, the memories that make me feel good about myself and life are _____

During childhood we are given values, attitudes, and skills that help us survive as adults. Values are what is important in life. Attitudes are the way we think and react to people and situations. Skills are how we do things, including how we work, show caring, and how we play.

The values, attitudes and skills I learned as a child that have helped me survive are _____

"It takes a whole village to raise a child."

- Omaha

Are you taking a break from the workbook when you feel tired?

Remember it is important to take good care of yourself.

AFFIRMATIONS

Today I can heal myself.

I can make healthy decisions.

I can learn to care for myself.

My School Years

The experience of going to school as part of our childhood and adolescent years is relatively recent. Traditionally, Aboriginal children as well as children from other cultures, worked alongside their parents, grandparents, uncles and aunts to learn adult skills. Most little children simply followed adults around and watched what they did. As children grew older, they participated in the work. Children learned by watching and doing. Most of us who are adults today, however, left our families and went off to school to learn some of the skills we were expected to need as responsible adults.

Some of us have fond memories of teachers, of school friends and of the things we learned. For others, just saying the word "school" brings back dark thoughts and feelings.

This part begins by reviewing your family's school history. It then moves on to explore your personal school experiences, especially the first school you attended. This part will end by looking at the affect school has had on your life today.

Understanding the impact of school on our life begins with knowing the school history of our family. Before we go to school, our grandparents, parents, uncles, aunts, older brothers and sisters will affect our attitude towards school as well as our expectations of what school will be like. You may not know all of your family's school history. Fill in what you know in the chart on the next page.

WHO	WHEN	WHERE
example: grandmother on my mother's side	between the age of six to 12 (1943 - 1949)	Blue Quills Residential School

Family members who have gone to school will sometimes tell stories about their experience. Write the stories you heard about school in your family. When did your hear the stories? Who told them? What did they say?

When I heard these stories, I thought school would be _____

Writing the stories and thinking about them now makes me realize _____

If you never heard stories about school in your family, why do you think school was never talked about?

Sometimes there are photographs of our parents and grandparents during their school years. Have you ever seen photographs of your parents or grandparents taken while they were at school? If you have, what did they look like? What kinds of clothing were they wearing? What was their hair like? What was the look on their face? Describe how they look to you in their pictures:

Some of the things that our grandparents and parents learned in school are passed down to us as small children. For example, if your mother liked school she probably passed on a positive attitude to you. On the other hand, if school taught your mother to be afraid or ashamed of herself as a woman or as an Aboriginal person, she may have passed that on to you. Another example: If your parents were forbidden to speak their language in school, then they may have forbidden you to learn it also.

Looking back over the stories you heard and the feelings you felt when the people in your family talked about school, list the things you think were passed on to you.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

When I look at my list, the things which were passed on to me that helped me in my life are

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

When I look back over my list, the things that were passed on to me that hurt my life are

_____
_____
_____
_____

The best way I can describe the attitudes I picked up about school from my family is to say that

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

Between the age of six and 16 and sometimes longer, many of us spend a great deal of time in school. If you are "Treaty" and grew up on a Reserve, perhaps you went to a residential school for a number of years. Or you may have ridden a bus to a school "off the Reserve". If you lived in a town, you may have walked to school. Maybe you went to several different schools during

your school years. No matter where you lived and who you lived with going to school was probably a part of your life. In this part you will go back in time to the years you spent in school to explore how those experiences might be affecting who you are and how you live today.

The first school I went to was called_____ and it was ___ miles from where I lived.

I got to the school by _____

I looked forward to going to school because _____

_____

_____

I didn't want to go to school because _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

On my first day of school, I felt _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Close your eyes and remember yourself seeing your first school. Did the school look big or small? Where was the door? Were there steps up to the door? Can you see anyone there? Draw your first school the way it looked to you as a child.

Drawing your first school may have brought back memories. The things I found myself remembering as I was drawing are _____

If your first school was a residential school, you probably lived in the school. If you did not live in a residential school, you can skip ahead to page 71 of the workbook. If you lived in a residential school that means that you slept, ate, played and worked in, and around, the same building. Being in a residential school also means that the adults who looked after you were not part of your family. Who looked after you in residential school? Who fed you? Who helped you get dressed and stay clean?

What do you remember about the people who looked after you in residential school?

When I think about the adults who looked after me at residential school, I feel _____

What did you eat for breakfast, lunch, and dinner at residential school?

What kind of clothing did you wear?

What was your routine for the day? What did you do in the mornings, afternoons, and evenings?

If you lived in a residential school, you probably slept in a dormitory with many other children. Do you remember the first bed you slept in? Draw a picture of your bed.

Thinking about the dorm I slept in and drawing my bed made me feel _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The dorm reminds me of _____

_____

_____

My bed was _____

_____

_____

Residential schools had many rooms other than the dorms; for example, the kitchen, the dining room, the laundry room, and the shoe room. There were also places outdoors such as the playground and the garden.

The room or place I did not like at all was _____

I did not like that room or place at all because _____

_____

_____

_____

When I think about that room or place today, I still feel _____

The room or place I liked the best was _____

I liked that room or place the best because _____

When I was upset or lonely in residential school I would _____

The worst thing(s) about residential school was/were _____

Do you have any happy or fond memories of residential school? _____

The best things about residential school were _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Some of the Aboriginal people who find themselves in prison are people who went to residential school. The "Voices" which follow are examples of their stories.

You know, I remember when my mother took me to the residential school. They told me that I was going to go to residential school, my mother and my grandmother and I don't know what my little mind perceived, or thought they were saying to me. The day they took me there, we were sitting in the parlour with the priest and my mom and dad were talking and a sister came along and asked if I would like to go and see the crafts room and being inquisitive, I said yes. By the time we got back, my mother and my grandmother had left. I was just absolutely devastated, just totally bewildered and I don't remember my mother or my grandmother coming to get me. I am not sure, how long it was after, but one day I was out in the play yard and it was on a Friday. I am sure it was on a Friday and I don't know how I knew this, I must of kind of gotten used to the pattern. When I went to residential school, it wasn't mandatory for people to take their kids to school, however, I also believe that for my parents, my father being a second generation to have attended residential school, myself being the third, that it had become a way of life. Not only was it a pattern in our family, I believe, like my father drank and so my family really struggled for a while and so it was like, perhaps it was a blessing to them, that they were able to send their children to school there ..... I had just never experienced anything like that and so young and I wasn't the oldest one. I had a brother who was older than I was and he went to school at the Metis settlement and sometimes I said to myself, well why would they send my brother there and why would they send me to residential school. In any case, I haven't found any answers and I went there for like two years, before any

of my brothers or sisters came. By the time that they came to school, it was like, I was just cold. I knew they were my sisters and there was a part of me that wanted to be with them, but there was also a part of me that shut them away, that didn't want them to get too close to me. I know what it is, it is about abandonment, it is about rejection and it is about looking after myself, saying, it ain't going to happen again .... Well, when I left residential school and I moved to that (town) my parents were very, very strict. It was almost like being in residential school and when I went to residential school, I was told when to get up, when to go to bed, when to pray, when to play, when to eat, on and on and on. I never thought for myself and then I went home and my parents were just really controlling and domineering and I didn't have a life. I went to school and I came home and I helped out with the kids and I didn't have a whole lot of time for playing, or just being me, getting to know who I am, or being with me. .....My husband was just young too and was having his own struggles. We ended up going out together and somehow or another, I ended up turning my first trick. Somebody had turned me onto a guy and I still remember the guy, a business man in (the city). He was married to an Indian woman and who was a brother-in-law to a friend of mine. Anyways, somebody turned me onto him and like I said, the first time you do something once and it gets easier every time and I believe that why it was so easy for me to do that, I believe it was easy for me to do that, because since the time I was a little girl and gone to the residential school, I just took flight. Things could go on around me, but I didn't have to be there, like they could use my body and give me money for it and I won't even be here and so it got easy, it got easier to do that. So I started doing that, I started hustling.

Amanda, age 45; record for prostitution, assault causing bodily harm, soliciting, breach of probation, running a common bawdy house, trafficking in narcotics.

I think where my life got haywire, I guess, or started to go downhill, is when I went to residential school. In there, I seem to, felt as if I was abandoned in there. It was very lonely times for me there. Not only having to watch out for myself, in there, with the supervisors, but with my own peers and stuff. If you couldn't handle yourself in there, you are going to get trampled over and you are going to suffer quite badly there, so you've got to know how to fight for yourself, take care of yourself. It wasn't so bad in Junior Boys but when I got into Intermediate boys, it was wicked there. I think, when I got there, the first year I was down there, I must of fought every day and also too, I started to really rebel against supervisors, and authority. If there was a Guinness record for strapping

I think I'd be somewhere on the top of the line. It got so that I was fighting constantly in there, I got to be the top pin in there, because I beat everybody there and I had to practise. I guess I sort of became what you would call a bully for about a year, until I got knocked off my throne. I guess the way they knocked me off my throne, they sent me down to the senior boys a lot earlier than I was supposed to go down, because I got out of hand and then seeing as I had to start all over again down there. When I went to the senior boys, it seemed like if you are a good fighter the older boys used to get a hold of you and say this is my boxer and boxing in there was a very popular sport. I remember they called this room the Bosco club, it was low and it had this big boxing ring in the middle, just barely enough room in there for moving around. They used to put the gear on us and they used to put us in there and we used to go at it in there. Any ways, those were my initiation into senior boys and also too, if you are a good athlete in there you had it made. If not, you are going to suffer in there. I was very fortunate that I was fairly good in sports, particularly, their main sport was basketball and I really excelled in that, football, baseball, those kind of sports, but the rebellion - I just despised authority. In those days I didn't really know what they were doing to us in there. I guess maybe somewhere back of my mind this was what I was rebelling against - what they were doing to us. I remember there were signs all over the damn place, speak English and if you got caught talking your language, and of course you had the other rats/stool pigeons that tell on you that you were speaking Indian, then you would be punished for this stuff. Anyways, I would say residential school had its good points and bad points. For me, I guess it would be 60/40, if it was sports it would be 60, but the other 40, and I never learned a damn thing in there. It even had a reputation - people going through that school, they called it Dumbo High. If you were good in sports and on one of the major teams, they didn't care about education - no. When I left residential school I must have had about a grade three, grade four. I could barely read. I was there right from age seven to age seventeen and I was supposed to be in grade ten, here I could barely read and write. Especially when I got into grade nine, we were so rebellious and so out of hand. I remember the teacher just walking out on us and just leaving us in there. I never learned nothing. I don't think I did any homework, or nothing, just going through the motions and playing basketball and that was the main thing.... I think where my drinking really escalated was when I was in the army. While I was in the army that is where it really got out of hand. I had absolutely no parenting skills and (my wife) and I got together with kids and I just totally abused them. I had jobs, my version of an alcoholic in those days I thought it was the guy who drank everyday and lived on skid row. If I even thought about being an alcoholic, and also too in those days there was no treatment centres. Things just escalated from there. I was working at that time. I was working on the reserve and one night I just got all sloshed up and I shot a guy and killed him. I was drunk out of my mind and when I went to prison, it was nothing strange to me.

I had never been in jail before in my life, but when I walked into the big house in Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, it was just like me going back to residential school. All of these old, these guys I went to residential school with, some of these guys were already sitting in there. I went in there with the same routine.

Harry, age 48; record for joy riding, murder, resisting arrest.

That's what I remembered about my mom's death. They took us, they took three of us to the (residential school), they took me and my (sister), she was the oldest, my other (sister) and she was the second oldest in the girls and they took (another sister) and my younger (brother). They missed (one brother). They hid him, the older boys, they hid him out and he didn't come with us to the residential school. The two younger ones they were taken in by welfare right away, as soon as my mom died. There was nobody around to care for them, or whatever. They took them and made them wards of the government. I guess in a way, we were made wards of the government too, because they picked us up and they took us to the (residential school). It was a strange beginning anyway at the (residential school).

In the residential school they spoke Cree. Cree was spoken, but at the same time, Aboriginal languages were not encouraged by the nuns and the priests. We got strapped with great big conveyor belts that would cut me there, almost like this, about this long, about two feet long, about an inch wide and those things were about half an inch thick. That is what they used on us to discipline us. Once I had a few tastes of that strap a few times, I tried my best to find out the best way to avoid it and that was just to do what I was asked and do my chores, clean my bed. After awhile, we got into a good routine and I felt good. I ate good and I didn't create any trouble, because I knew I would get myself. I really didn't know what was trouble or not, but whatever was told for me to do, I did. I had a good time. I used to go to mass, I was an alter boy. I used to even talk in Latin at one time. Now I forgot all that.

I just felt, just what they wanted me to do, like I said. It was sort of like a trade off for having a roof over my head and some food in my stomach and doing things that I wanted to do, that I was allowed to do in there.

Stan, age 39. Record for assault, assault causing bodily harm, manslaughter, careless driving, pointing a firearm, dangerous driving.

After reading and listening to these stories of residential school, do you have anything more to say about your residential school experiences?

Are there any connections for you between residential school and jail? If your answer is yes, what are the connections for you?

If you have completed the section on residential school, you may have already covered some of the topics that follow, for example, teachers, in writing your residential school experiences. If that is the case, you may wish to simply read through those questions.

Whether or not you went to a residential school, your first school had one or more classrooms. Every child who goes to school experiences a teacher and a classroom. Close your eyes and remember your classroom in the first school you attended. Can you see your desk? What colour are the walls? Where did the teacher sit? Draw your first classroom.

Drawing my classroom made me feel _____

_____

_____

_____

The things I remember most about being in that classroom are _____

_____

_____

_____

Some of the things I remember doing in that classroom are _____

_____

_____

_____

My first teacher was _____

I remember my first teacher telling me I was _____

_____

_____

_____

My first teacher called me _____

In school, I was never good at _____

_____

_____

When I needed help with my school work, I would _____

In school I was good at _____

My favourite subject(s) in school was/were _____

The worst thing about my first school was _____

The best thing about going to school was _____

The thing I found hardest about going to school was _____

Whenever I felt upset or lonely at school, I would _____

_____

_____

_____

Whenever I felt happy or proud in school, I would _____

_____

_____

Whenever we had time to play in school, I played in _____

_____

_____

_____

At my first school, I played with _____

_____

_____

The thing I found the most fun was _____

_____

_____

_____

Sometimes we get called names other than our own at school. I remember being called _____

_____

Who called you those names? _____

When I was called those names, I felt _____

_____

_____

_____

When I got called names I did not like, I would _____

_____

_____

_____

To end this section which has asked you to explore your first school experiences, begin by drawing a picture of yourself at your first school. What kind of clothing are your wearing? What does your hair look like? What kind of a look do you have on your face? Are you sitting or standing or running?

As I was drawing the picture of myself at school, I felt _____

_____

_____

_____

The little person in the picture looks _____

_____

_____

_____

I would like to tell the little person in the picture that she/he _____

_____

_____

_____

Look back at the picture that you drew of yourself before going to school. Do the two children look alike? If they seem different, how are they different? I was the same person at school as I was before I went to school because _____

_____

_____

_____

I was a different person after I went to school because _____

_____

_____

_____

You probably went to your first school as a young child of five or six. It is important that you have the opportunity to tell your family about that experience. Write a letter to your parents, or to someone else in your family, about your first school. Tell them what you did at school. Tell them how you felt about them and about the school. If you lived in a residential school you may have felt lonely and angry. You may have also felt hungry at times. It is also possible that being at residential school was a way for you to escape alcohol and violence at home. Take your time to write this letter. Tell someone in your family all that you need to about what happened to you, what you thought, and what you felt. You do not need to mail this letter. This letter is for you to express your thoughts and feelings. This letter is to help you understand yourself.

Dear _____

Many of us go to more than one school before we leave school somewhere during our teen age years. If you attended other schools list them. What were their names? Where were they? How old were you?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

The things that I remember about going to those schools are _____

_____

_____

Going to those schools made me feel _____

_____

_____

The school I found the hardest was _____

_____

_____

The school where I learned the most academically was _____

_____

_____

The school where I had best friends was _____

_____

_____

During the years I went to school, I learned _____

_____

_____

_____

Summary

Review what you have written about the school years of your family and yourself. Imagine yourself talking to a good friend or to your children. Imagine that you are telling them your story of school. Use the space provided below to tell the story of your school experiences. It is okay if some parts of your story are the same as your letter to your family. Use the first line to give your story a name.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Going back to our family's history of school and writing our own story of school gives us more information about how we are as adults. Our school years are usually the time when we begin to move out of home into a bigger world. It is a time for learning about how the world works. We learn how to handle ourselves with different kinds of people; some who are our own age, some who are older, some who are the same as us and some who are different. Our school experiences influence how we think and feel about ourselves as adults, as well as how we behave towards ourselves and other adults.

School years are generally a time of preparation for being an adult. It is a time to set goals for ourselves and to work towards them so that we can take our place in the world, especially as "working" adults. The old people and the children depend on us to provide food, shelter and clothing. Our experiences during school years influences our ability to earn a living. Being in school, for example, and not learning how to read and write does not provide us with either the confidence or the skills we need to go out into the world and earn a living.

Take some time to review what you have written and drawn about school experiences.

When I think about the school experiences of my grandparents and parents, I am _____

_____

My parents school years were _____

_____

_____

_____

When I think about my school years I feel _____

_____

_____

_____

My school years were _____

During our school years we can also be hurt physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually in ways that make it hard for us to be strong adults. For example, if we did not learn to read we may feel stupid as an adult. We may also lack the skills we need in order to get a job. Or perhaps you were called a "dirty Indian" which made you feel ashamed and hurt your spirit. Constantly being told how to think as a child may damage our ability as adults to solve problems on our own and to think creatively.

The hurts I carry from my school years and the school years of my family which hold me back from being a strong adult are _____

These hurts hold me back from being a strong adult because _____

It is important that I stop those hurts from having power over my life today. I can do this by

I can make up for the things that I missed during my school years, for example, not learning the skills I needed to be a responsible adult, by

The things that I gained during my school years and that I can use today as an adult in order to live a productive life are

"Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without love our self-esteem weakens. Without it our courage fails. Without love we can no longer look out confidently at the world. Instead we turn inwardly and begin to feed upon our own personalities and little by little we destroy ourselves.

You and I need the strength and joy that comes from knowing we are loved. With it we are creative. With it we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others."

- Chief Dan George, Coast Salish

AFFIRMATIONS

I am taking care of myself.

I am remembering to carry out my work plan and meet my safety needs.

My Adult Years

Leaving school usually means that we are expected to take up the work of being an adult. For some people that means finding some kind of a job in order to provide for their food, shelter and clothing; the basic necessities of life. Some people move "back home"; others venture out into the world. Some wander around from place to place. Being a young adult sometimes means that we don't take our life seriously. It is often a time to have fun. It is also a time when we take a partner and begin having children. This part reviews what you did after leaving school and how these experiences have affected your life, including the lessons you learned.

Leaving school made me feel _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

When I left school, I wanted to _____

_____

_____

After I left school, I went _____

_____

_____

After I left school, I became good at _____

_____

_____

I "hung out" with _____

_____

_____

Some of the things I did in the first few years after I left school are _____

_____

_____

When I think back over my life after I left school, the events and situations that stick out in my mind are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Close your eyes and imagine what you looked like at a time between the age of 17 - 21. What kind of clothing are you wearing? How is your hair done? Are you walking around with a cigarette hanging out of your mouth or from your hand? Are you standing straight or are you slouching? Are you driving a car? Are you sitting around waiting for someone to call? Is there a beer in your hand? Are there other people around? Are you pregnant? Draw the picture of the young adult you see in your imagination.

As I was drawing I felt _____

The young adult in the picture is thinking _____

The young adult in the picture is feeling _____

I want to tell the young adult that I drew that _____

The first time that I thought seriously about what I was doing and where my life was going was when I _____

I am glad that I _____

_____

_____

I regret that I _____

_____

_____

_____

One of the things we do as young adults is get a "job" that pays so that we can support ourselves.
My first paying employment was _____

I made _____ a month "take home pay". I spent my money on _____.

Being employed made me feel _____

_____

_____

_____

Many Aboriginal people, especially those who live on Reserves are faced with limited job opportunities. This fact, and other things in your life such as alcohol, may mean that you spent time being unemployed. List the times you were without paying work:

How did you get food, shelter, and clothing while you were unemployed?

How did you feel being unemployed?

Think back over the various jobs that you have had over the years since leaving school. List all of the jobs you can remember. What kind of work did you do in each job? Why did each job end?

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

6. _____

_____

7. _____

_____

8. _____

_____

9. _____

_____

10. _____

_____

Some of the things that these jobs taught me are _____

_____

_____

Reviewing my work history, I realize that the jobs, or kind of work, that I did best and enjoyed the most was _____

_____

_____

The job/work skills that I have are _____

_____

_____

The kind of work I would like to do in the future is _____

_____

_____

Will you need to learn additional skills in order to get the kind of work you want in the future?

_____

_____

_____

_____

If you need to learn new skills, what are they?

_____

_____

How will you get those skills?

Another part of young adult life is finding a partner and having children. Sometimes we live with our partners, sometimes we don't. Eventually, most young adults do live with a partner.

The first time I lived with a partner was

My partner was

Having a partner made me feel

I had my first child when I was

Having my first child made me feel

At that time, I was living

How many children do you have? What are their names and how old are they? Where are they living?

I am proud of my children because

I worry about my children because

Being a parent is never easy. Providing for our children's basic needs - food, shelter, and clothing - as well as guiding, loving, and supporting them are some of the biggest challenges any of us face in life. If our parents were unable to provide those same things for us as children, we may find ourselves without the knowledge and skills to meet the physical, emotional, mental and spiritual needs of our own children. The things I regret doing as a parent are _____

_____

_____

_____

It is important to remember that every parent loves their children. Every parent does the best they can for their children. A parent who gives their child to the grandparents, for example, may be protecting that child from being hurt by the violence and neglect that happens when they drink. And if you are doing this work book while living in an institution that means you are coping with being separated from your children.

Every parent also makes mistakes and has regrets. It is important to accept responsibility for our mistakes and, at the same time, acknowledge what we have accomplished as parents. As a parent, I was/am good at _____

_____

_____

_____

Are there any ways that you can make amends to your children for the mistakes, or the hurts you have caused them? Can you have contact with your children? Could you write them a letter? What would you have needed to have your parents do or say to help you heal the hurts they caused you? Give these questions a lot of thought. Ask someone you trust to talk with you. As parents, we can feel and carry a lot of guilt over our mistakes. Guilt does not help us or our children. A parent who is able to be honest and accepting of their mistakes can be helpful to their children. Sometimes, it is impossible to make amends. Once you have come to some decision about how to deal with your regrets and mistakes as a parent, take the time to carry it out.

My decision is _____

_____

_____

_____

I will _____

_____

_____

_____

At a certain age most of us become grandparents. Some of us have grandchildren before we reach the age of 40. Do you have grandchildren? How many? What are their names? How old are they?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

As a grandparent, it is my responsibility to _____

_____

_____

_____

The best thing about being a grandparent is _____

_____

_____

As parents and grandparents, we want the best for our children and grandchildren. We want to see them safe and protected. We hope for them to have a good life. And yet, each of us must face some difficult times with our children and grandchildren. The death of a child is very difficult to face and accept. Knowing that one of your adult children is "drinking and living on the street" is also very upsetting and worrisome. Knowing that our children or grandchildren are not safe, or are hurting themselves or being hurt by others in any way; all are very difficult things to think and talk about. If you need to, talk to someone. (Are you remembering your safety plan, and more importantly, are you following it?)

The saddest and hardest thing(s) I have had to face <u>in the past</u> with my children and grandchildren is/are _____

_____

_____

_____

The saddest and hardest thing(s) I am having to face now with my children and grandchildren is/are

Take time to think about what you can do to help your children and/or grandchildren. If there is something you can do, how will you go about it? If there is nothing you can do, how will you accept this? Is it possible for you to pray and think positive thoughts for yourself and your family, especially your children and grandchildren?

Going back to your young adult years, think about where you were living when you had your first job, or your first partner, or your first child. Draw the house where you lived. (Your "house" could have been an apartment in a city or town, or a "co-op", "halfway", or "transition" house.)

As I was drawing, I felt _____

The best things about my life at that time were _____

As I look back to that time, I find myself wondering _____

I wish I hadn't _____

I wish I had _____

The stage of young adulthood is considered to last until we are around thirty. You may still be in that stage or you may have passed it. You may be into your middle years which last until about 45 years old. Think back over your adult years. Which years have been the worst for you?

Those years were the worst for me because _____

When I think of those times, I feel _____

_____

_____

_____

The things I regret most about those times are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Summary

The old people say that everything we go through, especially the hardest time, are not lost if we learn from them. Sometimes hard times are beyond our control. Nobody can stop the fact that our parents may be getting old and will die someday. Perhaps one of your hard times was about losing someone you loved. But even in the case of loosing a parent, one of the lessons we can learn is how to grieve. Other hard times are caused by ourselves, by our actions. If we act out in violence by breaking and entering into someone else's home, for example, we can expect hard times to follow, sooner or later. If we drink ourselves into a blackout, we could wake up to find out we assaulted another person. The important thing is to learn from our mistakes. We cannot change our past behaviours but we can learn from them if we choose to.

My hardest times have taught me _____

_____

_____

_____

Which of your adult years have been the best for you?

_____

_____

_____

Those times were the best for me because _____

_____

_____

_____

When I think of those times, I feel _____

When I look back over the best times, I realize that _____

Some of the things I have done during my adult years that I am proud of are _____

Today, the things I can do to contribute to my life and the life of my children are _____

Today, the things I look forward to doing are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The Creator designed us to learn by trial and error. The path of life we walk is very wide. Everything on the path is sacred - what we do right is sacred - but our mistakes are also sacred. This is the Creator's way of teaching spiritual people. To criticize ourselves when we make mistakes is not the Indian way. To learn from our mistakes is the Indian way. The definition of a spiritual person is someone who makes 30 to 50 mistakes each day and talks to the Creator after each one to see what to do next time. This is the way of the warrior.

- Don Coyhis, Mohican (American Indian) Writer

Building My Future

Your life has been made up of several parts: your roots, or who you were and how you lived as a child, your school years, and how you have lived since becoming an adult. Who you will become and how you will live in the future depends partly on how you understand your life until now. If you can look at how you have lived your life and where you came from with kindness and understanding, you will be able to accept your self - the good, the bad, the beautiful, and the ugly - and move on. In order to move towards a fuller life, a place in the world that fits you, it is also necessary that you imagine your future and work towards it. Our hopes and dreams guide how we feel, how we think and how we act today.

Building a hopeful future also means listening to what the old people say. Each of us are born with gifts and finding our place in the world means understanding what our gifts are; accepting and learning to live with them in a way which is respectful of ourselves and of all life. Part of learning is understanding what the word "gifts" means.

To me, the meaning of gifts is _____

_____

_____

_____

Let us give thanks for this beautiful day. Let us give thanks for this life. Let us give thanks for the water without which life would not be possible. Let us give thanks for Grandmother Earth who protects and nourishes us.

- Daily Prayer of the Lakota

Future hopes can feel far away and sometimes they are. During those times, it is important to remember that you are alive today, that you are a survivor. If you have been able to survive so far, then you are also able to create a future of your choosing. Nobody has total freedom to create their future. We are all limited by ourselves and circumstances. The important thing is that you are alive today. This means you have some gifts and there is a place for you in the world. The old people also say that others can help you, but only you can do the work of finding your gifts and your place; where you belong.

This section includes a number of important things which will assist you in building your place in the world. It will explore the importance of hope. It will help you review and assess the values and attitudes you live by and the skills which you have used to survive. You will also explore letting go, or changing, self destructive values, attitudes, and survival skills. Further sections will look at healing your hurts, visioning your future, and taking the steps to reach your vision. This section will also provide room for you to write your life story, including your hopes for the future. In the end, you will be asked to look ahead to a time when you are an old person.

Take your time to complete this section. It may take you several months. You may wish to come back and work on it several times. For example, it may be helpful to return to "Building Your Future" after you have completed other parts of this workbook. You may also find it helpful to complete this section on loose leaf paper, so that each time you redo it you are able to change what you have written. If you choose to write in the workbook, using a pencil instead of a pen will make it possible for you to make changes more easily.

We begin to build a fitting future for ourselves the moment we believe that it is possible because we begin to <u>feel hopeful</u>. Everyone has the capacity to feel hopeful. As children especially, we have experienced hopefulness. Hoping for something goes beyond wanting something. We may want a chocolate bar but we probably will not hope for it. Hoping for something means closing our eyes and wishing with all our heart for something. Our hopes are very close to our heart and spirit.

Think about the times you felt hopeful, or hoped for something in your life. I remember hoping that _____

_____

_____

_____

Sometimes our hopes do not come true. It is possible that when we think back on those times, we realize that our wish was not granted and that it did not break our heart although it may have felt like it. Can you think back to one such time. What were you hoping for?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We must all face the fact that some of our hopes will not come true. Everyone must learn to deal with disappointments in their life. But if our hopes never come true we may give up hoping. Our heart is broken and our spirit crushed. We feel dark, down and hopeless. In those moments, we may even give up on life. We may contemplate suicide, perhaps even seriously injure ourselves.

Have there been times in your life when you have lost hope? _____

If your answer is yes, then list the hopeless times in your life.

_____

_____

_____

_____

Write the story of one of the times you felt hopeless. What was happening? Who was involved? How did you pull through? Did anything happen to make you feel more hopeful? Did you do something that made you feel more hopeful?

Writing my story of a "dark time" made me feel _____

When my hopes were crushed, I _____

Looking back over the times when I felt hopeless makes me realize that _____

When I think about hope today, I feel _____

Having hope for my future is hard because _____

The things that give me faith and hope today are _____

Some of the things I hope for in the future:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Writing down my hopes was _____

Writing down my hopes made me feel _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

A second, and important, thing we can do to create a hopeful future for ourselves is to carefully review and assess our survival skills. Take the time to go back and reread all that you have written or drawn in the chapters on your childhood, school and adult years. As you are reading, think about the ways you learned to cope, especially during the hard times in your early and teenage years. The ways you learned to cope are your survival skills. For example, one way that we sometimes cope is by withdrawing into a world of pretend, either our own fantasies or those found in books. Sometimes we learned to cope by getting involved in sports. Or perhaps we learned to cope by becoming aggressive; a fighter.

What survival skills have I built up for myself over the years?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

If you are finding it difficult to think about your survival skills, ask someone you trust or a counsellor to help you. Identifying how you coped, or how you have "gotten by", can be difficult.

Assessing your survival skills also involves understanding how you have used your survival skills up to this point in your life. For example, it is possible that one of your survival skills is manipulating others to get what you want and that, up until now, you have used that skill to "work the system" both in and out of jail. It is also possible that a survival skill of being active in sports has been used to keep yourself physically fit and healthy.

List each of your skills and describe how you have used it.

1. Skill: _____

   I have used this skill to _____

   _____

2. Skill: _____

   I have used this skill to _____

   _____

3. Skill: _____

   I have used this skill to _____

   _____

4. Skill: _____

I have used this skill to _____

_____

5. Skill: _____

I have used this skill to _____

_____

The most important thing to learn about how we cope - our survival skills - is recognizing that we have choices. We can choose when, where, how, and to what end we will apply our skills. For example, knowing how to con or manipulate other people is an important survival skill which could be useful if being a car salesman, or working in hotel promotions, is one of your hopes or goals for the future. Knowing how to manipulate others is not necessarily a negative skill. Another person may have survived residential school by becoming the school clown. This person can use this skill to become a professional entertainer. It is also possible that the survival skill of reading could be applied to some kind of studies in preparation for a profession. People who read a lot are often good writers which might be a survival skill that could be developed to strengthen your future. A person who survived by becoming the leader of a "youth gang" has important leadership skills which can be used to influence young people, or others, away from self destructive behaviours.

How can I use my survival skills to build a more hopeful future? (List each skill and how it might fit into your future.)

1. Skill: _____

I can use this skill to _____

_____

2. Skill: _____

I can use this skill to _____

_____

3. Skill: _____

I can use this skill to _____

_____

4. Skill: _____

I can use this skill to _____

_____

5. Skill: _____

I can use this skill to _____

_____

Finally, it is also possible that some survival skills must be let go, or surrendered, in order to build the kind of future that feels right to you. For example, it is difficult to imagine how being aggressive to the point of physically attacking another person could be useful in planning for a hopeful future. And the skill of "bumming" or "stealing" off other people will not contribute to feeling that you are a worthwhile person.

As I think about my survival skills, the ones which are not helpful to me are _____

_____

_____

_____

The third part of building a more honest and kind future for ourselves is looking at the values and attitudes which we have built up over the years. Our values are those things which are of central importance to our life. Being honest with yourself is a value. Our attitudes are the way we think and react to people and situations. Disliking and mistrusting all authority figures as well as refusing to listen to what they have to say is an example of an attitude. Review your life and what you have written in the earlier sections of this workbook.

List the values and attitudes which you have built up over the years towards yourself and the world.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Our values and attitudes affect how we behave. If we have what is sometimes called "an attitude problem" we might behave as though we don't care about ourselves and others. If we say someone has "a chip on their shoulder" we are suggesting that the person has a hostile or defensive attitude. Some values and attitudes are helpful because they strengthen caring and respect for ourselves and the world around us, including other people. Look back over your list of values and attitudes and think about how they affect your behaviour.

The values and attitudes which I have and which I need to keep and strengthen in order to build a hopeful future for myself are _____

_____

_____

_____

The values and attitudes which I have and which are hurting me are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Letting go of survival skills, values, and attitudes which are not helpful to us, which are self destructive, is another part of building our future. Letting go, or changing, can be a difficult process. For example, letting go of the attitude that "everyone is out to get me", or the value that no one can be trusted - "every person for him or herself" - and the survival behaviour of striking out physically at others requires us to make choices. Letting go requires much thought and patience, perhaps even help from others.

The important thing to remember is that behaviours, values, and attitudes are learned. And they are learned for a good reason. We learned to think and behave in certain ways because that was the best way we knew to survive in the past. If some of our attitudes, values, and behaviours are no longer useful then it is possible to learn new ways.

Participating in "anger management" courses, for example, can help learn new ways of coping with anger as well as help us understand where and how we learned to behave in destructive ways with our anger. Sometimes joining a support group, or a talking circle, can help to leave behind the "chip on our shoulder" by building trust in ourselves and others. Working with an Elder can teach patience and help us learn how to care, to be kind and respectful of ourselves and life. Completing other parts of this workbook which deal with other parts of life such as your family and sexuality is another way of helping yourself.

In order to change, or let go, those values, attitudes, and survival skills which are <u>not</u> helpful to me in building a strong future I need to _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Looking back over our life usually brings to light some things which we have overlooked and which contribute to our strength. The values, attitudes and survival skills which were given to me as part of my roots and which could help me to build a hopeful future are (List each one and how it will help you):

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

Looking over what I have written about the values, attitudes and skills that were given to me as a child makes me realize that _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I can bring back into my life the values, attitudes and skills I was given by _____

_____

_____

_____

Taking charge of our life and creating a future that is hopeful, that will give us independence and self respect also involves healing our hurts. Sometimes our deepest hurts come from being abandoned and living in foster homes. Other examples: being shamed at residential school, or physical violence at home. Missing out on the opportunity to learn occupational skills, or learning to mistrust authority also affects us. Being ashamed of our skin colour or our spiritual beliefs, and hurting others while under the influence of alcohol and drugs are other examples of hurts that need to be healed. Take whatever time you need to think back over what you have written and drawn about your life again. If you need to review your work do that.

As I look back over my life, the events and situations from the past which affect me most today:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

I have dealt with these hurts in the past by _____

_____

_____

_____

Healing begins with a choice, a commitment to ourselves: "I am going to deal with past hurts". We are capable of dealing with our past. Healing does not mean that we forget our hurts. Healing means that the past no longer has the power to control our life in ways which result in

destructive behaviour. Staying angry at our parents for drinking and neglecting or abusing us as a child, for example, means we have not accepted that the hurt happened in the past and that we are now adults and in charge of our life. As long as we hang on to, and live in, the anger at our parents we keep ourselves powerless like the child we once were.

Healing is not something that can be accomplished overnight. It always takes time and we often need to reach out for support and guidance. Help can come from other people who understand the process of healing; what it is and how it happens. Reach out for help. Again, a support group, a talking circle, a counsellor, or an Elder may assist you. For many Aboriginal people, learning and participating in sweet grass, sweat lodges, and fasting are very helpful. These, and other traditional practices, can help you find and strengthen your spirit.

I can heal my hurts by _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

I will ask for help from _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

At the same time as you are working to heal the hurts and assessing your skills, values and attitudes, creating a hopeful future for yourself also means beginning to let yourself envision or dream your future. Ask yourself these questions:

When I was younger, what was my vision for how I wanted my life to be?

When did I have this vision of my future?

When I look back on my vision now, I realize

Now is the time to vision your future. Close your eyes and imagine where you would like to be living ten years from now. What does the countryside look like? Are you in a city? What colour is your home painted? Is there a fence or a garden? What do the windows and the front door look like? (If you are now in prison and know that you will still be in prison 10 years from now, pick the time when you will be released from prison.)

Draw a picture of your vision on the next page.

Ten years from now, I would like to be living _____

_____

_____

_____

Ten years from now, I imagine myself living with _____

_____

_____

_____

Ten years from now, I imagine myself working _____

_____

_____

_____

Ten years from now, I will be _____

_____

_____

_____

Taken all together, where you imagine yourself living, the people around you, what you eat and how you dress, what you do with your time in order to earn a living, as well as to enjoy yourself, make up your vision for the future. Without letting ourselves think about these, and many other things, we cannot make choices today that will help create a better future. Our future is not something that will simply happen to us. Our future is something we can influence, something we create.

Think back to someone in your life who has loved you and believed in you. Is this person a grandmother, a father, an uncle, an aunt, a friend? This person may still be alive today, but not necessarily. Write down the name of this person: _____

Write a letter to this person telling them your vision for your future. As you write let yourself feel the support and love of this person. Let yourself know that someone believes in you and in your hopes and dreams. You do not need to mail this letter. This letter is for yourself.

Dear _____

Writing a letter to _____ made me feel _____

_____

_____

The last time I talked to _____, I remember _____

_____

_____

_____

Close your eyes and imagine the person you have written to. Imagine they are talking to you after reading your letter (or after having the letter read to them by someone else). Write down what that person is saying to you.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Our vision is our dream. It can act as a guiding light for our choices. At the beginning, a vision may seem far off in the distance. As time passes and we let ourselves move towards our vision, we may find that some parts of it are impossible for us to attain. That is okay. Other parts of our vision may come easily; simply fall into place. Reaching some parts of our vision requires concrete step by step planning and action. Our vision becoming a reality takes hope, trust, commitment and determination. It always involves doing hard work in one way or another.

As I read the letter I wrote to _____, I realize that my vision is _____

Did the person you wrote to give you anything that will help you reach your vision?

The things which I have already accomplished and which will help me translate my vision into everyday life are _____

Write a second letter to the same person thanking them for their help and support, and telling them what you have already done and what you will be doing in the future to make your vision become your everyday life. As you are writing this letter, tell the person each step you think you

will need to take to reach your vision. When will you take each step? If you need help to decide what the steps are and how to achieve each one, tell the person. End your letter by asking the person to tell you if they have any advice or guidance for you.

Dear _____

Once you have completed this second letter, take the time to stretch your legs and rest your mind. Are you remembering to follow your safety plan? After a break, go over the last letter you wrote. Close your eyes and imagine the face of the person you wrote to.

Does that person have anything to say that will help you further?

Is there anything the person has to say that you do not want to hear even though you know it is true? What is it?

The reason I didn't want to hear that is

Are there other things that I need to hear in order to accomplish my vision? What are they?

Writing these letters helps me to realize that I _____

_____

_____

_____

My future looks _____

_____

_____

_____

Right now, I feel _____

_____

_____

_____

Looking back over my letters, I realize that in order to develop the values, attitudes, and skills that I need to make my vision a reality, I must make some commitments to myself.

I will take the following steps to help my plan and my vision become my life:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

6. _____

_____

7. _____

_____

The step(s) which I imagine will be the most difficult to accomplish are _____

The step(s) which I imagine will be the least difficult are _____

_____

Looking at what I have already accomplished, I am ready to _____

_____

_____

_____

I am not ready to _____

_____

_____

_____

I think my life could be _____

_____

_____

_____

The thing that surprised me most about going over my life and thinking about my future is

_____

_____

_____

The biggest thing I learned going over my life is _____

_____

_____

_____

I am proud of _____

_____

_____

_____

Before you move on to the last part of this section which looks at being an old person, write the story of your life. Writing your story is a way of pulling together all the different stages of life that you have lived until now. It will collect your childhood, your school years, your adult years and make them into your whole life. Your story will help you make sense of your life. Include the hopes and dreams you have for your future and the steps you are committed to taking now, and in the future, to make your vision come true. Again, you may wish to review what you have written and drawn in this workbook.

This story can start wherever you want it to. It can start at the beginning of your life and move through the years until today. Or you can start with the future and work backwards through your life. Starting in the middle is also okay. There is no right or wrong way to write your story. It is your story. Tell it the way that feels right to you. Take as much time as you need, perhaps even several days to write your story. Is there anyone you wish to share your story with?

Once you have completed your story, look over the other parts of this workbook. Does telling your story help you decide which part to do next?

My Life Story

AFFIRMATION

My life and my story gives meaning to my survival.

Summary

This section has asked you to work at building a place that feels right for yourself by exploring a number of things: Building your hopefulness, reviewing and assessing your survival skills, letting go or changing destructive values, attitudes, and survival skills, healing your hurts, visioning your future, building a step by step plan and making a commitment to each of the steps you need to accomplish your plan and your vision.

You have also written your life story, including your vision for the future. All together, you are working towards a deeper understanding of yourself as a person whose hurts and mistakes do not change the basic fact that you are deserving and capable. You have gifts to offer yourself and the world around you. The world around you has gifts to offer you.

The final guidance which you can give yourself is to imagine yourself as an old person nearing the end of your life. Close your eyes and imagine yourself sitting under a tree watching a river run by. The sun is shining. You feel its warmth on your shoulders and face. You can hear the wind rustling through the leaves. Once in a while, you hear birds singing and fish jumping in the river.

As you see yourself sitting there, what are you wearing and what do you look like?

Imagine that old person (you) thinking back over their life. She/he is remembering _____

She/he is feeling _____

I think that the old person I am seeing is _____

I want to tell the old person I am seeing that _____

Draw a picture of yourself as an old person:

As I was drawing the picture of the old person, I felt _____

_____

_____

_____

The old person I drew reminds me of _____

_____

_____

_____

The vision this old person has for their children is _____

_____

_____

_____

The vision this old person has for their grandchildren is _____

_____

_____

_____

The vision this old person has for their people is _____

_____

_____

_____

The things I admire and respect about this old person are _____

This old person learned to respect themselves by _____

This old person learned to respect others by _____

This old person learned kindness by _____

This old person learned honesty by _____

This old person learned to accept change and to adapt to change by _____

_____

_____

_____

I will keep this old person in my mind as I go on to other parts of this workbook, and as I work towards finding and building my place in the world. This old person will help keep me strong as I heal my hurts from the past and build the values, attitudes, and skills I need to reach my vision of the future for myself, my children, my grandchildren, and my people.

> *"It is assumed by many that very little remains of traditional Indian idealogy and philosophy because the traditional Indian life-style is no longer in evidence; that is, we don't live in teepees anymore. This assumption holds that traditional values and beliefs changed when our life styles changed. Implicit in this assumption, also, is the notion that Indian culture must remain static to remain Indian. But the history of our people is a history of successful adaptation to change..."*
>
> - Marie Smallface Marule, Blood

Voices: Something to Think About

"So, on this four year sentence, after I got sentenced I went back to my dormitory in that city and I cried. That was the first time I cried in a long, long time. I cried so hard and I asked God, you got to help me. That was the first time I ever asked God or the Great Spirit for any assistance, sincerely ask for assistance. That is when I made up my mind, my mind was made up, it was set and from that day on, I have never looked back. I took all of the programs, I took programs that would assist me in rehabilitation. I took a life skills program that would assist me in understanding in how life was like out in the outside. I was determined, I was really hungry. I was so hungry for information that I was willing to do anything to get it. When my mind was made up it was made up. It didn't matter how many cons that were going to say, hey you are changing and I would say yep, I'm changing, that is enough for me. I understood the word to be solid to be a con, to be a solid man, but I realized it wasn't, it was an artificial belief. I think if you are going to be solid, I think it is really important to be solid with your family, your nephew, your niece, your auntie, your uncle, I think that is solid. I realized what kind of a guy I turned out to be, a chicken shit, to be a person that will always turn away and run away from problems. I realized that it was time for me to make an effort, to abide by exactly what I asked of God."

Richard, age 40; convictions for robbery, assault causing bodily harm, inciting a riot, attempted murder, break and enter, pointing a firearm, hijacking, kidnapping, dangerous use of a firearm.

"I didn't make a decision to turn my life around. I made a decision to get a parole, so I knew what I had to do and part of that was going to A.A. and I went to A.A. and did all the other things I did, to get a parole and somehow, along with getting a parole, they got me. My thinking started to change. I started to get honest. I started to make choices like not to hang out with those same people that I was fixing dope with. I started to see them for what they were and you know, they say that if you don't like somebody, probably part of it is that you can see in them, what you can't see in yourself and I seen in people that I was in jail with, things that I didn't like and I said, I don't need that and I choose not to hang out with them. I started, I spent a lot of my time praying, I went to church, started thinking about my family, my children and really, as long as I can remember, I always had the desire to be a good mom and I thought about my little kids without me. That was for sure a motivator and then the people that I met that came into the A.A. meetings, they were different than anybody I had ever known. The look in their eyes, the laughter, I always say the tinkle in their laughter. They were genuinely laughing, they weren't laughing at me. They were very, very genuine and their lives were what my life had been, not exactly, but certainly they had experienced a lot of what I had experienced. I heard a fellow say one time, he said, oh and I know some ex-cons came into the prison and then there was another fellow and somebody said, oh you know, he did time for manslaughter and I thought, well if they can do it, I can do it and so they influenced me. Another thing is, somebody said at an A.A. meeting, if you never want to go to jail again, all you have to do is quit drinking and the most successful way I know how to quit drinking is with Alcoholics Anonymous and so, I just kept going to meetings."

Amanda, age 45; record for prostitution, assault causing bodily harm, soliciting, breach of probation, running a common bawdy house, trafficking in narcotics.

"I think for me, like what I would probably say is like for a person to try and learn to live their own life, like live your own life and don't let other friends influence you. Like it could be anybody in jail, to influence you into decision making, you know what you do in life. I think it is more, if you want to be a man, you can do things on your own. It doesn't have to be in a crowd and to realize that a person has nothing to lose by going ahead and being honest with themselves and with other people. They are not in this world to show any impression on people. It is more to see what we can contribute to life, or to live our life the way it was meant to be lived, not going around living for other people all the time, that is probably I guess one of the things. A lot of times when I was in jail, it was always like I was living for other people and not to be ashamed to say, I am scared, or not to be ashamed to say, I need help, like to be ashamed to say, I am not a solid person. That is the kind of thing, because we get so built inside us, that we want to be strong all the time, we always have to be strong. There is nothing wrong with crying or to realize we are only human beings."

Bert, age 42; record for criminal negligence, escape, auto theft, break and enter, assault.

"I counselled I guess, quite a number of the boys in there, in that manner, but yet they return. Not only that, I told them, when you get out, you have been away from females for a long time and that is another thing that you have to watch, when you go in, when you go on your parole. If you get too involved with one lady and stuff like that, it is going to lead to drinking, pretty soon you are going to be breaching your parole, because you want to stay out and stay with them. Everything I say to these boys sitting in Bowden, they would be back about two months later and tell me, how come you are younger than me and yet you knew these things. That's because I anticipated these things, I looked here and there and I have seen the complaints the boys had, blaming somebody else all the time, but it is always them, it is always us that has to work on staying out. Whether it is on parole or whether you are not on parole, if you have a criminal record there is a strike against you and if you accept it. I accepted it, but the thing is, I never want to place my life in the hands of another human being, to deprive me of my freedom again. That is the main thing that keeps me going, keeps me staying out of jail and it is all up to me, not anybody else on how to prevent that from happening."

Stan, age 39; convictions for assault, assault causing bodily harm, manslaughter, careless driving, pointing a firearm, dangerous driving.

Communication Skills

Introduction

Most of us are born into this world with two basic needs - "to love" and "to be loved". When we are babies we communicate through crying or cooing our needs. As we grow into toddlers, we learn how to express ourselves in ways "big people" express themselves to us. The old people say, "We are all related. Everything is related." If we grow up in homes which are balanced, we, too, learn to talk about our feelings, our thoughts, our wishes in a balanced way. If our homes have been affected by alcoholism, parents who learned to "parent" in residential school, or in homes which were violent, we learn to speak of our feelings, thoughts, and wishes in a less balanced way.

Whatever our communication skills are, we access our gift of the wind spirit and the water spirit. These gifts are so sacred we could not live without them. The wind spirit is the gift of speech. It brings us oxygen to our brain so we can think. Wind spirit helps to give our voice sound. We can choose to use wind spirit in a good way - to speak with kindness about other people's body, mind and spirit. Or, we can choose to use our wind spirit to speak in a mean way about either our own body, mind and spirit or about others in an unkind way. How do you use your gift of wind spirit?

The other gift is water spirit. Part of communicating is the need to be able to speak or see or hear. The water spirit is the water in our mouth, our nose, our eyes, our ears, our vocal chords and our body. Without the gift of water spirit, we could not survive. Our choices are whether or not we acknowledge these gifts and give thanks for these gifts by using them in a good way, to love and be loved, and to say to the Creator, "Thank you for these gifts"; or to use these gifts in an unbalanced way. When we use these gifts in an unbalanced way, we speak or communicate in using mean words, mean looks or mean body movements, such as shaking our fist at someone. We have a choice.

How do you use your gift of wind spirit (speech), water spirit and the gift of movement?

"Let us give thanks for this beautiful day. Let us give thanks for this life. Let us give thanks for the water without which life would not be possible. Let us give thanks for Grandmother Earth who protects us and nourishes us."

- Daily Prayer of the Lakota American Indian

Our needs and our gifts are expressed in body movements and words. Did you ever notice that a lot happens when people talk to each other? Especially things that usually aren't even talked about - like face and hand movements, different tones of voice, whether or not people look each other in the eyes, tap their toes, look at their watch, yawn. Can you think of other kinds of "body language"?

Record some examples in the space provided:

_____

_____

_____

_____

Other examples include such things as arm-crossing or how some people might lean forward as the other person talks, while others slouch back. Or the same people might do both during the same conversation but at different stages of their talk. It just depends on what is being said at the time.

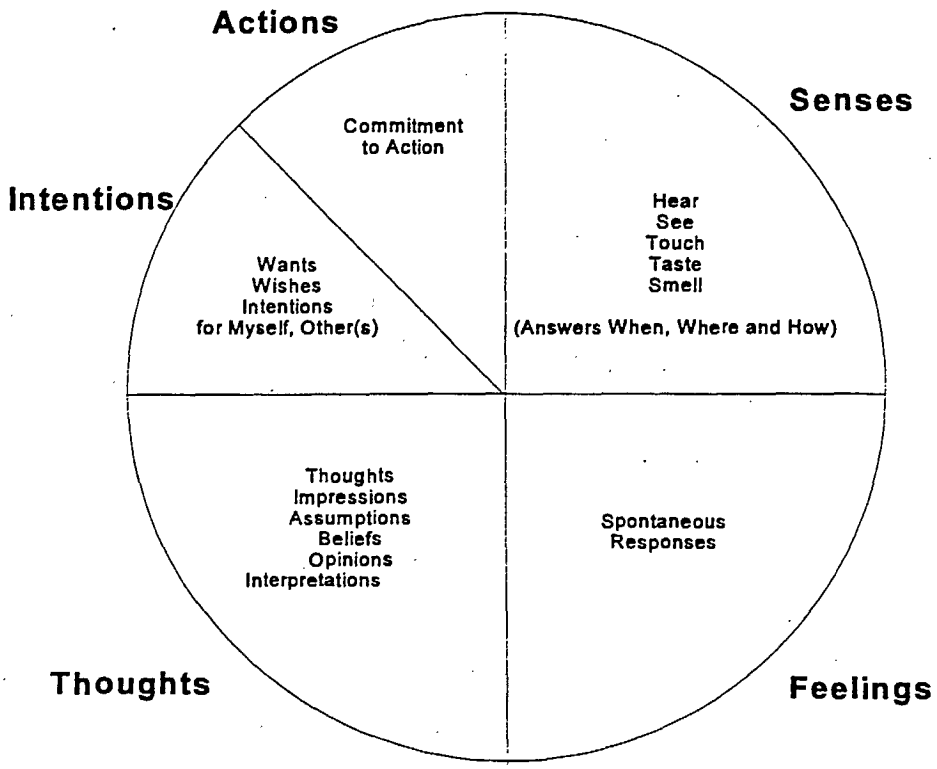
Or have you noticed that some talks seem to go smoothly and have a positive energy about them? While others seem very difficult, with perhaps many awkward silences? Or end in a shouting match? Or that for some conversations we want to choose our words very carefully and think a lot before we speak? Or that sometimes the best thing to say at the time is a joke?

In this section of the workbook, you will look at many parts of the whole "circle" of communication. We call this circle the "Awareness Wheel" because it involves noticing or becoming aware of many aspects of what we and others do while we are communicating. We become aware by paying attention to the five different kinds of information that can be used or processed during communication. When we become aware of the information available to us, we are better able to solve problems that often arise in communication with others.

Old people say, "It's up to you" and this chapter is an opportunity to express your thoughts, feelings, needs, wishes and plans in improved ways.

The Awareness Wheel

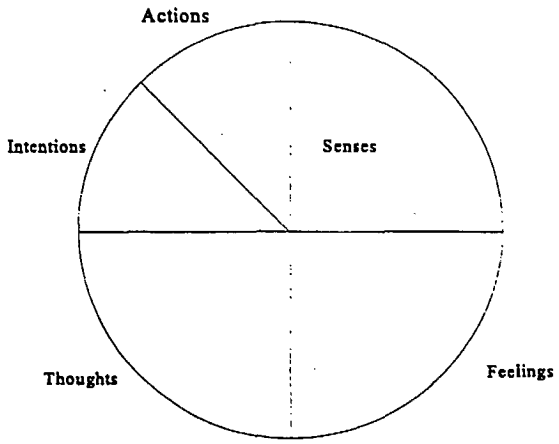
The Awareness Wheel is what might be called a visual and thinking tool. Below is a picture of the Awareness Wheel, a circle divided into parts (the five different kinds of information involved in communication), with some words describing each of the sections:



Many skills are needed to use each section of the Awareness Wheel tool. A map or outline of the main skills needed to understand or process each of the five kinds of information found in the Wheel follows. Let's take a look at the map of the information and skills you will be working with in this unit and see how each section of the Awareness Wheel tool makes use of different skills.

Senses

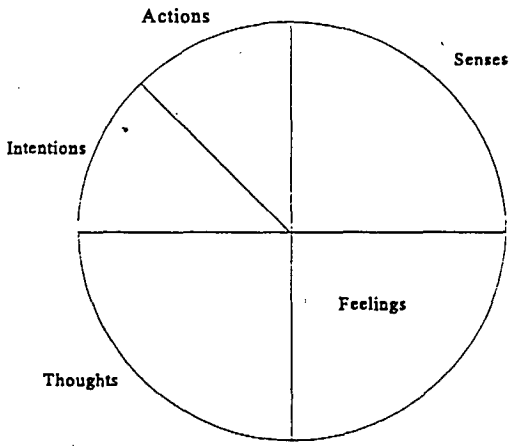
(top right corner of pie-shaped section)



Skills required:

- ability to make clear statements about what you are understanding when you take in or process information through the senses of sight, hearing, smell, taste and touch
- ability to attend to different kinds of sensory information
- ability to make lists of different kinds of sensory information
- ability to "tune out" other kinds of information, such as beliefs or wants, etc.
- ability to attend to two or more kinds of sensory information at the same time (for example, being aware of sights and sounds at the same time)
- part of the skill of "active listening" - really paying attention to the words that someone is saying and looking for "clues" as to what's important to them

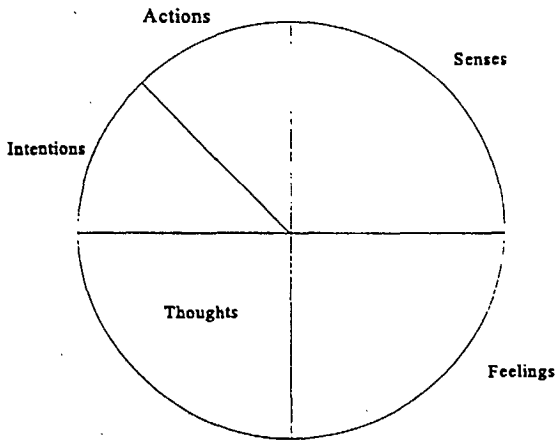
Feelings (or Spontaneous Responses)
(bottom right corner of pie-shaped section)



Skills required:

- ability to sort out the four basic feelings - glad, sad, mad and scared
- ability to notice when you are "numbing out"
- ability to notice when you are being truthful about your feelings - when what you say about your feelings is in balance with what your body language is "saying" about your feelings
- ability to name feelings - sorting out "how much" you feel of a basic feeling (for example, being able to tell the difference between feeling irritated and feeling hateful, or between feeling calm and feeling overjoyed)
- ability to say these feelings, then apply them to situations from your past
- ability to express both positive and negative feelings
- ability to know when it is safe to express feelings
- ability to combine sensory information and the feelings we have towards them (for example, "When I saw your hand bleeding, I felt scared.")

Thoughts (or the Interpretations we make of Sensory and/or Feeling Information) (bottom left corner of pie-shaped section)

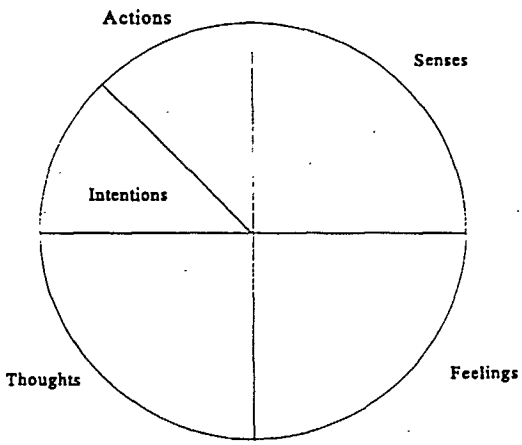


Skills required:

- ability to notice when memories come to mind
- ability to assign a meaning to sensory information - this includes jumping to a conclusion (which may or may not be correct), stating beliefs about other information that has been taken in, and making an impression about other information
- ability to recognize that an attitude or impression is influencing your thoughts
- ability to figure out what your needs are
- ability to recognize problems and to think about possible solutions
- ability to combine sensory information, interpretations and the feelings we have towards them (for example, "When I saw your eyes flashing with anger, I felt scared.")
- ability to recognize that some of your conclusions or interpretations may not be correct

Intentions

(half of the top left corner of pie-shaped section)

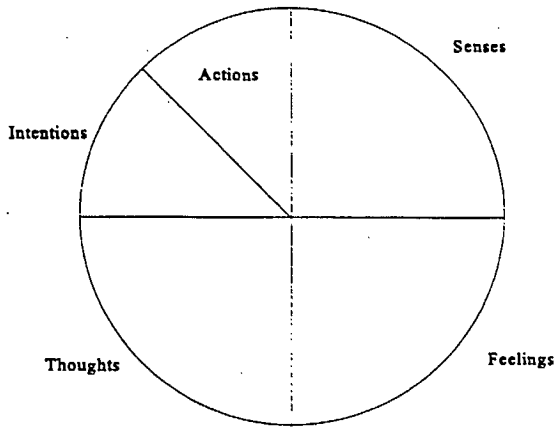


Skills required:

- ability to decide what you want from a situation
- ability to decide how you will achieve what you want (without hurting others in the process)
- ability to make plans and set goals, based on the sensory information, feelings and thoughts that you have gathered about a certain situation (for example, "When I saw the flash of anger in your eyes, I felt scared and I looked for a way to make the situation safe for myself.")

Actions

(last half of the top left corner of pie-shaped section)



Skills required:

- ability to carry out the plans that you've made to solve a certain problem
- ability to make a commitment to yourself to carry through with the plan
- ability to move beyond thinking about solutions
- ability to recognize the skills that you've learned to this point in time to help you avoid falling into old, less productive behaviour patterns
- ability to be flexible and change old, less productive behaviours
- ability to make the best use of all the other information that you have or that you can make available to yourself (for example, "When I saw the flash of anger in your eyes, I felt scared because I thought you were mad at me. I wanted to make things safe for myself and based on our past relationship, I knew that it helped to calm things down by recognizing your anger and asking you about it. So I say, 'Are you upset with me?'")

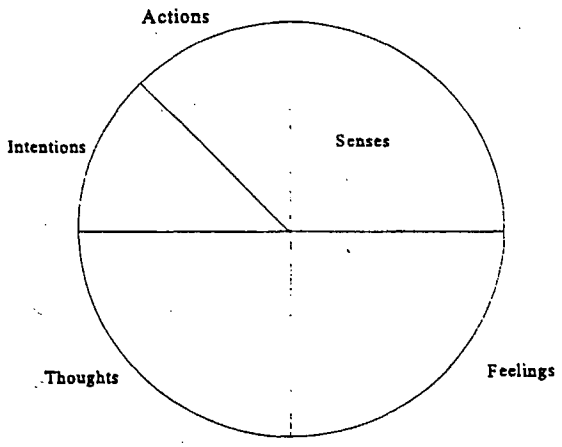
Now that you have read through the outline or map, do you have a better understanding of the different kinds of information that are a part of communication? Are you ready to take a look at building on the communication skills that you already have? In the pages to follow, there will be pictures to help you know which part of the Awareness Wheel you are currently working on and how each section relates to the others.

Please note that the way you move through the Awareness Wheel depends on the situation and does not always follow the pattern of senses, feelings, thoughts, intentions, actions. For instance, sometimes your first response to sensory information will be a thought rather than a feeling.

> *"You have noticed that everything an Indian does is in a circle, and that is because the Power of the World always works in circles, and everything tries to be round. The Wind, in its greatest power whirls. Birds make their nests in circles ... the sun comes forth and goes down again in a circle. The Moon does the same, and both are round. The life of a man is a circle from childhood to childhood and so it is in everything where power moves."*
>
> - Black Elk, Oglala (Teton) Sioux, Dakota Elder

> *"Better to stumble with the toe than with the tongue."*
>
> - Swahili Proverb

Sensory Information



Often we take for granted the information we take in through our senses (things we see, hear, smell, taste and touch). This is natural because we have a lot of information coming to us every second of every day. But there are times when it is helpful to attend carefully to sensory information while at the same time "tuning out" other kinds of information. Like when we are communicating or when we are in danger. Let's take a look at how we can better attend to and appreciate what we process through each of our senses.

Sight

Think of the variety of things we see every day: walls, floors, doors, furniture, food, faces, etc. Add some that you have thought of in the space below:

Now state things you see regularly without adding any judgements or interpretations or feelings to them. Do this by writing a sentence about what you see.

For example:

Stating a sensory perception:	**Stating a sensory perception with interpretation:**
I see a car.	I see a sporty car.
I see a table.	I see a messy table.
I see that your hair is wet.	I see that your hair is wet - it must be raining outside.
I see a pen in your hand.	I see a pen in your hand - you must be working.

Write your own statements of what you see in the space below (without making any interpretations about what you see):

Let's try these same exercises with the other senses.

Hearing

Think of all the different kinds of sounds you hear on a regular basis. Some examples are: voices, music, machines, the steps of people walking, water running, etc. Write down some of the sounds that you thought of in the space below:

Now state some sounds in a way that does not include any judgements, interpretations or feelings. Do this by writing a sentence about what you hear. Examples:

I hear the sound of a drum beating.

I hear someone singing.

I hear your voice talking.

I hear the sound of shoes walking across a floor.

Write your own examples in the space provided:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Smells

Think of some odours you smell or have smelled on a regular basis. Some examples might be: coffee brewing, sweet grass burning, meat cooking, burnt rubber, perfume, etc. Write your own:

_____

_____

_____

Now state some smells without adding any interpretations, judgements or feelings. Do this by writing a sentence about what you smell. Examples:

I smell sweet grass burning.

When I put on the brakes quickly, I could smell burnt rubber.

In the early morning, I smell coffee brewing.

Write your own in the space provided below:

Taste

Think of some tastes that you taste or have tasted on a regular basis. This could be things that are salty, bitter, sweet or sour - like salty soup or sweet candy or spicy like chili powder. Write down some of your own examples:

Now state some tastes without adding any interpretations, judgements or feelings. Do this by writing a sentence about what you have tasted. Examples:

I can taste the bitterness of rat root in this tea.

I taste how salty the soup is.

I have tasted how sweet this dessert is.

Write your own in the space provided below:

Touch

Communicating about the sense of touch may be a little confusing because it can be misunderstood with communicating about emotions. The difference between the two is that talking about the sense of touch involves qualities of objects, such as softness, hardness, warmth, coldness, smoothness, roughness or even "itchiness". Whereas, talking about feelings involves sensations from within you, such as angry, sad, happy, tired, etc. Some examples of what we feel by way of our sense of touch are: the coldness of winter air, the softness of a kitten's fur, the stickiness of cookie or bread dough, the wetness of water, etc. Write down some of your own examples:

_____

_____

_____

Now state some sentences about using your sense of touch without adding any judgements, interpretations or feelings. Examples:

I feel the coldness of this ice cream.

I feel how itchy these wool socks feel.

I feel the roughness of this sand paper.

Write your own examples in the space provided:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

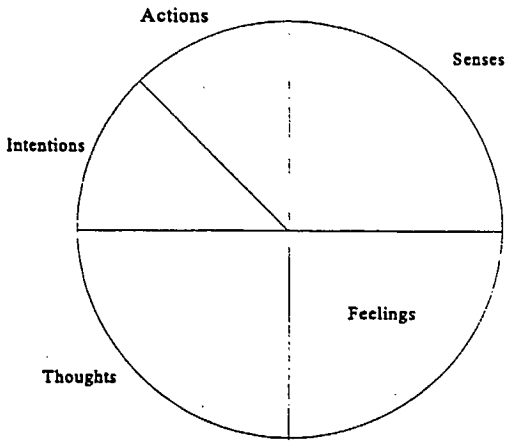
How was this exercise for you? Do you understand what it means now to pay attention to only sensory information without adding interpretations or conclusions or how we feel about the sensory information? For instance, if I had written "I like the coldness of this ice cream", this would have included a judgement so it would not be a pure statement about sensory information. Instead it would fit more in the "Thoughts" section of the Awareness Wheel. Or if I would have written "I am glad that we had ice cream today", then this would have been a "feeling" statement

and would fit in the "Feelings" section (right bottom corner) of the Awareness Wheel. But we will look more at this in the next section of this workbook.

"Feel Mother Earth awaken with new life in the Spring. Hear the Wind Spirits singing the songs of change. See how birds fly as one with others. Wonder Why Brother Wolf can run so long. Ask why Bear's tail is short. Look to see why Beetle's wings are transparent. Practice learning as Trees practice growing. Cry with the Clouds' tears. Laugh with the Flowers' dance of life. Reach for the Stars. Splash through the Puddles. Remember the Mishomis (Grandfathers)."

- Blackwolf Robert Jones, Ojibway and Gina Jones, Mohawk

Becoming Aware of Information From Feelings



In the bottom right corner of the Awareness Wheel, the information that is looked at is feelings or our emotional responses to other information, usually what we take in through our senses. It is likely that you have ignored "feeling" information for much of your life - this happens often when people learn that it is not safe to express them. The exercises which follow will help you to explore, in a safe way, the information that is available to you when you are aware of your feelings.

Identifying feelings

Often people who are used to ignoring their feelings find it hard to single out any emotion because they may be feeling several emotions at once. So if anyone asks how they're doing, they say "fine" or "lousy" but this doesn't really say much. Or they might pretend to be confident when they are actually quite afraid. The first step in identifying feelings is to recognize when we are "pretending" about what kind of energy is going on inside of us.

Exercise:

Write down some examples of when you pretended or denied what you were feeling.

Some examples might help you to remember:

- Last week, Joe said he'd meet me down at the weight room to spot me for lifting weights and he didn't show. I told myself it didn't matter, that it wasn't important. But it was.
- The other day, I told a buddy that I was looking forward to some visitors coming this weekend but, really, that's not true because nobody's coming to see me.

What are some of your own examples?

Quite often we pretend or lie about what's going on inside of us because we are afraid of being rejected. We fear that if people really knew us, then they wouldn't want anything to do with us - that they would abandon or leave us. It's true, this does happen but it may be better to find this out about people sooner rather than later, after you've invested a lot of time and effort trying to build a friendship with them.

If you're interested in trying to identify feelings, the main step is to focus on them. You will find it easier to pay attention to your feelings if there are no other noises or distractions (especially like a TV program going on or other people talking).

Exercise:

Find yourself a safe and quiet place. In the privacy of your own space, lie down.
Close your eyes ... relax ....
For the next few minutes, tune out everything except whatever emotions come to you.
Then pay attention to your breathing ... feel your chest rise as you take a breath in, then feel it fall as you let your breath out ... feel the breath as it moves in and out of your nose or mouth ...
Do this several times ...
Then focus on every part of your body, starting with your feet. Think about what they are feeling. Are they itchy, cold, stiff ? ... Stretch them and see if they feel differently ...
Then move on to the rest of your legs ... but remember to take your time. Don't hurry ... Take at least one minute to pay attention to each part of your body.
Notice different feelings about different parts of your body ... you may find that some parts may carry more tension than others ...
Continue this exercise until you reach the top of your head ...
Then focus on your overall feeling.
Do you feel differently than when you started this exercise?

Doing this exercise every day can help you to connect with your feelings, especially if they have been buried deep inside of you for a long time. Be patient with yourself. Little by little, your emotions will start to surface.

Putting a Name to Feelings

To make this step easier, remember that there are only four basic feelings: glad, sad, mad and scared. Also, your body can give you clues as to which one of these four feelings seems right to you for any situation. For instance, if you feel high energy, with your heart pounding and most of your body feeling tight and your fists are closed, you are probably mad. Or if you have low energy, your eyes look down most of the time and your body is slouching a lot, then you are probably sad. If you still don't know, guess one of the four and then see if it seems right.

The next step is to figure out "how much" of any one feeling that is going on for you. For instance, there is a big difference between feeling irritated and feeling hateful. There is a broad range for each of the four feelings and it's important to be able to "measure" the amount you are feeling. The following list can help you to do this:

Glad	**Sad**	**Mad**	**Scared**
Excited	Depressed	Resentful	Tense
Comfortable	Helpless	Frustrated	Insecure
Calm	Regretful	Annoyed	Afraid
Pleased	Disappointed	Furious	Concerned
Overjoyed	Tired	Jealous	Restless
Confident	Lonely	Offended	Terrified
Happy	Discouraged	Bitter	Nervous
Relieved	Hurt	Angry	Confused
Fortunate	Guilty	Disgusted	Panicky
Cheerful	Bored	Irritated	Shocked
Encouraged	Ashamed	Snarly	Uncertain
Loving	Embarrassed	Enraged	Haunted
Fulfilled	Unhappy	Hateful	Distrustful
Passionate	Gloomy	Aggravated	Shy

Exercise:

Pick as many emotions from the list above (or any others you've thought of) and think about and describe a time when you felt each of those feelings. Use the space below. Some examples have been provided to help you get started.

Feeling	**Example**
excited	The day my son was born.
embarrassed	When my mom saw me in court.
hateful	When I was punished in residential school for speaking my Aboriginal language.
terrified	When I was in a car accident and the car flipped.
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
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_____	_____
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_____	_____

Expressing Positive Feelings

If you lived with a lot of criticism growing up, expressing positive feelings may be very difficult for you. You might also tend to criticize others a lot of the time, simply because it feels familiar to you. Or you might feel some distrust towards people who do say positive things to you because others have confused you by saying one thing, then doing another. Other people you know may feel the same way - so what feels safe is to only say the negative or nothing at all. This may very well be a reality for you and how you interact with most of the people you see in the "system". However, there are probably a few people who you can be yourself with. Maybe it's your partner, an Elder or a family member (for instance, a brother or a sister). Whoever it is you feel safe with. It's important that you are able to be sincere with them about positive feelings. This will help to strengthen your relationship with them.

Exercise:

Make an effort to find things that you like. Maybe there are certain kinds of books that appeal to you. Or maybe it is something in nature or maybe there is something you appreciate about another person's behaviour or appearance. Try finding ten things you like or feel positive about, and write them down in the space below.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

Now it's time to practice becoming aware of the connection between things you like and positive feelings, using what you know about the Awareness Wheel. Let's think back to some of the statements you made about sensory information. What things did you see, hear, smell, taste and touch that you had positive feelings about?

Exercise:

Using "I" statements, write down some sentences about things you saw, heard, smelled, tasted, or touched and you had positive feelings about. It is important to learn to use "I" statements rather than "you" statements. When we use "I" statements, we take ownership of our feelings. "You" statements can be taken as blaming statements. "You" statements are a way of putting our feelings onto other people.

For this exercise, don't add interpretations, opinions, conclusions, intentions or actions. You will do this at another time.

Examples:

I see a smile on my daughter's face and I feel happy.
When I hear the beat of a drum, I feel proud.
When I smell coffee, I feel comfortable.
When I used to taste the "wild" taste of moose meat, I felt content.
When I felt the softness of my pet dog's fur, I felt calm.

Now it's your turn:

How was this exercise for you? If this was difficult for you and you could write down only a few examples, that's okay. Trying something new is hard work and sometimes it takes a while before you feel comfortable doing it. Come back to this exercise in two or three days and see if you can write more.

If you feel ready and if you have some privacy, say some of these examples out loud. If you have a mirror, say them in front of the mirror. If there is someone you trust (like a partner or an Elder) ask them if they will listen to you, so you can practice saying them to another person.

Exercise:
When you start to feel comfortable saying positive feelings in front of trusted others, try telling them something you see or sense about them that you feel positive about. You may want to practice writing some of these down first.

Examples:

When I see a smile on your face, I feel happy.
When I hear your gentle voice, I feel calm.

Now it's your turn.

When the time is right, try saying these directly to the people you feel these things about. Ask them first if they can just listen to what you have to say, because you want to practice for a little while first. Then, when you're both ready, they can respond if they want to. Maybe all they need to say in response is something like "That's nice" or "I'm glad for you". Then see how this feedback feels for you. And leave it at that for the time being. Later on, we'll look at more involved conversation. For now, it's good practice to absorb some healthy and positive feelings and feedback.

"Praise, flattery, exaggerated manners, and fine, high-sounding words were no part of Lakota politeness. Excessive manners were put down as insincere, and the constant talker was considered rude and thoughtless. Conversation was never begun at once, or in a hurried manner. No one was quick with a question, no matter how important, and no one was pressed for an answer. A pause giving time for thought was the truly courteous way of beginning and conducting a conversation."

- Chief Luther Standing Bear, Teton Sioux

"The greatest strength is gentleness."

- Iroquois Proverb

Expressing Feelings of Sadness, Anger and Fear

Feelings aren't really negative. They just are. What makes them seem negative is usually that they are somewhat painful or that we don't know how to deal with them in constructive ways. Because of the violent backgrounds many of us have come from, anger may be the most difficult emotion to express. We may fear that we'll lose control and physically hurt someone because of our deep-seated rage so we try to ignore angry feelings. Or we talk on a level of constant verbal abuse to keep people from getting close in the first place. Do you feel like a time bomb ticking away, waiting to explode? Or when you do express anger, do you do so in a way that is totally out of proportion to the situation?

Fear is another emotion we often try to deny. For instance, you may feel nervous in many situations (like when you're involved in a crime) but there's no way you'd admit it. It's more important to appear "cool" or confident. But we might also feel fear in other situations so familiar to us we don't recognize it. Examples of this might be when we fear that violence is about to happen or we might fear that someone we love will die. We may cope with this last kind of event by pretending it won't happen but then we are very unprepared to deal with the loss when it does occur.

By going through similar steps to what you have already used in working with the Awareness Wheel, you can learn to deal with strong feelings of anger, sadness and fear in more appropriate and less destructive ways.

Exercise:

Once again, think back to your work on sensory information. Were there sights, sounds, smells, tastes, and touches that brought up feelings of fear, anger or sadness? Try writing some examples, using "I" statements. Remember to not include interpretations, conclusions, intentions or actions for this exercise.

Examples:

When I see a finger pointing in my face, I feel angry.
When I hear the sound of a baby crying, I feel helpless.
When I smelled the odour of my hair burning, I felt panicky.
When I taste bland food, I feel disappointed.
When I feel the coldness of the water in the shower, I feel resentful.

Now it's your turn:

How was this exercise for you? Hopefully, it's easier to write out these painful feelings than to talk about them in front of others. Were you able to come up with some examples? Again, this is new and difficult work, so be easy on yourself. Come back to this exercise after you've had some time to think it over some more.

If you're ready and you're in a safe and private place, try saying this last group of feeling statements out loud. If you have a mirror, say them in front of the mirror. Or if you have someone you trust (like a partner or an Elder), ask them if you can practice saying statements that express painful feelings in front of them.

Exercise:
When you start to feel comfortable saying painful feelings in front of trusted others, try telling them something you see or sense about them that brings up painful feelings for you. You may want to practice writing some of these down first.

Examples:

When I see you cry, I feel uncomfortable.
When I hear your voice get louder, I feel scared.
When I smell your garlic breath, I feel offended.

What are some examples you can think of?:

When the time is right, try saying these to the people you feel these things about. Ask them first if they can just listen to what you have to say, that you want to practice for a little while first. Then when you're both ready, they can respond if they want to. Maybe all they need to say in response is something like "I'm glad you told me". Then see how that feels for you. And leave it at that for the time being. Later on, we'll be looking at more involved conversation. For now, it's enough to absorb the hard work you've done so far.

At the close of this section on "Awareness of Feeling Information", it's important to notice the effectiveness of using "I" statements in expressing both positive and negative feelings. The result is that the message is communicated in a clear and responsible way. On the other hand, "you" statements come across as blaming and usually provoke a defensive response.

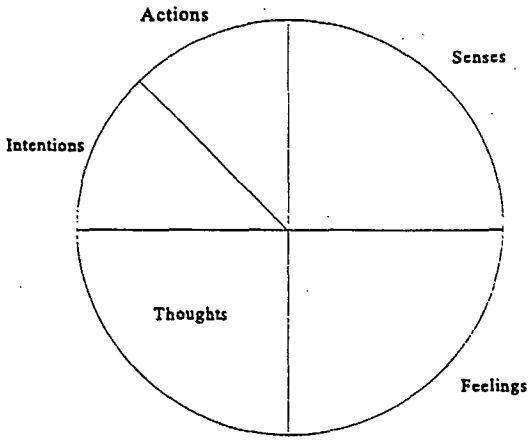
We will return to ways of expressing positive and negative feelings later, once we have taken a look at how thoughts can influence our feelings. This is because sometimes our first response to sensory information is a thought rather than a feeling. Also, our feelings about a situation may change once we've thought about the situation for awhile. Other times, our feelings influence our thoughts - the relationship between the two is flexible. You will see that when we add "thought" information to our awareness, communication becomes more complex and more likely to break down. But it is also where we are most likely to think about solutions. With this in mind, we will move on to the next section.

"It is your responsibility - your obligation - to your Self and the Spirit World, to become aware of all that is you."

"Anger, resentment, guilt and remorse freeze the flower in you and prevent it from blossoming".

- Blackwolf Robert Jones (Ojibway) and Gina Jones (Mohawk)

Becoming Aware of Information From Thoughts



In the Awareness Wheel tool, thoughts make up the bottom left corner of the picture. When we think, we are basically assigning meaning to sensory and/or feeling and/or other thought information. Meanings we assign to information often tell us about the quality of things, by our own standards, and this can lead to judgements - what we like and don't like. Because we all have different likes and dislikes and we all have different life experiences, the meanings we assign to things are often different than what others would give to the same information. This leads to differences of opinion and interpretation. And misunderstanding when we communicate. The good news is that there are actions and changes in attitudes we can take which can get us back on track to understanding each other and respecting our differences.

Let's take a look at some examples of interpretations, judgements and opinions that do not mention the sensory information that is being talked about.

Examples:

I think that you are a "traditional" Indian.
I think that you are talking about me.
I think of my grandfather's teachings.
I think of my grandmother picking them.
I think that it must be cold outside.

If somebody said these statements to you, you might wonder what they are talking about because some of the information is missing. You may then jump to some conclusions of your own and create further misunderstanding. Later on, we'll explore different ways of responding to incomplete statements as part of problem solving (intentions and actions). Or perhaps you've already thought of a constructive way to respond to this kind of situation - like asking, "What makes you think that?"

Now, let's look at some examples of interpretations, judgements, and opinions which refer to the sensory information that brought on the thought. (Keep in mind that some of the examples will reflect more "factual" information than others.)

Examples:

I see your long braid of hair and I think that you are a "traditional" Indian.
I hear your voice whisper and I think that you are talking about me.
I smell sweet grass burning and I think of my grandfather's teachings.
I taste the sweetness of the berries and I think of my grandmother picking them.
I feel the coldness of your hands and I think that it must be cold outside.

Do you notice a difference in how you would respond to the speaker if you heard these statements? The idea is that the communication is more clear and doesn't leave the listener wondering so much. Although, this doesn't necessarily mean that the speaker's assumptions or thoughts are correct - they are just more clear.

What are some examples of sensory information / thought statements that you can think of? Some space is provided for you below. Remember to not include feelings in these sentences.

What you may notice is that thoughts about sensory information often involve classifying information. Also when thoughts (and not feelings) are our first response, then the results are statements which may be very different from what other people would provide.

Let's take a look now at some examples of interpretations, judgements and opinions that also include feelings but are missing the sensory information.

Examples:

I thought you were mad at me.
I think you must be sad.
I wondered if you were feeling guilty about something.

Compare these examples with the added sensory information:

When I saw your eyes flashing with anger, I thought you were mad at me.
When I hear you singing "the blues", I think you must be sad.
When I smelled the flowers you bought me, I wondered if you were feeling guilty about something.

What differences in the messages do you notice? Which kind of interpretation would you rather respond to? Even though the conclusions that the speaker came to may or may not be agreed upon by the listener, the communication is at least fairly clear. The listener might answer by correcting the speaker's conclusion or assumption to try to clear up the misunderstanding. For instance, he or she could respond to the first example by saying, "No, I'm not mad at you, I'm mad at someone else."

It's also important to remember the four Aboriginal values of kindness, sharing, respect and honesty while we are expressing our thoughts (in combination with feeling and sensory information). This is partly done by using "I" statements (ie. by owning and sharing our thoughts and feelings rather than blaming others). But one of life's greatest challenges may be learning to speak honestly while respecting the other person, leaving them with their dignity intact.

Can you think of some situations where you might improve the communication if you provided more information (for example, sensory, feelings and thoughts)? How would you say what you need to say in a way that takes into account the values of kindness, sharing, respect and honesty?

Here are a few examples to start you on your way:

When I saw your eyes flashing with anger, I felt scared because I thought you were mad at me.

When you ask me to do you favours every time you phone, I feel like I can't trust you because I think you are using me.

When I noticed that you were two hours late and didn't phone, I was worried about you because I thought you were in an accident.

Now it's your turn (remember to use "I" statements):

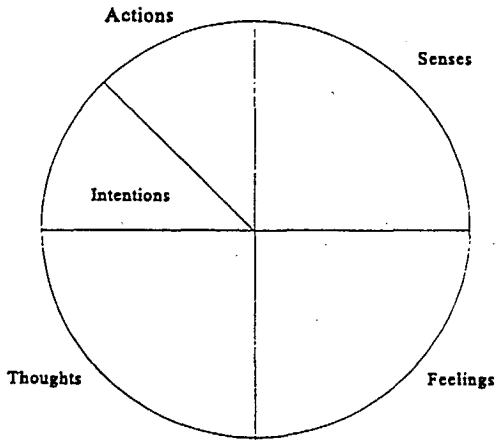
How was this exercise for you? How was this section for you? Are the exercises becoming more familiar to you because of the work you have done before? If you had trouble thinking up more than two or three examples for each exercise, you are probably not alone. Take your time and come back to the exercise after a few days, when you've had a chance to process this different way of thinking and/or communicating.

Of course, there are many situations where simply stating your feelings and thoughts doesn't solve the misunderstanding. Most of the examples given above show a way to communicate to avoid misunderstandings in the first place. But what happens when you are so upset that you don't trust yourself to say much because you fear you will explode? What do you do then? You may have to leave the situation to cool off for awhile. While you are cooling off, you have the time to work out a strategy, that is, to sort out what you want from the situation, and to decide if you can accept whatever happens as a result of the action you decide to take.

We will learn more about strategy in the next section, the one dealing with Intentions. In the mean time, congratulate yourself for your hard work to this point.

> *"In my opinion, it was chiefly owing to their deep contemplation in their silent retreats in the days of their youth that the old Indian orators acquired the habit of carefully arranging their thoughts. They listened to the warbling of birds and noted the grandeur and the beauties of the forest. The majestic clouds - which appear like mountains of granite floating in the air - the golden tints of a summer evening sky, and all the changes of nature, possessed a mysterious significance. All this combined to furnish ample matter for reflection to the contemplating youth."*
>
> - Francis Assikinack (Blackbird), Ottawa

Becoming Aware of Information From Intentions



In this lower half of the upper left section of the Awareness Wheel tool, we are dealing with what we want to do about or gain from a situation. This might include making a list of what we stand to gain or lose from making a certain decision. Or it might mean we need to explore what our wishes and our expectations are of others and of situations. Knowing and stating our wishes are important ways to move forward in our healing because many of our people have lost hope as a result of forgetting how to wish. Wishing and daydreaming about how we would like to see our future are wonderful gifts that can help us to do two things: to escape some pain for a short time when it's healthy to do so and to lead us to do what is right for our selves.

In fact, the main purpose of our intentions is to come up with a plan for a communication problem we've become aware of. Sometimes, when we're beginning to learn healthy communication skills, the plan we need to come up with is to state our feelings (using "I" statements) about a situation that is bothering us. Let's take a look at a few of these kinds of common communication problems.

Example 1

A few days ago, I talked with Judy on the phone and we agreed that she would come to the Institution for a couple of hours to visit on the weekend. She said she would be here at about 2:00 or 2:30 on Sunday afternoon but she never showed up. This is the third time she's done this now and I feel angry about it. The last two times it happened, I never said much about it because I thought she'd never talk to me again if I said anything that would upset her. Well, now I'm getting tired of getting my hopes up for nothing and I really don't care if we don't talk again. I guess I see that she's not much of a friend anyway. After thinking about this for a while now I see that there are three things I can do: 1. Never call her again. 2. Call her and give her a piece of my mind. Or, 3. Try to talk to her about how I feel for a change but in a way that isn't really mean. Right now, option number 3 looks to be about the best. I'm not quite sure how to do that yet but I know how I'm going to start my conversation with her. I'm going to say, "I'm upset that you didn't show up." And I know when a good time is to call her - all I have to do is do it.

We can take this example through all of the sections of the Awareness Wheel to see how it flows.

1. Senses:
   The speaker saw that Judy did not keep her commitment to visit at the Institution on Sunday afternoon.
2. Feelings:
   The speaker was excited about the idea of seeing her friend, Judy, but was disappointed (her hopes were shot down) and angry that Judy never showed up.
3. Thoughts:
   The speaker thought about the last two times this same event happened and what her response was to those events and why she responded in that way. She also evaluates her friendship with Judy and decides she's okay with letting go of the relationship.

4. Intentions:

   The speaker thinks up some possible solutions to the problem or ways she will get what she wants from the situation. She has decided she wants to say how she feels rather than hold on to a ho-hum friendship. She has even decided on the words she wants to use and has planned a convenient time for both of them to talk. She has also given herself a "pep" talk to encourage herself to take action.

5. Actions:

   As of yet, there has been no action. When the speaker actually makes the call and says what she wants to say then she will have taken action.

For the first time, we have seen the major portion of the Awareness Wheel tool in action. All of the pieces of information for this particular communication problem are in the speaker's awareness up to the point of "doing what she needs to do". We have also seen how being aware of certain pieces of information has helped her to create, through planning, a solution that seems right for her. Do you have a better understanding now of how the Awareness Wheel works?

Here's another example to help you see how it works for other situations.

Example 2

Henry knew he had a problem because he'd been in this situation many times before and it never seemed to get better. He'd been on parole for three months now and was trying hard to stay out of trouble.

He was working at the same job the last two months but lately his supervisor, Bill, was really leaning heavy on him. Henry made a mental note of all his supervisor's behaviours that were difficult for him to deal with: yelling at him, calling him a lazy S.O.B. and pointing his finger in his face. Each time this happened, Henry felt so much anger, he thought he was going to explode. He didn't understand why Bill was so angry with him because he was doing his job the best way he knew how. All he knew for sure was he wanted to punch the supervisor out but he became so afraid of doing this and the likely result of going back to jail, that all he could do was turn around, walk away and try to cool off in a private place. But this never changed the situation - in fact, Bill seemed to

be "in his face" more than ever. And after each outburst, Henry would feel more depressed because he felt like a wimp for not standing up for himself. He knew he had to do something soon because he couldn't take much more of this. He wanted to face his fear of confronting his supervisor in a way that wouldn't get him into trouble.

After a lot of thinking, he decided the next time Bill started acting this way towards him, he would tell him how he was feeling about the way Bill was leaning on him. If this didn't change the situation, he would quit. Even though he needed the money, Henry knew he would rather be unemployed than back in jail. Besides, he'd been keeping his ears open for other job opportunities and thought there was a good chance of getting something else soon. So, he practised how and what he was going to say to his supervisor. In front of a mirror, and in a calm voice he practised saying, "When you yell at me, telling me I'm a lazy S.O.B., and point your finger in my face, I feel angry and I think you are mad. And I don't even know what you are mad about. So I will go for a walk to cool off." Then he told himself he would tell his supervisor this, as calmly as possible, the next time he started yelling at him, which would probably be any day now. In the mean time, he would spend most of his spare time making contacts for other work.

Now let's walk this example through the Awareness Wheel tool.

1. Senses:
   Henry heard his supervisor, Bill, raising his voice in anger (yelling) at him, calling him names and he saw Bill pointing his finger in his face.
2. Feelings:
   Henry felt angry, scared and depressed.
3. Thoughts:
   Henry thought about the many times this had happened before and how he reacted to it in the past. He thought about how he'd wanted to punch his supervisor - and how dangerous this was for him because he'd end up back in jail if he did - but that he'd walked away instead. He also wondered why Bill was doing this because Henry was trying his best to do a good job. He also thought about how just walking away wasn't a solution because Bill just kept coming at him and more often. And Henry realized he wasn't standing up for himself.

4. Intentions:

   Henry wanted to confront his supervisor in a way that wouldn't get him into trouble because he wanted Bill to lay off on his angry behaviour towards him. He made plans to confront Bill in a way that was assertive and not aggressive in the hopes that Bill would not be so aggressive towards him. Henry was also making plans to look for another job in case Bill's role of "playing the heavy" with him did not change.

5. Actions:

   Henry has not yet acted - when he actually tells Bill what he is feeling and thinking, then he will have taken action. He may take further action by finding another job.

What have you learned from going through this example?

Do you understand how Henry made use of many different kinds of information? Do you think you could apply the skills Henry used to situations in your own life? Later, you will get a chance to do this. For now, it is important that you try to find any parts of the processing of information that you are not clear about. Go through these two examples again if you are confused about something. If you think you have a good understanding of being aware of all of the different kinds of information that are necessary for problem solving in communication, then you may want to take a break at this time. Give the learning a chance to settle in. And congratulate yourself for working so hard.

"No one needs help to get into trouble."

- Maori Proverb

"Try to understand water, minerals, vegetation, animal behaviour, and then it is easy to understand human behaviour."

- George Goodstriker, Blackfoot Elder, Canada

There is one more example below to help you understand how using the Awareness Wheel can help you learn to solve problems.

Example 3

James noticed (saw) that he seemed to be more fidgety and restless than usual. He couldn't seem to sit still for any length of time. And he couldn't concentrate long enough to read a whole page in his book, even though it was a science fiction novel, the kind he liked best. He wondered why this was happening. He wasn't scheduled for a parole hearing for a few months yet so he knew that wasn't what was making him nervous. Then he realized, "Yeah, I'm feeling nervous." So he laid down on his bed and tried to relax by doing deep breathing exercises. After a while, he noticed another feeling - he felt kind of "down" but that didn't quite describe it either. He continued with the deep breathing exercises and after another few minutes, a word "popped" into his head - lonely. He didn't want to believe that because he'd always felt kind of proud of how he'd always made it on his own. He couldn't think of many times where he actually needed people. In fact, he'd learned a long time ago that they weren't reliable. People just seemed to be the causes of problems and if he stayed on his own, then he was usually able to stay out of trouble. He'd gotten used to spending his spare time working out in the gym and reading. But now that he thought about it, these two activities weren't as satisfying as they used to be. James thought about it for a while and wondered if he shouldn't look for another hobby or activity but there wasn't a whole lot going on at the Institution. Except for some team sports and the Aboriginal Brotherhood. But those activities meant dealing

with and talking with groups of inmates - and he did enough of that in the Programs that were scheduled during the day. James realized he was stuck in a rut and wondered what he could do about it.

A couple of days later, after thinking about his problem some more, he decided to go to a Brotherhood meeting, even though he was very nervous about it. He thought if he stayed at the back of the room he could leave if he "couldn't handle" it. But while he was there, one of the speakers talked about how the Institution was opening up opportunities for an Aboriginal Elder to talk one on one with inmates. This was happening because many inmates who belonged to the Brotherhood were interested in it. James felt kind of excited about the idea, thinking "Hey, that's something I think I could do. Talking to just one person, instead of in a group, sounds okay. And an Elder is someone I think I could start to talk to." He left the meeting feeling pretty good and with his hopes up. He knew now that he had the start of a plan. He had let the Brotherhood know that he wanted in on this new program. For the next week, he thought about what he could say to the Elder so that he'd be prepared when his turn came up. He knew he wanted to say something to the Elder about loneliness and his lack of trust in people. What he liked best about the idea was that it felt safe to be able to talk with the Elder. And something inside him told him learning about spirituality seemed like a good thing to do too. He took some time to sit back and enjoy the good things that seemed to be coming from taking the risk of going to the meeting. Now all he had to do was make sure he kept his commitment to himself to talk to the Elder. And he thought he just might go to another Brotherhood meeting.

Let's take a look at how this example fits into the sections of the Awareness Wheel:

1. Senses:
   James saw his own fidgety behaviour - how he couldn't sit still or concentrate.
2. Thoughts:
   This told him something wasn't quite right and he wondered what could be causing these fidgety behaviours.
3. Feelings:
   After thinking about his behaviours (what his senses were telling him), he realized firstly that he was feeling nervous.

2. Thoughts:
   Then he thinks of a way to try to calm down - deep breathing exercises.
3. Feelings:
   The exercises bring up another feeling - loneliness.
2. Thoughts:
   James has a hard time believing that he feels lonely. He thinks about how he has made it on his own, how he was convinced that he didn't need people. And how he has filled his spare time with activities of working out and reading.

   What are some of James' other thoughts?

4. Intentions:
   After accepting the possibility that he might be lonely, James has a partial plan to try to relieve some of these uncomfortable feelings by deciding to go to an Aboriginal Brotherhood meeting. He isn't sure that this is a solution but tries it anyway, with the idea of protecting himself from more uncomfortable feelings by planning an "easy" exit if he starts to feel too scared. While he is there, he receives new information.
2. Thoughts:
   James starts thinking about/processing this new information (ie. the opportunity to talk with an Elder) and makes an interpretation that it is something he can accept as part of a possible solution.
4. Intentions:
   James makes the necessary arrangements to start to talk to an Elder about loneliness and trusting people as he has decided that these are a necessary part of his plan (or want) to

reduce the amount of loneliness he feels. He has decided that he wants to interact and communicate more with people, even if he starts slowly, one on one. He also includes learning about spirituality as part of his plan. Then he considers going back to another Brotherhood meeting.

3. Feelings:

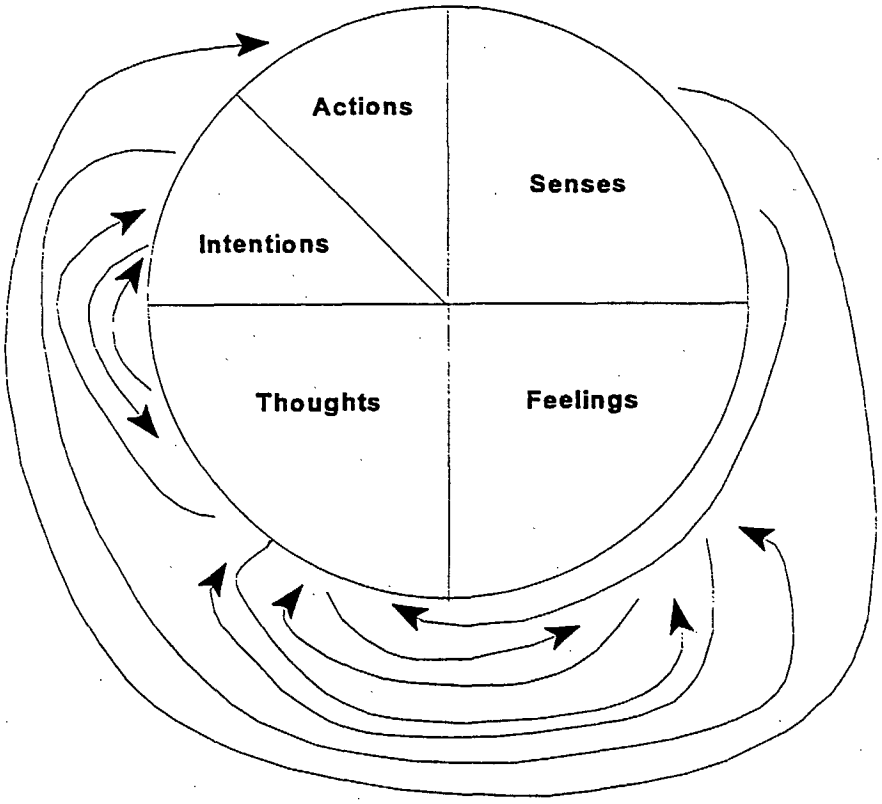
   James feels happy that he took a healthy risk and it seems to have paid off.

5. Actions:

   James did take the action of going to the Brotherhood meeting. However, his more well-intentioned action of talking with the Elder has not yet been completed.

How was this example for you? No doubt you noticed that this situation was more complicated than the first two examples. James' problem and its solution were harder to identify. And the flow from one kind of information to another was not a direct path from senses to actions. Many pieces of information influenced each other in a back and forth motion. This happens a lot in real life. If you were able to follow the order of information processing that was going on in this example, congratulate yourself. If you tried to follow the order of what was happening, congratulate yourself. You may want to go over this example again to get a better "handle" on it.

The diagram on the next page is meant to help you follow the way that James dealt with the information that he became aware of. It also shows the back and forth motion of the different kinds of information influencing each other.



What does this diagram tell you about communication?

If it confused you, you are probably not alone. The intention was to show you that successful communication takes several steps and it takes a commitment. Also, that it's okay to not be able to find a solution right away or in a set or rigid way. Different problems need different solutions. It's all part of the journey of finding our own path in life.

Are you ready to move on? The next section briefly covers the awareness that comes from taking action and how all the parts of the Awareness Wheel or the whole of communication come together.

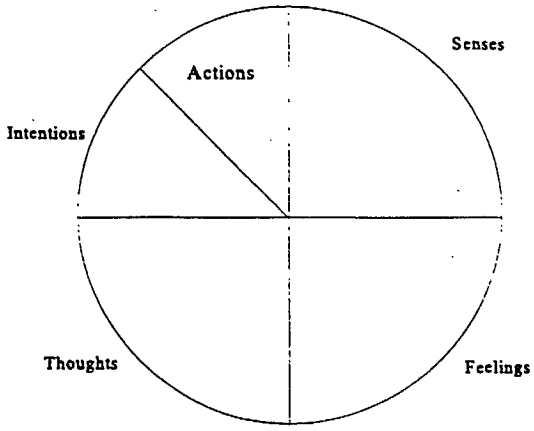
"The water feeds the island and the island feeds the people."

- Hawaiian Elder

"A long time ago the Creator came to Turtle Island and said to the Red People, 'You will be the keepers of the Mother Earth. Among you I will give the wisdom about Nature, about the inter-connectedness of all things, about balance and about living in harmony. You Red people will see the secrets of Nature. You will live in hardship and the blessing of this is you will stay close to the Creator. The day will come when you will need to share the secrets with other people of the Earth because they will stray from their spiritual ways. The time to start sharing is today."

- Don Coyhis, Mohican Writer, American Indian

Becoming Aware of the Information That Comes From Taking Action



The last segment (the top half of the upper left corner) of the Awareness Wheel has its focus on taking action. This means following through on the plans or intentions that were made, based on the information that was available from senses, feelings, thoughts, wants and wishes. By this time we have considered the "who, what, when, where and why" of the situation. When all of these pieces of the "puzzle" are brought together by the action taken, then we know that the action is complete.

Taking action also means that we are giving the person (or people) we are communicating with some information to process. Then they will be sensing, feeling, thinking, intending and acting on the information. Their response (just like yours) will depend on how aware they are of all the kinds of information processing that is going on for them.

Sometimes what results from taking action is that the situation that we want to happen, does happen. Other times, we need to take the information from the other person's response into consideration and try to come up with another intention or alternative. If we keep in mind that we may need a Plan B when we are planning our action (like in Henry's case - finding another job), then we'll be able to respond to whatever the other person says or does in a better way. What basically happens is that the whole process of using the Awareness Wheel starts all over again because we will need to process the other person's response, that is, take in what we see and hear, and what our feelings and thoughts are telling us.

Let's use the examples from the last section to take a closer look at what we can learn from taking action:

Example 1

> The speaker (Sue) phones Judy at the time she knew would be good for both of them and tells her she is upset that Judy didn't show up on Sunday afternoon and that she thinks if Judy can't keep her commitments or leave a message that she can't make it then she isn't much of a friend. She leaves the conversation at that. Then she takes a deep breath, feeling good that she found the courage to say her feelings and thoughts to Judy in a way that was clear, honest and non-threatening to Judy. Sue also knows the ball is now in Judy's court - she realizes Judy now has new information (from Sue) to process and her response may or may not be verbal. Judy may hang up. Sue may never hear from Judy and she is prepared for that.

What did Sue learn from taking action?

Did you understand that when Sue said what she did, she felt good about how she handled the situation? Also, that she understood Judy now had some information to process?

Let's see how this works for example #2:

Example 2

> Henry finds himself being put down once again by Bill the next day at work. Henry tells him in a controlled voice, his feelings and thoughts about being yelled at, called names and having a finger pointing in his face. Then he walks away. He feels good that he was able to speak first before walking away. He also knows that Bill is now processing some new information and waits to see what his response will be, especially to see if Bill "lightens up" on him. If not, Henry knows what his next action will be (for instance, seriously looking for another job).

Do you understand what the benefits are to Henry now that he has kept his commitment to take action? What are they?

Try to imagine the scene of taking action for James. Write it out in the space below:

Example 3

Are you clear now on how the Awareness Wheel works?

In the following pages you will get a chance to apply the Awareness Wheel tool to situations in your own life. There will also be some information for you on how to solve problems and some ways of dealing with common communication problems. Congratulations for making the effort to get this far into this chapter on Communication Skills.

"An unpleasing truth is better than a pleasing falsehood."

- Swahili Proverb

"Look behind you. See your sons and your daughters. They are your future. Look farther and see your sons' and daughters' children and their children's' children even unto the seventh generation. That's the way we were taught. Think about it - you yourself are a seventh generation."

- Leon Shenandoah, Onondagan Elder, American Indian

Exercises:

Think of a situation in your life that was causing you some minor irritations in communicating with others. How did you deal with it then? Chances are you probably were not aware of all the kinds of information that were needed to communicate effectively. Write down your situation and how you dealt with it in the space below:

Now take it through the Awareness Wheel and see if you recognize all the pieces of information that could have been available to you if you had known what to look for.

1. Senses:

2. Thoughts/Feelings (whatever was your first response to the sensory information):

3. Feelings/Thoughts (whatever was the next response):

4. Intentions (Wants, Wishes, Plans):

5. Actions:

How would you change your intentions and actions now that you are more aware of the different kinds of information which can help you to solve problems in communication?

Intentions:

Actions:

Now try this same exercise with a communication problem that is more pressing for you to try to solve. What is the situation? How have you tried to deal with it before now? Write this down in the space below:

Now take it through the Awareness Wheel and see if you recognize all of the pieces of information available to help you solve the problem.

1. Senses:

2. Feelings/Thoughts (whatever was your first response to the sensory information):

3. Thoughts/Feelings (whatever was your next response):

4. Intentions (Wants, Wishes, Plans):

5. Actions:

Has this helped you to see options that weren't available when you dealt with this situation before? What has changed? What didn't you see before?

Are there any other situations in your life that you want to revisit by way of the Awareness Wheel? If so, there is space provided for you below:

1. Senses:

2. Feelings/Thoughts:

3. Thoughts/Feelings:

4. Intentions:

5. Actions:

Common Challenges in Communication

Making Conversation

If you grew up in a place where your emotional needs were not met (such as in a home with alcoholic or addicted parents, or in residential school), making conversation may be extremely difficult for you. Remaining alone seems much safer and easier because you fear further rejection and abandonment. However, by choosing the option of saying nothing, people stay stuck in a rut, a thinking rut, rather than grow into the lovable people we are meant to be.

What you have learned from the Awareness Wheel is that we are dealing with thought, intention and action kinds of information in learning how to make conversation. For instance, you may want to consider that the risk of rejection is worth it because one possible outcome of reaching out is meaningful contact with others. When this happens, we move and progress on our journey.

Here are some helpful hints for practising the skill of making conversation:

A. Starting conversations:

There are basically three subjects to start a conversation with - yourself, the other person and the situation. Usually, people respond better to comments or questions directed to themselves or the activity you are both involved in. Sometimes, it helps if you share your own opinion about the situation and then ask what they think.

Here are some examples:

I'm looking forward to hearing this guest speaker. Have you been involved with the Brotherhood long?

I'm enjoying watching this hockey game. Are there other sports that you like?

Exercise:

Make a list of how you start conversations already. (Use the Awareness Wheel to develop your list.)

B. Keeping your conversations going: Being observant can really help to keep your conversations going. Ask yourself what you see about the person or what you hear about the way the person is talking (use the Awareness Wheel). For instance, what tone of voice is used? Or what kind of expression is on their face? Is there some jewellery they are wearing or books they are carrying that you are interested in? These are all pieces of information you may want to ask questions about. Also, it helps if you ask open questions, the kind where the person would answer the question by saying more than one or two words.

Here are some examples:

I notice that you are carrying a book about Aboriginal people. Where are you from?

Your tone of voice sounded excited when you were talking about your son. What's he like?

That earring you're wearing - I haven't seen anything like it before. Is there a story behind it?

Are there other ways that you can remember to keep conversations going? Try writing some down.

C. Pay attention to what the other person is interested in and remember that the next time you see the person. You may have heard information on that topic since you last saw the person and this can be a way of getting another conversation going.

D. Try to talk about specific things. Asking questions about the weather or other general topics can get boring.

E. Just another reminder to use "I" statements, to share your thoughts and feelings because this makes for clearer messages. Examples:

Instead of saying...	*Say ...*
It was fun.	I had fun.
That was boring.	I found that boring.
Aren't you a little early?	I'm not ready yet.

Making Assumptions

Probably the best way to prevent misunderstandings in communication is to check out the assumptions we make when we hear or see people expressing themselves. This can be done in several ways. Learning about the skills involved in Active Listening is one of those ways.

Active Listening (or listening carefully and participating in what the speaker is communicating):

Communication with others breaks down for many reasons. Some of them have to do with our listening habits. Like not listening (letting your mind wander) and being overly concerned about how others see us or what others think of us. Or sometimes, we "tune out" because of our attitudes. An example is when we stereotype or classify others by their race, age, or sex because of a previous negative experience with some other person of that race, age or sex or because we learned this kind of prejudice from a parent or other role model. To help overcome some of these barriers to effective communication, we can learn new, more productive habits. One of them is active listening.

Active listening involves many skills but it also involves an attitude change, that is, developing an open mind to what people have to say. If we think about the Aboriginal cultural values of kindness and respect as our guides for communicating and being in relationship with others, then making this attitude switch becomes a little easier. Keeping an open mind to what others have to say does not mean we need to stay and listen when others are being abusive. Or that we need to be a sounding board for every lonely person that we come in contact with. The values of kindness and respect that guide us also apply to our own well-being. We keep an open mind as much as

we have energy to listen and as much as the energy coming our way is positive. We treat ourselves with kindness and respect also. Keeping an open mind for communication means we never know who we will learn something from - we can't "judge" that until we start talking and communicating with them. The point is that many people have an interesting story to tell but we'll never know their story unless we are open to the possibility of hearing it.

"Be prepared at all times for the gifts of God and be ready always for new ones. For God is a thousand times more ready to give than we are to receive."

- Meister Eckhart, 14th Century

Benefits of Active Listening:

1. Helps you understand others - we can't be certain of the thoughts and feelings of others unless we check them out in some way. That's what active listening does. It helps you pay attention to signals which might tell something about their thoughts and feelings. However, signals may have many possible meanings, so checking out what you think (or assume) the signal means can help avoid misunderstandings from the start.

2. Helps keep your conversations going - active listening helps to minimize awkward silences because it helps to provide a supportive environment for others. It also helps you to focus on what others are saying so that you're not bothered by the distractions which often take away from or end conversations.

Active Listening Skills:

Active listening means not only do we listen carefully to the speaker's words but also that we pay attention to other "stuff" that might be communicated to us. Once again, we are referring to what we learned about in the Awareness Wheel. This includes the speaker's tone of voice, facial expressions and other kinds of body language. But it also involves encouraging the speaker to say more, especially by accepting and not judging what they have to say. When the speaker feels it is safe to continue and then opens up, we understand him or her better. And we can show our understanding by saying something back to the speaker that mirrors what we've understood.

The following is a five-step guideline for learning this skill.

1. Pay careful attention to the other person, listening for messages which seem to indirectly express emotions of any kind or which seem important in other ways. (Example "You told me you'd be here at 1:00 and here it is, 3:30!)

2. Ask yourself, "What is this person feeling?" or "What is this person saying?". Do the words seem the most important or are the emotions behind the words what need the most attention?

3. Briefly tell the other person how you'd answer one of the questions in Step 2. (Example: "You sound angry.") Remember not to judge or criticize their feelings. (Example: "You shouldn't be angry") The goal of active listening is to show the speaker you've heard their message. It's important not to tell others how they feel; just tell them what it seems like to you.

4. The other person will likely tell you that you are right and then say more on the subject. If your perception of what's going on for them is faulty, the other person will probably correct you. (Example: "No, I'm not angry. I was worried that something serious might have happened to you.")

5. If your original active listening proved not quite correct, you may want to try again, active listening to what they said in Step 4. (Example: "So my being late caused you some concern as to my well-being.") Or you might want to go back to Step 1 and wait for another opportunity.

Example of Active Listening:

Jack: I've been on hold 10 minutes.
Joe: [Active listening] You sound pretty frustrated.
Jack: Yeah, I feel like they've forgotten all about me.

Active Listening With Children:

Child: I don't feel like eating supper.
Parent: [Active listening] You sound sad.
Child: Yeah, I don't have no friends at school.
Parent: [Active listening] You probably feel lonely during recess and at lunch.
Child: After school, too. Today I invited Brent over here - and he told me no.
Parent: [Active listening] You sound disappointed.
Child: Yeah, and I feel like I'll never have any friends.
Parent: [Active listening] Like you'll be alone forever.
Child: That's right.

Exercise:

Once or twice a day for the next week, try some active listening of your own. Record a few short examples that worked for you:

Typical Challenges with Active Listening (common communication stoppers):

1. Not being able to identify feelings - usually because you have not had the exact same experience. By thinking about a similar experience, you can usually get in touch with similar emotions.

2. Focusing only on the words, while ignoring or minimizing the feelings behind them. Remember to acknowledge the feelings of others as this usually has a healing effect on them. Ignoring feelings tends to intensify them.

3. Repeating the other person's messages - this tends to annoy the speaker. Real active listening means that you need to add your own thoughts as to what you understand the speaker is feeling and the point he or she is trying to get across.

4. Offering criticism or advice - people telling you their problems don't want your judgement or your advice, they just want to be heard. We help people when we listen and share our pain.

Active Listening to Body Language - Three Steps to Checking out our Conclusions:

1. State the things you saw and heard that led you to your conclusion or your assumption.
2. State your conclusion - but do so in a way which is flexible rather than rigid. Let the other person know that they are the final judge of what is going on for them.
3. Ask if your conclusion was what they meant.

Example:

"I notice that you keep looking at your watch while we're talking and I get the impression you'd like me to go now. Is this what you're thinking?"

Or if you don't know what to make of their body language, tell them what you saw or heard and ask if they can explain or clarify things for you.

Example:

> "When I asked you how your AA meeting went, your face turned red. I'm interested in knowing why."

Exercise:

Once or twice a day for the next week, respectfully check out the conclusions you make about someone else's body language, using the 3-step formula given above. Record some of these situations, including the odd movements (like finger tapping, etc.) or other peculiar signal (like an increased tone of voice) which caught your attention:

What did you learn about asking other people if your conclusions were right? Did this help to avoid some misunderstandings? What else?

" For him, to sit or lie upon the ground is to be able to think more deeply and feel more keenly; he can see more clearly into the mysteries of life and come closer in kinship to the lives about him ... Kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky and water was a real and active principle ... The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard, he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too. So he kept his youth close to its softening influence."

- Chief Luther Standing Bear, Lakota

Asking for What You Need or Want

Many times we don't ask appropriately for what we need or want. Hinting at what we want doesn't often get the results we want - people aren't mind readers. Also, if we hint, people assume that it's not very important to us because if what we want is important to us then we would most likely just ask for it. Aggressively demanding that others give you what you want usually causes others to resist giving you what you want, or to give it to you in a grudging way or on a short-term basis. The best way to get what you want is to assertively ask for it. Here are some suggestions:

1. Figure out what you want - sometimes it's obvious what you want, but other times we need to "listen to our thoughts" or to pay attention to silent inner messages which tell us what we like and don't like. Also writing down our feelings helps us find out what we want.

2. Make requests - you might want to practice this beforehand, by writing it out first or ask someone who isn't directly involved. When you're ready, think in terms of the person you are asking. (For instance, do they have the time to help you right now?) Then, be direct - let them know exactly what you want and when. Also, in many situations, giving reasons why you want something (for example, sooner instead of later) will increase your chances of getting what you want. Finally, if you can show others how they might benefit from helping you, then they will most likely be more willing to help.

3. Invite people instead of isolating yourself. If inviting others is difficult for you, start with small requests (ask for an hour of their time instead of a whole evening) and practice sounding casual. Instead of making the request sound as if your life is on the line, present the invitation as a chance to have some fun.

   Example:

Instead of Saying ...	**Say ...**
You're probably busy, but... I've enjoyed meeting you and I thought maybe - if you don't mind - we could spend the evening together.	I'm enjoying talking to you. Let's continue at the next coffee break.

Many times when you make requests, you will get a "yes". If you get a "no", try suggesting or negotiating an alternative, especially one that is respectful of the objections the person has raised to your first request. If you are again turned down, you might choose to conclude that the person isn't interested. If so, be pleasant in ending your conversation. Or you might try again another time. If you don't get what you want, celebrate the fact that you spoke up and made an effort. Tell yourself that just as you have the right to ask in a respectful way, others have the right to say no.

> *"God's peace prompts service among brothers and sisters. In that way one creature sustains another, one enriches the other and that is why all creatures are interdependent."*
>
> - Meister Eckhart, 14th Century

Small Ways to Diffuse Anger

As we mentioned earlier in this section, rather than act out in violent ways with our anger, we can choose to do something different. There are other ways to deal with these big feelings.

Consider the following suggestions:

A. Speak up about the little things - Let go of small annoyances before they build into anger.

B. Take some time out - Wait for the rush of anger to subside, or walk away. Acting on initial outbursts may result in extreme responses, actions or words you may regret later.

C. Be clear and direct - Speak to the person directly and sum up your feelings in one word. Example: "I feel upset that you didn't show up."

D. Own your own feelings - You are responsible for your own feelings - show your understanding of this point by starting your feeling statements with "I". Example: "I'm annoyed that you lied to me." Using "You" statements (Example: "You make me angry") blames the other person and puts the responsibility of your feelings onto them. (Also, their response will likely be a defensive one and the situation will become increasingly tense.)

E. Write or draw out your anger - Many people find relief by practising expressing their anger in ways that are less likely to hurt the other person. You might want to try this in a journal or diary, or in a letter that may or may not be mailed. Find some paper to write and/or draw your anger.

F. Discussing your feelings about the past - Choose someone you trust and share your feelings about the past. This will help you to work through any feelings of guilt and shame that you have about your past. It may also help to put closure on a hurtful issue so you can get on with your life. Most of the time, the listener will have felt those same feelings and had similar experiences and it helps to know that many of our experiences and feelings are not unique to us.

G. Know you have the right to decide when and if to share feelings - You are not obligated to share your feelings even if you've identified them. Before expressing feelings, ask how you would respond in their situation. Also, consider the possible results of expressing your feelings and if you're willing to live with those results. For example, telling intimate details of your past to someone you've only known a short time is likely to overwhelm them and possibly scare them off. Also, the ninth step of the 12 step programs encourages people to make amends but not to do so when it would harm yourself or others. Having the skills to identify and express feelings gives you choices as to when and how to do so because the aim of learning these skills is that you will have more control of your life.

Giving Others What They Need or Want

> *"Once I was in Victoria, and I saw a very large house. They told me it was a bank, and that the white men place their money there to be taken care of, and that by and by they got it back, with interest. We are Indians, and we have no such bank; but when we have plenty of money or blankets, we give them away to other chiefs and people, and by and by they return them, with interest, and our hearts feel good. Our way of giving is our bank."*
>
> - Maquinna, Nootka Chief

Part of our Aboriginal traditions include the values of kindness, sharing, respect and honesty. Giving to others goes a long ways back. Our ancestors lived with this philosophy for thousands of years. Giving to others reflects the values of kindness and sharing. Even though others have not respected our kindness, it is still our way. We give because it gives us pleasure to do so without any expectations in return. It is a part of our spirituality. It also means that we can receive thoughtful gestures from others and enjoy them, without any obligation on our part.

If we give because we want something back, we are being manipulative. Chances are we learned this behaviour as we were growing up in dysfunctional environments, far from the influences of our ancestors. When we are manipulative, we usually give because we want something in return, perhaps love and acceptance. But this only has the opposite effect. Using manipulation usually results in attracting other unhealthy people to us for a short time, mostly until they get what they want. This leads to a cycle of mind games which generate negative feelings and actions. On the other hand, people who are loved seldom use manipulation. Rather, they believe in themselves and don't feel the need to seek others' approval, especially in insecure ways.

The good news is we can unlearn manipulative ways and be who we are meant to be - kind and functional people. Some ways we can change ourselves for the better are to ask people what they want or to give from your heart. For instance, the greatest gifts you can give won't cost you anything and can't be put in a box. They are your expressions of love and appreciation, your encouragement, and your assistance. You may want to practice doing this sort of giving to yourself first. After all, we can't be kind to others unless we become familiar with being kind

to ourselves. You may want to begin by reading, then writing, some affirmations. Then share them with people you care about.

"Learn the lesson of the acorn. How does an acorn know to become an oak tree? Because it yields to itself, so that it can become itself, in order to experience itself."

- Blackwolf Robert Jones, Ojibway and Gina Jones, Mohawk

"We are in harmony with our purpose when we experience an inner state of joy. The is our benchmark and validation."

- Blackwolf Robert Jones, Ojibway and Gina Jones, Mohawk

Learning About Reasonable and Unreasonable Expectations of Others and of Other Situations

Sometimes we need to do a lot of thinking about what is reasonable to expect of others. The value of respect for what the other person can and cannot do is very important here. If we have high expectations of people and they don't fulfill our expectations, then we have to decide whether it is the people or our expectations that have let us down. This is most likely something which needs to be negotiated with the person.

But we need to consider that people have only so much time in a day and that we all have different tolerance levels for stress. We need to respect that people have a choice as to how they will spend their time. And we need to remember that the world does not revolve around us, even though, from our own perspective, we think it does! This very much ties into learning HUMILITY.

Perhaps the best way to guide you in the process of learning about your own expectations and whether or not they are reasonable is to provide you with some quotes on expectations from the "One Day at a Time in Al-Anon" book.

They are as follows:

Example #1

> One source of frustration we seldom recognize is in expecting too much of others or expecting too specifically what we feel they ought to be, say, give or do.
>
> If I expect another person to react in a certain way to a given situation, and he or she fails to meet my expectation, have I the right to be disappointed or angry?

Every human being has his own individual drives and motivations, beyond my understanding and control. I might say: "But he knew what I expected," not realizing that it may have been precisely for this reason that he rebelled and acted otherwise.

My search for peace of mind will bear fruit much more readily if I stop expecting and relax into acceptance.

My Reminder for Today

I will not set a pattern based on my own experience and wishes - and expect someone else to live up to it. This is interference of a subtle and damaging kind; it damages my peace of mind and dignity, and those I am smothering with my expectations.

Example #2

How many of my frustrations and disappointments come from expecting too much! It is good to set our standards high, but only if we are prepared to accept, with unperturbed serenity, results that fall short of what we expect.

We expect more of the alcoholic than a sick, confused human can deliver. Once he is sober, we expect a complete transformation. Above all, we make too great demands on ourselves.

My Reminder for Today

Let me learn to settle for less than I wish were possible, and be willing to accept it and appreciate it. I will not expect too much of anyone, not even of myself. Contentment comes from accepting gratefully the good that comes to us, and not from raging at life because it is not better. This wholesome attitude is by no means resignation, but a realistic acceptance.

Example #3

One evening at a meeting there seemed to be an unusual number of complaints from members - about not having what they felt entitled to, or about the alcoholics' behaviour and generally about their sorry lot in life.

Once, a forthright person, spoke up: "You know, all this sounds as though some of us were childishly expecting life to be entirely free of problems. I recall a long-ago radio comedienne whose favourite line went something like this: 'Well, you have to take the bitter with the better.' That's pretty good Al-Anon philosophy, too, because it tells us we have to accept some unpalatable experiences along the way, never forgetting, at the same time, to keep an eye on the good things."

My Reminder for Today

Am I expecting everything in life to be just the way I want it? Maybe I ought to take a good look at those expectations and see if they are realistic for my particular situation. If I'm constantly reaching for the moon, I'm going to miss a lot of pleasant things right here in my little world.

Solving Problems

Growing up in abusive homes or settings has contributed to how you deal or fail to deal with problems. Most likely, problems in your past were never resolved, they just got bigger. They would get ignored but would happen again and again, usually in ways that became more and more complicated. After many years of this, you probably became used to living in crisis. You never saw how a problem could be dealt with so that it didn't become a crisis. The following are some dysfunctional ways of handling problems that may sound familiar to you:

A. Maintain the way things are - even though you may be frustrated with your situation, you believe that you have no other options and so remain stuck in a rut. Or even if you see some room for change, you don't act because you fear losing the bit of control you do have. Besides, there are some rewards to hanging on to the way things are and you are unwilling to risk losing those.

B. Denial - you still practice the "no talk" rule of your childhood and pretend everything is okay. You pretend to others that your problems don't exist - you might even deny these to yourself.

C. Fantasizing or waiting for a miracle - you might tell yourself that your problems will disappear if only..., if only you were transferred to another location, if only you met Mr. or Ms. Right, if only you had a job, etc. Miracles do happen but only when we do the ground work first.

D. Blaming/complaining - that others are responsible for your problems, ignoring any responsibility on your part. Or you might be blaming yourself when circumstances were beyond your control and you had little to do with the situation. You might feel better for a short time after blaming, but eventually your self-esteem becomes very low and you lose a lot of friends. And it doesn't change anything about the original problem.

E. Creating a crisis - you either act impulsively (without considering what will happen as a result of this behaviour) or aggravate the situation so that it becomes a crisis. This makes the situation familiar to you and helps to reduce your anxiety.

When you were growing up, you were powerless to solve your family's problems. But now, you have more options - the trick is to recognize and go after them. You may think that you are stuck or that you have no alternative, but change is always possible.

"What does your heart practice? What are you becoming? Always, there are choices. What you choose to practice, you are choosing to become. It is that simple."

- Blackwolf Robert Jones, Ojibway and Gina Jones, Mohawk

"The caterpillar does not say, "If only I could fly." It becomes and then flies. The stone does not say, "If only I could be soft." It collapses into softness. You too will fly. You too will collapse into softness. The power is within you."

- Blackwolf Robert Jones, Ojibway and Gina Jones, Mohawk

Formula for Solving Problems

Problem solving requires a series of steps. Knowing about the process of problem solving and being actively involved in it will help you feel more in charge of your life.

The steps are:

1. Identifying the problem and deciding if it is yours.
2. Deciding to solve the problem. (What do you want to do about it?)
3. Brainstorming possible solutions. (What are ways of dealing with the problem?)
4. Deciding on the best choice. (Which solution is the best?)
5. Deciding how to put your plan into place. (What do you need to do to make the change?)
6. Carrying or acting out the plan.
7. Assessing how your plan went (discuss with someone the good things about the change and the not-so-good things about the change).

Identifying the Problem

Some problems are easy to identify, ie, being blamed for something you didn't do or not having enough money to buy your child a birthday gift. Other times, we might be aware that something isn't "right" about a situation but we don't know exactly what it is. When you are unsure of what the problem is, focus more attention on the situation. Perhaps it is someone showing up two hours late and not phoning. Or maybe you are sitting down to write a letter and you can't think of what to write. If your problem is harder to identify, look for any clues your body might provide. When you feel depressed, anxious, etc., ask yourself what you were doing before, during or after experiencing these feelings. Writing the situations down for a few days might show, for instance, that you watch a lot of TV or don't get enough exercise. You might be able to see a pattern between certain feelings resulting from certain activities or behaviours.

Deciding if the Problem is Yours

Sometimes a situation is confusing as to whether or not it is our own problem - we might waste a lot of time by trying to solve others' problems. A problem is yours when your needs and wants are not being met. If a friend or relative is upset because a mutual friend hasn't called lately, the problem is not yours. Once you are aware that solving a certain problem is not your responsibility, you can become aware of choices as to what to do.

1. You can leave the situation.
2. You can offer to listen to the person's story or situation.
3. You can offer to share a similar experience in your own life and tell how you worked it out for yourself.
4. You can make a greater effort to show compassion during what you know is a difficult time.
5. You can help become a part of the solution, such as call once in a while, even though you know it is not your duty to do so.

If the problem is yours, write the story. Remember to include the role that you play in the problem. If you find out how you contribute to the problem, it will help you see how you can be a part of the solution. For instance, if you are lonely, but don't see that you seldom approach people to start talking to them, then it will become harder for you to solve your loneliness problem. In this step, it's important to define your problem in terms of needs rather than solutions. Writing "I need contact with someone I feel safe with" is more helpful than "I want more friends in my life."

Deciding to Solve the Problem

In this step, think of what you want to do about the problem. What are some good things about it and what are some not-so-good things about it? Then ask yourself if the energy that is needed to solve the problem is worth the effort. Make a list of the advantages and drawbacks of trying to solve the problem. Looking this over, you might find that the right decision presents itself. If not, go with what you think feels right for now (although you may not want to make a decision if you're feeling tired or irritable). You can always change your mind later if this decision doesn't

work out. Most decisions are judgement calls anyway. You can never know 100% if your decision is the right one until after it's made.

Brainstorming Possible Solutions

This means coming up with as many possible solutions as you can without stopping to judge them. Look at the problem from many different angles. Think of more and less common ways to deal with the problem - ideas that seem both practical and strange. Possible solutions usually require changes in behaviour (for example, asking assertively for people to respect your need for privacy), in situation (like changing your work setting) or in attitude (like looking at "doing time" as a way to change your life around, especially by growing spiritually instead of becoming bitter).

If you do a good job of just letting the ideas flow, many of the solutions will seem silly but your chances of finding a workable solution are greater. Finding your unique solution to the problem is one of the main purposes of this exercise. It's also a good idea, as you record your solutions, to jot down the solution of just doing nothing, continuing what you are doing now. Sometimes that is a very real solution. Another suggestion for brainstorming is to ask others you trust to join you in coming up with ideas.

Deciding on the Best Alternative

Look at all your brainstorming ideas - select the one that seems to do the best job of solving the problem with the fewest drawbacks. If you brainstormed with others, then you may want to discuss with them the advantages and disadvantages of the alternatives listed. (It's important to look for long-term gains and not just temporary, band aid solutions.) When you've made your choice, try hard to make it succeed. Don't worry about whether you've made the best choice. After some time, if you find your decision isn't working out, you can change it.

Deciding How to Put the Plan into Action

This decision means getting specific and fine-tuning your choice so that it becomes a series of realistic and practical steps that will take you to where you want to go. Some plans (especially ones that have to do with changing jobs or work placements) may take many steps. Writing down your plan will help you to be certain of it. Make a commitment to working on the plan and achieving the goal - you may want to remind yourself at the beginning or end of each day of all the steps that are necessary to achieve your long-term goal. You might also want to ask a friend to ask you on a regular basis how you're making out with your plan.

Example:

If my problem is being in jail, I can't change the fact that I'm in jail - however, I can work for early release in the following ways:

1. I can abide by the rules and regulations within the Institution.
2. I can maintain my work or educational placement.
3. I can attend drug and alcohol programming.
4. I can be involved in traditional and cultural teachings and ceremonies.
5. I can establish new, healthier relationships with peers or people who are working on their own recovery.
6. I can maintain ongoing involvement in regular recreational and social activities.
7. I can make application for early release.

What problem and plan for solution do you want to write out?

Problem: _____

Plan:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

6. _____

_____

7. _____

_____

Carrying Out the Plan

This is the taking action stage - the best way to make noticeable changes in your life is by taking action. Even though you have spent a lot of time so far thinking about action and you may have talked about your plan, nothing changes unless you take action. It's a good idea to act early while you still feel enthusiastic (before you can talk yourself out of it). Try not to leave taking your action until the last minute, when you feel more panic and anxiety. If you miss a deadline, forgive yourself and set another time to carry out your plan, then do it.

Exercise:

Record the actions you have taken to carry out your plan, including setting new deadlines and why:

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

5. _____

_____

Assessing How Your Plan Went

If you were working on your plan with others, holding a meeting a week or a month after the first meeting will help to see how your plan is working. Take some time to think about the progress or lack of progress you are making regarding your plan to solve the problem or meet your goal. You may want to take some time now to celebrate how much you have accomplished or what you have learned from this whole process of problem-solving. You may also want to list some of the things you have learned, for instance, what has and hasn't worked for you. Then the next time you problem solve, the process will go that much smoother.

Exercises:

List the things that worked for you in this example of problem-solving:

List the things that didn't work for you in this example of problem-solving:

List the ways that you can celebrate what you have accomplished:

"The Creator designed us to learn by trial and error. The path of life we walk is very wide. Everything on the path is sacred - what we do right is sacred - but our mistakes are also sacred. This is the Creator's way of teaching spiritual people. To criticize ourselves when we make mistakes is not the Indian way. To learn from our mistakes is the Indian way..."

- Don Coyhis, Mohican Writer and Consultant

You have now completed the section on Communication Skills. Hopefully, you have more awareness of how complicated the process of communication is and how easy it is for misunderstandings to occur. However, many skills have been included to help you avoid or correct these misunderstandings. It may be a good idea to return to various concepts and ideas as you practice these skills. Be patient with yourself as you learn new communication skills.

This is also a good time for you to take another break. It's important that you start each new section refreshed and in a learning frame of mind. Take care as you proceed with the rest of your journey through this workbook.

Voices: Something to Think About

It wasn't until, like I had been doing drugs for eleven years, I was a drug user for eleven years and it wasn't until, probably my last year that I realized that there has got to be a better life. At four o'clock in the morning, when I am sitting on the toilet with my pants down, looking for a vein, or looking in the palm of my hand for a vein, I know that something is wrong. I knew that drugs were a problem.

Sheila, age 32; record for failing to appear, assault, robbery, soliciting.

I lived with that woman for twelve years. In 1987 we separated because of my drinking again, heavily, I started drinking heavily. I started getting charged for impaired driving. My last time in court was in 1989, I got charged and went to court for it, for an impaired driving charge. I got three months and that was the last time I went to court. By this time I was getting tired of myself. I was getting tired of being sick and tired. I had to change my way of life and I knew what my problem was - alcohol. Every time I got in trouble it was through alcohol. I am not much of a drug user. I have taken pills. I have eaten pills like candy, like valium, tylenols, sleeping pills. I have never taken a needle. I have never injected any kind. I have never taken anything heavy like heroine, cocaine. I don't know what that is. Always, when we separated in 1987, I left the city and I moved to British Columbia. I sobered up in 1988. I went to a treatment centre in B.C. in 1989. In 1988 I sobered up and I haven't drank since. I got six years of sobriety. I started practising my culture. I didn't really know, I never practised it, because I lived a different way of life for so many years. When I came out of the treatment centre, I did a 56 day program there. When I left there I stayed in the city and I went to work at a sheet metal company. By trade, I am a heavy equipment operator and I am also a carpenter. I got tickets for that. I'd been living in the same city since 1989. I haven't drank, I had a sponsor. I was introduced to a counsellor there, they took me to her to be my counsellor and she refused me. So anyways, since then, I've been working for myself in my sobriety. I have been in programs, I started learning Aboriginal spirituality, which I always had, I guess.

I was gifted with that as a Aboriginal person, it's just that I never practised it. A lot of good things have happened to me since that time. Never realizing or ever thinking that I'd ever come this far in such a short time, like where I am today. I am very pleased and happy with myself.

Wilfred, age 48; record for break and enter, assaulting a peace officer, theft, assault causing bodily harm, robbery, impaired driving.

Treatment is very, very important in my life. It just happened two years ago, but still, I have never felt good about myself until I had treatment and I started working on myself, a little bit at a time, working on this addiction, working on that addiction, seeing to be able to open your eyes and see around you and see the beauty, instead of looking for the negative all of the time. I think before that, I always looked for negative, my whole life I looked for something negative, to me negative was excitement. Instead of looking at the beauty, I looked at all of the negative stuff and treatment opened my eyes to all of that stuff. There is nothing in this world or nobody in this world that I could thank more than Poundmaker's Lodge. There is nobody I can thank, I don't even know who to thank, that is the thing, so I thank the Creator for putting me here and letting me see, to open my eyes and let me see the beauty of life which I love so much today. I also know it is a life long process. I am an alcoholic and I will always be an alcoholic and all of the stuff that goes along with that, and I will always be an ex-convict. I can only live my life one day at a time and the beauty of life is to have people, like people who work here who gave so much to our people, who sacrifice so much for our people. It is something I love. I could never say enough of how I feel, the feeling of life.

Walter, age 50; record for assault, theft, robbery, mischief.

A Look At Addictions

In this section, you will learn the definition of "addiction" and explore various types of addictions. Also, included for you to look at is information about the disease concept of alcoholism: the physical effects of alcoholism, the signs for compulsive gambling, and the factors that contribute to compulsive gambling. Some information and personal exercises about the use of alcohol and drugs in Canada will be presented. Information on the "12 Step" recovery program and space for you to complete each of the steps brings the addiction section to an end.

Definition of the Term "Addictions"[1]

Addiction is a basic human problem. People are addicted when the use of alcohol, drugs, and/or other substances or activities interferes in any significant area of their lives. Addicts continue to use the substance or repeat the activity in spite of damage to their emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual health.

Addiction has to do with the effect a drug or activity produces for a person. What a person is addicted to is the experience the drug or activity creates and the fact that, while under its influence, the person does not have to deal with their life and their feelings such as pain, anger, or love. This experience is usually a welcomed effect since it relieves anxiety.

[1] This discussion is adapted from material prepared by the Aboriginal Adult Education Resource Centre (1990) located in Okanaga College, B.C.

Fill in the following:

1. Addictions means:

2. When I hear about someone being addicted I think:

Ann Wilson Schaef (1988) in her book, ***When Society Becomes an Addict***, defines addiction as any process over which we are powerless. Schaef believes that addiction takes control of our lives, causes us to do and think things that are inconsistent with our personal values, and leads us to become more compulsive and obsessive.

We often hear of violence in Aboriginal communities and it is important that this is not seen as a cultural norm that supports negative stereotypes of Aboriginal people. Instead, the behaviour must be seen for what it is - a direct outcome of pain and anguish, rooted in socio-economic occurrences, that is masked by alcohol and other addictions. Alcohol and drugs lower inhibitions and cause people to act out frustrations, anger, and other powerful emotions that they would normally be able to control or channel in less destructive ways.

DEFINITION OF ALCOHOL ADDICTION

As defined by Alcoholics Anonymous (AA)

Addiction is an obsession of the mind,
coupled with a compulsion of the body.

DEFINITION OF ALCOHOL ADDICTION

As defined by The American Medical Association (AMA)

Alcoholism is an illness characterized by significant impairment that is directly associated with persistent and excessive use of alcohol. Impairment may involve physiological, psychological, or social dysfunction (1977).

Addictions may be classified as chemical or non-chemical, or they may be divided into two main categories: substance addiction and process addiction. Both substance and process addiction function in essentially the same way and produce the same results. In today's society, addictions are common and most addicts have multiple addictions. Almost any substance or process in our lives can be addictive.

DEFINITION OF SUBSTANCE ADDICTION

Addictive substances are mood-altering and lead to physical dependence. They are usually ingested, ie., drank, eaten, inhaled, or injected, into the body and artificially refined or produced. Examples of addictive substances (classified as chemical) are: alcohol, nicotine, drugs.

DEFINITION OF PROCESS ADDICTION

Process addiction involves a specific series of actions or interactions and gives the person the same feeling of a "high" that he or she would get from a substance addiction. It is an everyday activity that takes control of our lives. Examples of process addiction (non-chemical classification) related to a behaviour or activity are: gambling, bingo, co-dependency, shopping, spending money, soap operas.

It is important to know that both substance addiction (chemical) and process addiction (non-chemical) are subject to tolerance and dependence.

Tolerance: More of the chemical or behaviour is required to achieve the "high" or sought after change of feeling.

Dependence: After awhile the chemical needs to be taken in or the behaviour needs to be repeated just to feel "normal" or to not feel sick.

Now that you have read the information above has your definition of addictions changed? ____

If yes, what is your definition of addiction now? _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Alcoholism: A Disease Concept

Alcoholism has been classified as a disease. As a disease, it is characterized by the following characteristics:

Primary: Alcoholism is a primary disease. This means that it is the most important problem or the number one problem. It is not a symptom of another or more serious problem.

Progressive: The disease is progressive and moves in stages. This means that there is a progression of the disease in terms of increasing dysfunction. The symptoms and signs of the disease tend to go together in clusters. The physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual symptoms become worse when alcohol and drug use continues.

Chronic: Alcoholism is a chronic or permanent disease. This means that once you have the disease you do not get over it. You cannot be "cured"; chronic diseases are incurable. The symptoms of the disease, however, can be arrested with proper treatment.

Fatal: If the disease is left untreated, it may be fatal. This means that you could die as a result of the disease. Alcohol abuse leads to physical deterioration, and many people die while under the influence.

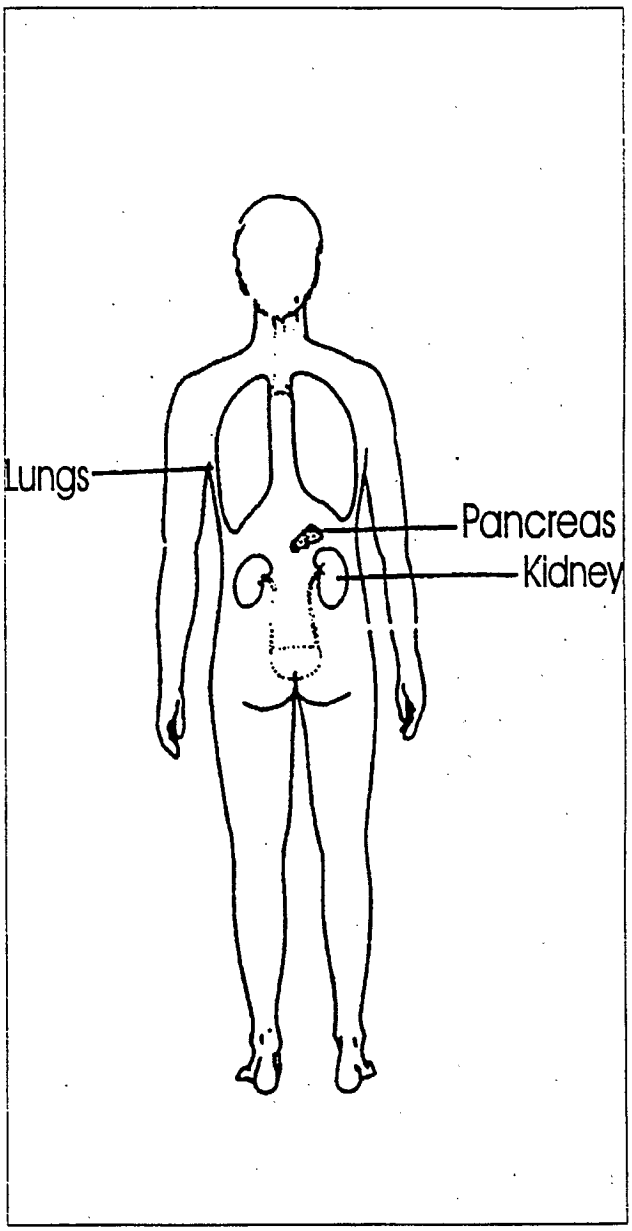
Treatable: Alcoholism is a disease which is treatable. This does not mean that it can be cured, but that the disease responds to certain kinds of treatment. The disease can be manage.

Physical Effects of Alcoholism

It is important to know that not every person who is addicted to alcohol will exhibit all of the visible and internal physical signs of chronic alcoholism. However, all of the symptoms are shown here, and may include the following:

The Pancreas

The organ responsible for making the digestive juices necessary to break down starches, fats, and proteins, and secretes the insulin hormone.



Acute pancreatitis: acute inflammation of the pancreas. Symptoms include nausea, vomiting, occasional diarrhea, and sever upper abdominal pain. This is a relapsing disease. Chronic pancreatitis may result in diabetes.

The Kidneys

Genitourinary System: This includes the urinary tract and reproductive system.

- The kidneys are not normally affected directly by alcohol in any major ways. What happens in the kidneys is usually the result of alcohol - related dysfunctions elsewhere in the body. Including, acute urinary infections, and/or prostatitis (through spasm and congestion of the prostate glands.)

- Skipped menstrual periods.
- In men, decreased sexual drive (libido), impotence, and on occasion, sterility.
- In men, if the liver is impaired, an imbalance in sex hormones may result, leading to increased feminization: enlarged breasts, shrinking of the testicles, loss of or thinning of body hair.

The Immune System

Most alcoholics exhibit increased susceptibility to infection. This is probably caused by changes in the body's immune and defensive responses.

The Muscles and Bones: Musculoskeletal System

Chronic alcohol use may play a causal role in different types of arthritis, generalized osteoporosis (thinning of the bones), and aseptic necrosis (bone death) of various bones.

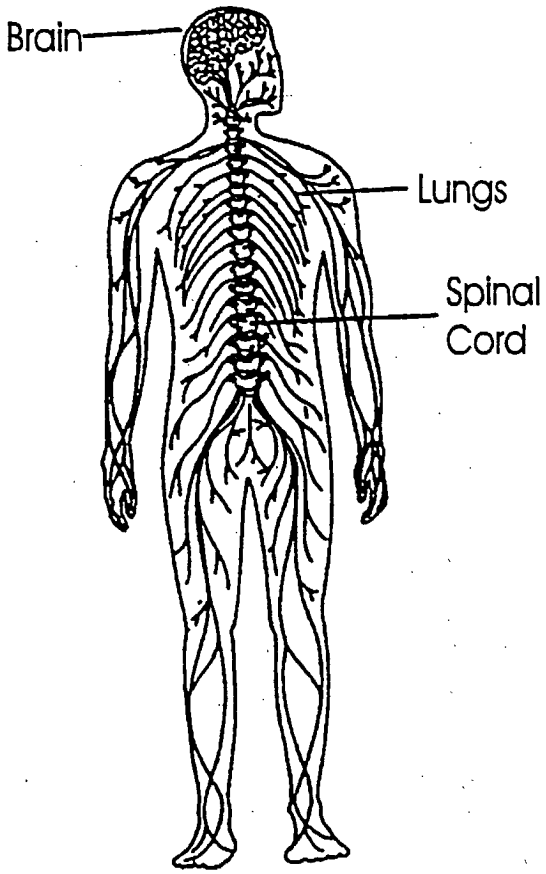
The Heart

- Hypertension: elevated blood pressure.
- Alcoholic Heart Muscle Disease: may be a severe condition with low-output heart failure, shortness of breath with the least effort, and dramatic enlargement of the heart.
- Beri-beri Heart Disease: resulting from a deficiency of vitamin B1, thiamine.
- A variety of abnormalities in cardiac rhythm, including holiday heart syndrome. A syndrome in which arrhythmias of the heart occur after heavy alcohol intake.

The Blood: Haematological System

The blood carries anti-infection agents, oxygen, nutrients, minerals, and hormones to the cells and removes waste products. Blood is made up of red cells, white cells and platelets.

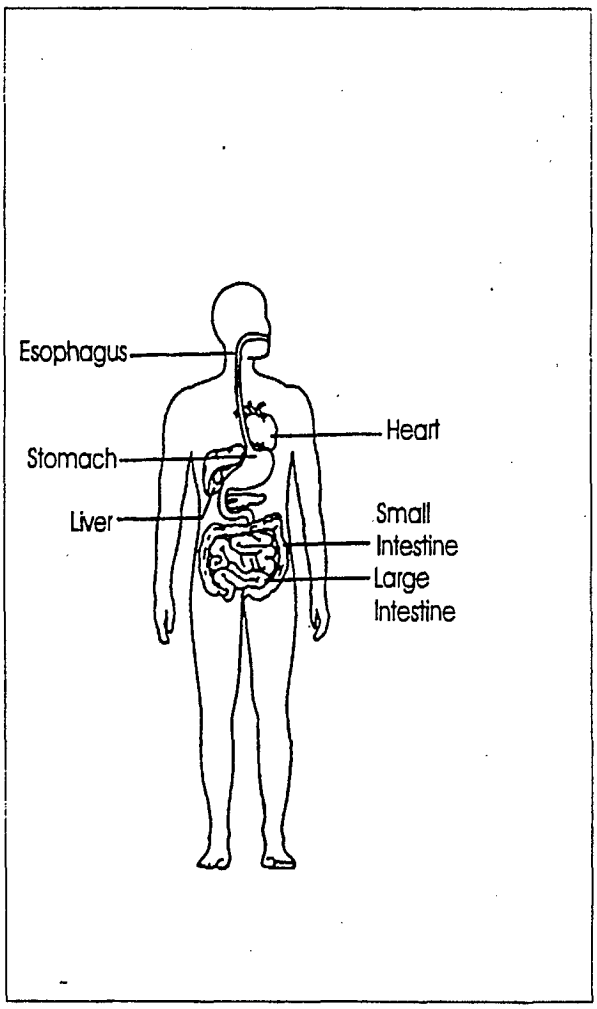
- A variety of types of anemia, which means too few red blood cells.
- Chronic alcohol abuse affects white cells, which contributes to an increased susceptibility and frequency of sever infections, especially respiratory tract infections in alcoholics.
- Alcohol decreases the number of platelets, which may result in bleeding disorders and severe bruising.
- The liver produces a number of the serum-clotting disorders (necessary to stop bleeding). If the liver is effected by alcohol, disseminated intra vascular coagulation may occur. This condition of abnormally increased coagulation (clotting) of the blood.



The Stomach

The stomach, small intestine and large intestine are responsible for the digestion of food.

- Generalized irritation of the mucous lining the gut, especially in the stomach (alcohol stimulates the stomach lining's secretion of hydrochloric acid).
- Inhibited muscular contraction of the intestine.
- Frequent belching.
- Loss of appetite.
- Alternating diarrhea and constipation
- Morning nausea and vomiting
- Esophagitis: irritation of the esophagitis. Symptoms include mid chest pain and pain in swallowing.
- Gastritis: acute and chronic irritation of the stomach. Symptoms include inflammation, abdominal pain, and also bleeding.
- Ulcers of the stomach or small intestine.



The Liver

This is the organ which metabolizes alcohol. It is also responsible for making essential blood components, storing certain vitamins, regulating blood-sugar level, and breaking down wastes and toxic substances in the body.

- Acute fatty liver: deposits of fat which build up in normal liver cells.
- Alcoholic hepatitis: actual inflammation of the liver and variable damage to the liver cells. Jaundice is a usual sign of hepatitis, as well as weakness, easily tired, loss of appetite, occasional nausea and vomiting, low-grade fever, mild weight loss, increasing inflammation in the lining of the abdominal cavity, dark urine, and light stools.
- Alcoholic cirrhosis: a condition in which there is wide-spread destruction of the liver cells, which are replaced by non-functioning scar tissue. Alcoholic cirrhosis may result in liver cancer, hepatic coma, damage to the lining of the abdominal cavity, low blood sugar levels, salt and water retention, renal failure, and gastrointestinal bleeding.

The Brain: Affects on the Nervous System

Alcohol is a depressant which acts on the brain. This leads to behaviours which are not normal, lack of coordination, slurring speech, fuzzy thinking and alterations in memory and other mental functions.

The Lungs: Respiratory System

Increased respiratory rate with low to moderate doses. Decreased respiratory rates with large and or toxic doses. Increased pulmonary infections.

The Skin

- Dilation of the blood vessels of the skin.
- Fingernail changes.
- Thinning of the skin.
- Chronic, flushes appearances.
- Bruising, paleness, and skin infections.
- Rosacea: flushing and inflammation especially of the nose and middle portion of the face.
- Rhinophyma: "rum nose".
- Porphyria cutanea tarda: increased pigmentation, hair growth and blistering in sun-exposed areas.

Signs of Compulsive Gambling

1. Preoccupied with gambling (reliving past gambling experiences, handicapping or planning the next venture, or thinking of ways to get money for gambling).
2. Needs to gamble with significantly increasing amounts of money in order to achieve the desired excitement.
3. Made repeated unsuccessful efforts to control, cut back, or stop gambling.
4. Restless or irritable when attempting to cut down or stop gambling.
5. Gamble as a way of escaping from problems or relieving dysphoric moods (eg. Feeling of helplessness, guilt, anxiety, depression).
6. After losing money, the gambler often returns another day in order to get even ('chasing' one's losses).
7. Lies to family members or others to conceal the extent of involvement with gambling.
8. Committed illegal acts, such as forgery, fraud, theft, or embezzlement, in order to finance gambling.
9. Has jeopardized or lost a significant relationship, job, educational or career opportunity because of gambling.
10. Relied on others (or institutions) to provide money to relieve a desperate financial situation produced by gambling.

Factors that Contribute to Compulsive Gambling

1. A family history of alcoholism or compulsive gambling.
2. Growing up in a family with an extremely critical, rejecting, or emotionally unavailable parent.
3. An emphasis in the family on status where money is overvalued.
4. Men in particular, who are brought up to be extremely competitive, are taught at an early age that winning is important.
5. An early physical or developmental problem.
6. Hyperactivity.
7. Exposure to gambling early in life which in some way is particularly valued.

On the following pages, there are several graphs generated from information produced by the Addictions Research Foundation.

Questions:

Where do you fit in relation to Canadian drinking/drug use norms of alcohol, cannabis, and cocaine?

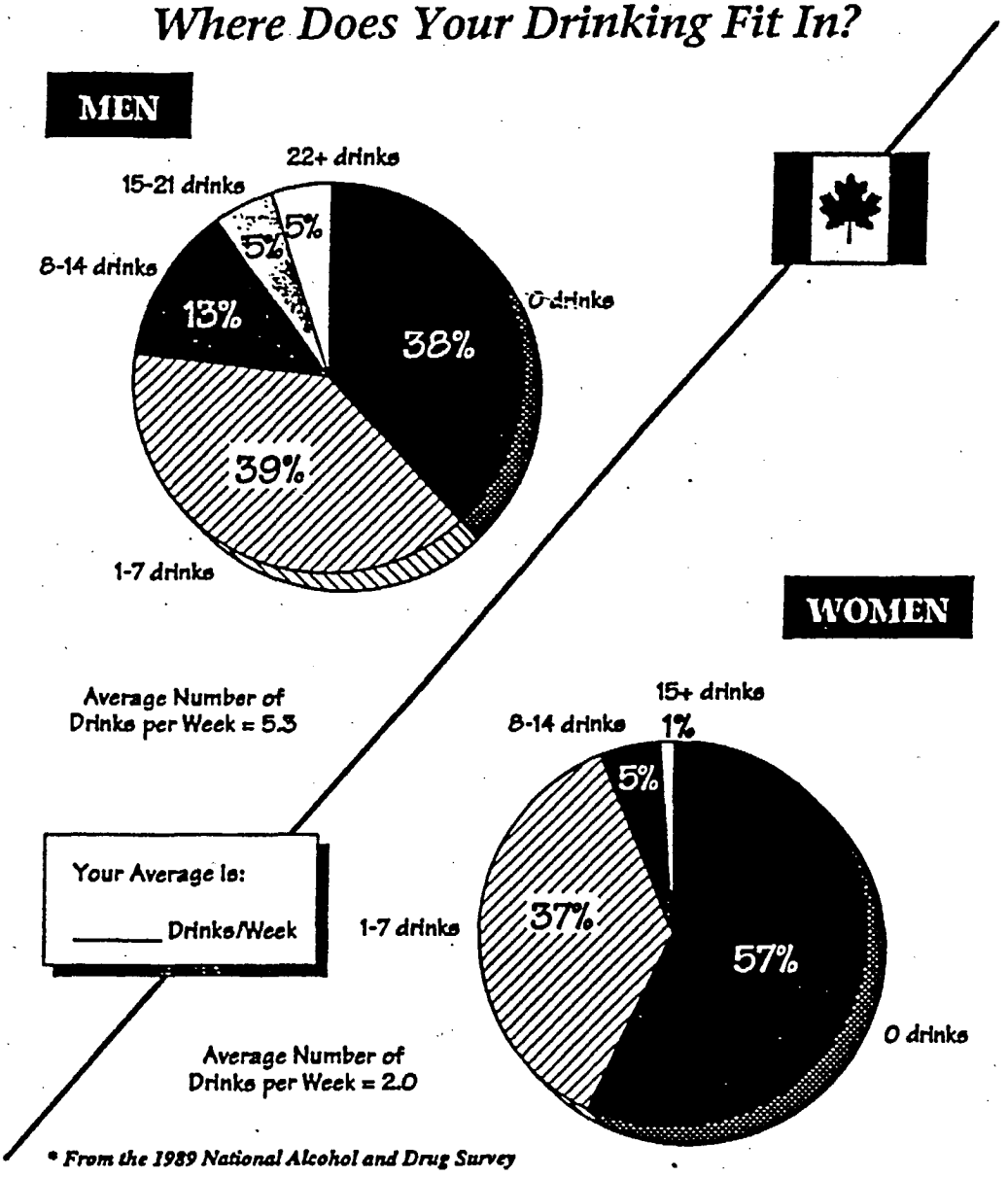
What are alcohol health risks?

NUMBER OF DRINKS CONSUMED IN A WEEK BY ADULTS SURVEYED IN CANADA*

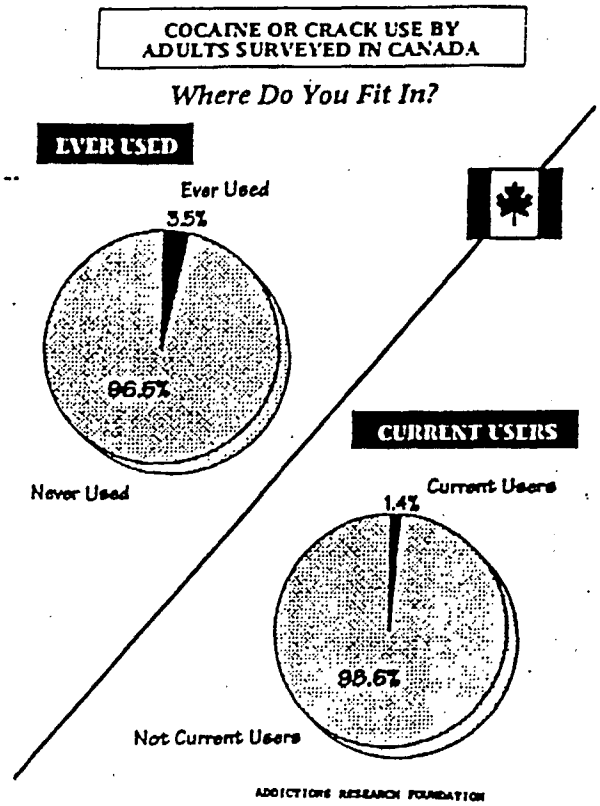
Where Does Your Drinking Fit In?

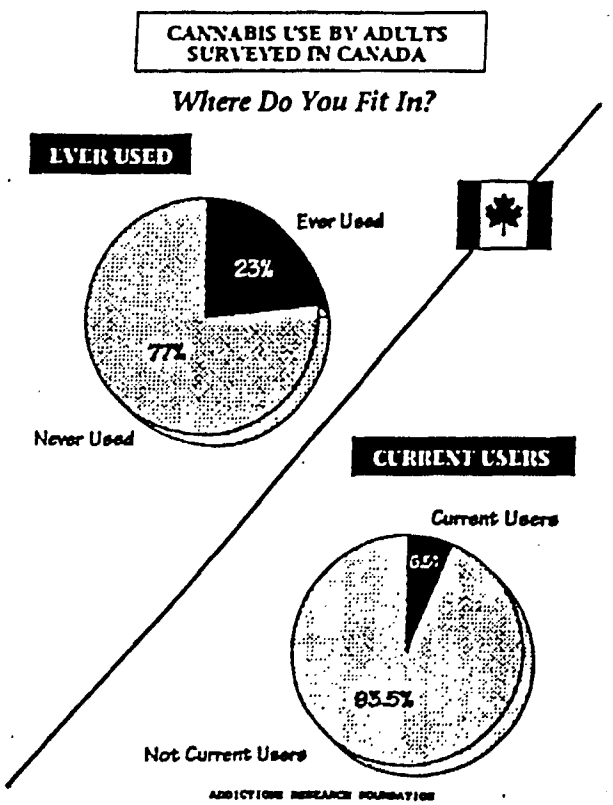
NUMBER OF DRINKS CONSUMED IN A WEEK BY ADULTS SURVEYED IN CANADA*

Where Does Your Drinking Fit In?



* *From the 1989 National Alcohol and Drug Survey*


COCAINE OR CRACK USE BY ADULTS SURVEYED IN CANADA
Where Do You Fit In?
EVER USED
Ever Used
3.5%
96.5%
Never Used
CURRENT USERS
Current Users
1.4%
98.6%
Not Current Users
ADDICTIONS RESEARCH FOUNDATION


CANNABIS USE BY ADULTS SURVEYED IN CANADA
Where Do You Fit In?
EVER USED
Ever Used
23%
77%
Never Used
CURRENT USERS
Current Users
6.5%
93.5%
Not Current Users

Assessing Your Behaviours

There are a series of four questions that can help you to decide if you are addicted to chemicals or repeated behaviours.

C. A. G. E.

C. Have you ever felt you ought to **Cut Down** your _____?
(drinking, drugging, gambling, smoking, violence)

A. Have people **Annoyed** you by criticizing your _____?
(drinking, drugging, gambling, smoking, violence)

G. Have you ever felt **Guilty** about your _____?
(drinking, drugging, gambling, smoking, violence)

E. After drinking, using drugs, gambling, or violence, do you feel the need to balance things out in your life?

If you have answered yes to these questions, you may need to seek out further information by reading, talking with a counsellor or an Elder. Although answering yes to these four questions does not necessarily mean you are addicted, it is important for your healing that you take the time to explore the issue of addiction in more depth. The following questions will help this exploration process.

Questions:

What are the addictive chemicals/processes that have affected your life?

My chemical abuses _____

My process abuses _____

The person closest to me has the following addictions.

Chemical _____

Process _____

How has tolerance played a role in your addiction?

How has dependency played a role in your addiction?

The society that we live in contributes to addiction by _____

When I hear about someone being addicted, I think _____

Now that you have taken ***A Look at Addictions*** you will know more about the types of addictions (substance and process), the physical effects of alcoholism and causes and gambling. Addictions, whether substance or process, affects many Canadian families. The questions in this section were included to encourage you to think about how it has affected either yourself or someone close to you.

The next part of this section provides some information on how to work 12 Step Programs and how they are helpful to people experiencing difficulties as a result of their addictions. We begin the next part with some familiar "voices" of people telling their stories about how the 12 Step Programs like AA were essential for their spiritual, mental and emotional well being.

"I kind of relate A.A. to the Indian way. I used to think that I really didn't like A.A., when I first started, because I thought, well, another white man made up the thing. I started to look at it and they say, no prejudice to any race or culture or any religion. That is what my grandfather and them used to say, so I could relate that to A.A. and then there is no bosses, anything you want, you have to work for it. Like in the Indian way too, like you pay, nobody preaches it and they say the same way in A.A., you don't promote it, it is non-promotional. It is an attraction rather than a promotion. All of these traditions, they relate to the Indian way, so in some way. I remember, I used to hate that, taking a program that a white man made and I started thinking, maybe they took this program from an Indian some where and I kind of put that in my mind. When they talk about it, in the big book, somewhere Bill W. and Bob, when they went to see somebody and they never ever mentioned that name, there was a third person that they went and seen when it came to spirituality. Sometimes, I think that person was an Indian, like it was an Indian. I remember I thought I remembered reading a part in the Big Book on when they first started that program, like where it came from, when they first started. I always resented taking anything from white people, what they made, like programs and stuff. Somehow, I can see this relating, A.A. and the Indian way, a lot of ways"

Bert, age 42; record for criminal negligence, escape, auto theft, break and enter, assault.

"I came out and they talk about getting a sponsor, so I had this old guy for about five or six years, he was my sponsor. He was really significant in my life, in regards to showing me that one guy could love another man. He taught me that, unconditional. He had his flaws, he had his shortcomings, but he walked with me for quite a few miles. A lot of the stuff that I know today, I learned from that old bugger. He was really helpful. He taught me about resentments, when people resent you, or if they are jealous, or trying to pull you down. Turn it around in your favour and tell them, thank you for the boost, because they are actually pushing you, he said. Us 'alkies', he said, we always give in when somebody gets jealous, or gets mad and we want to get mad and fight back at that same level, instead of going over the top and staying free from that."

Tony, age 52; record for impaired driving, break and enter; assault, manslaughter.

"That's when I came to the program and got involved in the Sweat Lodges and was involved with Elders. It was A.A. I attended a lot of meetings. Usually, it was Aboriginal orientated, like the Friendship Centre had a group there, for Aboriginal people and that is where I spent a lot of time and going to a lot of sweats, getting involved with the culture. Learning and asking questions and seeking out Elders."

Allen, age 52; record for break and enter, assault causing bodily harm, manslaughter.

"From there, I came to the treatment centre in 1990, I was already going on four years that I was in the program. I keep attending, like group therapy meetings. It was not all that easy for me, even back in the city all through my sobriety, I had to keep on going to programs, like life skills, something to keep me motivated and then I did go and see a psychiatrist, a team of psychiatrists when I was maintaining and they did tell me the same thing, do something like group therapy and they did ask me if I did attend some meetings and I did say yes and I did see a psychologist and he recommended group therapy meetings for me and that is what I do. Wherever I am, I go to meetings, I go to A.A. meetings. I get something from my meetings and I meet new people, new faces and I get to talk with them and I get to share my feelings with them and I get to share and sometimes I get to chair a meeting and I get to talk of myself, share my past experiences, how it was like, back then for me and how I maintain my sobriety. Sometimes, it is very emotional for me, very emotional, physical and mental, but it is okay for me. Sometimes, I cannot take it, sometimes I say it is too hard for me, sometimes I feel like I am going to go crazy, but it is okay for me, it is all with me."

William, age 42; record for dangerous use of a firearm, assault, willful damage, break and enter, robbery, joy riding.

The Twelve Steps

The purpose of this section of the workbook is to assist you in learning about ***The 12 Steps*** to sobriety. ***The 12 Steps*** have helped many people to maintain sobriety and change their life. These steps do work but the individual needs to know how to work each of the steps. ***The 12 Steps*** work if you work with it.

Each of ***The 12 Steps*** will be reviewed for meaning and understanding (what do each of the steps mean to you and how do they apply to your life?) At each step you will be completing exercises that will reinforce your learning of how alcohol has affected your life. You may also apply ***The 12 Steps*** to recover from a chemical or process addiction other than alcohol. If you are working to recover from gambling for example, you can simply substitute the word "gambling" each time the word "alcohol" is mentioned.

Remember going to 12 step meetings is the basic building block of recovery. Applying the principles of the program to real life problems helps to establish the foundation of recovery.

Also at the end of each step will be a suggested list of activities to assist you in reducing stress and anxiety for your overall mental, emotional, physical and spiritual well being. Relax and take your time in completing each of the steps. Remember there is no right or wrong way. The information that is needed for you to learn about yourself will come out as it needs to. In each day of sobriety there is a new learning for you whether that be in physical, mental, emotional or spiritual realm.

An Adaptation of The 12 Steps[2]

1. We admitted we were powerless over _____, and that our lives had become unmanageable.
2. Came to believe that a Power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.
3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of God, *as we understood Him.*
4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves.
5. Admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.
6. Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character.
7. Humbly asked God to remove our shortcomings.
8. Made a list of all persons we had harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all.
9. Made direct amends to such people wherever possible, except when to do so would injure them or others.
10. Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.
11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God *as we understood Him*, praying only for knowledge of God's will for us and the power to carry that out.
12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to _____, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

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[2] ***The 12 Steps*** are reprinted with permission of Alcoholics Anonymous World Services, Inc. Permission to reprint and adapt ***The 12 Steps*** does not mean that AA has reviewed or approved the contents of this publication nor that AA agrees with the views expressed herein. AA is a program of recovery from alcoholism only - use of ***he 12 Steps*** in connection with programs and activities which are patterned after AA but which address other problems, or in any other non-AA context, does not imply otherwise.

Step One

We admit we are powerless over

_____

(Insert chemical of choice)

And that our live has become unmanageable

_____

_____

_____

(List 3 ways that your life was unmanageable in the last month)

Step one helps us to look at the negative role alcohol or drugs began to play in our life. It means giving up the worn out excuses and facing our addiction with courage. It is hard to admit to ourselves that we cannot control our alcohol or drug use and our life became messed up because of it. But there is also a sense of relief in knowing that it was not I who was the problem but that the alcohol or drug use was the problem.

Powerless or Being Out of Control

One of the signs of chemical dependency is loss of control; we cannot stop when we want to or we replace one drug for another. Sometimes we made rules for ourselves about when to use with who, or how much, only to break those rules.

Along with loss of use comes loss of control over our behaviour. At times we lost control of our behaviour by not going home when we planned to, getting into arguments and fights, we got violently sick, acted foolishly, drove while under the influence, passed out, spent all the money or cheated on the spouse.

Exercise:

Think of a time recently when you lost control of your use of alcohol or drugs. What happened, who was there, where did it happen and when did it happen? How did you feel during this time and how did you feel later when you were sober? What did you learn from this experience? Remember "powerless" means unable to stop the use despite the negative consequences.

Story: (Take a page or two to write the story.)

List examples of other occasions where you were powerless over your alcohol or drug use.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

Unmanageable

In what ways has your alcohol or drug use damaged your life. List examples to show how your life became chaotic and crazy. How did it feel and what did you learn from these experiences?

Situation: _____

_____

Feelings: _____

_____

Learning: _____

_____

Situation: _____

_____

Feelings: _____

_____

Learning: _____

_____

Addiction History

Think back to the first time you used alcohol or drugs, how old were you, who was with you, what happened, where did it happen, how did you feel and what did you learn from this experience. Does writing this story out give you insight to your current alcohol or drug use.

Story

Relaxation and Reflections

Congratulations! You have just completed STEP ONE which is the beginning of the recovery process. At times you may want to go back and reread your work and make additions or reflection on your further learning. This was difficult work and you worked hard so take the opportunity to relax, reflect and absorb all that you have felt, thought and learned in this process.

Take four deep breathes and take one or a few of the following breaks.

- Have a cup of herbal tea
- Read a novel
- Listen to a meditation tape
- Go for a long quiet walk or jog
- Sit in a hot tub or steam room
- Watch a video
- Go to a movie
- Watch the sunset or sunrise
- Journalize your experience
- Take a leisurely nap
- Play in the park with a child
- Ask for a hug
- Write a letter
- Give a hug to a family member
- Find a quiet place
- Sit in the sun
- Phone your sponsor
- Smudge yourself
- List your accomplishments
- Talk to an Elder
- Go to AA meeting
- Listen to your favourite song
- Rock in a rocking chair
- Talk to a good friend
- Draw or paint a picture
- Go to a sweat or ceremony
- Say the Serenity Prayer
- Compose your own prayer

Step Two

Came to believe that a Power greater
than yourselves could restore us to sanity

Step Two asks us, whom do we trust. How readily do we ask for help from others and a higher power? Do we try to work things out by ourselves resist help when it is offered? How much we trust our Higher Power reflects how much we trust others to help us. The program teaches us to not only trust others to help us but also to ask our Higher Power to guide us through recovery.

Step Two asks us to look at our denial and delusions of our addictions. How have I lost touch with reality because of my using? What are my limits as a human being, what are my values and beliefs, how have they changed as my addiction increased?

Step Two is turning over our frustrations, loneliness and emptiness and filling our life with new hope that will restore sanity to our life. Step Two helps us to develop a spiritual identity and strengthen our faith in a power greater than ourselves. We admitted that we have no control over our chemical use or it's effects on our life but now we can get help from others in the program or from a power greater than ourselves.

Spirituality

Came to believe... recovery is a spiritual process which may happen suddenly or may take some time to develop. Whatever the case take time now to decide what you believe in and what you care about. Through the abuse of alcohol and drugs our spirit became invisible to not only ourselves but others. In Step Two we begin to discover and know who we are and what we care for. And for each of us this is different as we are all special in our own unique way.

Exercise:

Spirituality means how we help our spirit to feel good, happy and alive. In what ways do you honour your spirit by participating in activities that make your spirit feel good, happy and alive.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Story

Write a story of a time, place or event that happened to you that made your spirit feel joy, peace, serenity or awe. What was the event, who were you with, where did it happen and when did it happen? How did you feel about yourself and others, what did you learn from this experience?

Who are the special people in your life, people who bring good feelings, thoughts and actions when you are with them? How do they make you feel and what do you think of them?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

In what ways has your alcohol or drug use damaged your relationships with the special people in your life? List the different ways that you lied to yourself and others about the severity of your alcohol\drug use or the problems you were having in your life.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

My Higher Power

In what areas of your life can you ask your Higher Power to help you. Are you experiencing problems with your family, finances, work or with friends. Write a letter to your Higher Power, reintroduce yourself explaining where you are at with your life now, what your plans for the future are, ask for help with any problems you are experiencing now. When you have completed the letter share with a close friend, family member, Elder or sponsor. If it is possible for you to do so, burn the letter and let the smoke symbolize your prayer is heard and will be answered.

Date _____

Dear _____,

Step Three

Made a decision to turn our will and our lives
over to the care of God as we understood Him

Step Three asks us to make a decision to recover with the help of God or the Creator. Faith and trust in a Higher Power is required. In what ways do I need to change my behaviour to help myself in my recovery program and to become more intimate with people I love and the Higher Power, God, or the Creator as I understand him. Our behaviour reflects how intimate we can become with the people we love and our relationship with the Creator. Controlling thoughts and behaviours towards myself and others prevents true intimacy. Step Three asks us to turn our will, life and our addiction over to the Higher Power, God or the Creator.

How have I been selfish and self-centred in my relationships?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

In what ways have I been self destructive?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

What fears do I have turning my will and life over to a Higher Power, God or the Creator? When you have completed this exercise share your feelings with a sponsor, close friend or Elder.

Dealing with feelings during the early recovery process is a big step. Feelings of grief, shame, anger and fear will begin to surface during this period. Recognition of the feeling is the first step to dealing with these feelings.

As your addiction grew a relationship or bond with alcohol or drugs became increasingly important to you. As this relationship grew other relationships with people or activities you loved became less important in your life. Now you have chosen to restrengthen your relationship to yourself, loved ones and the Higher Power.

Write a letter to your drug of choice describing how this relationship made you feel, think and do. Were there any feelings of shame because of your behaviour, anger towards yourself or others, fear and guilt you may have experienced during your using time or when you made the decision to quit? Say good bye and grieve that loss as you would any loss.

Dear:_____ (drug of choice)

When completed share this letter with a sponsor, close friend or family member or Elder and burn it to symbolize the completion of that step. It may bring up feelings of loss, grief and this is to be expected as we move on to another phase of our life.

Relaxation and Reflections

Step Three is a powerful process and it takes time to readjust and ground yourself. When completed, don't forget to take care of yourself and take a well deserved break in one, two or three of the following ways that are listed below.

Take four deep breathes and take one or a few of the following breaks.

- Have a cup of herbal tea
- Read a novel
- Listen to a meditation tape
- Go for a long quiet walk or jog
- Sit in a hot tub or steam room
- Watch a video
- Go to a movie
- Watch the sunset or sunrise
- Journalize your experience
- Take a leisurely nap
- Play in the park with a child
- Ask for a hug
- Write a letter
- Give a hug to a family member
- Find a quiet place
- Sit in the sun
- Phone your sponsor
- Smudge yourself
- List your accomplishments
- Talk to an Elder
- Go to an AA meeting
- Listen to your favourite song
- Rock in a rocking chair
- Talk to a good friend
- Draw or paint a picture
- Go to a sweat or ceremony
- Say the Serenity Prayer
- Compose your own prayer

Step Four

Made a searching and fearless
moral inventory of ourselves

In Step Four, we really look at ourselves, our strengths, our weakness, our past and our present situation. Self honesty is the cornerstone of continued sobriety and as we reveal ourselves it is important to remember that our thinking helped us to support our denial of our addiction. Now we need to look at ourselves more realistically, openly and honestly.

As chemically dependent people our attitudes, behaviours and actions have lead to unwanted results and misunderstandings. We need to strip away protective layers of denial and defence mechanisms one by one. As we strip away this baggage living becomes more joyful, stress free and rich with many reasons to celebrate the accomplishments we have made.

Irresponsible to Responsible Living

Examples of how I've been irresponsible in my thinking and actions and what happened because of it.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now I am becoming more responsible in the following ways and the results are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Dishonest to Honest Living

Examples of how I've been dishonest and what happened because of it.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now I have taken the following steps to become more honest and the results of this are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Jealousy to Trustful Living

Examples of my jealous behaviour and what happened because of it.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now I have begun to trust others in the following ways and the results are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Self Pity to Self Worth

Examples of how I felt sorry for myself and what happened because of it.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now I've learned to believe in myself in the following ways and the results are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

False Pride to Modesty

Examples of my false pride and what resulted from that thinking.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now I accept my self unconditionally all my strength and weakness and the results are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Resentment to Forgiveness

The resentments I have felt and the results of that thinking are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

I have forgiven myself and others for the following and the results are:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Intolerance to Patience

Examples of the ways I have been intolerant to other's believes, opinions and feelings.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Now I have begun to show patience with myself and others, list one or two examples of how you have done this.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

List one or two examples of how you are patient with yourself and others.

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

Step Five

Admitted to God, to ourselves and to another
human being the exact nature of our wrongs

Step five is the verbal self-disclosure of the inventory completed in step four. Sharing our life, our story, with another person helps to strip away layers of denial. As we strip away the layers, our interactions with others becomes more authentic and meaningful. Our self-disclosure rids us of guilt, fear and shame and begins to pave a more enlightened road to recovery.

Your goal in Step Five is to voice who you are, what you are, what you have been and what you have done. You may use Step Four Inventory as a guide but talk freely and let it flow as a story should. Remember this is the story of your life, speak the truth and you will gain self knowledge which is the foundation of recovery. Be as direct and honest as you can. This openness and willingness to change will move you further along your recovery path.

Some things that you need to consider prior to Step Five:

1. Write down the names of one or two people who you feel comfortable with sharing your story. Choose someone who understands the A.A. program and is a compassionate listener.
2. Identify some fears and feelings you may have in sharing your story and talk it out with a trusted friend. Are you harbouring negative feelings that may get in the way of completing this step successfully, what can you do to nurture a positive attitude going into this step.
3. If possible, obtain a copy of "The Big Book". Read and meditate on Chapter Five and Six and review your Step Four inventory.
4. Identify what you most want to accomplish by giving your Fifth Step.
5. Decide in what setting you would feel most comfortable and make arrangements for who, what and where you will do your Step Five.
6. Think about how you will reward yourself after completing Step Five. And take any one or more of the recommended breaks.

All the self knowledge gained from Step Four and Five helps you to understand yourself in a more realistic light, your strengths and weakness. You will take this knowledge with you into recovery and it becomes your road map to a healthier happier life of sobriety. Trusting another person in Step Five is important and will become increasing important as you continue with the rest of the steps.

Draw a picture of how you want your new life to look like including everything that you care for and appreciate.

Step Six

Were entirely ready to have God
remove all these defects of character

In Step Six we look at our defects of character those behaviour mechanisms we originally learned as survival tools. As we grew up we learned ways to behave or think that helped us to get out of difficult situations or to protect ourselves from harm, these we call defence mechanisms. Defence mechanisms such as minimizing our problems, projecting our insecurities onto others, procrastination putting off things we can do now,

Just as we admitted we were powerlessness over alcohol in Step One and asked a power greater than ourselves to help us in Step Two.

List those defects of character that you are willing to turn over.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

List those qualities that you presently have which will help to lessen your stress.

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

Step Seven

Humbly asked Him to
remove our shortcomings

In each of the Steps we overcame obstacles, and worked through our struggles to avoiding using again. In this step we humbly ask God or the Creator to help us in removing the defects of character because we've learned we cannot do it alone. It's important to know that God or the Creator accepts us unconditionally with our defects of character and all. It is not an act of defeat of who we are but an acknowledgement of what we need to continue to work on daily. Our lack of faith may stand in the way initially. Perhaps the first thing we need to do is be honest to God or the Creator about our lack of faith.

Exercise:

Daily meditation, reflection and prayer will assist you in keeping on track of yourself. Compose a prayer any length that you choose that honours your daily commitment to sobriety and ask for the help that you need to prevent relapse.

Prayer

Step Eight

Made a list of all persons we had harmed,
and became willing to make amends to all of them

In Step Eight we list all those people we have harmed whether it was intentionally or unintentionally through words, thoughts, feelings and actions. Thoughtful consideration of the following is necessary for this step. This may be a long, difficult, soul searching process which could take some time and effort. Talk with your sponsor or Elder for guidance.

1. List the names of persons harmed, not only those closest to you but also the casual friendships or acquaintances.
2. What specific harm was done to these individuals? Record the memories, including your behaviour, words, thoughts and feelings. What were the other person's reactions?
3. What are your thoughts, reflections or interpretations about what happened?

Making Amends

Use the space below to complete the list of whom you would like to make amends with your additional thoughts or feelings based on the questions above.

1. _____

_____

_____

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9. _____

_____

_____

10. _____

_____

_____

Step Nine

Made direct amends to such people whenever possible,
except when to do so would injure them or others.

Now that the list is complete and we have considered the person, specific event, our thoughts, our feelings, it is time to consider our intentions and to keep them in focus when speaking with the person we are making amends to. Remember to be gentle with yourself and that person. It takes time to think and feel your way through the process.

1. What are your intentions or motivation when considering making the amend? Do I want to clear up the differences and hopefully become closer to the person? Making amends does not always end with reconciliation. But know that by making the amend, you have taken care of your end of the situation and have made a conscious decision to relate to people in a more positive way.
2. What specifically are you going to do to make amends, simply saying "I'm sorry." may make up for what happened. Or a specific activity may be necessary. You may not be able to reach the person and a commitment to live your life differently may be the only amend possible. In some situations, further contact may cause more harm to that person, or others, and respecting that boundary will be healthy for you and that person.
3. Record the date that the amend was made on your "making amends" list.
4. Update your sponsor as you make your amends.

After you have contacted the person you may need to take a reflection break and meditate on the process, or speak with your sponsor or Elder to affirm your actions.

Step 10

Continued to take personal inventory, and when we were wrong promptly admitted it.

Daily integration of the program principals of being honest with ourselves, God or the Creator and exploring both our strength and weaknesses will keep us on the track to sanity. Daily monitoring of our inventory, both strengths and weakness will emphasize balance and allow us to focus on ourselves and our responsibilities. Commitment to this process helps us to grow spiritually, mentally, and emotionally. In our continuous review of ourselves we need to admit wrong doings and promptly admit this to prevent us from carrying guilt and shame.

Daily Activities

1. Daily readings from the Big Book and the 24 Hours Book.
2. Daily meditation and reflection on the program principals and traditions.
3. Daily journal writing to review the day and remind us of what is important.

Step 11

Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with God as we understood Him, praying only for knowledge of His will for us and the power to carry that through.

Getting in touch with our spirit happens on a daily basis as, moment to moment, we review our attitudes and behaviours. Are our attitudes and behaviours healthy for us? Are they bringing joy to our lives. This is a personal dynamic process which is improving our connection with God or the Creator on a continuous basis. Spirituality is your personal connection with God or the Creator that will manifest in your life in creative, satisfying, healthy and life affirming ways.

Daily Activities

1. Daily prayer in the morning and at night to review yourself and your relationship to God or the Creator. Remember that prayer can help during the day if we are experiencing difficulties.
2. Attending sweats or ceremonies to ask for guidance and support as often as we need to.

Step 12

Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps,
we tried to carry this message to others,
and to practise these principles in all our affairs.

Step 12 is about sharing your progress and knowledge with others who are beginning their journey. When you have lived and worked the program you become a role model for those just starting out. Remember those days of emotional confusion and turmoil? Your ability to be a sponsor and assist another person (sponsee) through these difficult times is what "carrying the message" means.

Some of the benefits of sponsoring new members are:

- Your appreciation of the program and it's benefits in your life deepen.
- Modelling helps to teach you what you need to continue practising.
- By helping others you develop strong bonds and give back what you have received.
- Hearing new stories reaffirms how far you have gone.
- Become clear as to your own definition of sobriety

Some of the things you need to consider when sponsoring are:

- Work hard to understand your sponsee's story
- Support the sponsee emotionally
- Teach the sponsee the basics of your particular program
- Help the sponsee to focus on the steps of the program
- Be honest with your sponsee about how you see them working the program
- Give lots of positive affirmation to the sponsee to help them continue their struggle.

Conclusion

Now that you have completed the last of ***The 12 Steps***, you may be filled with a sense of gratitude and completion of ***The 12 Steps*** is a milestone in your new life of sobriety. Cherish your accomplishment as you would any gift that brings you pleasure, laughter and tears.

Voices: Something to Think About

My Elders taught me, that we live by example and teach by experience and if I wanted to teach my children, or anybody else, how to live life, I have to walk the walk and talk the talk, not just speak it , or think it, or say, I am Aboriginal, or go to a pow wow and say, I have been to a pow wow, that makes me Aboriginal and traditional, because it doesn't. I had to walk this way. I had to live this way. They taught me that my traditions are not a religion, or just part of spirituality, but it is a way of life and it is something that I try to incorporate, for myself, my children, my thoughts, my family, everybody that I have known. It is the only thing, when people say, what did you get out of your crimes? I got to realize through one of my fasts, I used to think that everybody did me wrong and I did have a lot of abuses in my life, but I never, ever counted the abuses I did to other people, my children, being stoned and not caring whether they were fed, or if they were in a safe house, or if they were playing with a dirty needle on the floor. My mother, who was also very abusive towards me, it didn't give me the right to abuse her back and I abused her totally. I stole her money, I stole her cars, didn't give very much faith, didn't give her very much support which is an abuse. My family, my friends, people I didn't know, I mean like, all the people that I robbed, the old people that I robbed. I stole from them, not only their money, I abused them totally. I took their safety of the street and their belief in mankind, away from them. Who did I think I was, to do this to another human being? It gave me an honest look at how I could stop it, what needed to be changed and what needed to be changed was that whole cycle of abuse. I need to stop it, not only for me, but for my family and for my children, especially for my children, because I thought, I am going to die one day and if I leave my children with the legacy of, that this cycle of abuse is all right to continue with, then I am passing them on all my garbage and I might as well just invite them to go right downtown and do drugs with me right now and not give them a chance at life.

Mary, age 36; record for robbery, possession of stolen property, prostitution, possession of narcotics.

The smell of sweet grass, whether it is in an institution or outside of an institution, it still smells the same, it smells good. It gave me a sense of rejuvenation. All the dreams I dreamt about when I was a little Indian boy, those dreams now are going to be coming to existence. I started letting my hair grow and as I was letting it grow, I came to understand more of the culture, I wanted more information about the culture, I wanted more information from the Elder, so I would hang around there. I wanted to go on a fast, I didn't know what a fast was. I went on a fast, my first fast, I stayed on the fast for four days and four nights. Oh boy, what a trip. The more rejuvenated I became, more of the programs, I started looking at people with a different light. I started seeing people as people, as individuals. The color didn't make any difference now, white, black, yellow or red, it didn't matter, they were all individuals. As I was getting all this information from the Elder, it was just like I was growing while I was inside. I realize I was standing out from the other inmates, you know from the other cons and that I was standing out and I was staying out in the clear and I was always in the clean, burning sweet grass, fasting. I fasted, I prayed and I was becoming a happy man. I was starting to become me. It had nothing to do with full parole or day parole or anything, but anything I applied for, I got. I was amazed, I was fascinated. Even the guards were talking to me as an individual, rather than saying hey you old con or whatever and I was really saying to myself, right, this is what I needed, what I needed the most was knowing and understanding that Aboriginal culture is a radiant culture.

Richard, age 40; record for robbery, assault causing bodily harm, inciting a riot, attempted murder, break and enter, pointing a firearm, hijacking, kidnapping, dangerous use of a firearm.

I'm glad that they introduced these into like all jails or mostly all jails, because for myself like I didn't like A.A. I got turned off by A.A., but I believed in my Indian ways, like from listening to my grandparents from a long time ago, as a child growing up with grandparents, like Indian sweats and going to sweats. So when they introduced that into the jail, I would sooner go to that than A.A., because that was the Indian way and for me that helped me start off my sobriety. It was just by sweats alone, because I wanted to follow my Indian culture and that involves not drinking, not hurting people, to help people, respect people. Introducing all these sweats and pipe ceremonies and all that, I think that's good, good for institutions for Aboriginal people. I think some of these Aboriginals, it would help them to start up that, look at the values of life, going to sweats, listening to Elders and then they can start from there. Once they respect themselves and respect life they will see things differently. I think that is good.

Ralph, age 36; record for impaired driving, break and enter, assault, theft, mischief, resist arrest.

I think Bowden was my turning point in my life, because Elders started coming in there, not as, see in Drumheller you got an Elder once every six months, Bowden was more free. Elders were coming in, gees, every God darn weekend sort of, every Brotherhood week, every meeting and this was attracting me. The more I sent letters out for Elders, the more they came and I organized a pow wow there and pretty soon I took advantage of these Elders and started asking them questions and talking to them and oh boy, they were just feeding the information... While I was in Bowden my grandma passed away. Holy, I had no parents to go home to now. Like, gees, those were my mom and dad and that was my home. Now I don't even have a home to go home to, even if I tell the Parole Board I am going home, where is home, you know? I didn't know. Holy smokes I thought, what is happening here. So now in Bowden all of these Elders are giving me encouragement and I am learning everything all over again what my grandparents taught me. Spirituality was coming back, hey this is the thing! Up until then I used to smoke a lot of pot in jail, a lot of pot, hash, grass and even speaking with these Elders I used to keep on smoking up in there and finally, it was about I think six months before my release, it was my very first day parole that was granted to me. A week after January, about January 12th I think I quit in there. I quit toking up everything and I started really getting Elders to talk to and speak to and everything. Oh God, they helped me a lot. They brought back all of the things I was taught as a kid growing up, everything and the strengths were coming back, my intention was coming back as being good.

Gary, age 36; record for break and enter, dangerous use of a firearm.

I think that to the healing process, I can't say that the Sweat will help anybody that don't believe, but it helped me because I believe. Everybody has their own way of living and they should challenge it, live up to it, like their beliefs and that is a starting point for them. Get away from negative people, stick around with the winners all the time. That is the one thing I have noticed about myself, I don't hang around with losers anymore. I hang around with people that I know that are trying to heal themselves and they are into all that, all that healing process of life, the positive things in life, like they do good things for people all the time. Those are the people I hang around with and those are the ones I call my friends nowadays, not people who give me money and call me my friend and stab me in the back five minutes later. I have a lot of friends, in all kinds of races, not only Aboriginal, the white, the black, the Chinese. They are all friends. I don't look for them tough guys anymore, because I used to be one and it wasn't fun."

Henry, age 45; record for auto theft, mischief, assault, murder.

Your Notes:

The Spiritual Journey

Every human being is meant to be in relationship with themselves, the earth, the birds, other people, their ancestors, with everything. A balance of mind, body, feeling, and spirit is necessary for personal and family stability and harmony within the community. Any journey of healing cannot ignore the spiritual dimension that includes such elements as prayer, traditional practices and customs, kindness, respect, sharing and honesty which help create balance and harmony in our relationships. These practices and customs also teach the values of Aboriginal spirituality, in particular, includes teaching on the Sacred Circle, Sweat Lodge Ceremonies, Smudging, Fasting, Women's Ceremonies, Potlatch Ceremonies, The Pipe Carrier, Numerical Symbols, The Medicine Wheel, the Talking Stick and the Healing Circle.

Sacred Circle

The Sacred Circle is also known as the Circle of Life. Within this circle is all of what makes life possible. Much like the gift of a wedding ring of gold in the Christian faith, the Sacred Circle has no beginning and no end. We are all part of this Circle, each beginning and ending were we began. (One should take the opportunity to see the Lion King, which is Walt Disney's feature movie about a young lion cub's journey through the *Circle of Life* to claim his rightful heritage as King. It is available in most video rental stores.)

It is believed by many Aboriginal people that there are four circles within the Sacred Circle. We travel from the Spirit Circle to the Birth Circle. In this Birth Circle, we travel until the time we become of age. This is not a number such as eighteen years but a time when our bodies are no longer those of children. When this event occurs, we move to the Adult Circle. This is the most difficult circle of all.

This is the time of marriage, children and many temptations. We leave this circle once all of our children are grown and our responsibility is finished. From the Adult Circle, we move to the Elder Circle. Again, this circle is easier - much like the Birth Circle. Once again we are able to focus more deeply on our personal self. In this circle, we find the many teachings of life and

the ability to pass these teachings on to the younger ones. As our time in this physical life grows short, we find ourselves moving closer to the Spirit Circle from where we were born into this Sacred Circle of Life.

Inside most correctional facilities, everything is "square." All areas are set-up in the "box" or "easy flow" pattern. For Aboriginal people who are somewhat traditional, this may be uncomfortable. For some, it is most difficult to think in a "box-shaped" area. Some Aboriginal peoples find that the constant exposure to this type of arrangement brings on feeling of anger. Many Aboriginal people, when placed inside of facility, try to "round off" their area. This is done not to cause a problem but to make themselves feel safe. All that is life for Aboriginal people is seen through circles!

Sweat Lodge Ceremony

The Sweat Ceremony is understood by many Aboriginal people in the West Coast area to have been bought from the Plains. Like most Aboriginal people of the world, the Sweat Ceremony was part of history. Only today are the old ways of this Ceremony starting to resurface.

The Sweat Ceremony is a time of purification for an Aboriginal person. This is the time when they can gain a balance within themselves. This Ceremony can be compared to the practice of the Catholics known as confession. Just as what is said in the confessional is private and personal, so too is what happens inside of the sweat lodge. When a person enters this small enclosure, it is said that he is returning to the womb of his/her mother, the earth. Inside is found a pit containing rocks, a bucket of water, several other people, and, at times, a pipe and/or shakers. The person conducting this Ceremony can be seen as sitting in the seat of the Priest. Through his or her directions, each person in turn speaks about that problem or request which he or she has brought to the Ceremony. What is said by those taking part in this Ceremony is not to be taken out of this enclosure by any person who hears what is said. All who take part in this Ceremony know this and respects confidentiality.

Nothing said inside of the enclosure can be used against a person for any reason. What is said is done to allow the person speaking to remove a burden, a hurt, a problem. It is not a time to point fingers or to pass information to cause harm to another. It is a time of purification and rebirth.

When a Sweat Lodge is built, it is most important the area around the enclosure be kept clean and undisturbed. The area should be respected for what it is – a sacred spiritual area. Only the people taking part in the Ceremony should be allowed to enter.

Items which are used or could be used for this ceremony are:

- Small hut style enclosure made of willow covered canvas;
- Firewood;
- Stones which are a special type and may require being gathered away from the immediate area;
- Water, containing herbs, the most common of which is cedar;
- Bowls, bucket, and dipper which are used to hold water and to pass offerings to those who take part;
- Shovel, pitchfork, rake, axe, and crowbar which are used during the Ceremony for moving the rocks from one place to the other, for preparation of the grounds, and for clean-up;
- Many different herbs and tobacco; most common of these are cedar and sage; Note: sage has a pungent smell of burning leaves;
- Pipe Bundle which can contain as few items as a pipe, tobacco, matches and a cloth to many items such as stones, herbs, shells and pouches and, when used, only the Pipe enters the Lodge;
- Feathers and fans most often made of eagle feathers though hawk, raven and owl feathers are also used. Other feathers used are goose, turkey and cormorant;
- Blankets and towels are used to wrap in before and after the Ceremony.

Smudging

Smudging is an *every day* act which is done by the Aboriginal person to help them maintain their balance. This is done in several ways, depending upon in which area of Canada you are residing.

People of the east use mainly sweet grass. Those of east-central and the plains area use sweet grass and sage[3]. Those of the west coast use a fungus found growing on trees in moist areas. There are times other items are used depending upon the need of the person. Other items which are used in this manner are cedar, tobacco, and a mixture of tree bark and leaves.

The Potlatch

Potlatch is a word meaning to give or giving. It is a word used to describe many types of ceremonies which are held throughout British Columbia and the Yukon. These ceremonies include feasts to name newborns and new chiefs. They also include ceremonies to mark the passing of relatives and titles. An important form of potlatch was the initiation of family members into medicine societies and dance societies.

To an Aboriginal person, to give means many things. It can mean giving up his or her personal time to go and witness cultural ceremonies. It can mean giving up a way of life in order to become a spiritual leader. The most common form of giving is giving up of behavioural disorders in order to grow and to become a more complete person. Everyone who attends a potlatch is seen as one who gives. To the host family, to give means they are demonstrating to the Creator they are not attached to material things.

The right to give a potlatch varies from tribal group to tribal group. In some areas, only the head Chief can give a potlatch. In other areas, anyone can give a potlatch.

The Aboriginal inmate may give a potlatch or have a give-away. This is very important to that person. It very well could mark the beginning of healing for the inmate.

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[3]Tobacco is also used as an offering for help when a person is in need.

Support should be given in the way of respect, encouragement and appreciation. The give-away may include money, handmade crafts or simply cigarettes.

The Pipe Carrier

Contrary to popular belief, a pipe carrier is not always a medicine man or woman out trying to bring peace with their Peace Pipe. Pipe carriers are those chosen by the Elders to carry the burdens of the people. They are people who have a special gift such as an ability to speak with children, or to make time of great pain bearable. They are everyday people who carry a pipe for their people, who carry a gift for the people and who are the people. Some of the pipe carriers are medicine people and use their pipe during such ceremonies. These medicine pipe carriers are what the non-Aboriginal community would call their general practitioners. They take care of the everyday hurts. Some of these medicine pipe carriers have a special area of medicine which they see as a gift.

Fasting

Fasting Ceremonies are done in different ways across the country according to the local teachings. However, the purpose of fasting is the same: to teach, to be guided through the messages of your dreams, to get in touch with your inner self.

The period of fasting is a minimum of four days and nights, depending on the teachings of the different times. During the Fast, there can be visitors who will provide support to the faster by smudging or smoking their pipe. The person fasting gives up all comforts of life. While fasting, everything around you becomes significant-the bugs, the plants, the natural surroundings of Mother Earth.

If a person wishes to fast, he/she may approach an Elder for assistance and guidance from the start to finish of the fast. The Elder will take you through the fast.

Women's Ceremonies

When an Aboriginal woman has her time (menstrual cycle), there is a very different set of teachings than those of the non-Aboriginal woman. In the Aboriginal society, this 'Moon Time" is seen as a gift from the Creator and is treated as such. It is a time when the Aboriginal woman centres herself and keeps to herself. It is a time seen by the Aboriginal woman as her power time and she is careful not to approach a man, indicating that she is showing respect to the men at this time.

When a young woman comes of age in Aboriginal peoples traditional lifestyle, it is a time of joy and ceremony. It is seen as a time when the one that was once a child has become a woman and has stepped into the Adult Circle. It is also seen as the time for giving notice that the young one is now ready to take a husband. In days gone by, the girl was expected to be married before her next "moon." This marriage was usually to a much older man as the young men could not afford to give the parents as many gifts as the older men. So most young girls were given to their first husbands who were twenty to thirty years older than they.

Today, there are still many ceremonies which take place for the young girls when this time comes. It is still a community celebration and a time for gift-giving by the girl's family. Few marriages are arranged today but possible husbands are allowed to come forward.

As a woman grows older in age, many of the things she is taught at the time of her "First Moon" will follow her.

Respecting anything that belongs to a man by not touching it or stepping over it and not cooking for a man are a few examples of what a woman would not do at this time.

The Medicine Wheel

The Medicine Wheel is an example of a teaching that is done using circles or a wheel. Within this teaching, all that one needs to know about life can be found. Each of the directions of the compass holds many teachings of life. From these teachings, one can learn how to approach life. Each of these directions has an animal, a flower, a medicine, a wind, a helper and a trickster. Many Aboriginal people follow the teachings of the Medicine Wheel.

The Medicine Wheel is a teaching method which does not require the use of any herbs, grasses or bundle items. The Medicine Wheel is a blueprint or an outline to show you how to attain a good, free, clean and peaceful way of life. This makes the Medicine Wheel teaching one that is quite easy to use inside the correctional facility by the Aboriginal people. Medicine Wheel teachings are known throughout North America.

To the Aboriginal people, the Medicine Wheel has been laid down by the Creator to enable Aboriginal people to attain a balanced way of life. It enables the Aboriginal people to better understand the physical and spiritual world around them, including Sacred Drum, the Pipe, the Sacred Bundles, the Sun Dance and the Potlatch.

The Medicine Wheel is made up of special stones which are smudged and arranged into a circle. The placement of each stone requires a prayer to that direction and an offering. When completed, the circle will contain twelve stones.

The Medicine Wheel outlines the personal journey which each Aboriginal person will take in this physical world. The teaching of each direction outlines the journey which will take place within that direction at various stages of life.

It is the responsibility of each Aboriginal person to ensure the journey of life is completed. The Medicine Wheel is there to assist in this responsibility. The gift of the Medicine Wheel teachings can best be said this way:

> Upon birth, the Aboriginal person is endowed with a special gift. Through vision and sacrifice, this gift is recognized. This gift is then to be used to assist ourselves and others around us. Only then can we continue upon our journey around the *Medicine Wheel of Life*, opening doors toward a completion of the cycle and the next world.

The Talking Stick

Within the Aboriginal communities across Canada there exist two types of Talking Sticks. One is used during Sacred Circle ceremonies as a point of order, the other is used to identify a family's history at a Potlatch Ceremony.

The Talking Stick which is used during Sacred Circle Ceremonies is most often a beaded stick with an eagle feather attached. This Stick is used during the ceremonies to aid those participating to focus. Through the use of the feathers of this bird, the Aboriginal person can hold his or her connection to the Creator close to their heart.

The other Talking Stick is used during the Potlatch Ceremony. This Talking Stick is used by the West Coast people to identify a family's lineage and tribal origin. The heads of the family are the only ones entitled to own or use a Talking Stick.

The Talking Stick is made of cedar and has carved crests of a particular family. Through the identity that this Stick gives the ranking order within the Potlatch system is kept.

At the time of a Potlatch, a Talking Stick is used by those chiefs who wish to speak. Only the chiefs and the family head can use this Talking Stick.

The West Coast Aboriginal people value this Talking Stick as an extremely sacred item. It should be treated as such.

Talking Sticks, both large and small, beaded or unbeaded, are all sacred objects. They are the object which sets the discipline for the ceremonies. When holding the Stick and speaking, the person is embracing the sacred quality of the ancestor figures and the gifts they have given to the people. Respect, patience, listening and speaking skills are all being taught and being learned at the same time.

This Talking Stick is an item which is most sacred and should be treated as such!

Symbols - The Number Four (4)

Aboriginal Peoples lifestyle is one with nature. In nature the number four plays a large part. There are four seasons, four stages of plant development, four parts to a day, and the year can be divided into four equal parts. All of these items have a direct or indirect effect on the Aboriginal people. Life is described in the Aboriginal teachings as "Four Circles of Life". Birth, Youth, Adult and Elder make up these circles. Each circle has many teachings that aide the person on his or her journey through this physical life.

To all Aboriginal people throughout North America, the number four is an integral spiritual part of life. When the Creator gave us life, He expressed His vision in circles of four: the four races of the world; the four elements of the world; the four aspects of the human being; and the four cycles of all life. Other ways in which the number four is part of the Aboriginal person's lifestyle are:

- Four Stages of Life
- Four Winds
- Four Seasons
- Four Levels Above
- Four Levels Below
- Four Days of Death's Journey
- Four Stages of the Moon
- Four Parts of the Pipe

- Four Days of Fasting
- Four Nights of Fasting
- Four Parts of Family

Aboriginal people have taken the gift and placed it into all aspects of their daily lives. All spiritual ceremonies use the number four. Each day is broken into four spiritual parts, those being:

- Morning - Spiritual Time
- Afternoon - Domestic Time
- Evening - Family (Fun) Time
- Night - Transition Time

The significance of the numbers to the Aboriginal people is universal. Each tribal group has a similar approach in understanding of certain numbers. Numbers that have special meaning to Aboriginal people are such numbers as three (3), four (4), 11, and 12.

Sensitivity and awareness to this concept will help promote a better understanding of Aboriginal Spirituality. All of these are part of the life cycle of the Aboriginal person.

Clan System

The Clan System of the Aboriginal people is the way in which the people were able to keep their blood clean from interbreeding.

The Clan Systems varies among the Aboriginal people, from two clans to seven clans. The Aboriginal people of the west coast follow the two-clan system. Within this system you find the Raven (crow) Clan and the Wolf Clan. These two clans are divided into several families. A Wolf Clan person must marry a Raven Clan person, and so forth. In this clan system, all four parent families are considered to that bloodlines are not crossed. In the west coast area, the clan system is held to very tightly.

When an Aboriginal person ends up in the correctional system to pay for an action against the non-Aboriginal society rules, he or she faces more than time inside. The shame brought to bear

by the clan and families is waiting when this person is released from the facility. While inside, the Aboriginal person will be given instructions by his or her Family Head as to what is expected upon their release. The families in the clan must ready themselves for a Potlatch with every member of the families donating to the ceremony.

This form of "double jeopardy" is faced by all Aboriginal people who find themselves in conflict with the non-Aboriginal laws.

Under the two-clan system, there are head clan people that hold the position of clan Chief. These people are seen as the ones that have final say on when and where the Potlatches are to be held. Under the clan chiefs are found lower clan chiefs and the family heads. These people are responsible for keeping the family dances and family songs alive. They also have a family Elder that knows all of the family names and how they are to be given.

Aboriginal people that follow the seven-clan system have a similar way in which they keep their blood clean. It is understood that members of the same clan cannot marry. To do so would be seen as marrying your brother or sister. Under the seven-clan system, there are two head or chief clans and one clan that sets between as a decision maker if a tie or deadlock is faced by the two chief clans. Under this clan system, there is a clan 'in charge' of protection/medicine, one in charge of the spiritual side of life, one made up of the warriors and one that all of the gentle people belong. Under this type of system, all parts of the day to day life of the people is seen to.

Across Canada today, these clan systems still exist but not to the extent that they did before contact with Europeans. Those that follow the seven-clan system are not as tightly together as those that follow the two-clan system.

People of a specific clan have foods that they should not, or cannot, eat. Those of the Fish Clan most generally do not eat fish, those of the Deer Clan do not eat any form of wild four-legged animal, those of the Bird Clan do not eat certain wild birds. Among the clans are certain foods that are not eaten because of the uses that they have as a medicine or as a ceremony item. These foods vary from area to area. Requesting a list of these from one of the Elders in your area would be recommended.

Seven Fires Prophecy

Among the Anishinabe ("the people"), it is told that seven prophets came many years ago and left the people with seven predictions of what the future would bring to the people. Each prediction was called a fire which represented an era of time. The seven predictions are called the Seven Fires of the Ojibway people.

The First Fire Prophet stated that the people would go and follow the sacred shell of the Medewinin Lodge and a migration would move westward.

The Second Fire Prophet said the nation would live by a body of water and at this time, the strength of the Medewinin would weaken but a young boy would be born to point the way back to the traditional teaching of the people.

The Third Fire Prophet stated the migration to the west would continue and that the people would move to the land where food would grow on water (wild rice).

The Fourth Fire Prophet was given by two prophets: they spoke of the coming of the light-skinned race. One prophet said this race could come wearing the face of brotherhood and a wonderful time of change could take place for many generations to come. He spoke of how the joining of nations could take place and that the joining of these nations could make one mighty nation. He said this could happen if the light-skinned race came wearing the face of brotherhood, no weapons and a handshake.

The other prophet said this race could come wearing the face of death-they would arrive suffering and the Aboriginal peoples could reach out and help them. He stated greed could get in the way of these people and foretold that if the rivers filled with poison and fish became unfit to eat, then the people would know this would be part of the face of death.

The Fifth Fire Prophet foretold of the time when there would be a great struggle for Aboriginal peoples. One would come among the peoples speaking of great joy and salvation and, if the people took this promise leaving their own teachings, there would be sadness and destruction.

The children would turn against their Elders and the Elders would lose their reason for living. The balance of life among the people would be seriously disturbed. A new sickness would be among the people causing much sadness and grief.

The Sixth Fire Prophet stated at this time the peoples would know the time of the Fifth Fire had come to pass. The people would experience a time of great sorrow at the loss of their independence, their freedoms, and their land. Children were taken away to boarding schools at this time. They would lose their language and traditional belief systems. The Elders would begin dying at a very early age as they began to lose their will to live in the loss of the children.

It was also foretold during this terrible time of the people, that visionaries would come among the Anishinabe who would protect the sacred ways of the Medewinin by gathering the sacred bundles and scrolls and hiding them in a hollowed out Ironwood log, buried in a cliff. The visionaries said when it was safe to practice Aboriginal traditional spiritual ways, a young boy would dream of the log and lead the people to it.

The Seventh Fire Prophet was said to be different from the other six prophets. He was young and foretold of the time of the beginning of the Seventh Fire. He said, "a new people will emerge... they will retrace their steps back to the traditional teachings. They will go to the Elders, but many of the Elders will have 'fallen asleep.' They will awaken to this time, some silent because of fear; some because no one will ask of them; and some, still suffering from sicknesses of the Fifth and Sixth Fires. The new people will have to be careful in who they approach and how they ask for help. The tasks of the new people will not be easy." The Prophet said "that if the new people stayed strong in their quest, seeking the guidance of the Creator and helping one another, there will be a re-kindling of the flame and the Sacred Fire will once again burn brightly for the people."

It was also foretold by the Seventh Prophet that it is at this time, the light-skinned race will have to make a choice in the path they choose. If they choose the right road, then the Seventh Fire will light the Eighth and final Fire – an eternal fire of peace, love, brotherhood among all nations. If the light-skinned race chooses the wrong road, then there will be continuing destruction of the human family and the earth.

Traditional Anishinabe have interpreted the "two roads" of the Seventh Fire that the light-skinned race must choose from are the road to "technology" and the road to "spirituality." The road of technology has lead to pollution and damage to not only the earth but, also to the universe. The road to spirituality represents the slower path of respect for all of creation.

One of the prophets from the Fourth Fire spoke of a time when "two nations will join to make a mighty nation." This has never come to pass as yet. At this time, if we can all begin to respect and care for creation and care for one another. Perhaps, we can make that mighty nation which was spoken about in the Fourth Fire.

"Are we the people of the Seventh Fire?"

- Manuel, V. et al.

Conclusion

In this section[4, 5] on ***The Spiritual Journey***, you have reviewed practices and customs that teach the values of Aboriginal spirituality. A faith perspective will help you to maintain a positive approach and balance in one's life. For instance, a daily ritual of prayer, smudging, affirmation of self and others will help bring positive results and harmony in your life.

[4] Material from this section was taken from "B.C. Region Correction Services Training Manual for Correctional Officers."

[5] Elder Frank Wesley, Winnipeg Council on First Nations.

Your Notes:

Your Notes:

Your Notes:

'All My Relations'

A Wellness Workbook

Part II

Introduction - Part II

"The body is full of stuffed tears. Tears of grief and tears of rage and the stream makes the body cry. Then the body is ready to receive love."

- Angeline Locey, Hawaiian Healer and Kapuna

"Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our Spirit feeds upon it... You and I need the strength and joy that comes from knowing we are loved. With it we are creative. With it we march tirelessly..."

- Chief Dan George, Coast, Salish

All My Relations is a wellness workbook designed for use by Aboriginal people. As was noted earlier, it honours and respects individual choice. You may have completed all, or selected sections of, Part I. Part II of this workbook deepens your process of healing by addressing the family, grief, sexual abuse and sexuality.

The first section of Part II is all about understanding ***The Family***. You will learn about the characteristics of a *"healthy family"*, life cycle teachings, family of origin, different kinds of families, family birth orders, and an historical overview of the *"wounded family"*. Step by step exercises will help you examine your own family's history through genogram work.

Leaving, Loss and Grieving begins by presenting you with information on the process and stages of grieving. This section also addresses the various ways of grieving, privately and publically. Your experiences of ceremonies, for example, community "wakes", will be explored. Detailed exercises will guide you through the work of grieving your losses, including those losses associated with being imprisoned. You will also have the opportunity to explore various ways of dealing positively with losses you may face in the future.

Sexual Abuse can be a difficult topic and issue to address. This section provides the information and guidance needed to begin healing if you are a survivor of sexual abuse. Throughout, care is taken to honour and respect your feelings and your right to make choices. This section will also be helpful to those who have not experienced sexual abuse but who wish to be better informed.

Part II ends with ***Sexuality and Spirituality***. An invitation to explore your story in relation to your sexual and spiritual being is the focus of this section.

Part II also continues to include a variety of ***"Voices"***; stories from men and women who have "done time" and found ways to rebuild a balanced and respectful life in the world outside of jail. These stories, along with the words of various other Aboriginal people, especially Elders, are meant to provide you with ***"Something to Think About"***.

Finally, the work you do in this workbook belongs to you. It is important you make the choices concerning the time you spend working in one, or some, or all of the sections included in Part II. It is also important to affirm your needs for support and safety.

By now, you will have found the affirmations that work best for you. You are also encouraged to invent positive sayings of your own choosing. Part II continues to offer you affirmations to read and repeat as a way of planting the seed for a caring and respectful life.

THIS WORKBOOK IS NOT MEANT TO BE A REPLACEMENT FOR THERAPY WITH A THERAPIST OR AN ELDER. IT IS INTENDED TO PROVIDE TIME FOR SUPPORT AND GUIDANCE; AN OPPORTUNITY TO WORK THROUGH YOUR LIFE EXPERIENCES. IF AT ANY POINT YOU FEEL A NEED, IT IS STRONGLY RECOMMENDED YOU SEE AN ELDER OR A THERAPIST OR PARTICIPATE IN A SUPPORT GROUP. THIS IS ONE MORE STEP TO DEVELOP BALANCE IN YOUR LIFE.

Your Notes:

Voices: Something to Think About

Right now, I am doing really good. I don't get involved with people I used to do time with. I don't contact them and even when I see them, I might say hello and good-bye and that is it. I am basically focusing on my family life, because I am getting up there with my age. I am forty-nine years old and I am experiencing arthritis in my legs and I know that I have to keep on working and pay bills and just maintaining my way of life. I have positive thinking now and I have lots of consideration for people, I respect people and that is where it is at.

Henry, age 49; record for murder, break and enter, assault, impaired driving.

Because when I was fifteen when I used to run away from home, where I used to just leave, I would run to my dad's reserve and that is where my grandmother was and I felt safe with her. Even though I drank and was wild, with her the things she used to tell me. I tried to take my life that time and she was the one that talked me out of it. She told me a lot of stuff about Indian ways and the morals, like what is right and wrong. She used to tell me that when I used to go and see her and those things always stuck in my mind. Well, when my grandmother died, that's when all my ways of my life, how I lived, they all started to change and I started thinking of what she used to tell me, to respect people. You have to think of the future she said and after she died, I don't know, I just picked up the things she used to tell me. I never thought of them when she was alive, but after she died it kind of hit me hard. Yes, they started changing slowly, not at once right away and I started to think of my future, like what is going to happen to me too when I die. I didn't want to die an alcoholic and I didn't want to die in jail.

Ralph, age 36; record for impaired driving, break and enter, assault, theft, mischief, resist arrest.

I always smoked up. I was always high. Being in treatment before, I knew that if I wanted to get ahead in life, if I wanted to become a productive, it wasn't for out of my concern for society. As far as I was concerned, society could go and screw itself. It was my sons that I was worried about, because I didn't want to go out there and die, commit suicide and have my sons growing up, thinking that their dad was a loser. That was the real thing that made me straighten out my life, was I didn't want my sons to grow up thinking that their dad was a loser. In May, 1987, I came into Poundmaker's Lodge here and I haven't looked back since. I remember that last drunk though, I was really suicidal. My wife, my ex-wife now, had kicked me out and I just couldn't envision life without my children, without my boys. I only had three boys at that time. I couldn't envision life without them and I just about committed suicide, but it was the thought of my boys thinking that their dad was a loser that made me quit drinking.

Harold, age 25; record for break and enter, joy riding, auto theft, armed robbery, assault, uttering death threats, theft, dangerous use of a weapon.

The Family

WHY THE CREATOR MADE FAMILIES....

When creation was finished,
Each star in its place,
The Creator cradled the earth
In His thoughtful embrace,
and, knowing that there would be
Problems to face,
His wonderful plan came to be....

For He wanted His children
To learn to be strong,
and not become frightened
If things should go wrong.
So He placed in each heart,
a desire to belong,
Somewhere they felt needed, yet free....

Then He added acceptance
and patience and trust,
Love that was selfless
and caring and just,
Where questions were welcome
and laughter a must....
and He called His great gift....

FAMILY

...by Emily Matthews

Introduction[1]

"The last 35 years has brought a new awareness about the impact of families on personality formation. We now understand that families are dynamic social systems, having structural laws, components and rules.

The most important family rules are those that determine what it means to be a human being. These rules embrace the most fundamental beliefs about raising children. What parents believe about human life and human fulfilment govern their ways of raising children.

Parenting forms children's core belief about themselves. Children are any culture's greatest natural resource. The future of the world depends on our children's conception of themselves. All their choices depend on their view of themselves"

- John Bradshaw (1988, p.1)

"If I am in harmony with my family, that is success."

- Ute

In this section we will provide you with an overview of the family plus some exercises to help you understand how the "family system" works, the stages of a family's Life Cycle, and the characteristics of a "healthy" and a "wounded" family. We will also explore your "family of origin" through genogram work. Understanding the personality traits of family birth order will further help you learn about yourself and your family.

[1] Material gathered for this section is drawn from the following sources: Bradsaw on: The Family; Dr. Ronald W. Richardson - Family Ties That Bind, National Native Association of Treatment Directors - In the Spirit of Family; Louise Hay - You Can Heal Your Life; Dr. David Stoop, Ph. D. - Forgiving our Parents, Forgiving Ourselves; Ward Clinebell - Basic Types of Pastoral Care and Counselling; Rev. Murray Still, BTH - Family Systems Therapist (Midlakes Anglican Parish, SK); and, For Generations to Come: The Time is Now - A Strategy for Aboriginal Family Healing - A final report for the Chiefs of Ontario. The purpose of this report was to address Aboriginal family violence in a manner which is culturally appropriate, holistic, on-going and community-based.

Definition of Family

The family is usually defined as a social unit of people living together and in relationship to each other, for example, Mom and Dad to children, brothers to brothers, or sisters to sisters. For some people "relationship" includes the people who live in the same home and who are related by blood. Other people define a family as everyone they are related to by blood and traditional or legal adoption even though some of these people may live in other places.

Question: Who are the people you would include in your family? What are their names and their ages? How are they related to you?

Name	Age	How are they related to you?

What is a Healthy Family?

A functional family is the healthy soil out of which children can grow, become mature and responsible human beings.

Characteristics of a healthy family are:

- provides physical, emotional and spiritual growth and development of each member including parents
- has the ability to provide love, support, guidance, encouragement, moral values, a sense of responsibility and sensitive to the needs of its individual members
- has the ability to grow in spite of whatever trouble comes its way and is able to use crisis as a means of growth
- retains mutual respect for the individuality of each of its members
- children will learn how to become responsible productive community members once they leave the family unit and live on their own
- the individual knows his/her own role within the family and the community and has sense of their own uniqueness or special place within that system
- model healthy lifestyles for our communities
- maintains the Life Cycle teachings and respect for one another's roles within these cycles

Life Cycle Teachings

Knowledge of the life cycle is important in developing healthy families and communities.

Individuals within the family will face four stages in life -- infancy, youth, maturity and old age. These four stages correspond with the four directions, the four seasons, the four colours and the four gifts; physical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and the four elements that make up the world; water, air, mineral and fire. The life cycle recognizes ages and stages of development from birth to death.

All members of the family and community go through the Life Cycle, each of whom are at different stages in life; infants, toddlers, children, youth, young adults, parents, grandparents, great grandparents. Each person has a gift to bring and a role to play in the family and community. To achieve wholeness and stability in the family, individuals will be encouraged to share their gifts and assume their responsibility as they journey through the stages of life.

Infant Stage

Infants bring the gift of joy and love to families from the time of conception to the time of birth. Each family and community member shares in the love, joy and unity of new life and awaiting the new birth in the womb. It is believed infants share the closest union with the Creator; in communication through sounds, laughter, crying and music.

Infants are regarded highly by their Elders, family and community. They are gifts from the Creator and on loan as a blessing to the family and community until such time as the Creator requests their return.

The Eastern direction celebrates infants, toddlers and children in the way that the new day or new season is celebrated.

Toddler Stage

Toddlers bring love, curiosity and exploration of new surroundings. As a continuing gift of the Creator, it is believed that parents must take on the special role of teaching and introducing toddlers to their new surroundings. Elders, family and community members participate in the wonder of curiosity of little toddlers whose each experience is new and whose learning capacity is great. Toddlers learn by experiencing and observing through music, laughter and language.

Much respect is shown to the little ones who represent the movement of the Eastern direction towards the Southern direction. Like the opening of the bud at dawn, the toddler awakens to life in curiosity and learning. East represents peace and light as a gift brought on by the toddlers to their family and community.

Child Stage

Children bring love, respect, caring and sharing to their families and extended families. It is a learning stage where aunties, uncles and grandparents are important for this character building time. Their movement is closest to the South Direction where the seasons of planting and growth are represented. The soft winds of the south remind traditional families that children resemble the soft wind with their laughter and joy in life and growth. There is a need for children to experience people in the most positive way since the child's formative years is also a time for careful nurturing of its values and moral ethics. How the seed was planted and nurtured is very important throughout these stages of development. South represents warmth and growth.

Youth Stage (13 - 17 Years)

Youth bring activity and zest for life and their preparation for the maturing season in their lives already nurtured through teachers, parents and community. They are now regarded as and trained to be, future leaders and highly respected for their visionary ability. Young boys are recognized for their strength and are prepared by their teachers to proceed with and realize their vision quests. Young girls are highly respected for the upcoming role in creation as life givers and are taught by the Elders, parents and community to prepare for their role in life. The youth are represented in the South direction where the season of growth and harvest occurs. As healthy and good harvests are necessary, Elders also see that youth are necessary for the harvest and thus need care, nurturing and love to be able to carry out the traditions taught in the four directions.

Young Adult Stage (18 - 21 Years)

Young adults bring caring and respect for life and are moving toward the West direction which signifies maturity and action. Their characters are already in place from the preceding teachings. It is now time for their self responsibility, self teaching for change, and for testing their characteristics. The end of the day is honoured in this direction to indicate that their childhood is moving toward the harvesting season. They are reminded by the Elders that they too are beginning the harvest of their youth and beginning to travel their own paths. They will now begin their journey as products of their own characters and ready for parenting roles. This is also a journey of many paths off the main road in the search for meaning and understanding. West represents introspection or looking within one's spirit.

Parent Stage

Parents bring love, hope, caring, sharing and teaching to carry on the traditions picked up in the journey from the Elders. Their roles are emerging as they pick up their parents' role as care-givers in their community and their immediate families. It is now their turn to parent their own young and care for their Elders.

They will begin to experience the responsibility to prepare their own children as they were also prepared for the Creator's work. They are designated to work for the growth of their children in recognition of the blessing and gift of the loan from the Creator. They will begin to experience the aches and sorrows in seeing their children leave the nest and enjoy seeing the product of their parenting skills.

Parenting is a time of discovery from the West direction and a time to proceed to that meaning in life for parents who are moving towards the North direction. Their roles are to assist in the meaning and understanding of life and to make clear the vision of life for the future generations.

Grandparent Stage

Grandparents bring love, greater spiritual understanding, and are slowly shifting to the North direction and the stage of wisdom. They bring the teachings and meaning of extended families through the practice of example and role modelling. They are the "aunties" and "uncles" to many children who share in their knowledge and understanding of life and love. They have experienced life in all the stages and should be highly respected depending on their journey in life. They are responsible for teaching the younger generation to live together in harmony, peace, co-operation and caring for each other in the family, community and all the relations. They are picking up the bundles that may be passed on by their Elders because now they have no parenting restrictions on their lives and are free to carry on the teachings in close union with the Creator and the Universe.

Elder Stage

Elders bring greater wisdom, love, spiritual meaning and understanding in their roles as healers, counsellors, guides and keepers of the Aboriginal teachings and ceremonies. The communities and families respect the Elders and value their wisdom and guidance and provide for them as they have provided for their children and grandparents. They are seen as the strength for the positive building of their families and communities through their teachings. Elders also need help to remain strong.

They represent the North direction where spiritual strength and purity are symbolized. It is considered a time for true meditation and contemplation with the spirits in the Four Directions, the Universe and Mother Earth. It is a time to pass on their knowledge to youth since they are considered to have mastered the meaning of joy and sorrow and many trials and tribulations encountered over the course of their own life's journey.

The Elders are now considered to have moved to the North direction where the teachings of true spiritual strength emerge. North represents wisdom, signified by the spirits of the Grandfathers and Grandmothers who stand guarding that direction. North also signifies purity, strength and the beginning of greater spiritual teachings.

Exercise:

Complete the questions on the following pages. They will help you to review your life stages.

Question 1: Can you imagine yourself in the stages of the life cycle that you have lived through? Write a brief description of what you imagined or felt about these stages.

Infant Stage

Toddler Stage

Child Stage

Youth Stage (13 - 17 Years)

Young Adult Stage (18 - 21 Years)

Parent Stage

Grandparent Stage

Elder Stage

Question 2: What did you miss in each of these stages of the life cycle that you have lived through?

Infant Stage

Toddler Stage

Child Stage

Youth Stage (13 - 17 Years)

Young Adult Stage (18 - 21 Years)

Parent Stage

Grandparent Stage

Elder Stage

Question #3: Write a short story about your own growth and what teachings you were given during the life stages that you have lived through.

Infant Stage

Toddler Stage

Child Stage

Youth Stage (13 - 17 Years)

Young Adult Stage (18 - 21 Years)

Parent Stage

Grandparent Stage

Elder Stage

Now that we have looked at the characteristics of a healthy family and our stages of our Life Cycle, let us review the Family of Origin and the different kinds of families there are.

Family of Origin

The family into which you were born is known as your family of origin or your "birth family"; your parents, sisters and brothers, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandparents and great grandparents.

Life in the family of origin is a tremendously powerful experience for everyone and the impact of this experience carries on beyond your childhood. The way we see ourselves, others, and the world is shaped in the setting of our family of origin. The views we develop in the family of origin stay with us throughout life.

Most of us leave our families of origin physically, but leaving them emotionally is not as easy. Even if you travel great distances or never return home again, you will continue to re-enact the teachings of your family of origin in the new family you start. You may do many of the very things your parents did, even though you always swore you would not. One of the most difficult things in life is to gain "emotional separateness" from that powerful early family environment and not continually repeat it or react against it.

The following example of Joanne's experience with her children will help you to understand what is meant by re-enacting your parents teachings. Joanne was a parent of four children who complained that her parents never liked or approved of what she did. She made a rule for herself that, as a parent, she would always praise her children and let them know how much she loved them. One day, to her surprise, her oldest child said to her "Mom, the problem with you is you are always telling us how good we are and we can't believe you because we never hear the other side!"

Please complete the following exercise.

List some examples of things you do now, that you do not like, that your parents did when you lived with your family of origin, even though you always swore you wouldn't do those things. For example, "I did not like always being told to take my shoes off at the door before coming into the house," or "Your clothes need ironing," or " Sometimes, my father hit me when I asked him a question."

List one or two examples of things that you do now, that you like, and your parents did when you lived with your family of origin. For example "I enjoyed going to pow wows," or "I liked when my mom read to me before I went to bed."

Different Kinds of Families

The Extended Family

When a child is born to an Aboriginal man and woman, ALL of the brothers and sisters of BOTH parents become the second set of parents of the child. In some large families, the older brothers or sisters become second parents to the younger children.

The Grandparents are the ones that make many of the decisions about the child's care and teachings and can take the child as their own if need be. Children are not turned out of the home at a certain age. Quite the contrary, the children are expected to stay close to the home even after they are married. This style of family structure has evolved for many centuries because of the lifestyle of the people.

When the men were out hunting or battling, there was always a younger brother to take their place and fill the need of the small child. When the mother was not able to do her usual work because of illness or injury, there was always a sister or brother to help. In this way, a child was never without a father or mother when one was needed. In today's society, this practice has lost some of the far reaching family ties but the immediate family connection is still there.

Exercise:

Can you remember a time when your Mom or Dad were unable to be there for you but another member of your extended family was able to meet your needs? Write an example of a time when your extended family was able to help you.

Adopted Family

The adopted family is made up of those persons not born into the family of origin.

A person can chose to "adopt" another family to live with or the family can choose to "adopt" children to live with them. Usually adoption is a legal process that "binds" a person permanently into the new family.

There is a "traditional" adoption practise in some cultures where grandparents raise their family member's children. In some instances, the adoption is through relatives or friends. The traditional adoption process is based on a belief that children do not belong to us. They belong to the Creator, so it is possible for the adopted child to continue to maintain a relationship with their birth parents and continue to live with their adoptive family.

Exercise:

Write about an example of adoption in your family?

Foster Care Family

Children are often placed, by the Courts, into a family they do not know for their safe protection until the family of origin is stable and safe. This family is a "foster care family".

Exercise:

Have you had experiences with foster care? If so, write about your experiences.

Chosen Family

Sometimes children are raised apart from their birth families, and as adults chose to not be involved with their adoptive or foster family. As adults, they may develop a "chosen family." This family may be made up of close friends, as well as extended family members or their own children.

Exercise:

Have you had experiences with chosen families? If so, write about your experiences

The Single Parent Family

The single parent family is made up of a mother or a father and usually children. As you know, there are many circumstances that could lead to the single parent family, for example, death or divorce.

Exercise:

Was your family of origin a single parent family? If yes, write about your experiences growing up in a single parent family.

Common-Law Family

Common-law unions are made up of two adults (male and female) living together without the legal binding or commitment of a marriage certificate. There may also be common-law unions between "two-spirited" people (same sex).

Often, children born into a common-law union take the last name of the mother rather than the father. In some families, the children are expected to adapt to the new, current partner.

Exercise:

Was your family a common-law family? If yes, write about your experiences growing up in a common-law family.

Some common-law relationships last for many years, even a lifetime. Or in a family there may be a series of short term common-law relationships. What do you think this teaches children about commitment/responsibility?

In a series of common-law relationships what do you think girl children learn about men ? What would girl children learn about being a woman?

In a series of common-law relationships what do you think boy children would learn about the women? What would boy children learn about being a man?

Family Birth Order

Birth order as well as our life cycle teachings and the kind of family we grew up in all go into the pot of our personality formation. The way we think about ourselves and how we react to and treat others outside the family starts with how our family members relate to us as first, last or middle born. The difference in birth positions accounts to a great extent for the tremendous variety of personalities among children of the same parents.

Each child has a different position in the family and understands all the events from his or her own viewpoint. Thus the family atmosphere accounts for similarities in traits and the family birth order influences the differences among children. The oldest child sees things differently from the way the baby of the family sees them.

It is important to recognize that these family birth orders only INFLUENCE an individual's personality development; they do not directly determine it. Each individual makes his or her own decisions. It is also important to note the birth order traits are associated with the first four children born into a family. When there are more than four children (five - 12 additional children) born into a family the fifth child assumes the traits of the first child, the sixth child assumes the traits of the second child, etc.

First Born (Oldest Child)

For a while, the first born is an "only child." Then just when they have become accustomed to their privileged position with their parents, they are displaced by a new baby. The first born is threatened by the newcomer.

When the second child arrives and is a different sex, the negative reactions of the first born are not as dramatic and there is less competition. However, this first born may try very hard to be good so their parents will continue to love them rather than their replacement. Parents unknowingly reinforce this by telling the firstborn that he/she is bigger and smarter than the newborn and therefore superior, even though the newborn now gets most of the parents attention. Parents also expect the first born or oldest to set a good example for younger brothers and sisters and sometimes take care of the younger ones. As a result, first born (oldest) children usually have many parental qualities; they can be nurturing and they are often able to handle responsibility well and assume leadership roles.

Second Born

The second born is confronted with someone who is always ahead. This child may feel inadequate because of the inability to keep up with the older brother or sister. The child may try to seek a place by becoming more of what the older child is not, i.e., more aggressive, more passive, more dependent, more social or more self-sufficient.

Third Child

When the third child is born, the second child becomes the middle child. When the youngest child is born, the third child frequently feels squeezed out, deprived of the rights and privileges of the oldest and of the baby. Both the second and third children may come to believe life is unfair or may decide to overcome the "disadvantaged" position. These children tend to be over concerned with fairness and sticking to the rules.

Youngest Child

The youngest child, like only children, are never displaced by a newborn. They are always the baby of the family, even to the extent that most of them continue to look young or childish even when they are old. Their families also continue to baby them long beyond babyhood.

Because they are the babies of their families, youngest children get a lot of attention. Everyone else in the family feels some responsibility for taking care of the youngest. They are often spoiled in a good way. They learn to expect good things from life, so usually end up being great optimists.

By the time the youngest child arrives, the parents have had experience in parenting so they are more relaxed about being parents and often have fewer expectations of the youngest and put much less pressure on them to achieve. Consequently, they often achieve less and may expect others to solve their problems. Youngest children learn early that it does not work to be aggressive to get their way, so they develop a manipulative style of getting what they want, either by pouting or by being charming. Youngest children who have been treated well as children are usually sociable, easygoing, and popular. Youngest children may sometimes baby-sit the oldest siblings children. If they have been unkindly teased as the youngest, they may be shy and irritable with others.

The Only Child

Since only children are never displaced by younger brothers or sisters they tend to be more at ease with themselves and have a higher self-esteem than oldest children, with less need to control others. They have less resentment of authority and actually expect as well as accept help from others when they need it. Only children generally demand a lot from life. Only children usually excel at school and at most tasks later in life.

Exercise:

Where are you in your family's birth order?

What personality traits do you share in common with your birth order?

What Is A Wounded Family?

The wounded family operates exactly opposite from the healthy one.

> *"The chief component (make-up) in the family system is the marriage relationship. Mom's relationship with herself and Dad's relationship with himself and their relationship with each other is the foundation of the family. The husband and wife are the architects of the family."*
>
> - John Bradshaw (1988, p.61)

Wounded families, or in John Bradshaw's way of speaking, dysfunctional families, are unable to teach their children to live in harmony with one another. They do not have respect for the individuality of each of its members.

The family is unable to provide physical, emotional and spiritual support. Roles are often confused, not flexible and with no clear boundaries. The family remains closed and secretive and often isolated from the rest of the community because of the inability to deal with inner turmoil. Families with these characteristics will produce wounded symptoms such as alcoholism and violence; physical, sexual, emotional and spiritual abuse.

The Wounded Aboriginal Family

It is important for Aboriginal people to know the historical factors that have wounded and hurt their families, causing a loss of their culture and family traditions and, in some instances, the loss of their Native language, which has sustained families throughout past generations.

The breakdown of Aboriginal families began with the arrival of the Europeans in the early 1700's. Along with them came various kinds of diseases never experienced before like Tuberculosis (TB), smallpox and measle epidemics. For example, by the late 1800's it is estimated that 60% of British Columbia's Aboriginal people had died of these diseases (Manuel & Poslums, 1974).

Buffalo herds were nearly exhausted by the Europeans who wasted much of their carcass. Alcohol was introduced and has continued to have a devastating affect upon families to this day.

Traditionally, Aboriginal people celebrated most aspects of life, for example, Rites of Passage through the life stages of birth, puberty and traditional marriages. Government legislation in the 1800's made many Aboriginal ceremonies illegal. For example, the Potlatch was forcibly ended, also Pipes and Drums could be confiscated. This legislation had a devastating affect on the family because traditional teachings could not be passed on.

The impact of missions and residential schools (1830-1960) on Aboriginal people was a loss of connection with their families. Children were taken from their families to these schools which were often very far from their homes where they were not allowed to practice their family traditions and culture and speak their language.

Although First Nation parents had the legal right until 1920 to refuse residential schooling for their children, this does not mean that parents were always free to exercise their right. Adults who found themselves without the means to secure a livelihood for their families and who refused to send their children to residential school, for example, might find themselves denied "food rations" by the Indian Agent (Dickason, 1992; York, 1990).

Establishment of the Child Welfare System also caused family breakdown by removing Aboriginal children from their homes. Many of these children were fostered or adopted into non-Aboriginal families.

As a result of all of the above negative influences on Aboriginal families, we have several generations of people who have not had the opportunity to learn many of their family teachings such as parenting skills, traditional family values, cultural activities and their own language.

Consequently, by not having the opportunity to grow in a healthy environment the Aboriginal family has experienced serious breakdown in its relationships of both close and extended family members. These wounds caused family members to have poor self-image and low self-esteem. Frustration and anger over their loss of power and control caused further breakdown. Family members turned to alcohol and drugs as a way of coping with these losses. Alcohol and drug abuse caused further frustration to families, which sometimes turned into rage causing various kinds of abuses and family violence. Sometimes suicide seem to be the only solution for these frustrations.

Early in the 1970's, Aboriginal families began focusing on re-connecting with their roots and family traditions. Aboriginal family healing and addiction treatment centres were established and operated by Aboriginal people. These were very positive steps towards healing all their hurts and reclaiming power over their lives. The early 1970's saw the ending of residential schools and the beginning of Aboriginal people taking control of their own education. Negotiations began taking place for the development of First Nations Self Government. The 1980's saw Aboriginal people work towards taking control of their own Child Welfare - no longer could Government child welfare workers remove their children from communities without their knowledge or permission. Now in the 1990's, we see that many First Nation Bands have obtained Child Welfare Society Status which means they control their own child welfare systems.

First Nations Tribal Councils are focusing on the re-connection to family traditions, supporting all cultural activities and children are being encouraged to learn and speak their own language. It is also very encouraging to note that many Elders are re-focusing on their responsibilities and reclaiming their respected status in their communities as teachers and healers.

Tribal Councils focus on positive 'role modelling' for their membership. In 1989, one Tribal Chief & Council passed a Band Council Resolution (BCR) that membership on their Council was not allowed unless the individual was sober. To prove their commitment to this resolution this Tribal Council, along with their Band Manager, entered a six week program at an alcohol and drug abuse treatment centre. Their spouses and children also spent two weeks in the program with them. Seven years later, this Tribal Council continues to focus on their healing journey and enjoys 95% sobriety in their community.

In conclusion, it is obvious that many Aboriginal people are beginning to understand their past history and come to terms with it. They are now capable of moving forward and focusing on rebuilding their family relationships, speaking their own language, practicing their traditional values and culture and working towards achieving a healthy environment for their families and communities.

Exercise:

As you were reading the historical overview of the wounded Aboriginal family, what thoughts and feelings entered your mind?

What About My Family?

This exercise will help you to learn more about your family.

What kind of family did you grow up in? Was it your family of origin, extended family, adopted or foster family, single parent family, or common-law family?

Where were you born? What is your heritage? (Status, Non-Status, Métis, Other)

How many brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, nieces and nephews do you have? What are their names, where do they live, how old are they? How well do they know you? List their names, ages and addresses if you can.

What are some historical factors that affected your family?

Write a story about one of the ways the family you grew up in was wounded?

Exercise:

These questions are about your relationship with your family members. While you are answering the questions, you may want to include other pieces of information. Please feel free to do so. Completing this exercise will help to provide you with a very good family map, or genogram, which is the next exercise in this section.

Think about your mother.

Write about the good times you had with her.

Write about the things your mother did, or did not do, that upset you.

What things did your mother make the final decision about in the family?

Think about your father.

Write about the good times you had with your father.

Write about the things your father did or did not do that upset you.

What things did your Father make the final decisions about in the family?

Think about your parents.

Write a story about your mother and father. Ask yourself these questions before you write the story: How well did they get along? Did they speak an Aboriginal language? Did they teach you to speak their language? What kinds of activities did they do together? Where did they live when they first got married? How did they meet each other? When did they get married? How did they celebrate their wedding? Did your parents go to residential school? Are they still married or did they separate or divorce, if so when (date)? Perhaps other questions will also come into your mind before you begin writing your story about your parents.

Think about yourself.

Where did you grow up?

What kinds of activities did you do with your parents? (Eg., Pow wows, shopping, family visiting.)

Did you help with the household chores when you lived at home? How did you help?

What happened when you misbehaved?

Do you speak another language? _____ If yes, what language? _____

Think about your brothers.

Write about the good times you had with your brothers.

Write about some of the things your brothers did or did not do that bothered you?

Did you have a favourite brother? Why?

Think about your sisters.

Write about the good times you had with your sisters.

Write about some of the things your sisters did or did not do that bothered you.

Did you have a favourite sister? Why?

You have now completed all the questions about your family of origin. Take some time to just think about what you wrote before carrying on to the next part of this section. You will use some of this information to expand your family map or genogram.

Your Notes:

Your Notes:

Your Notes:

Your Notes:

Your Notes:

Being Yourself and Knowing Who That Is

> *"When I was young, I set out to change the world. When I grew a little older, I perceived that this was too ambitious, so I set out to change my state. This, too, I realized as I grew older was too ambitious so I set out to change my town. When I realized I could not even do this, I tried to change my family. Now as an old man, I know that I should have started by changing myself. If I had started with myself, maybe then I would have succeeded in changing my family, the town, and even the state - and who knows, maybe even the world!"*
>
> - Words of a Chassidic Rabbi on his deathbed.

To be able to identify and pursue what you want for yourself (ie., to be yourself) while maintaining a close relationship with others is one of the major goals of *Family of Origin* work.

The road to healing must begin with yourself. By examining your own family's history you can begin to identify key problem areas which may still influence or hinder you today. In this section of the workbook, there are exercises that will help you draw a picture of the members of your family. This family picture will become your genogram or family map. The purpose of a genogram is to help you look at your own family of origin and how it has affected your personality.

A genogram can help you to gather all kinds of information about your family, such as:

- names and ages of all family members
- dates of births, deaths, marriages, separations, divorces of all members
- information about the family's history of health, alcoholism, employment, marital status or any other factors known to impact families
- help parents and other family members understand where their strengths, attitudes, beliefs and ways of resolving conflict (positive and negative) can affect their own relationships today

- grandparents may find it is a useful tool to review their own life's journey
- spirituality, it can help you see the continuity of life, although ones life is relatively brief, the family's life reaches back into the past and on into the future
- genograms are also excellent tools for family therapists

Genogram Symbols[2]



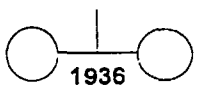
Male (square), with birth date



Female (circle), with birth date



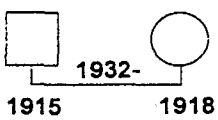
Dead Male, with dates of birth and death



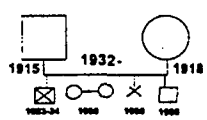
Twin Girls



Miscarriage or Abortion

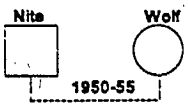


Marriage with dates (Husband goes at left side, wife on right)

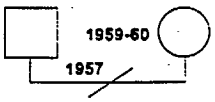


Father, Mother and Children in order of birth from left to right

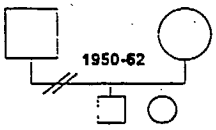
[2] From Richardson, Ronald W., (1984, 87). FAMILY TIES THAT BIND. Copyright International Counsel Press, 1990/CANCOPY. Used with permission.



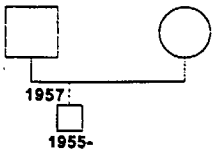
Common-Law (Living Together) with dates, with family names above



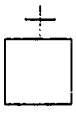
Separation with dates when Separation began and when couple reunited, as well as date when Married



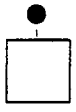
Divorce with dates of marriage, Children are with Mother after Divorce



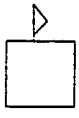
Foster or Adopted Child with birth date below and date of entering Family above (last name goes above the circle or square and first name inside)



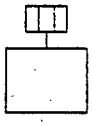
Residential School



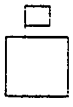
Other Abuse



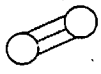
Chemical Dependence



Sexual Abuse



Long Term Illness



Fusion/Closeness



Conflict

Constructing a Genogram

To help you learn to draw your own family map (genogram) let us begin by preparing a "sample" genogram for a family of six, Mom, Dad, two sons and two daughters. We will name this family Mr. & Mrs. Alex Bear.

Alex Bear married Myrna Bird in 1968. Their two sons are Paul (25 years) and Murray (24 years) and their daughters are Lori (21 years) and Karen (20 years). Mrs. Bear attended residential school and Mr. Bear suffered from alcohol (chemical) abuse and one of their sons, Paul, also suffered from alcohol abuse. Conflict existed between Paul and Murray. Mr. & Mrs. Bear divorced in 1985. By this time, the boys were living on their own however, the girls stayed with their mother. This is the Bear's family story. Let us begin a step by step process of drawing the genogram for this family.

Remember to keep your genogram symbols handy for your reference.

Step 1 On the left side of the page begin by drawing the Father's symbol (a square).

Step 2 Inside the square, write the Father's name (Alex Bear), date of birth, and on top of the square write his surname (last name).

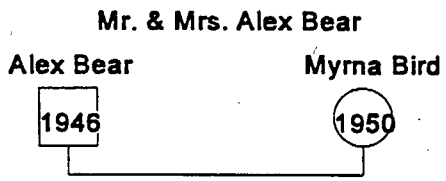
Step 3 On the right side of the page, draw the Mother's (Myrna Bird - maiden name) symbol (a circle). Females are always drawn on the right side of the page.

Step 4 Inside the circle, write the Mother's date of birth and her maiden surname on top.

Step 5 Draw a line connecting the father and mother together.

Your genogram will begin to look like this:

Diagram 1



Step 6 Now we will add the brothers and sisters to the family genogram in their birth order.

We know the first son, Paul, is 25 years old, therefore, we will need to find what year he was born. To do this, subtract his age from the current year, ie. 1996 - 25 = 1971.

At the left side of your genogram, draw the male symbol (square) underneath the line connecting the Mother and Father. Draw a short line in the middle of the square to connect it to this line. Write his year of birth inside the square and his first name on top of the square. See Diagram 1.

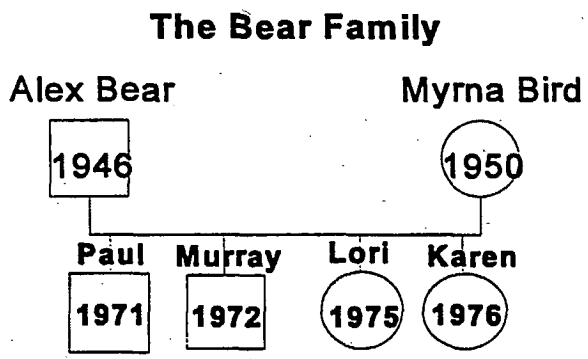
Step 7 The second son, Murray, is 24 years old. He was born in 1972 (1996-24). Draw another square next to Paul's and write in his date of birth inside the square and his first name on top. Connect this square to the line above.

Step 8 The third child is daughter, Lori, 21 years old. She was born in 1975 (1996-21). Draw the female symbol (circle) next to Murray's square and connect it to the line above.

Step 9 The fourth child is daughter, Karen, 20 years old. She was born in 1976 (1996-20). Draw another female symbol next to Lori's and connect it to the line above. Write in her date of birth and place her first name on top.

Now we have the whole family on the genogram and it will look like this:

Diagram 2



Step 10 What else can we include on the Bear family genogram? At the beginning of this sample exercise we were given the following information about this family:

a) Alex Bear and Myrna Bird were married in 1968. Alex would have been 22 (1968 - 22 = 1946) years old and Myrna was 18 (1968 - 18 = 1950)

b) They began having their family in 1971, therefore Mom had her first child when she was 21 years and Dad was 25 years old. We can note, by observing the dates of birth of their four children that they were born all fairly close to one another, therefore, they must have a handful for a young mom and dad.

c) Over the years, *Dad* became an *alcoholic* which must have been difficult for the family to cope with.

d) The oldest son, *Paul,* also had a problem with *alcohol* but we do not know at what age this began. We were also told he did not get along with his brother *Murray* so there was a source of *conflict* there.

e) The parents *divorced in 1985* after 17 years of marriage (1985 - 1968). The boys were living on their own by this time, but the girls stayed with their mother.

Now that we have reviewed the family story, let's identify the information we can put on the genogram. To assist you, please note the bold letters that will match the symbols on your symbol chart.

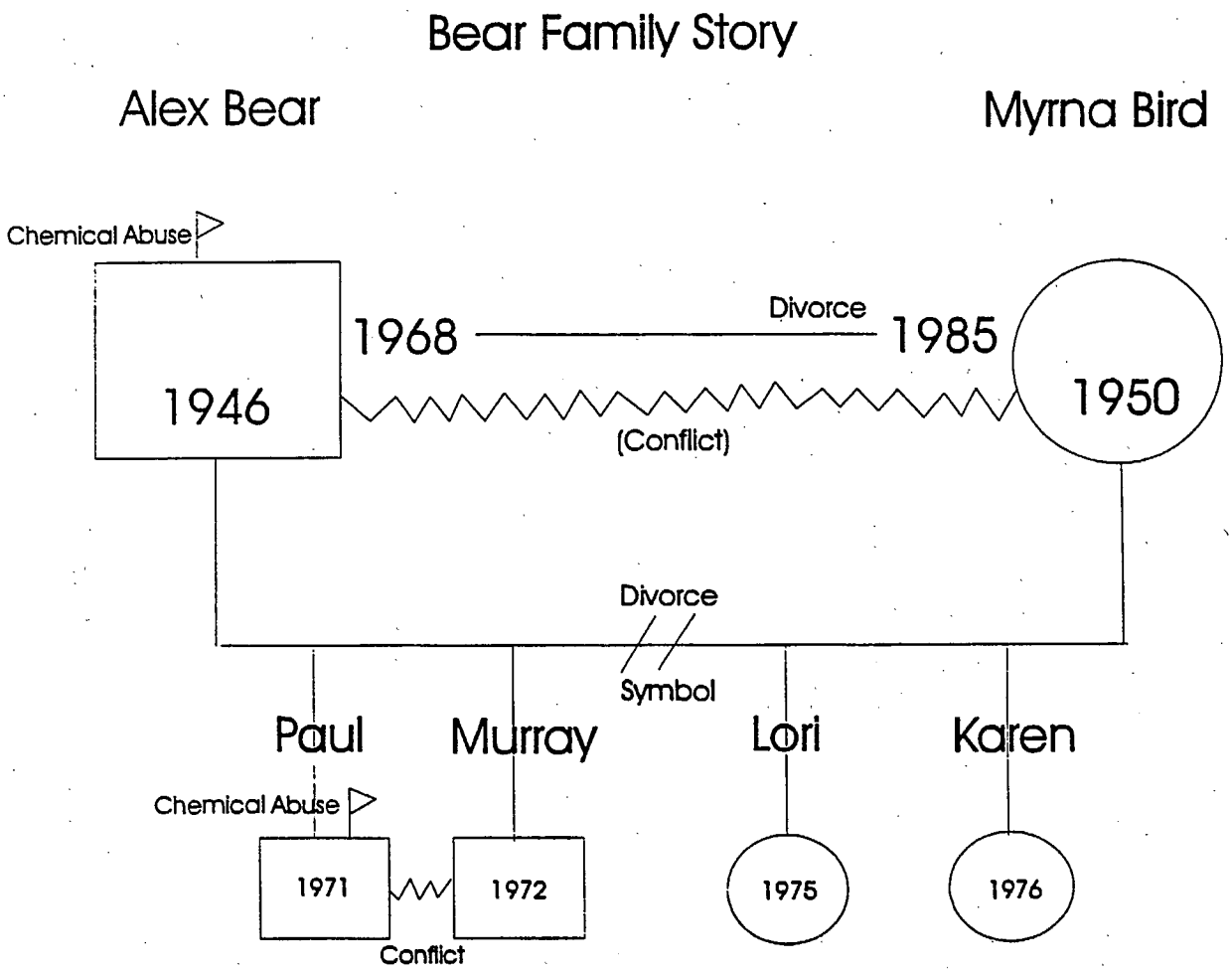
Step 11 On your genogram, write in the marriage dates (1968 - 1985). The father's date goes on the left and the mother's on the right. Draw a line connecting these dates. See the diagram below.

Step 12 The divorce symbol (//) is marked on the line connecting the Father and Mother and note the date of the divorce above the symbol. In this case, they divorced in 1985. These lines (//) are placed between the sisters and brothers to indicate the sisters stayed with the mother. If all the children went with mom, we would have placed the divorce symbol in front of the first born.

Step 13 Both father, Alex, and son, Paul, suffered from alcohol (chemical) abuse. The symbol for this illness is a triangular flag. Place this symbol above their squares.

Step 14 We also know there was conflict between Paul and Murray and mom and dad, therefore we will place the symbol for conflict (ΛΛΛ) between their symbols (square) on the genogram.

Diagram 3



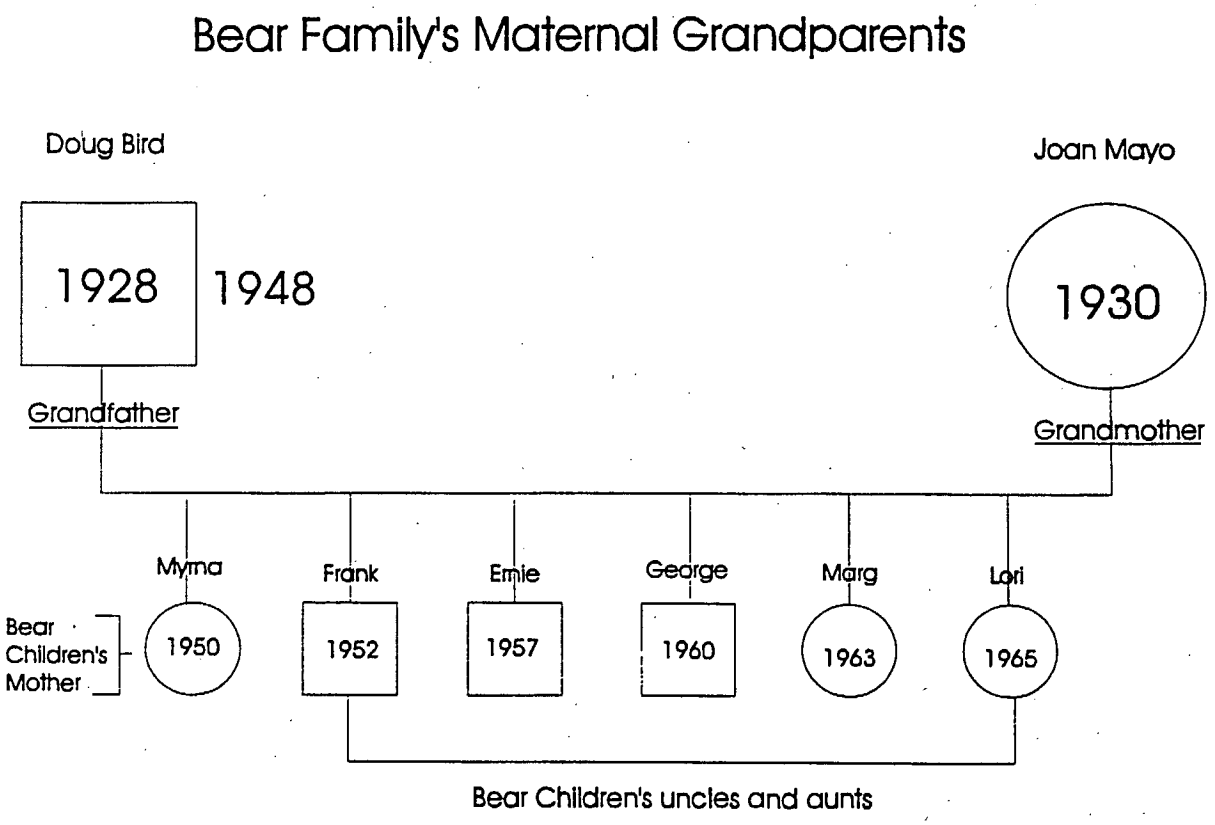
We have completed the sample of the Bear's birth family on the genogram. Using these steps as a guideline you can now begin to plot your own family map or genogram.

You can also complete other generations of your family in this same manner, i.e. grandparents (maternal and paternal), great grandparents (maternal and paternal)

A sample of the second generation Bear family on the maternal side would look like this:

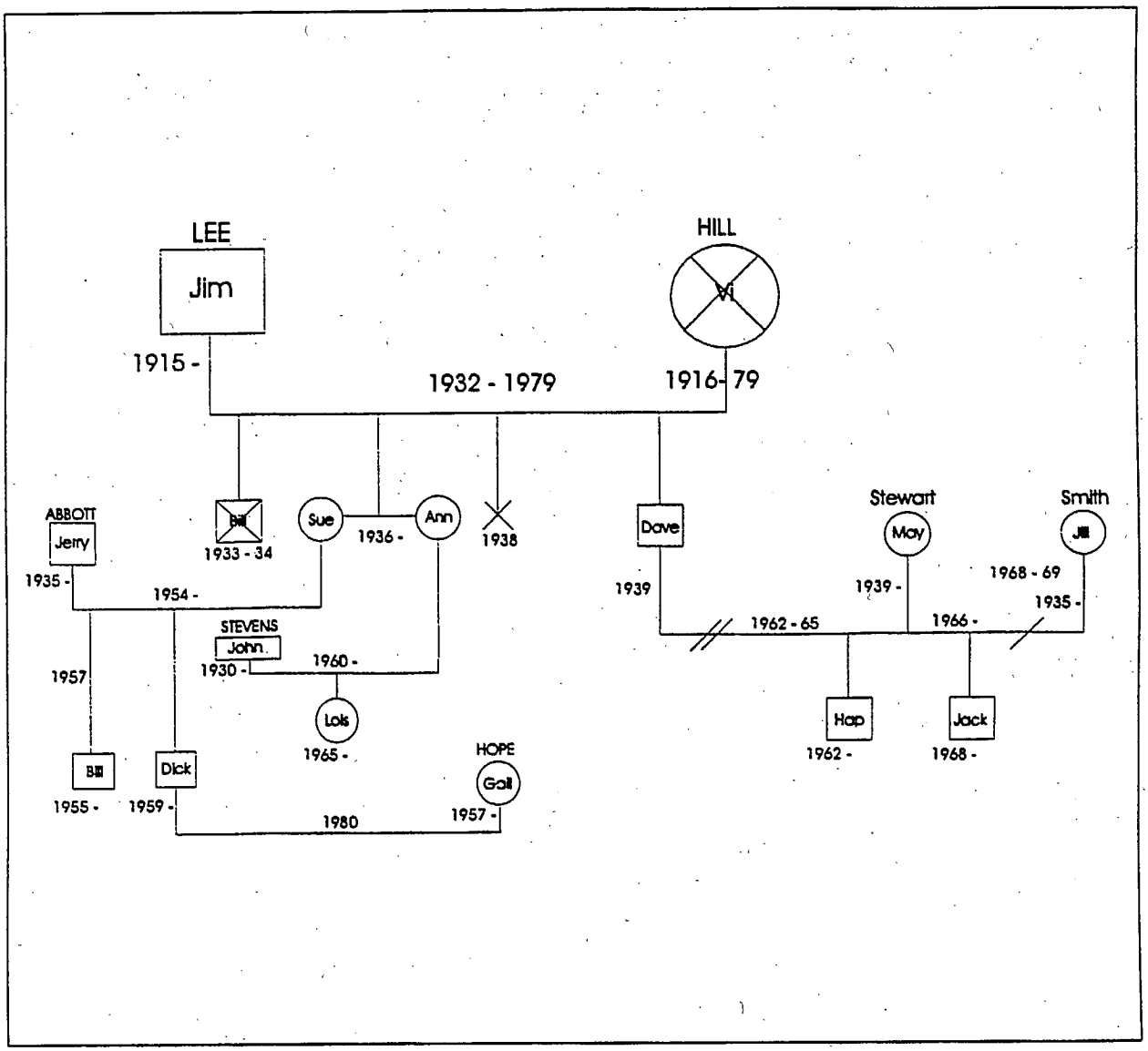
Diagram 4

Bear Family's Maternal Grandparents



NOTE: Maternal means the mother's side of the family
Paternal means the father's side of the family

The following is a sample of a three-generation genogram.



Uses of the Genogram

The genogram can be used in a number of different ways. It is the classic tool for gathering and analyzing family information. It helps both the counsellor and the clients understand the family system and the powerful influence of the previous generation on the patterns, structure, and problems of the present generation. It can help spouses understand the impact and carry over into their present relationship from their families of origin. In working with the Elderly, it is a dramatic way to review one's life. Spiritually, it can help people see the continuity of life; although one's life is relatively brief, the family's life reaches back into the past and on into the future. In adoptions and fostering, it helps children and parents understand when the sense of "incompleteness" and resultant difficulties may emerge. If done by the natural parents, it can be a gift of themselves to the surrendered child. It can also be useful in gathering an expanded history of health, alcoholism, employment, marital stability, or any other factors known to impact on family functioning.

Nothing will necessarily change in the family by looking at family names, dates and histories but it will do three things for you:

1. You will discover just who is family for you.
2. You will begin to fill in the gaps of information about people and events that have had an impact on you and other family members without your awareness.
3. Most importantly, you will begin to interact with other family members in a more neutral, less reactive way. It will provide you with a positive purpose for interacting with family, it gets them involved. You go to them for help, for their knowledge and information and this usually creates warm and positive feelings in others. People like being asked about their experiences. Aboriginal family Elders are like walking history books who are always willing to share their stories about family customs and traditions.

Now you can study your family's history for three generations. Are there any common threads that have been passed down from generation in your family? For instance, how many members of your family went to residential school? If so, you might see many of the personality traits of the wounded family which has affected your generation.

Developing a Family History

Perhaps by now you have developed a strong curiosity about your "Family of Origin" which is the most powerful and fascinating group that we will ever belong to.

You can begin developing your own family history. Dates and times of particular events are important, so you may want to record this information in a notebook or some people find a card file system more useful. You can write letters to family members and ask them for information so you can complete your own family history. This can be very time consuming and often it may take many months or years to collect a thorough history.

Conclusion

In this section, you have gained an understanding of the Aboriginal Family. You have identified the characteristics of a "healthy family" and a "wounded family". Doing the work in this section develops a strong curiosity in our family of origin, the most powerful and fascinating group that we will ever belong to. Many of us choose to develop our own family history or genogram.

Healing is a process which takes place over the course of one's life. It is rarely instant! You are a product of your past and, if there is pain or hurt stemming from family issues, you may benefit by examining those issues. Our family has the story. Our family story is important in the process of healing.

Once you know your family's story or history, you can look for ways to bring about healing, forgiveness and reconciliation. To do this, you may want to consider seeking help from an Elder or other sources of family counselling to continue your healing journey.

MAY ONLY GOOD SPIRITS GUIDE YOU AS YOU CONTINUE YOUR HEALING JOURNEY.

Voices: Something to Think About

Anyways, the nun said, you are going to be going with us to this (hostel) which was located in that town. I thought what is a hostel. I never heard of a hostel. Anyways, we got in this red van and trucking all the way down to this hostel. I got out of the vehicle and I walked down these steps, because they had categories, especially in this residential school. They had small boys, small girls, big boys, and big girls. Now small boys are from the ages of six to twelve, same with girls and then from thirteen to whatever age, nineteen, twenty, whatever are big boys and big girls. I was going towards small boys, because don't forget I am only about six and a half, seven years old. I was walking down the steps. I got down the steps and I was so fascinated, I was in a state of awe, you know, because I had never seen so many brown, you know the same coloured skin as I had, boys you know and the same kind of hairstyle, same structured body and coloured eyes, just full of energy. There were sixty-eight little kids, I was the sixty-eighth little kid there. I looked and there were sixty-seven little Indian kids running around playing Indians and cowboys, and armies, planes, throwing planes, fighting and wrestling and everything. I mean this is all in one room and that is a lot of energy and I couldn't believe how much there was involved in the Native kids. I looked at the nun and I said, excuse me, I am supposed to be transported to (my home town) and as soon as I said that and there was a bunch of little Native guys beside me. They were speaking a different language, there was Slavey, Dogribs, Chipewyan, Loucheux, you know different tribes. There was a group, there must have been about six or seven of them and they were pointing towards me and they were saying oh and I guess they were saying, oh boy that guy with a suit on and he speaks English really good. The nuns were saying, well you are going to be staying here until the summer holidays. I couldn't understand what they were talking about, summer holidays, because I wasn't too familiar of structured school, because I was tutored by this nurse. From that time on, that was my first introduction to residential school. I can't say residential school was totally bad and I can't really say that residential school was totally good, because I learned quite a bit when I was in residential school. I learned how to play sports, that was one good thing I learned. I think in 1949 sports was initiated into residential schools right across Canada. Anyway, my stay at the residential school was fascinating, because now once I was introduced into this residential school, I realized there was different tribes among all of the boys there and they all belonged to a tribe. I am a Chipewyan, but I couldn't speak Chipewyan, because I lost it and I felt out of place, I felt totally out of place by being in the residential school, because I was the only Native kid at that time that could speak English so fluently. It was just like I was a little white boy, so

and also pain, like I didn't know any physical pain until that year. Every time the nuns would do something to one of the little boys and take their marbles away, or apples and send them to bed, I would always raise my hand and say, sister that is wrong, you can't do that. Every time I did that, I guess I must have been a thorn again, a thorn in the side for the nuns, because the nuns were really being irritated by my constant criticism on their behaviour, they didn't like that. So, one day they told me, come to the office, so I went to the office and this was my introduction, my first time in my life to physical pain. They said, you have been acting up lately, you know we have rules here and you have got to understand that you have to abide by the rules and one of the rules is that you can't talk back to the sister. I didn't understand, it still didn't hit me as to what they were going to do, but then one of the nuns said, would you like to stick out your hands, we are going to punish you. You know I got to be crazy to stick my hands out, but I stuck my hands out. Actually, she grabbed it and started whacking me on my hands and that was the first time, I couldn't understand why they were giving me this kind of pain, for telling the truth and they kept on giving it to me. They hit me so hard on both hands, that both my hands were just swollen and when I walked out of that office, boy I didn't realize how much hate, how much pain that they caused me, how much hate I had for my family not to have a brother, or a mother, or a sister, or an uncle, a grandfather, grandmother, not knowing for all these years that I have family and them not knowing where I am at and getting this type of pain. That was my introduction to hate, oh I learned how to hate, just because I was telling the truth, they gave me a licking for that and I couldn't understand that. At that time, the nuns didn't take Native kids on the side and say, well you got a licking because of this. They didn't have the time when they have sixty-eight little Indian kids running around, they don't have time to take one aside and talk to them, explain why they got a licking. After that, my lickings were on a regular basis, plus they were sending me upstairs. They used to have movies on Sundays and you know I found it to be a really structured, total institutional lifestyle, you know, I had to wait in line for my food, I had to kneel on my knees almost a good three hours a day, you know when you add up the time, because you have to say the rosary in the evening after supper and you also have to pray and go to church every morning. I also had to get on my knees as soon as I woke up, as soon as the nun would come into the dormitory and clap their hands a couple of times, you would have sixty-eight little Indian kids jumping out of the bed and praying. Can you imagine how well tuned they had us, just like that, boy I couldn't believe it. At first I was getting a licking because of that too, because I didn't like getting up and I am really one of the laziest guys you will ever see in this world and I don't even like getting out of bed, until I am fully awake. Anyway, they had us right down pat. We had to wait in line to get a haircut and I had a pretty good hairstyle, until after about a week later I got to the institution and everybody was bald headed. You see a bunch of little Indian kids running around with hardly any hair on their heads, they are kind of

bald headed. That was a really painful experience, getting a haircut, you know from one of those nuns, especially when you are like the thirty-seventh, thirty-sixth kid in line and by the time you get there, those little clippers of those was just red hot. You would hear a lot of kids crying and yelling and screaming and the nun would slam them on the head, shut up and just keep on. That is a lot of pain you know and when I would come up, let's say I was the thirty-seventh guy, kid and Oh God it would be hot and they would just hold your head and if you moved they got this little knuckle of theirs, just bang it on your forehead, right in the back of the head really hard or they would twist your ears and say, hold still. From that point on, like it was really interesting, because I was living with a lot of kids and I never had that opportunity before, living with different tribes. Summer came along and this is the summer holidays and they said, this is the summer holidays and you guys are going home for a summer holiday. I thought, wow it is about time I got home, gee, I wasn't even supposed to be here, I'm not even supposed to know these nuns, but here I was.... In that sense, to me, this was an introduction to my culture, Native culture and that summer I really enjoyed myself. I really enjoyed the sun, having a slingshot, I didn't even know what a slingshot was, my brothers taught me how to make a slingshot and they gave me a little knife and I become a real Native. I had little moccasins on and running through the bushes, swimming out in the lake, there were no barriers, no fences, nothing, it was just fun, fun, fun underneath the sun, sleep outside and oh it was beautiful. That came to a halt and my grandfather said, you have to go back to the residential school and right away, I felt fearful, I thought why are you sending me over there. I told my grandfather how they treated me, how they beat me up for telling the truth and that and yet he is sending me over there again. I really hated my grandfather, so that fall I went back to the residential school and in that residential school, this time, I got more lickings, I hardly ever saw a movie because they watch movies every Sunday. I got more lickings, I ran away, I ran away from the hostel with my brother, at that age of seven and a half years old, I ran away from that hostel. That is how much hate, how much I wanted to be free away from that kind of life, especially at that age, when you are seven and a half years old, I guess you could consider it to be my first criminal activity, is breaking the rules..... At sixteen when I got picked up, it was my first introduction to jail. I really felt that I lost my dreams. I felt that I lost my career to be a professional boxer, or even a N.H.L. hockey player, because I was led to believe that once you go to jail, you lose everything, you are nothing but a convict, you are nothing but dirt and that is what I believed. From that time on, like I said earlier, I started going to jail, my first introduction into an institution, like a provincial jail, or a territorial jail, where they accommodate approximately sixty to seventy inmates. When I first arrived there, I had all this excitement of seeing bald headed people with striped uniforms, big numbers on their back and can't speak a sentence, muscular. I was really fascinated then, when I got there my two older brothers were there and all the guys were just

like me. The majority of them that I noticed, right away, were illiterate, they don't like reading and they didn't give a shit about laws and rules and regulations, spit a lot, smoked a lot and swore a lot and tattooed a lot. I guess for the next twenty-five years, that is the kind of lifestyle I was going to live and I really felt really depressed, I really felt that now that society wouldn't accept me, because now I am a jailbird or been incarcerated or inside a prison. I really felt that I lost my family, the respect from my family, I lost respect from my colleagues, my students, my peers, my coaches. I really felt a sense of loss, until I got into that institution and I realized that a lot of these guys have the same problems that I have and it was just like welcome. They welcomed me into the institution like a brother, saying hey, if they don't like us out in society, you might as well stay with us. The next twenty-five years, that's what I did. I stayed in these prisons. While I was in the institution, I noticed that I was more intelligent than a lot of the inmates, I also, you could say graduated from territorial into a maximum penitentiary and once I got to the penitentiary, I realized, gee, this is like the residential school, the only difference is that they have a key. You have a lot of people that are locked up and they have sports and I really loved it, I really liked being in jail, I really enjoyed being in jail, because I felt that it was my home. I felt that these people, or these boys accepted me for who I am and society didn't accept me.

Richard, age 40; record for robbery, assault causing bodily harm, inciting a riot, attempted murder, break & enter, pointing a firearm, hijacking, kidnapping, dangerous use of a firearm.

You know, a few of them told me that I am easier to talk to and I seem to understand what is going on. I don't know, when my dad died, there was something that wasn't explained to me that I learned at a movie, a movie put out by the National Film Board called Ronnie. It was shown at our (band) school building and I went and watched it and they explained how my dad died. They were shooting targets in the moonlight and they tried to keep the gun away from him, but everybody was having fun they said at that time, they were walking back and they forgot about the old man in that instant and he had that gun in his mouth and they said he was saying that, he had it in his throat. He sat down, he was kneeling down and he had the gun in this throat with his thumb on the trigger like this. They turned around and they told him not to, but they were too far away from him. I guess now that I have learned, I have read up and stuff like that on suicide and if they really intend, absolutely intend on

doing it, they will do it, but I didn't understand at that time. What he said is what really at that time, at that time frame, where I was at and everything, like I used to fight with my older brothers as soon as I was thirteen or fourteen years old, after I came out of the (residential) school. After the Department of Indian Affairs said that I had to come out and live in the community like this and not be locked up, like we were more or less locked up in that area. I couldn't handle it. I went from foster home to foster home, until they finally gave up on me. Once I got back to the reserve once and I knew where my roots were and I knew who my people were and stuff, I didn't want to leave, although there was nothing there. I learned more in the residential school and I felt that I was getting more ahead, but because they pissed me off for not leaving me there when I asked to be left there, that kind of, you know like, if you don't want to leave me in a place where I am happy and stuff, I'm not going to listen to you guys. As soon as I discovered the reserve, I kept running back, running back. Anyway, getting back to that movie, they said he was saying before he pulled the trigger, he was saying, you take care of my baby boy (me) and that was it and he shot himself. What used to get me really mad about that was they never told me. I associated with how they treated me with, how are they taking care of me by beating the hell out of me all the time. They closed my eyes quite a few times. There was a lot of violence and it has toned down, ever since I got this manslaughter charge. Maybe they have been looking at themselves or maybe they realize they could be in the ..... When my dad died, they took us and put us all in a convent. Them years were the most terrible years of my whole life. I went through a lot of pain because of the fact I lost my mother, I never seen my mother for two years after my dad died. That was very painful. It was a painful time in my life ..... When I came home at ten years old, I found that I was in just as much pain when I went home as I was when I was in the convent. I stayed home all summer and was just nicely getting used to being free and I ended up we had to go back to the convent again. Again that hurt. I guess being a male figure in an all male environment, I learned very young to be violent. If somebody did something to me, I did something to him. If somebody hit me with something, I hit them with something back, and hopefully harder. This was the way I grew up. I grew up with silence, you don't tell, you don't talk. I grew up and got into the system that you don't tell on anybody, because you get hurt from somebody else. This is the system I grew up in, in the convent. That is the environment I grew up with, my ears being pulled and all this stuff. So I started at twelve years old, I was already running away from the convent. I went to a bush camp to go to work at twelve years old. I worked in a bush camp all winter. I came out in the spring and the RCMP picked me up and then a priest came and picked me up and took me back to the convent. Again, that was a painful part of my life. I was still a kid, but I thought I was already grown up, but I was still a little kid. I don't know what I was rebelling against, but I was rebelling all of the time. I was constantly getting in trouble with the nuns, getting in trouble with the priests, the brothers, the police, all

kinds of little things. I guess I was very good at being somebody I wasn't. I could be an alter boy, like I was the head of the alter boys. I taught people how to be alter boys. Then I started stealing wine from the priests. I would go in there and steal a couple of bottles of wine off of them and pour water or half water into all the stuff. I started into the alcohol very young in the convent. We used to make home brew if we could steal enough raisins, whatever, we started into the home brew. That is when the trouble really started, is when I started to get into alcohol, because as soon as I drank alcohol I got very violent toward everything..... Later, I got charged with theft and again I went back to jail. By this time I was in Ft. Saskatchewan and I knew I'd been in there too much. You know pretty well, you're already into that system where it wasn't even punishment, because of the convent - it was worse than what I was facing in Ft. Saskatchewan. They were giving me tobacco and I got to work and all this stuff. In the prison system I didn't feel anything, like to be suffering behind bars, it wasn't really that much more bad than in the convents.

Walter, age 50; record for assault, theft, robbery, mischief.

Leaving, Loss and Grieving

This section will help you to look at some of the feelings and thoughts that you have about leaving, loss and grieving. Each individual person has a unique and personal way of dealing with loss. There has been a lot of research conducted into grieving and loss. Some people or cultures have ceremonies to help individuals deal with the feelings that accompany a loss. Funerals are part of the process of grieving and saying "good bye" to the person who has died. However, some of the losses that we experience are not about the death of an individual. Loss is not limited to death and dying.

Many losses are a "natural" part of life. Those could be aging, loss of childhood as we move towards adolescence, loss of youth as we move towards middle age, loss through families breaking up, loss of the chance of motherhood as we reach menopause and the loss of loved ones as they die. Some of the losses that we experience are "unnatural": the loss of friends and family due to suicide, loss of innocence due to rape or sexual abuse, loss of self due to abuse, loss of the ability to think and feel due to drugs and alcohol, loss of self-respect due to unhealthy choices and behaviours or loss of freedom due to residential schools, young offenders centres or prison.

Other types of losses could include the sense of grief that we feel when we have caused pain, suffering, hurt or abuse to other people. A person feels sadness and sorrow when they have victimized or abused a child, an adult, a stranger or a family member. People can experience loss when they had an opportunity to tell people they loved them or show them they loved them and did not take the opportunity to do that. This may have happened for a variety of reasons such as not knowing how to do that at the time. In the prison system, you may also experience the loss of privileges due to misbehaviour, or loss of a parole application, or chance of early release.

People can experience grief and loss over things that we have done to ourselves. Experiences like suicide attempts or self harming behaviours. Or if you were abused and then turn around and abuse someone else.

Loss can also occur when we leave one place to go to another. This is often referred to as "leave taking." Every leave taking has a sense of loss and grief. A list of leavings might look like this:

Where I left from		Where I went
leave home	⇨	to school, to work
leave home	⇨	to residential school
leave residential school	⇨	to home to work
leave home	⇨	to jail
leave one jail	⇨	to the next
leave jail	⇨	to a half way house
leave the half way house	⇨	to go out on my own
stop living on my own	⇨	to go live with my family again

Each time, you leave behind people that you may care for: children, family, friends or partners. You leave behind people who care about you. Or you could also be leaving behind a bad situation, one that you are pleased to be leaving. You may be leaving people who were a negative influence on you, or were enemies.

Sometimes leaving can be a joyous occasion; times in our lives that we have planned for with anticipation. Leavings can be seen as new beginnings or new starts. For some people, even in these times of "happy leavings" there can be a sense of loss. You may be leaving behind people you love. However, if you choose to leave somewhere or someone, you do so with a sense of control: "I have decided to leave." There may still be feelings of loss, remorse and sadness when you leave by your own choice. If you leave because someone else makes you leave, you may feel that you have lost control. This loss of control can lead to a feeling of helplessness - hopelessness. Many people who have been through residential schools, young offenders centres or prison have talked about their feelings of loss and grief.

Researchers and experts have studied and written about the subject of death, leaving, loss and grieving. Elders have stories about death and grieving ceremonies. They have stories about how they have lived through losses. When we think about the word "death" most of us think about the death of a person. However, death can be viewed in a number of ways. For example it can be seen as the death of a person, or the death of a dream, or the death/loss of freedom, or the death/loss of a relationship. One of the common themes in discussing or thinking about loss and grief is that it is a process that people go through. It is believed that there are five separate stages in the process of death, dying, grief and loss.

Leaving, Loss and Grieving begins by providing information on those stages. This is followed by a look at the various ways that we grieve, sometimes called the forms of grief. Ceremonies support the process of grieving. You will be provided with information on various ceremonies in Aboriginal communities, and asked to explore your experiences. The remainder of this section will assist you in looking into, and beginning the work of grieving the losses in your life, including people and events such as going to jail, being in jail, and leaving jail.

Going through the Process

An important point to keep in mind while you read through the following information is that your experiences are unique to you. The process and stages which will be discussed do not always happen in the order they are listed. Sometimes you may feel stuck at one stage for awhile. If you are going through a number of losses right now, or thinking about and remembering losses from the past, you could be at any stage. There is no set length of time that a person experiences one stage before moving on. Grief and loss are a process; not a happening or an event. You may move back and forth between the stages. This movement between stages often happens because we have so many losses in our lives.

Denial, or "Not Me"

This stage usually begins the process. You experience a loss and have trouble immediately accepting that it is happening. An example might be when you get a phone call that someone you know has died. Often the first words spoken include: "I can't believe it! I just saw him/her the other day!" During this first stage, people think things like; "This can't be happening to me," "He/she can't be doing this to me," "Mom will save me. She won't let this happen," "I can't be going to jail," "I can't be putting my family through this," "Not again! I'm not going to jail again." Denial is hard to maintain. Eventually, the reality of the situation must be accepted.

Anger, or "Why Me?"

When denial stops or cannot be maintained, it often gives way to rage, envy and resentment. This stage is very difficult to deal with as our anger can go in all directions and may come out as violence either against ourselves or others. Some people get deeply stuck in this stage. They feel angry at every one and unable to put the hurt behind them and move forward by dealing with it. Often people who are stuck in this stage need assistance from a group, a counsellor, an Elder or therapist, to safely work through their feelings or rage and sorrow. Examples of thoughts or feelings that some people experience: "Why am I back in jail? The other guy got off!" "It wasn't my fault! I was drunk." "Leave me alone or I will hurt you." "I'm going to show you. You hurt me. Now I am really going to hurt you." "I am so mad and sad I want to kill myself." Many people act out their anger caused by their grief and sorrow.

Bargaining or "Yes Me - But!"

This stage often finds us making bargains with the Creator/God. Some examples of bargaining: "If you let me get off this charge (or out of jail) I will be good. I promise. I won't drink or do drugs ever." "I won't hit anyone ever again. I will pray every day, just help me now." "I will talk to the pastor/priest/Elder and then the prison officials will see that I am really trying and they will grant me parole." Some people find their link back to spirituality or culture or religion while bargaining with God. Many people have realized that they feel a sense of peace or contentment when they are talking to the Creator/God and continue on with their spiritual journey.

Depression or "Yes Me"

Eventually we have to let go of the denial and the rage as it no longer holds any hope. At this point a deep sense of loss may be felt. A sense of mourning; a need to say good bye to what has been. Feelings of depression vary in their intensity. Some people feel suicidal. Some people feel very tired and only want to sleep, they have no motivation. Some of the thoughts or feelings you might experience: "I don't want to do anything." "I can't deal with this. I want to die." "Leave me alone." "I just feel so tired all the time, I just want to be left alone." "I don't want any visits." "I don't want my family/friends to see me in here." Some people find it difficult to

complete tasks; things get started, but are never completed. Some people experience depression by sleeping a lot or not being able to sleep, being withdrawn, being aggressive, drugging, drinking, sniffing or some go to helpers. Some of the helpers they go to are family, friends, Elders or counsellors. Sometimes the depression we feel leads us to seek medical attention, and perhaps medication to help relieve the depression.

Acceptance or "Yes, This is Me and This is Where I Am"

We begin to let go of the denial, disbelief and anger. We start to think about the future. It is a time to gain strength from the experience. People will begin to look at ways to get through the feelings of loss and grief. Some people are ready at this stage to begin to deal with the feelings and thoughts that they have experienced: "What do I need to do to cope with this?" "What have I learned in my life to help me cope?" "How have I survived in the past?" "What have my family or friends taught me to help me through this?" "Can my spirituality or religion help me now?" Many people feel a sense that it is time to make a fresh start, a new beginning and to plan for the future.

"You know this last time for me was the real changing point in my life. I was in the Remand Centre about four years ago, three or four years ago, I am in the Remand Centre, feeling sorry for myself again, poor little old me, you know, why me, it should be somebody else, but I started to cry, really cry and it really hurt to cry. I didn't want these other guys to know that I am crying. I would wait until they would lock-up and then I would cry. I was all by myself in the cell, then I would put my hands on the wall there, looking out the window and I would be crying and crying, openly and freely, because I am by myself and crying and I said, there has got to be a better way than this, there has got to be a better way. What can I believe, what can I do, who can I turn to, you know, I want it now, help me, help me. Then I remembered someone along the way, these different places I have been at in these institutions. We have had Elders coming in and at that time, Elders were starting to come in already, coming in to have sweats and pipe ceremonies and Native spirituality and that. So, okay, that's it, Native spirituality, that is what I am going to do and I am going to do it, I don't care what happens right from today, I am going to commit my life to the Native spirituality, that is the way. I got to find my spirit and once I do, I am going to nurture that spirit, I am going to take care of that spirit, help that spirit, whichever way I can. I cried and cried and cried that way and my tears just came and came.

I said, right from here I don't care what happens from this point on, where I go, which joint I go to, I don't care. I am going to follow through with what I am crying for today, which is freedom, that is what I was crying for. I felt that I wasn't an animal to be caged up all of the time, to be told when to come out when that door is open and what to do and when to do it, go to the washroom and changing my linen and my clothes, laundry time, clothes time, medication time."

Edward, age 49; record for theft, break and enter, assault causing bodily harm, robbery, auto theft, impaired driving.

Forms of Grief

"Rain releases the earth, and our tears cleanse our soul."

- Elder Tom Badger

When we think of loss we usually think of death as the most difficult form of loss or grief. Death of family, for example, spouses, children or relatives. There are two forms of grieving: private and public. Private grief we usually express by ourselves, such as in the middle of the night - crying into the pillow when we think everyone is asleep. Public grief is expressed with other people, at funerals, grieving ceremonies or community rituals. The Elders say each of us have gifts to help ourselves heal and to help others to heal. These natural healing gifts are crying, talking, singing, laughing, yelling, and dancing. We use our gift of the wind spirit, water spirit and the gift of movement when we cry, talk, sing, laugh, yell or dance.

If we let ourselves cry, the water spirit is a gift to release sadness or joy. Traditional ceremonies for loss include praying along with our gift of the wind spirit, singing traditional honour songs, singing different religious songs, singing with a community. Singing releases the wind spirit from our centre, our stomach. It releases our muscles in our centre, our chest and our lower abdomen. If you don't know songs, sing by humming. Go to an Elder or a fellow inmate or family and ask them what songs were sung when people died.

One of the most powerful forms of healing is through laughter. Tell stories about the person's life that were funny at the time and still make you laugh or smile when you remember the stories.

The gift of movement can be an expression of grief. Many men and women dance traditional round dances, tea dances, pow wows and at memorials for the deceased. The drum, which symbolizes the heart of our people, or the rattle and other forms of traditional instruments, are all utilized in ceremonies of honour for people who are gone on to the other side (have died). If you dance a tea dance for an hour, perhaps even longer, it will release energy through your feet, hands and other parts of your body. Dancing releases pain without a word coming from your mouth.

Private grief can be expressed by going into the bush and yelling our pain out from the pit of our stomach. If you are in a cell this may not feel safe to do, but, you may be able to do this in a talking circle or with an Elder or with a counsellor. Private grief can also be expressed through prayer, meditation, crying, writing, drawing or simply thinking and remembering the grief or loss.

In the following exercise, try to focus on grief that you have experienced through the death of someone you know.

The person that I lost was _____

I was _____ years old.

Where was I when this happened?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How did I deal with the death then?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How did I use my natural gifts of voice and movement?

What happened because of the death?

Ceremonies

If you are comfortable with an Elder, consider asking them about grieving ceremonies. For example, in the Carrier traditions, a potlatch is held one year after a death. There are ceremonial pow-wows and memorial round dances. Memorial pow-wows often include a give-away. It provides us time to think about the deceased person as we prepare for the pow-wow and go about purchasing goods to give away. We give these gifts in celebration of the person's life and to thank all the people who helped us through our grief.

One of the ceremonies you could think about doing is holding a memorial pow-wow for all the men and women who lost their lives in your institution or other institutions such as residential schools.

> *"You don't get something for nothing. It is in the giving and receiving that we are in relationship"*
>
> *- Abe Burnstick*

When people we love die, the time of grieving is the ideal opportunity to practice kindness to our body, mind and spirit and to other people's body, mind and spirit. Ceremony provides us that opportunity. It provides us the opportunity to practice sharing, respect, kindness and honesty with the family of the deceased and for the deceased. Think about going to an Elder to teach you about honour songs and ceremonies for times of grief.

In many Aboriginal communities we have a ritual called a wake. The wake is an opportunity to remember the person who died. It is an opportunity to cry, sing, laugh and joke about experiences we shared with the person who has passed on. If you have experienced wakes in your community take time to remember and write about the experiences. (If you haven't experienced a wake, move on to the next part of this section.)

Please complete the following exercise.

If there was a wake, whose house was the wake at?

Where was the coffin?

What did you do at the wake?

What did other people do at the wake?

How did you feel at the wake?

When they took the body out of the house, to the church or to the graveyard, what did you do? What did other people do?

What happened because of this death?

If you have been to more than one wake, you could do this exercise for each one.

The person that I lost was _____

I was _____ years old.

Where was I when this happened?

_____

_____

_____

_____

How did I deal with the death then?

_____

_____

_____

_____

If there was a wake, whose house was the wake at? _____

Where was the coffin? _____

What did you do at the wake?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

What did other people do at the wake?

How did you feel at the wake?

When they took the body out of the house, to the church or to the graveyard, What did you do? What did other people do?

What happened because of the death?

There are ways other than wakes that people use to deal with the loss of family member or friends. For example, a Christian funeral. If you have participated in ceremonies and rituals other than wakes, what were they?

Describe the ceremonies. Who they were for? How did you participate? What happened?

Time to Think

Take some time to think about the process of grief and loss. Does it make sense to you? When you think about your losses, do you think that you have experienced some of the stages? In the next section, you can take the opportunity to work through exercises designed to assist you to begin to deal with your individual losses. As you go through the exercises, take time to think about the process. You can do the exercises all at once or spread out over time. The choice is yours. This is your workbook, and you should do what feels right to you.

If you think or feel that you would like to take a deeper look at your own life and your losses and grief, please continue.

Dealing with Other Losses

To begin to deal with the losses and grief in your life, it is helpful to look at what you have experienced in your life. And to also look at how you coped or dealt with the experiences of loss and grief. You can follow the charts below, or if you like to express yourself through art, draw pictures that represent each exercise. You may be the kind of person who wants to think about each step, but not write it down or draw it out. You may be involved in a support group or have someone that you can trust enough to talk to about loss and grief. Do what feels right to you.

While in prison, it may be a struggle to find a place to work on these exercises. Your circumstances will vary depending on the kind of facility you are housed in. Some of the following exercises may cause you to experience or re-experience the feelings of loss, the grief and the anger. Try to find a place where you are comfortable and feel safe. Remember your safety plan. It may prove helpful to use the centering exercises outlined in the earlier section, "Building Safety Today" (***My Place in the World***). You may want to write in this workbook or use it as a guide and make a chart on another piece of paper. This work will be of a personal nature, you may not want to share it. If you wish your work to remain private, you can keep it safe and yourself protected from other people seeing it.

I can make decisions that are right for me.

Exercise One: ***What losses have I experienced?***

God/Creator never closes a door without opening a window.
When the cell door closes, open the windows of your mind and spirit.

The purpose of this exercise is to allow you to think about your losses and to look at whether these losses have been a natural part of the life cycle, or hurts that have been done to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else.

When you think about your life, you will have experienced some losses. Those could include the following things: loss of freedom, loss of identity, loss of family, loss of self respect, and loss of friends. Take some time to think about the losses that you have experienced and when you are ready, fill in the exercise below. You may want to list <u>all</u> of your losses, your hurts or the pain or grief that you have caused, or start with <u>one or two</u>. There is room on the following pages for you to explore your losses further. Work on this exercise at your own speed. Do not feel that you have to complete it all at one time.

The strength in me guides me
I am on the road to self discovery.
Today it is okay to let my tears come.

Loss that I experienced:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened?

Who else was there?

Was this loss part of the natural life cycle, or harm that was caused to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else?

Loss that I experienced:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened?

Who else was there?

Was this loss part of the natural life cycle, or harm that was caused to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else?

Loss that I experienced:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened?

Who else was there?

Was this loss part of the natural life cycle, or harm that was caused to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else?

Loss that I experienced:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened?

Who else was there?

Was this loss part of the natural life cycle, or harm that was caused to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else?

Loss that I experienced:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened?

Who else was there?

Was this loss part of the natural life cycle, or harm that was caused to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else?

Loss that I experienced:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened?

Who else was there?

Was this loss part of the natural life cycle, or harm that was caused to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else?

Loss that I experienced:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened?

Who else was there?

Was this loss part of the natural life cycle, or harm that was caused to you, or harm that you have caused to yourself or someone else?

Exercise Two: ***How do I feel?***

Every experience can be seen as a gift - some gifts are harder to unwrap than others.

The purpose of this exercise is to look at the feelings around the losses that you experienced and wrote out in exercise one. Think about how you felt at the time of those losses and what you think and feel about them now. Again, take some time to think about the losses that you have experienced, and when you are ready, use the guide below or make a chart on another piece of paper. This chart will be of a personal nature, you may not want to share it. If you choose to keep it private, where will you keep this list so it is safe and yourself protected from other people seeing it?

Loss that I experienced:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish

Loss that I experienced:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish

Loss that I experienced:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish

Loss that I experienced:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish

Loss that I experienced:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish

Loss that I experienced:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish

Exercise Three: ***What Happened Because of the Loss?***

The purpose of this exercise is to think about how the loss affected you. In other words, what were the consequences of the loss? If the loss was that your grandmother died and you lived with her at the time of her death, the outcome may have been that you had to go live in a foster home. You may then have experienced a loss by being taken away from your home against your will. This loss may have made you feel very helpless and hopeless. You may have become depressed and angry and violent. Or, maybe you wanted to leave your grandmother's and now you were going to be able to live with your favourite aunt. The loss (your grandmother's death) was the same, but your reaction and the effects would be different.

On the chart below, you may want to write all of your losses or just start with a few. You make the decisions. Write or draw about how you dealt with the loss, what were your thoughts, feelings, behaviours and actions at the time.

I will remain true to myself and my feelings.
I am learning to accept my mistakes.
I am learning to accept the losses in my life.

Loss that I experienced:

How did I deal with the loss then?

What happened because of the loss?

Loss that I experienced:

How did I deal with the loss then?

What happened because of the loss?

Loss that I experienced:

How did I deal with the loss then?

What happened because of the loss?

Loss that I experienced:

How did I deal with the loss then?

What happened because of the loss?

Loss that I experienced:

How did I deal with the loss then?

What happened because of the loss?

Loss that I experienced:

How did I deal with the loss then?

What happened because of the loss?

Exercise Four: ***How Have I Dealt with my Losses?***

The purpose of this exercise is to look at your coping and surviving skills.

When you experienced the losses that you have already listed, how did you cope? Did you have any one or any thing that you used for support? Did you use alcohol or drugs to help you cope? Did you respond to your loss with violence? Has spirituality or religion been part of your coping system?

Think about what was positive or negative about the way you dealt with your losses. When you remember the death of family and friends, what do you wish had happened differently at that time? Did you have any ceremonies? Was there a wake or a memorial round dance? Was the person's life honoured after they died?

Complete the exercise on the following page as often as you like. It will allow you to explore how you have coped with your losses in the past, and you may further examine the survival techniques that you have used. If you choose to look at more than one loss you may need to obtain more paper for writing.

"The soul would have no rainbow if the eyes had no tears."

- Minquass saying

Loss that I experienced:

How did I deal with the loss then?

How do I feel about the way that I dealt with it?

What do I wish had happened instead of what happened?

Would I deal with it differently today?

Exercise Five: ***Saying Good-Bye***

The purpose of this exercise is to allow you to say good bye to people and places in your past.

Some of the losses that you have experienced may be because you were not allowed to say good-bye to the people or places that you were leaving. Perhaps you would still like to say good-bye to them. This may have been when you went to residential school, or to jail, or were moved to a different jail.

Spend some time thinking about the people or places that you were unable to say good bye to. If you had been able to say everything you wanted to at the time, what would you have said?

When you feel ready, write letters to the people or places that you left behind, or the people that you hurt. Or, you might want to write a letter to someone who has died. **Remember, you are only writing them, you do not have to send the letters.** Writing a letter will allow you to express your sorrow or guilt or anger or sadness, or whatever emotions you had then and feel now. You can also draw a picture of the leave taking scene. Making a collage (using magazine pictures and pasting them into a picture) is another way to show the people and places you were leaving. Or, you may now feel ready to talk to the person. Select the right way for yourself to say good-bye and carry out your choice for each of the losses you wrote about on the previous pages.

You may want to consider some of the following things and include them in your writing or drawing.

1. How old you were at the time.
2. What were you wearing?
3. Where did this "leaving" take place? Where were you leaving from? Where were you going to? What time of year was it? What was the weather like?
4. Did you leave because you wanted to? Or because someone was taking you away? Or did you feel you "had to go?"
5. How were people acting, were they sad to see you go? Happy to see you go? Or maybe they didn't do anything.
6. How were you acting? Were you showing how you felt? If you were mad - were you yelling? Were you crying? Did you act in a violent manner? Were you silent?
7. What do you wish people had done or said?
8. What do you wish you had done differently?
9. In your letters, say the things that you wish you had said. Write as if you were talking to the individuals that you did not get to say good bye to.
10. What would you like to happen now, between you and the person you are writing to?
11. Make sure that you say good-bye, let them know how you felt, how you feel now.

Use this page to draw your picture of leaving or saying good-bye. Or, on the following pages, or in extra notepad, you can write your letters.

Date:_____

Dear _____ :

Date:_____

Dear _____ :

Exercise Six: ***Inventory of Support***

This exercise is to help you to develop an inventory, or list of supports, for yourself.

Think about the people, places or things that have helped you to deal with your losses. Who has supported you or helped you when you needed the help. For some people, this exercise may open the feelings of hurt and loss again. You may have had a life with little support or help when you needed it. For others, there may have been people who offered to help that you would not accept help from.

Fill in the following exercises or use them as a guide to record your loss(es). Add the names of the people who were there to offer help. How did they help you? What did you say or do with them? What did they say and do with you? Then take some time to think about those people. Finally indicate what you wish had been different. We can't change the fact that the loss happened. But, next time you can look for people or activities that will help you in a way that you would find meaningful.

I can learn from people I respect and trust.
I no longer have to "go it alone."
I can allow others into my life

Loss that I experienced:

Who or what was there to help me?

What activities helped you deal with your loss? Where did you physically go?

What do I wish had been different?

Loss that I experienced:

Who or what was there to help me?

What activities helped you deal with your loss? Where did you physically go?

What do I wish had been different?

Loss that I experienced:

Who or what was there to help me?

What activities helped you deal with your loss? Where did you physically go?

What do I wish had been different?

Loss that I experienced:

Who or what was there to help me?

What activities helped you deal with your loss? Where did you physically go?

What do I wish had been different?

Loss that I experienced:

Who or what was there to help me?

What activities helped you deal with your loss? Where did you physically go?

What do I wish had been different?

Loss that I experienced:

Who or what was there to help me?

What activities helped you deal with your loss? Where did you physically go?

What do I wish had been different?

Exercise Seven: ***Letting Go of the Sense of Loss and Pain***

The purpose of this exercise is to begin to accept that the loss was real and begin to move away from the pain.

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In exercise five, you wrote letters to the people and places that you were unable to say good-bye to. Now you need to decide what to do with the letters. Your letters may be very personal and private. You may want to keep them and read them periodically. You may want to re-read them and even re-write them from time to time. You may want to send them to the people that you wrote them to. If you feel unsafe leaving the letters in your cell, you may want to rip them up or burn them. (You wouldn't want to burn them in your cell though! However, you may be able to receive permission to burn the letters outside.) Whatever your choice is, allow yourself to let the pain go. You may want to write letters to people or places or things that were supportive of you. Is there an Elder who would perform a ceremony with you? Would going to a church service help? Are there older people or people you trust that you could discuss a grieving ceremony with?

In previous sections of this workbook, you have practised centering or relaxation techniques. Try practising these techniques and allow yourself to feel the loss and grief, and to also feel the loss and grief leave your body.

I am letting go of my losses.

Exercise Eight: ***Future Plans***

Survival happens one second at a time. Plan those seconds carefully.

How will you deal with loss in the future?

This exercise is to assist you to look at designing your personal coping strategy for the future losses in your life. It is a cliché to say "Get over it." But the reality is that leaving, loss and grief will continue to happen in all of our lives. We cannot change the cycle of life. And unfortunately, you may find yourself again being forced to leave a place you consider home. You may also experience people hurting or harming you. You may hurt or harm someone else. This exercise will also help you create a plan to deal with the feelings and the sense of hopelessness and grief.

To start this process, think about the people that you know now. Who is there that could help you? Who could listen to you if you want to talk? Who could help keep people away from you if you need time out? Who could perform a ceremony with you, hold you or let you cry?

Are there people and places that you need to avoid when you are feeling grief and loss. Think about who those people are. Are those people around you now? Where are the places you need to avoid? Do you have access to those places now? In the future, will you gain privileges that will allow you to access places, ceremonies or people who can help you?

Are there activities that you think would be helpful? Think about what those activities are. Are there activities that you should avoid? Think about what are those activities are. Do you have access to those activities now?

Are there prayers or spiritual ceremonies that would help? Would talking to an Elder help? Are you involved in a support group or talking circle? Do you have a special friend or confidante that would be there for you? Are you seeing a counsellor or a therapist?

After you have thought about all of these things, you may be ready to look at a future plan. Try to be realistic about this plan. When you are in jail, some of the people, places and activities you would like to be involved with may not be available to you. If you do not have phone privileges, you won't be allowed to call someone for support. Can you write to them? If the activity that you would like to do is to go to a sweat and there isn't one where you are, what else can you do?

Seek the answers wherever there are questions being asked.

Start to develop your plan by answering the following questions.

Who could I contact? How would I contact them?

Who would help? How would they help?

What activities could help?

What do I need to avoid?

Who could I contact? How would I contact them?

Who would help? How would they help?

Once you have finished exercises one through eight, allow yourself some time to think about the process. Your future plan is one that may change from time to time. Perhaps you will become involved in a support group that you feel comfortable with. You may want to add them to the list of people (inventory of support) who would help. If you experience a new loss, use these exercises again to help yourself understand and deal with your feelings and thoughts.

Taking the Next Step - Dealing with Now

Throughout the next exercises, you will have the opportunity to work through the process of loss as it relates to your current experience(s) of being in jail. If you have been to residential schools, jail, young offenders centres, remand centres, etc., try to include them in the exercises.

Exercise One: ***What Losses Have I Experienced?***

Record your losses associated with going to jail. An example of this might be: "Being arrested in front of my family, when I was 22. I was visiting my aunt and most of my family was there."

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened? What was I doing?

Who else was there?

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened? What was I doing?

Who else was there?

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How old was I?

Where was I when this happened? What was I doing?

Who else was there?

Exercise Two: ***How do I feel?***

Try to remember how you felt when you were first being arrested and first went to jail. If you have been incarcerated more than once, were your feelings different each time? How were they different?

The following questions will allow you to explore your feelings regarding the loss you experienced at that time, as well as letting you think of that loss now.

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish.....

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish.....

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I feel then?

When I think about that loss now, I feel/think/wish.....

Exercise 3: ***What happened because of the loss?***

Again, try to write about your experiences around going to and being in jail, residential school, young offenders centres, etc. This exercise will help you look at your own history and how you have dealt with thoughts, feelings, behaviours and actions associated with your loss.

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I deal with this loss then?

What happened because of this loss?

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I deal with this loss then?

What happened because of this loss?

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I deal with this loss then?

What happened because of this loss?

Exercise Four: ***How Have I Dealt With my Losses?***

Think about your current and/or past experiences with residential schools, young offenders centres or jails. How did you get through the time? How did you handle your feelings of loss, anger and grief? Did the way you handled your anger get you into more trouble? Have you ever lost privileges because of your behaviour?

By answering the following questions, you will be able to see how you dealt with each of your losses and what your thoughts are about those losses today. This exercise may also help you to learn new ways of coping with your losses.

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I deal with the loss then?

How do I feel about the way that I dealt with it?

What do I wish happened instead of what actually happened?

Would I deal with it differently today?

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I deal with the loss then?

How do I feel about the way that I dealt with it?

What do I wish happened instead of what actually happened?

Would I deal with it differently today?

Loss that I experienced when I went to jail:

How did I deal with the loss then?

How do I feel about the way that I dealt with it?

What do I wish happened instead of what actually happened?

Would I deal with it differently today?

Exercise Five: ***Saying Good-Bye***

Look at the questions listed in the previous section (Exercise Four). Try to write letters or draw pictures about your current and/or past experiences with jails, etc.. When you have gone to jail, who did you leave behind? Where are those people now? What do you want to say to them? Write your letters, draw pictures or make a collage to express your feelings and thoughts to the people that you have left behind.

Exercise Six: ***Inventory of Support***

When you develop your inventory of support, take time to think about the people who are in jail with you. Is there someone that you can trust? Are there any prison staff that you would feel that you could go to if a crisis occurred in your life. Are there Elders, pastors, counsellors or support groups that are available to you now?

Loss that I may experience:

Who or what is there to help me?

What activities could help? Where can I physically go?

What do I wish I could do?

What can I do?

Loss that I may experience:

Who or what is there to help me?

What activities could help? Where can I physically go?

What do I wish I could do?

What can I do?

Loss that I may experience:

Who or what is there to help me?

What activities could help? Where can I physically go?

What do I wish I could do?

What can I do?

Exercise Seven: ***Letting Go of the Sense of Loss and Pain***

No one but you will know when you are ready to do this exercise. You may want to write letters to the people who have been most affected by your going to jail. You may need to ask for permission however, if you want to burn the letters you have written. Or, you may want to talk to a counsellor, an Elder, a therapist or attend a support group. Using self affirmations on a daily basis may be helpful. Choosing to move forward, away from the past filled with pain and sorrow is a personal choice. You have to do it when you are ready. Seek out helpful and supportive people or activities. Trust that the pain will diminish.

Exercise 8: ***Future Plans***

Start by making a plan to deal with the losses and grief associated with being in jail.

Write down the names of people who are with you now that you feel you could trust. Who would be safe to confide in? Could you go to a counsellor, an Elder, a therapist or attend a support group or talking circle? Could you write to family or friends. It is your choice as to who your support group would be. You will start to build a new circle of support.

What activities are available to you now for you to cope with your losses? What can and should you avoid to help prevent further losses you may experience?

Upon completion of this section on ***Leaving, Loss and Grieving***, proceed with the following questions. Your future is in your hands if you wish it to be. Start on the next page to develop your future plan.

Who could I contact that would help? How would I contact them?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

How would they help me deal with my loss?

_____

_____

_____

_____

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_____

_____

What activities could help me cope in the future?

What do I need to avoid?

Voices: Something to Think About

That boarding school is another experience, like right there again, I ran into that same thing. When I look back, even then, I think I must have been about that age, fourteen, thirteen, in that age, it must have been around there, I was twelve years old. Even in there I ended up getting abused, sexually abused by a worker and I used to see that with other boys in there too, like these men workers would come in and bother them at night time. I never ever done anything about that, like to tell anybody, a lot of that was all something I never even wanted to face like that, until recently. I remember that's where in school there, I remember going to get drunk that time and this guy that was our supervisor, that's when I went with him. I don't know where we came one time on a trip, he took me out of school on a trip, like to (a city) or some place and right there he got a room and that's where he done a lot of that, like sexual abuse. I remember he gave me a drink there, too. These are the kind of things when I look back, like I think a lot of that has to do with, even now, I never really talked or went into detail like that.

Bert, age 42; record for criminal negligence, escape, auto theft, break & enter, assault.

I am very content, happy and I think my success is Spirituality and that is where my success is, but although I have a lot of delayed grief in here, a lot of issues, I know those things are going to take time. I am taking care of them now, going for professional therapy and processing these issues. I am going to professionals and right now I am making arrangements; I am seeing this psychologist that works with us at the Lodge. I'm going to start making appointments and start doing some really deep heavy work. My issues are all of this oppression stuff that happened to me, the Indian Act, residential schools, religion, racism, I guess for me, and all this oppressed stuff. It is all in here. That is why I have a real issue with white people. That is my issue. When I see a white man, right now I see his authority and I despise that. Right now I tolerate it and I work with it and I handle it pretty good, but that needs to be processed. For God's sake, I have a son-in-law who is a white guy, so that's where I'm at.

Harry, age 48; record for joy riding, murder, resisting arrest.

Finally one time he hit me and I went flying. I landed in the corner and I was out of wind. I couldn't breathe for a while, but I was scared. I remember that, I relived that over and over all my life, when I first started sobering up and looking at that and talking about it. Previous to that, I remember there is a lot of things back home too. I remember going through that, like what you are talking about, sexual abuse. Like before, even when I was a little kid, like when I barely didn't know what was going on, there is so many things that happened then and my uncle was the one who had done that. This was like my dad's brother on his side. Even these things, I never talked to anybody about. Those are the things that happened, like I was brought up that way and I guess I didn't know then, like now, that is the kind of life I was brought up like, to be raised up with. All my life to me, I was trying to hide, not to talk about those things. One time when I got into this A.A. program, like for me that is where I started like really looking back in my own life and they talk about that inventory, going back and looking at that. I talked to someone about it at one time, maybe that is what makes it easier today to talk about those things, but they still have a lot of affect on me.

Bert, age 42; record for criminal negligence, escape, auto theft, break and enter, assault.

Sexual Abuse

"...I was at a point in my life where I saw no end to the pain and suffering that I caused for my family. ...I never thought that the hurt I felt would ever end. ...I felt doomed to live my life out paying for my actions and experiences. ...I was told by my therapist that there can be a time where I could be happy again, and that I could find peace in my life. ...That was over six years ago. ...During that time I was found out for sexually abusing my daughter; I admitted guilt in court; I went to jail for 3 years; I started therapy in jail and then continued for two years after serving time; I dealt with my own sexual abuse, and the abuse I did to others. ...Today I am back home with my wife and children. We all dealt with what I did to them, and what we all experienced in our lives. We are a family again. I never ever thought I would say that again, I thought I lost my family forever. ...I will never ever let myself get to a point in my life where I act and behave in the ways I use to, when it was so destructive to me and my family. ...If I can make it, so can you..."

Brian, July, 1989

The topic of sexual abuse is a very personal one. When you begin to think about it, many emotions and memories that you may not have felt for some time can surface. Because I can't talk to you in person, the alternative is to share some general information about sexual abuse with you in writing. You are likely reading this while in prison, and in part, that's what I want to talk to you about: being in prison. Not the physical one you are in where you are confined between four walls, but possibly a worse prison, where we are a prisoner of ourselves. You may not be able to do much about being locked up in the physical prison, but you can do something to free yourself from the emotional, mental and spiritual prison you may keep yourself confined in. No one but you can keep you locked in your self-imposed prison, and no one but you can free you from it either. You have a choice. You can set yourself free from the hurt and pain that may have followed you to the place you are in today.

Before you begin learning about sexual abuse, it is important to remind you of the past circumstances that have influenced Aboriginal people. The introduction of European forms of government, religions, disease, and residential schooling, to name a few examples, weakened

Aboriginal family and community life. The outcome for many Aboriginal people was poverty, addiction, family violence and sexual abuse.

The section you are about to read is about people, who, for the most part, are like many people in this world. These people may be fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, uncles, aunts, and grandparents. You will read very intimate, personal information that people have willingly let the writer share with you. Their personal stories are a part of their life and contribute to who they are today. Their stories tell of love and hatred, happiness and sadness, kindness and cruelty, caring and having little regard for themselves or others. It also displays a courage seldom seen or understood, and a fear so painfully felt. This section explores, with you, what you may have done to people, and what others may have done to you.

This section will provide you with honest information so you can determine if you want to make some changes in your life. You will be supported and respected for who you are as a HUMAN BEING. You will not be looked down upon for what you have done, or what you have experienced.

As well as some general information about sexual abuse, this section will suggest areas you may want to explore. It is not meant to be a complete guide or an outline for personal healing, but a step in guiding you in that direction. Some of the information contained in this section may relate to you, and some of it may not. If the information is not relevant to your life, you may still find it useful to read. The choice is yours.

PLEASE READ

IF YOU CHOSE TO READ THIS SECTION YOU MAY EXPERIENCE CERTAIN FEELINGS. SOME OF THESE FEELINGS MAY RELATE TO AREAS OF YOUR LIFE THAT YOU HAVE NOT YET DEALT WITH, AND MAY BRING BACK PAINFUL MEMORIES. IF THIS HAPPENS, YOU CAN CHOOSE TO CONTINUE READING, OR STOP AND CONTINUE AT A LATER DATE, OR IGNORE THIS SECTION COMPLETELY. AS YOU READ THROUGH THIS SECTION YOU WILL FIND THAT YOU HAVE A CHOICE OF EITHER ACTIVELY PARTICIPATING IN CERTAIN ACTIVITIES BY ANSWERING QUESTIONS, OR TAKING PART IN WRITING EXERCISES, OR BY THINKING ABOUT CERTAIN EVENTS AND PAST CHOICES YOU HAVE MADE. YOU MAY DECIDE TO READ THIS SECTION FIRST. THE CHOICE IS YOURS. IT IS IMPORTANT THAT YOU ASSESS HOW YOU ARE FEELING AND DEALING WITH COMPLETING THE ACTIVITIES ON AN ONGOING BASIS. IT IS ALSO RECOMMENDED THAT, IF POSSIBLE, YOU HAVE SOMEONE YOU CAN TALK TO ABOUT YOUR THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS AS YOU WORK THROUGH THESE ACTIVITIES. THROUGHOUT THIS SECTION YOU WILL BE ASKED REPEATEDLY TO MAKE A CHOICE ABOUT CONTINUING. PLEASE CONSIDER CAREFULLY BEFORE MAKING YOUR CHOICE.

The "Okayness" of Feelings

As indicated above, you may experience certain feelings as you complete this section. Therefore, it is important to spend some time talking about feelings.

Each person experiences feelings many times a day. Some say we begin to experience feelings as a fetus in our mother's womb, and are influenced by her moods and attitudes. As life continues, our awareness of our feelings become more prominent. Some of us have been encouraged to talk about our feelings, to sort them out and to understand them. Many of us, however, were not taught this and, in fact, were encouraged to ignore our feelings, deny them and hide them. The manner in which we acknowledge or deny what we feel varies for each of us.

Feelings are a direct experience of who we are as human beings. If we deny what we feel, we deny ourselves. To deny ourselves can only hurt us and alter the manner in which we view and treat ourselves and other people. For example, if a person denies their feelings, they tend to bottle up inside them. When another situation arises, similar to a past issue which created the feelings which were denied, it may rekindle those feelings and the pain can return as intensely as if the situation happened at that moment. Issues of the past may create certain painful feelings which are triggered by completely unrelated issues.

People are often told that feelings fall into two main categories: **positive/good or negative/bad.** People often interpret positive and negative as being similar to right and wrong. If they experience feelings that fall into the negative category, they often think that they are wrong.

A number of feelings that people often put under the negative/bad category are feelings such as anger, sadness and depression. Like all feelings, the feeling of anger, sadness and depression are responses to what a person is experiencing in a given situation. It is not a matter of being right or wrong. Often people are told that, "you should not be feeling that way," and as a result of hearing that, they often think that what they are feeling is wrong. We do not have the right to tell another what it is they **should** or **should not** be feeling. What they are feeling is based on what it is they are experiencing, and what they have been taught. What you experience in a given situation may be very different from what another person experiences in that same situation.

People do not respond in the same manner to the same thing. For example, some people cry at funerals and some people laugh. The impression is that if you are crying it is because you are sad and hurt. The assumption on the part of the laughter is that this person may think it is funny. Both crying and laughing may be created from the same feeling, for example, one of sadness. The person who laughs at a funeral may feel equally as sad and upset, but for some reason feels inhibited or unable to express it through tears or acknowledge the sadness. They feel very uncomfortable in that situation and as a result, may laugh. This is usually a very uncomfortable situation for both the people watching, because they do not understand, as well as for the person experiencing this, because they too do not understand.

People often indicate that they would like the pain they are feeling to be "taken away." For example, they wish they wouldn't feel sad anymore or they wish they would no longer feel the pain and often want to work hard to remove it from their life. Removing the ability to feel pain is not a healthy process to go through.

The numbing of pain is a survival response. During a time of violence, this may have been a way of surviving a painful situation. However, the pain that was numbed in each violent situation, creates a very damaging effect on the emotional and spiritual wellness of the person.

If I had the power to remove the feeling from your right hand to the point you felt nothing, chances are you are going to repeatedly damage your hand because you cannot feel anything. You may fall and break your finger, but you will not know it. You might cut your hand with glass or with some other object and will not be aware that you are bleeding. Taking feelings from your hand is very risky and endangers you to damaging your hand forever.

The recognition of pain is a signal to your brain that something is happening to which you should pay attention. Emotionally, we work the same way. Emotional pain is there to tell us that something is happening and we should listen to it. Pain/sadness is a healthy response to something we are experiencing. It is an indication that our system is working and responding to these events or experiences.

Rather than taking away the pain that an individual experiences, one needs to understand what has happened and heal the hurt without removing the ability to feel. The feelings we experience are built in warning devices. Denying these feelings can be dangerous.

The residential school experience taught many Aboriginal people that the feelings they had were not relevant and that it was "sinful" to feel certain feelings, such as anger. These Aboriginal children and their families had a great deal to be angry about, but had few, if any ways to address these feelings, often resulting in having to deny or cover them.

It is important that we understand our feelings, as they are an influential part of our life. Being at peace in life means there is value in **your** life. To deny your feelings is a devaluing process to your own sense of self-worth.

Healing of feelings is a process which includes the (re)experiencing of feelings such as anger, sadness, confusion, hope and relief. As we heal, we move through these feelings to a point of resolution and peace, and see ourselves as being able to live in a world where we can be happy.

When we look at our life, it is important to do so in an honest way. If we ever expect to find peace in our life, we must openly and honestly address our issues and experiences, and be accountable for our actions and the choices we have made. Inner peace does not come if we live in constant denial, anger, blame, regret, hatred, and lack of self-respect.

Many of us have had experiences in our lives that have taught us to hide the truth about who we are. We may have opened up to someone in the past, only to be rejected by them. Or we may have lived a life where the things we needed were not provided to us. Things like being held, told that we were smart, or that we were important and loved, and are of value. ***By not having these things, the course of our life can change.*** We may become distant from people, and afraid to allow them to get physically or emotionally close to us. We may shut off our feelings because it hurts too much to let ourselves feel. We may feel all alone and need someone to be there for us, only to find that no one is there. Through all this, we still find a way to survive although our methods of survival may not always be healthy. In fact, it may be harmful to ourselves and to other people.

There was a time in all of our lives that we were innocent children. We were trusting and dependent on others for our care. People thought we were cute and lovable, and pure. But somewhere, somehow, things changed. We became someone that we did not even like. What happened? Why did this happen? The thing about cute little children is that they grow up. They grow up and become us in later years. How did things get to be like this? Together we will explore some of the answers to these questions. And maybe find some way to get beyond the effects of what we have experienced and done in the past.

Have you made a decision to take part in this journey down the road of understanding yourself? Yes or no? Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐ MAYBE ☐

If you answered Yes or Maybe, please continue.

As we go through this section, feel free to stop any time and take a break. You do not have to complete this section or any section of it in one sitting. Actually, it is best that you do not. Take your time, there is no rush. It is important that you read this information, and complete the activities at a rate that is comfortable for you. And besides, you probably have other things you need to do as well as work in this workbook.

You may want to keep this information in a safe place. You might not want others to read what you write in this section. If it is OK with you that others do read it, that is your choice.

If you are seeing or thinking of seeing a counsellor or Elder while you are in prison, you might want to consider telling them, or showing them, what you are doing with this workbook. You may have questions for them, or want to discuss how you're feeling, and what you're thinking as we make this journey together. It is important to have support.

Addressing Sexual Abuse

Before we proceed, I want to explain a little more about what we are going to be talking about. As indicated above, we will be focusing on issues related to sexual abuse. To make the point very clear, I want to talk about the sexual abuse you may have experienced, and the sexual abuse that you may have done to others. Talking about this may not sound appealing to you. But if you have ever experienced sexual abuse, or have ever sexually abused other people, there will come a time in your life that you will have to address it. Sooner or later, the effects of sexual abuse will catch up with you, and there will simply be no place to go. As frightening or as painful as this may be, you need to decide if it is time for you to move forward in your life, if it is, time to end the suffering.

On the next page, you will read a letter from someone who was, at one time, in a similar place as you. By this, I mean he was in prison, facing time away from the family, friends, and the freedom to come and go as they please. But, like you (possibly), they were held in the self imposed prison brought about by the denial of the pain they experienced through sexual abuse, and the lack of acceptance of the fact that they had sexually abused a child. This letter was written while he was in the holding cell at the police station, waiting to be transferred to prison to serve a three year sentence for the sexual abuse of his daughter.

> *"...my life feels like it has come to a complete stop. Everything that I have wanted to do, or have dreamed about is gone. My wife hates me for what I've done. My daughter's life is destroyed by what I did to her. My son has lost a role model and someone that he thought he could look up to. ... If only I could change things. "If only" that's the story of my life - "if only". For me, the words 'if only' have been my escape and my punishment. These words haunt me. ...in this little 6 foot by 8 foot cell these words seem to be so loud. I can't shut out the noise of these words. ...I don't know what will be worse for me, the sentence the judge gave me on Wednesday, or the sentence I have given myself."*

The man who wrote the above letter has given his permission to share some of his story with you. I will call him Brian. This is not his real name. Like so many people, Brian could have given up the struggle for life when he was sent to prison, but he did not. He was able to use this time to look honestly at himself, his life, and find ways to heal the pain that he carried. As we continue this journey, I will be talking more about Brian to show you his struggle, pain and ultimate freedom.

Being the victim of sexual abuse can be an extremely traumatic experience which can scar a person for life. If this person is you, you need to know that there are things that you can do about the effect your experiencing sexual abuse has had on your life. You may not even realize that your abuse has effected you. Many people do not. But even though you may not understand the effects of your abuse, it does not mean that it is not affecting you. You may just not be aware of it.

To prevent misunderstanding, you will be asked very direct questions. Some of the questions asked in this section are very personal.

Here is the first question relating to your sexual abuse. Remember, you do not have to answer it if you do not want to. The choice is yours.

Have you been sexually abused in you life? Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐ MAYBE ☐ I DON'T KNOW ☐

If you answered "no", you may wish to read further and learn. You may know someone who has been sexually abused. Maybe there is something you can do to help understand and support them.

If you answered "maybe", or "I don't know", by reading further you may have some of your questions answered. If you do not know if you were sexually abused, or you believe you were not, you may still find yourself with some of the same feelings as sexual abuse victims. Remember, even though your feelings are similar to theirs, it does not necessarily mean that you were sexually abused. Many of the feelings and thoughts created through different forms of abuse are similar.

If you answered "yes", you have taken a very important step towards reaching inner peace and freedom.

It is important to understand the nature of abuse you have experienced. People can be abused in a sexual manner through many different means. For example:

- they can be touched in a sexual way by others
- they can be made to touch others in a sexual way
- they can be made to touch themselves in a sexual way
- they can be made to watch others touching themselves in a sexual way
- they can be made to watch others touching others in a sexual way
- they can be made to look at sexually related information such as pictures, and sexually explicit movies
- they can be spoken to in very sexual ways, especially if that kind of talk is something that they (i.e., as a child) should not be hearing

As you can see, there are many different ways a person can experience sexual abuse or unwanted sexual acts. Take some time to think about whether or not you are ready to look at the ways you have been sexually abused.

Close this book and take the time to think about whether or not you are going to move to the next activity which is making a list of the nature of the sexual abuse you experienced.

The next question is:

> Do you believe that you are ready to move to the next activity where you will make a list of the nature of the sexual abuse you experienced? Please check your answer below.
>
> YES ☐ NO ☐ MAYBE ☐ I DON'T KNOW ☐

If you answered "yes", continue on to the next exercise.

When you begin to make a list of the nature of the sexual abuse you have experienced, you may need to think back many years to when you were a child. To help you make this list you will be provided with a list of some of the common things people experience when being sexually abused. All you need to do at this point is to check off the ones that you have experienced. If there are more, a space is provided for you to add to the list.

LIST OF THE SEXUAL ABUSE I HAVE EXPERIENCED

- ☐ I was touched on my penis/vagina (between my legs).
- ☐ I was touched on my rear end (bum).
- ☐ I was touched on my breast(s) (chest).
- ☐ I was made to touch someone else's penis/vagina (between their legs).
- ☐ I was made to touch someone else's breast(s) (chest).
- ☐ I was made to touch someone else's rear end (bum).
- ☐ Someone sucked on my penis/vagina (between my legs).
- ☐ Someone sucked on my breast(s) (chest).
- ☐ Someone placed their fingers in my rear end (bum).

- ☐ Someone placed their fingers in my vagina (between my legs).
- ☐ Someone made me suck on their penis/vagina (between their legs).
- ☐ Someone made me suck on their breast(s) (chest).
- ☐ Someone made me place my fingers in their rear end (bum).
- ☐ Someone made me place my fingers in their vagina (between their legs).
- ☐ Someone made me watch them have sex with someone (touching, intercourse, etc.).
- ☐ Someone made me watch them have sex with an animal.
- ☐ Someone made me have sex with an animal.
- ☐ Someone made me kiss them.
- ☐ Someone kissed me.

Please add any other ways you have been sexually abused that were not listed above.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Now that you have made this list, it is important to stop and ask yourself a few questions. The questions are:

- How do you feel now that you have made this list?
- What thoughts are going through your head now that you have made this list?

Remember, if you need to take some time to think about these two questions, please do so.

Please write down the feelings you experienced while completing the previous exercise (filling in the boxes and adding to the list of sexual abuse experiences).

What have you done with these feelings? What do you normally do with these type of feelings? Is what you normally do with your feelings healthy?

What you do with your feelings is up to you. You can ignore them and hope they go away. Or you can deal with them and take back the control of your life. The choice is yours. By acknowledging that something has happened, by acknowledging our feelings connected to the experience, by talking about it, and by sorting it all out to the point of some resolution, we bring our life under our control. Then, the past experiences of our life do not control our life today.

Two other questions you need to ask yourself:

- What thoughts and feelings are you experiencing now that you have made a list of your sexual abuse experiences? Are these thoughts and feelings ones that promote your health and well-being, or are they ones that you will not benefit from?
- Please list the thoughts and feelings you have about yourself, then check off if you believe these thoughts or feelings are ones that will help bring you closer to inner peace, or take you farther away from it.

Thought or feeling about myself:

_____

_____

Yes ☐ No ☐ Brings me closer to inner peace.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Takes me farther away from having inner peace.

Thought or feeling about myself:

_____

_____

Yes ☐ No ☐ Brings me closer to inner peace.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Takes me farther away from having inner peace.

Thought or feeling about myself:

_____

_____

Yes ☐ No ☐ Brings me closer to inner peace.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Takes me farther away from having inner peace.

Thought or feeling about myself:

_____

_____

Yes ☐ No ☐ Brings me closer to inner peace.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Takes me farther away from having inner peace.

Thought or feeling about myself:

_____

_____

Yes ☐ No ☐ Brings me closer to inner peace.

Yes ☐ No ☐ Takes me farther away from having inner peace.

Are you willing and able to continue at this time? Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐ MAYBE ☐ I DON'T KNOW ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue to the next series of questions for this section.

After looking briefly at the nature of the sexual abuse you have experienced, is this the first time you have acknowledged the extent to which you were sexually abused? Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Being able to admit that you have been sexually abused, is a very important acknowledgment. You can be proud of yourself.

Remember Brian? Here is what he had to say about the time he first looked at the extent to which he was sexually abused.

> *" ...for most of my life I denied that I was sexually abused because I never thought men could be sexually abused. ...I was always told that men just live for sex and that a guy will take it any way he can get it. ...I hated it. I was afraid when I was sexually abused. They did it so often. ...When I first took a look at the time I was sexually abused I wanted to run. It seemed that that was the only way I could deal with the pain of really saying that I was sexually abused. That I had to run. ...I decided that this time I was not going to run. That I am going to stay and deal with it. ...I have ran too often, too far, for too long."*

When you looked back at the sexual abuse in your life, you may have experienced certain feelings. It is very normal for this to happen. Sometimes the feelings are clear to us, and at other times it is hard to sort them out. Some of the feelings that come back may be painful. It is very important to understand that the feelings you have are a part of who you are. No one can tell you how or what to feel, or if what you feel is right or wrong. Many of us try to hide from what we feel. However, our feelings have a way of finding us no matter where we go. Have you ever noticed that sometimes you may have remembered something from your past that brought back a feeling, and that the feeling felt as real when you remembered it as it did the first time you felt it?

We may try to numb our feelings from the past with things like drugs or alcohol. This choice does not work. It only makes the situation worse. Even if we are drunk or stoned, it does not mean that we are not affected by those "couped-up" or "numbed-out" feelings. No matter how drunk or stoned we get, the events of our life and our feelings about them are still there. The truth about our life does not change when we attempt to hide from ourselves.

We may also be judged by how we look, or by how we act, or by the colour of our skin. Our looks and the colour of our skin, for example, are part of us but they do not tell how we feel, how we think, or what we believe in. Those truths lie within each of us and may not be easily seen by others, even by those people who think they know us. Most of us only let people see things that we want them to see. We tend not to be open. As a result, we do not always show the inner truth of us as a person, leaving others only to guess who we are.

Where were my Parents?

When we experience sexual abuse we often have certain thoughts and feelings regarding our parents, even if they were not the ones who sexually abused us. The following is a portion of a letter that Brian wrote regarding how he felt about his mother and father when he was being sexually abused.

> *"Where were you? I was a little child and you left me all alone. ...What did you think was happening to me when you were gone? Didn't you care about me? I thought that you hated me. I thought that you knew that I was being abused. ... I hated you for not being there for me."*

A mental or logical understanding of why our parents did or did not protect us from the person or persons who sexually abused us, does not take away our feelings. These feelings may not be as clear as our logic, and actually may say something completely opposite to it. For example, we may believe our parents could not protect us and at the same time find ourselves feeling angry at them.

The next question I want you to consider answering is:

- When you were being sexually abused, where were your mother and father?

I suggest that you do not let your logic tell you what you should feel, but let whatever you feel come out.

Please indicate below where your mother and father were when you were being sexually abused. As well, make a list of the thoughts you had about them and the feelings you felt towards them. Are your thoughts and feelings towards them different now?

MOTHER:

When I was being sexually abused my mother was _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The thoughts I had about my mother were_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The feelings I felt towards my mother were _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The thoughts I have about my mother today are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The feelings I have towards my mother today are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

FATHER:

When I was being sexually abused my father was _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The thoughts I had about my father were _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The feelings I felt towards my father were _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The thoughts I have about my father today are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The feelings I have towards my father today are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

You may also have (had) certain thoughts and feelings regarding others as well. Select someone you want to focus on and answer the same questions, where were they when you were being sexually abused, and what do (did) you think, and how do (did) you feel about them?

NAME OF PERSON: _____

When I was being sexually abused, (name)_____ was _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The thoughts I had about (name) _____ were _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The feelings I had towards _____ were _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The thoughts I have about _____ today are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

The feelings I have towards _____ today are _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is this the first time you have acknowledged your feelings regarding your mother and father and other people as they relate to your sexual abuse? Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Being able to acknowledge your feelings for your mother and father, is a very important step you have taken. You can be proud of yourself.

Do you believe that you are ready to move to the next activity?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐ MAYBE ☐ I DON'T KNOW ☐

If you answered "yes", lets continue.

Now that you have made the list of the nature of the sexual abuse you experienced, and identified the thoughts and feelings you have for your parents and others, please continue on to the next activity by identifying the person or persons who sexually abused you.

Are you in agreement to do this?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "no", please feel free to read along if you like.

If you answered "yes", please continue.

Acknowledging the person or persons who sexually abused you can be a painful experience. No one wants to admit that certain people hurt them, specifically if it is a family member. However, in order to continue healing, you need to move forward through your pain.

When you begin to identify those people who sexually abused you, you may need to think back many years to when you were a child. The following is provided to help you carry out your review. Please check off those that apply to you.

LIST OF THE PEOPLE WHO SEXUALLY ABUSED ME

- ☐ I was sexually abused by a priest in the residential school.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a nun / sister in the residential school.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a caretaker in the residential school.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by someone else in the residential school.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my foster father.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my foster mother.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my foster brother.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my foster sister.

- ☐ I was sexually abused by my foster relatives.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my adoptive father.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my adoptive mother.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my adoptive brother.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my adoptive sister.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my adoptive relatives.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my biological father.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my biological mother.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my biological brother.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my biological sister.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my biological relatives.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my grandparents.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by an Elder.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a Medicine Person.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a Spiritual Leader.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a baby-sitter.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a neighbour.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a family friend.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a stranger.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a doctor.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a nurse.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by my counsellor, therapist or caregiver.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a teacher.
- ☐ I was sexually abused by a police officer.

Add to the list any other people who sexually abused you.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

When you were making the list of the people who sexually abused you, what feelings did you experience? Please list your feelings.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Are you willing and able to continue at this time?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐ MAYBE ☐ I DON'T KNOW ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

The following letter was written by a young person who was sexually abused. In the letter they describe what it was like for them to experience sexual abuse. They wrote the letter to answer the people who asked them what it was like being sexually abused.

A Letter to the World from a Victim of Sexual Abuse

I have existed on this earth for sixteen years now, however, I have only lived here since I was seven. Some of you know me as a careless person who really doesn't give a damn, others of you refuse to know me at all. If you took the time to talk to me and to show me you are interested in me, I might open up and share some things with you. However, these things I'm sure are things that you do not want to hear.

When I was just growing up, I think around four or five or so, I remember my mother and father constantly fighting. My dad was an alcoholic and I can remember at times him beating my mom up. My mom was really afraid of him and I realize now she tried to do her best, but back then she ran from him with terror. My memories of those years are kind of scary but not nearly as scary as living them because I was never sure from one minute to the other what that moment might bring.

My father started sexually assaulting me when I was around six. I wasn't sure what was going on, but I believed within myself that what he was doing was wrong and looking back now I realized that at six years old I wasn't very able to go to my mother or to my father or anyone else for that matter and talk to them about what was occurring. You see, I realized at six years old that no one would believe a six year old child when it comes to her word over an adult. Especially her parent. I realized back then that if I explained to my mother what was occurring, she would be placed in a position of having to support me over my father and I knew that she wasn't strong enough to do that. In looking back now I realize that I used to parent my mother a lot more than she parented me. I realize now that I made a conscious decision, however, it didn't seem so conscious back then to keep the secret between my father and I. Before he started touching me I felt kind of like trash and scum of the earth any ways and didn't know whether or not I belonged to this family or not and through his touching me, it seemed to reinforce the fact that these thoughts and feelings were true.

As I am getting older I can remember hearing from people that children tend to play sides against their parents. In my upbringing, it was kind of opposite to that, my parents tended to play sides against me. I can remember so many times when my father would give me things and do things for me and at the same time criticize and run down my mother. He would tell me that she didn't love me and that she hated me and wanted to get rid of me. I felt so bad and so lost at times when he told me that, that I just didn't know what to do, because it was usually during those times that he would come and sexually assault me and tell me that he loved me, and that he would never let anything bad happen to me. I had such a strong need to believe him that I accepted what he was doing to me and blocked

every question of the incident out of my mind. As I started getting older my mom really began to see the relationship between my father and I growing. It was fake, however, on both my father and my part because we knew it was just a game. A game I tried many times to get out of. I can remember on at least four or five different occasions going to my mother and telling her that I had something to discuss with her that was really important. She never ever took the time to listen to me. One day I remember telling her that your husband is having sex with me, her response to that was, "well I hope you enjoy it because he never has sex with me." When I heard this I thought that she was pushing me towards him and I felt angry and resentful. I realize now that my mother really didn't push me towards my father except at six, seven and eight years old, I really couldn't tell the difference.

When I was around nine and a half years old, my mom and dad went to visit some family in the United States and left me at my aunt's house. I didn't mind that too much, however, that was before I went there. You see, when I was there my uncle, like my father, also sexually assaulted me. I didn't view it as sexual assault back then, I viewed it as something I deserved because my uncles used to call me "trash", and "slut" and he said he wanted to teach me a lesson. I won't go into detail as to what he did to me because your first question would probably be, "why didn't I run or scream out loud" but inside my head I screamed louder than anything you've ever heard. When my mom and dad came to pick me up, the first thing they asked my relatives were, how much trouble did I cause them. You see, I've been know to swear, mouth people off, and do drugs. My parents assumed, of course, that I would have done these things here as well and of course, I didn't. You see, or maybe you don't, but the only way that I knew how to deal with the fact that these things were occurring to me was to run. I couldn't physically run, so whenever I got stoned or drunk it seemed to ease the pain a little. That was until I woke up.

My father and my uncle stopped sexually assaulting me just before my sixteenth birthday. He promised me many times before that to never touch me again but he always did. I wanted too much to believe him that he would never touch me again, that I felt sorry for him. I knew he had a problem and I didn't know how to help him. My father finally stopped touching me only after I physically ran away and lived with my boyfriend, who I might add, also did what he wanted with me both physically and sexually. I grew up in a home where people were treated like trash and I expected when I found somebody that I wanted to live with, he would obviously treat me like trash. I didn't realize it then but I do now that I used to attract guys who had a need to hurt people, because back then I had a need to be hurt because that was the only way that I could prove that I was something. The pain was so real for me that it constantly reminded me of my nightmare. When I finally told my mom about what my dad was doing to me, she immediately called me a liar plus she called me every other thing she could think

of. I realize now that she had a need to deny it because she too was a past victim of sexual abuse and she never dealt with it in her life until now.

I should probably add also that my father, sister and brother were also sexually assaulted when they were children. That by no means means that my father is justified in touching me but to me it means that he probably felt as much pain as I did. So many times when I was growing up I wanted to die, and on two occasions, tried it. I began to feel that the only way to get rid of the pain was to get rid of the person. Thank God I failed at trying to commit suicide because now I realize that I am someone.

My mom and dad and I, actually our whole family, is going through treatment for the incest and sexual abuse that happened in our family. If I was to tell you that it was easy, I would be lying and I no longer lie. So the truth is, that it hurts, it hurts more than anything you can ever dream of but I am only a few months into the program and I realize now that this process is worth it because me and my mom and brother and sister and even my dad and uncle are really worth it. There is a reason those things occurred and if we punish the person without finding out the reason why it occurred, we gain nothing, and if I had any message to you at all, it would be this: for those of you who are victims of sexual abuse, remember that the person who is touching you has the ability to make you believe it's your fault. He or she has the ability to convince you that you are no good and that you're trash. For your sake if not for anyone else's, go to somebody you can trust and tell them, but better yet go to somebody who will also do something about it. Because if they promise you that it will stop, they're lying. It doesn't stop until you stop it.

For you mothers who hear for the first time or suspect that your daughter or son has been sexually assaulted, believe them. Right now more than anything else in their life they need you because tomorrow may come and they may not be there and you will feel guilty and bad and wish that you had done something sooner. Don't let that day pass, listen to them today, because when they come home stoned or drunk or tell you to "F" off, they are really telling you that they are hurting and they're scared and they don't know what to do. If you punish them for this, they will do it more. By this, I am not saying don't punish them, but I am saying get to know them, talk to them, listen to them, and believe them, because if you who are the biggest model in their life don't believe in them, neither will they believe in themselves.

For the fathers or the uncles, or any other person, whether they be male or female, who has sexually assaulted or has a desire to touch a child sexually, get help. You may try to convince yourself over and over again that you will never do it again, but ask yourself how many times you've said that, and how many times you've failed. I never thought that I could say this before but I realize now that I

can, you are not animals, you are people who have problems and they need to be resolved. As long as you view yourself as an animal, you'll run and hide like an animal when they're scared. Stop running, take responsibility for what has happened and get help. I love my father very much and I realize now that he was not purposefully seeking to hurt me but has a strong need to feel important and wanted and cared for.

We can now have that loving family and as every week goes by it gets better and better. I would also like to say to you that it is not only girls who get sexually assaulted, it's also boys. My brother was sexually assaulted numerous times by both men and women. When my mother was young she sexually assaulted a boy that she babysat, I used to have thoughts of doing this also. I can only thank God that I never did. I don't know what else to say to you other than, if you are in any trouble like this at all, phone someone, talk to someone who can and will help you end this nightmare.

Thank you, in dying memory. Kathy.

Your Story of Sexual Abuse

The space provided below is for you to write out your story of sexual abuse. You can choose to write as much, or as little, as you want. You may wish to write about one situation or several. Before you write your story, you will be asked several questions concerning your sexual abuse, prior to each of your stories. These questions may assist you in starting your story.

Who is the person in this story who sexually abused you?

How old were you at the time the sexual abuse first started?

How old were you at the time the sexual abuse ended?

At the time of the sexual abuse, how old was the person who sexually abused you?

Where did the sexual abuse happen?

What was the time of day or night when the sexual abuse happened?

What was the season when the sexual abuse happened?

My Story

After writing about your sexual abuse it is important to stop for a moment and pay attention to how you are feeling. Stop reading and writing and close this book. Give yourself a break. Perhaps you need to walk, or sit quietly, or talk with someone. When you are ready, come back to this place in the workbook.

Explore your Feelings

At this point there are a number of things you need to decide. You have already done a number of very important things by acknowledging your sexual abuse, identifying the nature of the abuse, acknowledging and reviewing your thoughts and feelings about your mother and father, and acknowledging the person(s) who sexually abused you.

Here is another question for you. Please check off the answer you choose.

> Now that you have gone this far in the section, and in addressing the sexual abuse in your life, do you need to:
>
> ☐ Stop reading for awhile, and continue at a later time
>
> ☐ Stop reading and never pick this up again
>
> ☐ Find a counsellor, Elder, or someone that you can talk to about how you are feeling
>
> ☐ Continue with the section

If you choose to stop reading for a while, continue when you feel ready.

If you decided to stop reading and never look at this section again, you may find that you have certain feelings which you may need to sort out. I would suggest that you speak to whomever you trust about how you are feeling. You may decide to continue with this section sometime in the future.

If you want to speak to a counsellor, Elder, or another person, it is important to tell them what you are doing in this section. They can be a support for you, especially if you wish to continue.

If you chose to continue, please do so. Remember: take a break whenever you need to.

The next in our series of questions is:

- When you were sexually abused did you feel you had a choice in what happened? Or, did you feel powerless and that you had no control?

Think back to when you were being sexually abused and remember how you felt. But before you begin thinking back, check that you are in a safe place mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually. You need to be safe to let yourself remember in a way that will help you.

Are you in a safe enough place mentally, physically, emotionally and spiritually to let yourself remember how you felt when you were being sexually abused? Check you answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐ MAYBE ☐ I DON'T KNOW ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

When you were being sexually abused you may have felt numb. It is likely that you felt a variety of feelings. If you were sexually abused more than once, you may have felt different things during each of the times you were abused. People who have been sexually abused sometimes feel the same way, other times completely opposite or different. There is no right or wrong way to feel when you were abused. The point is, what did *you* feel? Don't be concerned about what others felt, or if the feelings seem out of place. Some people feel afraid, embarrassed or ashamed to admit what they felt when they were being sexually abused. Please allow yourself to be honest with how you felt.

When you were being sexually abused, how did you feel? Please write down your feelings when you were being sexually abused. If you want to write down your feelings for a few different times you were abused, the space is provided for you to do so.

These are the feelings I felt at the time I was being sexually abused by (their name) _____
At the time of this abuse I was _____ years old. The person who abused me was _____years old.

When I was being sexually abused I felt _____

These are the feelings I felt at the time I was being sexually abused by (their name) _____
At the time of this abuse I was _____ years old. The person who abused me was _____ years old.

When I was being sexually abused I felt _____

These are the feelings I felt at the time I was being sexually abused by (their name) _____
At the time of this abuse I was _____ years old. The person who abused me was _____ years old.

When I was being sexually abused I felt _____

These are the feelings I felt at the time I was being sexually abused by (their name) _____
At the time of this abuse I was _____years old. The person who abused me was _____years old.

When I was being sexually abused I felt _____

Now that you have answered the above questions, how are you feeling?

Is this the first time you have acknowledged the feelings you felt when you were being sexually abused?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Being able to admit the feelings you had when you were being sexually abused, is a very important acknowledgement. You can be proud of yourself.

Are you able to continue to the next exercise or do you need to stop for a while?

Continue: ☐ Stop for a while: ☐

It is often important for the person who was sexually abused to have an opportunity to express their feelings directly to the person or people who abused them. In this exercise you will decide if you want to begin the process of doing that. To start this process, write a letter to the person or people who sexually abused you. This letter does not actually have to be sent to them. That can be something that you decide at a later time.

Right now though, I want to know from you if you are going to go to the next step and write your feelings down in a letter to the person or people who abused you. Are you wanting to do this?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

Brian's letter to someone who sexually abused him provides you with an example. Brian was sexually abused by a number of people, (his uncle, sister, female baby-sitter, and an elderly person). This is the letter he wrote to his uncle. Some parts of Brian's letter have been deleted to ensure confidentiality. Therefore, the letter may read like there are a few things missing.

Dear Melvin

As I began to write this letter I realized that I can't even call you uncle anymore. I didn't realize that until just now. As I think about that I haven't called you uncle for years. It hurts to much for me to admit that my uncle sexually abused me. You were the one I looked up to. You were closer to me than my dad. You were my dad, my uncle, my leader, my Elder, my friend. And, you were also my abuser. ...For the longest time I denied that you sexually abused me because if I admitted it I would have lost all the other things you were to me. So I denied it. I let the abuse go on. I thought if I stopped you I would have lost you. ...I felt guilty because I did not stop you. I felt like it was my fault that you did that to me. ...For a while I felt special. As sick as that sounds to me, and anyone who ever reads this, that's how I felt. I thought that because you were doing those things to me it meant that I was special to you. I guess I was special, but not in a good way. ...I looked up to you to teach me. You did. I became just like you. I am just like you. Except that I am in prison for what I did and you are still free to do as you please. ...I am beginning to realize that you may be free physically, but you have to live with yourself. That no one can free you from. Except you. ...I am writing you this letter not really knowing if I will ever send it to you. Even though I know that I don't have to send it to you I still feel some fear in telling you how I feel. ...I want you to know that when you sexually abused me you hurt all of me. Not just my body. You hurt my spirit. ...Some day I will tell you these things to your face. But before I do that I need to deal with the effects of what you and so many others have done to me. And more importantly, I have to deal with what I have done and what I have become. ...I have not become so bitter that I will not pray for your healing.

Brian

Brian actually wrote to each of his abusers and had this to say about how he felt:

> *"...even though I never sent all the letters to them, I felt I became more free as I understood what had happened to me. ...I realized that for me it wasn't so important that they knew how I felt, but that I was able to express even to myself how I felt."*

Writing a letter to the person or people who have abused you can be a step towards helping free yourself and bringing you to a more peaceful emotional, mental, and spiritual place. Think about writing a letter to your abusers. You don't have to send the letters to them, and actually at this point it is probably better you do not send them. There are a number of things you will want to consider before you ever send a letter. Asking the guidance of a counsellor or Elder is suggested if you want to mail the letter to them.

Several pages back, you said you were willing to write a letter to your abuser or abusers. The choice now is if you are going to write a letter to your abuser(s).

Are you going to write a letter to your abuser(s)? Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", continue to the next part of this section.

Before you write this letter, it is important to think about what you want to say. If you could say anything to your abuser, what would you want to tell them? Remember, you can say anything to them you want at this point, since you will not be sending the letter to your abuser and you are not saying anything to them in person. Say anything you want, and write and rewrite the letter as many times as you want. Unlike when you were being sexually abused, you now have the control. You have a choice to say whatever you want to.

After you have given this letter some thought, write it to them as if they were going to get it. By this I mean, address it (by name) to them, and own what you say by signing it. Remember addressing and signing your letter is only a suggestion. You may wish to do it another way. The choice is yours.

This is a very important step. You can be proud of yourself for reaching this place.

My Letter to the Person who Sexually Abused Me

Date: _____

Dear _____ :

Now that you have written a letter to your abuser, how are you feeling?

Is this the first time you have written a letter to a person who sexually abused you? Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Writing a letter to someone who has hurt us can be draining. You need to do a check again and decide what you want to do at this point.

Do you wish to continue to the next section, or do you need to stop for a while?

Continue: ☐ Stop for awhile: ☐

It is now important to look at how you think your sexual abuse has effected you. Are you ready to do that.

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

Sexual abuse can effect a person in many different ways. Brian wrote something that describes a little of how he thought his sexual abuse effected him. Some of the points he made are

- "I saw sex as being wrong"
- "I saw people as things without meaning"
- "I saw sex as being dirty"
- "I was afraid to let people get too close to me, because I thought they would hurt me"
- "I learned to shut off my feelings"
- "I lost trust in people"
- "I became angry"
- "I learned to hate"
- "I became revengeful"

Now, complete the following sentences regarding the way you think your sexual abuse has effected you. For example:

"When I was being sexually abused, I saw myself as being weak, to blame and dirty."

Please complete the following sentences:

1. When I was being sexually abused, I saw myself as being _____

_____

_____

_____

2. When I was being sexually abused, I believed _____

3. When I was being sexually abused, I saw sex as being _____

4. When I was being sexually abused, I saw men as _____

5. When I was being sexually abused, I saw women as _____

6. When I was being sexually abused, I saw children as _____

7. When I was being sexually abused, I believed that I would _____

_____

_____

_____

8. When I was being sexually abused, I believed my body was _____

_____

_____

_____

9. When I was being sexually abused, I believed that my abuser _____

_____

_____

_____

10. When I was being sexually abused, I believed that my Creator _____

_____

_____

_____

11. When I was being sexually abused, I thought that I would never _____

_____

_____

_____

12. When I was being sexually abused, I dealt with it by _____

13. When I was being sexually abused, I thought my life was _____

14. When I was being sexually abused, my feelings were _____

15. When I was being sexually abused, I physically felt _____

16. When I was being sexually abused, I spiritually felt _____

17. When I was being sexually abused, I wanted to _____

_____

_____

_____

The space below is for you to write any additional thoughts or feelings you have.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Do you wish to continue to the next section, or do you need to stop for a while?

Continue: ❐ Stop for awhile: ❐

Surviving sexual abuse takes a strength most people do not know they have. It is hard at times for someone to believe they survived sexual abuse when there is often emotional, physical, mental, and spiritual pain connected to the abuse. The way people survive sexual abuse varies from person to person. Some people are very aware of the methods they use to survive, while others are not. Some of the survival methods are healthy and non-destructive, and others are harmful and self-destructive. All methods serve the same purpose of blocking pain.

Brian spoke about the method he used for surviving his sexual abuse in a letter he wrote to the members of the group he attended. The following are excerpts from that letter.

> *"...at first I couldn't believe that my uncle would do anything to harm me. ...I told myself that what he was doing to me sexually was only a dream. ...I needed to believe that it was a dream because if it was a dream then I could still have an uncle. ...If it wasn't a dream, then I had an uncle that was hurting me. ...I didn't want to have an uncle like that. ...When the sexual abuse went on and on I couldn't pretend that it was all a dream, so I started to create a world that I could live in inside my head. ...It was a safe place for me to be and go to when I was being abused. ...Everything in my pretend world was good. ...I had a family that loved me, there was no sexual abuse. ...I was safe. ... It is how I survived. ...Later I turned to alcohol. That killed the pain - at the same time it created more pain for me. ...I found that the more other kinds of pain was there then I didn't have to think about the sexual abuse. At the same time I was killing the pain I was killing myself. ...Back then I didn't care what I was doing to myself, as long as I blocked out the pain around my abuse. ...I thought that I deserved to be in pain. ...I thought I deserved to be sexually abused. ...when I abused myself I thought I was punishing myself for being responsible for the sexual abuse. ...I thought that because so many people were sexually abusing me then I must have done something to deserve it. ...I never realized that I needed to think like that because I always felt responsible for everything. ...always being responsible was easier for me to deal with. ..."*

Brian's methods of surviving his sexual abuse involved pretending his abuse was a dream, creating a safe place (world) for him to go to hide the pain of the sexual abuse, turning to alcohol to numb the emotional, mental and spiritual pain he felt and, blaming himself. Although Brian did not say this in this letter, he later spoke of another method he used to survive his sexual abuse. He sexually abused others. In therapy, Brian said:

> *"I felt so powerless, I couldn't stop what they were doing to me. I needed to strike back at them, but I couldn't, they were too big, or so much older. ...so I sexually abused people they loved. ...When I did that, I found I could cope better with what they were doing to me."*

Look at the methods that you used to survive your sexual abuse. How did you cope with what was done to you? Focus on the question:

- What did you do ***during and after*** the times you were being sexually abused?

In other words, what did you do to survive? Space is provided for you to answer these questions.

While I was being sexually abused, I did the following in order to survive:

After I was sexually abused, I did the following in order to survive:

Surviving sexual abuse is a major achievement. You can be proud of yourself that you made it.

We have looked at the sexual abuse you experienced. You have acknowledged who abused you. You have had a chance to get in touch with some of the feelings you had when you were being abused, had a look at how your sexual abuse affected you, and the methods you used to survive. In all likelihood, you are now more in touch with your sexual abuse than you were before you began this journey.

You have knowledge on how being sexually abused feels. You have greater insight into the importance of talking about it. You have greater understanding of the need for supporting victims of sexual abuse. But, if in your past you sexually abused another person, have you gone as far as to know that they too need support, understanding, and acknowledgement? Do you know that if you have sexually abused someone, you hold a key to helping them to heal? Possibly helping them in a way that no one helped you. How would it have felt for you if the person or people who sexually abused you admitted their responsibility? How would it have felt for you if your abusers came forward and said that it was not your fault? How would it have felt if your feelings were validated and you and others knew that you were not lying about being sexually abused? How would it have felt if someone had been there for you? It might have felt great. It could give you a new hope in life. You do not have much control over your abusers, and they are not reading this section in order to know what they should do but, ***you are***. If you have ever sexually abused anyone, there is a great deal that you can do to help them and yourself.

Brian has a few words to say about helping himself and those he sexually abused.

> *"...I never thought I would ever admit that I sexually abused my daughter, niece, nephew, neighbour, and aunt. I always thought that I would hide the truth from everyone, so that the only people who really knew what happened were the people I sexually abused. I succeeded for years doing just that. ...I never stopped to think that even though I hid it from everyone, I still knew I did it, the people I abused knew I did it, and my Creator knew I did it. That I couldn't run from. God knows I tried to run, but wherever I went, so did my past. I was my past, and there came a time that I just couldn't hide from me anymore. ...I thought that when I got caught for the sexual abuse of my daughter I never had to tell about what I did to the other people. I was wrong. Even though the law never caught me, I had to live with me and I couldn't live a happy life when I knew I was living a lie..."*

Trying to hide the truth about your past is hurtful. Deep inside all of us is a place where lies cannot exist very well, and an honesty that we cannot cover up. Denying the truth about our behaviour may fool many people. If you have sexually abused someone, you may fool many people. But you will know, the person or persons you sexually abused know, and the Creator knows. You cannot fool the most important people: yourself and the person or persons you abused.

The most important gift you can give yourself and others is the truth. If you want inner peace and happiness, then you must speak the truth. Contentment, love, self-respect, respect from others, dignity, and freedom, are not built on a foundation of lies.

The next question you will be asked is about whether or not you have sexually abused another person or persons. Are you ready to be asked this question?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

After you read the next question, please close the book and find a quiet place where you can think deeply about what your answer will be. After you have made your decision, come back to this same page and check off your answer. You may wish to pray that you look for, and find, all of what you need to achieve the truth. Please read the question then think about your answer after closing the book.

Have you ever sexually abused anyone in your life?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you have sexually abused another person(s) and if you answered "yes", you can feel proud of yourself because you have made another important acknowledgment that will help you in your own healing journey. You probably do not fully realize the good that can come from your acknowledgment of the truth. You truly have done something you can feel proud of.

If you have sexually abused another person and if you have admitted it, how are you feeling right now?

I am feeling _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____ _____

_____

_____

_____ _____

_____

Is this the first time you have admitted that you have sexually abused someone?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

At this point do you want to:

- ☐ Stop reading for awhile, and continue at a later time.
- ☐ Stop reading and never look at this section again.
- ☐ Find a counsellor, Elder, or someone that you can talk to about how you are feeling.
- ☐ Continue with the section.

If you have not sexually abused another person, you may wish to continue reading to further your understanding of sexual abuse.

Moving forward brings us to another question and activity. Again you need to make another choice. The choice this time is if you are going to write a list of the people you sexually abused.

Are you wanting to do this?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

Space is provided below for you to write down who you sexually abused, and what you did to them. It is important that you acknowledge both. When you write what you did to them, it can be in point form if you wish.

Complete the questions for each person you have abused.

Person's Name: _____

Please describe what you did to them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I felt when I was sexually abusing: (name) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I think that (name) _____ felt when I was sexually abusing them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Person's Name: _____

Please describe what you did to them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I felt when I was sexually abusing: (name) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I think that (name) _____ felt when I was sexually abusing them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Person's Name: _____

Please describe what you did to them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I felt when I was sexually abusing: (name) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I think that (name) _____ felt when I was sexually abusing them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Person's Name: _____

Please describe what you did to them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I felt when I was sexually abusing: (name) _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

These are the feelings I think that (name) _____ felt when I was sexually abusing them.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

As you have identified, the sexual abuse you experienced had an affect on your life. It may have affected the decisions you have made, or the perception you have of yourself. Just like the abuse you experienced has affected you, your sexual abuse of others has affected them. In this next section, consider looking at the ways you think your abuse of others has affected them.

In doing this, please complete the following:

I believe that my sexual abuse of (name of person) _____ affected them in the following way:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I believe that my sexual abuse of (name of person) _____ affected them in the following way:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I believe that my sexual abuse of (name of person) _____ affected them in the following way:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I believe that my sexual abuse of (name of person) _____ effected them in the following way:

_____

_____

_____

_____

I believe that my sexual abuse of (name of person) _____ effected them in the following way:

_____

_____

_____

_____

When we remember and write about our actions or behaviours, certain feelings or thoughts may emerge. Some of what we experience may be feelings of the past, or a feeling based on a new understanding of our behaviour, and the impact it has had on others. Acknowledging our feelings is an important part of healing. As you were writing the above stories or accounts of your actions, what did you think or feel?

In the space below, please describe what you thought or felt as you were answering the questions about your sexual abuse of others.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

We are again at a point where you need to decide what you want to do. You have started to address a very important part of the sexual abuse you did to others.

Check off the answer to the following question:

Now that you have gone this far do you want to

- ☐ Stop reading for awhile, and continue at a later time.
- ☐ Stop reading and never pick this up again.
- ☐ Find a counsellor, Elder, or someone that you can talk to about how you are feeling.
- ☐ Continue with the section.

If you chose to continue, please do so. Remember to ensure you are taking rest breaks.

It is often important for a person who sexually abused others to have an opportunity to express their feelings directly to the person they abused. In this next exercise, you will decide if you want to begin this process. You can start by writing a letter to the person or people you sexually abused. This letter does not actually have to be sent to them. That can be something that you decide at a later time.

Do you want to go to the next step and consider writing your feelings down in a letter to the person or people you abused?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

Below is another example of a letter that Brian wrote. This one is to his daughter, a person he sexually abused.

Dear Linda

...I don't know how many times I started and stopped this letter to you. I have so much I want to say to you, and so much fear in saying it. I want to tell you how much I love you, but even the sound of that sounds wrong. I don't want you to misunderstand what I mean. ...I can't even begin to know how you must be feeling right now. If I could take all your pain away I would. ...You must understand that the sexual abuse was all my fault. I did it, Linda, not you. I made you do it. I told you things that made you not tell. I took advantage of you. ...I know it doesn't sound right, but I never wanted to hurt you. ...I was selfish, and I never even thought of what effect what I did would have on you. ...I was wrong. No matter what I have gone through in my life it never gave me the right to sexually abuse you. ...I blamed everyone and everything for my behaviour. ...When I touched you I didn't even think of it being you. ...I want you to know that I have now told mom the truth, that I sexually abused you. You were not lying, I was the liar. You had the strength to tell the truth. ...I have finally come to a point in my healing that I want to tell the truth. ...Linda, you are not to blame. It was my fault and no one else's. ..."

Brian eventually wrote to each of the people he abused, and had this to say about how he felt about doing so.

" ...even though I was full of fear when I wrote to them. I felt freer. I felt that the more I became honest with them, but mainly myself, a burden was lifted off of me. ...If only I had not waited so many years to do it. ..."

By writing a letter to the person or people you abused, you can bring yourself a step closer to freeing yourself and bringing yourself to a more peaceful emotional, mental, and spiritual place. Think about writing a letter to each of the people you abused. You do not have to send it to them, and actually at this point it is probably better that you do not. Again, there are a number of things

you will want to consider if you ever actually send it. Asking the guidance of a counsellor or Elder is suggested if you want to mail the letter to them.

Now that you have considered writing a letter to each of the people you have abused, you are ready to answer the next question.

Are you going to write a letter to each of the people you have sexually abused?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

Before you write each letter it is important to think about what you want to say. If you could say anything to the person you abused, what would you want to tell them? Remember, you can say anything to them you want. At this point this is only a letter. You do not have to send it, and you are not saying it to them in person. So you can say anything you want, and you can write and rewrite the letter as many times as you want.

After you have given this letter some thought, write it to them as if they were going to get it. Address it (by name) to them, and own what you say by signing it. Remember this is only a suggestion. The choice is yours.

I will provide you with space to write one letter.

Date: _____

Dear _____ :

How are you feeling right now? (Now that you have written a letter to a person that you have sexually abused.)

I am feeling: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Is this the first time you have written a letter to some one you sexually abused?

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

Having the courage to write a letter to the person you sexually abused is a major acknowledgement. It is also an indication of your desire to address these issues. You can be proud of yourself.

If you have sexually abused more than one person, you may now go on to write letters to each of those people on other sheets of paper. You may need to take a break between each letter, or you may wish to continue writing the letters at a later time. Whatever your choice, please ensure you are taking a break when you feel it is necessary or you are getting tired.

As you may know, sexually abusing someone affects not only the person being abused, and the one abusing them, but it can affect other family members as well. In Brian's situation, his abuse of his daughter had serious consequences for his wife Karen, and their son Trevor. Karen felt very betrayed by Brian and she lost trust in him for a long time. Trevor used to look up to his dad, until he found out that his dad was a sexual offender. It took a lot of work on Brian's part to earn his son's respect back.

Writing a letter to other people affected by your sexually abusive behaviour can be another step towards accepting responsibility for your behaviour. It also lets them know that you are gaining greater insight into your actions. Think about writing a letter to the significant people affected by your sexually abusive behaviour.

The following are excerpts from letters that Brian wrote to his wife Karen, and his son Trevor.

To Karen

"...for so long I blamed you for my behaviour. ...I never thought that I could come to a point in my life where I could admit that I was the one to blame. ...it was not you. ...you did not make me sexually abuse Linda. I did it, and I did it for my own reasons. ...I am not saying that in my head, and some times to you I did blame you. But I did that because I did not have the courage to accept my own responsibility. ...I never realized until recently the pain I caused you. ...I never looked at my behaviour as it effecting you, or being done to you. ...I violated your trust. I abused your child too. I brought shame to our family. ... I placed you in a position to have to chose who you should trust. ...I put you against Linda, and against your mother and sister. ...I can't even find it in me to ask for your forgiveness. I can't even forgive me for what I have done. ..."

To Trevor

...I find it hard to start this letter. I don't know what to say. ...I never thought for a moment that you would be hurt by my actions. ...the love and respect a son has for his father is sacred. ...I violated that. ...I violated you. Even though I never sexually abused you, I hurt you in other ways. ...I never knew how much you loved me until I hurt you so much. ...I was blind. ...I don't know how to describe what I did to you. ...I brought shame to you. I destroyed the love and respect you, my son, had for me, your father. ...I can't express to you how much I am sorry for what I did to you. ..I have also come to realize that when you found out that I sexually abused your sister, that you felt like I violated you as well. ...I never knew the bond you and Linda had was so deep.

Do you want to go to the next step and write your feelings down, in a letter, to the people effected by your abuse.

Please check your answer below.

YES ☐ NO ☐

If you answered "yes", please continue.

After you have given these letters some thought, I would suggest that you write to them as if they were going to receive the letters. By this I mean, address it (by name) to them, and own what you say by signing it. Remember this is only a suggestion, you can do it whatever way you want. The choice is yours.

Write one or two letters. (Use extra paper if you need.)

Date: _____

Dear _____ :

Date: _____

Dear _____ :

How do you feel now that you have written these letters?

Please check your answer below.

I FEEL THE SAME AS BEFORE I WROTE THEM ☐

I FEEL BETTER NOW THAT I HAVE WRITTEN THEM ☐

I FEEL WORSE THAN BEFORE I WROTE THEM ☐

In the space provided below, describe your feelings, and why you think you feel that way.

Since you have started this section you have looked at a number of issues related to your own sexual abuse, and the sexual abuse you did to others. If you gave all you could to completing the activities, you likely feel a sense of accomplishment for your efforts. As you begin to heal, it is important to look at your progress. In this final activity for the section on ***Sexual Abuse***, consider looking at the work you have accomplished.

Which of the following have you completed? Check them off.

- ☐ I have acknowledged that I have been sexually abused.
- ☐ I have acknowledged that I sexually abused others.
- ☐ I have acknowledged that I need to accept responsibility for my behaviour.
- ☐ I have acknowledged that I have to accept responsibility for helping myself heal.

Since I began this section, I have also accomplished the following:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____

Closure: the Medicine Wheel

There are many ways and methods people can use to assist themselves towards healing. They involve methods like self-help, support groups, counselling groups, support counselling, general counselling, extensive therapy, culturally appropriate and traditional methods, and holistic healing. Each one of these methods offers something for the person wanting to heal personal issues. It is important to understand that one method may be helpful for one person, and the same method may not be as useful for another. Some people are at different places in their healing and as a result have different needs.

When people experience sexual abuse it affects the entire person. Holistic healing emphasizes the importance of healing the whole person. The whole person consists of four aspects; **mind, body, emotions and spirit.** Each aspect functions in support of the other. The goal of holistic healing is to maintain a balance of all four areas.

The Medicine Wheel, or Sacred Circle, has strong meaning to Aboriginal people. "Medicine" as it is used in the wheel, refers to healing, teaching, enlightening and spiritual energy. (Coggins, 1990, p. 2). The sacred circle symbolically reflects the continuation of life, the four seasons and the four stages of human growth; from birth through to youth to parenting, and finally, to the stage of being grandparents or Elders.

The circle teaches the inter-relationship of everything in the universe; that every living thing and person is connected to each other. This connectedness also depicts the relationship people have between races. Colours are used symbolically to indicate different cultures; for instance, **yellow** represents Oriental, **red,** First Nations, **black,** Black, and **white,** Caucasian. The symbolism of the sacred circle varies between cultures.

The circle teaches about respect and equality toward every living being. Respect and equality display status and a sense of belonging within the circle. There is no one before you nor is there anyone behind you; all are equals. With one person to my left and one person to my right I am strong with their support. Every member is needed and has a place of belonging. This connectedness, and balance is seen in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal worlds. However, in many cultures, such as Aboriginal people, this balance and connectedness can be torn apart. This imbalance is shown (in part) through the existence of family violence.

Physical, Mental, Spiritual, Emotional

Physical balance (in part) is attained when a person rests regularly, exercises and eats proper foods. The result of a balanced physical life is an increased energy level, a clearer mind and a balanced metabolism. When the body is not taken care of, the result will often be illness. Eating disorders, abdominal problems, heart conditions, high blood pressure, and diabetes are often symptoms of an imbalanced physical life-style.

In another example, if the body was physically abused, the experience would impact on the emotional, mental, and spiritual aspects as well. The abuse could result in an external stress, possibly developing eating disorders, the abuse of alcohol and drugs or creating physical illnesses.

To use the medicine wheel to develop physical wellness, the North direction is the starting point for developing a balance. The North direction is also recognized as a time of rebirth. From the final stage of being an Elder, life continues on to rebirth.

In an abusive family system where abuse of foods or alcohol or drugs may be used to cope with stress, the physical aspect of life is impaired, as are the thoughts and feelings this family may have about themselves and each other. This type of life-style would also affect the spirituality of the individuals in the family system.

For example, many parents who have been abused while at residential schools, have found it painful to deal with feelings and have used alcohol and drugs to numb them. These parents often think they are useless, unloveable or unworthy of deserving anything. They tend to live their lives according to the beliefs and feelings they have about themselves. Without realizing it, they may choose a life-style that reinforces or strengthens their beliefs about themselves.

Moving clockwise to the next direction on the medicine wheel, we find the East. The East direction signifies the beginning of a new day, leaning new ways and enlightenment. This is a time of examining thoughts and views. The mind acts like a data or memory base giving direction both to the conscious and subconscious mind. The mind receives information from the environment around him/her which may include, parents, siblings, guardians, other extended family, reading material, television, radio, teachers and friends. The mind may act like a sponge, soaking everything up unless the person is able to sort through the information and be selective

about what he/she decides is worth retaining. For example, children who grew up in an institution like the residential school may not have been given the skills to develop limits and boundaries within their lives. They may have adopted values or morals from any source. Their limits and boundaries may have been too broad, at times finding themselves being abused or violated. Using the medicine wheel to attain balance, and as a guide, one will gain insight and direction to their thoughts, beliefs, and behaviours, and examine their views in proper perspective.

Next on the medicine wheel is the South. The South direction reflects the formation of the spiritual realm. Spirituality is the foundation for culture, values, beliefs, personal philosophy and morals. The spiritual self guides all three other areas.

The West direction talks about introspection, looking inside ourselves to see what is there. The feelings that are there act like a thermometer or warning signal, sending messages about reactions to life and the experiences being encountered. These feelings may be identified immediately or they may be stored away in the body or the mind. For example, the feelings and memories of the abuse at the residential schools were stored away.

When feelings are identified and dealt with immediately, the person will reduce their stress, resulting in more energy to cope with other aspects of life. On the other hand, suppression of feelings causes a number of reactions, some of which are stress, confusion, an inability to function as a whole, emotional and physical symptoms. Physical symptoms may include headaches, backaches, abdominal problems, ulcers, and heart conditions.

With respect to healing the whole self and consequently, healing the family, all of the four parts of 'self' need to be addressed. This holistic approach to healing will provide an opportunity for individuals to heal and to develop healthy relationships with self, family, friends and the community.

Family members grow up in a whole system, learning the beliefs and behaviours they will one day teach. Family members grow up adopting their parents', grandparents' or guardians' life-style without knowing what is healthy or unhealthy. Family members affect one another. Each member's behaviour requires the family system to respond in order for it to exist. For example, if one member of a family is unhealthy, the other members of the family respond to that unhealthiness to maintain the family system.

The holistic approach differs significantly from other treatment approaches. Most (treatment approaches) often only deal with either the emotional, physical or mental aspects of a person, excluding spirituality. At times one's personal philosophy, or the issues of legality, stop a caregiver or service provider from addressing the realm of spirituality or culture with those they work with. Spirituality and culture aid in forming the foundation of a person's life. If the healing process does not address these areas, the person may experience difficulty in understanding and implementing solutions to their problems.

It is important to question and examine healing methods, whether they are holistic in nature or not. It is essential that the healing method used be developed around the needs of the individual, family, and community being treated, and not forcing them into the treatment process that is insensitive and inappropriate to their needs. This workbook may have provided you with a structure to support your personal holistic healing journey.

Conclusion

In conclusion, here is a letter from a man describing his struggle and his success on his healing journey. This letter is written for you and your healing journey.

I never thought I would be in a position of writing a letter to other people wanting to enter a personal healing journey. I also might add that I never thought I would do any of the things I've done in the last decade.

I grew up in a home where sexual abuse, alcohol, drugs, and physical abuse happened all the time. I was in residential school for seven years. I went there when I was seven years old. I always looked at that experience in such a negative way. And it was negative. I would never wish that on anyone. And that is a change in itself. There came a point in my life where I had to make a choice of either continuing to blame everything on my past, or learn something from my past. To use my past to help me in my present and future.

This new outlook on life didn't just happen out of nothing, it happened because I was reported for sexually abusing a number of children in my community. At the time I was reported, I felt relieved, and I hated it. I was relieved because I could finally admit to the truth. It was hard on me to always have to lie. Thank God I was found out. I hated it because I was afraid. I was afraid of the truth. I always ran from the truth. I could control a lie, but the truth was hard to handle.

When I was found out I thought I was going to lose everyone in my family. My children were taken away from me, and my wife left me and went to live with her mother in another community. My own parents were supportive of me, but they were supporting a liar. I pretended that I was happy that they were there for me. But they weren't really there for me, because they never really knew who I really was. So all I had was a pretend sense of support. I felt that I was getting deeper and deeper into my lies.

Finally, someone came and talked to me and I felt that I could tell this person the truth. I never felt like that before. This person seemed different. I was not being judged. I did not feel like I was being looked down on. I was being treated like I was human. Even though this person knew that I had sexually abused children. I wanted this person to treat me like I was bad. Because if he did then I could fight back and continue to deny what I had done. I eventually told him the

truth about my sexual behaviour. I went to court and I thought I would fight it. The lawyer thought I could win. But I began to learn that by fighting it meant that I had to drag my child, and the other children, my wife and family through a gut wrenching process that I could control and prevent, if only I told the truth. So I did. I told the truth.

I went to jail for 16 months, and decided to use that time to help myself. I began to work on issues as best I could, and when I needed help I spoke to my Elder who came to the prison. I realized that I could either waste away in prison or I could use that time and begin my healing process.

My wife and children started therapy while I was in prison and we all began to look at our lives. When I came out of prison I entered therapy with my family and we all began to repair the damage that I had done. We spent over two years in therapy, and it was the hardest thing I ever did. Prison was easy compared to therapy. In therapy I could not run anymore. I had to deal with me, and what I experienced and did.

If you would have asked me before I admitted responsibility for my abuse of others, I thought I could ever admit it, if I would have told you that there was NO WAY. But I did admit it and I survived. If you would have asked me if I could have ever acknowledged what I did to my wife and family in other ways, I would of told you NO WAY. But I did, and I survived it. If you would have asked me if I thought I would ever go to therapy, I would have told you NEVER. But I did, and I survived it, and it changed my life forever. I have been able to have my family back. I can hold my children and wife in a healthy positive way. I can be at my children's sports and birthdays and tell them to their face that I love them. I never ever thought I would ever have them back again. But I do.

To achieve this took hard work, being open and truthful. It was not easy but I did it. You can do it, and others will do it. Life passes too fast to spend the rest of our lives thinking about the things we should do. There comes a point in time where we need to walk the talk and become honourable, respectable, and whole.

I will pray for you in your journey.

Warren

Your Notes:

Voices: Something to Think About

One of the biggest factors, or the biggest boost is that I met a lady that would back me up one hundred and twenty-five percent, a lady that would constantly say how nice a person that I am, day in and day out, a person that would constantly kiss me and kiss me, always reminding me of how nice a person I am, how beautiful of a man that I always am. Always reminding me that tomorrow will be a better day, supporting me more than I have ever been supported in my life, honest, trusting. I met a person that was a gift from God and prayers, I prayed for all that has been given to me today, I prayed for everyone, everything, the woman.

Richard, age 40; record for robbery, assault causing bodily harm, inciting a riot, attempted murder, break and enter, pointing a firearm, hijacking, kidnapping, dangerous use of a firearm.

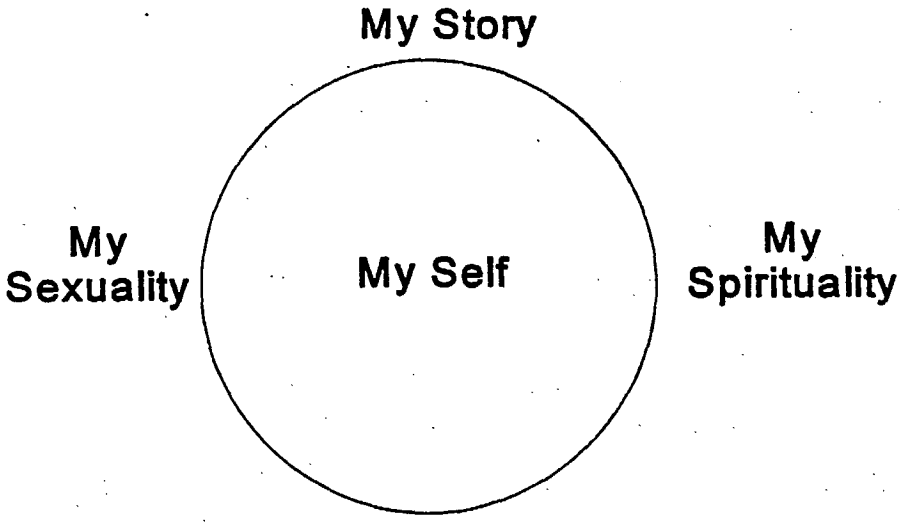
The Elder, that's how I changed my way of thinking. I always looked at it this way, today I know and kind of understand what had happened there. I guess I must have had, the easy way to explain, a crack, where my Spirit was in, and he seen it, and he reached in and touched it and changed things around. Then shortly thereafter, I went up North. The first time I had met this Elder from up North, and she really took me under her wings and took me in like a son. It was powerful up there, it seems like I just got deeper into this richness of our Spirituality stuff. Things just got better. I have to give a lot of credit to where I am today, I guess I would say, to the Creator, God or Higher Power. Somebody up there must like me to guide me all through this stuff and to be where I am today.

Harry, age 48; record for joy-riding, murder, resisting arrest.

I couldn't feel anything, any of my past. I think about it today and I can't feel any of my past. It was hurt, when I think about it today, it was a hurt that I had to run around and stay all over the place. It was painful, I guess. I didn't like doing what I was doing, like deep down inside it hurt. I didn't have any self respect, I didn't have any self-confidence, no peace of mind, no hope, no hope at all. I thought it was going to be my life forever. I didn't have any love, so I found it in ways that prostitution brought about, the love from the men. The love from men, that is the only kind of love I had, so I ended up doing it a long time and I ended up more or less liking it I guess, because I got this emotion from other people, this love. It was a painful process and it kind of hurts to talk about it, but I have dealt with my issues and I feel good about it.

Sheila, age 32; record for failing to appear, assault, robbery, soliciting.

Sexuality and Spirituality



CIRCLES of CONNECTIONS

RELATIONSHIPS with ME, OTHERS, and "ALL THAT IS"

Introduction

Our stories tell us and others who we are. They help to protect us. They help to heal us. Our stories can show us and challenge us to realize the potential that is in each of us. Our sexuality and spirituality are central to our story. By going through this section, you are invited to begin a journey to more fully explore your sexual and spiritual story.

The journey will start by looking at a general "map" of the "territory" of self, sexuality, spirituality and circles of connections. We will become more specific as we explore the actual "territory" of our sexual/spiritual selves later in the section.

How can I better know my story? How will I continue to create my story? The following journey can help to discover answers to these two important questions. It is your journey and your story and you are encouraged to explore the "territory" in a way that both challenges you and respects your own limits at the same time.

Imagine that you stand beside a pond of still water with a handful of small pebbles. Then imagine that you throw the pebbles high in the air above the water. As they splash into the pond, the many circles of ripples that spread out and run into each other are like the circles of connections that include us and our sexuality and spirituality along with our connections to all that makes up our world around us.

Our spirituality involves circles of connections which includes our connection with our selves, with others, with nature, with the Creator and with "all that is".

Your body, mind and spirit form circles of connections within your "self". Your sexuality is all part of these circles of connections. These circles of connections of your self, your sexuality and spirituality are like the circles of ripples on the pond which all are connected to "all that is."

The circles of connections of our self, our sexuality and our spirituality and our connections with "all that is" involves a mystery. It cannot be fully understood nor explained and can seem confusing. This mystery is sometimes referred to as some fundamental element of "love." That "love" is a mystery and cannot be fully understood nor explained does not make it less real. "Love" is real. "Love" is absolutely important. "Love" is central to our stories.

Our stories are gifts. You are invited to give the gift of your sexual and spiritual story to yourself. The offerings that follow in this section may be ways that you can use to give and receive and unwrap and explore this gift to yourself. What is offered here may guide you in coming to know your sexual and spiritual story more fully and help you as you continue to create the story of your life.

Being the author of our own stories means being our own authority. (The word "authority" comes from the word "author".) Authority is about making decisions, making choices. Being our own authority means that we take responsibility for the decisions and choices we make and for the consequences that arise.

You are invited to take some quiet time to be curious about being your own author, your own authority. Take your time. You may want to just have your thoughts and feelings about it. Or you may want to write about it or make pictures or talk into a tape about it. Be easy and gentle with yourself even though this may not be easy to do. It may be very difficult and require a lot of your courage and wisdom. Courage does not mean being without fear. Courage means facing our fear and moving forward in ways that respect and honour ourselves and others.

In one way or another, we are always writing or telling or making our own story. Our lives keep moving and changing. As part of the mystery of love, we all have the potential to turn this movement and change into growth for ourselves. We receive from and have the potential to give back to "all that is" around us. In this way we are as "one" and part of the "circles of connections" with "all that is."

As a way to explore this part of your story, you are invited to draw or sketch a picture of your own "map" of the circles of connections of your self, your sexuality, your spirituality and your connection to "all that is". You may wish to use the image of the circles of ripples on the pond. You may want to use other images or symbols in your picture. Animals or plants or words such as in poems or other creations can also be used as images and symbols to create pictures that can make up the map of your story. You are encouraged to refer back to this "map" from time to time as you explore your story further. You may want to modify your "map" as you continue your journey. You can do your drawing in the space provided on the following page or you may want to use a separate note book. It is important to maintain your privacy in ways that are right for you.

Your picture can help you explore that following questions as well as other questions that may come up for you. What are the circles of connections within me? What questions do I have about my sexuality? What questions do I have about my spirituality? How do I fit in with other circles of connections? What does it mean to be my "self" and be at "one" with "all that is" at the same time?

Circles of Connections "Map"

Our Body & Sexuality: An Exercise to Explore

You are invited to explore your sexuality by taking time to become aware of your body, your attitudes, your emotional experience, and your thoughts about behaviour during this exercise. By doing this exercise you will be taking the "map" from the first part of this section and moving into the "territory." You are encouraged to go slowly and be mindful of the wholeness of your body, your body senses. You will be reminded of this as you go along. Go slowly and make this a loving gift to yourself.

Before starting this exercise, there is some additional aspects of sexuality to think about that are related in important ways to how we experience our own body. Our sexuality includes our many bodily structures and the functions that they perform. It includes our special sexual organs as well as the rest of our bodies. A body structure means what something is. The function refers to the various things that a structure does. Many body structures and functions are both directly and indirectly related to being sexual. For example, one body structure is our tongue. Some of the various functions of this fleshy and muscular structure includes: tasting and moving food and liquids; helping us to talk; being a part of kissing; giving and receiving sexual pleasure; and when we were young, sticking out our tongue helped us to tease our brothers or sisters.

Sexuality includes having sex and what we do with our bodies and what we think about and feel while we are experiencing sex. Our thinking and our attitudes about our female and male selves and others are part of our sexuality. Sexuality also includes the influence of others upon us in relation to what we think, feel and do as men and women. You will be invited to explore more of these aspects of sexuality later in this section.

As a foundation for this exploration, let yourself become aware that you are allowing your body to be supported by whatever you are standing, sitting or laying upon. Somewhere beneath is the earth which is the basis of all our support. Take some more time to think about what it is like and what it means for you to allow yourself to be supported in some way. Let this be a reference point for you to know that you can allow yourself to feel support from the earth for your self, your body. What does this mean to you? (There is space to write or make sketches after most questions. You may want to do this after each question or you may want to wait until later.)

Without trying to change anything take some time to pay attention to your breathing. What is the rhythm of your breathing like? Where do you notice your breathing the most? The least? What is it like to know that your breathing is such a vital connection to the environment around you? Have you ever noticed that taking easier, deeper breaths can often have a calming effect?

Take some time to get a sense of your whole body. How do you feel about your body? You are invited to set aside self-judgements about your body and have the intention to accept and love your body as you are at this time. This is a reminder that our bodies are sacred and that our sexuality is part of our spirituality. Can you love and respect your self and your body more fully when you can let go of all of the expectations about how your body should be?

While doing this exercise you may get to know yourself and your body in a way that you may not have experienced before. We will be taking an awareness journey throughout our body. We will take time to focus on all of the areas of our body. Because of our focus on sexuality, you are invited to pay attention to the many areas of your body that are important to your sexual experience.

For now, position your body in any way that feels comfortable for you - sitting, lying down, standing or slowly walking. You may want to change and vary your body position at any time. This exercise can be completed as a total experience or divided up into whatever time intervals or other ways that you choose. Do it in whatever way and at whatever pace is right for you. You are encouraged to go slowly and take time to pause quite often. The word *"pause"* will be inserted from time to time to remind you.

To get started, focus your attention on your feet. Take your time and let your attention linger and explore. What are you aware of as you pay attention to your feet? Our feet are the basis of our connection to the earth. Think of them as the connection between you and the earth. *"pause"* Think of the balance that you can have and the complex structure of your feet. Note the various sensations that come to your awareness as you are think about and pay attention to your feet. For a few moments, and with appreciation, think about your feet and the miles that they have carried you and the miles that they have yet to carry you. *"pause"*

Let your awareness move from your feet to your lower legs. Think of the connection of your ankle joints connecting your feet to your lower legs. Think about the important part that your lower limbs play in your many ways of moving on the earth. *"pause"* As you move on up your body, pay attention to the wonderful structure of your knees. It's a hinge that moves back and forth and allows the mobility, direction and strength that makes our legs so important and useful to us. Take time to get a feel for your legs and a feel for your knees as part of your legs. *"pause"* And then as you move on up your body, think of your thighs and the muscles and power of your thighs. *"pause"*

As you pay attention, think of how well the various structures of your lower limbs work together - your thighs and your legs and your knees and your ankles and your feet and how they are connected with each other and are part of what makes your connection to the earth what it is and makes your mobility possible. *"pause"* By taking this time and paying attention, you can know that you are caring for your body. *"pause"*

At this time let your attention move up from your legs. Focus on your whole pelvic area. Think of the important functions that are experienced in this part of your body. *"pause"* Pay attention to your genitals. What is your attitude about focusing on your genitals? What is it like to be aware of your genitals and know that you do not have to do anything else at this time? *"pause"* Our genitals are such a central part of our femaleness or maleness. Note the importance of your genitals and the rest of your pelvic region to your total sexual experience. *"pause"* Note that by focusing your awareness you can appreciate and value yourself as a sexual <u>being</u> without having to <u>do</u> anything at the moment. *"pause"* Can you appreciate the important function of the movement of wastes from the pelvic area of your body? *"pause"* What was your experience and what did it mean to focus awareness on the pelvic region of your body? *"pause"*

You are invited now to take your time and move your attention up your body. Focus on your back; all the areas from your buttocks, to your lower back to your mid-back, to your upper-back and to your shoulders. What do you experience in your back and shoulders? Spend time with this large area of your body. *"pause"* Think about the qualities and functions of your back and shoulders. Think about the power and the stability of your back. *"pause"* Think about your back as being part of the container that serves as protection for your internal organs. *"pause"*

Let your attention focus around to the front of you. Take a slow trip of awareness from your lower belly to your upper belly. What does this area of your body mean to you? *"pause"* Continue on to your lower chest and your mid-chest and your upper-chest and where your chest meets your shoulders. Linger in this area and explore what it means to you. *"pause"* Think about the vulnerability and the sensitivity and the need for contact that is often the experience of the front part of our bodies. Take note of the many thoughts and feelings that you may have. *"pause"* How is this related to your sexuality?

Let your awareness now go to the internal structures and functions within the trunk of your body. Think about all the amazing "circles of connections" involved with the complex structures and many functions and processes that go on in the trunk of our bodies. *"pause"*

Think about your circulation system: the powerful pump that is your heart and the rest of your blood vessels. *"pause"* Can you feel your heart beat and sense the blood flow in your body? What does your heart and blood system mean to you? How is your heart related to courage? *"pause"*

Focus on the skeletal structure of your body: your rib cage, your back bone and the connections to our pelvis and legs and arms and neck and skull. Take time to appreciate this wonderful support system. *"pause"* How is our skeletal structure related to dignity?

Let your attention go to the digestive structures and functions as we take in food and digest and receive energy and let go of wastes. *"pause"* Focus on the function of breathing; the rhythm of taking air into your body and letting it out. Think of the exchange of air with your blood in your lungs to purify your body and to give you energy. *"pause"* Be aware of the endocrine system and its vital glands that secrete various hormones into our bodies. *"pause"*

Think about the remarkable "circles of connections" related to all of these internal systems. In a general way, can you have the sense of the awesome complexity of our internal functioning? Take time to appreciate and marvel at this. *"pause"* How is your sexuality related to your internal functioning?

Now let your attention go to your arms and hands. Take time to get a feel for your arms and hands and what they mean to you. *"pause"* Think about the strength and the many skills of your arms and wrists and hands. Focus on your ability to reach out; your ability to hug and to hold. Think of your ability to give comfort and pleasure. *"pause"* How is this related to your sexuality?

Focus on the awareness of your neck. What do you notice in your neck and what does it mean to you? Your neck is the passageway from your head to the rest of your body. It allows movement and connection. *"pause"* How is your neck related to pride and dignity and sexuality?

Focus your attention now on your head and face. Take time to appreciate the ability to hear and to see and to smell and to taste and to take in air. *"pause"* What is the sexual importance of these abilities? *"pause"* Think about your face and the expressions with which you meet and greet the world. What is the meaning of this to you? *"pause"* Think of the wonderful instrument that is between our ears; in other words, our brain. It is such a wonderful, complex instrument and organ that has such tremendous capacity and potential. This is our control centre from which we focus our attention, solve problems, appreciate beauty, form our attitudes, come to decisions, make choices, have fantasies and know something about love. *"pause"* We have such wonderful abilities! What does this mean to you?

And now let your awareness go right to the top of your head. Let it slowly travel from the top of your head right down to the soles of your feet. Let your mind and your attention expand up and down and in and out and around and within all that makes up your body and your self. Take your time and let yourself have as much time as you want to take this journey of paying attention and being mindful of all that makes up who you are. *"pause"*

Encourage yourself to repeat this exercise or any parts of it at other times in the future. Repetition will make the experience richer.

You are invited to use the following page and additional paper or note book to write the story of your experience of exploring your body. You may also want to draw pictures or use other images as well. You are invited to go back and respond to the questions throughout the exercise if you have not done so already. How does this exploration add to your picture from the first part of the section? How is this exploration a self-loving thing to do?

Body & Sexuality Exploration Exercise

Connection with Our Sexuality: Toward Spirituality

In addition to the areas explored above in the exercise, "Our Body and Sexuality" there are many additional elements related to sexuality and the connection to spirituality. You are invited to use the ideas and the information in this section to continue to write your story as you add to your knowledge and experience about your spirituality. This section can be used as an exercise to read slowly, to think about and to explore your own questions and answers. Along with the material presented, there are questions throughout to help to guide your exploration.

Sexuality is *our way of being in the world.* It includes *our femaleness and our maleness.* It is *our embodied life energy.* It is *who we are in our body. Spirituality* is *our being part of nature* and *our divine connection to all that is.* This *includes our body, our thoughts, our feelings, our deeper knowing; all that we are.* The oldest meaning of spirituality is *"breath".* The *breath of life connects us to everything.* Spirituality which includes our sexuality cannot be completely explained nor fully understood. It involves a *mystery.*

Our sexuality includes and depends on sex. It includes what we **do** and **think** and **feel** sexually as well as who we **are** in relation to our physical, mental, emotional and spiritual needs for physical and intimate connection. Our sexuality is part of our spirituality in relation to all of our connections with our self, with others, with nature, with the Creator and the powers beyond our self. This is all part of the "circles of connections" and the mystery of "love".

Sexuality and spirituality involves caring for and loving your self. This is especially important, and also often difficult, in our relationships with others. **As an adult, self love and self care in relationships requires that I make a conscious choice to be in a particular relationship and that I take responsibility to be equal within it.** Sexuality and spirituality involves partnership rather than any kind of domination of one person over another. It involves partnership of equal people. Equality also means accepting that we are different in many ways. It means that we are different and yet of equal value.

Relationships that are based on equality, respect for differences, and self-responsibility in relation to sexual behaviour and which includes mutual consent by partners have a foundation for connection to spirituality.

A challenging area of human sexuality/spirituality is that of sexual attraction (orientation) according to gender. (*"Gender"* refers to our being either female or male.) Sexual attraction includes mental, emotional, physical and spiritual factors. Sexual attraction can range from being attracted mostly to members of the opposite gender, being attracted to members of both genders, or being attracted mostly to members of the same gender.

There is evidence that sexual attraction or orientation is based on both physical or hereditary factors, as well as social or learned factors. Sexual attraction can also depend on different times or stages in our lives or the context of our present living situation. Being close to, as well as the availability or unavailability of, people of the same or opposite gender can affect our feelings of sexual attraction.

Members of society, in general, or members of different cultures have a range of attitudes, feelings, and behaviour towards people of varying sexual preferences and practices. It ranges from honour and respect, to tolerance, to indifference, to intolerance and to discrimination. Some Aboriginal cultures give special honour to people who have same gender or both gender sexual preferences and practices. These people are referred to as "Two Spirited" people.

Sexual attraction in general is different from sexual behaviour. Often it seems as if we have little choice about whether or not we are attracted to various people. However, we do have choices regarding sexual behaviour and are responsible for our choices. As has been previously stated, respect and honour involving mutual consent and self-responsibility is the foundation for sexuality that has a connection to love and spirituality. A loving approach toward sexuality has the potential for the greatest personal satisfaction.

What are some ways that you know you are equal with others even though you are also different and are your own unique person? What challenges do you face in respecting and honouring your own and others' sexual attractions, preferences, and practices? You are invited to go over these last few paragraphs slowly in order to think, feel, and write about these challenges.

Being *"sexual"* is not the same as being *"sexy"*. Being *sexy* has to do with having the "right image" or being a "good performer." Because none of us can ever have quite the right image nor ever quite perform well enough, expecting ourselves to be sexy leads us to feeling "never quite good enough". This type of self judgement separates us from ourselves and others. Being *sexual*, on the other hand, means that we value and accept who we are. This connects us to ourselves. What does being sexual as opposed to being sexy mean to you?

The Biological Part of Sexuality

Sexuality has to do with our biological functioning; our total physical anatomy, our specific sexual anatomy, our genitals, the wholeness of our body and how we relate to others. The biological functioning part of our sexuality has to do with reproduction. The only part of sexual functioning that is strictly natural is reproduction.

Part of being sexual and being responsible for our sexuality means knowing, respecting and accepting our bodies. This includes the various structures and functions of our bodies that are parts of our sexual being. In order to more completely know and understand our bodies there are diagrams on the following pages that show some of the basic sexual structures of each gender.

The diagrams of the female and male sexual and reproductive structures include the external sexual organs called genitals or genitalia and the internal sexual and reproductive organs. Brief explanations of the main functions of these structures are also given. It is important to note that these diagrams are limited and only show the basic aspects of our specific sexual structures.

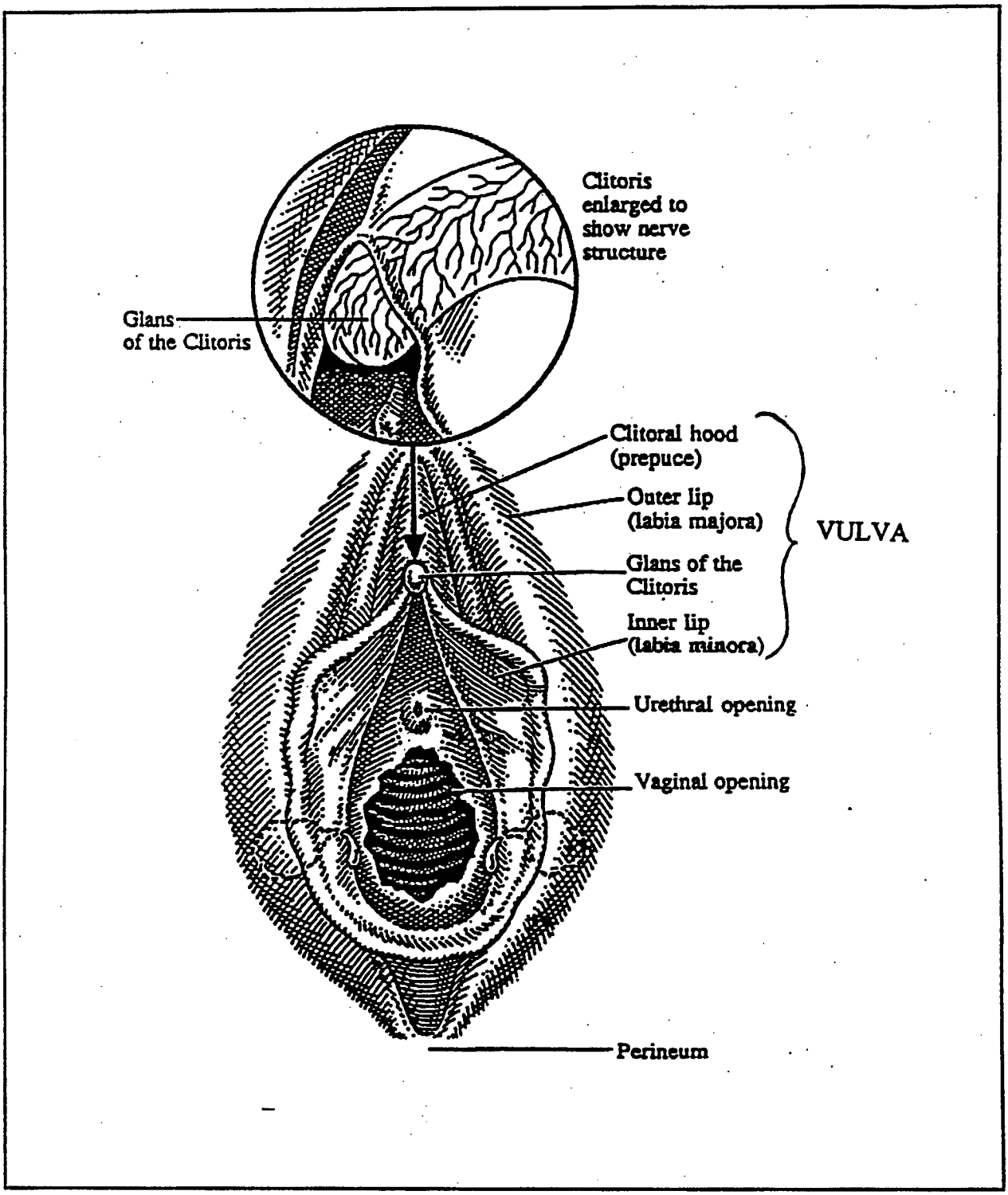
You are invited to study the following diagrams carefully in order to more fully know your own gender's basic sexual structures and functioning as well as those of the other gender. You are also invited to examine your own body in relation to these diagrams. This examination can be done privately by exploring with your hands and fingers and by examining visually and with a small mirror when this is possible.

You might have been told that examining your body's sexual structures is bad, wrong or "dirty". This is unfortunate. Don't we have the same right and responsibility to know our sexual structures and functioning as any of the other structures and functions of our bodies? There is a joke that refers to when we are young and we are often taught in one way or another that: "Sex and our sexual parts are bad, wrong, dirty and sinful" — and — "we should save sex for someone we love."

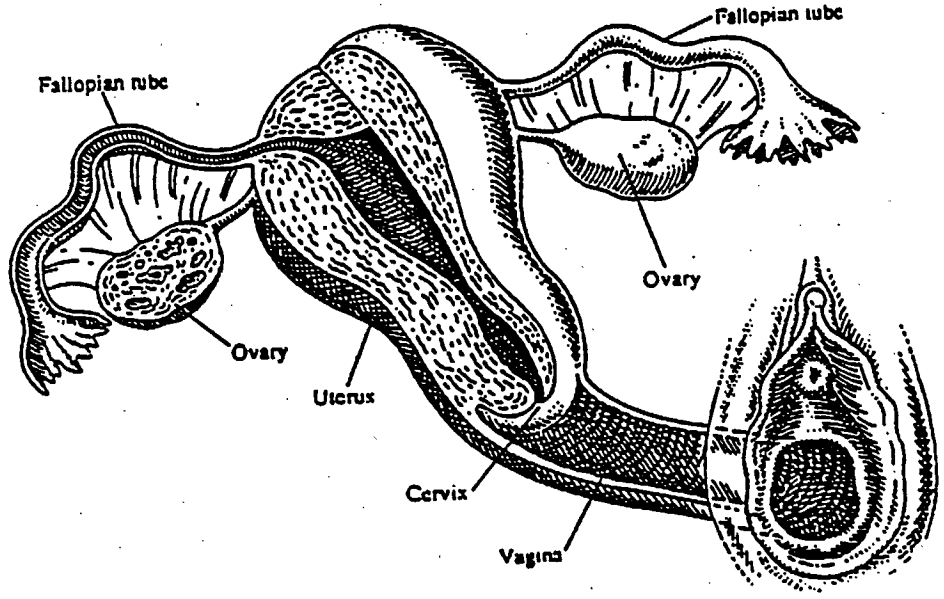
Female Genitals and Reproductive Structures and Functions

The main female structures that are shown and labelled on the following two diagrams will be briefly explained below. (The labels used on both the female and male diagrams are somewhat non technical. This is to help with basic understanding for our purposes. Therefore, different words for the same structures are sometimes used depending on the source.)

Female Genitals



Female Reproductive System



VULVA - is the name used to include the female genitals that are generally considered to be external. Part of the vulva not shown on the diagram is the pubic mound. This area covers the pubic bone and is located above the clitoral hood and in the lowest part of the belly. In adults this area is covered with pubic hair. There are many nerve endings in this area and when the pubic mound is caressed it is often a pleasurable experience. The other genitals making up the vulva include the outer and inner lips (labia), the clitoral hood and the clitoris. The appearance of the vulva varies considerably at different stages of sexual arousal and from woman to woman. Female genitals are often beautifully compared to the appearance of various tropical flowers. The genitals are not as regularly formed as are shown in anatomy drawings. Appearance does not determine sensitivity nor the capacity to receive and give sexual pleasure. (For better illustration, the diagrams here show the female genital area more like it would appear during sexual arousal.)

OUTER LIPS (LABIA MAJORA) - in adults these lips are covered with hair on the outside and are smooth and moist on the inside. They protect and enclose the more inner structures. They have many nerve endings and can be the source of pleasurable sensations. The outer lips usually open during sexual arousal.

INNER LIPS (LABIA MINORA) - the moist inner lips protect the urethral and vaginal openings. They also contain very many blood vessels and nerve endings and, therefore, are often very sensitive and can be an area of sexual pleasure. They most often open with sexual arousal as well.

CLITORIS - covered by the clitoral hood to varying degrees, the clitoris is composed of tissue that contains a very large number of nerve endings. Therefore it is usually very sensitive. The head of the clitoris is called the glans. The function of the clitoris is for sexual pleasure. Various kinds of stimulation are pleasurable.

URETHRAL OPENING - this structure is the open end of the urethra which is a small tube connected to the urinary bladder. This tube is for the elimination of urine and is not specifically part of the reproductive system.

PERINEUM - is the area at the bottom of the pelvis between the vulva and the anus.

VAGINA - is a flexible tube-shaped organ. It allows the passage of menstrual blood. It receives the male penis and ejaculated semen and sperm during intercourse and is an area of other kinds of sexual pleasuring as well. The vagina also serves as the birth canal during child birth.

CERVIX - is the narrow section of the uterus that connects the uterus to the vagina.

UTERUS - is the holding organ that serves to implant the embryo and provides for the nourishment and maturation of the fetus (unborn baby) during pregnancy. The inner wall of the uterus sheds and is expelled with menstrual blood during menstruation about every twenty-eight days. Menstruation does not occur when a woman is pregnant or is in menopause.

FALLOPIAN TUBES - this pair of tubes connect the uterus to the ovaries. These tubes carry the egg cells toward the uterus and the sperm cell in the opposite direction toward the ovaries. If an egg cell is entered by a sperm cell, conception occurs and this new cell structure begins to divide and move toward the uterus. This dividing cell structure eventually becomes the embryo after about two weeks and is implanted in the uterus.

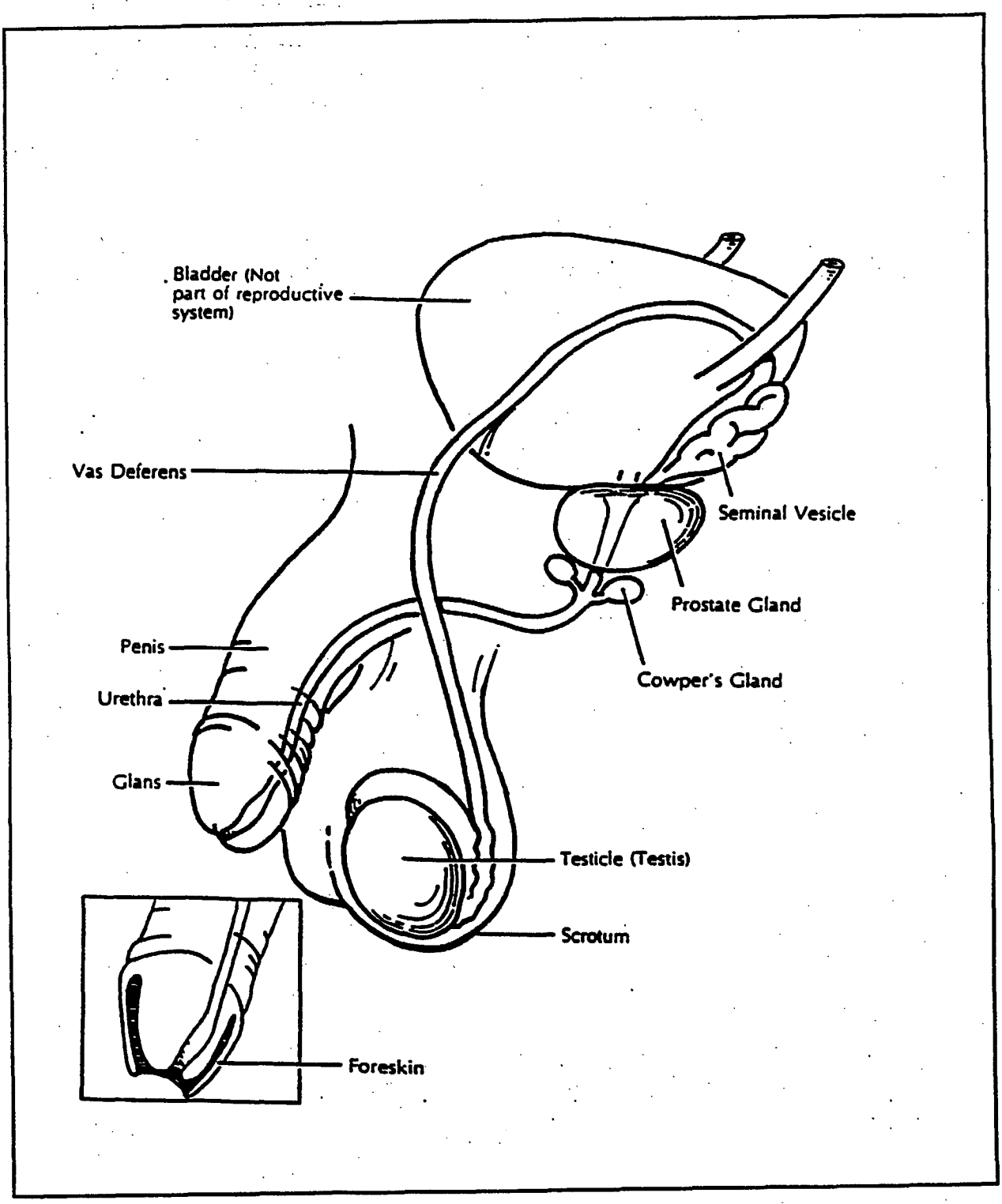
OVARIES - this pair of structures produce egg cells and female sex hormones. (The estrogen hormone governs female body characteristics such as the formation of breasts. The progesterone hormone prepares a woman's body for pregnancy.) The ovaries expel egg cells which are drawn into the Fallopian tubes.

You are invited to think and wonder about the bodily structures and functions of women's sexual and reproductive systems and the ways that they form complex, powerful, beautiful and sacred "circles of connections" of possibilities for reproduction, pleasure and connections with self and others. What are the ways that you can respect and honour the physical aspects of female sexuality and spirituality?

Male Genitals and Reproductive Structures and Functions

The main male structures that are shown and labelled on the following diagram will be briefly explained below. This diagram includes both external and internal illustrations of the male sexual and reproductive systems. The external appearance of male genitals varies according to degree of sexual arousal and from man to man. Appearance does not determine the degree of sensitivity nor the capacity to receive and give sexual pleasure. (As previously stated, the labels used on both the female and male diagrams are somewhat non technical. This is to help with basic understanding for our purposes. Therefore, different words for the same structures are sometimes used depending on the source.)

Male Reproductive System - Side View



PENIS - is the external male organ of reproduction and urine elimination. During sexual arousal spaces within the penis become filled with blood and it becomes firm or hard and moves to an erection of varying degrees. The glans is the head of the penis. The foreskin covers the head of the penis. This skin is sometimes removed during circumcision. All of the penis is usually sensitive to sexually pleasurable stimulation. The glans, however, has the greatest concentration of nerve endings and is often the most sensitive part.

URETHRA - is a tube that runs through the centre of the penis and connects to the bladder and to the seminal vesicles. It connects to the bladder in order to carry and eliminate urine from the body. The urethra also connects to the seminal vesicles in order to carry semen during ejaculation.

SCROTUM - is at the opposite end of the reproductive system from the penis. The scrotum encloses and supports the testicles. The scrotum is made from skin that is sensitive to the touch and is often a source of pleasurable sensation.

TESTICLES - the two testicles produce sperm, the male sex cell. They also produce testosterone, the most important male hormone .

VAS DEFERENS - is a pair of tubes which carries sperm from the testicles to be stored in the seminal vesicles.

SEMINAL VESICLES - are two glands that produce semen which contain fluids for the nutrition and movement of sperm.

PROSTATE GLAND - produces fluid to prolong the life of the sperm and to aid in sperm movement.

COWPER'S GLAND - produces pre-ejaculation fluid for lubrication and to neutralize the acid effects of urine on the sperm. This fluid can contain some sperm. This is important to note because, when having intercourse, "pulling out" before ejaculation does not prevent the possibility of pregnancy.

You are invited to think and wonder about the bodily structures and functions of men's sexual and reproductive systems and the ways that they form complex, powerful, beautiful and sacred "circles of connections" of possibilities for reproduction, pleasure and connections with self and others. What are the ways that you can respect and honour the physical aspects of male sexuality and spirituality?

Sexuality/Spirituality: "Circles of Connection"

There are many, many personal and outside factors affecting our sexuality and spirituality. We are always changing and going through various processes and stages and so our bodies look, feel and respond differently at different times and under different circumstances. Some of these processes and stages include: aging; being energetic or tired; having illnesses or being well; having varying degrees of sexual desire or not; being sexually stimulated or aroused to varying degrees; menstruating; ovulating; being pregnant; varying processes after the birth of a child; varying hormonal changes for both women and men; and when we are experiencing a wide variety of attitudes, emotions and behaviours with ourselves and with others. Remember to take into account that any of these factors and more can be personally affecting us to varying degrees much of the time.

You are encouraged to have patience and understanding for yourself as you consider "circles of connections" related to sexuality and spirituality in the pages that follow. What are some of the ways you can be patient and understanding of yourself when you are learning a number of new things? What about knowing that you don't have to learn things all at once; that you can take it a bit at a time? What about knowing that you can come back to things later? What are some other ways you know?

Sexuality and spirituality are closely connected to **cultural factors**. Our cultural values and our cultural expectations and our cultural customs have a lot to do with who we are and what we do sexually and spiritually. All cultures are different and unique and so the values, expectations and customs vary and are unique from culture to culture. There are also a lot of similarities and overlaps across cultures as well. Within broad cultures there are various subcultures. Some of these subcultures may be based on a particular age group or a particular religion or a particular family. For example, teenagers and grandparents form different subcultures. However, most cultures and subcultures have strong and yet often conflicting attitudes, information, expectations, and customs regarding sexuality and spirituality. The differences can be a source of difficulty as well as a source of pride in our sexual and spiritual identity.

What are some of the cultural factors that have affected your sexuality/spirituality? How have these changed over the years? Which factors have helped you be true to your self and have pride in your sexual/spiritual identity?

Sexuality has to do with the pursuit of sexual pleasure. This includes sexual pleasure for ourselves and the sexual pleasure of our partner. It means respecting the pursuit of sexual pleasure of others. Sexuality has to do with love and personal fulfilment, where we can feel fulfilled and loved both for ourselves and from other people and for other people. Sexual pleasure involves taking risks; allowing ourselves to be vulnerable, allowing ourselves to give, allowing ourselves to receive. Sexuality is the awareness of and the interaction of our femaleness and our maleness and that of the femaleness and maleness of others.

Even though we are greatly affected by outside influences, each of us is unique. Therefore, our bodies look, feel and respond in our own special way. You are unique in the specific ways that you experience sex and express yourself in your sexual life. The specific experience of sexual desire, eroticism, stimulation, arousal, passion, orgasm and sexual fulfilment is different for each person.

Eroticism is the purposeful and intended heightening of our sexual arousal and intense sexual experience. Eroticism is based on personal or mutual respect and choice. Words and pictures that show people respectfully and lovingly desiring and arousing each other can be used for erotic purposes. Pornography, on the other hand, uses sex for the misuse of power and is violating of people to various degrees. It is based on dominance, objectifying for sexual use and often involves violence. Objectifying means that people are seen and treated, and allow themselves to be seen and treated as objects for sex and not as whole people to be respected for their own wants and needs.

Sexual desire and pleasure are extremely important to our sexual/ spiritual selves. Our fantasies are an important part of our sexual life. They can considerably heighten our sexual desire, arousal and pleasure. There is a very important difference, however, between fantasizing sexual behaviours and doing behaviours that are not true to ourselves and others.

How can you allow yourself to be vulnerable and have sexual pleasure and be respectful and true to yourself at the same time? What sexual experiences are most arousing, pleasurable and fulfilling to you? Are they based on respect? What kind of experiences are erotic for you? In what ways can you have erotic experiences and be respectful and true to yourself and others? What experiences do you know to be pornographic? Can you be involved with pornography and be true to yourself? How can you make fantasy an important part of your sexual experience?

Sexuality has to do with **wanting**. We are vulnerable when we allow ourselves to want; to want sexual pleasure with someone else, to want to be closer and be in intimate contact with someone. It is difficult to want and also be true to ourselves and true to other people. We do not always get what we want. Healthy sexuality involves wanting and not expecting. Nothing is owed! What would it be like to freely choose to give and receive sexually from our own wants and to respect the same with others? What does it mean that with sexual wanting, nothing is owed? Can you not get what you want and still feel okay about yourself? Can you accept and respect others when they do not give you what you want?

Sexuality has to do with **sexual potential** which involves the increasing capacity to maintain our own identity and have more highly intense loving and connected sexual experience with another person. With increased awareness and being true to ourselves we can learn to increase our sexual arousal and our sexual pleasure and make our sexual functioning an increasingly more positive and fulfilling experience. What does it mean to you that our sexual potential can be more fulfilled with personal growth and maturity?

Sexuality has to do with aloneness and how we cope with our own aloneness. Mature aloneness means that we can stand on our own two feet in relation to others and yet not isolate ourselves from others. Our sexuality has to do with how we are sexual with ourselves and how accepting, respectful and loving we can be with ourselves. This is in parallel with how accepting, respectful and loving we can be with others.

Masturbation is a very common and usually pleasurable way that people can be directly sexual with themselves. Most people, both females and males, masturbate at various times in their lives. Masturbation is not physically harmful unless harmful foreign objects are used. For some people masturbation is against their beliefs.

How is aloneness different from being isolated from others and being lonely? What does masturbation mean to you?

Sexuality involves **rejection** at times. Being human, we have different wants and different timing and different desires and each person's sexual experience is different. So we will meet with sexual rejection in various ways. The challenge is whether or not we can accept ourselves and accept the other person when we do not get what we want. Someone wanting something different sexually does not need to mean that we need to allow ourselves to feel rejected as a person. Accepting and respecting the differences in others is a challenge for our own growth; a challenge to be true to ourselves and other people as well. This is often a very difficult challenge to meet. What does it mean to you to accept your own differences even when you may not get what you want?

Sexuality involves **touching**. There is often more communication in touching than there is in words. Take some time to think about all the ways that you like to be touched. Take time to think, write or draw pictures about all the ways you like to be touched and the parts of your body that you like to have touched and under what circumstances for both. Similarly, take time to pay attention to the ways and parts of your body and the circumstances in which you do not want to be touched. You may note that eye contact can be thought of as a form of touching as well. Add to the above exercise by paying attention to how you like or do not like to touch various parts of your own body. Can you give yourself permission to explore touching yourself more? Can you touch yourself in new and more loving ways? What is the quality of loving touch? What makes loving touch a positive experience? How is lovingly touching yourself and allowing yourself to be touched in loving ways being true to you? You are encouraged to take plenty of time to explore these questions. You may also want to come back to these questions and explore them again from time to time.

Sexuality involves **intimacy**. Intimacy involves truth-telling. Telling the truth about who you are. "This is who I am." "I want to know who you are." "This is what I want." "This is what I don't want." "I want to be true to myself." "I want you to be true to your self." Those are all aspects of intimacy. Intimacy respects differences. We can accept and love ourselves even though we do not agree with nor tolerate some of our behaviour. Likewise, we can accept and love others even though we don't agree with nor will tolerate some of their behaviour. Can you know your own truth and still love yourself no matter what? Can you love yourself by "taking yourself on" and not "letting yourself off the hook?" This is being intimate with yourself. How is intimacy connected to respect and courage?

Sexuality involves sharing. This is about choosing to share of ourselves and allow others to share with us. When we share ourselves with other people sexually, it is a form of gift-giving. We give of ourselves and receive from others. Gifts are chosen to be freely shared and have no strings attached. Nothing is owed! How do you want to share? How is sharing related to being true to yourself and others?

Sexuality involves **"okayness"** or **validation**. Validation for our self is not dependent upon validation or approval from others. What would it be like to know that you are okay, sexually and otherwise, and that this would not be dependent upon others' judgements of you? Being okay also means being able to change, to learn from our own efforts and mistakes and to be able to learn from others. In what ways do you know that you are okay?

Sexuality and spirituality involves being connected and yet maintaining a sense of one's own identity and separateness. It is important to have our own identity even though we are close to and connected with others. Close physical, sexual or spiritual connection with people is scary and we feel vulnerable and we often have anxiety at the same time. This requires that we take responsibility and become more skilful at dealing with our own anxiety. This means that we are not dependent upon others to take care of our own anxiety. Being anxious is not necessarily a bad thing. In fact, it is common in intimate relationships as we let others know who we are and what we want. Excitement and anxiety are often very close together inside us. The responsibility is ours, however, to take care of our own anxiety when it is becoming over-whelming. Can you make a drawing showing yourself being connected and also maintaining your own separate identity in a relationship? What are some ways you know to help yourself manage your own anxiety? Is paying attention to your body and making an effort to breathe more fully and easily one way that may work for you? Is taking your own space without emotional withdrawal another way that may help? How do you know that managing your anxiety is so important? How does managing your own anxiety make your life easier?

In ending this section you are invited to write a story about one time that you felt equal and respected in a sexual relationship. This would have included both self respect and respect from and for a partner. If you cannot remember such a time, you are encouraged to write a story about how you would like to be involved in one. Go slowly and reflect on how you would go about making that happen. What factors would you need to remember? What additional things would you need to learn? What do you know now that gives you the encouragement you need in order to risk choosing to be involved in an equal and respectful sexual relationship? How would this type of sexual experience have spiritual qualities to it?

Use this page and additional paper or notebook to answer the above questions and to write or draw your story.

Your Notes:

A Spiritual Connecting Exercise:

It is important that you do this exercise slowly and take plenty of time with each of the parts. For this meditation it is suggested that you sit quietly or you could stand or you could do an easy walk. Go very slowly and take time to pause after each sentence or so. The word *"pause"* will be inserted from time to time to remind you.

With any of the exercises that we do, breathing is an important part of each of them. You can begin to practice, if you like, just paying attention to your breathing for as often as you want and for as long or as short as you like. Pay attention to the air coming into your body and going out. *(pause)* Pay attention as it affects your chest or your belly as you breathe in and breathe out.

This meditation and exercise is about connecting to ourselves and to some of our history and to others that are part of our lives in various ways. This type of connecting with yourself is one type of spiritual practice. *(pause)* One thing that is important to think about is that even though at times we feel very alone, we are also not alone because we can have our memories and our dreams; our memories of what has gone on before, and our dreams of what we want for the future. *(pause)* How we can connect ourselves with both our past and what we want for the future is an important part of connecting to ourselves in the present. Our breathing connects us to both the earth and the sky. Our memories from the past and thinking into the future is a way of connecting, particularly to other people that have been important to us. *(pause)* As you are breathing, let your awareness and your memory go back. Bring to your awareness various teachers or mentors from your past - people who have been important in your life in teaching you various things that you know you needed to learn. Things that you have learned that have been helpful to you, helped you to be more true to yourself and perhaps have helped you to survive. *(pause)* Think about those people and what they taught you and how that is important to you today. This involves inviting your mind to go back to those people. Think as specifically as possible. *(pause)* Let your mind drift and realize how you've brought things from your past to be present with you now; particularly the things that can be positive for you and help you in what you need for your life at this moment. Spend as long or as short on this as you want. (pause)

Now let the memory of your teachers and mentors fade. Bring into focus the people that you love in your life at this time; people who are alive or who have passed on. *(pause)* Also bring to mind people who you know love you. Just think about them and think about the love that you have for them and the love that they have for you. Realize the strength that comes from loving and the strength that comes from knowing that you are loved. *(pause)* Even if it is a very small number of people, or a large number of people, just let yourself spend time with the thoughts and feelings of people who you love and who love you. *(pause)* Sometimes when we are away from those we love, we can feel an ache or a pain that is there. That is difficult to face at times, and yet sometimes it is necessary because even though we feel it in the present, to allow it to happen brings us strength. To block these feelings away and not let ourselves feel them often causes more pain over time. *(pause)* Even though we can't be in the presence of our loved ones at times, we can draw on the strength of their love of us and our love for them. It takes real courage to love and it takes courage to face the difficult feelings when we can't be with the ones we love from moment to moment. Again, let yourself take as long as you want to spend in this part of the meditation. *(pause)* Or pause if someone is reading this to you and take as much time as you need. Just let yourself fully have the thoughts and feelings of your loving and being loved. *(pause)* When you feel finished for now with this part, let it fade.

As you go on now with the meditation, let yourself imagine and visualize one or more people who have hurt you in one way or another, either on purpose or not. They may have hurt you emotionally or physically or sexually or spiritually. Even though it may be difficult, just allow those people and those situations to come into your mind and let yourself have those feelings to whatever degree and extent that feels okay to you. *(pause)* As you can let these memories of these situations happen, see if you can allow yourself to do this with the intention of having these feelings move rather than be stuck or held. Have a sense that you are going back to visit these aspects of your life with the intention of having the situation begin to be more fluid or to move for you. *(pause)* Even though the feelings may be difficult, get a sense that as you can feel them, and fully allow them to happen, they begin to move. This is part of a healing process. Again, take as much time as you need to have these feelings about those who, purposefully or not, may have hurt you in some way. Take your time. *(pause)* After you've taken enough time, then allow yourself to think about bringing into your mind the idea or the feeling of forgiveness. Even though you can't force yourself to do it, just imagine what it would be like if you could begin to think about allowing yourself to have a feeling of forgiveness towards those people. *(pause)* You don't have to say it to them directly either now or ever. However, within yourself

you can send out and direct towards those memories the idea of forgiveness. *(pause)* And again, take as much time for this as you want. And now let all of this fade and give yourself some time to focus on your feet and the earth somewhere beneath them. *(pause)* Focus on your body and the rhythm of your breathing. Allow yourself to breath easy for a time. *(pause)*

After you have given yourself sufficient time, think about and allow your mind and your memory to go to those people and those situations where you, either on purpose or not, have caused hurt to others. This may be difficult to think about and difficult to face, but in the same spirit, if you can allow yourself to face these and to think about them, the feelings that surround it can begin to move for you in various ways. *(pause)* Take as much time as you need. When you've taken sufficient time, again think about the idea of forgiveness. Forgiveness is like gently moving into a new open space. This is the space of forgiveness. *(pause)* Imagine what it is like to have the idea that it is important and possible for you to forgive yourself. To forgive yourself for the hurts that you have caused to others, whether on purpose or not. *(pause)* No matter how small or how large the hurt may be, this is an important thing that you are able to do for yourself. Give yourself as much time as you want to allow the spirit of forgiveness to enter into this space for yourself *(pause)* .

Then allow the idea or the feeling of forgiveness to spread to yourself in relation to the ways that you have hurt yourself, either on purpose or not. *(pause)* Again, call into being for yourself the spirit of forgiveness and allow yourself to enter into the space of forgiveness for having hurt yourself. Take as much time as you need to. *(pause)* Sometimes it is very difficult and it takes courage to take responsibility for our behaviour and to forgive ourselves at the same time. Being both responsible and forgiving is a self loving thing to do. *(pause)* When it is time for you, let the thoughts and feelings of this part fade *(pause)* .

As a final part of this meditation, bring into your awareness the fact that you are part of the "circles of connection." You are connected with all the other things that go to make up the world and your environment and you are connected to all of the other people who live and have lived on this earth. You are connected to "all that is." *(pause)* Just let the wonder and the power of all this begin to wash over you as you think about this and allow the awareness of all this to happen. *(pause)* Think of all of the plants and all of the animals and all of the birds and all of the fish and all of the insects and everything that lives. *(pause)* You are in some ways connected to all of those things that live. That life is a common factor that unites us with

everything living on this earth. When we think of it, then, in some sense we are never completely alone. Think of the meaning of all this. *(pause)* Think of the meaning that in some sense we are connected to all that is non-living as well. This is part of the "circles of connection." These " circles of connection" are part of our spirituality. *(pause)* In your own time bring your awareness back to your breathing and how your breathing connects you to the environment around you. *(pause)* Bring your awareness back to your feet and your connection to the earth. *(pause)* In your own time, let yourself bring this meditation to a close.

As you ponder for a few moments after finishing this meditation, you can think of the wonder and bigness of the "circles of connections." Think of all that you know, all that you love, all that you have had difficulty with, and all that you can encourage yourself to dream about and change for the future. You are encouraged to give yourself the gift of these thoughts and this awareness.

You are invited to add this experience to your story. Continue to write or draw your story on this page and on additional pages as you need them.

A Spiritual Connecting

Add to your story or picture here.

A "Four Directions" Exercise

This "Four Directions" exercise is based on Aboriginal spiritual practices. This exercise will be in the form of a meditation. This is only one way of making use of the power of the "Four Directions" for your own learning and healing and growth. There are other ways and you are encouraged to explore them as well.

The "Four Directions" are based on "circles of connection." These include the circular movements of the earth and the sun and the universe. These are the domains of the Creator; the creation and keeping of all of life and "all that is." You are invited to use this meditation exercise to help you explore these things and at the same time not to take on the burden of needing to fully understand. These are mysteries that we can never fully understand. This meditation exercise may help you to feel part of these "circles of connections" in ways that feel true to you.

You are invited to do this exercise either standing up or sitting down. Perhaps you will want to experiment with both at different times. Take your time with this exercise and go through it slowly. Give yourself time to experiment with and think about the various parts of the exercise.

Start the exercise by facing the direction you know to be south. Focus your attention on your feet. You might want to stand with the feeling of your feet firmly underneath you or sit with your feet flat on the floor. It would be good if you could have your feet right on the earth. However if you're not able to do that, then whatever is under your feet, whether it is cement, or metal, or tile, or wood, you can imagine and know that the earth is supporting you even though it may be under layers of something else; that you are connected to the earth beneath. *(pause)* You are invited to pay attention as you take some air into your body and let it out. And another breath, and let it out. Begin to sense the rhythm of your breathing as you take air in and let it out. *(pause)* Our breathing is such an important connection to our world and paying attention to our breathing is a way to connect with ourselves.

In facing the south we can realize that in this direction the sun is at its warmest. The sun is the source of life. We are all dependent and vulnerable to the heat and energy of the sun. The direction of south can be symbolized by the mouse, a very small and vulnerable animal. Sometimes we feel small and very vulnerable. *(pause)* When we think of facing south, we can become aware of the reality of being vulnerable. We often have fear of being vulnerable. Maybe you want to let go of some of the fear of being vulnerable. *(pause)* Along with fear we often have feelings of guilt and shame. Maybe you can let go of some of your guilt and shame. Facing the south can be a time when you can say to yourself, "I am letting go of some of my guilt." "I am letting go of some of my shame." "I don't want to be controlled by my fear." *(pause)* In facing the south direction we can also think of compassion and acceptance. With compassion we can feel for others and we can feel for ourselves. Compassion breeds kindness. Do you want more kindness in your life even if only in some very small ways? Take some time with this. *(pause)* Being more accepting doesn't mean we have to like something or someone or agree with something or someone. The road to more acceptance is paved with less anxiety and the possibility for more peace. How can I have more peace in my life? *(pause)* The south leads us to think of forgiveness. Forgiving ourselves and forgiving others. How can I begin to forgive myself? How can I begin to forgive others? Give yourself time to think of all this. *(pause)*

You are invited now to turn to the west. This is the direction of the setting sun. Let this be a time of looking more fully into yourself. The west is symbolized by the bear. The bear is a powerful animal. Looking into ourselves in the spirit of truth is powerful. *(pause)* As we look into ourselves, we move toward being true to ourselves. Being true to ourselves and "taking ourselves on" in this way is powerful. *(pause)* Being true to others is powerful. In the spirit of the direction of the west, how can I be more true to myself and others? *(pause)* Like the slowly setting sun, take time to look into yourself and to know yourself in more powerful ways. *(pause)*

Now turn to the direction of the north. The north is symbolized by the buffalo or the bison. The buffalo is firmly connected to the earth. Our connection to the earth helps us with wisdom and courage. We need our wisdom to know what is true and right. How will I come to respect my own wisdom? *(pause)* To have courage means to face our fear, hold onto ourselves and move forward. We need courage to walk our path. How will I use my courage? How will I know to trust myself? *(pause)* Like the long winters of the north, give yourself time. How can I give myself the gift of patience which is also a quality of the north? *(pause)*

Now look to the east and the rising sun. With the rising sun think of the eagle that soars in the sky on its powerful wings. As you think of the eagle can you allow your spirit to begin to lift? *(pause)* Can you inspire yourself to do something that will help you make the next few minutes, the next hour and the days ahead, a little better for yourself? Give yourself time to think of this. *(pause)* Also connected with looking east, and as the sky connects to the earth, think of the earth and "being down to earth." This is about being humble. Humble comes from the word "humus"" or "of the earth." To be humble doesn't mean to feel ashamed or "one down." It means that you are "down to earth" and accept who you are. *(pause)* Knowing that we walk one step at a time, can you take more steps to feel equal and humble and let your spirits lift? *(pause)*

And now let yourself bring this exercise to a close.

You are invited to adapt this "Four Directions" meditation exercise and make it part of your daily routine as much as this is possible. Give yourself a gift of exploring this exercise in ways that challenge you and feel true to you.

How can this "Four Directions" meditation be used to connect to the other parts of this section as this adds to your story? How can this be a stepping stone to the continuation of your story?

The "Four Directions" and Continuing My Story

Conclusion

In your own way, you have used this offering to more fully explore your sexual and spiritual being. You are encouraged to review and reuse these tools as ways to help yourself as you continue to be the "author" of your own life story.

Your Notes

Appendices

Appendix 1 - Talking Circles

Talking circles are also referred to as healing circles, fire circles and women, men's or support groups. This is an ancient form of communicating, visiting, resolving conflict, sharing information, teaching, healing and sharing stories with the Aboriginal people. This form of communication existed prior to the Europeans arriving in North America and continued through the ages within the realm of Native spirituality. In ceremonies such as the pipe ceremony, sweat lodge, sun dance and smudging the practice continues to grow into even more functions. Recently the community sentencing process has utilized this technique to assist in the healing of the victim, perpetrator and community. All individuals affected come together to be heard with no fear of repercussions for their thoughts, actions or feelings. The main purpose of the healing circle is to bring about understanding through caring concern and high regard for the person who is sharing their story, their pain or their wisdom. Naturally the traditional values of kindness, caring, respect and sharing are the basis of the talking circle and are honoured within the process.

Purpose

The purpose of the talking circle is to allow a group of people to come together to express themselves mentally, emotionally, physically and spiritually. Each member of the group takes his or her turn to share their thoughts, feelings or concerns, the atmosphere of unconditionally high regard to be cared for, respected for who and what they are and to be shown kindness by being allowed the opportunity to be themselves. Each of us needs a place to go to be heard respectfully by our fellow human beings, to be able to speak openly on subjects we need clarification on, or to let go of painful emotions, memories or thoughts, to explore new ways of being and gain insight about our situations or ourselves.

The process of the talking circle is therapeutic by the nature of the activity and the intention of the group members but it is not therapy in the professional sense. The level of the sharing and intensity of the experience creates a climate of intimacy which becomes a therapeutic experience for all the group members. The climate of intimacy increases as group members begin to share on a deeper level either on their own or with assistance from other group members. This level of sharing is dictated by the group members based on level of trust with each other which is

determined with time and experience with the group. It is not therapy because there is no one leader who is directing the depth of sharing from any of the group members. The group members determine this with their experience with the group, level of trust they create within the group and the direction they wish to take their group. Remember this is a process which is labourious and time consuming.

Role of the Leader

Determining a leader can be done in a couple of ways, either a natural leader will come forward and volunteer this type of participation based on prior experience or the group may decide who among them would best fit the role of leader. Or the group may decide to have a rotating leadership role where all members at sometime will lead the group. Any of the above methods is acceptable providing that all members agree and support the decision and are able to renegotiate when need be.

Within this type of process, the leader's role is to provide an atmosphere of safety for the participants and to act as timekeeper for the group, making the best use of group time and designing the activity of the group. Also as the group leader, you will need to be prepared to risk by making mistakes, assessing your personal commitment to the process, providing and receiving feedback regarding your role as leader.

The following questions are some things that you may want to consider prior to starting a circle with your potential group members.

1. How many members would you need to form a group? Will this be a closed group with no new members or an open group with new members welcomed at any time.
2. What physical space do you have available for your group, this will help you with the number you want in your group? Is there sufficient space, is it comfortable or will you need to provide a rug, cushions or extra seating? Is the room soundproof, does it have washroom facilities?
3. Can you ensure there will be no interruptions during group time?
4. Can you ensure that confidentiality will be kept by the group members?
5. How often will your group meet?

Also, give consideration to the next questions when designing your talking circle's format

1. How will you open your circle? Some groups start with a prayer, with or without smudging you may want to start with a song, a story, or form a hand holding circle.
2. Will you include any special objects such as a talking stone, talking stick or an eagle feather. Often times groups utilize one of these objects to assist themselves to stay focused within the group.
3. What methods will you utilize to include everyone in the circle? How will you connect with the participants and to each other? Some groups will start and finish their circle with a handshake or hug or a special acknowledgement of each other and their unique presence to the process.
4. How much quality time do you require for your circle. This should be negotiated with your group but the rule of thumb is no longer than two hours without a break.

Role of the Participants

As a participant, your role is to experience as much as you can from the talking circles. During this time you will share your insights, heartaches, joy, parts of your life, humour, understandings and your personal knowledge to the group. The talking circle is a sacred space where all of our life experiences can be expressed. It is an opportunity for you to surrender for two to three hours into complete awareness every second as to how you feel, what you see, what you hear and how you are touched by other people's experiences. How it does or doesn't relate to you. What can I learn by this person's story? If you find yourself losing interest or getting bored, know that there is a shadow of fear there, bring it into the group and allow others to help you.

The talking circle is a place where the participants can bring their secrets, fantasies, day dreams, humour, nightmares, wisdom, energy and their stories. It is a place to bring your grief, stress, traumas, concerns, and laughter and deal with it in a collective manner. All the expertise within your group will assist you through the process of healing. Collectively, or individually, the wisdom and knowledge will be brought forward for you to evaluate and use as you wish.

Here are some guidelines which will help your group stay focused on the process.

1. One person speaks at a time, no interrupting except in an emergency. The use of a rock, talking stick or feather is useful for this reason.
2. Confidentiality must be honoured by all group members. What is said in the group stays with the group.
3. As group members take their turn to speak, other group members must respect their time and not talk with people sitting next to them.
4. The use of "I" statements helps group members stay focused on themselves.

Discussion Topics

Almost any issue or topic that affects any of the group members can be brought up for discussion or for processing. The group will identify these in their own time or with encouragement from the leader. This could be an item for discussion at your first meeting. What would the group be interested in dealing with and in what manner? Try as much as possible to expand your awareness with the group and not stick to the old and familiar. Stretch yourself and the group to make this a productive and rewarding experience.

It may be helpful to start with some of the following techniques and see where it takes your group:

- Breath Exercises
- Visualization Exercises
- Drawing Exercises
- Affirmations Exercises
- Sharing of Teachings
- Sharing of Personal Truths
- Sharing of a Dream
- Sharing of Traumatic Experiences

Closure

At the end of your group time, it will be helpful to have some mechanism/technique in place to help the individual group members get centred and for the group members as a whole to feel complete and appreciative of all that has been shared. This could simply be the group holding hands in a circle with a minute of silence with or without a prayer. If someone in the group is feeling particularly vulnerable maybe an extra added strength for them migh. be to place them in the middle of the circle. Whichever ritual or ceremony your group comes up with will be the one most meaningful and comforting. Let your group know they are loved and appreciated for their support and encouragement.

I hope this will be helpful to you in starting a circle of support for yourself and others who need this type of encouragement. We all need a place to belong and I sincerely hope that this will be that place.

Good luck and take care!

Appendix 2 - Voices: Something to Think About

Throughout this workbook you have read the "voices" of people who have spent time in prisons. Their stories were told to researchers in the hope of helping others find ways to stay out of jail.

Several themes or topics come up over and over again throughout the stories. These themes were the important things which people in jail said helped them to heal and live a good life.

- Quitting Drinking and Using Drugs
- Spirituality and Culture
- Sick and Tired of Prison: Looking for a Better Life
- Personal Identity and Personal Responsibility
- Therapy and Processing Issues
- The importance of Family
- Residential Schools

In this appendix, each theme is set out and followed by some questions that you can use to help you think about your life.

Theme 1 Quitting Drinking and Using Drugs

All of the offenders in the Nechi study explained how important it was for them to stop drinking and using drugs. Here are some questions for you to think about.

- Have you taken any alcohol/drug treatment programs? Did you work the program? What did you gain from taking the program?
- Do you know what programs are available in the institution? In the community?
- Have you made a serious commitment to quit taking drugs or drinking alcohol?
- Do you know who to talk to when you are ready to quit?
- What support will you need to quit and stay sober?
- Do you know sober people in the community?
- What influence does drinking have on your getting into trouble?
- Do you see similarities between AA and Aboriginal spirituality?
- People use drugs and alcohol to cover pain from some of the things in their past? How does this apply to your life?
- What have other people said to you about your drinking/using drugs?
- How has your drinking affected your children, spouse, other family members and friends?

Theme 2 Spirituality and Culture

All of the offenders in the Nechi study explained how important spirituality and Aboriginal culture were as factors that helped them get out of trouble and stay out of trouble. The importance of the Elders was especially strong. Throughout this workbook, you have heard spirituality and cultural stories. Here are some questions:

- What did you learn about your culture when you were growing up?
- What ceremonies do you take part in now?
- Who can you ask when you want to learn more about spirituality and culture?
- Are you interested in learning traditional teachings?
- Who are your role models/heroes?
- How important is your culture to you?
- How has your culture influenced you?

Theme 3 Sick and Tired of Jail: Looking for a Better Life

The offenders in the NECHI study explained that even though they adjusted easily to prison settings or even became institutionalized, they eventually became sick and tired of the jail scene and they saw a better life ahead. Here is what they had to say:

- How sick and tired are you of going to jail?
- What dreams do you have for a better way of life?
- Are you ready to commit to changing your way of life?
- Does prison life seem to be better than life in the community?
- Who do you know who has turned their life around?
- Do you know who to talk to when you want to change?

Theme 4 Personal Identity and Personal Responsibility

The offenders in the Nechi study explained how they gradually saw themselves as sober, valuable persons who made things happen for themselves. Here is what they had to say:

- What do you see when you look in a mirror?
- What are you doing to overcome the obstacles in your life?
- Do you know about the teachings of the Medicine Wheel?
- Is who you are now who you really want to be?
- What is standing in your way?
- What is one thing you would like to change about yourself? What can you do about this today?

Theme 5 Therapy and Processing Issues

Many of the offenders in the Ńechi study explained how they still have to deal with issues from their past.

- What are some of the things from your past that still bother you?
- Do you know how you are dealing with these things? Do you like the results?
- Have you talked to an Elder about really personal things?
- Could you talk to a therapist about something that was bothering you?
- Do you know how to contact a therapist or counsellor?
- Do you have a good friend you can talk with?

Theme 6 The Importance of Family

The Offenders in the Nechi study explained how important and influential their families were.

- Who in your family would be a lot of help as you try to change the way you live?
- Which family members have a really positive influence on you?
- Are there family members who aren't much help to you?
- What feelings and memories do you have about your grandparents? Parents?
- What feelings and memories do you have about your brothers and sisters?
- Who can you count on when you get out?
- Have you thought about being a role model to your children? In what ways do you have a positive influence on them?
- Are there some things that your children see about you that you would like to change? If so, what are they?

Theme 7 Residential Schools

In addition to voices of hope, courage and commitment, some of the offenders talked about their experiences at residential school. For most, this experience ranged from upsetting to destructive. Residential school disturbed their sense of place that they had known with their family. For some, residential school was instrumental in preparing them for other places - not colleges, universities or jobs - but foster homes and prisons.

Throughout the various sections of this workbook, you have read their "residential school" stories. Here are some questions for you to think about concerning residential schools.

- What experiences did you have in residential school?
- How have these experiences influenced your life?
- Did your parents go to residential school? Did this influence how you were raised?
- Do you know of people who benefitted from residential school?
- Have you talked to an Elder or other counsellor about things that may be troubling you about residential school?

Appendix 3 - Wisdom, Affirmations, & Meditations

This appendix is intended to provide you with wise and affirming words. It begins with Aboriginal Elders' voices. Their words of wisdom, along with other Aboriginal people from around the world, can support and guide your healing.

Some of the affirmations included in this appendix will be familiar to you. They have been used throughout the workbook. This section also allows you the opportunity to develop your own affirming thoughts.

Meditations from a centering book by Matthew Fox (1983) and from Deepak Chopra's (1994), Journey into Healing, bring the appendix to a close.

Elders' Voices

The following are taken from the book, Our Elders Speak, (Jarnier, 1990).

> *Through ceremonies we help ourselves, help people, help Mother Earth.*
> *- Napoleon Kruger, Okanagan*

> *My heart is real good today because all my life I loved helping old people.*
> *- Celina August, Sto:lo*

> *In my lifetime I've known all nationalities and found they are all good people.*
> *- Andy Natrall, Squamish*

> *Be a brother to all.*
> *- Chief Alvie Andrew, Squamish*

> *Kindness pays dividends you'll never regret, so always be kind to others.*
> *- Emma Joe, Squamish*

> *Fellowship, communication and working together is the strength of our Indian People.*
> *- Chief Simon Baker, Squamish*

If you haven't had a cup of tea or coffee with a Native Indian, you don't know anything about us.

- Minnie Croft, Haida

Our Indian spirituality is based on love for people and respect for nature - it's all one spirit.

- Andy Commodore, Sto:lo

Caring and sharing is a big part of our Indian way.

- Wilfred Charlie, Sto:lo

The foundation of a good life is made of love, honesty and especially sharing.

- Louis Miranda, Squamish

All of Creation is sacred to Indigenous people. This is our message to the rest of the world.

- Lavina White-Lightbown, Haida

Our Elders speak from the heart of this land.

- Minnie Peters, Nlaka'pamux/Sto:lo

When picking a plant for Indian Medicine, first we give an offering and an apology. Then we take only as much as we need.

- Edna Bobb, Sto:lo

Don't smoke, don't drink and take care of your own business.

- Mary Ferguson-Bessette, Cree

Our people are coming back real strong - now that we've returned to our sharing and praying in the sweat lodge.

- Nancy Phillips, Sto:lo

What good is education without love?

- Catherine Adams, Kwakiutl

All living things understand you. And they will help you - if you respect them. This is the one thing we should never forget.

- Joe Louie, Nooksack

When you see the eagle, say: 'Thank you Grandfather, thank you Grandmother for appearing today, for looking over me and giving me strength.'

- Mary Uslick, Secwepemc/Sto:lo

To bring about the healing of an individual or a nation depends on respect for all things that have life including the rocks, the mountains and the waters. We should show our respect for all things and all people. And we should respect the differences. We call on the animals, the four-leggeds, the two-leggeds, the lightning, the thunder, the wind, the eagle - we call on all these spirits in order to attain these healing powers.

- Rolling Thunder, Cherokee

Teach your children what we have taught our children - that the Earth is our Mother.

- Chief Seattle---1854

The following passages have been taken from the book, My Heart Soars, by Chief Dan George (1974).

My people's memory reaches into the beginning of all things.

In the midst of a land without silence, you have to make a place for yourself. Those who have worn out their shoes many times know where to step. It is not their shoes you can wear, only their footsteps you may follow - if you let it happen.

You come from a shy race. Ours are the silent ways. We have always done things in a gentle manner ... You too must follow the path of your own race. It is steady and deep, reliable and lasting. It is you - if you let it happen.

For some time bewilderment will, like an ugly spirit, torment you. Then rest on the holy earth and wait for the good spirit. He will return with new ways as his gift to you - if you let it happen.

Use the heritage of silence to observe others. If greed has replaced the goodness in a man's eyes, see yourself in him so you will learn to understand and preserve yourself. Do not despise the weak, it is compassion that will make you strong.

When a man sits down in quietness to listen to the teachings of his spirit, many things will come to him in knowledge and understanding.

Look at the faces of my people: You will find expressions of love and despair, hope and joy, sadness and desire and all the human feelings that live in the hearts of people of all colours. Yet, the heart never knows the colour of the skin.

There is a longing in the heart of my people to reach out and grasp that which is needed for our survival. There is a longing among the young of my nation to secure for themselves and their people the skills that will provide them with a sense of purpose. They will be our new warriors. Their training will be much longer and more demanding than it was in olden days. The long years of study will demand more determination, separation from home and family will demand endurance. But they will emerge with their hand held forward, not to receive welfare, but to grasp the place in society that is rightly ours.

I am a chief, but my power to make war is gone, and the only weapon left to me is speech. It is only with tongue and speech that I can fight my people's war.

The following is taken from the book, My Spirit Soars, by Chief Dan George (1982):

[In the city] wherever you look there is nothing your eyes know, and when weakness settles into your legs you will recognize your brother by the shadow his hunched body casts in the corner of a street, in a city where people walk without seeing the tears in each other's eyes.

1. The following are taken from the book, My Soul Would Have No Rainbow If The Eyes Had No Tears, by Guy A. Zona (1994):

To gossip is like playing checkers with an evil spirit: you win occasionally but are more often trapped at your own game. ---- *Hopi*

When you have a talent of any kind, use it, take care of it, guard it. ---- *Sauk*

Always assume your guest is tired, cold, and hungry, and act accordingly. ---- *Navajo*

The grandfathers and the grandmothers are in the children; teach them well. ---- *Ojibway*

We will be known forever by the tracks we leave. ---- *Dakota*

The mark of shame does not wash away. ---- *Omaha*

Do not wrong or hate your neighbour, for it is not he that you wrong, but yourself. --- *Pima*

When a man prays one day and steals six, the Great Spirit thunders and the Evil One laughs.

---- *Oklahoma*

When the wisdom-keepers speak, all should listen. ---- *Seneca*

The more you give, the more good things come to you. ---- *Crow*

When the legends die, the dreams end; there is no more greatness. ---- *Shawnee*

If I am in harmony with my family, that's success. ---- *Ute*

Talk to your children while they are eating; what you say will stay even after you are gone. ---- *Nez Perce*

It takes a whole village to raise a child. ---- *Omaha*

Flowers are for souls to enjoy. --- *Sioux*

Guard your tongue in youth, and in age you may mature a thought that will be of service to your people. ---- *Sioux*

You can't get rich if you look after your relatives properly. ---- *Navajo*

The more you ask how far you have to go, the longer your journey seems. ---- *Seneca*

Hold fast to the words of your ancestors. ---- *Hopi*

The greatest strength is gentleness. ---- *Iroquois*

Each person is his own judge. ---- *Shawnee*

One finger cannot lift a pebble. ---- *Hopi*

If we wonder often, the gift of knowledge will come. ---- *Arapaho*

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. ---- *Cherokee*

The soul would have no rainbow if the eyes had no tears. ---- *Minquass*

One has to face fear or forever run from it. ---- *Crow*

One must learn from the bite of the fire to leave it alone. ---- *Sioux*

Misfortunes do not flourish on one path, they grow everywhere. ---- *Pawnee*

The eyes of men speak words the tongue cannot pronounce. ---- *Crow*

A danger foreseen is half-avoided. ---- *Cheyenne*

Teachers not only teach but they also learn. ---- *Sauk*

The frog does not drink up the pond in which he lives. ---- *Sioux*

Don't be afraid to cry. It will free your mind of sorrowful thoughts. ---- *Hopi*

Wisdom comes only when you stop looking for it and start living the life the Creator intended for you. ---- *Hopi*

What should it matter that one bowl is dark and the other pale, if each is of good design and serves its purpose well? ---- *Hopi*

The bird who has eaten cannot fly with the bird that is hungry. ---- *Omaha*

There is nothing as eloquent as a rattlesnake's tail. ---- *Navajo*

Our first teacher is our own heart. ---- *Cheyennne*

He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone. ---- *Seneca*

People have responsibility, not power. ---- *Tuscarora*

You already possess everything necessary to become great. ---- *Crow*

A man must make his own arrows. ---- *Winnebago*

Great chiefs prove their worthiness. ---- *Seneca*

To touch the earth is to have harmony with nature. ---- *Oglala Sioux*

Listen to the voice of nature, for it holds treasures for you. ---- *Huron*

When a man moves away from nature his heart becomes hard. ---- *Lakota*

Take only what you need and leave the land as you found it. ---- *Arapaho*

The Creator gives us each a song. ---- *Ute*

The one who tells the stories rules the world. ---- *Hopi*

Everyone who is successful must have dreamed of something. ---- *Maricopa*

A people without a history is like the wind over buffalo grass. ---- *Sioux*

A people without faith in themselves cannot survive. ---- *Hopi*

It is no longer good enough to cry peace, we must act peace, live peace and live in peace. ---- *Shenandoah*

The weakness of the enemy makes our strength. ---- *Cherokee*

In death I am born. ---- *Hopi*

There can never be peace between nations until it is first known that true peace is within the souls of men. ---- *Oglalo Sioux*

Those that lie down with dogs, get up with fleas. ---- *Blackfoot*

There are many good moccasin tracks along the trail of a straight arrow. ---- *Fox*

A good chief gives, he does not take. ---- *Mohawk*

There are many paths to a meaningful sense of the natural world. ---- *Blackfoot*

Be satisfied with needs instead of wants. ---- *Tenton Sioux*

Work hard, keep the ceremonies, live peaceably, and unite your hearts. ---- *Hopi*

Dreams count; the Spirits have pitied us and guided us. ---- *Cree*

The dead add their strength and counsel to the living. ---- *Hopi*

When you lose the rhythm of the drumbeat of the Creator, you are lost from the peace and rhythm of life. ---- *Cheyenne*

Never let things slide: keep a steady hold upon yourself - do not throw away your life simply to spite another. ---- *Cree*

It is good to be reminded that each of us have a different dream. ---- *Crow*

A shady lane breeds mud. ---- *Hopi*

Do not allow anger to poison you. ---- *Hopi*

The following Elders' words of wisdom are from Four Worlds Development Project (Bopp, et al., 1984).

Where does that leave the Indigenous people? They call us Indian, but Indian means Indigenous. It means we are the protectors of the land and all life in it. We are the spiritual centre and always have been. That is what we have to offer this warring world at this time in history.

---- *Oren Lyons, Iroquois*

For him, to sit or lie upon the ground is to be able to think more deeply and feel more keenly; he can see more clearly into the mysteries of life and come closer in kinship to the lives about him ... Kinship with all creatures of the earth, sky and water was a real and active principle .... The old Lakota was wise. He knew that man's heart away from nature becomes hard, he knew that lack of respect for growing, living things soon led to lack of respect for humans too. So he kept his youth close to its softening influence.

---- *Chief Luther Standing Bear, Lakota*

In the last decade or so Indian people ... have been experiencing what might be called a revitalization. We have awakened just in time to rediscover something that might otherwise have passed from our memory and from our reality forever. I am referring to our great heritage, our culture, and our values. Fortunately, we woke up in time. But when you wake up, the day just begins, so we still have a long way ahead of us and a lot of work to do now that we are awake.

---- *Tom Porter, Mohawk*

O Great Spirit, give me strength not to be superior to my brothers and sisters but to fight my greatest enemy, myself, so that when life fades as the fading sunset, my spirit may come to you without shame.

---- *A Dakota prayer*

Then I was standing on the highest mountain of them all, and round about beneath me was the whole hoop of the world. And while I stood there I saw more than I can tell and I understood more than I saw; for I was seeing in a sacred manner the shapes of all things in the spirit, and the shape of all shapes as they must live together like one being. And I saw that the sacred hoop of my people was one of many hoops that made one circle, wide as daylight and as starlight, and in the centre grew one mighty flowering tree to shelter all the children of one mother and one father. And I saw that it was holy.

---- *Black Elk, Lakota*

We must stand for the common good of our people, whether Mohawk or Cree or Blackfoot or whatever. And if we compromise on this, we are going to lose. We have compromised in the past, and we have lost in the past. This is something that we all have to understand. We must strive to achieve that situation where we will be truthful with each other, peaceful with each other, unified with each other. This in turn will bring strength, and that strength will make us supreme.

---- *Andrew Delisle, Mohawk*

We say that there exists a common interest that should determine the future of the world. The common interest should be, as it is stated by my people, the welfare of the seventh generation to come. Every decision should be made in reference to how that decision will affect the seventh generation in the future.

---- *Oren Lyons, Mohawk*

We know that the philosophies, myths and legends used in traditional Indian education contain great spiritual truths and determine the way the Indian people look at their being here on earth. I think many of us in the Indian world still believe in a greater power that controls our lives and things that we do; we believe there is a definite relationship between the human being and nature. Many of the tribal priests and medicine men had visions that had some relationship with the spirit world but which have no rational explanation. Both my father and grandfather saw certain visions and certain stories that would not be believed by young Indians today who have not been exposed to the same spiritual realities as our older Indian people.

---- *Allen Quetone, Kiowa*

... if we are going to build a truly Indian society, spirituality must be involved in everything we do, including our government.

---- *Andrew Delisle, Mohawk*

In many ways this Circle, the Medicine Wheel, can best be understood if you think of it as a mirror in which everything is reflected. "The Universe is the Mirror of the People," the old teachers tell us, "and each person is a Mirror to every other person."

---- Hyemeyohsts Storm, Northern Cheyenne

It is assumed by many that very little remains of traditional Indian ideology and philosophy because the traditional Indian life-style is no longer in evidence; that is, we don't live in teepees anymore. This assumption holds that traditional values and beliefs changed when our life-styles changed. Implicit in this assumption, also, is the notion that Indian culture must remain static to remain Indian. But the history of our people is a history of successful adaptation to change ...

---- Marie Smallface Marule, Blood

My objective is to get those of my people that have strayed away from our traditions, like I myself once did, to understand and come back. It's not easy. I suspect this is the problem with Indian people everywhere. We have to sit down with each other within our own communities. We have to reconcile the factions that exist. We have to tell those people who just want money or glory for themselves that they must think of the nation first. We have to sit down and speak the truth to each other, and make a peace amongst each other. That peace will bring unity and with unity there is strength, and with strength we can start assuming control over our own affairs.

---- Andrew Delisle, Mohawk

Love is something you and I must have. We must have it because our spirit feeds upon it. We must have it because without it we become weak and faint. Without love our self-esteem weakens. Without it our courage fails. Without love we can no longer look out confidently at the world. Instead we turn inwardly and begin to feed upon our own personalities and little by little we destroy ourselves.

You and I need the strength and joy that comes from knowing we are loved. With it we are creative. With it we march tirelessly. With it, and with it alone, we are able to sacrifice for others.

---- Chief Dan George, Coast Salish

... the long-standing argument by Indian leaders that the rates of social pathology among Indians - that is, incidence of incarceration, alcohol abuse, and suicides - are in large part attributable to assimilation policies and the inability of Indians to control their own affairs.

---- Menno Boldt, Leroy Little Bear, Anthony Long

You know, grandson, Wakan Tanka, the Great Spirit has given all people knowledge and wisdom. Never forget this. Some people received knowledge and wisdom through reading books. You too must read and study those books, but remember to take from those books only those things that bring unity, goodness and understanding and help us to serve one another in better ways. The other things, leave them behind.

But to our Native people and all other people who live close to Mother Earth, the Great Spirit gives us knowledge and wisdom through dreams, visions, fasting and prayer and has blessed us with the gift of seeing the many lessons he has put in nature and the world around us...

---- *Frank White Buffalo Man*

The following are from Native Wisdom for White Minds: Daily Reflections Inspired by the Native Peoples of the World (Schaef, 1995).

"The body is full of stuffed tears. Tears of grief and tears of rage and the steam makes the body cry. Then the body is ready to receive love."

----- *Angeline Locey, Hawaiian Healer and Kapuna*

"Let us give thanks for this beautiful day. Let us give thanks for this life. Let us give thanks for the water without which life would not be possible. Let us give thanks for Grandmother Earth who protects and nourishes us."

----- *Daily Prayer of the Lakota American Indian*

"Well, when the woman is about four months pregnant, she starts taking these baths infused with evergreens, pure natural aromas. There are many plants the community uses for pregnant women, colds, headaches, and things like that. So the pregnant mother takes baths with plants prescribed for her by the midwife or the village leader."

----- *Rigoberta Menchu, Quiche Indian, Guatemala*

"Technologically advanced cultures dismiss the contributions of the Aboriginal peoples. I believe our contribution can dramatically change everyone's life on this planet. It is imperative that people understand the separate reality of Native peoples and the rest of society."

----- *Douglas Cardinal, Cree (Canada) Architect, Writer and Artist*

"There are few Aboriginal families in Australia, from the outback to the suburbs, who have not experienced the removal of their children. White authorities often went to great lengths to break the cultural and family bonds between parents and children. Children, even babies, were often removed to distant locations where they were arbitrarily issued with new names and birth dates. The treatment they received in institutions was often horrific."

----- *Derek Fowell, Australian Writer*

"It is this warrior mentality that most characterizes the Celt, though it is warrior in a very specific sense. The warrior was the one who brought in the new age, the transition person. The agent of change."

----- *Daniel Martin, Irish/Celtic Writer*

"To me as a tribal Aboriginal, dreaming is more than just an ordinary dream which one would dream at night or day. To us, dreaming is reality, because it takes in all the Aboriginal spirituality. When the religious tribal Elders say, 'This mountain is my dreaming,' or 'that land is my dreaming,' he is really saying to us that this mountain or that land holds very sacred knowledge, wisdom and moral teaching, passed on to us by the spirit of the Creator, who has created for us the holy sacred sites and the sacred mountains which exist today."

----- *Australian Aboriginal*

"I believe much trouble and blood would be saved if we opened our hearts more."

----- *Hin-mah-too-yah-lat-kekht (Chief Joseph), Nez Perce, American Indian*

"Old people are highly respected, honoured and loved. They are regarded as the living links with the ancestors."

----- *Feleti E. Ngan-Woo, Samoan Writer*

"We cannot depend on governments to heal our wounds. We have to help each other."

----- *Hene, Maori Woman Elder*

"The Creator designed us to learn by trial and error. The path of life we walk is very wide. Everything on the path is sacred - what we do right is sacred - but our mistakes are also sacred. This is the Creator's way of teaching spiritual people. To criticize ourselves when we make mistakes is not the Indian way. To learn from our mistakes is the Indian way. The definition of a spiritual person is someone who makes 30 - 50 mistakes each day and talks to the Creator after each one to see what to do next time. This is the way of the warrior.

----- *Don Coyhis, Mohican (American Indian) Writer*

"I want to thank the Creator for all His gifts. I don't always understand the gifts of those who say negative things about me and who attack me, and I do trust that the Creator has given me these gifts so that I can learn and grow spiritually."

----- *Lenore Stiffarm, Blood (Canada) Poet and Professor*

"Whenever we pray we always pray, "mitakuye oyasin", for all our relations. We pray for all of the black people, all the yellow people, all the white people, and all the red people. We pray for all our relations."

----- *Lakota Elder, American Indian*

Affirmations

Affirmations are statements which help us to visualize (or picture in our minds) healing thoughts or attitudes. They tell us where we want to be in our way of thinking at some point in the future, even though they might seem difficult to believe right now. By repeating affirmations on a daily or weekly basis, we make a commitment to working on our own needs for self-love and self-acceptance. They also help to erase the negative thoughts that have been taught to us by others from our past. Just as these hurtful thoughts have been learned, they can be unlearned and replaced with ones that help us to "see" the Creator's life plan for us.

The following are some affirmations which may or may not help you. They might also help you to think of others that are more meaningful to you.

In many ways, I can decide how I live my life.

What I need is already within me.

I can become whole and complete in myself.

This is a plentiful universe and there is enough for all of us.

I am open to receiving all the gifts of this caring universe that provides for us.

I love and appreciate myself just the way that I am.

I am now in touch with the Creator's plan of my life.

I now realize, accept and follow the Creator's plan of my life as it is shown to me step by step.

All negative and limiting beliefs are fading away. They have no power over me.

I am naturally lovable and likeable.

I now let go of all the guilt, fears, resentment, disappointment and grudges from my past.

All my negative self-images and attitudes are now melting away.

All barriers to my full expression and enjoyment of life no longer exist.

The Creator always provides.

I am now getting my life in order - I am prepared to accept all the good that is coming to me now.

I am thankful for all the good that I have and all the good things to come.

I forgive myself for what I have done in my past, here and now, and forever.

This week or month or year I will create positive memories.

I can set my own boundaries.

I can create my own inner light in this season of darkness.

I can meet my own needs.

I will move ahead and not get discouraged when things go wrong.

I reward myself for living in a good way.

I can find many ways to heal myself.

I am in touch with the wisdom of my inner voice.

I can learn from people I respect and trust - I no longer have to "go it alone."

I am lovable at every age and stage of my life.

I will welcome my dreams as ways which teach me to live a good life.

I am willing to receive love - I will not hide from it or chase it away.

This day is exactly as it should be.

I can let go of the need to criticize myself.

Today I will think about the source of my strength.

Today I will stretch and expand my imagination and experience new powers of vision.

I am working hard to break free from negative patterns.

I can heal broken places in my soul or spirit.

I feel good about my successes.

Today I will be open to nature's surprises.

I can allow others into my life.

Great Spirit, Grandmothers and Grandfathers, guide me to my strengths so that I can keep my body and soul from harm.

The Earth surrounds me with love. At all times, I am loved. Love fills my lungs. I see it all around me. It touches me, caressing me. It keeps me warm. It keeps me connected to my surroundings and to others. I don't have to ask for it, for it is always there and is freely given. I feel it through my feet as I touch the Earth. Everywhere, there is love. I allow myself to bathe in its beauty.

Believe in your strengths. A woman can be a warrior too. Strength is not an obscenity but a freedom to express life fully.

I am unique, nobody is like me. So it makes me feel very special.

There's always light inside of me. I just have to light it and it will shine my way on my path of life, the brightness totally depends on me and my attitude.

Stand and be counted.

The strength in me guides me.

I am the spirit of life.

I am being cared for by myself and others.

Live each day to the fullest.

I will take care of myself, my mind, body and soul. I will allow myself to heal spiritually.

I am beautiful - I am precious - I am a miracle - I am a gift - I am gifted.

I am respected - I respect myself and others respect me. I am loved.

I am free in spirit.

I am Truth - I am Wisdom - I am Health - I am Love - I am Beauty - I am Kindness.

I am a healer and a teacher.

I am needed.

I am taking my power back. I will believe in myself. I will walk with my head high.

I will remember the beautiful spirit which will always be there inside of me.

I allow myself today to be connected with the nurturing, healing energy of Mother Earth and the unconditional love of the Creator.

I let go of the walls within and love my true self.

I look into my eyes and soul and see the beauty within.

I am wise, worldly and worthy.

I understand life's journey.

I am on the road to self discovery.

Change is possible if I put my mind to it.

I will allow myself the space and time to love myself.

I recognize who I am and I am setting goals for myself.

I am letting my spirit soar.

I am intelligent - I allow wisdom to shine through.

I reach out to my sponsor for help when I need it.

I allow my trust to grow in a gradual way.

Today, I open my eyes to all choices.

I know I can choose rules that enhance my life.

I acknowledge and appreciate my gifts.

I can begin to live my life with a new peace.

Everyday I will choose to laugh.

I will transform envy into self-awareness.

I am seeking balance in relationships.

I work toward my responsibility of meeting my own needs.

I can express my emerging personality.

My choice is to have positive thoughts.

I can trust myself.

I see the future from a new perspective.

I can get over my fear of letting others close.

I will remain true to myself and to my feelings.

I can forgive by letting go of judgements.

I can make healthy decisions.

Today, I can calm my own fears.

Today, I no longer take part in blaming.

My life and my story gives meaning to my survival.

I embrace the totality of who I am.

By trusting my perceptions, I strengthen my reality.

Today I will face my emptiness.

I experience the flow and connection between my head and my heart.

I can learn to express my anger in a healthy way.

Today I can make new choices and experience new things.

I am satisfied with my being.

I will be gentle with my scared self within.

My spirit and I are strong inside.

I give myself a pardon for past mistakes.

I accept that my inner self heals through grieving.

Today I acknowledge my dark past and create a bright future.

I am discovering my own integrity.

Today I ask for help when I need it.

Today I can shrink the bullies in my life down to size.

I can allow people to be who they are.

Today I can change the way I view my past.

I can make healthy decisions.

Today I possess the courage to choose the direction of my life.

My mistakes are an opportunity for my growth.

I can be open to giving and receiving.

Right now I am a safe and nurturing container for my inner self.

I'm finding out that it's okay to ask for help.

I am discovering the nitty gritty of who I am.

Today I will listen carefully to my inner voice.

I can choose what is right for me today.

I am creating a future of growth for myself and my world.

I am patient with my journey of healing.

I have been learning the skills that improve my life.

Today it's okay to allow my tears to come.

I acknowledge and accept my humanness.

My definition of who I am is growing every day.

I can discover the art of stillness.

Today I am learning to care for myself.

Today I discover my strengths in my own way.

The beauty of affirmations is that you can make up your own, ones that are unique to you and are special to you. Sometimes you can do this by changing a word in another affirmation. Other times you will want to express yourself totally in your own way. Below is some space provided for this purpose:

Meditations

The following are from Meditations, a centering book by Matthew Fox (1983):

Apprehend God in all things, for God is in all things.

All hiding-places reveal God. If you want to escape God, s/he runs into your lap. For, God is at home. It is we who have gone for a walk.

We love everything according to our own goodness. We are to love all things that lead us to God - that alone is love.

If the only prayer you say in your entire life is 'Thank you,' that would suffice.

The most beautiful thing which a person can say about God would be for that person to remain silent from an inner wealth. So, be silent and quit flapping your gums about God.

Be prepared at all times for the gifts of God and be ready always for new ones. For God is a thousand times more ready to give than we are to receive.

There, where clinging to things ends is where God begins to be. ... Therefore, if you wish to receive divine joy and God, first pour out your clinging to things. Everything that is to receive must and ought to be empty.

All creatures flow and return to their source. Transformed knowledge and love draw up and lead and bring the soul back into the first source of the One, the Creator of all in heaven and on earth. What is created flows out but remains within. So, when we return to our first origin, which is our primal purity, we discover our freedom and are free.

One "Hail Mary" uttered sincerely is more potent and better than a thousand muttered mechanically, for the heart is not made pure by prayer but rather prayer is made pure by the pure heart.

When one has learned to let go and let be, then one is well disposed, and he or she is always in the right place whether in society or solitude. But if one has a wrong attitude, one is always in the wrong place whether in society or not. Now one who is rightly disposed has God with one in actual fact in all places, just as much in the street and in the midst of many people, as in church, or the desert, or in a monastic cell.

The spirit is never satisfied. It presses on, deeper and deeper into the vortex, further and further into the whirlpool, the primary source in which the spirit has its origin. This spirit seeks to be broken through by God. God leads this spirit into a desert, into the wilderness and solitude of the divinity where God is pure unity and where God gushes up within himself.

Why is it that some people do not bear fruit? It is because they are so busy clinging to their egotistical attachments and so afraid of letting go and letting be that they have no trust either in God or in themselves. Love cannot distrust. It can only await the good trustfully. No person could ever trust God too much.

Human beings ought to communicate and share all the gifts they have received from God. People are not to receive and keep gifts for themselves alone, but should share themselves and pour forth everything they possess whether in their bodies or their souls as much as possible.

The work that is "with" or "outside" or "above" the artist must become the work that is "in" her, taking form within her. In other words, to understand one's vocation as an artist, we should interpret the verse "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee" (Lk. 1.35) to mean: "The Holy Spirit shall come from within thee."

Spirituality is not to be learned by flight from the world, by running away from things, or by turning solitary and going apart from the world. Rather, we must learn an inner solitude wherever or with whomsoever we may be.

The outward work will never be puny if the inward work is great. ... The inward work invariably includes in itself all expansiveness, all breadth, all length, all depth. Such a work receives and draws all its being from nowhere else except from and in the heart of God.

How can anyone be compassionate toward her neighbour who is not compassionate toward herself? ... God wants our compassion to begin at home, s/he wants us to be compassionate toward our own body and soul. ... Friendly relations with another spring from friendly relations with yourself ...

You may call God love, you may call God goodness, but the best name for God is compassion.

God's peace prompts service among brothers and sisters. In that way one creature sustains another, one enriches the other and that is why all creatures are interdependent.

If you want to be comforted, comfort those worse off than yourself and there are many.

And there can be no love where love does not find equality or is not busy creating equality.

People should not feel bad if others are angry with them but only if they merited the anger.

The path of which I have spoken is beautiful and pleasant and joyful and familiar.

The following passages have been taken from Journey Into Healing, by Deepak Chopra (1994):

To live without love, compassion or any other spiritual value creates a state of such severe imbalance that every cell yearns to correct it. Ultimately, that is what lies behind the onset of disease: the body is sending a message that something lacking in the present - an imbalance existing somewhere - has given rise to highly visible, unarguable, physical symptoms.

❦ ❦ ❦ ❦ ❦

Bad habits are just the worn-out ruts of the mind, paths that once led to freedom because they opened up new thoughts, but now lead nowhere.

❦ ❦ ❦ ❦ ❦

Instead of consciously creating disease, we could be consciously creating health.

❦ ❦ ❦ ❦ ❦

In "Siddhartha", Hermann Hesse writes, "Within you there is a stillness and sanctuary to which you can retreat at any time and be yourself." This sanctuary is a simple awareness of comfort, which can't be violated by the turmoil of events. This place feels no trauma and stores no hurt. It is the healing mental space that one seeks to find in meditation.

❦ ❦ ❦ ❦ ❦

No healing can occur without compassion. It inherently motivates the body and arouses the desire to get well.

❦ ❦ ❦ ❦ ❦

Accept what comes to you totally and completely so that you can appreciate it, learn from it, and then let it go.

❦ ❦ ❦ ❦ ❦

Despite the appearance of being separate individuals, we are all connected to patterns of intelligence governing the cosmos.

❦ ❦ ❦ ❦ ❦

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About the Authors

Doug Heckbert - **APPENDIX 2 - VOICES: SOMETHING TO THINK ABOUT**

Doug has 30 years experience in the criminal justice system as a probation officer, parole officer, prison caseworker, trainer, educator, administrator and researcher. He has worked for Alberta Correctional Services, National Parole Service, Native Counselling Services of Alberta and Grant MacEwan Community College. Doug is president of KAS Corporation Ltd., a research and training company in Fort Saskatchewan, Alberta. Doug has an M.A. in Corrections from the University of Alberta.

Louise Million, Ph.D. - **MY PLACE IN THE WORLD**

Dr. Million is a chartered psychologist and therapist with several decades of experience working in Aboriginal communities and with agencies such as Nechi Institute. She has developed curriculum materials and delivered various training modules in areas such as addiction, family counselling and grieving. In addition to a private practice in Edmonton which specializes in adult trauma recovery, Louise's time is taken up with grandchildren and gardening.

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Deborah Lee is a freelance writer who is of Cree, French and Scottish ancestry. She also has a B.A. in Psychology, experience in journalism, video production and addictions training and has two extraordinary young adult children. In addition to authoring Communications Skills, Deborah was employed by Nechi Institute to coordinate the efforts of the other authors of this workbook and to collect "affirmations" and "wise sayings" of Aboriginal people, especially Elders.

Lois Loyer - **A LOOK AT ADDICTIONS**

Lois is a Trainer and Project Manager with Nechi Institute. She is Métis and has worked in the field of addictions since 1984. Lois authored the material which provides information on "chemical" and "process" addictions. Her work provides the opportunity for individuals to assess their relationship to various substances and activities.

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Normie is originally from the Saddle Lake Reserve and presently residing in the city of Edmonton. She has 16 years experience working with the Aboriginal people in the areas of training, treatment, aftercare, and management of addictions programs. Currently, Normie is working on a prevention training series for Nechi Institute. Normie authored "The 12 Step" portion of "A Look at Addictions."

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Yvonne is of Cree ancestry and originally from Manitoba, presently living in Calgary. She has a private practice and has worked frontline with Native and Government services for the last 25 years. Her areas of expertise include chemical dependency, child and family services, community development, organizational administration and management. Yvonne is also a specialty trainer in project regeneration board/committee training, documentation procedures, monitoring and review services. Yvonne enjoys summers in Manitoba with her grandchildren.

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Laura Kemp Hanson is a partner of Hanson Community Resources Ltd. (Edmonton, Alberta). As consultants to human service providers, HCR writes proposals, conducts community assessments, needs assessments, evaluates programs, designs and delivers training/workshops. Throughout her career, Laura has assisted many ex-inmates to gain self-sufficiency through employment and community involvement.

Tony P. Martens, B.S.W., R.C.C., R.S.W. - **SEXUAL ABUSE**

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