THE IMPACT OF CULTURE ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

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By
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The Impact of Culture on Psychological Assessment

Abstract

The purpose of the present study was to examine the relationship between culture and the clinical practice of psychological assessment. Over the past decade, psychologists have come under criticism for maintaining a mainstream cultural status quo in clinical practice. In particular, indigenous peoples throughout the world have pointed out that clinical psychologists, in both research and practice, have not successfully been able to understand or deliver culturally appropriate services due to Psychology’s entrenched, Western European, ethnocentric perspective.

In order to understand the difficulties that psychologists might face in performing assessments on people of First Nations heritage, a collaborative research project was undertaken with a process and heuristic orientation. Collaboration occurred between myself and the Social Development Sector of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. Multiple sources of data were used in the study, including observation, open-ended interview, and analysis of archival data. All data were qualitative in nature, and analyses included qualitative content and process analysis as well as indwelling. Included in the project is a review of the literature in Cultural Psychology and the cultural aspects of Psychological Assessment.

Results from the study suggest that assumptions and biases can occur between mainstream psychologists and First Nations people that will interfere with competent and accurate assessment and communication. These assumptions and biases derive from
both the culture of the psychologist and the discipline of Psychology itself.

Understanding of the First Nations person with whom the psychologist is attempting to interact will not occur unless the psychologist is prepared to undertake a deep learning about the heritage First Nations peoples. In addition, the psychologist must be willing to enter into a process of self-examination in order to understand what beliefs, heritage, training, and experiences he or she is personally bringing into the assessment process.

Suggestions for future research are included.
Acknowledgements

My family supported me emotionally, spiritually, financially, and physically throughout the process of obtaining my doctoral degree and the writing of this dissertation. They witnessed my struggle and supported the experience of personal change that I went through during this difficult time. Thank you and monhaya lita, therefore, are extended to my husband, John (Jack), of the Skrip, Lobinski, Wagosh, and Butchinski families; to my daughter, Mallory, of the Skrip, Zolner, Butchinski, and Mandrusiak families; to my mother, Mary, of the Mandrusiak, Pankiw, Elkow, and Yaremchuk families; and to my father, Bernard, of the Zolner, Papirnik, Meday, and Krupa families. Thank you and monhaya lita are also extended to my two very good friends, Mary McCann and Maria Kozak, for their humor, conversation, and encouragement over these past several years.

For my spiritual and cultural development over the years, I also would like to acknowledge the contribution of St. Basil’s Ukrainian Catholic Church, the parish’s Basilian monks in Edmonton, Canada, as well as Sisters Esther and Petronella of the Sister Servants of Mary Immaculate; Sts. Peter and Paul Ukrainian Catholic Parish in Saskatoon, Canada; and St. Stephen’s Byzantine Ukrainian Catholic Church and Choir in Calgary, Canada. Thank you and monhaya lita! Thank you and monhaya lita also are extended to the Confraternity of Our Mother of Perpetual Help at Sts. Peter and Paul parish in Saskatoon, Canada; also to Frs. John Pazak, Bryan Bayda, and Rendy Yackemic as well as to Bishop Basil Filevich of the Saskatoon Eparchy and Bishop Lawrence
Huculak of the Edmonton Eparchy for the guidance and edification extended from them towards me.

For academic guidance, support, and assistance, I would like to acknowledge and thank Dr. Gerry Farthing, who has been supervising me in my graduate work for the past eight years. Gerry demonstrated an uncanny and rare ability to balance supervisory direction evaluation with patience, humor, and gentleness. In addition, he encouraged me to keep true to my character, personality, and values in my work. I also know that he prayed for me in times of difficulty and was not afraid to see and explore the connection between the physical and the metaphysical in all things.

Gerry struggled with me as a supervisor throughout the process of this dissertation project. He provided an atmosphere for learning that enabled me to take a step over to a First Nations worldview and did not block my development along the way. He encouraged broad thinking and demonstrated a fundamental respect for me as a student, woman, mother, and spouse throughout my years of graduate training. I am very grateful for having had Gerry as an academic supervisor for both my master's and doctoral work. May God grant you and your family many years!

In addition, I would like to thank and honor the Elders who were directly and indirectly involved with this project, as well as the Health and Social Development Commission of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations, Sandra Atimoyoo, Colin Rope, and the Indian Child and Family Services Directors who were involved in the project. Thank you and honor are extended to the people who agreed to be interviewed and who provided their time and knowledge to assist in teaching me to value a First Nations worldview and perspective on assessment.

Thank you and honor also are extended to my dissertation committee, whom I write more about in the Preface to this work, and to Dr. Richard Dana, who traveled an extended distance to attend my dissertation defense. Dr. Dana provided excellent
comments and questions that were thought-provoking and that stemmed from his extended experience with intercultural work and academic advisement.

I would like to thank and extend many blessings to the following people and institutions, who assisted me in accessing archival and other types of information, without which this dissertation would not have been complete: Mr. Joe Karapinka, Mr. Roman Fodchuk and the Shandro family of Alberta, Dr. Bohdan Kordan, Mr. Sakej Youngblood Henderson, Miss Lilia Komprichevska, Mrs. Anne Jakimiw, the Staff of the Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies at the University of Alberta, and the Staff of the Ukrainian Archives in Edmonton Alberta.

My dissertation committee requested that I elaborate, in particular, upon the contributions of Sandra and Colin as organizers for this project, under the instruction of the Health and Social Development Commission of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. The committee also asked me to elaborate on the context in which the work occurred.

Sandra Atimoyoo is of Cree/Saulteaux ancestry. She is the Director of Social Development for the Health and Social Development Commission of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and, as such, she is responsible for a number of areas. Her responsibility includes acting in an advisory capacity in areas such as Indian Child and Family Services.

Sandra had an amazing ability to understand the larger picture in related to the smaller experiences we were having throughout this project, keeping a close and careful eye on the project at all times. Sandra was able to maintain a consistency, resiliency, and balanced approach to the project in it entirety. Sandra nurtured, taught, and demonstrated the enduring qualities necessary for my development throughout the project. Her insight into the implications of this particular project were of tremendous value to all concerned.

Colin Rope is of Nakoda/Dakoda ancestry. At the time of this project, he was program advisor for Indian Child and Family Services in the Social Development
Commission of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations. Colin does not currently work for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations but is pursuing his own graduate training in Social Work at the University of Regina in Regina, Saskatchewan. Colin worked for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations for approximately seven years, and during 1996, he contacted me at the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada’s Conference on Oppressed Indigenous People in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. At that point, this project was given form.

Colin read my writing and ripped much of it – if not physically, then verbally. He was critical, demanding, and unyielding when necessary, but also understanding, patient, and a good teacher. He was, above all, true to his own worldview. He encouraged broader reading of First Nations writers and related contexts, concepts, and perceptions through stories he had heard, experiences he had lived, and experiencing he was living at the time. We had extended discussions regarding mainstream Psychology, and he helped me to appreciate how First Nations might conceptualize their worldview at all levels with relation to mainstream society. He was brutally honest in translating the impact of mainstream Psychology on many First Nations peoples with whom he had worked, lived, and interacted.

For many First Nations peoples, there has been a long-standing awareness of the oppressive nature of mainstream Psychology on their relatives. This awareness was always present in the Elders, Indian Child and Family Services Directors, and interviewees that I spoke to for this project, as well as the numerous other individuals from all walks of First Nations life to whom I had the opportunity to listen. Each time that these people spoke, they seemed to feel burdened by their inability to break through the veil of empathy that shields the impenetrable wall of mainstream misunderstanding. This was the context in which the project discussed in the dissertation was initiated and developed.
Dedication

For all my relatives

Господи благослови наша родина
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Preface

I write this preface seven months after drafting this dissertation and seven years after initially starting the work. I now ask myself how I can assist readers of this document in understanding what enabled the process reflected in this work to occur. Undoubtedly, this document will provoke strong emotion, both positive and negative, in those who endure its reading. The document is long and the reading arduous at times. At other times, some might have a difficult time putting it down, only to be dissatisfied by what they see as a lack of clear direction and sense of closure once the last page is turned.

I have been asked by some to provide a clearer answer to the question of how to provide competent psychological assessment services to First Nations peoples. However, I want to remind readers that the question I set out to answer in the project was, "How can I come to understand a First Nations perspective on assessment and what it means for me, as a member of mainstream, academic Psychology, to perform an assessment with a First Nations person?"

The question had two parts. First, how can I come to understand a First Nations perspective on assessment? The answer to this question is manifested in the methodology of the project. After having read the document, some might ask what the methodology was. Others might declare that the project has no recognized methodology according to the literature in mainstream Psychology.

When I initially drafted the methodology chapter for this dissertation, I relied heavily on mainstream guidelines for field and qualitative research. I had a continuing
sense of disillusionment and disappointment that the academic literature on field research was not helping me to come to a closer understanding of the people or processes with whom and with which I was involved. Nevertheless, I initially included a chapter on mainstream qualitative methodology. However, even the dissertation committee recognized that this literature did not fit with process of my learning, and they shocked me by advising me to remove it from the text.

I came across many pearls of wisdom during the past seven years, but one, in particular, stuck to me like a prairie burr. I do not remember now how I came across the advice, but it was from Gloria Anzaldúa, who said, "Voyager, there are no bridges. One builds them as one walks." I had those words pinned to my bulletin board in front of my desk at the University of Saskatchewan, and I took great solace in them every time that I felt confused about the fact that I could not fully anchor my experiences in any of the mainstream literature.

Confusion was not the only emotion that I felt during the process. Other emotions included, well, all of them, from horror to joy, sadness to fear, shame to gratitude, liberation to judgment, anger to zeal. This process of taking a very small step over to a First Nations worldview was much more than an academic exercise; it was a journey — an intellectual, physical, emotional, and spiritual journey to a destination at which I have not yet arrived. However, I am hoping that readers will appreciate that it was the journey I took, and continue to be on, that was more important than the destination at which I hope to arrive.

Near the beginning of the dissertation, I mentioned that First Nations methods for assessment and treatment exist. So do First Nations methods for research. Those readers familiar with the literature in mainstream assessment and research might feel frustrated, disappointed, or angry that I do not engage a thorough examination and demonstration of my knowledge in these two areas. However, these topics have been treated extensively
elsewhere in the literature already. I would not be contributing much by recounting, criticiquing, nor attempting to justify these topics. Rather, I devoted most of my energies to demonstrating the process necessary to come to understand a First Nations perspective on psychological assessment.

The research methodology and process was one of relationship building and cultivation of trust. Nothing would have occurred without trust, and the process would not have continued if trust would have been broken. Trust had to occur on all sides. Sandra and Colin had to trust that I would not appropriate First Nations practices or knowledge under the claim of my own expertise. My academic supervisor, Dr. Gerry Farthing, had to trust that I was not going to misrepresent or betray the integrity of my working relationship with him and the University of Saskatchewan. I had to trust that Gerry and my dissertation committee would support the idea of a First Nations process for learning. I also had to trust that Sandra and Colin would be patient and stay with me through a difficult time of learning and personal change.

There were times during this process that I thought I would quit because I felt like I would not be able to honor both systems — First Nations and academia — without betraying one or both of them. I was under an incredible amount of pressure to maintain integrity and honesty in all relationships to which I was responsible. For example, the process for seeking approval for this project from the Vice-Chief of the Health and Social Development Commission of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and from the Social Sciences Ethics Committee at the University of Saskatchewan were radically different from each other. However, in both worlds, my request for permission to proceed went forward to people and authorities that I did not know but who could approve or deny the request based on their own responsibilities, duties, and allegiances in their respective communities.
Attempting to balance the ethics application and write it in a manner that would not offend or turn away people was a nearly insurmountable challenge. My own fear of rejection by both worlds was acute. It kept me awake at night and worried me to the very core of my intentions and identity. At times, I was in anguish. What was I doing? How could this work? I asked myself these questions over and over again. I talked to Sandra and Colin -- for hours at a time, over days, months, and years on the telephone, in the car, in person, at meetings, during conferences, by the side of the road, in parking lots, around tables, over coffee, passing pepper, on-reserve, off-reserve, and during prayer -- asking over and over, how can we make this work?

I acknowledge and believe that Colin and Sandra had a better sense of direction than I did because they understood the necessity and benefit of building trust and relationships as primary to learning about First Nations peoples' worldview and psychology. I depended on them throughout the process to help me walk in First Nations country. However, at some point I had to let even their support go to see if I could stand on my own. They gave me opportunities to do even that. For example, they had me participate in a First Nations and mainstream justice process with First Nations and mainstream leaders, elders, families, judges, lawyers, and social workers and asked me to express some of what I had learned from what I had experienced during the project. In a similar manner do I also express myself in the writing of this dissertation, which reflects my learning and limited knowledge derived from the process through which Colin, Sandra, and I went together.

I also know that protecting of each other occurred throughout. Colin and Sandra protected me during discussions, that I was not aware of or part of, which might have arisen during the project about my non-First Nations status and intentions. They kept me shielded from these discussions so that my enthusiasm for the project would not be damaged or reduced. In turn, Gerry and I protected them from the University of
Saskatchewan's questioning of Sandra's credentials for sitting on my dissertation committee as an authority on the methodology as well as First Nations worldview. Eventually, both sides -- academic and First Nations -- were able to admit both Sandra and I to work in their midst, but getting to this point was risky.

For example, an official from the University of Saskatchewan wanted to telephone Sandra and question her about her academic credentials to see whether she qualified to be on the committee. I tried to explain that a university degree did not exist that validated the type of unique and valuable knowledge and experience that she brought to the committee. Members of the dissertation committee recognized the need to have Sandra on the committee. However, the University of Saskatchewan did not recognize her because her training and knowledge did not match their standards and criteria. My concern that this official's questions and judgment would hurt Sandra and our relationship was so great that I would not release Sandra's telephone number or address to the university official. I was concerned that trust would be breached.

When I told the official that I would not be able to continue in my work if Sandra was not recognized on the committee, the official dispassionately stated that she could do nothing more. At that point, I risked the viability of my work and knew that if Sandra could not be recognized in the university system, then I could not and would not proceed, even if it meant not completing the project. Really, I risked my own academic standing in order not to violate the integrity of my working and personal relationship with Sandra, Colin, and the ICFS Directors. I took this risk because Sandra and Colin had taken risks in their own world in order to work with me. Their risk was greater than mine because I had far more ability to do damage to First Nations peoples than they had ability to damage the academic system. We were all working with risk management. I then placed the dilemma in Gerry's hands, and he was able to solve the problem through other avenues that I was unable to access.
Fortunately for me, I had good, strong people to work with in both systems, each person having a unique perspective to offer as well as a great capacity for understanding and thought. The First Nations and academic people working with me permitted me to engage this process of learning. What enabled the process to work was faith, not just faith in the process but faith in the Creator of us all, and let me state that we do have a Creator. Some readers of this dissertation might not have a personal relationship with the Creator, but the fact of the Creator's and Pantocrator's existence is nonetheless very real.

Sandra, Colin, Gerry, and I believe this to be true, and know that without the presence of the Great and Holy Spirit, this process would not have occurred. Therefore, the methodology of the dissertation was relational and spiritual in every aspect. However, this is the aspect of the work which remains thus far undiscovered and thus far unexplainable, for who can write the will of God?

There was a temptation during the process of this work to give the credit to Colin, Sandra, Gerry, and myself. However, the credit belongs to the Creator and with the Creator it will remain. Yet, let me add that many people -- First Nations and non-First Nations -- prayed that this process would be good, and so it was. To do this kind of intercultural work, you must believe in something much larger and greater than yourself to guide your steps because you, yourself, will not know where to walk.

Going back to the two parts of the research question, the second part asks “what it means for me, as a member of mainstream, academic Psychology, to perform an assessment with a First Nations person.” I discovered that performing mainstream psychological assessment with a person from a First Nations worldview — or any worldview that differs from that of mainstream Psychology — turns the assessor into a colonizer. A psychologist whom I once knew told me back in 1993 that if I did work with First Nations peoples I would become known as a colonizer. I replied to him in a way that did not deny being a colonizer. However, I did not explain to him at the time that the
reason I did not deny being a colonizer was that I am not afraid of truth. Those who
object to words like colonization, genocide, and racism are those who fear the truth upon
which our nation and so many other nations on this earth are founded.

Even when the English stepped off the Mayflower, seeking religious freedom in a
new land, they were seeking freedom for themselves from England to worship as they
saw fit, to the detriment and death of those who dissented or who were judged as non-
human. Canadian history is no better.

I have learned that assessment must come from relationship, not just to the persona
being assessed but to everything that person comes from and is tied to in his or her world.
Out of this kind of relationship comes respect and understanding of the person as well as
the processes, procedures, and techniques necessary to then assess and allow that person
to assist himself or herself in life. Without this kind of relationship, assessment becomes
an act of classification according to foreign taxonomies, which continues to recolonize the
person as well as minimize, distort, and destroy the balance necessary for that person to
embrace and maintain a healthy First Nations existence.

This type of classification might extend also to this dissertation. For example,
some academic scholars might want to claim this work under the rubric of Cultural
Psychology. Others might want to appropriate it into their own paradigms for research
methodology or theory. However, this dissertation is not about Cultural Psychology; it is
about First Nations Psychology, which is tied to their worldview and the earth to which it
belongs. If First Nations Psychology did not exist, I would not have been able to go
through this process. There were times when I felt so hurt by my own lack of
understanding that I would honestly have quit the project had Colin, Sandra, and the ICFS
Directors not been there to balance off and take care of how I felt. Had they not known
how to keep me and each other in balance, trust would have failed, and I would have left
many meetings and discussions feeling useless to this process and upset. What is not
described in this dissertation is how they saw me and worked to keep me a part of the process at my lowest emotional moments.

What also is not described in this dissertation is the work that currently is being done to develop and write First Nations assessment tools and procedures. The Indian Child and Family Services Directors in the province of Saskatchewan, under the direction of the Health and Social Development Commission, are working to develop First Nations services and methods. However, my agreement with the Health and Social Development Commission prevents me from disclosing their ideas and plans in this particular area. Other work is being done in New Mexico, by Dr. Eduardo Duran, and, in Oklahoma, by Dr. Dolores Subia-Bigfoot, both of whom appear to have stayed within a First Nations worldview in theory and practice.

In addition, I would like to acknowledge the dissertation committee for this project, consisting of Dr. Richard Dana, Dr. Mark Flynn, Ms. Sandra Atimoyoo, Dr. Richard Katz, Dr. John Conway, Dr. Gerry Farthing, Dr. Linda McMullen, and Dr. Gurcharn Basran. Each of these people, who were present at the dissertation defense, also grappled with the process individually and struggled with the information in the text of the dissertation. All committee members, witnesses to the process, are left with a considerable amount to ponder about Psychology and their own roles in relationship to First Nations peoples. Each committee member perhaps also is more aware of psychologists' individual responsibilities, consistent with those outlined in the Canadian Ethical Code for Psychologist, to respect the integrity as well as the dignity of First Nations peoples and to ensure that we do no harm to them and others, one nation on this, our beautiful earth.
CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM

What is it we think we are doing when we "understand" others? Are we grasping something about their own way of relating their inner states to their overt acts, or are we merely projecting onto them psychological assumptions we have constructed about ourselves? Does the psychological picture we have formed become the baseline against which we are able to inquire more deeply into the other's particularity, or does it constitute so limiting a grid that we never get past its criteria?

- Lawrence Rosen, 1995

In the Spring (1994) issue of the Saskatchewan Psychologist Newsletter, Louise Halfe published some reflections about some of the problems, from her perspective, with mental health service delivery to First Nations peoples. In her article, she discussed issues like "entrenched ethnocentric perspectives," "the burden of history," "the bureaucracy of Indian affairs," and "community healing." Ms. Halfe, as well as a number of other writers (La Fromboise, 1988; La Fromboise, Trimble, Mohatt, 1990; La Fromboise & Plake, 1984), has criticized how mental health services are delivered to First Nations peoples.

Not only has service delivery been criticized, but research methods and paradigms have also been questioned (La Fromboise & Plake, 1983; Stokes, 1985). Researchers and

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1 This research was made possible in part by funding from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.
clinicians alike have been faulted for doing little else than maintaining a cultural status quo and perpetuating an often-cited, 500-year state of colonization for First Nations in North America by imposing a dominant culture ethic on them (see Aboriginal Organizing Team, 1996; Duran, Duran, & Yellowhorse-Braveheart, Unpublished Manuscript, a).

In the face of such sweeping criticisms, clinical psychologists trained as scientist-practitioners may feel frustrated. Most clinical psychologists assess and treat individual people or families on a case-by-case basis. For a practicing clinician, it might seem difficult or irrelevant to relate arguments about 500 years of colonization to the treatment decisions of an individual case in a clinic: Individual treatment is about meeting the personal needs of one client, not the social or historical needs of an ethnic collectivity, the psychologist might argue. Practitioners also might argue that Clinical Psychology is about the study, diagnosis, and treatment of abnormal behavior, disorders, and psychological problems (Phares, 1992). It is not Sociology, History, Anthropology or even Social Work. It is not about fixing social ills. Therefore, clinical psychologists go about treating the clients whom they are requested or mandated to assist. Researchers go about their business, attempting to understand the nature of psychological phenomena and their relationship to a multiplicity of causes and associated factors. On an individual level, we claim to treat people and, mostly at a group level, we try, logically and scientifically, to study them. We state that we are doing our jobs. We profess that, within our academic and professional practice, we are doing what we were trained to do.

Yet we are accused of failing in our work with First Nations people. Alcoholism, suicide, family breakdown, abuse, and a host of other problems, including poverty and poor health, continue in the First Nations community in what we might believe is an endless downward spiral that makes us feel hopeless and bitter that our work has little impact (Halfe, 1994). Halfe (1994) suggested that this type of frustration turns professionals into "victim blamers" (see also Four Worlds Development Project, 1984).
There is frustration, too, on the First Nations side, resulting from Western socioeconomic control, which results in "months of waiting for a five minute bandaid, a bureaucracy of redtape, and prescription cures destined for failure" (Halfe, 1994). Whatever the answer to these difficulties, clearly we have not recognized or reached one yet. Furthermore, in the words of Cushman (1993):

hermeneuticists and social constructionists such as Bernstein (1976), Gergen (1985), McNamee and Gergen (1992), Richardson (1989), Sampson (1983), Stigliano (1992), and Taylor (1989) have recently argued that psychology's claim to be objective, amoral, and apolitical is philosophically impossible and politically dangerous. I have extended this line of thinking by arguing that psychotherapy's claim to be a universal scientific practice that objectively treats ahistorical illnesses is equally untenable. Psychotherapy is a cultural product and, like all cultural products, it both REFLECTS and REPRODUCES its cultural context.

Because the cultural context is in part composed of moral traditions embedded in political structures, psychotherapy is unavoidably a moral practice with political consequences (p. 103; author's emphasis).

While psychologists might not have recognized or reached an answer to the problems confronting us in cross-cultural work, we clearly cannot rest on academic laurels and claim that our practices are objective and free from bias because they are "scientific." We cannot righteously assume, nor can we justifiably maintain, a positivistic stance.

People in Crisis from Communities in Crisis

It is no news that First Nations communities have more than their share of crisis (Shkilnyk, 1985), and crisis – such as alcoholism, suicide, and violence – has been the focus of many mainstream researchers. Trimble and Medicine (1993) noted that 2,329 articles on American Indian mental health had been compiled from the literature by 1981, 969 of these articles being on American Indian alcoholism. Some communities have
virtually 100% alcoholism, such as the Alkali Lake community in British Columbia once had.

Clinical psychologists treating individual clients might have some impact on an individual person's ability to live and cope. However, sending a treated person back to a community that is in social and economic crisis would severely challenge the ability of any person to continue living in a healthy and viable way. This is not a new problem in Psychology: We can help change the client, but how do we change the socioeconomic system in which the client lives? Where do we draw the line between intrapsychic problems and social problems? Some have argued that in focusing their efforts on individual clients and intrapsychic conflict, psychologists have become victim blamers. For example, Prilleltensky and Gonick (1994) argued that Freud's use of psychological terms redirected attention away from issues of social oppression by attributing personal unhappiness to intrapsychic conflict rather than social hardship. On a more recent note, the popular press in Canada (see, for example, the Saskatoon StarPhoenix, August 30, 1997) has been giving considerable attention to Dineen's (1996) arguments that psychologists are victim creators. Others have argued that psychologists might be agents of social control, assimilating people into a mainstream culture and keeping the status quo intact (von Baeyer, 1994). Certainly Psychology has no lack of critics or apologists, for that matter; however, even what some might call ‘extremist criticism’ can have grains of truth that are worth investigating. Rather than flinching at such criticism, some healthy self-examination should prove beneficial for everyone, clients and the profession alike.

Differing Worldviews

First Nations are adamant that Western assessment models are imbued with assumptions and values that conflict with the assumptions and values of many First Nations peoples. For example, a psychologist might focus on a person's traits, self-construct, or intrapsychic conflict as defined according to Western thinking. However, "First Nations peoples might have a significantly different perception of elements that are
usually described by mainstream Psychology as assessment and treatment" (Rope, Personal Communication, October 2, 1997). In fact, First Nations methods of assessment and treatment might have an entirely different focus (Zolner, 1993). Yes, First Nations methods.

While psychologists preoccupy themselves with reading the latest journal articles on cross-cultural treatments, few might stop to think that perhaps First Nations peoples might have assessment and treatment methods within their own culture and practices. I have mentioned the idea of First Nations expertise to a number of scholars from a number of different fields, including Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, History, and Rhetoric. The idea had not occurred to any of them.

For example, recently I was at an international conference of rhetoricians. One scholar had been studying the oral traditions of the Mohawk nation and was delivering a talk on the subject at Wauskegun Heritage Park, a First Nations historic site. He stated that, once he had developed a theory about Mohawk oral tradition, he would like to take his work to anthropologists for verification, to compare what he had found to what they had found. From the back of the room, I asked him whether he thought it might be appropriate to take his work over to the Mohawk nation and ask them, perhaps even ask a Mohawk scholar, whether his theories were plausible. He replied that this would not be possible, as there were not any Mohawk scholars. In addition, he stated that Mohawk culture had been so imbued with European culture that a "pure" Mohawk culture did not even exist any more. The very idea that the Mohawk nation could have people within it who would be able to critique academic scholarship or who would have anything at all worthwhile to say about their own heritage seemed impossible to this man.

Although this experience might seem rare or unusual, it is not. On other occasions I have had discussions with scholars about their views of First Nations knowledge; most expressed doubt that First Nations philosophy or methodologies would exist and seemed surprised if I suggested that they did. I have begun to suspect, rightly or wrongly, that
many non-First Nations tend to see First Nations as passive, inexperienced, uneducated, and naive — not too far from Rousseau's 'noble savage,' or perhaps just short of the ignorant beast that must be looked after once domesticated, lacking any type of motivation for actualization or change. In this regard, "Non-First Nations claim to be the catalyst for First Nations' intellectual enlightenment as a result of therapy through Western psychological style and technique" (Rope, Personal Communication, October 2, 1997). However, what might appear to psychologists, looking in from the outside, to be a lack of motivation or ability to change might be a misinterpretation of what we think we are seeing.

Certain kinds of factors create what we call motivations — factors, for example, like need. There's different ways to look at this. If you need something for your own survival, you're motivated to go after what you need, but the manner in which you are motivated to look after your needs is in line with the social, emotional, mental, and physical ways in which you were brought up, the things that form your social character, and that's how you interpret what you need and how you obtain them. The manner in which you begin to motivate yourself and the people around you is, itself, motivated by the social, emotional, mental, and physical ways in which you live (Rope, Personal Communication, September 13, 1997).

The variables that psychologists might look to for measuring mental health, personal character, lifestyle, or normality are products of what the psychologist has been trained to assess, which, itself, is a product of what we view in our society to be healthy behavior and ways of living. If we continue to view First Nations in a position of intellectual or cultural inferiority (Prilleltensky & Gonick, 1992; Sioui, 1992), we become at risk for doing in our academic domain what the Department of Indian Affairs appears to already do in theirs: adopt an attitude of caretaking and control over First Nations that is founded in a
fundamental belief in the superiority of Western culture (Bolafia & Li, 1985). In the words of Sioui (1992)

In my opinion, two ideas generally accepted by the dominant society . . . account for the impasse in American cross-cultural communication. First is the belief in the superiority of European culture and morality, which has served as a foundation for the acquisition of other peoples' territories and resources. Its scientific name is the theory of social evolution, which puts forward, as a truth, the principle that those peoples who possess the most 'advanced' technology and the 'capacity of writing' are in the vanguard of the process of 'evolution,' and thus have the right, inherent to their culture, and the responsibility, to bring about the 'development' of the 'less advanced.' I call this theory the evolution myth. The second idea, which hinges on the first, is that of the inevitable disappearance of the Amerindian, or the myth of the disappearance of the Native. Such annihilation was regarded as the logical and normal outcome of the shock that occurs between a highly 'advanced' civilization and another – particularly that of the New World Natives – very 'backward' one (p. xx).

Sioui is exposing Western culture's belief in the superiority of itself over other cultures. If Psychology accepts this belief, then psychologists will run the risk of becoming the kind of "helpers" that deny uniqueness of strength, motivation, competency, and autonomy of First Nations people. Psychologists would be left in a caretaking position, fostering dependency and despair in the very people we sought to assist. Psychologists then would be abandoning the very basis for morally enlightened psychological practice with First Nations.

Such dangers might seem implausible, far-fetched, or remote. Bock (1988) argued that stereotypes held by Europeans in the past were used to justify exploitation and indifference, as well as rationalize oppressive actions. However, in more modern times,
students (and anthropologists) come to the study of primitive peoples with many irrational prejudices and contradictory stereotypes. It is important that we become aware of our own unconscious assumptions and critical of our common-sense knowledge (Bock, 1988, p. 7).

Bock’s arguments apply across disciplines to Psychology as well. It is deeply ironic, however, that, in challenging academics to explore their unconscious assumptions and common-sense knowledge, he fails to address his own use of the word "primitive" when referring to people of First Nations ancestry. Certainly, people’s assumptions and biases can run very deeply (Bopp, Bopp, & Lane, 1984).

Methods for assessment and treatment exist across a variety of First Nations. Most methods are not readily available to the mainstream or non-First Nations public, as First Nations knowledge is largely held in the oral and practical domains, rather than in the written domain. However, some have been published as training approaches for First Nations community workers. For example, Mussell, Nicholls, and Adler from the Sal’i’shan Institute (1993) described one aspect of their treatment model as follows:

From a traditional perspective, the focus of helping is to provide support through a system of mutual aid and helping networks that are reciprocal in nature. The natural helping relationship is viewed as an end in itself and is concerned more with the person than the problem. Moreover, family, group and clan emphasis is more important than individual issues or values.

The Sal’i’shan Institute’s model for therapy is through mutual aid, which typically does not include the presence of a professionally trained therapist. However, to simply classify their model as "mutual aid" would be missing an entire cultural understanding and First Nations philosophy about how "reciprocal mutual aid" might work and how it could be practiced. To assume that First Nations mutual aid groups are like mainstream mutual aid groups would be to miss significant cultural differences that may exist; the methods might sound the same but, in practice, be very different.
Moreover, Canadian psychologists might have difficulty with a model like that of the Sal't'shan Institute, since their first duty is to the individual client, with most psychologists being trained in individually oriented psychotherapy. Family and interpersonal therapists might go beyond single-person work, but it is not likely that such therapy would have a "clan emphasis." It is unlikely that the average psychologist trained in a Canadian graduate school would have adequate knowledge of any particular clan or nation's perspective, and would, therefore, be unable to provide services with a "clan emphasis."

Sue (1989) argued that Psychology lacks mental health services, literature base, and institutional resources to address any minority group concerns in a meaningful way. Western-trained psychologists become in danger of resocializing their clients according to non-First Nations perspectives, subtly undermining the identity of the client and assimilating them by assisting them to internalize the values of mainstream society so often reflected in the culture of Psychology, committing a type of "epistemic violence" by "replacing of Native with foreign idioms of definition and understanding" (Duran, Duran, & Yellowhorse-Braveheart, Unpublished Manuscript, b). Rope (Personal Communication, October 2, 1997) stated, "This is more than evident when First Nations are referred to as a minority in their own land, especially when minorities are usually viewed by mainstream as coming from other countries." Issues of minority and majority when considered numerically can override, even negate, the identity of those people who are seen as having a less important or "alternative" view because they are classified as a "minority."

Assimilation and Acculturation

The issue of whether a First Nations person is being assimilated through mainstream mental health services is not simple, however, as individual First Nations people have had various degrees of contact with their natural families and original culture. Many First Nations children were separated from their families and cultures of origin by
being raised in White foster homes or residential parochial schools. Historical accounts exist of outright killings and battles that were sanctioned by overt genocidal policy, the intent of which is now perpetuated by socio-cultural and economic policies that appear to be more humane but, in fact, are actually more covert forms of genocide (Churchill, 1996; Duran & Duran, 1995; see also Staub, 1989).

There is a longstanding history in North America of First Nations peoples being overtaken or, in a word, "colonized" at the individual level by non-First Nations peoples (Churchill, 1996; Duran, Duran, & Yellowhorse-Braveheart, Unpublished Manuscript, b). Following in sequence the Ages of Exploration, Enlightenment, and Evolutionism in Western Europe,

many European nations carved out colonial empires around the world, subjugating and often enslaving the native peoples while expropriating their land and exploiting their labor and resources.

The Western European nations created theological rationalizations like manifest destiny for their policies of imperialism: The souls of the natives had to be saved, even if their bodies and their societies were destroyed in the process (Bock, 1988, p. 5). The juggernaut of colonization sought to crush the culture out of the lands that psychological institutions now stand upon. In the words of Dinnerstein, Nichels, & Reimers (1996),

That foreign powers controlled these lands did not disturb Americans, who genuinely believed, as a later expansionist would write, that "God, with infinite wisdom and skill [was] training the Anglo-Saxon race for its ultimate destiny" (p. 85).

If these arguments seem somehow extreme or remote, the following quotation illustrates how close to home these issues can be. The following is a commentary on Saskatchewan First Nations reservations in the mid-1960's, with some additional statements about how the author believed First Nations people could be moved "toward mainstream" (Davis, 1965, p. 519):
We believe that such rural settlements, because they lack the economic and motivational resources for evolving into modern communities, should be recognized for what they are -- outdoor custodial institutions. Subsidies should not ordinarily be further increased, either in the form of direct allowances or in the form of make-work programs. Rather, subsidies should be limited, perhaps sometimes reduced, in order to increase the "push" out of substandard communities without a future. Simultaneously, funds and programs should be made available for voluntary relocation. In brief, prod from behind, and put a big bunch of juicy carrots in front (Davis, 1965, p. 521).

Davis's (1965) report contained many similar types of comments reflecting the attitude it contains of non-First Nations towards First Nations. First Nations peoples, in reading this quotation, would likely interpret it as a direct recommendation for their complete cultural assimilation into mainstream society. The quotation from Davis's (1965) report can only be described as disparaging, disrespectful, or worse. In the words of Bennett (1985), "We make them dependent and then scorn their dependency."

All First Nations peoples have been affected by colonization in North America, but individual people experience levels of assimilation or "acculturation" to varying degrees (Triandis, Kasha, Shimada, & Villareal, 1986; Lonner, 1985; Berry, 1981; also see Triandis, Bontempo, Betancourt, Bond, Leung, Brenes, Georgas, Hui, Marin, Setiadi, Sinha, Verma, Spangenberg, Touzard, & de Montmollin, 1986; also see Graves, 1967), depending on the particular social history of their family, extended family, First Nation, and First Nations. Their heritage and culture are not dead, nor were they lost, but exist to varying degrees across people and nations throughout Canada and throughout the Americas.

Many First Nations people, as well as people from other cultures, recognize that culture, whether First Nations or non-First Nations, is crucially important to human development. Gibbs, Huang and Associates (1989) argued that cultural heritage
(1) shapes belief systems; (2) influences manifestation of symptoms, defensive styles, and patterns of coping; (3) determines help-seeking patterns; (4) shapes use and response to treatment; (5) affects the level of trust and openness in the treatment relationship; (6) provides an identity and set of values, norms, and social behaviors; and (7) gives meaning to subjective experience, structure to interpersonal relationships, and form to behaviors and activities. In addition, Gibbs, Huang and Associates (1989) argued that specific cultural heritages use particular, even unique, criteria to determine the attainment of independence, competence, and interpersonal skills.

A therapist cannot assume anything about the specific heritage or levels of acculturation for any one client. For example, some clients might appear to reject any kind of First Nations worldview outright, having been completely converted to another one, such as Christianity. A psychologist can become lost in a sea of misunderstandings when treating a First Nations client, knowing that "culture is important" but not really understanding how it might work either at a collective or individual level. The psychologist might resort to stereotypically "traditional" cultural factors, which might not be accurate or appropriate, or the psychologist might attempt to apply a standard assessment or treatment model and risk the clashing of worldviews.

Therefore, psychologists are left in a difficult situation. Trained in models that might or might not suit individual First Nations people, based on research methods that have been criticized, and cultural information that might be naive, an individual psychologist is left alone to decide how to best 'help' each First Nations client that comes through the office door. However, if left with limited understanding of First Nations, perhaps it is the First Nations client who must 'help' the Western psychologists re-evaluate the psychologists' Western-based assumptions in order for the First Nations person to help himself or herself. The implications of this statement are staggering (Rope, Personal Communication, October 2, 1997). It is true that sometimes people want to help and think that they can help, and then find out that they cannot.
For example, Canadian Kathleen Tchang had a similar experience when going to Croatia to give humanitarian aid, to "help" victims of a war-torn country. When she went there, she found out that she, herself, needed to rely on the local people to survive. She went to Croatia thinking that its people needed her and found out that she needed them. Writing back to colleagues in Saskatoon, she commented, "... but the local people are really great and always ready to give me 'humanitarian aid' when I need it... I question 'Who's giving the humanitarian aid?'" (Tchang, 1994). She thought she would be giving Croatian people humanitarian aid, but it turned out that she was the one who needed the humanitarian aid. However, she had to go to a strange surrounding to see her own weakness or biases and other people's strengths. Initially, she thought they were incompetent in their own homeland and that they needed her to rescue them. Perhaps helping requires some humility and knowledge of when we can help and when we need help.
CHAPTER 2: PROBLEMS IN PSYCHOLOGICAL SERVICE DELIVERY AND RESEARCH

_The institutions that provide mental health services continue to fail the First Nations people._

- Louise Bernice Halfe, 1994

The question arises whether clinical psychologists have anything to offer to First Nations peoples at this time. Part of the challenge in answering such a question is in understanding how psychologists fit into the grand scheme of the problems and potential solutions facing First Nations peoples today. Psychologists might have a wealth of knowledge and skill that could help discern when professional involvement in a case may be necessary and to deal with problems that communities may not be prepared to address. In addition, psychologists have a particular type of knowledge and skill that can be misapplied if they do not understand the nature of the people and the community with which they are working.

Psychologists cannot ethically or reasonably impose their way of seeing people in the world without considering the background of the clients to whom these views are being applied. Understanding the background of a First Nations person means more than understanding that person's personal and family history and worldview (Lonner & Ibrahim, 1989). It also means understanding the present circumstances and history of the community from which a person comes and how people in that community relate to each other (Dana, 1986): It might mean attempting to understand the worldview of a band or
nation, but is this possible or realistic? Should we expect psychologists to become experts in the worldviews of every First Nations band or nation in the province? What’s more, should we expect psychologists to understand every worldview other than the psychologist’s own? Furthermore, do First Nations peoples really want Western Psychological services?

The risk of therapy models collapsing under the weight of cultural relativism is staggering. Psychologists cannot possibly expect themselves to put on a different ethnic hat each time a new client comes through the door. To say they can do so is to make false promises and to risk denying any validity for the models that psychologists currently use, when applied to a Western clientele. People who attempt to offer “culturally appropriate therapies” that can be generalized across cultures risk misrepresenting who they are and make themselves vulnerable to accusations of charlatanism.

It is probably better to be true to who and what you are than to try to be something else. Psychologists cannot pretend to offer assessment and treatment services that are suitable to First Nations if the services are not. The best that psychologists can do is to understand their personal and professional values, strengths, and weaknesses (St. Denis, 1989; Westermeyer, 1987) and to understand the limitations of their assessment and treatment services so that they can make an attempt to identify on a case-by-case basis where personal and professional views may clash with the worldviews of a client or community.

Where, then, do psychologists fit, in terms of offering services to First Nations peoples? If psychologists understand their limitations as Western-trained clinicians, they will recognize that the therapies they have been trained to offer and the models that they use to conceptualize people might not be appropriate for First Nations and other non-Western people. If a First Nations person seeks or is mandated to attend therapy from a non-First Nations psychologist, then it should be very clear what the assumptions are that inform the treatment.
Non-Western Service Delivery Systems

On the other hand, if First Nations peoples could benefit from a more culturally anchored treatment, then they should be enabled to do so. As Katz (1982, p. 716) argued: Healers from each system [clinical and traditional] recognize the different assumptions of each system and respect the work of the other; they understand the limitations and strengths of each system, especially their own; and they are knowledgeable about making referrals between systems and are willing to do so.

These guidelines are no more than good clinical practice.

However, traditional healing practices are often seen as secondary to primary health or mental health intervention. As a result, a spirit of competition may overtake a spirit of cooperation in providing alternative service delivery systems (see Katz, 1986).

Indeed, in the report on reorganization of the health care system from the Saskatchewan Commission on Directions in Health Care (1990, p. 20), the Commission identified the service of medicine men as "important, and it must be seen as complementing the scientific and clinical approaches used by the formal health care system in our society." At first, the idea of complementary services from medicine men may seem culturally sensitive. However, the service is not structurally recognized within the "formal" health care system.

The services of medicine men are seen as informal and unscientific, which may suggest that they are secondary to the primary provincial health services for First Nations peoples, rather than being practitioners of equal value within it. In comparison, when discussing the interdisciplinary approach of supportive living services, the Commission identified each type of therapy service as a unique division that is staffed and provide services on an outreach basis within a variety of institutions. This is not to suggest that medicine men would want to be established as a therapy unit that travels from center to center. However, the language used to describe these respective services clearly differs. The fact that medicine men are discussed on the last page of the document under "other
health care issues” clearly marginalizes them in the system and does not offer them a position of equal esteem or respect within it.

The difficulty with establishing a system of mutual referral and respect between clinical and traditional service providers is that one system might pass judgment on the validity and merit of the other system. Typically, the system that passes judgment is the one that is more powerful and authoritative. Therefore, if communities want to set up their own, alternative treatment services that take the backgrounds and specific needs of their members into account (much as the local health boards are designed to do), then they will have to be acknowledged as important and valid entities that are not secondary to the current primary service delivery systems.

For First Nations and non-First Nations professionals in the province to agree to engage in systems of mutual referral and respect, they must be able to recognize a number of concerns: (1) that there are both psychological and social problems of a complex nature existing within First Nations communities that psychologists might not be able to address adequately, if at all; (2) that First Nations service providers might have models to deal with these social problems that would be beneficial to some clients; and (3) that psychologists and First Nations service providers might come to develop some mutual respect for each others’ work, given that the two points mentioned earlier could be acknowledged first (Harris, 1985).

Building Practice Models that Work

If psychologists become aware of what they are able and not able to offer First Nations peoples in the province, then there appears a greater simplicity to the problem of how psychologists fit into the grand scheme of the problems and potential solutions facing First Nations peoples today. That is, psychologists become specialty service providers of Western assessment and treatment services to First Nations people who are referred to them. For people who are voluntarily referred from within the (currently) mainstream services, systems are already in place for referral and reporting back. However, for
people coming from reservations, referrals often come through the Department of Social Services or the courts.

In such cases, options should be available to have treatment provided at the most appropriate service provider or agency. If traditional or more culturally appropriate services are available within the person's community, then that person should have the option of accessing them. If the person is incarcerated or kept away from the community, then alternative services should be available to the person in the new community where the person resides. The argument, here, is that if a psychologist's services are not adequate or appropriate for a person, then alternate services should be available. The question becomes, who decides what is appropriate? Psychologists tend to make decisions about such issues based on past research, training, and clinical experience; however, over the past decade, mainstream psychological research and clinical practice has come under heavy criticism.

Criticisms of Mainstream Psychological Research and Practice

In terms of clinical practice, Duran and Duran (1995) as well as Dana (1993, 1986) argued that Western clinicians tend to see First Nations ways of responding to social experiences as abnormal or pathological (see also Matsumoto, 1994; Katz & Nunez-Molina, 1990). In other words, clinical psychologists' own paradigms of research and practice might limit their perspectives on how to conceptualize a problem and determine what its proper course of treatment should be, if the nature of the problem falls outside the realm of their usual treatment modalities and contexts, which can be problematic for a psychologist (Lonner, 1985). For example, a clinical psychologist in a government treatment facility might not be the best person to provide therapy, counselling, or guidance for problems that are seen, within the First Nations community, as ones arising out of social oppression and persecution.

La Fromboise and Plake (1983) argued that psychological research is
culturally myopic; that it focuses on weaknesses of people at the expense of attention to their strengths; that research findings are not concretely helpful to the research subjects informing the phenomenon under study; and that research results typically are not disseminated to the community. In addition, La Fromboise and Plake (1983) argued that researchers may interpret data in ways that are harmful to the community and that researcher motivations are career-oriented and self-serving rather than community-oriented and beneficial to the people informing the research.

Discussing the situation of First Nations peoples in New Zealand, Stokes (1985) described Maori people as "guinea pigs for academic research." Stokes argued that Maori people have not gained much from mainstream research, which typically is descriptive and offers no guidelines or advice for how to assist Maori people in maintaining their cultural identity in the face of rapid change in their communities caused by migration to the cities and loss of language and traditional social structures. Stokes maintained that cultural change is not bad; however, she stated that the real issue was "the rate and direction of change, and who is directing or imposing change" (1985, p. 5).

A Possible Approach to Collaboration

Given these criticisms, it is unlikely that typical academic research would address the concerns and issues of central importance to First Nations communities. Studies that do not address the direct concerns of a community might only make community-level workers impatient, given the pressing social needs that these workers face on a daily basis.

In addition, mainstream service delivery systems often require communities to demonstrate and justify their work through mainstream research paradigms. Although some might argue that communities should not have to justify their systems to anyone outside the community, the reality of funding situations is that "First Nations programs are grudgingly accepted and then heavily scrutinized from an entrenched ethnocentric perspective" (Halfe, 1994, p. 29).
The only type of research paradigm involving academic researchers that might possibly address community needs and work towards developing a community-based model is community-based, participatory research (St. Denis, 1989). This type of research is designed to enable changes in people's social reality to be made (St. Denis, 1989, p. 25). It emphasizes "resolution of social problems and the collaboration of all involved in the research" (St. Denis, 1989, p. 24). Unfortunately, this type of research is not always valued, and is judged to be "less valid than a study of an issue undertaken in some more high-minded detached academic environment" (Stokes, 1985, p. 5).

Psychologists trained in a community perspective (Community Psychology) might have an orientation that is meant to support or assist communities in getting their needs met in ways that are suitable to the communities. Concerned with the fit between environments and persons, community psychologists stress the creation of alternatives through identification and development of community strengths (Phares, 1992; Jason, 1991), rather than the perpetual focus on weakness and pathology that seems so ever-present in psychological studies of First Nations. Community psychologists fundamentally support actions that are directed toward building up the competencies of persons and environment, not focusing on the deficits (Phares, 1992). In this way, community psychologists promote diversity rather than singular (dominant) social norms or values (Phares, 1992). As La Fromboise and Plake (1983) pointed out, psychologists must work towards achieving findings that are helpful to a group in a practical sense.

Barriers to Collaboration

Unfortunately, most psychologists are trained in individually-oriented practices, with little understanding of community-based approaches or First Nations issues, which has an impact on how they come across to clients in the practice of the profession. Through my contact with clients while training as a student in Clinical Psychology, I have come to the opinion that some First Nations people may find it difficult and uncomfortable
to visit a non-First Nations office or a non-First Nations professional such as a social
worker or a psychologist.

Some First Nations people might feel that the non-First Nations professional is not
really understanding what they are saying, and they might know or believe that the person
is not looking at their difficulties from a holistic, or even a balanced, point of view. The
non-First Nations professional might attempt to diagnose or understand a problem from
many different Western perspectives (mental health, physical health, family systems,
social conditions; for example, see Marburg, 1983), but without first-hand knowledge of
First Nations perspectives or without first-hand knowledge of the day-to-day realities of
life for many First Nations peoples. I once was told by a First Nations client of mine that
I really knew little or nothing about the actual conditions and situations that face First
Nations peoples in their lives from day to day. When speaking to the First Nations client,
I had only my Western training and my personal heritage to inform me about how people
and families should live and cope with life’s challenges.

Generally speaking, psychologists tend to assess and treat the individual person.
Sometimes family members are included. However, these therapies and assessments are
not carried out from a First Nations perspective. The First Nations person might learn
new ways of living or new ways of seeing the self, but all of this new learning is done
from a Western ideological point of view. The person learns about the structure of
families and the roles of parents, but from a Western viewpoint. This is not to suggest
that there is no role for Western practitioners in the lives of contemporary First Nations
peoples. However, non-Western ways of seeing life and responding to its challenges are
sometimes devalued by Western practitioners rather than accepted as equally valid but
different ways of seeing the world.

Sometimes First Nations people work in Social Services or other mental health
agencies, but those agencies often limit the type of work they can do to Western ways of
treatment and assessment. These agencies do not usually understand or recognize the
value of First Nations assessment and treatment methods, or they see them as less important than the ways of Western professional practices. Practitioners of traditional non-Western therapies do not usually work with these agencies, or, if they do, their work may be limited by the agency with the main focus of therapy determined by the assessment of a psychologist in charge, not the Elder(s).

Many psychologists might feel that they have good intentions and want to help First Nations people, but they do not understand how their professional training has taught them a way of looking at people that is not balanced from a First Nations perspective, even when psychologists try to maintain that they use a bio-psycho-social model (for example, see Marburg, 1983). Psychologists must examine how their own knowledge and definitions about what is normal living can continue the socialization of First Nations peoples from a Western perspective rather than respecting how First Nations peoples would choose to socialize their children and foster personal and community balance.

Furthermore, many models in Western social science do not include or value the more spiritual aspects of people's lives. For example, during my graduate school training in Clinical Psychology, I was not taught to do assessments or treatment using a biopsychosocial-spiritual model. In addition, some (for example, Duran & Duran, 1995) have argued that psychologists often have little community-based experience with First Nations peoples. A survey of 128 rehabilitation counselors employed with the North Carolina Division of Vocational Rehabilitation confirmed their lack of experiences working with First Nations and their lack of knowledge of First Nations treatment methods (Braswell & Wong, 1994).

Sometimes, academics, including psychologists, perform western-based research, or even western-based participatory research, on First Nations people for short periods of time and then consider themselves to be experts in First Nations (or are considered by colleagues to be highly knowledgeable practitioners within First Nations culture) when, in fact, their knowledge remains quite superficial. Psychologists are then suspected of, or
perhaps guilty of, doing little more than perpetuating Western values or recolonizing First Nations peoples through Western research, treatments, and assessments that may be biased and discriminatory or that are based in superficiality.

In contrast to the Western models that non-First Nations professionals have to work with when treating a person of First Nations ancestry, other models might be able to provide better frameworks from which to understand that person. It is possible that a First Nations perspective may offer a more culturally appropriate perspective on how to live well for First Nations peoples. First Nations models tend to teach about how to have a balanced personality through mental, spiritual, physical, and emotional well-being within a certain cultural heritage. First Nations models also tend to emphasize the importance of building community harmony and having strong, interdependent relationships between family members and the community. They provide a framework for making life experiences and understandings meaningful. This is not to say that other heritages are lacking meaningful teachings; however, psychologists' theories tend to arise out of Western European and North American heritages that differ markedly from First Nations heritage.

For example, psychologists might like to discuss concepts of the "mental health" of the person as separate from other people and systems in a person's life. First Nations models appear to focus more on keeping all personal systems in balance and in harmony with greater social structures. There may be less emphasis on the person and more on the person's life within community. "Mental health" might not be segregated from social development in the way that it might be through individual treatment in psychotherapy. For example, I have been told that multiple Plains Indian methods and assessments are embedded in the philosophical foundation of the Medicine Wheel which teaches in numerous ways that when the physical self is out of balance, the emotional self will be unhealthy; and that when the spiritual self is not well, the intellectual mind will not be able
to function well, thereby having a direct impact on emotional and physical aspects of the whole person.

The various relationships of all these aspects exist in all situations, which creates the need for First Nations people to access the existing and appropriate First Nations methods for assessment in order to help individuals and families within the context of a First Nations worldview (Rope, October 2, 1997). To fragment and divide aspects of the person, which Western academia and professions tends to do, stands in direct opposition to a First Nations holistic approach to living.

A non-First Nations psychologist might try to understand a First Nations perspective on social and personal development, which tends to be more community-based, but it is genuinely difficult to shake that person-centered or nuclear-family based perspective. It is true that psychologists trained in Community Psychology tend to maintain that people should be understood in context (Shinn, 1990), not as individual particles floating disconnected in a vacuum. However, very few universities in Canada offer training in Psychology from a community perspective any longer at either the undergraduate or graduate levels, and very few students follow the Community Psychology path in their education. In fact, Community psychology is an area of study that tends to be marginalized by mainstream perspectives that emphasize individualism and individual treatment (Walsh-Bowers, Johnson, & Parkinson-Heyes, 1993) that is typically performed in an office in a city setting (Duran, 1984). In addition, Community Psychology itself, tends to look for universal features across communities, in much the same way that mainstream psychologists do; however, recent advances in Community Psychology certainly have demonstrated a more emic, cultural approach (Trickett, 1996).

Martens, Daily, and Hodgson (1988) tried to develop a mental health service model specifically for First Nations peoples. However, Western values of humanism and individualism tend to form the foundation of the model, rather than a community or
indigenous perspectives. The following is an excerpt from the Martens, Daily, and Hodgson (1988) model:

The foundation of our treatment model . . . is based on a humanistic philosophy; we make the following assumptions about people:

1. Human beings are basically good, and given the opportunity, they will strive towards that end.

2. Each individual is unique.

3. People have a personal responsibility for the choices they make and the consequences they entail.

4. People are capable of change and self-awareness which leads to the ability to choose and change behavior.

5. Human beings are basically pro-social; they want to feel good about themselves, and have a need to relate to others in order to develop a sense of self.

6. The normal human tendency towards growth and self-actualization sometimes needs a little assistance. . . .

Within this philosophical framework, our treatment approach first attends to the needs of the individual members of the . . . family. Then we gradually bring together these individuals, who are in the process of healing and personal growth, for dyadic sessions (sessions with the therapist and one other family member), family therapy, and family reconstruction (Martens, Daily, & Hodgson, 1988, pp. 99-100).

In this model, individuals are treated first and later brought together as a group in "family reconstruction" therapy. However, the fundamental focus of the therapy is on individuals and individuals in groups rather than on individuals in the context of a larger community heritage, history, and meaning. The values promoted are those of the therapist; that is,

This type of model treats problems at the level of the individual, but the problems of First Nations people are also on a collective level, rooted in cultural oppression, religious oppression, as well as the tearing apart of families and cherished ways of life. Therefore, the solution must involve both individual and community work, not just the treatment of individuals within one family. Dr. Duran (Personal Communication, July 3, 1996) criticized such models as defining a well functioning person as a person who is functionally productive and who contributes to the economic system of the culture — "who earns money to buy more stuff and keep it all working." In the words of Martens, Daily, and Hodgson (1988, p. 104), "These people are now living very healthy, productive, harmonious lives that they once thought would never occur" (italics added).

Contrast the Martens, Daily, and Hodgson (1988) model with one from the Sal’i’shan Institute (Mussell, Nicholls, & Adler, 1993):

from a traditional perspective, the focus of helping is to provide support through a system of mutual aid and helping networks that are reciprocal in nature. The natural helping relationship is viewed as an end in itself and is concerned more with the person than the problem. Moreover, family, group and clan emphasis is more important than individual issues or values.

Why is this view of the helping relationship from a traditional perspective? Because the view is consistent with values expressed in the heritage of a people who want to continue to update and foster those values in the present time and as applied to modern circumstances (see Appendix I for a glossary of terms such as "traditional").

Pressures to Fit In

However, in North America, First Nations peoples, as well as people from other non-Western heritages, largely are expected by non-First Nations (mainstream) systems and people to understand and be treated according to Western concepts of socialization and
mental health, rather than their own traditional and normative approaches to assessment and treatment. Such a shift in ways of seeing the self and the self in relationship with others and the world challenges the integrity of the values systems in a community. Traditions and ways of living that normally galvanize and maintain community become thought of as inferior to Western ways of understanding. Communities experiencing negative pressures to transform have been studied (Shkilnyk, 1985) and tend to have higher incidence of violent death and suicide, crime, illness, alcoholism, and child neglect.

The community becomes in crisis when such problems become so extreme that they displace customary norms of social behavior (i.e., traditional ways) or when they differ greatly from the norms of other communities of similar size and composition. Unfortunately, there are no First Nations communities in Saskatchewan or in the rest of Canada that have not been affected by some form of social breakdown with tragic results, suggesting that most First Nations communities are communities in crisis. Shkilnyk (1985) argued that the well-being of any collectivity depends upon vital processes that allow persons to grow, discover their identity, and learn their people's ways and skills of knowing. When I have listened to First Nations Elders speak, they have always insisted that these processes are important, just as they have always insisted that when these processes are violated

the young people of the community become extremely vulnerable to negative pressures from the outside and may become so demoralized that they also commit themselves to a kind of death. 'Where there is no vision, the people perish' (Shkilnyk, 1985, p. 231).

According to Dana (1986, p. 493), these processes have been completely violated in North America: "Native Americans have been treated with uncaring ambivalence as a conquered people with an implied demand for renunciation of tribal identities, values, and cultural history." However, examples do exist of First Nations communities that have restored successful, community-based healing programs (e.g., Alkali Lake), and it is these types of
communities that we look to as powerful models, not just in British Columbia, but also right here in Saskatchewan.

Many researchers and writers tend to write about the problems, weakness, or incompetencies within First Nations communities, but few seem to focus on the strengths. In fact, even in the 1997 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada focused exclusively on pathology and needs within First Nations communities rather than on the talents, strengths, and competence of the people, as it did when referring to Canadians in general.

Powerful words were spoken during a talking circle by a First Nations woman in July, 1996. She said that healing would happen only by doing those things that White people would not let First Nations peoples do when they first came to this land. She was talking about traditional practices and about how the strength of the people exists within traditional ways. This does not mean that First Nations will refuse all that Western medicine has to offer. First Nations peoples have always looked to expanding their knowledge base in the context of their own culture, as have people from other cultures.

Dr. Eduardo Duran is an Apache/Pueblo clinical psychologist living in New Mexico who has written about mental health practices with First Nations peoples. He also came to Saskatoon in the summer of 1996 and the spring of 1997 to deliver talks about differences between First Nations teachings and the ways of Western mental health workers. He maintained that it is very difficult to build up trust between a First Nations person and a Western mental health worker. He said that feelings of distrust between the two communities exist long before the First Nations person comes to a Western agency for treatment. He pointed out that, in 1978, the Canadian Psychiatric Association made a statement regarding First Nations mental health. According to Dr. Duran, this organization of Western mental health practitioners said that the human services are under the control of people who do not understand or care about the language, traditions, or
cultures of our people. He said that Western mental health workers pay little attention to how First Nations peoples see mind, body, spirit, and emotions all working together.

Dr. Duran also pointed out that the Canadian Psychiatric Association recommended to the Government of Canada in 1978 that control of health-related services be transferred to people of native ancestry and that training of First Nations people in health-related areas be sped up. However, there is some concern that training of First Nations people in Western science may be similar to sending them away to a residential school if universities deny or, worse, appropriate the values that inform the heritage of First Nations. The First Nations student then becomes caught between two different cultural perspectives. For example, the student is required to understand and collaborate with a Western service delivery system while maintaining respect for First Nations ethics that may be in conflict with this system, such as principles of respect for personal autonomy and non-interference. The tension between these perspectives will be greatest if the student does not understand the extent to which cultural disruption has had an impact on both the student's life and the lives of potential clients.

Berg-Cross and Zoppetti (1991) argued that psychologists need to develop therapeutic tools that would enable them to treat culturally diverse clients, because traditional mental health services tend to be unresponsive to or ineffective for clients from diverse cultures. Psychologists might try to gain an understanding of the core features of a particular group; however, an individual person from that group might not match the exact picture that the professional formed about the group from books or workshops in cultural sensitivity. Pressures of oppression and acculturation, as well as other factors affecting interpersonal communication can alter the individual person's fit with tradition. In addition, books and workshops might transmit only a superficial understanding of how a culture really operates. Application of the cultural features a psychologist learns about in books and workshops to an individual client can lead to superficial stereotyping and further violations of the person, despite the therapist's "good intentions." In attempting to
learn about a culture, psychologist might not learn about how oppression and acculturation can alter a client’s interpersonal interactions in ways that would be inconsistent with that person’s traditional social norms. An outsider to a culture really would not be able to judge what is consistent with a culture and what has changed in response to acculturative pressures and genocidal acts.

Many professionals learn about cultural features in very general terms and have little knowledge of local customs or differences between local First Nations when working with First Nations people. Applying general stereotypes to individual people, failing to understand the impact of oppression, and forgetting that not all First Nations people share the same cultural traditions lead to oversimplification or misunderstandings that have an impact on the First Nations person that the professional might not anticipate or comprehend.
CHAPTER 3: PROBLEMS WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSESSMENT

*Science cannot be spoken in a singular universal voice.*

- Catherine Kohler Riessman, 1993

Conceptualizing the Problems of First Nations Peoples

In order to understand the difficulties or experiences a person is having, psychologists will conduct an assessment with a person. While psychological assessment is common enough, it is a practice that relies on the clinical judgment and inferences of the psychologist performing the assessment (Tallent, 1992). The results of an assessment depend "heavily on the skill and knowledge of the interpreting clinician," making the process of psychological assessment as much of an art as a science (Tallent, 1992, p. 14). Assessment, itself, can be a very useful procedure in the hands of a well-trained clinician when appropriately applied. Nevertheless, if the psychologist knows little about First Nations culture and experiences, then the psychologist runs the risk of, perhaps unwittingly, misinterpreting assessment data in a biased way. Bias, in this context, refers to "test-taking disadvantages among people whose origin is in a culture different from that in which the test was developed" (Tallent, 1992, p. 88). Bias can lead to First Nations persons being misclassified or their potential underestimated, which may propagate various social inequities, such as lost educational or employment opportunities (Tallent, 1992). In addition, assessment is often about finding weaknesses rather than strengths and may lead to a conceptualization of a person as chronically helpless or disabled.
Many First Nations peoples in Saskatchewan have had the experience of being called into a clinic to see a social worker or psychologist for an assessment. The psychologist may give the person many tests and interviews to try and understand the nature of the difficulties the person is experiencing. However, it may be difficult for a professional conducting an assessment with a First Nations person if that professional has only generalized knowledge about the experiences of First Nations peoples or about the historical events that shaped the way First Nations peoples live in Saskatchewan. In the words of Louise Halfe (1994, p. 29)

   Mental health workers, like First Nations people, are suffering under the burden of history, the erosion of personhood and culture as well established by the residential schools and the bureaucracy of Indian Affairs. Mental Health services must become familiar with not only these dynamics but also the dynamics of community healing if they are to service and empower the First Nations effectively.

   No psychologist can assess and fairly conceptualize the nature of problems in the First Nations community without understanding the relationship of those problems to (1) the presence of the individual psychologist in this country as a participant in the mainstream culture; and (2) the very existence of a mainstream, dominant mental health care service delivery system in the province and the impact of that system on First Nations lives (see Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, & Loya, 1997). Whyte (1986, p. 15) wrote, "If schools are to do justice to Indian and Métis students they cannot continue to represent a culture that ignores and oppresses and denigrates the indigenous culture." The same is likely true for psychological service delivery in Saskatchewan.

   Many First Nations people, themselves, have not had the opportunity to learn about their culture and language. They have become distanced or torn away from the
Many First Nations people, themselves, have not had the opportunity to learn about their culture and language. They have become distanced or torn away from the one framework that would help them to achieve balance in their lives as First Nations peoples within larger Canadian society. These people are vulnerable because they have experienced the pains and the losses of cultural and religious oppression, but are then being assessed by a person who does not understand the meaning and impact of those experiences on the First Nations person and who cannot offer the First Nations person anything other than dominant culture tools for personal change and empowerment. In the words of Dana (1995),

The use of modern Western psychology continues to be the main method of trying to understand the problems within Native American country. The frustrating issue in all of these methods is that these researchers are using tools from the very cultural context that has been oppressing Native Americans.

Dana (1986) pointed out that minority persons may respond differently in contacts with professional people than do white, middle-class clients. Dana suggested that, in order to develop the special relationship necessary to perform psychological assessments, psychologists and their clients must share cultural views on features of the social environment, including rules, norms, roles, expectations, and values (also see Clark & Kelley, 1992). In other words, the psychologist and the client must do their work in a context of "common thoughts and beliefs" in order to succeed (Dana, 1986, p. 490). However, a non-First Nations psychologist might share very little with their First Nations clients.

Without "common thoughts and beliefs" an assessment could, in fact, be invalid. The history of cross-cultural contact between the First Nation's person's band and White people will shape the First Nations client's expectations about the assessment interaction and outcome and may influence or bias the assessment relationship (Dana, 1986). Dana
argued that, if a First Nations client does not trust the assessor or perceives the assessor to be insincere, then the clinical interaction between the client and the assessor will be contaminated. Dana described this problem as "a shadow over the assessment process" (1986, p. 491).

An argument could be made that the psychologist could spend some time with the First Nations client to explain the nature of the assessment process and try to build rapport with the client to ease any potential fears and minimize their impact on the assessment process (Dana, 1986). Some non-First Nations psychologists might argue that seeking informed consent from the client about the assessment process should be adequate for ensuring that the assessment is fair and that the First Nations client has the latitude to not participate in the process. However, the client may not be able to give informed consent to the assessment process if the client does not understand the nature of the procedures and instruments being used in the assessment or whether those instruments are relevant to a person of First Nations ancestry (Dana, 1986). The client, therefore, is in the position of trusting that the psychologist fully understands whether an assessment instrument may be appropriately used with a First Nations client. In addition, the First Nations client might not fully understanding the long-term impact of assessment results. Finally, the First Nations client might not really have the option of not participating in the assessment if it has been mandated by the courts. To not participate in a court-ordered assessment might suggest to a provincial or federal judge that there is a lack of cooperation on the client/prisoner’s part; therefore, failure to participate might seem worse than participating in an unknown process, making some assessment processes very coercive.

Assessment Instruments

In the process of doing a psychological assessment, psychologists often use tests or other assessment instruments to gather information about the person's way of being in
the world. Psychological assessment instruments are powerful tools for understanding people; however, many writers in the psychological literature caution about the use of tests cross-culturally, as most testing instruments have not been developed for or with First Nations peoples. The major complaint against psychological tests is that, being based on dominant culture values, they may suggest that minority experiences are pathological or unhealthy — abnormal (Duran & Duran, 1995). For example, people indigenous to Alaska, when assessed with the MMPI, may have appeared as having paranoid personality disorders. In the word of Duran and Duran (1995, p. 97),

The fact that the Alaskan native population was and is actually being oppressed and persecuted apparently never crossed the mind of the researcher when the diagnosis of paranoid personality was applied. In our view, the fact that Native American people sometimes score as paranoid may reflect good reality testing rather than pathological disorders.

Other researchers have concluded that Aboriginal people in North America are seriously disturbed when compared with White samples (Duran & Duran, 1995). Alternatively, some pathological personality features could be reinterpreted as survival mechanisms "in the face of having to live in a society in which Native Americans are systematically denied the opportunity to live a life that is meaningful within their cultural context" (Duran & Duran 1995, p. 97).

However, some psychologists argue that assessment instruments are appropriate for First Nations peoples because (1) First Nations peoples do not score differently from other people when taking those tests or (2) First Nations peoples score differently and psychologists can "take this difference into account" when writing an assessment report based on the test data. However, test developers rarely give instructions on specifically how to "take this difference into account," turning an empirically developed test into a framework for subjective interpretation and dangerous bias.
Tests that have been developed with First Nations peoples included in the test development sample typically put all First Nations peoples into the classification "Native American" or some such grouping, much in the same way that people often and mistakenly classify First Nations as a homogenous group (Koverola, 1992). This classification, "Native American," is an, often reified, statistical construct that has no relevance to First Nations as a people. It is a concept that refers generally to people who are descendants of the many nations who were living in North American prior to the arrival of White settlers. Duran and Duran argued (1995, p. 107) that

To focus on "Indians" without qualifications is to reinscribe an arbitrary category and a European invention. In 1492, more cultural and linguistic diversity existed on this continent than in Europe. The difference between tribes still accounts for 50 percent of American cultural diversity.

Including First Nations peoples in a test development sample under a grouping of "American Indian" means lumping all of that cultural diversity into one, apparently homogeneous, classification (Indian). The cultural diversity is lost in a process of statistical averaging that is meaningless to the real diversity of the First Nations as they existed then or as they continue to exist today, making the validity of the "Indian" construct extremely questionable.

If a test developer says that an assessment instrument is valid for North American Indians, you might ask the test developer for what Nations it is valid or whether all Nations were considered to be one and the same. The basis for the statistical classification of "Native American" becomes one of race, not culture or nation, where all members of a race are assumed to share the same, universal psychological and cultural characteristics. Their performance on the test is averaged, and that numerical average is assumed to reflect the typical performance of people from any Indian group in North America regardless of the context of their current or past existence.
Psychological tests acontextualize people. In other words, the tests take people out of their real-life contexts and group them based on "universal constructs" that are assumed to apply to all people from all walks of life. These "universal constructs" are defined by persons from the dominant culture; therefore, non-Western ways of conceptualizing the psyche, the personality, or the social world are neglected and ignored as they historically have been for First Nations peoples (Lonner, 1985). For this reason, Duran and Duran described social scientists' research as "hegemonic . . . colonial discourse . . . hegemonic because they partake in ideological/cultural domination by the assertion of universality and neutrality and by the disavowal [of] all other cultural forms or interpretations" (1995, p. 110; see also Duran, Duran, & Yellowhead-Braveheart, Unpublished Manuscripts, a and b).

Ironically, although life circumstances such as poverty, discrimination, and a degeneration of Native American culture are routinely described as root causes of First Nations social and psychological difficulties, the focus of psychological research typically is on individual's maladaptive adjustments to life as reflected in psychological assessment results (Duran & Duran, 1995). Focusing exclusively on problems at an individual, intrapsychic level "surreptitiously redefines the problem as an individual one with responsibility for prevention or cure placed at the individual level" rather than placing First Nations problems in the context of a greater social history (Duran & Duran, 1995, p. 100). Indigenous persons in other parts of the world who have experienced a history of ethnocide and genocide have experienced difficulties similar to those of First Nations peoples in Canada (Duran & Duran, 1995).

Problems in Assessment: The Example of Assessing Attachment and Bonding

When a First Nations child comes into the world, that child has a place in its family, extended family, and First Nations community. The child depends on the people around it to help it grow and become strong. In particular, the child will look to its
parents for the things that it needs — comfort, protection, and food. The parents of the child often raise that child according to the ways that they were taught to raise children.

As a child grows, it develops feelings for its parents. It develops an emotional tie to the parents. The child may be said to become attached to the parents through this emotional tie. Becoming attached to the parents means developing a relationship with the parents, having emotional ties or connections to the parent. It also means wanting to be with the parents and knowing that the parents care for the child.

However, people become attached in many different ways. People may have physical, emotional, spiritual, national, mental, racial, historical, or other types of ties. For example, people may be said to have an emotional tie if they share certain feelings (love/hate) for each other. People may have a spiritual tie if they share a common heritage. People may be attached because they belong to a certain nation and share common customs and traditions. People may be attached because they share common ideas (mental attachment). People might belong to the same race, causing them to be attached through a common feeling of brotherhood/sisterhood. People might also share a common history. People may be physically attached, in the sense that they share common physical living arrangements. All of these types of attachments, and others, may exists amongst people, not just emotional attachments.

The child may develop attachments of varying kinds to other people. Older brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, grandfather, grandmother, and others may be very important people to a child. Children may even develop attachments to school teachers. Each person in the child's life will have something different to give to that child. Each person will do different types of things with that child, and spend time with that child in a special or unique way. Through spending time together, the child may come to know many people in many different ways. Some of these attachments will last a lifetime, while others may be shorter. Some may start out well but change over time.
Some attachments to people who have died will continue, and attachments to future
generations that have not been born yet will exist. Attachment, from a First Nations
perspective, is not bound by time, place, or physical existence.

These attachments to people are a natural part of how First Nations peoples live,
and First Nations children may grow up with many different attachments to family,
extended family, and community people both living, deceased, and yet to be born. Each
attachment that the child develops within the family, extended family, and community
forms a link between the child and that child's heritage. The child has an individual
place amongst all these people and is connected or attached to them all.

The raising of a child may involve many people. Each person connected to a
child may have a special role in teaching that child how to live. The child learns to
understand these relationships and through them develops a knowledge of the culture
and their place within it. There may be special responsibilities that go along with being
attached to a child. Aunties and uncles as well as other people share in teaching that
child how to live according to First Nations law, natural law, and creator's law.

If something happens to one of these attachments in the child's life, other
attachments still continue to exist. For example, if the child can no longer live with
parents, there may be aunties, uncles, or other relations within the community to help
raise that child. The parental connection is not the only attachment in the child's life that
is important. To say that the parental attachment is primary or exclusive is to cut the
child off from the rest of that child's relations and heritage. The parental relationship
certainly is of greatest significance, but it exists along with a number of other
relationships that also may be significant to a child.

If a child lives with another person besides the parents, the child is helped to
understand the role of that person in the child's life. For example, if a child goes to live
with an auntie, the child knows that person as an auntie. The child might or might not
call that auntie mother. The type of connection between people is always honored and maintained.

How Psychologists use the Word "Attachment"

Amongst people who work in psychology, social work, and other professions, the word "attachment" is used as a technical term that has a very specific and narrow definition. The word "attachment," in these professions, is used to describe the psychological connection that exists between a child and another person, whereby the child sees that person, typically an adult, as a secure base from which to operate or experience the world (McAuley, 1996; Bowlby, 1988). Psychological connection usually refers to emotional and mental ways that a child is attached to a person.

Psychologists and other mental health professionals understand that a child may develop a unique relationship with other people. However, they try to demonstrate scientifically the existence of this relationship. Psychologists are usually the people who study attachment scientifically. They usually only study attachment as it exists between a child and another adult (McAuley, 1996). Also, they usually only study attachment between a child and a mother figure, although lately fathers have also been included (McAuley, 1996).

The way that psychologists have tried to demonstrate attachment between a child and an adult is by studying what a child does when separated for a brief time from that adult. The psychologist then studies the child's behavior at separation from the adult and at reunion with the adult. In most cases, the adult's behavior is also observed.

The behaviors that the psychologist observes are called "attachment behaviors" and are classified into four types or categories of attachment (McAuley, 1996). According to McAuley (1996), psychologists who study attachment usually assume that the way a child acts in this situation reflects the quality of the attachment relationship between the child and an adult. Some psychologists believe that lower-quality
attachments in a child may be related to emotional, social, and behavioral problems as the child grows up.

Certainly all children develop attachments to the people who look after them, and these attachments may be of varying qualities: These ideas are not "owned" by psychologists. To say that attachment is "universal" is to say something that is obvious: All children become attached to other people.

What is important to realize about the psychological view of "attachment" is that it is based on a narrow definition of what attachment is and it is assessed using a very specific scientific procedure. That scientific procedure and the conclusions made from it are based on an analysis of behavior within a certain understanding or interpretation of what those behaviors mean. Many problems arise when psychologists try to use their procedure for assessing attachment to describe the quality of attachment relationships between people from outside of White, middle-class society. The following are some of the problems that exist with attachment assessments (Katz, 1993):

1. Behaviors may have different meanings in different cultures – consider, for example, the different meanings that laughter, eye contact, proximity-seeking, touching, personal greetings may have from one culture to the next. Therefore, assessments that focus on "attachment behaviors" might be intrinsically biased towards Western ways of showing emotion (McAuley, 1996).

2. While psychologists agree that attachments can be formed with many people across a person's lifetime, they place primary, almost singular emphasis on the child's relationship with the mother or mother-figure in the child's life – other relationships in the child's life are not considered to be as important to the child's emotional well-being.

3. In assessment of attachment quality, psychologists tend to see the family as a nuclear unit — parents and children — not as an extended family, tribe, or clan-
based system. Psychologists who study attachments usually do not include attachments to people outside of the immediate, nuclear family to be central to a child's development, which might dramatically clash with a non-Western view of family.

4. The child-mother attachment relationship is given a special name and may be the only focus of an attachment assessment. The relationship between the mother and the child is called a "bond" and the process of developing this relationship is called "bonding." Psychologists used to think that bonding started in the few minutes after a child was born (McAuley, 1996). Psychologists also used to think that if a mother and child were not together immediately after the birth then bonding would not occur (McAuley, 1996). Psychologists now hold that this is not true and that bonding is a process that takes place over time and can also change over time (Bowlby, 1988). Psychologists do not usually use the term bonding to refer to other relationships in a child's life outside of the mother-child relationship, although fathers may be included at times (McAuley, 1996; Bowlby, 1988).

In addition to some of the problems in attachment assessment, the terms "attachment" and "bonding" are often misused (McAuley, 1996). For example, sometimes attachment and bonding is referred to as if it is a once-in-a-lifetime event (McAuley, 1996). This is not true, as attachments and even mother-child bonds can change or even break down over the lifetime. Other pressures and events that happen in life can dramatically change relationships between people.

Transracial adoptions and foster care arrangements are two areas where the issues of attachment and bonding assessment often arise, particularly in custody disputes. While placements in transracial adoptions and foster homes might appear to be smooth during the early years, once a child enters adolescence, identity issues may
develop which may affect the attachment between a child and the adoptive or foster parents (Villanueva, Duran, & Roll, Unpublished Manuscript). For example, other people may identify the child with the race to which the child belongs. First Nations youth, as well as other children of minority races in North America, have been known to experience instances of racial prejudice (Martinez, 1992). The children's adoptive or foster parents may not be prepared to handle these types of racial incidents if they do not know what it is like to actually experience racial discrimination. Therefore, the child is left to cope with the problem alone. In addition, if the people discriminating against the child are of the same racial background as the child's adoptive or foster parents, then the child might feel resentment towards the adoptive or foster parents.

Furthermore, if the child was not raised to understand and feel pride in his or her heritage, then the child may be left to cope with feelings of inferiority rather than self-confidence and self-acceptance to keep strong in the face of racism. These types of events and issues may cause a deterioration of the attachment that the child feels for the adoptive or foster parent in adolescence. This deterioration may influence a child to run-away or seek out people from the child's own heritage or race rather than stay with the adoptive/foster family.

Finally, the concept of attachment as used by psychologists is rooted in Freudian and psychodynamic ideas and theories (Bowlby, 1988). These theories may or may not contain assumptions that are contrary to assumptions held by people of other nations and heritages. Therefore, when psychologists attempt to do an assessment of attachment and/or bonding, as they might be asked to do for a custody assessment, they might be applying understandings of family relationships that do not fit with the cultural heritage of the client. In addition, the very fact that the terms themselves are frequently misused suggests that assessments of attachment and bonding should be carefully scrutinized, as decisions based on these assessments can have a far-reaching impact on a person's life.
CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

It is time for research psychologists who believe in the value of human diversity to act in our professional lives as if what we do matters.

- Julian Rappaport, 1994

Research Design

This project was designed as participatory research situated within the broader area of Cultural Psychology and having a process-orientation. Presentation of the project methodology, as well as discussion of the research design and assumptions will occur.

Cultural Psychology and Heuristic Research

When I first started working with First Nations people on their assessment research project, I knew they wanted me to learn, but what I did not initially expect was that much of the primary learning I had to do was about myself. I had to learn how others would see me as a member of a mainstream academic and clinical discipline and as a member of the dominant sector in Canadian society. In fact, the First Nations people with whom I was working were inviting me to participate with them in a research project, and I was just as much a participant in their research as they were in mine. Initially, we had to learn about each other, but more than that, I had to be willing to take a step over to their side, work with them in their day-to-day reality to appreciate where I was doing things that went against how they saw things. This was Cultural Psychology in the real world, not from a book. The First Nations people with whom I was working were teaching me that I had to be able to see the world from their perspective, to look back on my own world from their side.
I have to admit that this was a scary prospect because it meant letting go of the wire without having any net underneath. I quickly learned that I would often unknowingly rely on mainstream psychological assumptions and theories as ways of explaining First Nations knowledge and ideas that I did not immediately understand. I also looked for validation of this type of research process in the mainstream psychological literature to see if any other psychologists were seeing that a step over to the other side could mean a clearer view of where I had been standing.

I found some readings in a new area of Psychology called Cultural Psychology (Shweder, 1993, 1990; Much, 1995). Researchers in this new area are most noted for their common interest in overcoming biases of parochialism and ethnocentrism in social science (Much, 1995). It has been touted as a "new agenda" for social science (Much, 1995). According to Stigler, Shweder, and Herdt (1990),

The basic idea of a cultural psychology implies that an 'intrinsic psychic unity' of humankind should not be presupposed or assumed. It suggests that the processes decisive for psychological functioning (including those processes promoting within-group or within-family variation and the replication of diversity) may be local to the systems of representation and social organization in which they are embedded and upon which they depend (p. viii).

Research in the area of Cultural Psychology should be culturally embedded, culturally "situated," as opposed to being culturally comparative. It will be emic, not etic. It will be particular, not universal. It will be transcultural, not cross-cultural (Much, 1995).

Thinking back on my experience with First Nations, I wonder whether the researchers who wrote about Cultural Psychology developed these ideas on their own or whether they had some experience with an indigenous, non-Western people that also led them to see how a change in perspective can make your view very different.

Research in the area of Cultural Psychology should respect the indigenous knowledge and theories of each culture, understanding that part of the value of dialogue with indigenous theories of other cultures is the power they have to reveal
the biases, and often the weaknesses, of one's own theoretical assumptions. . . .

One reason for studying the indigenous theories of other cultures is to understand
our own indigenous theories better and to put them in perspective within a
transcultural psychology (Much, 1995, p. 113).

Therefore, researchers in Cultural Psychology should examine their own biases and
weaknesses, placing the social scientist on an equal footing with those whom they made
subjects of their studies. Cultural Psychology researchers must recognize First Nations
peoples culture and heritage, and in so doing become able to see their own. When
performing a psychological assessment with a First Nations client, we must also be able to
see and understand the culture of academic Psychology to understand differences between
non-First Nations psychologists and First Nations persons. Psychologist should also be
aware of their own personal identity and how it relates to the culture of academic
Psychology.

To understand self in the context of this particular project would mean engaging in
some necessary cultural self-exploration, that is, some critical self-examination
(Moustakas, 1990; Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, & Loya, 1997), recognizing that the person
of the assessor might have as much impact on an assessment or research process as could
professional training and clinical instruments. Colin and Sandra were encouraging me to
examine my own assumptions, knowing that I would not understand their worldview if I
did not also understand my own. They set me on a path for self-exploration, which to
them was a natural, age-old, and necessary process. However, within psychological
research it is not such a natural and necessary process. In fact, introspection was
exorcised from psychological research long ago. However, there remains some precedent
in the current psychological literature for engaging a self-exploratory research process.
Some researchers in Psychology have recommended and supported models or processes
for performing self-exploration, including Sodowsky, Kuo-Jackson, and Loya (1997) and
Moustakas (1990). The following words of Moustakas (1990, pp. 10-14) describe what
a heuristic process is like:
The heuristic process is a way of being informed, a way of knowing. . . . From
the beginning and throughout an investigation, heuristic research involves self-
search, self-dialogue, and self-discovery; the research question and the
methodology flow out of inner awareness, meaning, and inspiration. . . .
Emphasis on the investigator's internal frame of reference, self-searching,
intuition, and indwelling lies at the heart of heuristic inquiry. . . . Whatever the
effect, the heuristic process requires a return to the self, a recognition of self-
awareness, and a valuing of one's own experience. The heuristic process
challenges me to rely on my own resources, and to gather within myself the full
score of my observations, thoughts, feelings, senses, and institutions; to accept as
authentic and valid whatever will open new channels for clarifying a topic,
question, problem, or puzzlement. I begin the heuristic journey with something
that has called to me from within my life experience, something to which I have
associations and fleeting awarenesses but whose nature is largely unknown. . . .
the mystery summons me and lures me 'to let go of the known and swim in an
unknown current. . . .' In heuristic research the investigator must have had a
direct, personal encounter with the phenomenon being investigated. There must
have been actual autobiographical connections. . . . in a vital, intense, and full
way. . . . The heuristic research process is not one that can be hurried or timed by
the clock or calendar. It demands the total presence, honesty, maturity, and
integrity of a research who not only strongly desires to know and understand but is
willing to commit endless hours of sustained immersion and focused concentration
on one central question, to risk the opening of wounds and passionate concerns,
and to undergo the personal transformation that exists as a possibility in every
heuristic journey.

Certainly, a large component of this research process was to examine my own interactions
and assumptions while working with and learning about First Nations people. I could say
that I was engaging Moustakas's heuristic process, but the truth is that I was primarily
engaging a First Nations process for learning and doing research. I merely point out that an interesting and somewhat similar research process has been commented on by Moustakas based on his own experiences (1994).

Participatory Research

I had some familiarity with the psychological and other literature in the area of participatory research prior to working with any First Nations people. What I came to realize once we started working together is that all First Nations research is participatory. I did not need to "demonstrate to the community" the value of participatory research or of addressing pressing social concerns because that was, as far as I could tell, how research in the First Nations community frequently was done anyway. The First Nations community seems to be inherently democratic this way. However, in Psychology, research is not typically done in participatory fashion, but there is some history of participatory research in the field of Psychology as well.

From a Western psychological perspective, when working with non-Western people, researchers must pay particular and especial attention to community strengths and use research methods that support complex understanding of communities as they are actually lived (La Fromboise & Plake, 1983). Participating in a community-based research team that directs all aspects of the research process minimizes the chance that the psychologist, acting individually, will misinterpret data that is collected during the course of research or use data in a "culturally myopic" way that is damaging to the participants involved in the research endeavor, serving the career motivations of researchers instead of benefiting First Nations communities (La Fromboise & Plake, 1983, p. 45).

As St. Denis (1989) pointed out, to accomplish this type of collaboration, the psychologist and the community must work together to build trust in each other, in an effort to heal the damaged relationship that currently exists between First Nations people and mainstream helping systems, a damage that has its roots in the original settlement of Canada as a country. When working with First Nations people, the issue that is most
important, the issue that becomes a central metaphor for building research relationships is trust (Gibbs, Huang, & Associates, 1989). Without trust, nobody has anything.

Therefore, the most appropriate framework for this project is to take a community-based approach such as participatory research so that issues of primary importance to the community are addressed, which is best accomplished by allowing the team of community-based researchers to set the research questions and method, as well as the process and interpretation of the project. It also means understanding and accepting how life is lived in the community rather than analyzing and critiquing the integrity of the people as a group. Participatory research, also called participatory action research, is noted for its involvement of community members in the research process, its localist and grass-roots orientation, and its respect for knowledge that is experience-based, not just academically based (Chesler, 1991).

This research project was definitely participatory, as the research team set the agenda for the research, including the topic of study and the process for studying it. However, because of the nature of the process, which was self-reflexive, the primary responsibility for the interpretation of the information would remain with me. I would collaborate consistently with Colin on how to interpret information throughout the observational and interview process, refining the process as we went along. However, the final writing of the dissertation would be my responsibility — although even then I would consult with Colin — and the interpretation of my own cultural information and indwelling would be my own.

The validity for this type of process was discussed by Moustakas, who stated: Since heuristic inquiry utilizes qualitative methodology in arriving at themes and essences of experience, validity in heuristics is not a quantitative measurement that can be determined by correlations or statistics. The question of validity is one of meaning: Does the ultimate depiction of the experience derived from one’s own rigorous, exhaustive self-searching and from the explications of others present comprehensively, vividly, and accurately the meanings and essences of the
experience? This judgment is made by the primary researcher, who is the only person in the investigation who has undergone the heuristic phases of incubation, illumination, explication, and creative synthesis not only with himself or herself, but with each and every co-researcher. The primary investigator has collected and analyzed all of the material — reflecting, sifting, exploring, judging its relevance or meaning, and ultimately elucidating the themes and essences that comprehensively, distinctively, and accurately depict the experiences. . . . The heuristic researcher returns again and again to the data to check the depictions of the experience to determine whether the qualities or constituents that have been derived from the data embrace the necessary and sufficient meanings. . . . In such a process . . . “certain visions of the truth, having made their appearance, continue to gain strength both by further reflection and additional evidence. These are the claims which may be accepted as final by the investigator and for which he may assume responsibility by communicating them in print” . . . What is presented as truth and what is removed as implausible or idiosyncratic ultimately can be accredited only on the grounds of personal knowledge and judgment (pp. 32-33).

The validity of the interpretation of that process really lay with what Moustakas termed the ‘primary investigator.’ I was not the primary investigator in this project, but I am the primary interpreter of the data for this dissertation. I seek assistance with interpretation for the information from the rest of the research team, namely Sandra and Colin, who ultimately will be able to comment on the honesty and integrity of my commentary on the interview data because they are better interpreters of First Nations material than I. However for my own cultural information, I hold sole responsibility for the interpretation of the data, unless it came from my own family, in which case I brought it back to representatives in the family for validation before finalizing it.

Process-oriented Research

This research project is a small part of a larger project that the FSIN-HSDC is performing on assessment by and for First Nations peoples. Therefore, it is part of a
larger process of research and will derive some of its data from that larger project. The larger project is process-oriented, meaning that the researchers in charge of the FSIN-HSDC project are aware of the process of the project from day-to-day, and they discuss and alter the process as necessary. Their research plan is process-oriented from a First Nations perspective. Again, however, most research within the field of Psychology is not process oriented. However, there is some history of process-oriented research in the field of Psychology as well.

Wicker (1989) wrote that any research endeavor has three primary aspects: conceptual, methodological, and substantive (CMS). He argued that in research planning, conceptual concerns tend to take precedence, followed by methodological and then substantive concerns; that is, researchers tend to focus on identifying and defining the concepts they are attempting to study typically by reference to the literature and past documented data on these concepts. Once the key concepts are identified, researchers focus on how to operationalize and measure them according to a defensible methodology that is sound and ethical. Finally, researchers turn their attention to substantive concerns such as the context and behavior setting in which the research will take place, ensuring that the setting will adequately support the research investigation and finding ways for the setting to accommodate the researchers and their tools or objectives. Substantive concerns involve the temporal, spatial, and social contexts of the research and are most likely considered once the conceptual and methodological aspects are worked through, although occasionally methodology might be altered partially to suit a setting.

With this CMS method, the process of planning the research is quite separate from doing the research itself. In order to achieve scientific rigor and objectivity, the research plan is worked out ahead of time, and the substantive aspect of the setting are not meant to alter the conceptual integrity or focus of the research project. In other words, there is minimal interplay between substantive concerns and conceptual/methodological planning. The methodology is designed as a finely honed blade cutting through the temporal, spatial, and social contexts to arrive at the conceptual truth behind all of it. In this way, the
researcher can arrive at a barren truth that is objective and neutral despite the contextual elements attempting to cling to it. However, Wicker (1989) argued, as have many others, that such claims of neutrality and objectivity are both misleading and false, being cloaked in the guise of logical positivism which has tended to claim much more than it has actually been successful in delivering.

The process of developing the research itself affects the outcome of that research. Neither research nor researchers can be unbiased or neutral. However, researchers can work at identifying biases and understanding how they are affecting the process and outcome of the research. Researchers must stop being product or outcome driven and become process-oriented in their approach to their work. That is, they must begin to understand how the choices that they make at each stage of their research might affect their thinking about the project and the eventual path that they take along the journey of their investigations.

In a First Nations Unity Ride from Central Saskatchewan to South-Central South Dakota in 1996, a young woman asked the spiritual advisor to the ride "When will we get there?" The reply was "The journey or the trail to our destination will be more important than arriving there (Rope, Personal Communication, October 2, 1997).

Different paths mean different outcomes, and as much may be learned along the way as at the final destination point. Therefore, the research team will examine each step in the journey to determine whether the process is fine or whether something needs to change in order to obtain the best possible learning throughout the process.

The Process Behind the Project

Initial Conceptualization of the Research Question

I knew that any research involving First Nations peoples would have to be community-based and that the process and direction of the research would be determined by what members of the community wanted and by what they felt to be important and necessary. In the spring of 1993, I discussed these ideas with Dr. Richard Katz, who
posed the most challenging question to me: "Why am I the right person to do this work?"
The right person? The question threatened me, and I thought about it intensely.

I posed the same question at a formal dialogue that occurred in 1994 between First
Nations scholars and non-First Nations scholars at the University of Saskatchewan,
suggesting that non-First Nations scholars need to ask themselves what their motivations
are for doing work with First Nations people and whether, individually, non-First Nations
researchers are the right people to be doing such work. I got no reply from the non-First
Nations researchers. I continued to think. Since that time I have made some peace with the
question, but the work I did to attain this measure of peace was long, arduous, and it still
continues. I had to understand my own motivations, my own background, my own
personhood; I had to face myself and my own biases. Then I had to trust myself. That was
the first step to having First Nations people trust me, but more steps followed and further
work needed to be done. I realize now that the work was necessarily self-reflective
because I had to immerse myself in myself as much as in them and their worldview. I
could not learn and understand from an objective stance outside. I had to learn from
inside.

Going out on a Limb

Initially, when trying to decide what type of project to do for my dissertation, I
thought of a study using as its method community-based participatory research to
understand (1) Saskatchewan mental health workers' understanding and approach to
providing mental health services to First Nations people, (2) how First Nations people's
social support and mental health are maintained or sabotaged by professional caregiving
systems, and (3) how First Nations people and mental health caregivers can best meet
First Nations people's mental health needs. I thought that the project would be a
necessary and timely attempt to bridge the gap between the abstract ideals of caregiving
systems and the concrete reality of First Nations women's daily lives, as First Nations
women comprise a large proportion of mental health caseloads, but their unique needs are
not well-represented in the caregiving literature. I thought that First Nations women need
special attention because they bear the burdens of both racism and sexism, in addition to more concrete problems and, possibly, feelings of powerlessness.

All of this I had imagined before actually linking up with any particular First Nation group. However, as a student, I was caught by the necessity of applying for a research grant to support my studies: The very process of being a student in some ways conflicted with a more ideal way of designing the research project. Time became a factor; in order to obtain funding for myself as a student, I had to propose a framework for a feasible, fundable project without having the full time necessary to consult with community members. This was a risky situation, because I was proposing a project without having a community on-side with the project. I was, in fact, going against my own philosophy in that I was designing a community-based participatory project framework without having a community involved in the funding proposal!

Being aware of this dilemma, I emphasized in the funding proposal the necessarily collaborative nature of the project, hoping that it would be clear that the ideas forming the direction and foundation of the work would have to be generated from the community itself in partnership with myself. This would be the first of many ways I was caught between the needs and expectations of the academic community and the needs and expectations of the First Nations community.

Initial Statement of the Research Question

Essentially what I wanted was to engage in meaningful collaboration with First Nations people. Together, I hoped we would build a model that bridged the world of First Nations people with that of mental health caregivers and work towards solving what to me looked like a pressing social issue: How do First Nations people in Saskatchewan feel their mental health needs should best be served, and whom do they feel should serve them?

I envisioned that the study would enable two communities to enter into an exchange of knowledge and services. I thought that the study would be successful if it resulted in a more open dialogue between First Nations people and mental health
caregivers in Saskatchewan. As a non-First Nations person and member of the mental health community, I was attempting to bridge a gap between two groups so that they could hear each other's perspectives and understand how best to work with each other. The goal of the project was to develop true community collaboration so that all involved in the study would benefit from the open sharing of information that seemed vital to its success.

These goals were noble and seemed appropriate, even necessary.

Lost and Found

Once the project idea was funded by a grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), I had to put my money where my mouth was. I faced the task of now finding a community who would be willing to work with me. After a few promising but barren leads, I stopped trying, worried that nobody was really interested in doing this kind of work. I became preoccupied with other demands, such as academic course requirements and comprehensive examinations, all the while continuing to attend events and functions, both First Nations and university, that seemed interesting and related to my dissertation goals. I remember thinking to myself, "Well, if nobody in First Nations country wants to work with me, then I'll just have to cash in and do something else." I was determined that I would not do the work unless it was community-based.

In July of 1996, I attended a SSHRC-sponsored summer institute at the University of Saskatchewan on oppressed indigenous people. While at this institute, I had the opportunity of listening to a variety of scholars and community representatives, and I had an opportunity to talk as well, not about my research ideas but about my own feelings toward the institute's topic. A local researcher from the Health and Social Development Commission (HSDC) of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations and I linked up with each other during the institute, recognizing that perhaps we had similar research goals, but were coming from different perspectives. I gave him the research proposal I had submitted to SSHRC. At this institute, the two of us decided together that mutual collaboration might be possible. Therefore, he invited to me participate in some research
that had already started to be conceptualized at the HSDC. I do not think he was looking so much at the proposal I had given him as he was looking at the type of person that I was and what I was saying.

Revised Conceptualization of the Research Project

While I originally thought to study "mental health service delivery," it became apparent that this focus was too broad to be practical. The HSDC asked that the project be narrowed to the area of psychological assessment, which is an area of service delivery that has an immediate and far-reaching impact on First Nations clientele of mental health systems. In addition, the HSDC, which is the Commission in Saskatchewan having responsibility for all health and social delivery policy for First Nations in the province, suggested that families were a more appropriate client group to consider, rather than just women, given that service delivery within First Nations communities tends to be viewed within the context of family and community. Consequently, my focus has become more appropriately narrowed to studying psychological assessment service delivery to First Nations families and communities in Saskatchewan.

Methodology

In my work within the First Nations community, I have recognized that providing excellent assessment services means learning about more than the needs of First Nations as a client group; it means learning about what exists within current psychological assessment practices that might not work with persons from a First Nations culture, including examining assumptions and procedures typically used within Clinical Psychology. Also, I have learned that the person of the psychologist is like a filter for all these assumptions and practices (Tallent, 1992; Sadowsky, Kuo-Jackson, & Loya, 1997).

Revised Statement of the Research Question

Therefore, this dissertation project has become not just about studying mental health service delivery to First Nations; it is about examining and understanding the practice of assessment, itself. The old research question was, "How do First Nations people in Saskatchewan feel their mental health needs should best be served, and whom
do they feel should serve them?’ However, the new question was, “How can I come to understand a First Nations perspective on assessment and what it means for me, as a member of mainstream academic Psychology, to perform an assessment with a First Nations person?”

Data Sources

a. archival information on First Nations issues, both historical and more recent
b. archival interview data on First Nations views of psychological assessment
c. observational data from First Nations events
d. archival documents on cultural issues, both historical and more recent, that are pertinent to the self-examination process
e. archival interview data on the psychologist’s cultural issues, both historical and more recent
f. understanding of self through self-examination (indwelling) and analysis of personal memories and experiences

Informed Consent

All of the interview data comes from the Social Development Sector’s research project on First Nations assessment, of which I am a participant and for which I had conducted some interviews. This project data is owned by the HSDC of the FSIN and is a rich source of information on First Nations views of psychological assessment practices. In addition, some of the data can be analyzed in terms of the process that can occur when a non-First Nations person interviews First Nations people.

Permission to work with the HSDC on their project and to use data from their project was obtained from the Vice-Chief of the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN) responsible for the HSDC. In addition, at the time of interviewing, all individual participants were informed that their interviews might be used as part of later dissertation research. I have no control over how the HSDC uses their interview data for their own purposes; however, when I use interview data from the HSDC, I will protect the identities of all interviewees.
Permission to use archival data not belonging to the FSIN-HSDC will come from the individual owners of that data. Owners of archival data will be fully informed of the process of the research and will be requested to give their written consent for use of their data, unless that data was published or had been disseminated at some point in a public way (e.g., published monographs, newspaper articles, world wide web).

Method of Analysis

Given the multiple data sources in this project, more than one type of analysis was necessary. When analyzing data for assumptions and values, ethnographic content analysis (Silverman, 1993) would be appropriate, as much of this information is written intra-culturally. The purpose of this method is to try to understand the deep meanings and assumptions held within a perspective or within a variety of perspectives. Some conclusions could be drawn about how those assumptions and meanings might have an impact on the process of psychological assessment and on how the client involved in that assessment becomes viewed. However, no attempt in this study was made to perform "cross-cultural comparisons" in an attempt to seek out universal categories. I would be looking for an understanding of what values and assumptions are held from each perspective (Psychology, psychologist, client) regarding assessment practices. The analysis could be described as an ethnographic process because it would take a "local culture," emic approach rather than a context-free or universal, etic approach (Silverman, 1993).

When analyzing First Nations interview data, it will be important to extend the analysis to the interaction between myself as interviewer and interviewees to illuminate the process of the research project and how I came to an understanding of psychological assessment from a First Nations perspective. It will be important to consider what is happening during the interview to determine whether the information being asked about or given is being understood by the interviewer or to determine how well the interviewer and interviewee are communicating. Therefore, the ethnographic content analysis will be complemented by an ethnomethodological analysis of the context of the interview data.
Ethnomethodology (Silverman, 1993) emphasized how people use their skills, assumptions, and common-sense categories to understand and describe others. Ethnomethodology uses the concept of membership categorization to identify how members of a certain group classify and thereby understand others. The goal, here, would be to understand how the interviewer is responding and classifying to the interviewee in order to determine what assumptions on the part of the interviewer might be operating during the interview and how those assumptions have an impact on what data was obtained.

Analysis of "culture" in this study means discussion of what values come out of the data that might illuminate how persons from that cultural perspective understand human nature, families, and other issues pertinent to assessment. However, all cultures have their "internal information," in other words, information that is normally not made public. There will be no attempt made in the course of this dissertation to uncover cultural mysteries or to reveal ceremonial or traditional practices from any of the perspectives. This means that information that would normally be considered private within a perspective will not be made public. Participants providing information that has not been publicly published will review their information prior to it being used in the dissertation. Furthermore, no individual participant will be considered representative of their entire cultural group, as this study has an emic approach. Although it is hoped that useful information will come from reading the finalized dissertation, generalization beyond those people who participated in the study would be inappropriate.
CHAPTER 5: The Process is the Project

"There is no substitute for experience, none at all."

- Abraham Maslow, 1966

The fall of 1996 was spent meeting ICFS staff and presenting who I was and what my interests were at an ICFS Directors meeting in Saskatoon. I spent a lot of time talking with Collin and Sandra, as well, so that we could get to know each other and so that I could learn about some of the issues in ICFS. In addition, I spent part of that period of time working out terms of reference for the Vice-Chief so that I could have permission to work within Social Development. I also had to submit an ethics application to the university so that I could proceed with this type of work.

This initial period of work was very tentative and slow-moving. Collin and Sandra did not know me, nor I them, and a lot of effort was being invested in trying to understand each other. Trust was a definite issue for all of us. I know that I did not see any reason for them to not trust me, but I thought that way because, at the time, I did not know what type of damage it was possible for me to do or what it meant to bring a non-First Nation academic researcher onto their team. Looking back on this period, I am surprised that they approached me at all, given the types of statements and events that I have witnessed between First Nation people and non-First Nation people over the past two years.

During this time, I worried a lot about the ethics application for the university. This research was very different from hypothesis-directed, positivistic paradigms, which
the ethics application appeared to be directed towards. I was extremely concerned that the language of the application would destroy any shred of trust that we were working to build.

What I initially realized about the ethics application is that the developers of the form assumed singular control by a researcher, or a student and that student's supervisor. This became apparent, first of all, in the first question, the listing of the researchers and their "departments," not asking for listing of non-academic or community-based persons who might be involved:

1. Name of researcher(s) and department(s).
   a. Name of student(s), if a student study, and type of study
      (e.g., B.A. Hon., M.A., Ph.D.)

Therefore, for the first question, I had to add additional names and redo the presentation of the information so that my supervisor was not listed as the "primary researcher" but as a co-collaborator in the project, along with the HSDC and myself.

Second, the form asks for the title of the study. For a study based on preconceived hypotheses, this might be a feasible question. However, given that this project was exploratory in nature and process oriented, it was difficult to come up with a title that reflected the essence of the project right from the beginning: I did not know, at that point, what the main learning would be; therefore, I left the title out.

The third question asked for the hypotheses of the study; however, given its heuristic and process-oriented approach, there were only research questions. The wording of this question was also problematic because it implied, again, singular control over the research and a subject-object orientation towards "testing of hypotheses."

3. Abstract (100-250 words): provide a brief statement of the hypotheses (or a brief statement of the research questions) to be tested.
Questions five and six created similar problems:


6. Methods/Procedures: Describe the procedures to obtain research data and attach copies of measures, instruments, questionnaires or interview schedules to be used.

We were planning that I would use data belonging to the larger assessment project on which the Social Development Sector of HSDC was working. In addition, other forms of "data gathering" would be done through direct observation and ongoing interaction with members of the ICFS team. Nobody in this study was seen as a "subject": The word, itself, has strong implications for researcher control over and scrutiny of persons involved in the project. In addition, I was not going to be administering tests or measures, and was not planning to use structured interviews or questionnaires.

We were trying, in this work, to build strong working relationships but the ethics form was asking me to delineate who and what I was going to test. Therefore, I was concerned that if my co-researchers read these types of questions, they would think that I was trying to deceive them about the type of relationship I was attempting to form with them.

To make matters more complicated, question seven asked outright about risk and deception.

7. Risk or deception: Indicate if any aspects of the study involve risk to the subjects or deception of the subjects and what measures will be taken to minimize their impact.

There were inherent risks to First Nations in becoming involved in an academic study, and I took no issue with identifying what they might be, particularly in line with what Collin and Sandra had been describing to me about past experiences and worries regarding use of data and findings. However, the concept of deception made us nervous. I stated that
there would be no deception involved; however, the question introduced the possibility that psychologists sometimes do use deception, which leads people away from trusting, and not towards it. I hear the same types of distrust in some undergraduate students comments when I teach them about possible uses of deception: Some students take great offense to the concept and make that offense known during class discussion.

In addition, question ten brought up the issue of debriefing:

10. Debriefing and feedback: Indicate how the subjects will be debriefed following their participation, and to offer information on the results of the research once the study has ended.

Although the term "debriefing" might seem like a positive and necessary part of doing research with people from a psychological point of view, from a non-psychological point of view it sounds like something that is done to people by governments or institutions after being through extreme trauma, such as war, disaster, or torture.

The fourth question asked for a disclosure regarding funding for the project.

4. Funding: Indicate the source of funds supporting the research. If externally funded, state whether the grant or contract is in application or has been awarded.

While I, as a student-researcher, was funded by SSHRCC, this agency did not influence how the project was to be done, nor did it direct the research project. It funds primarily the researcher, rather than the particular research project, as long as the project topic is approved as part of their mandated funding jurisdiction and seen as necessary research. There is nothing wrong with disclosing funding and, in fact, it should be encouraged. However, for community researchers, the fact that a student is affiliated with a federal funding agency must be explained in terms of what that agency requires and how funding from the agency might influence the research being done. I had no concerns about SSHRCC influencing this project, but this was yet another relationship that had to be
explained so that Collin and Sandra and others did not think that I was working for a department of the federal government.

Questions eight and nine addressed issues of confidentiality and consent.

8. Confidentiality: Describe what measures will be taken to protect participant confidentiality and privacy.

9. Consent: Describe the process for consent. Enclose a copy of the consent form. Give a detailed justification if one is not being used. (See Guidelines for Informed Consent below.)

These two questions brought up the issue of who the participants were. Although the persons engaging in the research project were identifiable, the project had the potential to have an impact on a much larger group of people. The procedures outlined in the university ethics documents identified a type of individualized consent and confidentiality that would not have violated the sense of group membership and responsibility that Social Development staff had. To ask for the individual consent of people apart from the group and communities as a whole would not be appropriate. Permission to initiate and proceed with the project had to come from leadership within the Federation, specifically the Vice-Chief in charge of the Social Development Sector of the FSIN. However, permission also had to be obtained from the ICFS Directors, who were responsible to the communities whom they represented. Their agreement did not reflect their personal permission to be in the project but their consent to be in the project based on their representation of a larger group of people. In fact, the group that this project stood to have the most impact on were the people back in the home communities: Through participation in the project a lot of good or a lot of harm could be done to those communities. For example, once a group of people opens up its doors even slightly to an outside person, there is always the possibility that the outsider will learn information that the community does not want to be shared outside the bounds of the group.
There is an ongoing tension in this type of project between the internal and the external, between what information should be kept within the community and what can be shared outside of it. These concerns are not limited to First Nations. Even in Psychology, there is information that is kept internal to the group; for example, the specifics of psychometric test questions and procedures are rarely discussed in the open or published about, except within professional psychological circles. There is always the worry on both sides, researcher and researched, that the information will be misinterpreted, misrepresented, or misused.

Finally, these last statements appear on the ethics application form:

11. Signatures of the applicant(s) and departmental head(s). Student applications must be submitted by the faculty supervisor and signed by the supervisor. If reviewed by a department or college ethics review committee, the signature of the committee chair and the committees' response should be attached.

It became very clear, by this point, that in collaborative projects community-based coresearchers are working not just with the student researcher, but with many other people, including supervisors, committee chairs, committee members, department and faculty members, ethics committee members, and more. As a student-researcher, you represent not just yourself but an entire institution. While I felt comfortable speaking for myself in this research relationship, I was not certain that I felt comfortable speaking for an entire institution, including processes and people over whom I had no control.

The issue of data ownership and use came up at this point in the process. Collin and Sandra had explained circumstances to me whereby an outside researcher had come into a community or First Nation organization and gathered data, interpreted the data according to their own observations and viewpoint, and then used their conclusions in ways that misrepresented or harmed the very people the researcher was trying to understand and "help."
While I agreed that all data used from First Nations sources would be owned by the HSDC, the issue of interpretation and later use of that information was not so easy to resolve. Interpretation of the First Nations data would be done in collaboration, not singularly by myself, so that I would not have free license to interpret the data in whatever way seemed correct to me. At first this seemed like a necessary "courtesy" on my part. Initially, I was thinking that I would agree to co-researchers looking over my interpretations to make sure there were no gross misunderstandings, but I would not be biased or influenced into changing interpretations just because they seemed unflattering or disagreeable. After all, I wanted to be objective and report on findings impartially. Later, I learned a little more about what "impartiality" and "objectivity" really implied.

Other discussions took place around authorship and later use of data, once the dissertation project was completed. I learned, during this time, that the very way that dissertations are thought of at the university belies some of the fundamental tenets of collaborative, community-based research. If this were to be a collaborative project, then how could it be that I was the single author of the final dissertation? If this were to be a collaborative project, then how could it be that the University of Saskatchewan had final say regarding its acceptability? These were difficult questions to address. At the time, I felt very torn between the requirements of the university and the requirements of this project. I had a lot of doubts, as did my co-researchers, that we could really work something out, but we continued to try, and progress was made in ways that are the topics of later chapters in this work.

The process of applying for ethics and the final ethics application became the official working terms for my involvement with the HSDC. Due to the nature of the application form and some of the assumptions contained within it, my application for ethics became a deconstruction of the application itself, in order that some of the assumptions and biases contained within it were made explicit and discussed. At first this seemed risky, because I was altering the regular process for obtaining ethics approval, but
it seemed to me that the only way to build trust was to make assumptions clear and explicit. At this point, I began learning that laying assumptions bare and discussing them was a better way to approach issues than by avoiding or defending them outright.
CHAPTER 6: Knowing Something or Knowing Nothing?

When we Westerners call people ‘native’ we implicitly take the cultural colour out of our perception of them. We see them as wild animals infesting the country in which we happen to come across them, as part of the local flora and fauna and not as men of like passions with ourselves. So long as we think of them as ‘natives,’ we may exterminate them or, as is more likely today, domesticate them and honestly . . . believe that we are improving the breed, but we do not begin to understand them.

- Arnold Toynbee, 1946

By January 1997, I had obtained permission from the Vice-Chief responsible for Social Development as well as from the Indian Child and Family Services (ICFS) Directors to work on their assessment project and my dissertation research in conjunction with that project. I had my focus and was ready to start studying psychological assessment service delivery to First Nations families and communities in Saskatchewan.

The work proceeded along a number of lines at first. I attended ICFS meetings, some of which involved ICFS Directors and some of which involved representatives from other government organizations, including the federal Department of Indian Affairs and the provincial Department of Social Services. At first, I could not really understand why I was going to these meetings. They were interesting, of course, and gave me a chance to meet people and have them meet me. However, the meetings were not about the assessment project specifically or about my dissertation focus. I attended patiently, waiting for my turn to have a role or a say in the discussions so that I could explain the
concept of psychological assessment and its importance in treatment planning. I waited so that I could in some way help them. In addition to going to meetings, I also had the opportunity to observe a custody hearing in provincial court and to help plan a First Nations conference on mental health and justice service delivery. I also attended community functions, such as pow-wows and other ceremonies, and began to get to know some of my First Nations colleagues better.

As I sat in these meetings, I paid attention to what was going on. Nobody really asked me anything in particular about the topics at hand, so I just listened and observed. However, at these meetings, I began to become familiar with some of the major issues and developments in social and mental health service delivery to First Nations in the province. I learned about the pressing needs that existed and what types of situations blocked psychosocial service delivery. At inter-governmental meetings that included federal and provincial bureaucrats, I began to learn about the kinds of issues that the federal government and First Nations service agencies argue about.

Initially, I had a hard time following the discussions for several reasons. First, the issues being discussed were quite foreign to me – treaty issues, jurisdiction, standards, terms of reference, mutual vesting – at first I really did not understand what the issues were, and I did not think that the issues were relevant to my reason for being there, which was to study psychological assessment. I was also not familiar with the history of the issues to date.

I was surprised that I did not understand the political issues because before moving to Saskatchewan I had worked in political circles for over a decade, sat on funding and public issue-based committees, and worked closely with several provincial and federal politicians during campaigns and throughout non-compaigning periods. I had traveled to other provinces and to Ottawa for various political events and felt that I was "in the know" when it came to political methods, rhetoric, and issues. Yet, here I was becoming confused, especially when talking with ICFS directors and staff. I noticed that, when they
were talking about government and service-delivery agencies, I would be thinking about parliament, legislatures, and provincial mental health centers. However, they were referring to Indian governments, Tribal Councils, Band Councils, and ICFS agencies. Our points of reference for understanding the world were completely different from each other, and it was, in the early going, a source of great confusion for me.

I realized that even our basic ways of communicating were different. For example, although we were all speaking English, the ICFS directors and staff had a different way of constructing conversations and turn-taking while speaking than I was used to in ordinary conversation. There seemed to be a dialectical difference in the way that grammatical antecedents were used, making it difficult to understand conversational tropes and turns.

What really bothered me was that people would often refer to events, things, or persons that had not been part of the immediate conversation a minute before. For example, I noted one particular conversation in which people were discussing a disturbing turn of events that had taken place with a person that they knew. There was a pause in the conversation, and someone said, “Like that guy.” Others nodded and replied with small “hmm” comments. In the meantime, I was thinking, “What guy???” Then everyone would laugh. I’d wonder why they were all laughing and how the conversation had turned so quickly from drama to comedy. I remember wondering whether they were laughing at me and my lack of understanding, as if I had been somehow the center of their attention. I felt like they were all talking in code, and it made me distrust them, as if they were hiding something from me. Sometimes, nothing or not much would be said in the way of verbal communication with each other, but reams of information would be transmitted between people through body movements, posture, seating arrangement, and other non-verbal cues. No words were needed because they all understood the issues, the dialect, the history, and the context. They understood each other.

It is hard to help when you don’t know what is going on and cannot follow the turns in the conversations. Dialogue and communication being difficult to follow, I was
starting to feel confused and frustrated, but there was no dictionary or book that could have assisted me with this problem. I had to begin asking people questions, like “What do you mean? Who are you talking about? What are you referring to?” I admit that I must have looked very ignorant. With patience, Colin and Sandra would explain to me what they were discussing. At other times Colin, in particular, would become impatient: “I already explained that to you. Weren’t you listening?” Or, he would refer back to something he had said earlier that was difficult for me to understand, and he would just shake his head and try to move forward with me. I realized that they were trying to help me understand their issues, their dialect, their context, and their history. Slowly, I started catching on. The words of Kathleen Tchang clanged in my head: "Who's giving the humanitarian aid?" (Tchang, 1994). I was wanting to help them, but I was the one who needed help in understanding such basic things as how the people communicated with each other.

Gradually, I learned their local “lingo” and began to feel more relaxed and at ease with the work. I kept track of my reactions to what I observed and what I was slowly learning. In particular, I started noticing how other non-First Nations people were interpreting First Nations issues and comments. Some of the issues that I was learning about were reported in the Canadian newspapers, and I found myself being amazed at how the issues were being reported and interpreted. I also found myself noticing other things of relevance to my experiences: televised news stories and documentaries, movies, fiction, art, everything. So many things began to stand out for me as commentaries upon the various issues that I was encountering and the real and tangible differences between being an insider or an outsider to this community (see Appendix II).

These experiences were very interesting, but I found myself becoming annoyed. I kept thinking that we were wasting a lot of time. I felt that I should be interviewing people about assessment, collecting data, and moving along with tasks directly related and
relevant to the assessment project. Attending meetings was very interesting but seemed not very important to the project or to an understanding of psychological assessment.

To add to my impatience, I found myself becoming very frustrated at the intergovernment meetings I was attending. It seemed, at those meetings, that nothing was ever accomplished. Even now, as I write this chapter, I can feel that frustration returning. I began to notice a script or formula for how the meetings were going. For example, this is an outline of the process that occurred for one series of meetings that I attended concerning the negotiation of an agreement for service provision:

- issue presented as a carry-over from the last meeting
- presentation of concerns from First Nations about the issue and the way that the solution to the issue was being worded in the agreement being worked through
- explanation from the government about why it could not accept any other wording, typically with reference to some higher authority in Ottawa which would not allow such wording, such as the minister or the Treasury Board
- explanation from the First Nations about why the proposed wording would pose problems from their perspective and government's requirements
- a statement from the government, often starting with phrases such as "at the end of the day," indicating that no further compromise would be possible
- requests for clarification of the government's reasons
- provision of inadequate explanations: raw data with no explanation except accounting and statistical jargon that was not meaningful
- requests for further clarification, because the information provided was inadequate
• denial of the fact that any request for clarification was made
• pressure to provide more specific and accurate information
• reply that the information was classified and could not be released

Most of the inter-governmental meetings which I attended (about a dozen both off
and on reserve), followed a similar, frustrating pattern, with issues being presented,
wrangling back and forth, and then a wholesale closing off of the issues by the
representatives of the federal government. There was an ongoing lack of communication
and heavy posturing by the federal government, sometimes resulting in anger and
accusations being leveled back and forth. One thing was for certain: Distrust was
rampant, and the power was unidirectional — the Canadian government always had control
as well as the final say, and little compromise was achieved at the meetings I attended.

I tried to stay a "neutral observer," but the arguments that I was hearing the
Canadian government provide for its perspective seemed inadequate. For example, when
discussing formulas for funding mental health services for ICFS agencies, the numbers
never seemed to add up in a way that made sense. When pressed for an explanation, the
response was always vague or deferred. I, myself, began to wonder what the agenda
really was. At one point, I was asked to speak at a meeting, given my graduate training in
statistics, and explain what type of information the ICFS agencies were asking for and
why the current information was inadequate. The manner in which the government
representative answered me was very different from the manner in which he had been
answering the ICFS Directors and staff. When he recognized that he could not depend
upon vague and misleading statistics, he simply stated that the information necessary to
answer the questions was classified and could not be obtained. Later, he approached me
and asked me whom I was working for and who I was.

I came into these meetings thinking that the government was going to do its best to
negotiate adequate service delivery for First Nations families living on reservations. I left
feeling shocked and overwhelmed by the rhetoric of intimidation, authority, and power

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that was being used against adequate funding of on-reserve services to families. The process felt unjust.

For example, I became aware that the funding formula for service provision had a per-child expenses cap on it. Unfortunately, that dollars cap was much lower than services would likely cost, even for services such as short-term psychological therapies. In fact, the cap was smaller than most basic psychological assessments would ordinarily cost, not including any treatment that might follow. In addition, the dollars cap was not just for psychological services; it was for any special services required for the child. If the agency went over budget on these services because treatment was essential, then the money would have to come out of their day-to-day office operations budget — the same one covering telephones and desks, for example. If children's needs became greater than the pre-allotted budget, the agency could become bankrupt and taken over by the federal department. However, the agencies were mandated under the law to provide necessary services, making the situation impossible. The whole framework seemed destined for failure, and meeting after meeting was not solving the problem. No progress was being made. Each side had its own responsibilities, parameters, and language, and very little positive communication was occurring.

It began to come clear to me why the First Nations group did not trust me right from the start. If their experience on a regular basis with non-First Nations agencies was anything like this, no wonder there was so much distrust towards non-First Nations people sent to help them. No wonder that the distrust initiated generations ago persists. This distrust came about as the result of "contact" with non-First Nations which resulted in extreme damage and, in some cases, annihilation of First Nations people and communities, such as the case of the Beothuk peoples on the eastern coast of this land (Dixon, 1997; Waldrum, Herring, & Young, 1995). In fact, intergenerational oppression was continuing through governmental covert policy and overt intimidation, as well as
deceptive, manipulative communication strategies that tainted relationships between First Nations and mainstream agencies.

First Nations people see these interactions and intents as genocidal to their people. I had a difficult time with the word "genocide." It was not a word that had been associated with the Canadian government in any Social Studies textbook or world history text I had ever read during my years of education. Genocidal regimes existed elsewhere in the world, but not in Canada, or so I was trained to believe. I found that I would use words like "communication breakdown" or "misunderstanding" or "disregard" to explain relations between Canadian and First Nations governments. It is so easy to slip into the kind of language that erases people and the oppression that they continue to experience. When referring to the intergovernmental process and meetings, I noted Colin saying, "They created in their minds the image that they could kill us like flies or something. They epitomized everything right there" (Rope, Personal Communication, Nov 28, 1998).

The decimation and extinction of many indigenous peoples is a matter of historical fact, initiated by a cascade of interwoven sociopolitical, economic, and ecological changes. These include: ecological disruption resulting from the importation of new plants and animals, including pathogens . . .; interference with and subversion of the social order by missionaries, traders, and government officials; the arrival of settlers to farm the lands of people already shattered by epidemics and the persecution of resisting survivors; and social fragmentation and reorganization as surviving groups coalesced on the margins of European settlement . . .

(Waldram, Herring, & Young, 1995).

Fortunately for me, I was listening to what First Nations people were telling me, so I felt that I was not as biased as government representatives, who had a political agenda to fulfill. Furthermore, I, of course, had no intention to colonize, as the early settlers did. I silently gave thanks that I was on the research and not the political end of things.
Or was I? Gradually, I began to question what I, myself, was bringing with me in my contact with First Nations. Maybe I did not have small pox or meager budgetary offerings, but what was I bringing? This question remained in the back of my mind for a long time, and it insidiously worked its way into the forefront of my thinking as I became more and more immersed in this work. As Walt Kelly (1973) once said: “We have met the enemy, and he is us.”
CHAPTER 7: Data Collection and First Interview

*If you don't know you're in it, you're not gonna know how to get out of it.*

- Interviewee #1

When I came to the realization that I really did not know as much as I thought I did about the First Nations community, I had to take a step back and re-examine what I thought this project was all about. I had intended on studying psychological assessment collaboratively with First Nations, but I was also recognizing that to do an assessment you had to have a strong understanding about the psychology of the people being assessed. I was slowly discovering that, in fact, I did not understand the psychology of First Nations people, individually or collectively. I did not understand their history, the contexts of their lives, or their language. I did not understand their worldview.

In working with the Social Development sector, I found that I also had a lot to learn about how First Nations communities operate, what types of policies and services are currently in place, and how those services tend to work. In fact, I did not, at first, realize how much I did not know. What was worse was that I was not always certain what was important to know and what was not. I never was certain when or where I was making a mistake in my assumptions or interpretations about events. I had to watch other people's reactions to myself and my statements very carefully and seek out guidance from others if I was not sure what was happening. My learning became a kind of immersion in the professional and community activities of the Social Development sector.
I attended Indian Child and Family Services Board meetings and developed preliminary working relationships with staff from various Tribal Councils and Bands throughout Saskatchewan. Meetings were held at various locations, both in Saskatoon and in locations around Saskatchewan, such as Band offices. I also met with some Directors of other Commissions in FSIN to understand how assessments and services tend to be delivered in their areas. I observed and learned about cases involving First Nations clients within Justice and Family Court. Part of my learning also required knowledge of how outside agencies interact with First Nations, including agencies of the provincial and federal governments, non-government organizations, as well as private counselling and consulting services. All of these agencies have an impact on how people obtain access to mental health service delivery and how those services are viewed and utilized.

I began to reflect upon what I would do in a typical psychological assessment and whether it would have an impact on the assessment if I did not have an understanding of the client’s worldview. I needed to understand more about how First Nations people saw psychological assessment and Western professionals. The assessment project team from Social Development sector wanted to have a sense of how others were thinking about assessment from a First Nations perspective. In addition, they felt that they needed to take a critical look at mainstream Psychology in order to understand how to change the discipline’s generally limited and restricted view of First Nations. Therefore, the project team agreed that I should interview some of the people who worked on a regular basis in the various service delivery sectors of First Nations systems, as these people worked with service delivery issues continually. The information would be used for the Social Development’s assessment project, and I would be able to access the interview tapes for my dissertation.
Colin and/or Sandra approached people ahead of time to explain the parameters of their project and to determine whether the person would be willing to be interviewed. Once contact had been made internally, I then could contact any of the people that they mentioned at my timing and discretion. I contacted six of the people that they mentioned and scheduled some appointments with prospective interviewees.

Data Collection

Collecting data and conducting interviews were two activities I felt ready for and trained to do. I spent some time researching what would be good equipment to buy (microphones, tape recorders, tapes). I had also spent time reading about different interviewing styles. Colin, Sandra, and I decided that an unstructured interview would be the best because it would allow for more open and free discussion that would not be constrained by pre-selected and possibly more biased ideas or structure. Given the open-ended nature of the interviews, the participants were free to take the interview in any direction that they deemed appropriate.

Each interview participant was given information on (1) the purposes of the assessment project and my dissertation; (2) the fact that their information would be used in the assessment project and in my dissertation; (3) how their confidentiality would be protected when their information was used in my dissertation; and (4) a brief explanation of what I meant when I said we were going to discuss “assessment.” Every interviewee was given the option of withdrawing their participation at any time.

In reporting on the interview data, no names, personal identities, or job titles will be revealed to protect the confidentiality of the interview participants. In addition, any other types of identifying information has been disguised or deleted. The words of the interviewees have been reported as stated, but stutters, repetitions, coughs, most “ums” and “uhhs,” as well as voice clearing have been deleted if their deletion did not in any way affect the speaker’s meaning. Entire sentences that have been left out are indicated
by ellipses (...). Although the interviews are reported as stated, some sections of the interviews have been left out due to the length of the original transcripts and university limitations on the size of this dissertation. Parts of the interview left out pertain either to (1) themes other than the ones chosen for discussion or (2) information internal to a First Nations organization not meant to be made public. In the discussion of each interview, I will point out information and make interpretations of the substantive, process-oriented, and heuristic concerns that arose for me during each of the interviews and throughout the interview process.

First Interview

The first person that I interviewed was a man working in a federally funded service-delivery program who had a post-secondary level of education. The interview started quite formally with me explaining what we were about to do. I provided him with a copy of my carefully worded, written description of the intended focus of our conversation together, as follows:

What is an Assessment?

The process of coming to a decision about programming for people is called "assessment." Assessment means gathering information that will help the assessor understand what that person requires to live in a good way. A good assessment should be able to inform a plan of action that will help a person. The effectiveness and benefit of every type of program depends on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the assessment that leads to a person being placed in a program. Poor assessments may lead to poor program placements and failure to make progress in a case.

Many types of assessments currently are performed with First Nations people, such as intellectual, psychiatric, physical, emotional, educational, spiritual, family, community, risk for violence, risk for suicide, etc. All of these
assessments are geared towards understanding the person in a way that allows for a decision to be made about what types of programming or assistance that person requires to become balanced and well. Unfortunately, First Nations people are often subjected to a number and range of assessments, many of which are not integrated with each other and most of which are not sensitive to the realities of First Nations people's lives. In addition, the assessments currently being provided for First Nations people usually are not sensitive to First Nations ways of understanding and being in the world. Therefore, it is time to develop an assessment process that more fully addresses the practical needs of First Nations people in Saskatchewan.

He read the handout and said he did not have any questions about it. Therefore, we started discussing his response to the handout.\textsuperscript{1} His initial comments reflected problems with assessment referrals on the reserve. The first main problem he mentioned was that referrals were not being made to provincial service providers for a number of reasons. He used himself and his own experience working for a community. When he started out, he was not familiar with exactly what a referral for provincial services meant. In addition, he was not familiar with the provincial system’s requirements for paperwork when making a referral.

Well, I just think that time and time again, especially with our relationship with the governments and that kind of stuff around health I think it’s \textit{a First Nations approach to assessment} more and more needed, cause there’s a bunch of different areas to start with. I’ll go back to, I guess, my experience and where I

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{1} Comments and questions that I made during the interviews are enclosed within square brackets. Editorial comments that I have included in the editing of the interview transcript are enclosed within angular brackets. All interview excerpts are presented in single-spaced text to assist the reader in following the flow of discussion.}
started in working in communities is first of all a lack of what referral means and then, y'know, basic very simple stuff, where to find the form, uh, how to fill out that form, what signatures are required from reserve to, say, treatment in the province. I think there's a real lack or sort of know how to do that if you want to start very simple in assessments.

However, even when people were referred, there was some reluctance to follow through on the part of the person who would be receiving the services because of their experiences with provincial systems in general:

And then, secondly, a lack of commitment on behalf of the person being referred. I've been to a lot of communities, one example, a community I was in about three years ago in Manitoba. There was about 77, 78 percent of the children were in care in Winnipeg, a high percentage without the family or even the guardianship knowledge that the kid was being placed. Either the kid was out three in the morning, they just -- fffffff -- put him on a plane the next morning and the whole process was just sort of done without without any real consent . . . .

Simplification of the referral process was attempted, but continued to not be used by First Nations staff:

. . . to make things more simple for community people, we came up with, for example, a formula that they could follow in terms of how to develop a proposal, very simple. We basically did the work for them. All they had to do was put in the stuff, the amount of money it would cost, I mean things like that where we would just try to make things more simple. Yet, rarely are they utilized.

To use the same approach, forms and reports, but attempt to make it from a First Nations perspective would be even more difficult because a First Nations method would necessarily assess a person in a holistic way across a variety of domains. For example, Eduardo and Bonnie Duran (1995) had commented:
Another crucial worldview difference of which the Western therapist must be cognizant is that of noncompartmentalization of experience. In Western experience it is common to separate the mind from the body and spirit and the spirit from mind and body. Within the Native American worldview this is a foreign idea. Most Native American people experience their being in the world as a totality of personality and not as separate systems within the person.

These values are reflected in the words of the interviewee:

It becomes even more complex when you talk about a First Nations assessment form or report or whatever you want to call it that would cover vast areas of Health, Justice, ICFS and whether you can really create an assessment tool or form that can, y'know, cover all of those things.

[So it seems kind of big?]

It's big and it's huge and it becomes a complex thing. How are community people gonna relate to that kind of stuff and how can we make it simple in the sense that when we look at a child or a situation or even a family, how can we deal with the situation, deal with the things that need to be dealt with in a very effective simple way and that's not gonna create more harm than it, y'know, than needs to be necessary.

[So you see community people, um, having to deal with situations but . . . not . . . uh, having sort of the background or something or]

Not the, not the up to date sort of professional background on how, say, I would look at a situation

[mm-hmm]

You go into many First Nations communities, and, I don't mean to be negative, but a lot of communities y'know, are 10 years behind or 15 years behind in thinking about how to deal with things in the community. This week George Erasmus made a good point on some of the stuff he learned on the Royal
Commission. He says you take all of Canadian society and, if there's a national average of 10 percent unemployment, everybody's up in arms. He says, well you take any Native community across the country where there's anywhere between 60 and 90 percent unemployment, imagine how we feel as First Nations communities, y'know. So I think, to go along with what he was saying, a lot of people just spend their times being in community. They don't work, they're not active, they're just basically living, doing basically nothing. How do we promote and convince people to be involved in something like this where we're talking about holistic healing? When you talk about holistic healing you're talking about the whole community being involved and, uh, would such a First Nations assessment draw out those strengths in, say, your average guy who's not working, who just basically <he laughs> does nothing in the community when he could be benefiting the community, um, y'know, we always seem to be seeking solutions but . . . would, this assessment alleviate those things or would we create more problems?

There was an interesting contradiction in what he was saying: He wanted to do things from a First Nations perspective, which he described as "holistic healing." He knew that there is a First Nations worldview, method, and philosophy but was labeling it with very modern, non-First Nations labels and talking about it from a "professional" stance, believing that people on reserves are behind in their thinking about how to deal with things in the community because they do not have "the up to date sort of professional background on how, say, I would look at a situation." There was a theme of "progress" in his talk, that suggested that he was ahead of community people in his thinking. He was, at once, including himself in the group but holding an expert position within it that was different from "the average guy." He was describing himself to me as someone who has professional training and knowledge from outside his community. What was striking about what he said, however, was that he was not seeing the similarities between his professional training and his First Nations worldview. He was not thinking about how a First Nations worldview and philosophy can encompass futuristic thinking without resorting to the ideology of "modern progress." He seemed
convinced that his post-secondary training gave him knowledge that was "more advanced" than First Nations-based thought. In some ways, he was making a subtle reference to that old distinction between advanced, civilized and developed thinking as opposed to the more behind or backward thinking of those people living in the communities. Although he may not really have been thinking these thoughts, the possibility existed that his post-secondary training had convinced him that a First Nations traditional worldview was primitive. He knew First Nations philosophy, but, clearly, he was thinking about it through the filter of his own, Western-based training and education. His doubt about First Nations competency was showing. I reflected his concern:

[So, like, would the assessment . . . really be helping, would it really be a problem-solving, concrete, practical thing?]

No, I guess, can it be?

[Can it be?]

Yeah. I'd like it to be, but can it be? Y'know, how do we do that?

The prospect of developing a First Nations assessment was appealing, but he seemed uncertain about how to do it or whether it would be worth the effort. I was surprised at his uncertainty, and I wanted to ask him about what he thought might work. However, the manner in which I asked him the question directed him back to talking about federal programs, rather than a First Nations approach because I asked him about his "program." To me, a program could have been a First Nations approach, but clearly to him it referred to federal programming. I still had not grasped the difference between First Nations approaches to things and federal department "programs." I was still
seeing the current federally funded programs as First Nations “programs.” However, I had asked him about his program, so he answered me.

[Do you have some ideas about, like, what d'you think would be practically useful, or, y'know, what would be useful to your program, for example?]

Well the whole program is, uh, age zero to six

[mm-hmm]

the money's focused on those groups, so for me it would be most beneficial or useful in the area of prevention.

[mm-hm, so looking at, umm, preventing different]

Well, again, you take that a step further, uh, to prevention and criteria outlined in our <laughs> strategy which would cover only those programs specified.

[In . . . different initiatives]

Yeah, mental health, solvent abuse, that kind of stuff.

[And so there, what happens now with assessment? What do you see happening, like, y'know, for people in terms of the way they're assessed either within or outside your initiative?]

There's a lot of work that needs to be done, I can tell you that <laughs> much! <laughs> There's no kiddin' about that!

Rather than talking about First Nations assessment, he talked about “programs,” which typically refers to activities funded by federal or provincial governments and carried out in First Nations communities according to federal or provincial governmental objectives, standards, and criteria. This interviewee was drawing a distinction between what he previously had called “holistic healing” and the programs administered in First
Nations communities that had to follow federal funding criteria. He had laughed when he talked about “our strategy,” likely because he knew the strategy was directed by federal government criteria. The federal program that he was administering was focused on prevention-based activities for children aged zero to six, and it limited program activity and scope of effectiveness to that purpose and age group. Assessment of need in the community was not being addressed because the funding did not allow it, so it would have to be covered off by another area. Assessment of need was being covered by referrals to provincial practitioners. However, the referrals were not necessarily being made or followed through on, and First Nations children were still being placed in off-reserve service agencies for treatment or in non-First Nations foster homes.

He then tried to explain to me what was wrong with provincial and federally directed and funded programs:

The other interesting thing about all that is, if you look at the country, First Nations across the country, Saskatchewan has the most programs yet we receive the least amount of money in terms of per capita from the government.

He was catching on to the fact that my perspective was mainstream, so when he said “the country,” he was referring specifically to” First Nations country,” “Indian country.”

When I heard him say “the country,” I was thinking about “Canada,” not First Nations people. He continued:

Yet, we're spewing out all these programs, we're initiating a whole bunch of different things other provinces aren't doing or are just beginning.

[So it's not just about funding].
It's not just about funding, but, in the same sentence, Saskatchewan is the second highest for solvent abuse; 90 percent of the male population in prison are First Nations; 70 percent of the women's population are First Nations; 50 percent of youth or children in custody are First Nations; 40 percent of those youth on probation are First Nations, so it begs the question, well if we're doing all these wonderful programs - prevention, intervention, treatment, or after care - how come we seem to have statistically the most First Nations youth, families, and communities in the country related to any abuse? So with that thinking it definitely tells me that . . . either we're not doing the job, or there's lack of skill in doing the job, or people just don't wanna do the job, 000-or <the emphasized this last point strongly> there's too many programs. There's too many. Say if we develop an assessment at the <federal> level, and uh, a kid gets in trouble with ICFS or is apprehended, ICFS they have their own separate assessment, referral, process, whatever, and then Justice gets involved at some level, and Education can get involved at some level, um, I think that's the whole goal. . . . How do we create something that's universal within Saskatchewan so that we coordinate services rather than work against because, say if a child gets apprehended on reserve, it could benefit <his federal program> but his situation doesn't necessarily fall under our criteria and we say 'no, we can't do that' because 'Da, da, da, da,' hey, y'know, 'x, y, and zee.' It becomes very complicated in trying to figure out, well, how do we do that, then, knowing what the statistics are, knowing that we have no programs but yet we continue to rise in epidemic proportions in a lot of communities in a lot of different areas.

He knew that there was great need in the communities and that the services to First Nations people were fragmented and restricted by program criteria set out by whoever was paying for the program, such as the Medical Services Branch of Canada Health, who frequently funds programs but provides the criteria, standards, and direction for the program.

[So if the child’s apprehended on reserve, what would you guys do in your program?]

We couldn’t. We’re prevention focused.
[Yeah.]

There's nothing we could do.

[At that point it's already past prevention]

actually

[it's intervention]

Yeah.

[So everything that you do is of a prevention nature, so you, so]

But in the same sense one of our programs <a different federal program>, was developed from the foundation that it's a positive response to crisis.

[mm-hmm]

Now, is crisis prevention? Y'know you could define it in a lot of different ways.

[mm-hmm]

Y'know, yeah we do a lot of prevention, like <he names a program> training is, it's prevention focused with some intervention. It's creating a link with the treatment center and that sort of stuff, <he names another program> is, again, it's prevention focused. All of the stuff we've done with <program> money has been prevention focused, pamphlets, posters, videos. <Another program>, same thing. All the programming we do is prevention focused.

[And that's all community directed mat-]

Community based

[erial]

Community based. Much of, in fact, I would say 85 percent of the budget goes right to the community, right past FSIN, right past the Tribal Councils, right into
the community, so it's basically up to the communities what they wanna do in
terms of their community-based allocation. And they get different sorts of
money from Mental Health and stuff like that that are community-based, and
there's some criteria around that they have to develop some things based on the
criteria but, for the most part, all the money goes right to the communities. We
don't even touch it, we don't recommended nothin', we don't make decisions,
that's for them to decide what to do with it.

[m-hm]

Like <an ICFS agency>, for example, this week they hosted their third annual
health conference for the communities

[mm-hmm]

and that's prevention, they invite youth, they invite people from the communities
to come out for three or four days and meet, and, I know, <another ICFS
agency> did the same thing last week, so that, y'know, that all of the initiatives
are very, y'know, prevention focused, and to create that, to develop an
assessment tool based on prevention would be an idea in itself as -- are our
programs meeting your needs? If not, how can we, how can we meet your needs
if we're not meeting them?

[So, it's kind of an assessment of needs, or what issues are in the community that
need to be worked on in terms of a prevention model?]

Yeah.

[what problems are there . . .]

Yeah. Cause the whole intention of <the federal program> was to focus on
prevention for the n, y'know, 92 to 97, for a five-year process

[m-hm]

and, um, I've heard a lot of people saying . . . training's good, yeah, conferences
are good, yeah, but there's this whole sort of surface, y'know, you touch the very
surface of issues like when you have a conference, you touch a lot of surface
issues when you have training. A lot of people – now I’m getting feedback from
the last six months – are saying we need to start talking about the issues beneath
those surface issues. We need to start talking very clearly about sexual abuse
and how it affects our communities. We need to start talking about residential
school and how it impacted our communities. We need to start talking about
family violence and suicide and how it’s affecting us and our communities. So
I’m hearing a lot of people saying we need to take it a step further, um, and how
do we do that, how do we bring those sensitive issues forward? . . . what’s the
point of having prevention? It almost defeats our purpose as <the federal
program> <he laughs> in setting up prevention, you’re always, you’re at late
intervention, you’re not even at early intervention.

The federal program criteria was prevention-based, when the community issues
required intervention. The programs were “community based,” meaning that the
federal programs were carried out at the community level, but they were not community
directed, owned, or controlled. I remembered Dr. Eduardo Duran telling me that the
mainstream idea of prevention (i.e., stopping a problem before it happens, often through
public education initiatives) was impossible in Native communities, because everything
was past the point of prevention and required direct intervention (Personal
Communication, October, 1997, Saskatoon). Yet the government had a five-year,
prevention-based initiative that had to be administered if funding was to be had.

Then, secondly, how, are our programs helping those kids from zero to six and if
they’re not <laughs>, y’know, we need to start doing something about it because
most of the training, actually all of the training that’s taking place out of <his
federal program>, adults have attended, and the whole point of training them is
to take this back to your zero to six year olds, begin preventing some of those
things, y’know.

[And then seeing all of that prevention programming in action at that age]

Right.
[and how it has an impact on them]

Right. But you look at the statistics last, in the last five years from 92 to 97 in those age groups, they're on the rise in solvent abuse, they're on the rise in sexual abuse, they're on the rise in apprehension, family violence, and that tells me though, well maybe <federal program> isn't really working in our communities and if not why isn't it? . . . people are strong about, uh, how they feel about <federal program> because it does a lot of good in our communities, but for who? . . . y'know, if we say it's zero to six then let's start helping zero to six because those age groups are definitely on the rise in a lot of those negative issues.

[So it's helping somebody now but it's a different population?]

I think it is, yeah.

[Who do you think it's helping now?]

Well, the youth, for one.

[Like older . . .]

Yeah. Y'know, from between the ages 12 and 17. I know there's a definite impact there, simply because the people we're training and the people we're doing conferences and training sessions for have children that are in those age groups and not necessarily zero to six.

[So they're a little bit beyond]

Right.

Ironically, the federal program might have been having some impact with a group of people that did not fall within the program criteria. The age group that the federal department reportedly intended to target was getting worse.

[So something else happens to families of those with just little kids]
Right.

[something else there ]

Yeah, I think so.

[and they're not as plugged in somehow in the program?]

Yeah. Exactly.

[So a way of getting at those families would be helpful? Targeting those families with, y'know, with little kids.]

Clearly I was trying to find a way to make the program work. After all, there were funding dollars available, if they could only be redirected towards where they were needed. However, I also was not able to see the big picture he was describing.

Well, yeah, and there, I mean, if you look at it in a traditional sense, teaching began at those ages. You taught. You equipped the child for the rest of his or her life before he went on to become y'know, a boy. There's, a period of being a baby and a child where you learn everything, where you equip a child with everything for life, a lot of those values and beliefs and traditions were taught at that young age so that they could carry on for the rest of their life, y'know, and I know growing up myself in traditional, that's where I learned everything was from zero to six, was from that point on, that's how I've become who I am now, is at those very young ages, and I think that was, well I know that was the, the belief behind <federal program> when they targeted that age group because we, our strategy, the First Nations strategy speaks very strongly of traditions and culture and values and the best place to start doing that is with young children, with babies and that's what I think primarily that's what the focus was. And again, if we're missing that component, if we're missing a cultural component or values in our program when we developed the different initiatives maybe we need to start changing our perspective around how we teach people.
He was speaking to an issue that I had listen people argue about in meetings with the federal government, again and again. The federal program developers knew that First Nations people talk about the need to focus on very young children, so the department was delivering funds for such a program on their terms. First Nations were talking about teaching and raising children; the federal program developers were talking about financial accountability for prevention and training program delivery, posters design and video development without the true cultural component – despite the fact that the programs usually were decorated with beautiful First Nations art and titled with words like “circle,” “healing,” and “medicine wheel.” I had collected a number of program pamphlets and paraphernalia that always used words and concepts that were part of and came out of First Nations philosophy. However, the actual definition and practical application of those words and concepts when used by non-First Nations people always took on a connotation and use that coincided with mainstream values and concepts. In this way, the concepts would become subtly twisted and easily assimilated or appropriated into a mainstream program.

During our conversation, the interviewee came back to the problems with federal programming many times. For example,

Epidemic proportions. See and that amazes me because, as Native people we represent less than one percent of the total Canadian population, but in any province, in any province, we’re three to five times higher than the national average on any issue – diabetes, heart attacks, you name it – y’know, and that frustrates me as a First Nations person working in the <program> area because people often, and I heard it the last couple days at <an internal meeting>, y’know, we, y’know, we don’t get money and all this kind of stuff, and I say bullshit because money is not gonna solve anything. You could have billions of dollars. It’s not gonna take away any of the problems because if you look at a traditional sense, you look at the way the strategy talks, <federal program> strategy, and many other strategies similar to it . . . they speak to traditional values and going back to a traditional, holistic approach to healing. Maybe that’s the
alternative. Maybe we really need to study and research our ceremonies, our cultural beliefs, our values and how they were taught, developed, and implemented in our young people because they're not now-a-days, y'know.

He was saying that “speaking to” traditional values was very different than teaching or adhering to traditional values. Later, he said:

... we need to create healthy people to teach it <tradition> as well. And that's where I see that big gap is we often talk about culture and traditions and our healing practices, but yet rarely are they there, y'know, a sweat's a good thing, but it's not the only thing, y'know, sundance is a good thing, but it's not the only thing. We need to get more complex in what were some traditional medicines perhaps and how we take, took care of ourselves ... not just isolated practices, you know. Often we'll burn sweetgrass and we pray at a meeting, and that's good but, I don't know, I guess we're just moving more towards technology and all that kind of stuff, but I think often we forget the fact that if we're gonna talk about healing and tradition, y'know, there needs to be some sort of tie in between the two and often there isn't, y'know. Cause, y'know, our <federal program> training, it's in a hotel, you've got flip charts, you have videos and that's it. Y'know, it's good training. It's all in English, it's from a White person, y'know...

He was talking about the difference between federal program “healing” initiatives and actual, traditional medicine practices. However, he was not objecting particularly to flip charts and technology. He was objecting to the Western values and beliefs inherent in programs developed by non-First Nations people:

Is that traditional? No, it isn't. Is that based on traditional cultural beliefs and values of the community? No, it isn't. You know, it's developed by White people, implemented by White people, facilitated by White people for Indian people, and that's sort of what I mean when we, when I say we jumped into it too fast because we, as First Nations people, had no clue when they say, 'Well here's millions of dollars, start developing your programs.' First thing we did was hire White people to do it, y'know, that happened in ... my area anyway, the Tribal Council. There's White people all over the place in our communities.
Interestingly, the DIAND recently did just that – offered millions of dollars for people to start developing programs for healing (DIAND, 1998a):

On January 7, 1998 the Government of Canada announced it was committing $350 million to support the development of a Healing Strategy to address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the Residential School system. The commitment is part of Gathering Strength – Canada’s Aboriginal Action Plan, which represents a new approach to Aboriginal issues based on a renewed partnership.

What is the Healing Strategy? The Healing Strategy is not a compensation package. Rather, it is a mechanism to support community healing initiatives which can address the legacy of physical and sexual abuse suffered while attending a Residential School. The Healing Strategy is an initiative intended to support community-based healing for Aboriginal people – Inuit, First Nations (on and off reserve) and Métis people – who have been affected by the legacy of physical and sexual abuse in the Residential School system. It is also intended to help Aboriginal individuals and communities start the process of healing and thus improve their health and well-being.

The implication in this press release from DIAND is that no healing has been going on since the inception of the residential school program in Canada, until this moment, when funds were released “to start the process of healing” (my emphasis). Is it possible that when the funds are used up, the department will say that the healing is finished? The level of First Nations psychological dependency on DIAND that is implied by the press release is difficult to miss. In addition, although the money was targeted to “develop a healing strategy,” the practical application of the program is to “support community-based healing for Aboriginal people” by reviewing proposals for “a mix of traditional and non-traditional healing initiatives.” This latter quotation stands as a good example of how a word, “healing,” is being applied indiscriminately by DIAND to both traditional and non-traditional practices.
The interviewee gave an example of what he meant about non-First Nations-based control by using his home community as an example:

... when we first started developing, at least from what I know 10 years ago ... – and I speak from my personal experience, I speak for my own community and my own Tribal Council – 10 years ago, we had directors of <programs> that were White, we had consultants and technicians that were White developing programs for our 14 communities.

[mm]

And, um, and we were one of the first Tribal Councils ... to begin transfer of child and family services, and all the criteria was based out of Medical Services and Health Canada, and it took us, y'know, four or five years to figure out, 'Well, wait a minute. We could have done this on our <laughs> own!'

[mm]

Literally! And when we did figure that out, we said, "Hold it, stop the gears here. We need to slow down and look at this.' And we did.

[So it took you a while to realize that you didn't have to look to them]

Right!

[for the answers.]

And they weren't telling us that. They just kept on doin' what they were doin'.

During a talk, Dr. Eduardo Duran had made a similar comment about how mainstream health services employees “crank out a lot of work and make a lot of money so they can buy things and keep it all going” (Duran, July 3, 1996, Saskatoon) rather than looking at or listening to what the community might really need.
And they weren't telling us that. They just kept on doin' what they were doin'.

[Which was . . .]

Controlling everything, and until our Tribal Council got up and said, 'Wait a minute, can we, we can do this on our own?' The government said, "Yeah." Well why didn't you tell us five years ago? And that whole process began of saying well, you guys get out of our offices. We'll do this ourselves and we did. I'm not saying it hasn't happened. . . . What I am saying is it needs to happen more, and it needs to happen more traditional. That's what I am saying.

[It has to go further.]

Yeah. . . . And it goes back to what I say. There needs to be an alternative approach for this, y'know, for these 60 percent.

[So it sounds like the first step, really, for your Tribal Council was to recognize its own authority]

Right.

[and to, or to realize where it was maybe, uh, going along with another authority that wasn't serving its interests in the best way?]

Right.

[So once that authority turned towards, you know, once the Tribal Council took more control]

Our communities got healthier. There was a definite, obvious sign in our community that things were changing.

[So what happened, like, why do you think]

We implemented our traditional values and beliefs, the whole, it's called usma, which means, its a sacred word in our language. And once we, that was our vision, that was their vision for the whole usma child and family services. Once
we realized the power and potential we could have in our communities we went full force.

[mm]

We got Elders involved, we got youth involved, we got our traditions involved, literally, our ceremonies and traditions were literally involved, our language was hundred percent completely involved and we included that along with the resources we were getting. The sky was the limit, and there was a huge impact on our communities in the last, from 1990 'til present, a definite change, definite obvious change in our communities. We have kids, one of the girls, she’s 12 . . . she was at this . . . youth conference — got up and she spoke, she received a national award. She spoke fluently in <her language>. She sang the song cause of receiving her gift all in her language. I wasn’t able to speak my language til I was 22 and I learned it in university. I didn’t learn it from anybody in my community. But that just goes to show that, that since we started taking control 10, 11 years ago, she’s 12, she’s an obvious impact of our control

[m-hm]

my sister, who’s, uh, in grade seven, be 13, she can speak the language, she can practice, she knows who she is, she knows our history. She’s another example of that impact in our communities and once we control that aspect of our life. And our, kids her age growing up speaking our language fluently when its predicted that <his language> would not go beyond the year 2020. It would be dead by that time. We revived it, we implemented it, and we used outside resources to do that. We matched it with what we could do, you know, within our heart and within our concept of how we view the world. Huge impact, very, very big impact on our communities.

[So you used what outside resources that you had]

Money.

[Money]

<he laughs>
Exactly. We took the treatment centers we had in our areas, the therapists we had in our areas, the counselors we had in our areas under, under those agreements. We said, 'You, you're toast, we want this person in there.' We developed the training. We developed the treatment models. We developed the aftercare and supports and systems within communities.

[m-hm]

Based on usma. Based on who we were as people.

[All delivered by First Nations people?]

Absolutely. Absolutely. And if there weren't First Nations people, then we, again, we developed a training specific, or even, y'know, where there was cultural sensitivity training, you can call it that, to make them understand where we were coming from when we said, "We look at this child as a very sacred gift and not to be messed with. And we want you, who's a White person, to understand that." Y'know, in a very respectful, not in a very blunt way, but in a very respectful way. And that's where, that's where the impact of our Tribal Council and our communities changed. That's not to say that we've done great umpteen things in our communities. Y'know there's still lots of abuse in our communities, there's still a lot of residential issues coming out. The difference from 10 years ago is we're talking about it. We're acting on it. We're doing something about it, y'know, in our way and how we want to do it. How we want to deal with it. And no child within <his Tribal Council> ever, ever goes outside of our Tribal Council in terms of apprehension. Most often the child, him or herself, will stay right in the community. If they can't, they'll go into the next closest community, y'know. It never goes outside the barriers of our traditional land.

[And not into a White foster home, for example?]

Not in White foster homes... at all. Not in city centers, not in White foster homes. And if the kid's in the city then he goes to another Indian family living in the city
you know, and we've taken care, like, our Tribal Council have built three or four Elders', uh, not, not group homes but where Elders can go and live. And there's programs, youth going, they visit, and, y'know, old people don't just sit there waiting to die. They're very actively involved in the community. We take care, we make sure our Elders are healthy cause we, y'know a lot of people speak, "Our Elders are dying off." That's true, cause we're not taking care of them and they're not taking care of themselves. So we, y'know we implemented all aspects of our community once we had that control to do that. We went full force with it.

[So, it sounds like that control enabled people to start caring about themselves and each other]

Absolutely.

[rather than looking to people from outside the community.]

Yeah.

[mm]

Yeah. We literally, people, I remember people, the government would come with criteria for funding, whatever, criteria for programs. Our chiefs literally ripped it <rips a paper> in front of their faces. "It's not gonna happen. You can send us to jail. You can take us to court. Do whatever you want to do, but it's not gonna happen." And that's how strong and adamant they were, and that's how I see Colin and Sandra, I see, you know, the different Vice-Chiefs are that strong in the aspect of Saskatchewan First Nations. And that's why we have the most transfer programs in the country is because of that, you know, they're full force in the belief that we can take care of ourselves. But we need to take time doing that, y'know? And, often I see that we don't, and that's not all our fault. We have, you know, sunsetting and reinvestment, and we have the government, we have to meet deadlines and that kind of stuff, but we need to, again, I go back to the alternative approach that, what's that point of fighting against it when we could develop an alternative approach in our communities that would work with it.
It was a powerful example of self-determination. The community knew that the federal programs were not working, and they decided to take them over, but what were they doing that the federal programs could not do? He illustrated the point.

What I personally think is happening is, uh, there's a huge gap of misunderstanding, well not so much misunderstanding, but just not knowing of, you know I use the example, I was at the ... youth conference,

[m-hm]

and I gave a presentation on residential schools, the effects of residential schools, and the two workshops that I presented, when the youth had a chance to talk, a lot of the comments I heard from them was, 'I know my parents went to residential school but they never talk about it.'

[m-hm]

And I think with ... those sort of comments coming from youth, I think there's a huuuge lack of not knowing what happened in that generation

[m-hm]

because I know a lot of adults that talk about the residential school experience and how they became addicted to whatever and they saw the light and they went to treatment and they healed and they became counsellors and now these are these people who are directors of <programs>, they're, you know they work as counselors ... in communities - that's a wonderful thing - but I think somewhere along the way they lost the vision that, umm, they got so focused on themselves as a generation, and I think that's still happening especially with the residential school issue on the rise that they missed the boat on this generation, the fifth generation of kids growing up today, and I think there needs to be some understanding of history there on behalf of both groups. This generation needs to teach and talk about what happened to them, and this generation here needs to listen and come up with solutions about how to move forward, on those traumatic events that happened to us as Native people.
[So the older generation is healing, they're trying to]

They’re trying to -- very hard -- heal, and I use my, I always use -- like I wouldn’t talk about what anybody else by my own family -- I use my father as an example.

I was surprised that he would mention his father during a conversation about program service delivery. I was trained to keep personal comments and self-disclosure to a studied minimum in professional interactions. I was also trained to weigh the costs and benefits very carefully before providing personal information if requested or required to do so in a professional situation. The role of the psychologist in assessment takes its guidelines from the role of the psychologist in therapy settings:

There is a great all-around similarity between psychological assessment and therapy, and commonality in validation objectives. . . . For example, in one situation we must establish a therapeutic alliance; in the other a diagnostic alliance. "All the concepts that are employed to understand the therapeutic relationship (e.g., alliance, transference, countertransference) are central to the testing process" . . . . To be a good diagnostician, Allen suggests, one must be a good therapist. The reverse would also appear to be true. Assessment and therapy employ very much the same approach to helping people (Tallent, 1992, p. 45).

The stance held between the therapist and the client in psychotherapy typically involves a minimum of self-disclosure on the part of the professional. For example, in the words of Strupp and Binder (1984, p. 49):

Be absolutely honest at all times; never dissimulate. Because most patients have had ample experience with duplicity (double binds), they are often exceptionally sensitive in detecting such qualities in a therapist. Honesty,
however, does not mean uncritical self-disclosure on the therapist's part. The therapist is entitled to privacy, as is the patient.

Even in terms of research, a caveat exists against personal information being shared (Christensen, 1985), although attitudes towards this in research have been changing for the past 20 years (see Jourard, 1974).

Sharing of private information by an interviewee is not, of course, unusual if that private information is being sought out. However, given (1) that this was an interview between two people who might be perceived as more collegial, and given (2) that we were discussing professional issues, and given (3) that I had not asked for private information about this participant's life, the mentioning of his father took me somewhat aback in the moment. Likely the interviewee had weighed carefully what he would share with me, and he, also, was entitled to privacy. However, I was, nonetheless, surprised at this personal example given in this professional, "impersonal" context.

... Very recently in the last two years has he started talkin' to me about what happened to him in residential school. My mother still hasn't and I can respect that I can understand that. But I almost see myself stepping outside of myself and saying, 'Hold on ... wait 'til your Dad grows up so he can, so you can talk to him about what you have to talk about,' and I've told him that, like, 'it's not like I haven't told him that. I've told him things like, 'I'm afraid to get mad at him. I'm afraid to get angry at him for some of the things he's done,' although I've done that in psycho-drama sessions and counselling sessions and workshops where he hasn't been around, and that's been good for my own healing, cause I need to, I don't, I, it's not like I'm just gonna wait until he catches up to me.

[m-hm]

But I think at some point we're gonna come, y'know when he's back here I'm up here, and I'm back here he's up here <designating different positions with his hands>, I think there's gonna come a time when we're actually at the same level and we can move forward on some of these issues as father and son.
[m-hm]

And same with my mom. My mom's just waaay back there yet. A lot of sexual abuse to deal with, a lot of foster home issues to deal with, and I think . . . there needs to be, uuuuh, there's a lot of work that needs to be done there but there also I think, there also needs to be a lot of empathy on both generations part to understand that . . . us as youth are going through a lot of shit right now, y'know, and we'll continue to for a long time yet.

The tenor of our conversation changed with this level of self-disclosure. At the time, I wondered why he was telling me these very private thoughts and details about the lives of his parents and his relationships with them. It was tempting to see the disclosure as weak, as if he was resorting to personal life experience rather than professional training, knowledge, and work experience to inform the issues we were discussing. After all, I was interviewing him because of his professional role in the community, not because of his personal life problems and experience in therapy.

I realized, when I reflected upon my reactions to his disclosure, that I was drawing a sharp distinction between roles in that moment. This was research and we were both professionals participating in a community-based research project. He was not a client, and I was not his therapist. Therefore, the level of personal disclosure in his statements made me a little uncomfortable, like we a crossed a threshold or a boundary that I had not intended to be breached during our conversation. I had planned to talk about issues; he was talking about himself in relationships and therapy. I felt this was unusual, given the parameters for the talk that I had laid out with him in advance. I felt that this was out of place, and it caused me, in my uneasiness, to make judgements about his sense of personal boundaries with others, like maybe he had "poor boundaries." As this project progressed, my understanding of what he had done would change dramatically.
But there's this whole, y'know, this whole generation, y'know, 10,000 kids by 1965 were in residential schools in this country. Lots of healing needs to be done there, and there's a lot of history teaching that needs to be done there in looking at reviving what <federal program> calls a strategy to prevent kids from <delinquency>. Y'know, and I think that's a key issue, I think it's a real key issue and about how people both political and <program> areas needs to start looking at bridging those things and in ICFS, in Justice, in Education, because all of those things were affected, they were disrupted, or moved or turned when the children were taken away from our homes.

[So you see that relationship between, uh, the residential school trauma that the older generation went through and the gap, that causing a gap between them and their kids . . .]

Absolutely.

[and then their kids being then lost or somehow not understanding . . .]

Yeah.

[and so they're on, like, separate paths or separate in. . .]

Separate families, cause, I mean, statistically, you look at Canada, 60 percent of the whole population, the Native population, are under the age of 25 years, 40 percent are under 15 years

[mm]

and, about 75 percent are 35 years and under

[mm]

so we have young people having kids, and then yet even before they're, we have kids having kids.

[Yeah.]
And that concerns me because, um, my generation, still, I mean, we're just starting, and I just talked to a youth group yesterday between the ages of 12 and 17 who had no clue what a residential school is

[m-hm]

Y'know, and that concerns me because I keep saying history needs to be taught because if we don't know that history we can't move forward on a lot of issues unless we can relate it to something, we can relate the pain or the trauma to something. [So you're seeing the kids as being affected by the residential school trauma, yet, but not really knowing about it]

And not knowing why

[not knowing why what's happening to them]

Yeah.

[not understanding . . .]

Yeah. And that's where stories like 'my uncle abused me when I was three, four, or five, that's when my grandpa abused me, when I was so and so and so and so. They were in residential school.' I never attended residential school, yet I was sexually abused as a boy and when I first started talking and discussing on that issue, dealing with it, I needed to relate it to something

[mm]

y'know I needed, for my personal healing I needed to say, 'why did this happen to me?'

[Make some sense of it.]

Yeah. And when I figured out why this person abused me and studied this history, he was in residential school for many, many years

[mm]
and his father was in residential school for many, many years, and I began to understand and link things together and say, y'know, I had a lot of anger towards him, he's dead now, but I had a lot of anger towards him and needed to deal with that anger and part of that anger went to that relating. It was like a familiar body in, in the pile. I could relate to it. So I think kids now-a-days especially, y'know, young kids have all this anger inside about, y'know, whether it's being Indian or having no identity or having low self-esteem, whatever you wanna call it. I think kids try and relate it to something, especially First Nations kids

[mm]

but if you can't relate it to something, if you don't know you're in it, you're not gonna know how to get out of it because a lot of people coming over from . . . residential school is, is a small potato of this whole system of First Nations issues. It's just a small piece, but, y'know, when kids look at those kind of things, and they look at the color of their skinin, and they hear people calling 'em, y'know, 'Go play hockey over at, y'know, Wanskewin's there, it's where the Indians are supposed to play.' They hear those kind of racial overtones all the time, but yet they look at their skin and they, y'know, well, how am I Indian? Why am I on a reserve. Why am I going through this? Why is my community such, y'know, blah, blah . . . and if they can't relate it to history, how are they gonna know how to get out of it? How are they gonna know to say I'm gonna move beyond this and go forward on these issues'? Y'know, whether it's not drinking, whether it's volunteering, whatever, counselling, treatment, whatever.

[So, teaching them and helping them to understand the context and the history of their lives . . . ]

Right.

[So that they don't see things as just their fault or . . . ]

Or perpetuating what they see.

[Or perpetuating what they see. Right.]

Yeah. Exactly, cause
[in terms, of, like, bad models . . . ]

Yeah. Yeah.

His rationale for why he had been abused was that the perpetrator had been in residential school. The rationale seemed weak and not necessarily justified given that not all people who went through residential schools became perpetrators of abuse. I knew from conversations with other First Nations people and from listening to Elders speak that there was a real, strong, coherent, and cohesive rationale for people’s behavior in oppressive situations. I also knew that there were traditional forms of treatment that would be able to heal people without perpetuating or increasing the hurt and anger that they were feeling.

The interviewee had said, “if you don’t know you’re in it, you’re not gonna know how to get out of it.” This interviewee was talking about the need for communities to go back to traditional practices. However, he actually was talking about himself in very mainstream terms. He was describing his personal sense of “relating,” “volunteering,” doing “psychodrama,” and “therapy” at the same time that he was telling others they need to become more grounded in their cultural traditions for healing. Although he knew, or claimed to know, the ethical foundations and intellectual connections between his life experiences and his spirituality, he persisted in talking about his own path to healing in very mainstream terms and from a modern “abuse” framework.

In effect, he was using what First Nations people might call a “White” way of thinking when talking to me about these issues. Possibly he did this so that he could have a better conversation or interview with me. Possibly he did this so that he could seem to me like he knew what he was talking about by sharing an academic-discipline based language or jargon. Or possibly he had convinced himself that his post-secondary, mainstream training was right. I am not certain what made this young man, who was
very knowledgeable about his own heritage, revert back to discussing mainstream approaches to treatment during our interview. Perhaps it was his own colonized thinking manifesting itself in the interview with me.

We were doing a . . . video. I was working at <a First Nations institution> and an 11 year old girl spoke up, and she says, 'I may not have gone through as much as the adults here are talking about, but I've gone through some things and I'm a child and I'm still healing.' She related what her mother was going through. She related what her older community members were going through. She could identify that 'I'm going through the same thing and I'm still healing.' She could, y'know, because she saw positive people in her life healing from the past, therefore, she could copy and do the same thing and have support for each other, in the whole process.

[mm-hmm]

Y'know, and I think that's what kids need -- to physically see, they need to emotionally hear it, they need to spiritually experience it, and they need to mentally understand who we are as First Nations people, whether you're Métis, Cree, Saulteaux, half-breed, whatever you wanna call yourself. There needs to be an understanding of the history as it relates to all issues like Health, Justice, Education, y'know, uh, family services.

He had a real feeling for what young people in his community needed from a First Nations perspective, but when it came to talking about himself, he spoke the language of mainstream. It was a disconcerting clash in his discourse, and it made me doubt whether he really was grounded in his culture. I also began to doubt whether somebody like me (a mainstream-trained professional who had spent a limited amount of time on reservations or working with First Nations people) would have the knowledge and the capacity to help children from this heritage understand their own philosophy and associated world view when I, myself, did not have an adequate enough understanding of it.
These were big questions, and I was not sure how I would be able to assist a First Nations person in tackling them, should that person come to me, when I, myself, was just beginning to learn what some of the issues were. If mainstream psychologists were to assess a First Nations person without knowing the history and worldview of that person's community and people, they would never understand the relationship between personal development and community history that this interviewee was trying to point out to me. They would never be able to appropriately interpret the person's behavior, intentions, and motivations. They would not be able to assist a First Nations person, if that person came to them in need of support, particularly if that First Nations person did not recognize the impact of colonization and residential schools on his or her personal development and history.

In mentally reviewing what I was told about assessment of First Nations in graduate school, I remembered professors telling me that sometimes First Nations people's test results looked different from those of other ethnic or racial groups. They were different, but why? Psychologists point to culture, but not necessarily to specific causative elements within culture, how cultures change over time, and how historical events have an impact on the development of people within that culture.

Psychologists are told to "consider" culture or to "take it into account" but rarely is anything specific said about what to take into account. For example, the MMPI has been cited as the psychological test most frequently used by the Indian Health Service in the United States of America (Silk-Walker, Walker, & Kivlaha, 1988, as cited in Dana, 1993), despite its unknown utility with these people (Dana, 1990). In discussing the use of the MMPI-2 with American Indian clients, Graham (1990, p. 192) wrote:

Although American Indians tended to score higher than whites on some clinical scales, there was no clear pattern to these differences across the studies. No data have been published concerning differences between white subjects and
Hispanic, American Indian, or Asian-American subjects. However, given the continuity between the MMPI-2 and the original MMPI, it seems appropriate to be very cautious in using the MMPI-2 with members of these groups.

Butcher (1990, p. 21) wrote:

The interpretation of any psychological test proceeds best in the context of a personal history. Important aspects of the case – for example, ethnic group membership, education level, marital status, and the presence of a precipitating stressor or trauma – are important variables to consider when MMPI-2 profiles are interpreted. Errors of interpretation can occur if MMPI-2 profiles, or other psychological test protocols, are considered apart from non-test parameters.

However, these writings and advisements from Graham and Butcher seemed empty when they wrote about “culture.” They did not tell me what to look for in “culture,” what to understand, and how to interpret what I was learning about the history, culture, and heritage of First Nations persons. Perhaps only First Nations people can give non-First Nations people that emic, intracultural advisement about what to look for and how to understand them.

Listening to this interviewee, I began to learn about specific problems, historical and current, which are having an impact on interpersonal relationships and personal development in First Nations communities. The word “culture” was taking on very specific meaning that had deep cognitive, interpersonal, and emotional value as well as significant historical meaning to it. In the context of the interviewee’s words, the definition of culture was not so vague. When people talk about their own cultures and heritages, they are referring to much more than just a word, “culture.” They’re talking about relationships, relatives, and bonds that tie people together across generations and are based in a particular worldview and set of customs and practices. Graham and
Butcher's words could never capture the richness of the interviewee's words when discussing "culture."

My mother-in-law works in social services, she has been for 27 years, and she often talked, y'know, . . . she says often kids don't understand why they are in that situation, and part of her job is to allways, constantly, and consistently explain, well, this is why, and this is why, and this is why, and it's almost like she's sticking up for her, y'know, for the kids' parents or guardians in a sense, that they should have done in the first place.

[m-hm]

y'know, and if families or parents or guardians or whatever aren't healthy enough to do that, then there needs to be a system in place in communities for kids to understand that this is why your community is the way it is, y'know, this is why there's lots of unemployment, this is why there's lots of so and so and so.

[m-hmm. So it's kind of a two-fold thing, first learning what are the issues or assessing what are the issues in community in terms of the history of that community in particular, so what are, say the history of residential schools or the history of . . . you were saying, for example, race relations or race-racial things that kids hear, trying to assess what are the issues and then teaching kids about those issues so that they can build a healthier model for themselves ]

Mm-hmm.

I realized that we were not just talking about assessment or psychosocial service delivery: We were talking about this man's life and the life, history, heritage, and difficulties of every person living in his community and in every First Nations community. What to me was a "federal program" to him was a "cultural stranglehold" (Katz, June 22, 1999, Saskatoon). What to me was "having a culturally sensitive assessment" to him was more like appropriating a few, isolated cultural practices into an
otherwise mainstream approach. What to me was the variable “culture,” to him was his life, heritage, and the future of his own children and community.

Nevertheless, I thought back about the apparent doubts he had expressed at the start of the interview:

[But there was some hesitation when we first started talking about whether a tool like this would help that or whether people could do that, it sounds like people have done that.]

People have. But what has not been accomplished is an assessment that would look at bringing services streamlined, where we don’t create barriers for ourselves as First Nations people when we wanna deliver service to a particular individual, and that would be neat if we could create something, an assessment or tool like that, where it’s streamlined from Justice, Education, right to Health, as compared to the system <the province> has or the government has where there’s often four or five referrals happening ‘til a kid finally gets help.

[mm]

If we can create something like that from a First Nations point that’d be awesome.

[So you’re saying now kids’ll go to one place and get assessed and then another place]

Yeah.

[... What’s been your experience of that?]

That’s been my experience. I’ll give you one example, when I was working off-reserve here in Saskatoon, I got a call from a social worker, uh, 11 year old girl had been referred 56 times. She was a chronic sniffer. They didn’t know what to do with her, so everybody just kept passing. ‘Oh, it’s not mine’ and so, fill out another form, refer it.

[Send her somewhere else.]
Send her somewhere else. She'd been in care 20 odd times. The families couldn't deal with it.

[And the, uh, and these places didn't ever talk to each other?]

Didn't, pick up the phone and talk. Y'know, and if we can eliminate that in our own communities, right on <he laughs>. Let's do that.

Then, later, he gave another example of what he thought of when I said “assessment”:

They barge into the community, saying we're taking your kid, we need to fill out this form and sign it, ship the kid off to treatment . . .

[So you've seen that happen.]

Oh, absolutely.

[And where does that, like, what, how does that come about that somebody just barges in like that?]

Well, somebody in the community would say, well . . . example, <the name of a reserve>. I worked in <a province>, the worker lived in <a major city away from the reserve>. She visited the community once a week, stayed for two days, and in those two days she'd round up every trip five or six kids. But she'd come in <the pointed> that kid needs a home, that kid needs a home, that kid needs a home . . . sign the papers, kids'd be just <he laughs> shipped off the very next day. And I've seen that happen over and over again and even in my own reserve.

[So how is that assessment done? Like . . .]

I have no idea. They had their own personal, sort of, assessment forms and

[Yeah.]

risk, and . . . whatever <he laughs>, y'know, and the parents needed to sign 'em obviously and they would, cause, y'know, the parents were alcoholics, they partied all night, 'Hey, right on, I don't have to deal with my kid, there you go."
Y'know.

[So they were just taken away.]

Yeah.

[And the treatment is . . . not integrated with the community at all?]

No. So when the kid comes home from treatment, back to the same old.

[Do you still see, some, like, that kind of stuff happening?]

Oh, absolutely. Yeah. Absolutely.

When I asked him about “assessment,” what he thought of was a social worker coming onto a reserve, making judgments about which children needed a home or treatment, and then taking them out of the community without looking at what was really happening in that community and why alcoholism, unemployment, ill health, and violence might be so prevalent. The implication was that the social worker saw the child as a target for intervention separate from the child’s parents, families, history, and problems in the community. The individual child could be removed from that “situation” and rehabilitated.

The view of the child as an entity separate and individual from the family and community is central to Clinical Psychology. I recall a criticism that Kessen (1997, 1979) made of modern Child Psychology:

Hovering over each of <Psychology’s> traditional beliefs mentioned thus far is the most general and, in my view, the most fundamental entanglement of technical child psychology with the implicit commitments of American culture.
The child -- like the Pilgrim, the cowboy, and the detective on television -- is invariably seen as a free-standing isolable being who moves through development as a self-contained and complete individual. Other similarly self-contained people -- parents and teachers -- may influence the development of children, to be sure, but the proper unit of developmental study is the child alone. The ubiquity of such radical individualism in our lives makes the consideration of alternative images of childhood extraordinarily difficult (p. 7).

From a mainstream perspective, the view of the child as a separate entity from everything and everyone around him or her justifies the removal of a child from family and community without a deep and realistic understanding of the ramifications this type of move can have on a collective people. It is an ideology that parallels justifications for removing children and placing them in residential schools earlier this century.

Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun (1997) have identified this ideology as "methodological individualism (MI)".

The fundamental notion of MI can be stated quite simply: it is "the view in social science according to which all phenomena must be accounted for in terms of what individuals think, choose, and do. . . ." MI is a form of reductionism, one which says that complex, orderly phenomena (like economies, institutions, wars, etc.) are built up from orderly phenomena that involve individuals, and what individuals are capable of doing. Thus, there is an implicated causal order, in that the variability of the more complex phenomena (wars; depressions) are ultimately the result of what individual people think and do. . . . The problem is that this way of thinking is so endemic to Western social sciences that even those who "intellectually" reject it embrace it in practice.

The mental health worker who takes children out of communities thinks he or she is doing so to help the individual children, to give them therapy and a better home. This
benign, seemingly altruistic stance is similar to the common rationale given for residential schools, as developed by Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun, after talking with very many people in Canada about the schools:

Residential Schools were created out of the largess of the federal government and the missionary imperatives of the major churches as a means of bringing the advantages of Christian civilisation to Aboriginal populations. With the benefit of late-20th century hindsight, some of the means with which this task was undertaken may be seen to have been unfortunate, but it is important to understand that this work was undertaken with the best of humanitarian intentions. Now, in any large organisation, isolated incidents of abuse may occur, and such abuses may have occurred in some Indian Residential Schools. In any event, individuals who attended Residential Schools now appear to be suffering low self-esteem, alcoholism, somatic disorders, violent tendencies, and other symptoms of psychological distress (called "Residential School Syndrome"). While these symptoms seem endemic to Aboriginal Peoples in general (and not limited to those who attended Residential School), this is likely to have come about because successive generations of attendees passed along, as it were, their personal psychological problems to their home communities and, through factors such as inadequacy of parenting skills, perpetuated the symptomology, if not the syndrome. In order to heal the rift the Residential School experience may have created between Aboriginal Peoples and Canadian society at large, and in order to heal those individuals who still suffer the consequences.
of their school experiences, it is necessary and appropriate to establish formally the nature of Residential School Syndrome, causally link the condition to Residential School abuses (physical, sexual, or emotional), determine the extent of its influence in Aboriginal populations, and suggest appropriate individual and community interventions that will bring about psychological and social health (Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun, 1997).

This general explanation of the residential school system is similar to the Canadian government's own, very sterile, account:

The origins of the residential school system predate Confederation and in part grew out of Canada's missionary experience with various religious organizations. The Federal Government began to play a role in the development and administration of this school system as early as 1874, mainly to meet its obligation, under the Indian Act, to provide an education to Aboriginal people, as well as to assist with their integration into the broader Canadian society.

The term 'residential school' generally refers to a variety of institutions which have existed over time, including: industrial schools, boarding schools, student residences, hostels, billets and residential schools. These schools were located in every province and territory, except New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. At any one time, there were no more than 100 such schools in operation. It is estimated that approximately 100,000 children attended these schools over the years in which they were in operation.

The Government operated nearly every school in partnership with various religious organizations until April 1, 1969, when the Government assumed full responsibility for the school system. Most residential schools ceased
to operate by the mid-1970's, with only seven remaining open through the 1980's. The last federally run residential school in Canada closed in Saskatchewan in 1996 (DIAND, 1998b).

However, this rationale has been sharply criticised and a new rationale for residential schools was proposed to the Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (Chrisjohn, Young, and Maraun, 1994; see also Canada, 1996):

Residential Schools were one of many attempts at the genocide of the Aboriginal Peoples inhabiting the area now commonly called Canada. Initially, the goal of obliterating these peoples was connected with stealing what they owned (the land, the sky, the waters, and their lives, and all that these encompassed); and although this connection persists, present-day acts and policies of genocide are also connected with the hypocritical, legal, and self-delusional need on the part of the perpetrators to conceal what they did and what they continue to do. A variety of rationalisations (social, legal, religious, political, and economic) arose to engage (in one way or another) all segments of Euro-Canadian society in the task of genocide. For example, some were told (and told themselves) that their actions arose out of a Missionary Imperative to bring the benefits of the One True Belief to savage pagans; others considered themselves justified in land theft by declaring that the Aboriginal Peoples were not putting the land to "proper" use; and so on. The creation of Indian Residential Schools followed a time-tested method of obliterating indigenous cultures, and the psychosocial consequences these schools would have on Aboriginal Peoples were well understood at the time of their formation. Present-day symptomology found in Aboriginal Peoples and societies does not constitute a distinct psychological condition, but is the well known and long-studied response of human beings living under conditions of severe and prolonged oppression. Although there is no doubt that individuals
who attended Residential Schools suffered, and continue to suffer, from the
effects of their experiences, the tactic of pathologising these individuals,
studying their condition, and offering "therapy" to them and their communities
must be seen as another rhetorical maneuver designed to obscure (to the world at
large, to Aboriginal Peoples, and to Canadians themselves) the moral and
financial accountability of Euro-Canadian society in a continuing record of
Crimes Against Humanity.

When I had asked this interviewee about assessments, I had evoked in him a
series of thoughts about procedures that results in children being taken into provincial
services and systems. He envisioned social workers apprehending children from the
reserve. What I had done, in fact, was to evoke a whole history of “assessment” and
apprehension that he and all First Nations people know about all too well. The impact of
child apprehension from First Nations families had and continues to have profound
ramifications, both for the people left behind on reserve and for their children who
become subjected to forced assimilation into mainstream Canadian society.

I have tried to reflect, as a mother, upon the reality of residential schools: The
thought of an official of church or state coming to my door and telling me that my
daughter had to come with them. The taking of my daughter. Not being able to see her.
Not knowing what was happening to her. Or worse, knowing where she went and what
was happening – abuse, assimilation, the erasing of her identity. If this happened to me
and my child, something inside of me would die. The pain would be too much to bear.
If this happened to all the families in my community, how would we continue to support
each other in our grief and pain? What would it feel like to suddenly live in a
community when the children were gone?
Why is this called genocide? Canada is a signatory to the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. Article 2 of the “Genocide Convention,” as it is commonly referred to, states the following:

In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;
(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
(e) Forcible transferring children of the group to another group.

The problem with the convention is that it defines genocide as the intent to destroy a group. Although residential school officials and health officials would never admit the intent to destroy First Nations, ample evidence exists in Canadian historical annals documenting purposeful intent to deal with what federal officials called “the Indian problem.” Senior bureaucrat and Deputy Superintendent General of the Department of Indian Affairs in the early 1900's, Duncan Campbell Scott, said:

I want to get rid of the Indian problem . . . . I do not want to pass into the citizens’ class people who are paupers . . . when they are able to take their position as British citizens or Canadian citizens, to support themselves, and stand alone. That has been the whole purpose of Indian education and advance since the earliest times. . . . Our object is to continue until there is not a single Indian in Canada that has not been absorbed into the body politic, and there is no Indian question, and no Indian department” (INAC, 1978, as cited in Richardson, 1993; also see Chrisjohn, Young, & Maraun, 1994, 1997).
Members of the Department of English at the University of Toronto have described Duncan Campbell Scott as a poet who, through his position as Deputy Superintendent of the Department of Indian Affairs, "developed an understanding of and sympathy with the native peoples of Canada (Lancashire, 1998)." However, "from 1913 to 1932, Scott was responsible for the implementation of the most repressive and brutal assimilation programs Canada ever levied against First Nations peoples (Cullingham, 1995). His main aim was to save money for the Canadian government and get rid of First Nations culture altogether in order to end the "Indian problem" (Richardson, 1993). Richardson (1993, p. 130) wrote:

I have seen enough aboriginal communities, and learned enough of their history, to know that the onslaught against them has not been perpetrated only by federal legislation. Aboriginal people have been taken advantage of by their neighbours, by municipal and provincial governments, by people who operate and work for business enterprises, and even by many of those who have come among them promising to help, such as missionaries, teachers and officials (and journalists, of course). The attacks on aboriginal people, the efforts to destroy their economy, undermine their religions and beliefs, and to eliminate their languages, have been a communal enterprise, entered into with varying degrees of vigour and enthusiasm by most Euro-Canadians who have dealt with them.

I am aware that this is a harsh indictment, and many Canadians will refuse to accept it. Yet I believe that, although officially colonialism lies far in our past, in daily practice we continue to apply colonial policies within our hinterland where most aboriginals live. . . . The formal instrument for this crude politics of oppression has always been the Indian Act, whose implementation has impoverished Indian people, reducing them to a dangerous state of social alienation and psychological dependency. This objective appears to have been
pursued with, as they say in the criminal courts, deliberate intent – at least by the bureaucracy.

I had asked this interviewee about assessment, and he had told me about much more than the assessment process. He told me about the relationship between First Nations people and federal program developers. He told me about the relationship between parents and provincial mental health workers. He told me about the relationship of assessment to genocide. When we started the interview, I had told him about how I saw assessment:

The process of coming to a decision about programming for people is called "assessment." Assessment means gathering information that will help the assessor understand what that person requires to live in a good way. A good assessment should be able to inform a plan of action that will help a person. The effectiveness and benefit of every type of program depends on the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the assessment that leads to a person being placed in a program. Poor assessments may lead to poor program placements and failure to make progress in a case.

During the interview, he told me about the impact of provincial and federal programs and assessments on people from his communities. I compared what I had written about assessments to what the "standard account" was of residential schools (Chrisjohn, Young, & Maraun, 1997):

Residential Schools were created out of the largess of the federal government and the missionary imperatives of the major churches as a means of bringing the advantages of Christian civilisation to Aboriginal populations. With the benefit of late-20th century hindsight, some of the means with which this task was undertaken may be seen to have been unfortunate, but it is important to
understand that this work was undertaken with the best of humanitarian intentions. Now, in any large organisation, isolated incidents of abuse may occur, and such abuses may have occurred in some Indian Residential Schools. Of course the tremendous number of reports of abuse and other horrific experiences that have to come out about residential schools indicates that the abuse certainly did not occur in “isolated incidents.” However, I wondered about the mental health practitioner’s role in supporting genocidal policies. A psychologist might argue that removing a child from a home is not genocidal. However, when a discipline like Psychology or Social Work can use professional authority to impose a worldview on a group of people and then take their children away from them without considering the larger social problems in the clan or community, then the taking of the child stands as a direct attempt to resocialize and assimilate the child into the dominant culture. In Canada, the dominant cultures are English and French. This type of practice reflects values of malevolent beneficence. In fact, the paragraph about the rationale for residential schools could be rewritten to describe the mental health disciplines’ rationale and justification for their continued practice of working with First Nations people without really learning about them. Rewriting the residential school description with an emphasis on mainstream psychosocial services illustrates the close parallels between the rationales used to support both residential schools and psychosocial assessments with First Nations people.

Psychological assessment and therapy were created out of the cumulative research of psychologists, social workers, and other health care professionals as a means of bringing the advantages of modern medical and psychological advances to Aboriginal populations. With the benefit of early-20th century hindsight, some of the means with which this task was undertaken may be seen to have been unfortunate, but it is important to understand that this work was
undertaken with the best of humanitarian intentions. Now, in any large organisation, isolated incidents of abuse may occur, and such abuses may have occurred during some child and family assessments.

I realized that when I gave this interviewee my description of the philosophy of psychological assessment, I was introducing him to the same type of utopian rhetoric that was completely opposite to his experience of assessments on reserve. According to this interviewee, the manner in which assessments are actually carried out and the real-life impact that these assessments have had on people he had known had been devastating, genocidal, and nothing like what I had described to him in my handout on assessment.
CHAPTER 8: Second Interview

_We know where we want to go. It's how to get there often that slows us down._

- Interviewee #2

I began the second interview in the same manner as the first. I showed the interviewee the handout on assessment that I had prepared, and we began to talk about assessment. This interviewee had a Master's Degree in Social Work, and he had been working for provincial and First Nations psychosocial and educational agencies for many years.

This interviewee started out by complaining about social services assessments performed on children and youth brought into provincial institutions, particularly young offender institutions:

I'm disturbed about the way Social Services assesses young people when they come in the institutions. I used to be a part of that system too, so I know how it's done. Effectively there's no assessment done. These kids walk in there, they come there for six months to two years, even three years and it's really just a very crude social assessment. . . . There's no extensive assessment in any way of where these kid's are at. It's very poor. It's poorly done. They don't assess for a lot of the health problems that we know that these young people have

[m-hm]

There's a high, I think there's a high indication of fetal alcohol syndrome

[m-hm]

and "F" "A", the, uh FAS effects, I think it's called, FAE?

[Yeah]

FAE, FAE?
Yeah, there's no work done on that at all. As a result, the type of program these kids have is all behavioral. It's behaviorally oriented.

and it's assuming that kids can comprehend what people are saying to them and that in order to participate in the behavioral program you have to have the ability to problem solve and to be able to have the, (sighs). I don't think these kids all have the ability to problem solve the way the behavioral program suggests you should do that, and so they just take these kids, bang, you get 'em right into a program that's, "Okay, these are your problems, you have a problem with anger, you have a problem with authority, you have a problem with socializing"

okay but how do they know those problems ... in order to arrive at that they haven't done their homework

Yes, it's behavior. It's gotta be more, I think, more exhaustive one, ... and because these kids come from First Nations communities, I think ... they need to have more of a cultural perspective on these assessments. I say it should be incorporated into the assessments. It shouldn't be solely what it is, but I think it should be a part of the assessment process ...

This interviewee was talking about integration of First Nations and mainstream perspectives. He felt the cultural component should be "incorporated into the assessments." I wondered how that would work.

I mean, even attention deficit disorder. How many of our young people have attention deficit disorders? If they had attention deficit disorders, maybe they can't sit in the classroom

or maybe they're hyper

right? ... I think there's gotta be a more comprehensive assessment that they're gonna do, cause otherwise they're just guessing what these kids need, and they're making these kids do these things, and kids can't do them. They don't do them. They <the workers> think they're <the kids are> reacting to authority

and acting out
and they get penalized

He was talking about psychological diagnoses. As he was talking, I was thinking about Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, behavior modification programs, problem solving approaches, mental retardation, and cognitive capacity. An entire body of psychological literature was referenced in my mind, and I began to make associations between what he was saying and what I had learned in graduate school. He had mentioned the importance of culture, but I felt a little stymied because I was not sure how culture was going to help with a child who had severe FAS or FAE. To me at the time, the medical and cognitive issues overrode cultural concerns.

in the back of my mind I’ve been wanting to get a hold of somebody and . . . it just requires me to write a letter to somebody to do a study. . . . Apparently, I can work with a native agency that would be willing to do a model or do a pilot project on assessing these kids,

[m-hm]

going in there and doing assessments and then comparing that with how they do assessments.

[m]

Well they don’t.

[m-hm]

They don’t exist.

[m]

They can’t really say that they do assessments, cause I don’t really think it meets the – I think that there’s gotta be certain factors in an assessment. I don’t think that these people consider them at all.

A pilot project sounded like an interesting idea. This interviewee was not just complaining about the system: He wanted to do empirical research to demonstrate where the problems were. It seemed intriguing to me.

[So what do you think they’re missing?]
What do I think they're
[It sounds like there's something missing in what they're doing]
Yeah.
[they're either doing nothing or very little it sounds like]
I think they're only looking at the behavioral
[m-hm]
aspect
[So just what the kid does.]
Yeah. I think there's some medical issues
[m-hm]
I think there's, uh, some intellectual issues
[m-hm]
I think there's all these. They need to check for alcohol syndrome, attention deficit disorders.
At the time, it sounded to me like what the youth needed were more in-depth medical and psychological assessments for cognitive problems and medical disorders, but what did that have to do with culture? Thinking back to what interviewee #1 had told me, I realized that he had not mentioned medical and cognitive issues at all. I began to think, at the time, that interviewee #2 might be more attuned to modern issues in assessment.

now, having... gone to federal institutions and talking to forty to a hundred inmates on two occasions now
[m-hm]
they're very concerned about the MMP one and two tests that are done
[m-hm]
cause they feel that they practice their culture, and their culture says it's okay to talk to spirits. The test talks about, asks that question.
[m-hm]
They feel that when they were brought into the federal institutions, and they're goin' through an assessment state... they feel that because they want to practice
their cultural ways that also can be used against them by these two tests... and then that follows them around and that decides what kind of person they are, maybe, or what their problems are and, as a result, they have to take all these programs

[So that test... helps a judgment to be made of them that their practices are bad or wrong or there's something wrong with them?]

Well, that their behavior, I guess, it's manifested in their behavior that it's got certain values, I guess

[m-hm]

okay, now, I guess, as a professional person working for an Indian government, I can agree with that? on the other hand, I also know that many of these guys minimize, they cannot face the problem that, or face the fact that they have done some pretty scary things

[m-hm]

so they seem to deny, they refuse to deal with the issue

[m-hm]

their issues

[m-hm]

and, I guess, as someone who's try'n'a advocate for resources to go into communities, we have an obligation to our Indian people to make sure that we don't set these communities up, that... we're as concerned as anybody else is about safety of community members

[m-hm]

and we wanna come up with solutions, or we wanna come with assessing people our way... I guess, we'd like to determine how they would be, if they really are serious about their healing path

[mm]

if they say they are.

[m-hm]

So how do we look at ensuring that these guys are indeed the best candidates for us to support their release into communities?

He was talking about adult assessment and, using the MMPI as an example, he was telling me that formalized testing was problematic because it categorized people according to certain behaviors that reflected values different than those of First Nations people. He was
telling me that the way a discipline judges behavior reflects that discipline's values. He clearly was unhappy with how mainstream systems were judging behavior, and he came back to this point a number of times during the interview:

I wanna tell ya, all these behavioral models, right, like guide group interaction you know, the kids telling us that they can manipulate the system, these little kids, they know how to manipulate, they know how to set each other up

[mm]

and staff,

[m-hm]

really, well... they're not supposed to do it for treatment. They're supposed to do it for control... behavior modification I guess is the

[You mean the levels and things like that?]

The levels are part of it. They're all interfaced, the level system and the guided group positive peer culture

[Yeah.]

Right?

[m-hm]

Those things, kids have said that they can manipulate those things

[m-hm]

so they can say, 'Okay, let's get this guy here.' Y'know, they're allowed to do that

[Like at the 6 o'clock meetings]

Yeah. Yeah.

[and stuff like that?]

Mm

[Say things? Get together and say things?]

Yeah, Yeah, and I think that, I mean I can understand, I support guided group because... if you deal with every kid, if there's, I understand the efficiency of it and I think that's a good thing, but I think that there's gotta be some kind of quality control, that somebody has to ensure that these groups don't get carried away, you know, I think, I think being a former institution worker in a place where it <quality control>wasn't used it really was bad...
[And the kids can see through it]

Yeah.

[and manipulate it]

Yeah.

And later, he said:

... Behavior modification still needs to be there, but I think that we provide opportunities to get these kids to really try to, you know ... get the kind of counselling I think they need that's missing in there.

The interviewee also described his view that the staff in institutions use the institutional programming as therapeutic when they are not training to provide therapeutic programs:

[So what is that, do you think <that's missing from the programs and making kids worse>?

What is that? I think institutions have a real hard time trying to provide a professional service. It's more warehousing

[m-hm]

okay? Uh, getting specialized services like drug and alcohol services is getting better but it's still not there

[m-hm]

Right? ... Can institutions really get at the issues that these kids have or, I mean a kid can keep himself together because he gets so much points for his room, he gets so many for keeping his room clean. I wonder how much room confinement, like I think there was an interesting study, someone said ... you have to get room confinement along with that kid. In other words, if you're prepared to give a kid room confinement, then you have to have the same amount of room confinement as a staff person. I wonder, the issue of room confinement on a kid, if that's ever been studied about ... how damaging that might be, okay? some kids?

[m-hm]

Like how that can drive kids further into their shells ... I think the Young Offender Act says they're s'posed to be, these are special needs kids, it says that, but I ... don't know too many that ... really have the programs.

[So you don't think that that's really what's happening in the institutions.]

No. I think it's mostly warehousing. It's warehousing and I don't think the staff have the skills. They don't have the skills to do this stuff.

[So is that for all kids or just First Nations kids?]
All kids, not just First Nations kids, all kids... I think we need to come up with a process for assessing the ability of staff and whether staff are in the state of mind to be helpers. I would hazard a guess that the majority of institutional staff are burned out and they're only there, in fact literature says that the institutional programs are for the staff, not for the kids, that's documented.

[hmm]

Right? So the shift work... the shift patterns, the program that goes on there is actually designed to meet the needs of the staff and not kids.

[not the kids in there]

Absolutely. No... and I mean, hell, we're supposedly in a province that is enlightened cause the programs are from the social services model versus if you go to Alberta or B.C. where they're from, you know, they're run by justice

[more of a]

right?

[corrections model]

Yeah, a corrections model,

[m-hm]

so we're supposedly enlightened over here and, and you know I mean I've been to <a young offender institution in B.C.>, right, and that's a real shit place if I ever saw one, for kids, so I know we're not near that but still... I think Indian people have to be very vocal and we're trying to be that wise for these kids... We're getting shit on lots. I mean, hell, they just had a meeting with our union here last week...

[m-hm]

Oh Yeah, you know, cause they're thinking we're gonna take away their jobs, that's another issue altogether but... we're talking about assessments here... I guess in the context of treating kids, but even the way the system assesses whether or not kids should go into custody

[m-hm]

I think it's, I think it's atrocious. We look... across Canada here. We're probably the third highest country, only Russia and... the States... We have a high incarceration rate... .

The Lynn report... said it's more likely for a young male, Indian male, to go to jail than to graduate from high school. I still believe that's still there today, and we're trying like hell to convince funding agencies, we're looking at legislation to divert these kids, all, most of our Indian kids away unless they're, like, seriously damaged kids, right? I really believe that we could develop the community resources and work with these kids in the community rather than having them go in the institution.
[where they, you’re worried that they’d be damaged . . . in the institution]
Well, where they’re damaged by staff that don’t have the skills,
[m-hm]
they’re not properly assessed, staff are burned out, kids manipulate the system
[m-hm]
that’s four right there. Good reasons
[mm]
right?
[m-hm]
He picked up on this point, again, later in the interview when talking about how to deal
with youth in trouble with the law:

they’re a problem to society but, . . . no one’s evaluated institutions in
Saskatchewan . . . . Show me, show us Indian people how you’re helping our
kids.
[right]
Prove it to us. We’re a big clientele here. I mean, we’re a constituency.
[m-hm]
you know, go to us and show us why you think these kids need to be there. We
understand why they need to be there because we don’t have the resources to do
what we need to do,
[m-hm]
but, you know admit that
[m-hm]
you know. Don’t say that it’s because we’re all terrible people, and we need to be
there
[Right, so you want a chance to help the kids.]
Yeah

The conversation was appealing to me because I had spent a little time working
with youth in corrections facilities and had a chance to observe some of these problems
first hand. However, he was talking about problems with the correctional system in Canada for all youth, not just First Nations youth. I was agreeing with him, and in this last segment of conversation, I had starting saying “right” instead of just “mm-hmm” because I was thinking, “Yes! Better assessments, trained staff, more therapy.” We were speaking a common language, and I was enjoying the conversation. The common language we were speaking was about assessment, treatment, behavior modification, legislation, program evaluation, program models, enlightened service delivery, staff burnout, incarceration rates. I could relate to all of these terms and this entire dialogue because it spoke to my knowledge and training in Psychology. I could even understand his point about the MMPI because it had come up in assessment classes I had taken earlier in my training. I felt I understood him and the perspective that he was giving to me.

Given that he had made a number of criticisms of the current system, I wondered what his solutions for better assessments were:

[What would you want to know about a kid?]

A kid? What would I want to know about a kid?

[Yeah. Like you're saying that you would do an assessment]

Yeah. I'd want to know about his, about his, um . . . I'd want to know about, for me to actually help him when, if I was an institution, I thinks it's important to know where he's at intellectually

[m-hm]

Okay? um, I think where he's at, where his special needs are, right, so like I discussed earlier about, cause I mean, I don't think I, you know, I think that if he's a fetal alcohol syndrome kid, I think . . . we would have to design a program to meet those needs. Even solvent abuse. How many of our kids are, and we know the dangers of solvent abuse.

[m-hm]

We know what that can do to you. Kids, that have been sniffing for a period of time, can they actually handle these programs, these behavioral modification type programs?

[mm]
I don't think so. You know, so I think I'd like to see more of a clinical approach I guess I'd put it, that's not there, you know, cause I think these people play counsellor, but I don't really think they qualify to be counsellors.

[m-hm]

Okay?

[In the institution?]

Yeah.

[mm]

And I think we need to have, because we're talking a hundred percent, pretty well a hundred percent Indian kids, you gotta have your Elders working there, you gotta have the role of Elders in guiding, participating in group counselling exercises.

[So it sounds like the intellectual assessment and the]

The alcohol . . .

[pathology]

Yeah.

[substance abuse assessments]

Yeah.

He seemed to be really struggling with the question of what to do with the youth. First of all, he was telling me that services were not working. Then he was telling me that all the standard assessments are important (intellectual, substance abuse) as well as solvent abuse education and group counselling. His comments solidified my view that better assessments, trained staff, and more therapy were the answer. However, I wondered about the role of Elders and First Nations people in service delivery:

[You would want those assessments done by what kinds of people?]

I, I, <breaths out deeply>, well, I guess if we could get our own people there, great.

[Great.]

you know, I think, I guess there's a role for, um, I don't know, Mental Health Services, but it's gotta be balanced off with sort of the cultural people so you have a team, or even, I mean, why doesn't the Youth and Child Services across
Saskatchewan, why don't they have the role of Elders in there? Why aren't Elders working with a team of these guys when they do their assessments? See, we've done this. Maybe they should sit in on our assessment, and we recognize what our Elders can do for these kids. . . .

There was a shift in his tone. He was frustrated by the system's lack of recognition for Elders' services. He was aware that Elders can provide something that the system could not provide, but they were not being recognized for it.

I mean, um, some provinces, some jurisdictions, they recognize the healing, they actually will, MSB, Medical Services Branch, will pay for a healer, spiritual healer,

[m-hm]

Right? Happens in Manitoba. Why don't we do that in Saskatchewan?

[You don't see that happening?]

No, not yet.

[How do you, what do you think people think about that?]

I was surprised because I thought that Elders were allowed into institutions to work with the youth.

Well, I think they think that we're nuts

[hm! <laugh>]

I think they think you need people, you know, what do they mean, well, you know, how, how would, they, they wouldn't understand it, you know, I think that, uh, so I, I think, again, but I think that we just can't,

He was definitely struggling with this line of conversation.

I think there's gotta be a process, and again, we have to, Indian people have to come up with a process. . . .

[m-hm]

you know

[So you're saying a balance]

Yeah.

[but a balance where the Elder isn't undervalued]

m-hm
[by the professional system.]

Exactly.

[So you see a role for professionals]

m-hm

[but somehow also a role for Elders, like, how do you see them working together, do you think?]

Well . . . if you're doing assessments, I think an Elder should sit in on the assessment, so if someone's being assessed you should have an Elder there.

[m-hm]

I think they should try to work together, so I think that everyone's gotta know what assessments are, they've gotta know what this Western version of assessments is.

[okay]

This “Western version” of assessment. I began to wonder what other version of assessment he was thinking about. I had thought that we were speaking the same, professional language, but suddenly we weren’t. He had some other type of assessment in mind that I did not know about. I had stopped saying ‘right’ and was back to saying ‘okay’ and ‘m-hm’:

You know, we get some sort of training on that. Same time, the therapist who does the assessments has gotta sit with the Elder and say this is what I do.

[m-hm]

this is what I can bring here

[m-hm]

so there’s a mutual understanding

[m-hm]

okay, a mutual understanding, and I think then you come in and you see a kid together, or else, maybe you see them separate, I don't know how, but it would, I haven't thought specifically how it could work

[Somehow both could have access . . . ]

but somehow they have access to the kid, and they sort of sit down and say, okay, this is what I think and this is what I think and this probably would be a better way
or this should be a good way, some of this, some of the cultural stuff, some
counselling together, you know, let's at least try these things

[m-hm]

let's at least, cause I don't think we really recognize that they're not working very
well. We just keep doin' it. We just keep doin' it.

[So you think people aren't really admitting that there is a problem.]

Right.

[They just keep doing]

Yeah.

[what they're doing.]

Yeah.

[And what do you think the cultural stuff would do for the kid?]

I think it would do lots for his self esteem. . . . I think it, an Elder who
understands, I think an Elder can have as good of a role to understand where these
kids are coming from, right, so that you could really . . . complete the
understanding that maybe isn't complete all the way, you know, and . . . I think, I
don't know, I mean . . . just having these little groups on the team and you're
talking about your day. I mean there's a lot of dead time on these institutions.

He seemed to know that there was a role for Elders, but he was not articulating how the
Elder would work or what was important about having an Elder there.

I think there could be more work around counselling, so I think Elders could come
in and hold counselling sessions with these kids.

[In the institution.]

M-hm, yeah, do some good counselling, do some good work while they're there,
you know, problem solving, family issues, understanding feelings, I mean, all of
or a lot of these kids do not only know anger . . . there's a lot of other feelings in
life and I think, I know, and I know that there weren't too many skilful people that
could do these kind of groups, I saw very few people that had these kind of group
skills that could do it

[m-hm]

So, if we're really gonna say we're talking about special needs that means more
than just behavior modification, there's a lot, there's behavior modification still
needs to be there, but I think that we provide opportunities to get these kids to
really try to, you know, get some, get, get the kind of counselling I think they
need that's missing in there
[mm, so you're talking about really bringing in a person, an Elder, who's very skilled who could work with kids on more than just behavior]

I think

[on who they are, self esteem]

Yeah, I think it's not just an Elder, but I think an Elder has a lot to do with it, but I think also getting, I mean, hell, we don't have, we have, even just getting staff, getting Aboriginal, even all staff to be more oriented in their bags that they use with these kids

[m-hm]

right?

He went on to elaborate about the importance of First Nations staff:

in the North where . . . we had mostly Aboriginal staff and we tried to look at bringing in the type of Elders that we needed that could do work with these kids along with y'know, I guess the specialists, which is the psychologists or whatever.

[So, uh, this is gonna be kind of an obvious question, but what, what would be different about that institution than just, say, sending them to <I named a provincial institution in Saskatchewan>?]

Well, I think there's a couple of subtle issues. Number one, it's closer.

[m-hm]

These kids wouldn't have to worry about their cultural barrier, right? It would minimize the cultural barrier, so you should be able to get at the problems better, more quickly

[m-hm]

And we should be more effective, hopefully, we should be more effective . . . to do treatment

[because]

because, uh, because we have staff that . . . because they have Aboriginal staff they can relate to that can probably speak their language, that can probably deliver, I think also you could even look at culture as part of the treatment, well yeah, definitely! culture would be part of the treatment process for these kids

[Okay]

Right?

[Yeah]
even being around Indian people I think is therapeutic. We've never done a study about what that means, but I mean it would be interesting just to say why is it that in our correction study that we're doing every young person that we've talked to said they'd like to see more Aboriginal staff there. I think there's gotta be, we've gotta really think about just the presence of an Aboriginal person, but I think, um, even the presence of having an Aboriginal staff around is therapeutic for a kid.

He had made some good points about cultural barriers and language, but I was not sure that he really knew or could describe what the role of an Elder might be with youth in prison. Of course, who was I to say, given that I knew even less on that topic? However, I could see that he was struggling with the monstrous problem of trying to merge two systems that did not share a worldview. He talked on at length about different ways to integrate the two perspectives, but everything he was saying sounded like mainstream programming being delivered by First Nations staff. It sounded almost the same as what was available in mainstream institutions at present. I questioned him a little more:

[Do you think there's a difference between First Nations assessment and mainstream assessment?]

Well . . . I mean we have ICFS agencies, you know, that's different

[m-hm]

um, I think just the fact that if we controlled it we could have more influence on programming, we'd have to be more responsible for and accountable to ourselves about how we're going to do this

[So joining <First Nations service delivery systems together>, you're saying?]

Well, joining Social Services up with ICFS some way.

[The, you mean the provincial Social Services Department?]

m-hm

[m-hm]

Yeah or co-managing it — maybe doing a co-management thing,

[m-hm]

you know, but at least giving our people an opportunity to try it out.
I was astonished at his suggestion. After listening to the first interviewee, after going to all those DIAND meetings, after beginning to understand the problems in delivering mainstream programs to First Nations people, and after listening to him tell me that he saw mainstream programming as superficial and inadequate, this man was suggesting that First Nations systems join in with the province.

Reflecting back on how our conversation had gone, though, I am no longer surprised. In fact, our entire conversation from the start had been about mainstream services. I was willing and felt comfortable going along with the conversation because the two of us were speaking a common language, the language of mainstream professionals. He was speaking to me like a mainstream social worker, as he was trained. However, there were undeniable moments of struggle for him. He wanted First Nations to have an impact on their youth. He wanted youth to have access to Elders, but he could not seem to get out from under the control of the mainstream system. He was stuck, being able to see that First Nations had the ability assess and treat their own youth, but not knowing how to use this knowledge or apply it. I felt that he was, in some ways, a little bit like me. I could see that there was something different and powerful in a First Nations approach but could not explain, use, or articulate what it meant or how it worked. He had been speaking to mean from a mainstream perspective very comfortably, but when I asked him to speak from the other perspective, he struggled.

[Could it be 100 percent First Nations run?]

Uh, uh, well we could, say, at least 70 percent because that's the number of, I mean, that's the number of, that's the population nowadays of people in custody

[What would you still need from those systems that you couldn't provide?]

What do we need?

[From the provincial staff?]

Well, we don't have, I mean they need to recognize that, I think that if people, I think if we're, I think we should be, uum, coming up with a program and
presenting it to them cause I think they will address money, there will be money available.

[So you need the money.]

Oh, well, yeah.

[So, you feel tied to them because of the money.]

Absolutely, Yeah, it's a real interesting process, see, because right now the money is so tied. Like, sometimes we ask ourselves, whose agenda are we working on. Is it our own, or is it theirs? Often we feel it's theirs because of the way that they control us with the money.

He knew that they needed resources to develop their own programs, but he knew that the money was tied to a provincial or federal agenda. This was the same problem that the first interviewee had identified.

[So it's always an issue of where the money's coming from.]

m-hm, m-hm

He also said:

We're trying to develop services but we continually run into the funding problem

[m-hm, in the community]

The community. So, and we've got a number of strategies so, I mean, we've recommended to <a federal committee> that Ottawa gives the province roughly the 6 . . . million dollars for running young offenders -- that they hive off a million and give it to us so we can develop community resources.

[So you can work with your own kids.]

M-hm. Stuff like that.

[m-hm]

So we think that if we had the community resources that we could get more kids into the community resources and then we wouldn't need these institutions in Saskatchewan.

[I'm thinking of something, I don't know if it's right or not, but you're saying the province gets six million, six point]

Roughly about six million dollars.

[Six million dollars to run young offender institutions]

That the federal gives the government of Saskatchewan.
[You want a million of it]

We'd like to see a million right off the top.

[But 70 percent of the youth in <he cuts me off>]

Well, I guess because . . . as a start, as a start

[As a start]

As a start

[Yeah]

Because that's a lot of money

He wanted to develop a program, but he wanted to start small, to not ask for too much from the start.

[So if I gave you the magic wand and all the money, what would you do?]

Well, I guess, I think, especially, I think in Saskatoon . . . we have a high concentration of professional people here,

[m-hm]

you know? of Aboriginal people, I think that it makes sense for an urban place like Saskatoon to have assessment and stabilization that are controlled by Indian people, so I would look at trying to get a Tribal Council, probably, interested in assessment and stabilization and, you know, working towards that strategy where, where we would, you know, uh, we would, I mean, they're gonna, I mean they're building . . . [I know <a provincial institution> is looking for a place, and they'd want to tie it to <the provincial institution>, so it would be the other piece to it too.

[So really the things you're talking about are fairly cooperative with the province.]

Well, we're talking about partnership. We're not, like, in Saskatchewan we've always felt that we could do things in partnership.

In partnership? This was not the position I had heard from most other First Nations people with whom I had worked. In fact the Province of Saskatchewan had a mutual vesting agreement with ICFS for provisions of services that distinctly was not a partnership. So, he wanted to start small and in partnership with the province.

[m-hm]

you know, then we could, I mean there's a lot of Ying and Yang in that process

[m-hm]
You know, yeah.

We talked for a while about how partnerships might look. It was more of the same, so I tried to wind down the interview:

[Right, okay, well, ... I talked to you for a long time. Do you want to add anything more, or is there anything we missed?]

Uh <sighs>, no that's about, you know, I guess, I'm, we've got a lot of work to do, but I think that if we're gonna make it happen in the country it's gonna be in Saskatchewan

He had a lot of faith.

[m-hm]

you know, and I guess that's the optimistic part.

[m-hm]

We know where we want to go. It's how to get there often that slows us down.

He was describing himself: He knew where he wanted to go but did not know how to get there because of his own mainstream training, orientation, and financial ties to outside funders. Knowing that he could not describe what was so important about culture, he said I should speak directly to an Elder. Then, he told me a story about how one Elder made a difference:

I mean, you should really talk to this <gives me the name of an Elder>... you know, he's got some really good ideas, and this summer in September we took 10 Indian kids, 10 cops on a 4-day canoe trip, you know, like it was kinda like the two opposites of the justice system, right?

[m-hm, m-hm]

the bad guys and the good guys

<we laugh>

and they sort of really forgot about that they were. They were just, they just were human beings

[m-hm]

and, you know, cops were sharing all their tackle with the kids and, you know, the cops were starting to see these kids ... they don't have parents at home, they don't have anything, you know
in fact it's, they're often abused at home

so the cops begin to understand these issues

and I think they got a lot more empathy for these kids than they had, and the kids got to see these cops as not just wanting to arrest me all the time, but when they, these kids, some of them, when they came back, some of them got in trouble and they were picked by these guys that were on the canoe trip and the kids were actually embarrassed about being arrested by these cops

because of, hey, you know, he knows me

and so that was very interesting, you know

Yeah

[and lack of understanding]

sure

[but bringing them together]

Yeah

[changes the way they see each other]

m-hm, you know, and . . . this <Elder> came along and he brought his tarps and he did all these sweats out there for these kids and cops

you know, and was really good cause cops got very emotional in these sweats

and it was good to see these cops get emotional

cause these are cops that have seen everything and they got very

[Yeah]
I guess that's how you make it, you know

[Yeah]

and so, it was really good, I think, you know, and they wouldn't admit that they learned anything cause that would be too, that would go against . . . them being macho, eh?

[putting pride]

cause they've seen everything, right,

[m-hm]

you know? But I think down deep inside they were really challenged to change. It was good.

[mm]

You know, in fact, cops are now, like tonight, you go down to the Friendship Center, and there's gonna be cops playing basketball with the street kids.

[m-hm]

Cops on their own time,

[mm]

right? And that came out of that canoe trip,

[mm]

you know.

[So its really not just about kids seeing cops in a different light but it's also about cops seeing kids in a different light too]

Sure, people benefiting, you know, like it should be, not a mutual admiration society, but at least respect for each other

The interviewee wanted to see both systems respect each other. He wanted people to understand and respect each other. However, it took the intervention of an Elder to achieve that goal for the cops and youth. Anybody can organize a canoe trip, but it would not be the same without what he was referring to as the “cultural stuff.” It was the “cultural stuff” that made the difference, emotionally and otherwise, for those people. I was impressed by the seemingly simplicity yet real sophistication and cost-effectiveness of this Elder's interpersonal, physical, emotional, and spiritual treatment approach.
I realized that he really could understand and had experienced a First Nations worldview, but I could also see that he was not completely immersed in it and could not fully explain it. He was trying to merge a First Nations worldview and system with a mainstream system that controlled all of the money and power for program development. Faced with the enormity of this control, he was trying to find compromises that would, at least, allow youth to have access to Elders. His own training, and possibly his upbringing, were preventing him from seeing beyond the systems currently in place. His thinking and ability to come up with creative solutions were being controlled by mainstream concepts and systems. He was talking and seeing through the filter of his own mainstream colonization.
CHAPTER 9: Third Interview

They have to understand how it is to be First Nations trying to live in mainstream society. I think we've come a long ways in respecting their ways. They now have to meet us half way, understand and learn to respect our ways.

Because we do have different approaches to things.

- Interviewee #3

The third interviewee had been working for many years in psychosocial service delivery programs for both the provincial government and First Nations agencies. After reading my handout, this interviewee started out by describing a comprehensive assessment tool that had been developed for substance abuse assessments in Saskatchewan:

Ok, so there was a tool, you said.

Yeah, there was an assessment tool developed for use by the First Nations field workers. . . . The tool itself I guess was developed by First Nations people and what the assessment tool did was bring all the treatment centers that we have in Saskatchewan — we brought all their tools together and tried to develop a more comprehensive one, because the complaint out there by the <federal program> workers at that time was that there were too many assessment tools, and every time we want to refer a client somewhere there's so many forms to fill out. Those types of things, so

[So you brought them together from First Nations institutions?]

Our <federal program> institutions. We brought all the tools together and developed one comprehensive one. The problem with the one comprehensive one now is its too long. However, I think what is happening there is it's not accommodating the crisis situations where you have to get someone in a center fast. But, I think if the tool is used for its intended purpose which is to assess treatment readiness and to get
to know the client, to look at the needs or the issues and referring that person to the proper place rather than just to a treatment center if addiction isn't really the issue. That's what the tool was intended to do. The problem is it's, I think it was about 32 pages long. And, if they think they can sit there and do it in one setting, forget it. That's not the intent of that tool. You're supposed to do it in a series of visits, and because, you know, in a lot of the cases were dealing with crisis situations. I think that's why those types of tools don't work.

[So, crisis situations need something more.]

Quick. Something that they can sit down and do in one day and everything's done, but if it's used for the intended purpose, in reality all you're doing is getting to know the client and it's counseling the client through, just making the client more aware of self in the four areas. There is a holistic approach with that assessment model or that assessment. You assess all parts, and with the whole assessment tool also is a plan of action; but, what its doing is you're getting to know your client before you do anything with the person. So I think the tool in itself is good, but when you sit down and you look at 32 pages, I guess that's why people are not really using the tool.

[So, it's a really comprehensive assessment]

Yeah

[and you're finding most of your work is crisis work.]

Um hmm. All lot of it is crisis work or the reports from the field. A lot of it is crisis work.

[So you want something shorter.]

Personally, I like the comprehensive, maybe because I've been in the field a long time, and I can just almost do it at the top of my head, lead the discussion with the client. Maybe you need a short and a long assessment tool. I don't know.

[Are you saying, it's a First Nations assessment and it's set up according to the holistic model of, balance model, that some First Nations talk about?]

First Nations guided that tool. It was put together by a non-First Nations person, but the Committee was First Nations and they guided the tool.

[What do you think about the tool itself? Do you feel its, does it address all the needs or is it a good model for you?]

... I used on three or four occasions. I would say it's a fairly good tool, if you provide the training that goes with the assessment. It could be that people aren't understanding the whole intent of the tool. A ... person did go around to each tribal council training the workers with the assessment tool. I can't speak for the other tribal councils, but I know we at <her Tribal Council> took advantage of it. With our field workers, there is mixed feelings with the tool for the people who are using it for its intended purpose. They're saying, 'Wow.' For the ones who are looking for a quick tool to get clients into treatment quick, it's not working.
From my perspective, this interview was going quite smoothly. We were discussing the possibility of having a First Nations assessment tool, and this interviewee’s federal program had already developed one. However, as was a complaint of the first interviewee, many of the people in the field were not using the instrument because it was not meeting their needs in the field. In addition, she described to me the fact that, although the tool was being used for substance abuse assessments, it covered a range of information because people’s problems generally were linked to the same root causes that were not necessarily explained by behavior.

There’s underlying root causes I think with almost every issue that we have in First Nations. Community is just coming to an understanding.

[So, what would you see then as some of those important issues that assessment would need to get at. For example, that might share with other areas, or their common causes. You mentioned sexual abuse.]

Yeah, sexual abuse. Well, we do a whole history, a whole background on the person. We examine if there is any issues with sexual abuse incest, family violence, physical abuse, verbal abuse, looking at self and your feelings of self, looking at whether or not people know that they do have feelings, because a lot of the times what I’ve found in my work with people is because of all these issues that seem to hit us in the face all the time, we’ve learned to numb our feelings to the point where we don’t know we’re feeling any more. So, we do a lot around feelings work with the assessment. You also look at the physical body and how, I guess, because that affects your self-image. The whole idea with the holistic approach is you take the four sections, that’s what makes up the whole person, so you have to have a balance with all four within your being in order to be, well, I guess, the phrase they’re using out there, is healthy, that’s a catch phrase. . . . You look at all the issues in a person’s life, I guess is what you’re doing, from childhood up to the day they walk into your office, and with the whole process if you use it for its intended purpose, you’re . . . assisting the person in learning to recognize that there is all these issues. A lot of the times the clients that are coming in, we’re looking at alcohol and drug addiction, all those behaviors that they’re displaying outwardly. They’re just symptoms of something underneath, of underlying root causes, and we’re finding that there is a lot of sexual abuse and incest happening. There’s a lot of physical abuse. Residential school syndrome has had its effects. Parenting is an issue. I don’t, all the negative things that you can think of seem to have hit First Nations people.

[So, your <federal program> programs are geared at getting at some of those underlying issues that affect specifically First Nations people.]

Um hum.
I noted that the psychological assessments I was trained to do also attempted to get at root causes that ran deeper than behavior alone. I was not sure what she meant by "feelings work" and "assisting the person in learning to recognize" issues, but I made the (erroneous) assumption that she was combining some therapeutic interaction with assessment, as psychologists sometimes do. I found this interviewee quite easy and pleasant to talk with, and I felt that we, too, were interacting like psychosocial professionals. However, by this point in the interviewing sequence, I was becoming wary of talking with mainstream terminology and concepts because doing so meant that we were not getting at First Nations terminology and concepts. However, given that the assessment she was describing seemed similar to a mainstream one, I asked her what she thought of mainstream assessments:

[What about other assessment models or programs that are out there that are more non-First Nations, set up for non-First Nations?]

I'm looking at, say for example, the gaming assessment that <a provincial department> uses. What I've been hearing from First Nations communities is "The tool doesn't apply to us." I haven't really looked at the tool completely, but I know there is questions on economics. It doesn't take into account that our situations at First Nations level are different from the mainstream White society. Employment, unemployment rates. We have a really high unemployment rate on the reserve. The majority of our people are on social assistance. The tools will ask about economics which is alien to us because we don't have, really I guess, we're — how do I say this — well our unemployment rates are really low. I think it's 10% for mainstream society, and you take First Nations communities, it's 70%. So the majority are on assistance. What I've been hearing from people is it's different when you're looking at gaming addictions. Its different for First Nations people because . . . we don't have very much money; whereas with mainstream society, they have a few more dollars. They're saying, ok . . . How can I put this?

[You're saying there is something about asking questions about economics that doesn't apply?]

Right, it wouldn't apply.

[So, how do your people interpret being asked questions about their economic status? Like, are they employed? How much money do they make? How much do they spend on gambling? How do you think they respond or react to being asked questions like that?]

'I'm on assistance. I don't have money. I buy my groceries. Whatever I have left, that's what I get to spend.’ I don't think they go out and plan, or they don't have a set budget that they go out with. They just look at their needs, provide for their
basic needs, and whatever is left over is what they can use. I can't even speak for people here. I really don't know how they feel about being asked those types of questions. I just know there are some issues with those types of questions.

I was starting to notice that the people I was interviewing often did not want to speak for other people. They typically would only speak about or for themselves or their own experience.

[Issues in the sense that they don't like those types of questions?]

Um hmm. Why are they asking, or, they don't apply. They just don't apply.

[So there are some things in the <provincial department> model that]
in the assessment

[in the assessment, itself, that some issues that are focused on aren't necessarily relevant to First Nations people.]

Um hmm. So, we will be looking at that or developing an assessment tool for First Nations people in the area of gaming. But we need to look at the different models that are out there first, come up with our own model and something that we are comfortable with and that's going to involve consultation with 72 First Nations. So, it's not going to be a process that happens quickly. So, we eventually, I'm hoping we will develop our own model and get it recognized by some institution.

[You mean for training in the model?]

Training, assessment, ways of dealing with the problem. Looking at the whole continuum, we hope to develop a treatment and prevention model. So, it includes everything, assessments, approaches, all sorts of things, and then training or retraining the workers.

[So it sounds like your idea of assessment really focuses on a tool that you use to do that assessment.]

Um hmm.

This interviewee wanted to develop an assessment model and tool after first studying other models that were out there and then having the model that her team developed recognized by a mainstream institution. The idea of an assessment tool or instrument was understandable to me, but after having talked with the first two interviewees, I was starting to doubt the value of linking that the tool with a mainstream program or
department. However, she explained that her program needed a tool to screen for
treatment readiness:

Treatment centers have a concern that clients coming in are not ready for treatment, which is very true. So, we don't know where the problem is really.

[So, when you talk about treatment readiness, are you using] 
Is the person ready to go into treatment?

[In terms of an abstinence model?] 
In terms of, I guess the treatment center or, say for example, we referring to inner child therapy . . . . Is this person ready for that type of work or do we need to work with that person first? That's what the assessment tool will help you to do.

[So, your tool will be used then to refer people to non-First Nations therapies.] 
Yeah. So, I think even in the development of this tool, a lot of those other agencies were considered. You will find it more comprehensive than most of the tools that are out there.

I was surprised that the goal of developing their own assessment instrument was to refer clients to mainstream therapies, like “inner child therapy.” My assumption was that her assessment might have focused on treatment delivery within a First Nations service delivery model. However, she was talking about sending people for mainstream psychotherapy.

[ . . . Do those treatments that your clients go to, the non-First Nations treatments] 
They also have their own assessment tools. The whole intent of this comprehensive tool is to bring all these assessments together. It's just that now it's too lengthy, and nobody wants to use it.

[So, those agencies would then take your assessment tool and use it in place of their own assessments?] 
That was the whole intent in the beginning, but what I find right now is that some communities will try to use this assessment tool. Those who have received some training and understand how the tool is supposed to work. They're saying that it's a really good tool. Those who are just in to refer the client quickly are not finding the tool useful because it's too lengthy. Treatment centres, they tell us all the information you can give us on a client is good. So, I think this package going in with the client into the treatment center is a good package. However, they still do their own assessments, though a lot of information that they want is in that comprehensive tool . . . .
Her program was making an attempt to provide comprehensive assessment and screening for treatment readiness, but the mainstream service providers were doing their own assessments anyway, forcing the client to go through two assessments.

[So these non-First Nations treatment centers, do they kind of get the intent and spirit of your assessment tool or do they use it?]

I don't know. No, I don't think any others, other than the First Nations centers use it. I know if I'm referring to the provincial centers, I'll use their assessment tools.

[Rather than your own.]

Rather, because they require you use their assessment tools, but when I'm working with my clients, I will use our own.

[So, the provincial centres aren't necessarily accepting of a First Nations tool?]

I guess they wouldn't be because they ask that we fill their own out.

[How do you feel about that? What do think is the purpose for, why does that happen?]

Why does it happen? I don't know. Turf protection. I have no idea.

[Well, no, that's a good]

That might be the only reason. I just don't see why they wouldn't welcome the tool because all their information, all the information that they require is contained within the tool anyways. Maybe it is the 32 pages. I don't know, but I know when I'm referring people, I will send the tool with all its information, but I'll also do a two-page summary, so, with myself, I've never had problems, but maybe it's because of the way I work.

The problem she was raising was one of mutual recognition, which is an ongoing problem for First Nations service delivery agencies. Although First Nations agencies have their own standards, policies, and procedures, rarely are these recognized by mainstream governments or services. However, within the last few years, the province of Saskatchewan has recognized, through mutual vesting, the standards of ICFS agencies as equivalent to their own. Despite mutual vesting in ICFS, other areas of service delivery were not receiving the same level of recognition.

[So, all the information that they would need in their tool is contained ]

Is probably contained within our First Nations tool.
[Now, is all the information that you would need in your tool, contained in theirs?]
No.

[OK. What's the difference, do you think, between the two approaches and the two types of assessments?]

...They just ask general basic questions. I think we spend a lot more time with different types of questions that would help us understand the person or help the person to understand themselves.

This also was an ongoing problem for First Nations: If they went by the minimum standards of provincial and federal funders they would not have adequate information to carry out their own service delivery models. Mainstream assessments are viewed as superficial and inadequate for a First Nations service delivery system.

[So the assessment, your tool is a bit more interactive, you're saying.]

Um hmm.

[So that the person also learns something from the assessment? Isn't just assessed by somebody and that information is compiled]

Right. They're partners with this whole assessment process. It is interactive.

Until now, I was thinking that her program's assessment model was pretty much the same as a mainstream assessment, but what she was describing now sounded a little bit different in terms of the type of relationship between assessor and client.

I'm trying to remember if I've ever been involved in people assessing me and if I had problems with those tools. I think they used to just fire questions.

She was using herself as an example, just like interviewee #1 had. This time, I was less surprised.

[They just asked you things.]

Right. Just ask, write, ask write [sighs].

[Whereas your tool is]

Once you learn how to use the tool you can sit like this and just, it's like a conversation going back and forth, but you're also helping the client more aware of themselves and at the same time you're learning about the client.

[So, is there a line between assessment and treatment?]
I guess not really. It all starts with first contact, initial contact. You’re already starting there. I guess much of your question, there would be no line really. It's just that when you refer a client to treatment, they're starting to go more in depth with the issues that people have. When they come back, if it's working the way it should, if our systems are working the way it should, the client is referred back to the field worker who will continue the work in some of the areas if the client is ready. So treatment they're more or less going more in depth, looking at the issues more, opening up more, opening the client up more. When that client is released, the <community> workers continue the work at community level. In some cases, that is not working, but I think originally that was the whole intent of the <federal program>, the prevention and treatment program.

[So, it starts from first contact and then the intent is to get the person thinking about issues in the assessment that are viewed as relevant to First Nations and then continue in that through the rehabilitation and treatment process.]

Right, and the after-care follow-up.

[Yeah, and so you’re saying that the provincial model is very different than that. The provincial model is about asking questions and]

[Though it does ask some – Oh geez, I haven't seen one of those forms in about ten years. It does ask, ok, it'll ask questions about education, economics — I don’t even know if it focuses on physical. I think all they require is a doctor's medical form, really. But, they don’t really go in depth with physical. Like, I don’t remember any of their forms ever asking a client about their sleeping patterns or about exercise or all those different areas. I don't remember their forms asking those types of questions. I remember medicals. We had to get a medical doctor to fill out forms. They would do the physical assessment ... label. ... I don't believe in labelling people. I think First Nations people generally feel that way. I have a nephew who would be ADHD, a label based on the fact that he is hyper and probably because he talks back and he has got some behavior problems. But, there's a lot of underlying — I don’t think anyone's recognized the fact that he is grandma’s boy and is spoiled rotten. No, he's ADHD. First thing they wanted to do is put him on Ritalin. No one took the time to sit down and talk to him.

[Do you think labels are a substitute for understanding?]

Um hmm. Maybe they don’t want to understand our children. I don’t know.

[Do you think the labels get at some of the issues of First Nations? Like you mentioned, for example, residential school syndrome, which isn’t a diagnosis in the main stream mental health.]

I think when we talk about residential school syndrome, we’re talking in general about all the issues that all the things that happened to, I guess, our children at the time when they were in residential school.

[So, the mental health labels don’t]

The labels are kind of different <we both laugh>. Even the labels are different come to think of it.
[So, you mean they're still labels but they are labels that are pertinent to First Nations issues, and you're saying that ADHD and some of these other labels]

I would think so. Like when somebody says residential school syndrome, I already have a picture in my head. I have an idea of some of the issues that this person sitting in front of me, some of the issues they may have.]

[Right.]

ADHD, when I think of that label, I think about hyper child with behavior problems and that's about it, that should be on Ritalin.

[So a label to you refers to behavioral things.]

Behavior rather than the inner and looking deeper at — I don't know — that's the way I see it. Maybe viewed as different by different people, but just thinking about it now, it does look that way.

[It sounds like that mental health model is not very satisfying to you for those reasons.]

No, no, it wouldn't be. They don't look at the whole being. They look at parts and they make their diagnosis on just parts of a being, rather than looking at a whole. With a holistic approach you look at everything and the whole goal is to bring everything in balance.

It was becoming apparent to me that more than one of the interviewees was objecting to making assessments and diagnoses based on behavioral criteria. To them, there was always something more important behind the behavior that needed to be comprehended. An assessment based on behavior, to them, was superficial. In addition, the diagnostic labels given to people did not reflect the types of assessment domains and information that she would be looking for when assessing a First Nations person.

[So, have you had clients that have gone through that provincial system and then come home again?]

I have clients, yeah.

[And what do you see? Like maybe they went there and got a label or something and then you get them.]

I don't know if it's problems with assessments or just problems with the way they're greeted, the way they're treated.

You mean in the provincial centers.
Um hmm. If I can't help them here and if I refer them back to the province they just say forget it. I've been there. I haven't really looked at why; but I am just questioning if its maybe the approach or the way they're greeted.

At first she had said "greeted," but then said treated. I assumed that the first time she said "greeted," she had meant to say "treated," as in "mainstream therapy." However, then she said "greeted" again and clarified what she meant by talking about people's "approach." This intrigued me, because I had never really thought much about how clients are greeted, other than observing, in some therapeutic settings, the psychodynamic caveat against talking to clients while walking from the waiting room to the therapy room. After being so critical of mainstream assessments, she became more specific about what in a mainstream assessment process might not be working.

I really don't think First Nations people are hard to get along with. If you're trying to help, they know you're trying to help. If you come with a caring attitude, they're not hard to get along with. Could be in the approach. I don't know. I don't know if the problem is really with the assessment tools.

[Maybe the problem's with the people, you're saying, or the system itself?]

Um hmm. Because I've used some of their tools when it came to economics and the different types of things, I had a general idea they were on assistance. I didn't even look at that whole area. I know they place a great emphasis on education. A lot of our people don't have a high level of education.

[So, for you assessment isn't just about the]

You're developing a relationship right through, as soon as the person walks in the door.

[So, it's not just about the power of the tool, but it's the power of the people to understand, and form a relationship with the First Nations person.]

Yeah, and the words used, I guess. I'm not too sure if the language can get too technical if they're being assessed by provincial system. We try to keep it as simple as possible, and, if we're lucky, doing it in our own language, which holds a lot more. . . . So, I'm really not sure if the problem is the tool itself. Because no matter what tool you use, someone's not gonna be happy. I found that in the different tools that we have presented to the workers out in the field. I think what helps is if everybody gets involved in developing the tool, then they know the intent and the reasoning behind the tool, and how it's supposed to be used, and how it's supposed to work.

[So, when a client of yours, a First Nations person, goes to a provincial center for an assessment, their encounter in the whole system of, you know, people and labels
and tools, you're saying doesn't reach some of them, and that people don't want to go back there if they leave your system. They don't want to go back there.

In some cases, not all cases. Not all our people have a cultural background. So, I think those who have grown up in mainstream society despite the issues understand that system. So they wouldn't necessarily. I think its more the people who have lived on reserve and know a different type of system. They would be the ones not to go back.

[So going through that system, then, for somebody who is closer to their culture, somebody who wasn't raised, maybe, as you're saying, in the city or away from their community, going into that provincial system wouldn't be a very good, positive experience for them, you think?]

Or that type of questioning anyways wouldn't be positive for them.

She was teaching me that the main basis for most mainstream assessment methods – asking questions – might constitute the wrong approach to take with a First Nations person, including the manner in which people are greeted when they arrive for the assessment. Mainstream assessments typically are based on direct questioning either verbally or on paper. At the time of this interview, I really could not see another way around asking questions.

One thing I find too, one thing I've learned is the emphasis they place on non-verbal behavior. A lot of the times you're reading Indian people totally wrong. I remember back in '87, I took the life skills coaching course and they were assessing me based on my non-verbals. They were assessing the First Nations people within that group based on non-verbals. They thought we had low self-esteem, we were not confident, we were not this or we were not that. All because we wouldn't look him in the eye. In our culture, looking somebody in the eye is a sign of boldness. We're taught to keep our eyes downcast as a sign of respect, but we're assessed as people with low self-esteem, no confidence, lacking all these different things. So, non-verbal and the way they're read, I think, also within an assessment . . . need to be looked at because they are not sensitive to our culture and some of our beliefs and why we do some of the things that we do.

That's a pretty fundamental misunderstanding, isn't it?

Yeah, yeah. But I always remember that because . . . I thought, 'All these years you say you had First Nations people in these groups, don't tell me this is the first time someone's addressed this issue. All those years, I still don't believe, unless I was a first, and out of respect we won't talk and create a ruckus. If I had a problem with a person, I would talk to that person first, rather than bring it out in a whole group. Maybe that's why it was not addressed in the past.' I thought, 'Huh, no more! No more.' Because they were giving an older lady, an older First Nations lady a difficult time with that, so I thought I had to put my two cents in about the non-verbals. They could be reading those all wrong, and I know that's part of the counseling assessment.
She was raising a very big issue in a very small way by emphasizing the point that often First Nations people “won’t talk and create a ruckus” out of respect. There were many times that I had observed ICFS people letting things go without correcting them if someone had done something wrong. Their attitude seemed to be either that they would fix the problem after the offending person had left or else they would teach the person how to do it right, when the appropriate time came for that teaching to occur. In this interviewee’s example, she had decided to speak out, but her experience after speaking out only convinced her that she would not do it again.

Yeah, looking at the person’s non-verbal behavior . . . . It’s not just the questions. It’s the whole approach to assessment I think. It’s the way you’re greeted at the door as soon as you walk in. I think I would sit through an assessment if the person was nice to me coming in, as I was going in. If I was greeted warmly, I think I would sit through, but in some instances they’re not going through the assessment. One visit and they say they’re not going back. So, I’m wondering if it could be approach too and not just difficulty with the assessment tool.

[So, this is kind of a difficult question. It’s a bit of a devil’s advocate question. Is this about training the province to understand better?]

I think they need to. I think we learned their system. I think they should learn to understand our system.

[So do you think that there should be some kind of cooperation there or would you rather just see First Nations people just treating their own and not worrying about educating the province.]

I can see a lot of merit in First Nations people dealing with their own, but I think we have to face reality that resources are with the province, in most cases. We have to use their facilities because we don’t have those resources in our own First Nations. So, at some point, we’re going to have to, if not work together, at least understand each other . . . .

This was exactly the same rationale for “partnership” with the province that the second interviewee had given: The province had the “resources” (i.e., the money and facilities) so First Nations were forced to work with and within mainstream systems.

I would say, yes we’ll treat our own people if we had all the different types of facilities the province has had. Like . . . I worked in corrections for two years, but we designed and changed the assessment tool when I got there. We used a more holistic approach. But even looking at how they assess offenders, especially when an offender’s applied for conditional release, they assess whether or not the person has a job to go home to. Well, we’re returning to a reserve that has a 70%
unemployment rate. We'd have, some of the women would have babysitting jobs upon their return home for somebody whose working. To them that was, "God, even though I've offended someone trusts me enough to look after their children." To them it was a big boost, but it would be denied by the system because it's a babysitting job, though in First Nations, that could be the only job you find in some cases. So, even those assessments at corrections, they would be really unfair to First Nations people.

[So there's some things there about what the different system value that are, as you're saying, unfair to First Nations?]

Oh yeah, big time, yeah, yeah. You look at probation workers doing assessments on First Nations people. A lot of our people will go into jail. A lot of the White people will stay out of these places because they do have a job. They are holding . . . whatever the values are in White society; whereas, our First Nations people, they don't have a job. They may have tried, tried, tried and finally given up because no one will hire them because what they feel is "I'm an Indian."

[They feel it's a race thing.]

Yeah. Education. I commend those who have gone through the education system, First Nations people who have gone through, because we are learning a different culture as we go in. We're learning their system. We have a lot of dropouts. I don't know if it's for that reason. But, that's always a strike against them. I guess those are the two main, when you look at mainstream society. Education, a lot of importance on education, though they're just as important in First Nations country, we just don't have the resources to give jobs or even put people through school any more. The whole cycle is always comes back to something. You can always relate it to something, looking at the reasons . . . Like they'll talk about our low employment rates. It's not that we don't want jobs. It's not that we're lazy. We could go ten places in a day, hand in our resume, no one will hire us. You know, a lot of people say, no, Saskatoon is not like that. But you come stand at this end. You really see it. It's subtle, but it's there. No one's overt, no one's saying it, not like Prince Albert. Prince Albert, they'll just say it. Saskatoon is more subtle, but it's there. It leaks out in the attitudes.

[So, really what you're talking about, it sounds to me, is about Indian/White relations. Not just in terms of employment, but in terms of assessment, understanding the needs of First Nations or misunderstanding those needs . . .]

Yeah. Um-hmm. So, I wouldn't say it's just about assessments.

[It's interesting because you're saying that you're tied to provincial resources and a system that really doesn't place value or emphasis on the things that are most important, or maybe worse, judges people by standards that are not appropriate to the reality of]

of our situation. Yeah. That happens a lot. I know I used to hate working in corrections because of that. Because I could understand and I didn't know how to balance the two models and I don't think corrections is going to allow one little First Nations person to come in and change the system, so, though we did with our assessments, tried to make it more geared to First Nations. We couldn't assist them the other way. We couldn't get them early releases or conditional releases because
of the fact that they were going to a reserve and there was really nothing there, no jobs. In most cases, we only have up to Grade 8 level, I think, on reserve. A lot of our programs, it's one person doing the whole addictions continuum. Doesn't really have time to supervise people coming out. So, there is a lot of . . .

[Strain on resources?]

Yeah. Well, they have to do prevention, intervention, individual counseling, group counseling. They're involved in after-care follow-up from those returning from treatment centers, and they're looking at the whole gambit of addictions, not just alcohol and drugs. They're having to deal with the gaming, the inhalant abuse. On top of that, they're mental health counselors also. They have to deal with the suicides, the sexual abuse, everything. One person at community level and you have all these other things that are thrown at them, corrections early releases, all these different things. They're expected to pick that up. They have a lot of work. I look at my position here. I'm dealing with 72 First Nations, how many tribal councils, how many — you go into <a provincial department>, they have four people in my position looking after 30 districts. So, where are the resources? If we were to look at equality or whatever, parity in the system, I guess there would be eight of me here dealing with these 72. So, even our addictions workers at community level aren't trained in just one model. They're trained in many, many different models. They don't have the luxury of coming in and saying, ah, behavior modification. That's the model I use as my approach to counseling. No, they don't have that. They use a whole range, and they find a lot of what they do is more client oriented. I think they'll work with assessments and then as the relationship develops, they know what model to use.

I found this aspect of her comments difficult because if the counsellors were working from within a First Nations perspective, they would not be looking for what mainstream model to use. However, I understood that, because the counsellors were having to partner with the province, they may not have had the latitude to use a First Nations approach being that they were tied to the provincial system and a federal program funder.

[So how would you fix this problem?]

<laughing> I'll tell you in about a year, once I've had a chance to develop our own. How would I fix this problem?

[I think that's a big question, but ]

I don't know. I've always been a fighter, so nothing's ever stopped me. But, that's me. I don't know just empowering our people. I think the system in the past hundred or so years has really tried to break down and it succeeded in a lot of cases to break down our belief system, our culture, our way of live, our language. I think the only way, I think the place to start is just regaining our culture again, learning our language, taking pride in being a First Nations person. I look at the urban Indians for example. I still think there is a lot of shame in being Indian because the Indians they do see and the Indians they do know are the Indians on 20th <street>. They don't see the working Indians or the ones who are trying. They don't see the
Indians on reserve who are maybe practicing their culture and living a healthy and a
good life style. . . . So, I think for me that's where I would start, and that's where I
always direct my clients to find out who they are and what it means to be a First
Nations person – to examine our belief systems, to look at our ceremonies, to get
involved in those types of things because within our ceremonies, within a First
Nations life almost everything, I think, is a ceremony. Anything we do starts out
with a ceremony and prayers and there's always different meanings behind all our
ceremonies. They teach you to respect, when you say it in the First Nations
language that word is a really loaded word.

[Respect]

Yeah. It's kind of reduced when you say it in English, but when they say
"manatsisso" look after, you have to look at yourself, all four parts of your being.
You're responsible for that part of your life. You're also responsible for everything
around you. They teach you all those basic rules and I think all those values or
beliefs that we hold, they lead to a healthy life style. So, if we could somehow bring
all of those back, which is why I guess it starts with the children. We have
unhealthy adults, dysfunctional adults using alcohol, drugs, whatever, their children
aren't learning. So, we have to, in order to teach the children, we're gonna have to
get this person healthy though with prevention we try to teach this person because in
some cases we can't help with the adult.

[So, help the adult but also focus on the children]

Yeah, yeah. The whole, you look at, there's the other holistic to this holistic
approach where you're looking at the individual person, the family, and then all the
people outside the family. So you're working with not just the individual.

[So this is something that I guess that I'm wanting to ask you. Do you think this is
something that you can get from a non-First Nations counselor, assessment
procedure or institution]

If they were willing to learn about and understand First Nations people, and if they
really genuinely care about somebody, care about people, I think anyone can do it.
They just have to understand the other side, the costs of, they have to understand
how it is to be First Nations trying to live in mainstream society. I think we've come
a long ways in respecting their ways. They now have to meet us half way,
understand and learn to respect our ways. Because we do have different approaches
to things. There are different meanings to everything. So, I don't think it would
matter what color as long as they came from that approach, even within our own
First Nations system, we have to be cautious from tribe to tribe, because they have a
different approach or different belief system. It all ties in but there's different, I
guess you could call them practices. So, even when you're going and working with
someone who's of a different tribe, you still have to learn their customs too. Learn
to understand so you're not doing anything that's disrespectful. It'll work if people
want it to work, I think. I think it will.

This interviewee had taught me about compromise forced by an external authority.

She was working in a system of government that depended on other systems of
government to provide program funding – the same predicament that the two interviewees
before her had described. However, she was much more similar to the second interviewee in her willingness to partner with the province. In fact, she could not seem to see how to get out of that partnership, despite the fact that she still believed, as the other two interviewees did, that the best way to fix the problem of unequal partnerships was to let First Nations develop their own programs and systems under their own jurisdiction.

I came away from this interview not really believing that she had that much faith in the ability of First Nations to offer services independently from evaluations and recognition according to mainstream standards. A few months later, I attended a powwow, where, coincidentally, I had the opportunity to watch her dance her traditional women’s dance. She looked so different, not just because she was wearing First Nations clothing and was dancing. The difference was in her eyes and in the way she carried herself when she walked. The difference was in her whole demeanor. She exuded a serenity and a confidence that I had not seen in her when she was working in and talking about forced evaluation and partnering with mainstream systems. Really, it was like she was a different person. She was surrounded by family and friends, and, clearly, this was her heritage where she felt confident and was accepted fully by others. There was no need to compromise and reduce or alter her standards and values to obtain external recognition or funding --- even in this setting, where her dancing was being observed and compared, but within a context and philosophic understanding of her relationship to every person and every thing that was there surrounding the connection between her physical and spiritual worlds. She understanding herself, others, and the whole world according to culturally-consistent values, ethics, procedures, techniques, and standards. In this setting and with these people she was able to live without being “heavily scrutinized from an entrenched [alien] ethnocentric perspective” by imposed mainstream standards and values (Halfe, 1994, p. 29).

I saw her differently after that day, as well as every other First Nations person and the whole context of social relationships between individuals, families, First Nation
peoples, First Nations, and all nations. It seemed that First Nations peoples were always having to move back and forth between their own worldviews and mainstream requirements, between what worked in their cultures and what they could patch together as a program to meet the dominant system's standards. They were always under scrutiny, and their own methods and ways of doing things were fundamentally disrespected. Living like this must be like trying to make a recipe with mostly the wrong ingredients and always having to make do with how the food turned out. However, the consequences of this type of compromise were far more serious than ending up with a spoiled cake. These people were being forced to modify their own practices, beliefs, and processes, as well as their own systems, values, and worldviews that had been developed and integrated in a manner which allowed all nations to coexist in the world for millenia. During the last century, in particular, they have had to modify their entire structure of life, which had been subjected to comparative analysis, misunderstanding, and degradation. Continuing devaluation by external system criteria forces people to justify their worldview and their very selves. It puts them in a position of inferiority and dependency that can and does lead to feelings of shame and doubt about their heritage. Feelings of inferiority, dependency, and shame can become internalized to the point of self-hatred and self-oppression, particularly if systems of social science and empirical analysis have entrenched this type of a view. Self-oppression will continue unless opportunity exists for oppressed peoples to ground themselves in a strong sense of identity consistent with their heritage and existence as valid and real people in this world coexisting through mutual respect with other nations in the world. Once people have a strong accurate and stable grounding in First Nations cultural identity, then they are able to move between cultures without feeling devalued and invisible. Without being genuinely anchored in their own culture, First Nations people would end up being sucked into the mainstream, which had a one-way current that never subsides until people became utterly lost in the vast ocean of mainstream thought and systems. For people who are not well grounded in their own identity and not able to move
back and forth easily between their own and other cultures, if those people are trained or working in mainstream systems, then getting back to shore, to the grounded perspective of a First Nations heritage, is like swimming upstream against a relentless current – difficult, exhausting, and dangerous.

Yet, this interviewee would not exclude any other races or people from making that journey to learn about First Nations methods and participate in First Nations culture. However, she was suggesting that a non-First Nations person would have to meet First Nations “half way” and understand their side of things. As I, myself, was learning, meeting First Nations half way in their philosophy was easier said than done when a person grows up or is trained in a mainstream system of thought. Half-way really meant that I struggled forward in against the current, while the First Nations people and culture threw me lines – hell, actually jumped into the pirhana-infested waters of the mainstream – to bring me over to their shores. They came over first, and now it was my turn. I was finding it very hard to let go of the safety and comfort of my own training and academic knowledge. Trust, even for a minute, in another type of valid knowledge and worldview was a genuine risk. It meant letting go of all the tie lines and life preservers that held me in place. Without them, I feared a full-scale drowning of my professional identity could be possible. First Nations knew I was risking a change in worldview and would feel vulnerable. They know about vulnerability and they things that happen inside of people’s minds and spirits when they are cut off from their own sense of identity. They also know what needs to happen to fix that and strengthen a person who feels vulnerable and cut off. That knowledge is already over on that shore – it was not placed there by academics.

For an academically trained person, and probably for any person, living between worldviews is really an issue of feeling vulnerable. In the words of Katz (1993, pp. 358-359):

Any method of research into the experienced realities of another culture must first emphasize Indigenous descriptions, eschewing a comparative
framework until the phenomena being studied are clearly understood. This means that the researchers must give up their worldviews and allow others to express their own, whether directly or through the help of the researchers . . . Researchers must become vulnerable, letting go of their accustomed sense of self to let that of others be known.

By vulnerability I mean a radical questioning of one’s worldview. One must give up the comfortable protection of assumptions as to what is “valid,” “correct,” “obvious,” and “common practice.” Only then does understanding the world from within another culture become possible. Vulnerability resides in all aspects of the process of existing, even for a moment, between or without worldviews; experiencing the multiplicity of valid worldviews is deeply unsettling. . . . The experience of vulnerability is a source of fear, even at times terror. . . . Painful as it is, the experience of vulnerability can open the door to special knowledge, in part through opening the door to self-knowledge. Instead of being dismissed as subject, self-knowledge can become an important source of valid data, helping to erase the distinction between subjective and objective validity. . . .

Field work demands vulnerability if it is to allow one to enter into another culture . . . . Vulnerability, though often ignored or denied, is both a methodological asset and an experiential component of participant observation.

This interviewee’s words had really hit home for me because I had been trying so hard to understand the people with whom I was working. After I came away from this interview, I talked with Colin about how the interviews were going. I wrote the following passage after our meeting together:

After reviewing the thematic contents of three interviews that were performed, Colin and I discussed the fact that the interview handout started out by discussing assessment from a mainstream paradigm. I was shocked at this revelation,
because I realized that all this time I had been thinking about assessment, about what I saw as the fundamental basics of assessment, from a mainstream psychology point of view. I had not altered my conception of assessment in any way, really, except to substitute words like "live in a good way" for words like "solve problems" or "function more effectively." I was thinking of assessment in terms of gathering information, developing a plan, accuracy/comprehensiveness, success/failure, and progress. Most of all, I was thinking about assessments in terms of the types of disciplines that conduct them. What I wasn't doing was talking about assessment in the way that the rest of the research team (Collin and Sandra) were thinking and talking about it. What I wasn't doing was talking and writing about assessments from a First Nations/indigenous point of view. Once I started thinking along these lines, I realized that the word "assessment" itself was not adequately capturing what they meant. Then I realized that Colin had been telling me this all along: "assessment" was a psychological term, not a First Nations term. When people talked about assessment, certain things came into their minds — forms, tests, interview formats, reports, judgments. All three people I interviewed started talking about forms, institutions, and assessment processes in a way that was very consistent with how they are currently done. It was not until later in the interviews, after getting away from the discussion of more mainstream institutional systems that people talked, to some degree, about more of a First Nations point of view.

While it is important to document how the participants view mainstream assessment practices, this project is not about discussing and validating the system that is already in place in so many private practices and government institutions. This project is about understanding how First Nations want to come to terms with the needs of their own people through their own understanding of processes that will help them come to understand those needs. In asking people to reflect upon
assessment as described from primarily a mainstream point of view, I was deflecting them from discussing how people come to understand each other in First Nations country.

In discussing the interviews, Colin asked me to go and re-read the last 30 pages of *Indians Are Us*, so I did. What I realized is that in those last 30 pages, Churchill is talking about First Nations people being tricked into validating systems that oppress them. He discussed the idea that people tend to be defined in the ways that they are described and that First Nations people must be careful that they not be described in ways that validate systems that oppress them and fail to respect their worldviews. It was these points that really made me realize that I had been clinging to my psychology training ideas of what an assessment is. I was not considering the fact or opening my mind to the fact that First Nations people might have a totally different way of coming to understandings about people. Of course, I had always superficially or intellectually made this point, but I had never really understood it before.

I became somewhat frightened at the thought that there might be no way to express in the English language how First Nations people understand people in their contexts. For example, if mainstream assessment involves the concepts of testing people, soliciting information from them, and then coming to a judgment about them because you have been given the authority to make that judgment, how would a people perform "assessment" if their society upheld "noninterference" and a "nonjudgmental stance" toward others? What would assessment mean in a culture that did not intervene with and judge people with the same degree of authority and "license" that psychologists have?

The word 'assessment,' itself, might not (and likely does not) reflect how First Nations people see and understand each other. Therefore, it may be useful, as Colin suggested, to note words in a variety of First Nations languages that
reflect the spirit and understanding of what it means to assess or understand a person from a First Nations point of view. To this end, I asked a First Nations man I knew to come up with a word in his language that would reflect that process of understanding. I also am rewriting the description of assessment that was being used in the interview handout to be subject-based, from a First Nations point of view, as best as I can. I will bring this description back to Colin for review. In the mean time, Colin and I have agreed to not use the handout. Instead, I will describe the nature of the project verbally according to this newly drafted understanding.

At this point in the project, I was beginning to feel very vulnerable because I could see that the training in assessment I had from graduate school was not going to assist me in understanding the worldview of First Nations people. I thought I had come up with a "culturally sensitive" description of assessment when I had created the handout that I gave to the first interviewees. Colin and Sandra knew that the handout had been written from a mainstream perspective, but, rather than rewriting the handout for me, they let me experience for myself the differences that would allow me to reflect back on the mindset I had brought into the project when I first had joined it.

A few days later, I wrote the following passage:

Had a talk with Sandra today about some of the insights I'd reached in the last few days regarding mainstream and alternative paradigms or perspectives. She asked me if I felt like I was finally breaking new ground. I agreed but also said that I felt more like I was finally catching up with everybody around me. Up until this point I'd really been feeling like I had a bunch of puzzle pieces in front of me but could not figure out how the hell they all went together. Now I'm starting to see; I'm taking a first step in understanding a First Nations perspective/point of view. I was feeling really dumb up until this point. Somehow, people were communicating in ways that I couldn't really get. Sandra congratulated me for
catching on so quickly. She said that a lot of people, even First Nations students, have a hard time seeing past university training to a more indigenous perspective. She was not being critical of people with mainstream, university-based training. She was simply pointing out to me that mainstream post-secondary education changes the way people think and obscures non-academic perspectives because they are generally seen as invalid or unscientific.

I felt grateful to her for this encouragement and thanked her, but I still felt foolish, like I had been betraying the project by covertly imposing a mainstream paradigm on it, all the while talking like I was seeing alternative points of view. I felt guilty. However, now that I recognized what I was doing, I felt less confused and freer to pursue the work in a more genuine way.

These feelings, however, prompted nagging doubts about whether the university department would accept a dissertation written from an indigenous perspective. However, for now, I'm committed to letting go of my paradigm to learn another. If I can't let go of control when doing field research in a foreign community, then how can I let myself be guided to a new perspective; how can I learn? Also, if I can't question the assumptions of my own training, then how can I adequately have faith that the training is appropriate when applied with First Nations? In short, if I can't question the assumptions of my field, what's the point of doing research, if only then to always perpetuate the assumptions and never go beyond them or learn other ways of relating?

People like Sandra and Colin, as well as Sakej2 and Eduardo Duran, had talked to me about the importance of language and of seeing things from a First Nations perspective, but I didn't really understand. I did understand intellectually, but not experientially. I hadn't, until now, experienced the sheer frustration of

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2 Sakej Youngblood Henderson, who is the head of the Native Law Faculty at the University of Saskatchewan.
trying to get at and describe a concept knowing that the words I was using were not representing the totality of the experience I was trying to get at. I remember Chief Justice Yazzi of the Navajo nation saying at last summer's symposium that the ideas of First Nations people were held in their language and that the importance of describing things from the perspective of that language could not be underestimated.

I had a chance to talk . . . with <the uncle of one of the interviewees>. . . . He said that the closest he could come to describing how an Elder would perform a First Nations style "assessment" would be to use the word <I can't spell it in English> in his language, which translated roughly into the phrase "to become aware" of something. He thought that "looking" was a component of this awareness, as well. He stated that awareness was a way of describing coming to an understanding or knowledge of something without implying judgment or evaluation. He said that an Elder would try to come to an awareness of a person without being evaluative or judgmental of that person. The problem with the English word "assessment" is that it carries a lot of connotations with it about evaluation or judgment, which, as Sandra and I had discussed earlier today as well, is not a part of how First Nations experience each other. . . .

Is the psychology department going to accuse me of "going native" (Gawd, what a racist phrase that is!!!!!). I'm beginning to realize how preoccupied I am with how the department will react to my work. Why am I? Probably because I'd like to graduate and I don't want to "fail." Still, having to worry about that all the time pisses me off and inhibits me sometimes from really becoming immersed in an alternative world view. The tie to the department jerks me back, like a master.

Of course, I was afraid of seeing another worldview because I knew that what I saw in that worldview would not be seen by the people I was working with back at the
university. They would only have my interpretation of events and data to rely on, and I was only a student who still had to meet stringent academic criteria for dissertations and social science that had been laid down for generations of students before me and generations yet to come. The seeming immutability of that academic tradition seemed staggering.

However, I knew that there was real value in the First Nations worldview that I was starting to see very gradually. I also knew that there would be no way to write from a purely mainstream perspective and capture what I was learning. For example, when I wrote my master’s thesis a few years ago, I thought that I was being very culturally sensitive when I wrote the following paragraphs in my conclusion:

One reason for the high within-groups variability on the SSI is that the measure is extensively culturally loaded. Social skills cannot be defined without reference to what is considered to be appropriate and skilful behavior within a given culture. The sexual offender group and especially the nonsexual offender group contained a high number of First Nations youth, some of whom appeared puzzled by a few of the items on the measure.

The following is an example of an item on the SSI that may have been confusing for First Nations youth: “When in discussions, I find myself doing a large share of the talking.” Many First Nations youth are brought up to understand that listening and watching are important ways of behaving. The ability to speak at length to others is not as valued a skill as it may be in the dominant White culture (Zolner, 1995).

When I wrote those two paragraphs several years ago and included them in my master’s thesis, they seemed reasonable and enlightened at the time. However, looking at them now, they seem ridiculous. First of all, I really knew nothing at all about First Nations culture back then, other than what I had read in a few books written by non-First
Nations people. Second, of course the ability to speak at length is valued by First Nations. Some of the longest speakers I had ever listened to were First Nations Elders, who frequently went on at length when they were giving a teaching. Third, I had written that the “ability” to speak at length was not valued in First Nations culture, as if these youth with whom I was working did not have this “ability.” I was characterizing First Nations youth by using a deficit-based perspective that, in effect, was minimizing their competency. Fourth, I had written that the youth had seemed puzzled by the questions. This observation was made solely on the basis of behavioral cues. Thinking back on the first three interviewees comments, I realized that I would have to go far beyond just behavior to really understand the First Nations worldview, if I really ever would understand it at all.

I knew that I had to start thinking from a First Nations perspective, just like when you learn a new language you do much better if you try to think in the new language rather than always translating back and forth. Also, there was a danger in that kind of translation. Every time I tried to link or relate First Nations concepts to mainstream thinking, I ran the risk of watering down, altering, or appropriating those concepts into the mainstream. For example, I remember reading the research of a medical anthropologist who had interviewed First Nations Elders working in the penal system. After writing all about the Elders’ own perspectives and their work, he related them back to a major anthropological theory of “symbolic healing” and attempted to show how these Elders were doing what medical anthropologists had known about and labeled in their own way for a long time.

I understand, from an academic perspective, the value of labeling and classifying. However, the problem with what this anthropologist had done was to appropriate the First Nations knowledge into his mainstream vocabulary in a way that would make other anthropologists reading his book think that they, having read the book, now knew what First Nations healing was all about. The term “symbolic healing” would call to mind all
the mainstream literature and discourse that they had ever read, and that discourse would fill in the details of their academic understanding of the First Nations worldview not contained in the book and, possibly, not known about or understood by the book’s author. This is how appropriation takes place, not just in the writings of academics, but in the thoughts of academics as well. For example, in writing about the Tewa people in Arizona, Dozier (1966) wrote:

Although there are seven Hano clans – Bear, Fir, Corn, Tobacco, Earth, Cloud, and Cottonwood – only two, Bear and Fir, are grouped together. This linkage seems identical with the phratry groupings of the Hopi and fits Titievi’s definition of the Hopi phratry (Titievi 1944:5):

. . . a nameless division of kindred made up to two or more clans which share certain privileges, mainly ceremonial, in common. The outstanding feature of the phratry is that it delimits the greatest extension of kinship terms based on a given relationship, and that it marks the largest exogamic unit recognized by the Hopi . . . (p. 44)“

This passage from Dozier represents “comparative analysis,” a certain way of thinking in academia that makes it simple to quite superficially compare alternative perspectives or practices and then subsume one under another or overlook real and significant differences between them. When Dozier wrote about Hano clan systems using academic jargon and labels, he changed the point of reference and authority in the discussion to mainstream, in effect asking his readers to think about what other researchers had already decided about the study of the Hano people. The classifications exist in the First Nations culture, but the manner in which they are discussed and referred to make it seem like the knowledge of those classifications came from the mainstream.

The effect of this type of discussion is more to perpetuate mainstream knowledge rather than to find out new and unknown things about the Hano people. When academics think of words like “phratry” and “exogamic,” they think of how those words
and, consequently, these people would be defined by other, like-minded scholars. In this sense they appropriate knowledge of Hano culture and relabel it with their own concepts. Sometimes the similarities between different worldviews can facilitate this process of appropriation. This process really is no different from the way that federal and provincial program developers use “concepts” from First Nations knowledge, but in ways that are really based in a mainstream paradigm. However, in the social sciences, it is the researcher’s motivation to identify regularities or universals across cultures that fuels this type of comparative analysis and consequent mutation of First Nations knowledge.

Segall, Lonner, and Berry (1998) wrote the following about Cross-cultural Psychology, which is fundamentally based in comparative study of cultures:

> Albeit vigorous, the discipline <Cross-cultural Psychology> was marked by some conceptual and methodological weaknesses. In the early days, there was, far too often, a naïve application of Euro-American theoretical notions and, worse, instruments designed, produced, and validated in Euro-American settings to research conducted in other settings. This approach, dubbed “imposed etic” (Berry, 1969) most often yielded uninterpretable “cross-cultural differences.”

The authors acknowledged the problems with Cross-cultural Psychology, and then proposed an new way of studying culture that they claimed would avoid the “imposed etic” of previous methods. They described a method of coming to a “derived etic” based on the “careful, internal exploration of psychological phenomena in local cultural terms,” resulting in an analysis of a culture that is ostensibly culturally sensitive and based on indigenous meanings. I have now become wary of the phrase “based on” because it usually means “changed” and it could mean “appropriated.” However, the authors’ goal, once they developed a “derived etic” is as follows:

> In the extreme, and probably late in the game, even a universal psychology might emerge, but we argue that universality can never be assumed in advance. . . .

Cross-cultural Psychology is still stereotyped and unfairly criticized for having
used this research mode in its earlier incarnations. It is true, however, that
although a priori absolutism is deplored, a universally applicable psychological
theory remains a tantalizing and presumably attainable goal for many cross-cultural
psychologists . . . . For example, Poortinga, van de Vijver, Joe, and Van de
Koppel (1987) examined cultural variables very carefully . . . in order to reveal the
“psychic unity of mankind” at the core of culture. . . .

First (and probably foremost), our findings are meant to contribute to the
understanding of human behavior. In this respect, cross-cultural psychology is, in
its intent, as “pure” as general psychology in its incarnation as a “science of human
behavior.” (And because cross-cultural psychology studies behaviors always in
cultural context, it even provides correctives to culture-bound interpretations of
data previously collected in a single society, where the potentially relevant
variables were inextricably confounded.)

It is not just a “universal psychology” that they seek. In the above passage, it becomes
clear that these researchers do not want to just learn about alternate worldviews: They
want to “correct” understandings based in those worldviews. The authors wrote this latter
comment in parentheses, but it really is this particular comment that reveals their self-
created higher place in the hierarchy of experts about culture. They are still digging for the
gold nuggets containing the truth about human Psychology, but what if the gold is not
valued in the other culture?

It certainly is difficult, actually impossible, to understand a culture from the
outside. When you finally go inside the culture, it is even more difficult to leave your
baggage behind, all those suitcases containing your methods, analogies, comparisons, and
anchors to your own worldview. Letting go is scary, even if it means you might drift over
a little so that you can see the other side.
CHAPTER 10: Fourth Interview

*Everything has a purpose on this Earth, and we tie everything to it,*

*and even to make a simple decision you gotta think back,*

*and it all turns out to Creator's laws, and it goes into our own laws*

*that are specific to whatever you may be doing, and it's all, we're all tied to it.*

- Interviewee #4

After rewriting the assessment interview handout, Colin and I decided that it would be better to not use it at all because it was too mainstream. Instead, at Colin's suggestion, I used the idea of what a hunter might do. The following is the new type of introduction I had for the final interviews:

If you were gonna do an assessment, what would be important? Like, if you were gonna teach a young boy to go hunting, you'd teach him what to look for and quickly what to pick out as important. That's the kind of thing that that we're looking at. With some kind of person or situation how would you pick out what was important, what would be important, and is there a word in your language for what you would do?

This was as close as I could come, at the time, to what I was beginning to learn about a First Nations approach to assessment. It was far from being even remotely close to what a First Nations assessment was, but it was enough of a description with which to start a conversation. It was a less formal way to start, and I did not have anything written
down on paper ahead of time. Therefore, interview number four was much more conversational. The fourth interviewee was just completing a Bachelor’s Degree in Indian Social Work. He had been working for First Nations psychosocial and educational agencies for 12 years and was now completing the final practicum for his degree with an Indian agency.

[So what do you think about, see I said assessment, but it’s not the word, eh?]
Yeah.

[Like, uh, you have another language besides English?] Yes, Saulteaux.

[Saulteaux, like maybe there’s a word in Saulteaux that describes, like what an Elder would do] U-huh

[if somebody came to see that person, there might be a word, you know, I don’t think it’s “assessment”]
Yeah, it’s, I guess the closest way I can get to that would probably be a study or to study.

[m-hm]

and . . . like if you look at Child Welfare now, the types of abuses that are associated with Child Welfare, if you <sighs>, go into a community, you study the norms or the, the cultural ways. I’ve had a chance to work with other cultures within the new tribal council, which are the Crees and Saulteauxs, they’re similar and there’s a few differences, but they’re still similar in our eyes. We can relate to them and understand why they’re different

[m-hm]

and if you take, for instance, if you take a non-Indian person that’s doing research or say, I’ll use a school, ’cause I have a little bit of experience with that, and if there’s a situation that happened, um, maybe the child was abandoned or whatever and the principal or a teacher was asked to do an assessment or a diagnosis of what he figures was wrong with the child and this child would go visit his home maybe in the evenings, and this was based on an actual case . . . this child would go to this person’s home and he was a white man and he told the courts that that child was hungry and the judge or the peoples in the court asked, ‘well how do you know that?’ ‘Well, every time he came over he says, I’m hungry, you know, What do you have to eat?’

[m-hm]
you know and like, go to the fridge, and he'd literally help himself, you know <he laughs>, and uh, he says, 'I knew he was always hungry so he was like in school too. So, when I went out to study it, and I seen a different picture. Back home we have a way when somebody visits us we feed them, like without asking we will. It's just our way. We put food on the table or we'll feed them soon as they walk through the door. There's also another, it's a contemporary norm, it just kinda came up with our Indian children now where they say when they're hungry they mean they want something sweet. There's no goodies in the house so they'll say they're hungry

[m-hm]

So we gotta look at it like that. And that child was both. He knew that when you went to another person's house that you had to be fed, and this person didn't offer it so he asked

[m-hm, m-hm]

and in a way he was interpreted to say that he was starving but he wasn't. They did have food in the house. They did, and to him there was nothing to eat in his house because they didn't have no chips or sweet stuff. So if you look at it like that, you gotta be able to understand, I guess, And especially justice systems or courts. They don't have time to do that. They allow, I guess they rely on their own people to do those kind of things.

Understanding culturally normative behavior and differences between traditional and contemporary ways of expressing oneself were a part of doing a proper assessment.

Visiting a home, yourself, understanding what you see there and then telling it like you see it was also part of doing a proper assessment.

However, the “telling it like you see it” was not done in the mainstream system.

He said:

I did have dealings with some courts, and when I did talk to our children that went through the system and I would ask them questions like what they seen the judges, or what they seen their lawyers, what they seen their prosecutor – and they all had different stories, but a lot of them are very similar... They would say, 'My lawyer is the guy who lies for me, who tries to make me a really outstanding person <he laughs>, prosecutor is the guy that tries to make me look bad and to prove that I am a bad person and the judge is the one that's gonna tell me I am a bad person, and he says I don't know what they talk about, but they go sit, they're doing something over there, I'm not involved in it and... I'm scared of what's being discussed about me and the social worker's over there too, he's... supposed to look out for my best interest. And I ask that youth, I ask that child, 'What do you think is the best interest for you?' 'I don't know. I don't have that responsibility. I don't have that authority to make that up for me, for myself. Those people up there are gonna do that for me.’

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The justice system in Canada is adversarial, and it contradicts what would be a normal way of finding solutions to problematic situations in First Nations families and communities. According to this interviewee, the Canadian justice system also excludes the person from involvement and finding an answer to his or her own problem.

they go through their whole system like that and then build up a wall where resistance, and I guess it goes towards that whole notion of self esteem and that's where the judges, the courts, social workers, psychologists, or whatever you have will all say that this children's are, they have low self esteem, they're dysfunctional, their whole family's dysfunctional, their extended families are dysfunctional, even the Chief and Councils are dysfunctional, they will go right up the ladder

[mom]

and then it's a whole total breakdown and then there's a big bunch of chaos and the kid just gives up....

Evaluations from people outside the system who do not understand from inside what is right or wrong about a situation can end up in sweeping negative generalizations that overwhelm people and entire community systems.

[What are you looking for that's different, do you think]

I think more or less it's based on understanding and how you're gonna talk about this, like, if you take traditional counselling, for instance, that's usually controlled and handled by another, and sometimes even a Chief'll do it, like, he'll designate somebody within the community to go and help that family. And if you get another person < an outsider to the community> that watches this whole process, 'You know those guys, they don't know what they're doing. You know, it's not structured' but meanwhile they don't see it between the lines ... how the process is actually handled according to our culture and the boundaries that are set up in there and how nobody interferes with that. And if an Elder is appointed and sometimes an Elder will delegate helpers to do some tasks for him in order for him to get at something he wants to know and if he can't get it directly out of that, out of the child or the family, then he's gonna instruct other people to try and do that for him and ... you have a hierarchy of a traditional counselling technique that is not recognized or even understood by other counselling people.

He was pointing to the problem of understanding a process from the inside as compared with seeing it from the outside.

I had a poignant experience of my own along these lines, on one occasion, in a graduate school class in Psychology. The class had been discussing an assessment profile of a woman. The professor of the class commented that the woman was Ukrainian and,
therefore, had likely experienced a lot of isolation in her life. Being Ukrainian, myself, I remember that I was, at once, both shocked and offended at this extrapolation based on the woman’s cultural heritage. I expressed my shock to the professor, something like, “Isolated? Where would you get that idea?” He explained to me that people from the Ukrainian community were isolated from the mainstream because of their different cultural heritage. Now, I became even more offended. He was telling me about my own. I tried to explain to him the richness, closeness, and interconnectedness of the Ukrainian community. At the same time, I was aware that Ukrainian means a lot of different things, depending on what type of Ukrainian person you are talking about. Nonetheless, with all these thoughts, images, and responses going through my head at once, it was difficult to really communicate anything but objection to what he had said.

Looking back on that scenario, I realized that I was experiencing the Ukrainian community from the inside, and he was seeing it from the outside. The professor had been assuming that integration with mainstream was an important and desirable goal. I was thinking of how the community people support each other. When discussing the relationship of Ukrainian people to the mainstream, I would not ever have chosen the word “isolation.” I would have chosen the word “discrimination.” I asked my mother about her reaction to the professor’s words, given that I was still reeling from the blow. She said,

I’m shocked at the use of the word isolation. Where’s he coming from, the dark ages? There’s more communication flowing around the Ukrainian community than anywhere. And furthermore, there is communication between the Ukrainian people and other people from all walks of life. The Ukrainian people are an outgoing community, who love to talk and laugh and sing with each other. However, the internal view that a community has of itself is not always accepted outside of the community. In referring to the counselling process that happens in a First Nations community, the interviewee said:

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There's nothing really to back up that whole process because of the oral nature of our traditions . . . and the only thing that backs those up is you'll see it practiced within our ceremonies, and not about the ceremonies themselves, but what's talked about in there, the way they do things, how you take that, incorporate that into your everyday life, and then you have other influences . . . .

He was making the point that oral tradition is not always accepted as good evidence by people outside of the community. He was also making the point that the two worldviews differed in their view of dysfunction.

Recently, DIAND commissioned a preliminary report on the reliability and validity of oral tradition. The following are excerpts from that report (von Gernet, 1996):

This research report is an interdisciplinary literature review prepared for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. The objective is to compile and synthesize opinions which address a variety of issues relating to oral narratives about the past. The 50-day study commenced January 15, 1996 and ended April 5, 1996.

The need for the present study was stimulated by a recognition that the more than 70 historic treaties, which represent legally recognized solemn arrangements between various Aboriginal peoples and the British Colonial government or Canada, are frequently controversial. The written English texts are oftentimes subject to varying interpretations, partly because their vague and ambiguous language does not lend itself to straightforward application in the modern context. Treaty First Nations regard the treaties as living and evolving agreements and emphasize their spirit and intent. Moreover, occasionally it is claimed that oral promises were made by Crown representatives outside the written texts. Such oral dealings are alleged to have been transmitted by word-of-mouth to descendant generations, at which time they became oral traditions. Many of these traditions, which are now communicated to modern listeners, are not easily reconciled with written documentation and, hence, divergent positions on treaty interpretation have arisen (my emphasis).
After concluding in his report that he thinks oral tradition is basically inconsistent, unreliable, and only partially valid, von Gernet gave the last word to a First Nations person, Dora Wilson-Kenni, a Gitksan monitor and advisor in the Delgamuukw [court] case:

None of our languages are written; it's an oral history. And I guess this is one of the arguments that was used against us; that there's oral history and nothing is written. I guess it's fine if anthropologists get this history and write it down and then it can be recognized... To me is was a sad day when I heard that decision [by Judge McEachern]. And yet in a way I was happy because in a way it was a victory. A victory in a way that yes, our oral history was slammed around as we were witnesses on the witness stand, but we have it written in black and white now for anyone to see in those transcripts, in those 374 volumes of transcripts. In all of the commissioned evidence, all of those affidavits—it's there written, and that is something that the Gitksan and Wet'suwet'en people have done to further this fight for recognition.

Scholars and researchers generally see written documentation as more reliable than oral. Written documentation takes on the status of “autonomous discourse,” having an authority of its own which Western scholars and researchers typically view as higher than the authority of orally based information (Ong, 1982).

The interviewee continued in his train of thought:

and now if a family is dysfunctional, for instance, there's two meanings to the word dysfunctional to the Western system and then our own. . . . We have two different views of that and I guess how to bring those two together is to hook one, hook the other, I guess, based on the similarities, you all want the same thing but it has a different technique.

[So the White, uh, view of dysfunction, like leaving that aside for a second, what's just the First Nations, like or a Saulteaux view of dysfunction. How would you see that?]
I wanted to know more about the two views of dysfunction, but I had started out the question by making reference to the mainstream. It is so very simple for a mainstream-trained person to stay anchored in the mainstream. However, I caught myself and asked about what I really wanted to know—a First Nation person’s perspective on “dysfunction.” He was Saulteaux, so I asked about a Saulteaux view. Slowly, I was shifting over to try to see his side.

The breakdown of our boundaries, our responsibilities. It’s kind of like... has two views to it within our own system too because it has a positive side and it has a negative side and how people manipulate that whole notion of our culture. Some will use it on, for instance, a non-Indian therapist who doesn’t know the norms or anything, they’ll use that. They’ll, like, say, ‘Well, I don’t speak English, and they’ll resort to their language, maybe Saulteaux, and they can say that, ‘I don’t understand what you’re talking about’ and then ‘Our culture states that we can do this,’ you know, ‘I could go drink. I could go inflict abuse on whoever I want or get to be abused. And if it’s a father doing it then he could almost say that ‘It’s in our culture that I can abuse that child’ but... there’s checks and balances within our own culture. It’s very dangerous. That could backfire on a person, also, what he’s doing. So he could manipulate that with another non-Indian person.

[but he wouldn’t get away with that]

he wouldn’t get away with it to <pointing to himself and his surroundings, meaning the person wouldn’t get away with it within a First Nations community and a person who was aware of First Nations norms of behavior>. . . . It’s very, it’s kind of a scary thing but it does happen.

As the interviewee indicated, a major danger in trying to do cross-cultural psychological assessment was the danger of not knowing whether a behavior is normative or not within a community. The assessor runs the risk of being manipulated or fooled by the client, but the client would never get away with this kind of deception with a person trained to do traditional counselling in First Nations culture.

I was curious about his use of the word “boundaries,” because in the psychosocial sciences the word had a particular meaning referring to interpersonal concepts of privacy, autonomy, and individuality relating to the person’s sense of self and role within relationships. However, he was using the word in relationship to “responsibilities.”
Looking back on the transcript of our conversation, I realize that he had not said either "violation" or "broke a boundary." I was thinking about boundary in the way that mainstream assessors and therapists might think about it: as a demarcated limit that had rules about who or what could cross it under what circumstances. The word also had connotations of "privacy" and "individuality" that led me to think of how interpersonal boundaries can be violated or broken, as psychologists might think of boundary. It's hard to get out of mainstream thinking, and it must be equally hard to describe concepts from a different worldview using a foreign language such as English.

m-hm

[... I'm not sure what that means]

Okay <sighs>... it's just like... you probably heard about that blaming the victim <sighs> attitude towards lower class people or, in our case, I guess, since we live in a welfare state now... our people are blamed for that and, put yourself... I was there actually and I did put myself there and I grew up in that environment. It was pretty hard to find answers because those answers were kept from me, and, in a sense, I guess, those boundaries were ripped apart where we had literally no responsibilities to even help ourselves. We had other people to come in and do that for us... even to make a decision for a person as to how they're gonna help themselves, and you start looking at your parents and you try to ask them for help and there's something there. It disallows you. That's what I mean about those boundaries, They <the parents> don't allow you to go to them because they can't help you anyways 'cause somebody else took that away. And then, if you overstep them <your parents>, try and go to your grandparents even them too, they may help you out to a certain extent, but it's contained. It's like a sense of hopelessness, and it has something to do with an individual's well-being... how he feels about himself, self-esteem, I guess, and how other people interpret their self-esteem, saying that, like we're lazy, no good for nothing, we don't work, we just live on welfare... There's all kinds of things that were inflicted on our people, like we have our own political system on each band and it's a breed of its own making. I don't know where it comes from <he laughs>... it's something that just doesn't belong there, and it affects a healthy family or the well-being of a family... It has an impact on that and then that too rips apart boundaries that exist there as to the roles, responsibilities of a parent, and children, grandparents, right up to the leadership.

He was using boundaries like "responsibilities," but it was extremely difficult to explain this concept without using his own language and making reference to all the ties the
concept had to a traditional worldview. I had a very hard time understanding him, partly because of his use of the English word “boundaries,” partly because of my psychological understanding of what a “boundary” is, and partly because I really did not understand how the role of parents, children, and grandparents were defined in Saulteaux or in any other First Nation. I was going to have to live with some ambiguity in my own understanding of what he was saying, but I persisted a little anyway:

[So boundary means this is who you are and you have these responsibilities and ways of acting because you’re a child or a parent or a grandparent]

m-hm

[and that becomes broken]

Yeah, torn apart

[because . . . like, how? By, you mean, like one]

like robots, use that for an example

[‘cause you’re always]

controlled

[controlled]

it’s a control mechanism, there’s a lot of control mechanisms out there to keep our people in that environment

[like political control mechanisms and funding]

m-hm

[well actually . . . you didn’t say funding but a couple of other people have mentioned that to me – funding as a control]

socioeconomic

[socioeconomic control]

conditions, housing, turns into a

[whats, housing and what else?] socioeconomic conditions

[conditions, right]
I was struggling to follow him, still thinking back to his example of the robot and how it related to "boundaries."

housing, education, uuh, motivation, demotivations, you do get people that break out of that, those kind of people are very strong

[m-hm]

It's like a map of life, I guess, and if you break out of there you're lucky. You could, but it's even harder to try and help those people that are still back there because of those boundaries <he laughs> that keep coming up. And, you have to encounter provincial politics, federal politics, jurisdiction and all that that comes along with it, so you could throw all those aside <provincial and federal politics>, especially to the view of a lot of families

[So, like boundaries in that sense would mean, like they put up road blocks for you guys]

This was not at all what he meant, but I had not really been listening for the past couple of minutes because I was so stuck on understanding what he had been telling me about "boundaries." Really, I was not listening to him at all in these moments because I had been preoccupied with my own thoughts. Nevertheless, he went along with my own use of the word boundaries -- the more mainstream use -- and continued:

Yeah, constantly. As soon as you conquer something, another one comes up. It never ends.

[So when you're looking at a family or a kid, it sounds like you're looking at not just the family but what the White system has done . . . in that family and community? . . . is that what you're saying?] I really was not catching on very well to what he was saying.

No. It's not what the White system has done to that family but, I guess it's -- I don't know how to put that in words -- but it's, why it's allowed? Why those families allow those to take place. We're very passive . . . I know, based on my own experience, I used to wonder why that fight is taken out of us! and there's a spiritual context tied to it because . . . <sighs> when the treaties were signed. And it has a lot to do with commitment, and we don't want to break those treaties if we go to war . . . that's why I say that fight was literally taken out of us because there was offerings put there, along with our pipe, and White man's Bible, and it had their queen's representative's there, and we had ours, and they did their thing on our side, and they probably did theirs on their side, and they come to an agreement, and reserves were struck, deals were made, medicine chest claw, stuff like that, and social assistance, and supposedly economic developments, programs and all those good things that are supposed to come along with treaties, and in a sense the treaties are for the White man too, so because of those treaties, they get
to use the land and all the good things that come along with that, and a lot of those were broken on that side not ours so the only thing left for us to resort to was to war, which we never went to war yet, and that personally I still have a hard time understanding. And I could understand how a lot of things like Oka and Ippersville — and then there's that other thing that happened in BC — all those little sporadic actions taking place — and I could relate to why that's happening. I guess it's more or less the frustration level. You take that and internalize that into an individual, that's what's happening inside that person's head ... and they're so frustrated that they don't give a shit anymore now and they're and how you <intercom rings> deal with that, is that it'll probably be a nightmare <he laughs> 

[That's, uh, that's really interesting.]

This is what people say when they really do not understand what someone is talking about. However, to keep the conversation going, I asked a question about the one thing that I could grasp on to and understand in his words, partly because the first interviewee had said something similar:

[So that what's happening on a community basis is really happening on an individual]

Yes.

[basis too. There's a tie between the community and the individual]

m-hm

[What happened to the community and what's happening to that one person.]

Yep.

[So you see that, when you go. Like, if something's happening in a family and you go and you have to see that situation]

Yes.

[you see that]

Yep.

[and you look, and you can see that anger there]

m-hm, 'cause I know when I talk with them I try and talk about all these things at the same time, try and open avenues hopefully to find something so we could zero in on

[So you're making a link between what's happening to the family and the history of what's happened to]

External forces, yeah.
Yeah. That are having that effect on the family."

... When you assess the family, I think that would be a good thing to ask them what they view justice as and what they think justice is. Same thing... they did with Child Welfare when we went and we asked them 'What is Child Welfare? We went, and we asked them what they did about it when those kind of things happened. You take your child sexual abuse, for instance, or child neglect, or abandonment, or physical abuse, things like that, what they did about them, and... then we looked at the provincial system and it was totally, it was the same thing but they wouldn't do it that way, thinking about all those other things, I was just talking about.

He was referring back to what he had just said about treaty, boundaries, responsibility, and spirituality. I did not know how all these things tied together, but I could tell from what he was saying to me that First Nations child welfare workers and provincial child welfare workers were both interested in dealing with sexual abuse, neglect, abandonment, physical abuse, but professionals from the two worlds used very different methods, philosophies, and techniques.

[mm, so what would they do that would be different or the way that they would do it would be different?]

Some of the technique <sighs>, how you're going to talk about it, and how you would want services, and how you would get some of that anger out and put that responsibility on some of those organizations that inflicted it. One thing that comes to mind is that residential school, that's really coming up, like you hear that term residual all the time, like ownership, responsible, who's responsible, and I think we could clarify as to who is actually responsible for those. I think it would make things a whole lot easier because this time we're just chasing a ball around and you, like as an individual growing up, you want to blame somebody, and it's hard to put that blame on somebody. You can't even blame your parents... you'll try... and when they start talking like that you actually see those boundaries on them and where they're broken – some that are solid – you hear them say, 'I'm all messed up' and when you ask them, 'Well, why are you messed up?' then they will talk but they won't talk about all those external things, and I think you want to take into account those... when you're assessing, I guess, the community, or a family and, that's the only thing I can think of right now <he laughs>.

[So, it sounds like... one thing you're saying is... you're not just looking, you're not just assessing what's going on there but you're also giving information to the family?]  

Yeah. Two way. Two way avenue

[Two way, so both]

m-hm
You're getting and giving at the same time]

Yeah

[And that it's helpful for the family to be able to tie what's happening to them to]

the bigger picture

[the bigger picture, okay, so they know why this happened, like who to blame, what, you know]

m-hm

[who's responsible for this, and there's something in that]

It makes the job easier for everybody.

[okay]

It's a better understanding . . . . I'll use myself for an example. When I was growing up, I used to wonder why my grandfather used to drink quite a bit . . . . I talked to him, 'Why don't you quit?'

[mm]

'Just stop.' And we're happy, you know, we've got food in the fridge, you know. We go hunting. We have a household we're in, you know, but I, I was just a kid, you know, I didn't know what was out there yet . . . . and I used to wonder why he didn't want to teach me our language too. He says, "You don't need that language where you're going" he says, "You're gonna have to learn that White way. You're gonna be spoiled," he says, "We used to make fire and chopped wood and melt snow in the winter," he says, "That's, you know, that's a good life right now, but you're gonna be spoiled even more," he says, "When you grow up," he says, "You're gonna go to a wall when you get cold, and you're gonna turn a knob," he says, "You're not gonna light a lamp there. You're just gonna flip switches at your command. You're gonna push buttons, and you're gonna get lazy," he says <he laughs>, and it didn't really hit me 'til way after, and then I used to wonder why he resorted <the pauses> and there was a lot of suicide in my family, too and a lot of family violence and I used to wonder about that, 'Why?' and I used to try and blame my uncles or my mom, or somebody, but it didn't hold water, and then finally, . . . . when I got older, and I started really studying on it, and I started getting that bigger picture, it made more sense to me why, why our people resort to family violence, suicide, and all that stuff because they literally just give up. <the pauses> That fight is just taken out of them. That was boundaries. I mean, I keep talking about them. They were broken. There's no responsibilities there any more, so they have no where else to go, and they just blow up, and that's why I say if there's an understanding, like for me, if someday somebody talked to me about that, maybe I'd have a better picture on that, and I'd really feel about them, myself, if I know what the perceptions of a non-Indian community might be on myself, like, going into that area with that knowledge, . . . . and same thing with the justice. You know, our people don't even understand that a lot of them are commodities . . . . Without them those systems wouldn't work . . . . If you went to a foster home, adoptions, or whatever . . . . here, I'll use adoptions for
an example, if... a child has been removed from their parents at a very young age or from the community and adopted out, and they’re not told who their natural, biological parents are, the Elders always told me that we don’t believe in that kind of adoption... because that child, when he goes in there, he lives his life like a fantasy. He wonders who his parents are, and he’s gonna grow up thinking like that, so here, to him his life is gonna be a lie. Everything is gonna be a lie to him. That’s how he’s gonna interpret it. Somebody tells him something, he’s gonna say, ‘Well, that’s a lie anyways, you know. You guys aren’t my parents.’ Or if you want to do this, that’s, ‘You guys are just deceiving me’ and usually when they start doing that, they get in trouble with the law and they start doing that, and then they end up in their institutions, the youth facilities, and graduate into their correctional centers and into penitentiaries. <he pauses> Like that. And they all come from different angles – foster homes, group homes, or right out of the community itself, and without thinking about that, you know, I think if those people knew the bigger picture, they would be able to commit themselves or plan their life at least knowing what’s right and wrong. Right now they, they don’t really know what’s wrong. They just figure what’s right, and they’ll go that way... I guess if you could talk like that, then there’d be a whole better understanding... and most people, most young or people don’t realize that until their 30’s, in their 30’s, sometimes even beyond. They don’t get a clear understanding of that. That’s why I say there’s a lot of conditioning and a lot of controls in there.

He was talking about the conditioning that First Nations people experience when they encounter non-First Nations systems, but he was also talking about the conditioning youth receive when they grow up in family systems that have been broken apart by devastation, like the devastation of families being torn apart by the people who ran residential schools.

[So they don’t know what’s right or wrong because they don’t know who they are?]

Yeah.

[... They’re missing something because of that?]

m-hm

[So, this is a very basic question, but what do you think they’re missing when they don’t know who, where they come from, who their parents are?]

The truth <he laughs>. It’s an imbalance. It really imbalances their spiritual, emotional, healthy, all those four areas of our life. It affects every one of those. A child would probably be very imbalanced in all those areas, especially the spiritual context... I’ll use foster homes as an example of not knowing who you are. I really don’t know where I’m gonna go with this, but <he laughs>... Well, there’s two kinds of foster homes here. We have our own ways and then we have the provincial existing services already, but that totally breaks down that... whole like that imbalance of those 4 areas. If you pick spirituality, for instance, they will say, ‘Well, we will address these cultural needs. We will take him to
pow-wows. We will take him to cultural gatherings, stuff like that.’ Then, if we’re sitting on the other side and we’re watching this going on, ‘Well, yeah, that’s good, they’re doing that, but that’s just a celebration, the other side of a child’s life, ‘cause, if you go back historically, we use pow-wows for celebrations, round dances or whatever, it could be hand games or whatever, it really makes you feel good about being an Indian, but that’s a celebration, you’re celebrating life. . . . There’s still things that fall in behind that, like going to ceremonies, now that thing is gonna be blocked from those children. There’s gonna be a front there for these children and it’s like a false hope. . . . It’s gonna show them that they’re Indian and to be proud of it but yet they won’t have nothing to validate or something to go back to that really does prove that they are an Indian ‘cause they miss that spiritual side of it. Now if you take that within our own foster care or foster parenting system, like, we will probably have that incorporated into our own standards, into our own ways . . . and ensure that those 4 areas of a child are balanced.

Most of Clinical Psychology is based in the bio-psycho-social model, which attempts to look at a person from a “whole” perspective. This interviewee was telling me not only do the areas First Nations value not correspond with that bio-psycho-social model; but that model was completely lacking in spirituality altogether. I remember in a graduate student seminar, I had asked the group and the professors what would happen if a client started talking about prayer or faith. The response I got on that occasion was that “Psychologists don’t really talk about prayer and faith in psychotherapy.” While not all psychologists would agree with this one professor, mainstream psychological training in spirituality has remained in the domains of Counselling, Social, and Pastoral Psychology, rather than Clinical or Experimental Psychology.

In truth, although this interviewee and I did not share worldviews or faiths, we did share the belief that spirituality is essential to life. It was a real point of connection for me to this interviewee and to the worldview that he was sharing. I had often wondered during the course of my training about the place of spirituality in Psychology, but I realized that Psychology and spirituality have been age-old rivals. Psychologists typically write about “religion” rather than about “spirituality,” and even when they write about spirituality, they are not writing about a First Nations worldview. Social scientists talk about spirituality as a component of a person, like we all have compartments within ourselves, each containing a different aspect of self.
Going back to the early parts of the century, Sigmund Freud and Albert Ellis typified antireligious sentiments (Cortes, 1999). In the middle part of this century, Oates (1958) wrote that psychology has seen religion as childish, a way to maturity, a way to health, an illusion, a way to reality, and a sickness. Drakeford (1964) claimed that Psychology should go back to its original interest in psyche/soul and printed the following poem by G. A. Studdert-Kennedy in his text, *Psychology in search of a soul*:

**The Psychologist**

He takes the saints to pieces, and labels all the parts,
He tabulates the secrets of loyal loving hearts.
He probes their selfless passion, and shows exactly why
The martyr goes out singing, to suffer and to die.
The beatific vision that brings them to their knees,
He smilingly reduces to infant phantasies.
The Freudian unconscious quite easily explains
The splendour of their sorrows, the pageant of their pains.
The manifold temptations, wherewith the flesh can vex,
The saintly soul, are samples of Oedipus complex.
The subtle sex perversion, his eagle glance can tell,
That makes their joyous heaven the horror of their hell.
His reasoning is perfect, his proofs as plain as paint,
He has but one small weakness, he cannot make a saint.

A review of the more recent psychological literature can turn up discussions about the “psychology of religion” (Spilka, Shaver, & Kirkpatrick, 1997), religion as psychotherapy (Razali, Hasahan, Aminah, & Subramaniam, 1998), the religion-science interface (Herner, 1997), the “divorce” of Psychology and science from religion (Cortes, 1999), and the view of Psychology, itself, as a religion (Dineen, 1998). Survey’s of psychologists attitudes towards religion show that they tend to have a lower involvement and identification with religion than the general public (Eckhardt, Kassinove, & Edwards, 1992). However, they also tend to be tolerant of religion, fundamentally dualist, open to all information, skeptical of determinism, and knowledgeable about evolution (Cox, 1997).

Despite these fairly tolerant descriptions of psychologists, extreme views also occur in the Psychology literature. For example, Robb (1986) argued that nothing will be gained if psychologists call certain life experiences spiritual or supernatural, that using
these terms only reduces psychologists’ understanding of emotional and behavioral disturbance. Robb advised that psychologists should maintain the logical-empirical philosophy of the science of Psychology. From a neuropsychological perspective, Persinger has been making persistent arguments about the experience of religious and paranormal phenomena as well as endorsement of religious belief. Persinger has been trying to debunk religious and spiritual experience over the past decade by arguing that these types of experiences are really due to complex partial epileptic-like signs in the temporal lobe (for example, see Persinger, 1993). Derr and Persinger (1989) also tried to debunk belief in an apparition of the Virgin Mary over a church in Zeitoun, Egypt during 1968-69, writing that the phenomena was really an exotic luminous phenomena caused by tectonic strain and associated regional seismicity.

The interviewee described First Nations spirituality as the overarching framework and an essential element to proper development and balance. In fact, as a result of my experiences so far on the assessment project, I was beginning to see that the First Nations worldview was fundamentally spiritual. On the other hand, Psychology fundamentally was not spiritual. Given Psychology’s conflicted approach to spirituality, the two worldviews, on this point, were at an impasse.

The interviewee went on to give an example of the need for a balanced perspective according to the manner in which First Nations might talk about balance:

And then you have a breakdown of a child living in a White foster home, for instance. For instance, I'll use myself for an example. I tell this story once in a great while. I was raised part of my life in a White foster home in Calgary, and they were very nice people. Like a lot of Indians had bad experiences in foster homes, but I'm one of the lucky ones, and I really got along good with my foster parents, and they really showed me a lot of love. They showed me a lot of direction, but they were very limited in regards to already what I learned when I was being brought up with my grandfather, and I kinda compared that a little bit. And then, I was kept away from other Indians. It's like they overshadowed me. They were overprotective. Then when I got old enough, I started associating with people like me and especially the family moved up there, and I started associating. I really got put down by my foster family, my parents. They didn't want me to hang out with them. They actually wanted to choose my friends for me, which was good. I didn't mind that, 'cause I did have White friends, too, and Indians, and I didn't mind that. I could interact just as well as I could with my Indian
friends, but there was a standard there, a double standard. I couldn't associate with them, and I couldn't even go home. I couldn't. I used to wonder about that

[Go home, like, to see your Grandfather?]

Yes. They would let me but with great, a lot of, there would be a lot of bad feelings.

[from them?]

When I'd come back. And then it hit me. They would look at other Indians and look at them very disgustingly, and, you know ... they stereotyped. And yet I was friendlier, and ... really, it used to really bother me, and finally it made me feel like a pet. Like it reminded me ... like I had a dog one time, and I really liked that dog, but I don't like all dogs. I hate dogs, but not that. That one dog I liked 'cause of the qualities he had, and he was very friendly, and he was very smart, and I really got close to him. And I used to kick all the other dogs, and I wouldn't let him even go to those other dogs. That's the way I felt. I was looking at my dog, and I betcha I know that's how I am too, I said. I betcha that's how my family wants me, too. They ... can't love all Indians. They only want one, and all this kind of thing, and, for me, that kinda, I'd made some major decisions in my life at that time. I had to come to grips with reality and that's when I ran away. I was 17. I ran back to my grandfather, and I remained there ever since and, mind you, I still associate with them and all that, but ... I see that kind of a scenario maybe in different scales or in different ways with other children.

[So there comes a point where they realize that <I pause> they're Indian]

m-hm

[and that their White foster parents may not like Indians]

Yeah.

[even though you have a good relationship with them, on some level, they ... ]

They may be unknowingly prejudiced <he laughs>.

[Yeah. They're rejecting who you are.]

Yeah. But they're not looking at ... where you come from. They're literally trying to change your heritage or your color or, if they had that power they told me they would do it. But because of God's, I guess, rules and his limitations and his <he paused> they can't do that <he laughs>. They used to talk like that, like, those Indians are very spiritual. . . . Everything is usually tied to it because of those, if you think about Indian spirituality and then if you look at all the gifts that the Creator gave, all the colors and the races of the world. Mother Nature was given to Indians just like technology was given to the Whites and endurance was given to Black people, stuff like that. . . . but, I guess . . . everything has a purpose on this Earth, and we tie everything to it, and even to make a simple decision you gotta think back, and it all turns out to Creator's laws and it goes into our own laws that are specific to whatever you may be doing, and it's all, we're all tied to it, and how we're associated with different ceremonies and stuff like that. And if you could understand how those things work it's like some, you know, the
question maybe even put to you, 'What is culture, you know, what is Indian culture?' I asked that question to my Grandfather quite a few times and, you know, 'What is this culture? Why do we have so much ceremonies, and why do we have to go to some and stay away from some, you know, and all those things, those nice things in there, and there's two sides, two roads to everything and all that?' Well, he says, 'It's up to you,' he says, 'What you wanna make out of it,' he says, 'It's God put those there for us. Our culture's like a big bowl of beads,' he says, 'They're all individual beads, and they're all nice colors, glass cut or whatever. They're all very nice. You put your hand there and mix them up or whatever, but if you did take something out of there, individual beads, sometimes you can make something nice out of it and that's our culture. Those are all our ceremonies in there. It's all which ones you take, which ones you pick to make something nice for you.' So he says 'That's, that's our, that's how our Indian is, that's being an Indian' <he laughs> . . . . There's so much things in there that you could, it's very complex, it's, even our own people, it's like, you get an influx of all this stuff. You just prioritize what's important to you, and you take what you think would be best suited for you. And a lot of people are different. The personality, individuals, and all those people interacting and just like those in there, and you'll have our leaders . . . they pick different, what's good, to bring it all together for the rest of the whole community, collective rights and this individual rights stuff, how you internalize that, then. I always use, like referring back to that bowl of beads all the time, like there's a lot of nice things and you just gotta pick them out and make something nice.

[What, you said collective rights?]

Yep.

[What is that?]

Respecting them, and knowing what your rights as an individual are. There's a lot of collective rights within our cultural heritage. It's just like a check and a balance in case an individual makes a wrong decision. The collective rights will overrule that.

[Do you, can you give me an example?]

Yeah, for instance, take a Child Welfare case, for instance. If a person disassociates or cuts themselves off from their band or their group . . . with their tribe and something happens to them – they have a case in that there's a child abuse or whatever and the province is involved in it – they will tell the province, 'We do not want the band involved.' They maybe have their own reasons for it, but the band gets involved because of the strong extended family ties that we have in there and also because of the treaty argument and the treaty base that's out there. And some of the criteria that's set out in those treaties . . . nobody thinks like that, how it's tied to that individual when he makes a decision not to contact the band, but they, the collective, collectively we need that because of our stats, our, I guess I'm thinking about contemporary times and how it's tied to that treaty in order to bring those kind of cases in. We need them. So, collectively, the people or the bands will overrule that decision . . . .

[So the child's, what happens with a child is as much a responsibility of the parents as of the band.]
Yeah. Collectively, supposedly that's how it's supposed to work, but then you have other external forces breaking that whole system right down right now.

[External forces like the]

Province . . . they have their own social workers with their own interpretations, their own opinions, no understanding <we laugh>.

[But why? Like, okay, so if that's the way that it's approached, you know, for example, from the collective – and I heard that when you were talking about assessment, too . . . that . . . you're not just looking at what that child is doing, you're looking at that child in that family in that community --]

Yeah.

[in that history]

Yeah.

[All across those, right? Boy, like, you must have seen, the main system in action, lots of times.]

m-hm

[How do you feel about that system?]

Our own system?

[No, the, I shouldn't say the main system, the provincial system]

It doesn't work <he laughs>. That's all I could say about it . . . but a lot of our people don't understand why it doesn't work. And they'll be overwhelmed. They'll just go along with it.

[m-hm. So what do you think about why it doesn't work?]

It's too great, the precedence that is already set before them. They're just following it. I have one story here of a, it's a hunting story. It kind of relates to what, uh, this old guy who was out hunting one time, and he was hungry, so he was driving on the side of the road, and he seen a duck. So he got out of the truck and then he shot it. And it just happened that a police cruiser was cruising by and seen him doing that, so he put his gun in the truck and he went and got that duck and he put it in the trunk and he shut it. And the police officer come there: 'What are you doing?' 'Nothing. Driving by.' <he laughs> 'Don't you have a duck in there?' and he says, 'Uh, yeah,' he says <we laugh>. 'Could I check?' 'Sure go ahead.' So sure enough, he opened the trunk and, sure enough, there was a duck in there, and he was, wounded. He was limping around. I guess he must have shot him in the wing or something. He was walking around in his trunk, so the police officer grabbed that duck and wrung his neck, put him in his car because he kinda charged him for poaching <we laugh>. Well, this is, uh, this is where the <he laughs over his words> the individual's, uh, interpretation of a foreign justice system is, uh, this old guy went to court, and he went there and the judge asked him, 'Are you guilty?' and he says, 'No, I'm not guilty. I didn't kill no duck.' And then they – the prosecutor and then they brought the police in – and they says,
'Well, this is what happened. He was driving by, and I seen him shooting this duck and all this and he put him in the trunk.' 'Did you shoot that duck?' He said, 'I tried' he says, <we laugh> 'But I put him in the trunk anyways,' he says, and then, so they put that police officer on the stand, then, and the judge asked that guy again and he says, 'Did you see him kill that duck?' 'Uh, no.' He says, 'Did you find the duck in the trunk?' 'Yeah.' 'And who killed it?' and then, 'I did.' <we laugh> They threw that case out! How do you get around that duck's neck? <he laughs> That old guy walked out of there and he was, and he was still confused <we laugh>. So you take things like that. And then again the opposite side of that is our people will plead guilty to a couple minor offenses and the White man will keep building those cases up and refer to those cases so if somebody wants to plead not guilty then you have to go against the weight of your own people pleading guilty to all those, to that similar case. I mean if you could relate that to Child Welfare, or, it's the same way there too. Because of our past, our passiveness in our people, I guess, it's getting a good understanding of that passiveness and trying to get around that so that that doesn't happen. And I guess there's a lot of injustices and nobody wants to look at that during, from all the research that I've been talking to our Elders and our families that I've been dealing with so I guess that's all I can think of right now. <His daughter came into the office a few minutes later. We chatted a bit together, and then we all left.>

Psychologists performing psychological assessments with First Nations people are seeing people from outside the First Nations community and culture rather that knowing that community and culture from the inside. When you are an insider to the First Nations community, you know about normative behavior, and you also see how internal and external systems clash with each other. When you are inside a community, you also see the effects of the external systems on people from the community. Like this interviewee had already said:

... When you ask them, 'Well, why are you messed up?' then they will talk, but they won't talk about all those external things, and I think you want to take into account those... when you're assessing....

You have to be able to see more than the First Nations worldview. You have to be able to see the effects of colonization on First Nations people's thinking, emotions, behavior, health, interpersonal relationships, political systems, interactions with non-First Nations people – you have to be able to see the impact of colonization on everything.

You also have to be able to see the impact of their colonization on yourself. When First Nations people were colonized, they were identified as different and problematic. They became, for mainstream bureaucrats and legislators "the Indian problem." Thus,
they were perceived by everybody as “the Indian problem.” The concept of the Indian problem and the disdain that colonizers had and continue to have for First Nations people became imbedded in the English language in such expressions as “running around like a wild Indian” or “being an Indian giver.” Even immigrants to Canada took on the attitudes and expressions of the colonizers. Colonized people become “others” in a “them or us” kind of way. There were overwhelming pressures for First Nations people to assimilate, and those pressures persist into today. Knowing that I have been working with First Nations, friends and acquaintances have said to me the following things:

- Wouldn’t it be better if there were not Indian Affairs department? Then the Indians could be regular Canadians just like us.
- They’re moving into the cities anyway, so we should just take back all the reserves. We could use the land.
- Look, they’ve got all those land claims. I’d like it if someone gave me a little free land.
- We’re getting tax increases while Indians are sitting on free land. They should pay just like the rest of us.

But First Nations people have paid and they continue to pay, with their lives, their culture, their identities in addition to all the hidden taxes and fees that they pay along with the rest of us pay. I noticed that friends and acquaintances stopped saying these things to me when I did not respond sympathetically to what they had said. It was worse for me if I tried to discuss or explain what was discriminatory or racist about what they said. Instead, people stopped making the comments to me, and I wondered if it was because they were now seeing me as sympathizing with “the other.” They had seen me, perhaps, as having taken a step over to the other side. Suddenly, I found myself seeing, hearing, and interpreting statements and situations differently than I had before, and there was no turning back. This “research” was changing me and the way I saw things. For example,
the next time I heard the Canadian national anthem, I heard it differently: “Our home and Native land.” It was funny. Made a good joke.

I felt like a veil had been lifted from my eyes when, without any warning, I realized one day that First Nations people do not compartmentalize the human psyche the way that psychologists do. In the mainstream, we are always talking about “aspects” of people or “components.” We fragment everything, as if we could somehow isolate different parts of the human spirit or mind. I began to find that it was this process of compartmentalization that allowed me to do mainstream work as a psychologist. I thought I could look at different aspects of people without bringing to bear my own worldview, the one that included spirituality, for example. I thought I could take an objective stance without sacrificing who I am and how I was raised. However, taking on one system’s objectivity meant suppressing another system’s subjectivity. I realized that in order to do the work of a mainstream psychologist, I had to suppress, block off, or lock up some of my own beliefs and worldview about human existence and take on other views. This realization sunk into me, frightening and liberating all at once.

Now I recognize, with a little help from Colin, that objectivity and subjectivity both exist within and externally to systems. A person can have subjective knowledge and, at the same time, be objective within a system, not just from outside of a system. That is, objectivity has to be situated from within a particular worldview. Making quasi-objective judgments across worldview is not objectivity – it is bias. Objectivity can only occur with full awareness of a culture, the normative behaviors within a culture, and what constitutes a violation of culturally normative behavior. Once a person can recognize what is normal within a culture, that person can also recognize what is deviant and what is new but acceptable. In addition, full knowledge of a culture allows a person to recognize the types of biases, oppressions, and discrimination that can exist intraculturally – not just interculturally.
When I began to understand First Nations people within their own cultures, I began to see how people from outside their cultures can hurt them. However, I also learned about how First Nations people can and do hurt each other. I learned, from the inside, the kinds of things that First Nations people have to do and tell themselves to feel better when they know that they are following mainstream ways of doing things and thinking. I also learned about myself and what I had to do to live in the mainstream. Once I began to see these similarities, I could not ever turn back to a solely mainstream way of seeing the world. I had to begin to examine who I am and where I belonged, and it was this examination of myself that was so horrifying and so liberating all at once.
CHAPTER 11: Fifth Interview

You're welcome as long as you're comfortable.
- Interviewee #5

By the time I came to do the fifth interview, my outlook had changed and I had taken a small step into the worldview of First Nations people. The fifth interviewee was just completing a Master's Degree in Social Work, and she had many years of experience with both First Nations and mainstream psychosocial and educational agencies. Although I had started out talking to her about assessment, she talked about counselling, not differentiating between assessment and treatment. She described how an Elder might listen, watch, and talk but not in the same way as a mainstream counsellor3:

[I'm thinking of something that one other person told me about asking questions, you know, and what you're saying is like she would listen and watch and talk, but not like]

Not in the interview style.

[Yeah.]

She would ask a few questions, but mostly how they say hmm, hmm makes you talk more, opens you more, and maybe this person has never, ever had the opportunity to have someone give them undivided attention to listen to them; whereas, when they go in to the counseling session, the therapists and you. Right away there is this kind of relationship <indicates what she means with her hands, one higher and one lower>.

Where the therapist is up?

The fixer in the problem; whereas you are at the same plane as the Elder. There is respect there. You have to respect him but he shows you respect or she shows you respect. So that is equality, its there, and once you establish your relationship

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3 This sentence is a summary of some of this interviewee's opening words because the tape recorder destroyed a portion of the tape at the start of our conversation. I put in a new tape and was able to record the remainder of our talk.

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with your counselor, and whoever gonna assess you, there's no termination. It's an ongoing relationship.

Oh, I see. That's interesting. So there's no coming to an ending.

No termination.

That would be interesting for you to study. Like, it would be interesting to have somebody do a study like that to look at the difference there.

Possibly, her use of the word termination called up in my mind the psychotherapy termination literature that I had read, and I immediately started wanting to draw academic comparisons between the two approaches. Even at this point, I was hovering between two paradigms, as I always would be.

Cause I do lectures at the University on that and at traditional council.

[And how you're not working towards termination.]

Um hmm, you're not working towards termination.

[Because basically half way through therapy, you're working towards termination.]

Um hmm. That's right. You make a contract for six hours, six sessions.

[Well, for six sessions, you're working towards termination by the first one.]

Um hmm. Yeah. Right. So, probably knowing that this is a life-long relationship, I'm not only here to see you because I have a problem, makes it a two-way relationship. It's not a one-way relationship. But I guess that's counselling techniques, but not assessment.

[Well, it would be the same person doing the assessment though?]

Um hmm. It would be doing the same... and has a psychologist or anybody ever went to an Elder for an assessment? That would be interesting <we laugh>. . . . I can say all kinds of things about assessments, about why how... assessment doesn't even reflect our world views. I could list a whole bunch of ways that the assessments don't work for us. Why they don't work for us. I don't know if you're looking for that. Are you looking for that?

[Yeah. I'm interested in that. Like the social work assessments. Like, what happens because people are saying they're not working, but why?]

Yeah. That's the thing. That's what I'm wondering too - my question on child welfare for my thesis. Why is the child welfare program not working?

[Right. This isn't just doing assessments.]
Yeah . . . OK. Why are not assessments working? I will give you four. See if I can think of four. Probably the biggest one is where the assessment originates. Assessments usually originate with working with the non-native people in a non-native setting, and it's all evolved from books, from the European thought. And so, how do we try to fit just using this example. So, we have an assessment of a frog. How do you assess a frog after you dissect it? And so you look after all these things, and then you generalize it to everybody like fish, or you bring fish in there and use the same things and you look for the same thing and of course it's not going to work, cause probably its the same concept that is happening to Indian people, eh? So, it's the whole world and then, again, the other part is who are you assessing. Even the White clients are being assessed. Maybe this is designed for middle class people. They don't take poverty into consideration, or the living conditions, but then I guess again you look at the root of that. Where the assessment tool came from. Whereas, there may be stigma attached to it -- that social Darwinism concept, the survival of the fittest. So, what the poor don't have, the skills, the whole stigma is attached to them. So, your assessment tool comes from the middle ground. So you can't really try assess these poor people using this.

[Like it doesn't match.]

It doesn't match. Just, for example, my nephew was involved in a murder this summer. There was I think an 18 year old kid got killed up north in <a province>, and so the kids, the three older kids, they're in their 20's, took a whole bunch of 12, 13, 14, 15, all the way up, were involved, and there's a bunch of them, maybe about 8, 10 of them, and so they're all taken away from the community, and the police said, we will take all the kids out of the community for their safety. We won't bring them back here because the relatives might kill them or whatever out of revenge. So, they took all the kids out, and they did assessments for these kids and so, I wonder what kind of assessments they did for these kids. They didn't properly assess the community. Some of the kids' families are pretty straightforward, like pretty solid resources. Like, my family is a resource for that kid that got involved in there, just that one night thing that he was with those kids, and he was watching when this happened, but he wasn't involved right to the killing. Like the little kids ran away from there, and he didn't even know this kid was killed. The kids, the smaller kids, you know, there's only three kids, two kids, the two older ones that were involved, but they still got charged for it, you know, as an accomplice or whatever. So, now he is in a youth centre somewhere in Portage, and they put him through all kinds of psychological testing. He's slow because the reserve schools have very poor schooling. The educational standard is very low. He doesn't have a good concept of the English language. So, I wonder how they -- is there an interpreter when they do these assessments, and all those standardized testing. I remember taking all kinds of assessments in the social research class. How could they measure these kids when these kids haven't seen, if they lived in this little community all their lives, they haven't been exposed to the city. How could they? You know what it is. And how could they assess them? Would they really assess them? They may seem very unaware, right? . . . But, yet they would know lots about survival there and how to keep friends. . . . They're measuring their abilities, their thought processes, their mature levels. Living in that kind of an environment, its not being measured, but here they're being measured about what they don't know about.

[But the tests say that this is important and then measures that, but not]
Not over here what's important to this person. Yes, so I wondered how these kids got on their assessments.

[So, leaving the standardized testing aside, like what's missing. Like, if you were gonna go in and look at those kids]

OK. This is what I do when I do counselling.

Again, she was emphasizing that assessment and counselling were intertwined with each other.

I look, first of all, I look at the reserve communities. I look at Aboriginal people. I see Aboriginal people are very resourceful. They're very resourceful in the sense they're there to help you. They're there to listen, and they have informal helping systems that are not recognized here. The extended families, the grandparents we talked about. We can't pay for those services. So, when I make an assessment, I can see, and I've done this before, a child that can go in over here, and the child has lots of resources. These people, the relatives are there willing to work with this person but none of them are approved foster parents, none of them are — social services doesn't know about them. Social services doesn't understand about them. And I see the support and the caring that these people give, and the child knows that he is being cared for. The child knows that he's loved, but if you're looking from the outside you don't notice that. You just see an uncle sitting over there, but there's a bond there between the child and the uncle. So I can read it because of what I grew up with. That's how I use my assessment.

The relationships I had with other people, they didn't hug me right away or whatever, and I didn't need to be hugged to know that I was cared for. There might be one little word. It might be a little piece of food, a little piece of chocolate. They can't give me a whole chocolate because there's not many chocolates in that house — or an invitation to go and cut wood with somebody and you walk along and play along and whatever. That helps me with caring, but they don't see those things

[The social workers?] Yeah. So I can see, when I go in the community, I can see these supports that are there, and that's how I form my assessment.

An example is in <a First Nations community>, there was two suicides .... Two of them. All of them were both off reserve. One happened in the jail .... One happened in <a city>. So, I go to the community. They <a federal program> had mental health therapists going in. Mental health therapists got there, and they were shocked. They thought they would have an office to bring people one by one to counsel them .... These guys had to set up, set it up.

And I know when I went in, I would not have to do that. So I took my mother along. She likes going to wakes. You go there to support. You don't have to do anything. You can just sit there. So, I take her along. I see her as the biggest resource for me. And, my other resources, I don't know everybody in <that First
Nations community>, but I know <names a person>, so I go in there and I just sit down, say hi and shake peoples' hands, and I sit down and <the person she knows> comes to talk to me, and we talk and then introduces me to people. So, I just have coffee and just be there for the support. I don't feel uncomfortable cause I'm not doing any work, but being there is a support in itself, and then I watch all these people. Everybody has a role to do. Everybody knows their roles, and nobody was crying. There was no big deal, but you can tell everybody is in the mourning state, and there is a ceremony going on all the time, just individual little ceremonies continue. There's a fire outside that has a purpose, a healing purpose, within First Nations and whenever you eat, you have a little piece and you take it and they put it in the fire. So, I stay there until I go to the funeral and there's rituals that go on, and four days after the funeral there's rituals that go on.

Then after the funeral, I go to the other place, and these people are all set up. Everything is set up already, you just have to go and sit there and spend time with them, and people are joking, joking around. There's humor because you don't want people to feel depression, and there's a lot of reality checks going on all the time. It was a wonderful time for me and my mom, a wonderful time for them, and when I got back here, I said everything is okay. Those people are busy. We don't need any more therapists at this time cause they have to do the four-day ceremonies after the funeral. They're busy.

<the federal program workers say:> 'Actually there will be a crisis because they are so sad. How can you say there is no crisis there. There were two suicides. Everybody will be committing suicide in the next two weeks!' . . . and so I knew the rituals are there, the ceremonies are there. The therapists there went, and they said 'Devastating! They need more help!' but yet they couldn't provide help that was needed there. But, I saw the rituals, the culture. All the supports were there that they needed. But, if psychologists went in there, they wouldn't recognize any of these.

[And the therapists went there?]

The therapists went there.

[What did they do?]

They just stood around there. One stayed there for two hours, and he wanted the contact person there to set him up a room and bring people in for counseling, but nobody came in for counseling. So, he felt uncomfortable. He had to come out of his office. He left. She said she went out with him for lunch. So, he probably stayed only 45 minutes, half and hour. Two hours, all together.

[What did the other one do?]

Same thing. He just went and stood around there. They couldn't do anything. . . .

[They expected people to come away from that setting into a room to talk.]

Um hmm.

[What did you think of that]
What did I think of that? Well, what I told these people was, What I said is, ‘Everything is okay. Everything was taken care of. All those supports that are needed are there,’ but they didn’t believe me. They thought they should be sending more, because they come from the Western perspective . . . .

[So, they were thinking, like, those therapists were thinking it was really bad, a crisis.]

Um hmm, really bad, crisis, and these ones <federal program workers>, too, they said, ‘Oh, people will be committing suicide in the next two weeks.’ When I said everything is okay right now. They can take care of it. After those four days, maybe you can make some time available for the family. ‘How can you say everything is okay?’ But I didn’t walk into their crisis.

[So they were creating the crisis.]

Hm hmm. They were creating the crisis. So that’s how my assessment was different from theirs.

[You could see different things than what they were looking for.]

Yeah.

[It sounds like the therapists saw themselves as]

Magicians, fixers, ‘come and talk to me if you want to feel better. I can help you feel better.’

[Like, that they had something and people would come and get that.]

Um hmm. <she names an elder> would do the same thing as I did. Go there and be friendly and sit around, go there, that process, the whole process of being there, and I think that that works so much for me to gain their confidence and trust. Now, they can feel free and come and talk to me rather than going and standing there with a pen and paper and my brief case. I didn’t even take a brief case.

[So those therapists must look pretty different when they walk into the community.]

They look very different, very, they feel very, those people weren’t happy, those therapists weren’t happy with going there, like they didn’t feel comfortable at all. They were at a loss.

[Didn’t know what to do.]

Um hmm. They didn’t know what to do.

[Or didn’t have a role.]

Um hmm. There is not a role for a mental health therapist at that point. Unless I was a mental health therapist, I could fit in. If they could fit in, they would be
alright. They could be a resource for the workers, but it's already separating them from the group, right?

[Yeah. It sounds like it's a group, like it was a group, and then they expected people to leave the group; whereas, the group was the support.]

Yeah. The group was the biggest support . . . .

[So, if you ask them to leave the group]

And, what if they did go and talk to that person. So, are they going to say, we have a group here. It's already, how would you say, when you get the group in stride, you're working together already, you've already built, they're already working together. So, I pull one out and I go talk to them. How is she going to react to that? How is she going to feel?

[Breaks the group.]

Yeah.

[So an ICFS worker would just be there.]

Yeah, would just be there. They would be there and that's what happens. That's what always happened. Even in my reserve, they still have those things. The teachers that are there, that feel comfortable. They come in and sit around these too, and they bring food there too, and the nurses, whoever is comfortable. You're welcome as long as you're comfortable. They come to the wake and whatever.

That's very different. I mean it's really different from the way that the professionals do their work.

This was an interesting point that I was making because I was not acknowledging the professional status of the ICFS workers, despite the fact that most had professional qualifications from a mainstream perspective. I was making the distinction between Western "professionals" and First Nations "workers," which intrinsically gave the Western professionals more status from a mainstream perspective. It is very difficult, indeed, to disentangle yourself from mainstream thought, once it has colonized you.

Very different. So, I don't even know how they assessed. I wouldn't mind to see their assessment report. . . . I don't know what happens in White families when there is a crisis. Like, say, if there's a car accident in the family, what happens?

[What happens in a White family?]  

Yeah.
[Uh, it depends on the family because I grew up, I didn’t come from a Western European family. I came from an Eastern European family.]

What does that mean?

[Like, my family came from, Eastern Europe, Ukraine.]

Ukraine? Okay, okay.

[And in that type of a situation, people get together. Truthfully, I don’t think anybody in my family would go to a therapist.]

Isn’t that true though, eh?

[But, they would expect me to be there, and not because I was a therapist, because I am a daughter, and they would have everybody there, and they would, the one thing, they always bring food because it is a sign they are caring for the people that are there. In my culture, you leave a spot sometimes at some events, you leave a spot for the people who have died, and you leave food for them. Sometimes, they bring food to the graves, and then they share it. But, you see that’s like]

That sound similar to ours.

[There are some similarities between Eastern traditions and First Nations, but if you go into some of the other cultures, like some of the other white cultures, Western European cultures, maybe I’ll do them a discredit because I don’t know enough about them. They don’t seem to do stuff like that.]

I think the English wouldn’t do that because they seem to be involved in conflict. There’s always conflict in Europe, and these are people you see Ann Landers, ‘What do I do at a funeral?’

[They’ve lost so much. See, my family just knows what to do. Everyone just does what they’re supposed to do.]

Right. That’s the same with our families.

[So, if somebody came in. OK. We always have a dinner. There’s always a dinner after the funeral, and everybody comes. Whoever is at the funeral must come to the dinner, and I don’t know why they have a dinner. I mean it’s a time for people to talk and just be together, and everybody knows that’s going to happen. Now, if a therapist walked in there.]

With a brief case, or does everybody carry a brief case?

[A lot of them do. But if somebody came into that, I guess, and I mean it would just be too weird. It just won’t happen. It wouldn’t be "nashi". In our language it means part of us and belonging. It would just be — but see we haven’t lost that. My family has only been here under 100 years, OK. But, others don’t know what to do. Like in different celebrations in different times of the year,
there are things that we do, and you know what to do... I know what our family does. Like there are just things you do and things you don't do.]

It's the same thing with us.

[I think in the sense that everybody knows what their role is.]

So, when you think of an old person in your community, how would you assess a person?

[By looking at him.]

By looking, and they won't judge either. There's... some like my community where there is a brainwash. Like, they've lost it. They do judge and comment. That's maybe it's why there is a kind of mixture.

[Apparently, years and years ago, in my family, in the history. People were just who they were. Nobody minded anybody else's business. If you go back, there's some history, you know like people who travel and write things about people that they see. There wasn't any one leader. Everybody was just — so nobody got anybody's — but it's not like that anymore. Things change over the years.]

Isn't that why it leads people to conquer people — because everybody was in little groups.

[Well, in my background of ancestors, they were conquered over and over and over by different groups.]

And they still managed to keep their ways. That's good.

[They're still there.]

What nationality are you?

[Ukrainian]

Ukrainian.

I felt a little strange telling her that I was Ukrainian because I was aware that the name “Ukrainian” did not even begin to capture which type of Ukrainian, or which region, or which faith, or which wave of immigration, pre or post-Soviet, or anything. I let it go and settled for the easy way out — “Ukrainian” — and we returned to talking about assessment:

[It means ‘the land.’]

Really. Oh my goodness.
My description was not complete. Actually, “Ukraine” originally meant the “border lands” or “the land” in which the people resided. It did mean “the land,” but in a more limited sense pertaining to where the people were living. Eventually the name took on other meanings (see Mirchuk, 1940). Originally, “Ukraine” did not refer to the people themselves or a “nation state” until after global political change began to have an influence on the developments of countries and “citizenship.” In Mirchuk’s (1940) words:

National consciousness increased as a consequence of oppression by Russians and Poles, in spite of whose resistance the name “Ukraine” as a special term for the Ukrainian territory spread quickly, thus emphasising the fact that there is a difference between the Ukrainians and their neighbors in the spheres of language, race, culture, national feeling and policy.

Prior to this increase in national consciousness, people in Ukraine thought of themselves more regionally rather than as a people belonging to a larger nation state. I continued:

[People just stayed as they were, but my last name means soldier.]

I really do not know why I mentioned this, but, nevertheless, I did. I believe I was thinking that the people stayed the same only somewhat because some things had changed drastically, particularly in the last 100 years.

What’s your last name again?

[It’s Zolner, but it’s pronounced ‘Zhohnier,’ and it means soldier.]

I was uncomfortable discussing my last name because “Zolner” was really a made-up name. My grandfather came to Canada from Halychyna (Galicia), which was what the western area of Ukraine was called under Austro-Hungarian rule. Under the Austro-Hungarian empire, all official documents, including birth certificates, were changed to the dominant language of that regime. Hence, my grandfather’s name was changed to “Zolnierszcz.” When he came to work in Canada, his employer could not spell his name, so the employer changed it to “Zolner.” I never was happy about discussing that point.
OK. So to me traditional counseling would, Elders would watch out for himself, the balance of where you are as a person, your behaviors, your whole social support system, your emotional support system. And, I think, it's holistic. It's always a holistic thing, right, and so by talking to you, by observing you, they can read you through body language. They can read through underlying what you're saying, like some social workers can do that, and also feel you. So, sometimes I think are they psychic or what? . . . and after they finish their session with you, they'll say, sometimes, you're not feeling good this way. So there is a little bit of advising, teaching. It's not only paraphrasing, clarifying what you're thinking . . . and humor and everything, it's been lifted out after counseling with an Elder, and he makes his assessment, so . . . through that, he can see where you're not balanced, and he'll tell you where you need to get help to balance you.

[Looking at those four areas.]

Yes, and how they, and with their mannerism, you do it through food, with tea that when you come out of there, your problem is not as big as you thought. It's shrunk so much, you're able to put it into perspective, and it usually takes one counseling session to do that. So, his assessment, he assesses you, what you need, what you problems were, where you need help, and he gives you a prescription – is to get into your culture and participate in activities. So people start going . . . and usually it comes out. That's how I've seen it done. I've only seen it with <she names an elder> and I've seen it with my community. They more or less preach to you, teach you, but they <in her community> don't use humor because they're so mixed up with Christianity, and it's a threat to our God whose going to get you. So, it's not very healthy.

[It's different anyway.]

My reaction to what she said was a product of a little frustration and some defensiveness. I have a hard time when people talk negatively about Christianity because I am Eastern Catholic, which is a Christian faith. I understand the history of oppression, inquisition, and debauchery of some branches of Christian religions, including the Roman Catholic. However, the Eastern Catholics and Eastern Orthodox faiths were much more geographically and culturally distant, both in their practice of the faith and in their view of God. I did not grow up with a fire and brimstone, punitive view of God, not until I entered Roman Catholic school, anyway. It was hard to defend the historical behavior of Christians, but I had grown up with a different mindset. However, I did not want to get into a debate about the differences between Eastern and Western Catholicism. That was my own pet peeve. Also, I did not want to seem like I was contradicting what she said.
because she had a very valid point about the impact of Christian missionary work on First Nations people, particularly in relationship to residential schools. She continued:

Yeah, and with other women, this <names another elder> . . . . I'm sure she'll have something to say about how she assesses people, and she does lots of counseling for individuals. Lots of people go to her for counseling. She works with us at <a Tribal Council>, but what I noticed her to do is to let you talk until your talking and your mannerisms and your level of confidence -- she can read it, and . . . in the meantime, she'll be talking to you probably how you respond to things, and she does it. Nobody that does counseling will take you to a room unless you request it. It's always in an informal manner, and so you feel like it's normal to have a problem. It's not a big thing where you come in here and you have to be in a room and describe yourself. It's a normal thing, it's a normal part, normalizes you and normalizes your problem. So you can have kids running around. Kids will pick up a word here and there, and they go, and it seems they're learning again. They're socializing those kids, and then the client feels good about it. She's being a role model. It's that, I guess, during that whole thing, it's empowering. That interaction that's happening is empowering for those people.

We visited for a long time after this point in the conversation, talking about all kinds of things. After talking with this woman, I had a more concrete sense of what some First Nations mean by "holistic" from the examples she had given me. I also noticed that the assessments and treatment methodologies she talked about were situated in the lifeworld of the people, rather than being behind the closed doors of an office or therapy room. This is not to say that there is no privacy, confidentiality, standards, or ethics in a First Nations methodology. Every method has its proper context and approach. The assessment and treatments that this interviewee described would not value the same criteria as are set out in mainstream standards. However, First Nations methods came with their own standards, techniques, ethics, and assumptions, and taking a mainstream approach would violate the First Nations processes that existed and that stemmed from First Nations knowledge.
CHAPTER 12: Sixth Interview

The assessment should be done . . . by first getting to know that person, you know what I mean. It shouldn't be a direct question. There should be, I don't know, more — what would you call it — more human contact.

- Interviewee #6

Of the six people that I conversed with about assessment, the sixth was the eldest and was raised the longest on reserve. I provided the same type introduction as for the last two interviewees, and we began to converse:

I don't know. Basically it's what kind of a format that a person follows, I guess. Like most of the assessments that are being done right now, they're following the, I don't know what you call it, medical model or whatever.

[m-hm]

where actually it's not really identifying what the person needs . . . cause we done an assessment on <his program area>, and this is what we found. It doesn't really identify what the person really needs. I don't know whether it'd be any different, right, if it's looked from the social point of view instead of the medical thing.

[So the assessments that are being done don't really get at the problems.]

Yeah, yeah.

[What kinds of things do you think, like, . . . what would you want to get at, do you think? That's what we're thinking, like what? Cause there have been complaints that those assessments aren't working.]

m-hm

I was talking a lot, and he was not responding much, just watching me. I did not feel like we were connecting very well, so I tried to explain more about what I meant.

[So how can we, like what could we do that would help, that would get at that, not what would a social worker or psychologist do, but what would First Nations, like]
if they were doing assessments for their own, what would be better, do you think?]

Like how?

[Um]

Mm, the format, or <he paused>

[Like the way it's done, has to be different?]

I don't know, mm, I kind of figure maybe it's, I don't know how should I say <he pause> like it's, uh, sort of answering a question yes or no whereas the assessment should be done <he pauses> by first getting to know that person, you know what I mean, it shouldn't be a direct question <he pauses>. There should be, I don't know, more — what would you call it — more human contact or <he pauses> like <he pauses>. Generally what happens is when people come to a reserve to do an assessment <he pauses> they start right away from throwing out questions instead of, uh, first talking to the person, getting to know the person, or <he pauses> I don't know, like

[So they just come in and ask and]

Yeah.

[just take, just <I make a movement with my hand> and then they just leave.]

Yeah.

[So they don't spend any time]

I was guilty of the same thing. After we sat down together, I had started out by asking him questions almost immediately. Of course, I had given a better introduction than I had given for the first three interviewees, but the approach, the way I had greeted him for this conversation was very mainstream. Although I was not conducting an assessment of him, in the way that mainstream Psychology thinks about assessment, he was, nonetheless, teaching me something about interviewing. He was not, so much, telling me about the process as he was taking me through the process. I could see that he was watching me very carefully in the interview, and he followed what I said closely. He actually was being kind to me, and I believe that he wanted us to make a good connection with each other without conflict.

I felt foolish for having started out by directly questioning him — making the one mistake I had been hearing so much about from the other interviewees. In fact, everything
that they had warned me about was happening right here in this interview between this man and me. My approach was very different, although he gave me some guidance and reminding me that my methodology was not going to work. Even our pace of speech was very different from each other, with me being somewhat rapid and academic, while his pace was much slower, relaxed, and conversational. He seemed, himself, to be quite relaxed, although I was feeling quite nervous. Not only was my approach wrong, but the pacing of the conversation was difficult for me, given my expectations for an interview, and I found his language and demeanor hard to follow. In addition, the small office we were sitting in did not help to make me feel relaxed enough to chat and visit.

I was trying to feel less stilted, but the conversation was feeling a little forced to me. There were a lot of long pauses while we spoke, and I always felt like I had to fill up the silence and advance the conversation in some productive way. I found this feeling of pressure to keep talking strange because when I am in a therapeutic relationship, I do not mind long pauses at all. However, the therapy role was very familiar to me, and the conversational process I was involved in at the moment was not at all familiar to me. I thought that I would try to relax a little and not be so progress and results oriented in the conversation, so when he mentioned that he had been a journalist, I jumped at the chance for more informal and casual conversation:

No <he pauses>. Like I used to work as a journalist before I started using a wheelchair, and it wasn’t a matter of me going in there and asking direct questions. What I used to do was I used to talk to the person first, or you get to know the person or, then I more or less seemed to get more, I don’t know, responsive answers or whatever.

[You worked as a journalist?]

Yeah...

[Huh! Where did you work?]

<gives the name of the newspaper>

[Did you?]

Yeah.
[Huh! That's interesting work.]

Yeah. Oh, I used to try to go all over <he laughs>

[In the province or]

Yeah, anywhere. Used to take in the, when it was called the National Indian Brotherhood.

[m-hm]

used to have meetings in BC, Nova Scotia, all over. Got a chance to travel <he laughs>

[So you met, I bet you met a lot of people from all over the place.]

Yeah, yeah

[Wow, that must have been really interesting, but then you stopped doing that, or]

m-hm. My back started bothering me.

[Yeah.]

From a car accident, yeah.

[Yeah, I know what that's like.]

We had made a small connection with each other, and he had started it by sharing some personal information about himself with me. I had started to share back a little, but then he continued talking about assessment:

Cause, I don’t know, the assessments we did for our study, like, we kind of more or less followed the <federal program> format, but what I found out was some of those questions were too direct or whatever

[Like just coming right out and asking somebody]

Yeah, yeah, like you kind of put off a person but, on the reserve you go ask, like direct questions. I don’t know why, yeah.

[What about when you were a journalist, you just]

Well it’s what I did.

[ask direct questions?]

No, no, no, no

[Oh, no, you just did it the other way.]
Yeah

[So how do you do that? There's a direct question! <laughs>]

m-hm

[But that's a different way of doing things, you know, like that's a different way of <pause> I know what your saying cause]

Yeah.

[psychologists and, I was trained that way]

m-hm

[you know, you come in and you have, like, a form or]

m-hm

[you have certain things you want to find out about and <snaps fingers> you just]

Yeah, yeah

[ask those questions]

or sometimes people kind of, uh, tighten up and for some reason they won't respond

[I've seen youth do that, you know]

Yeah

[when you ask them a question, like I used to work with young offenders]

u-huh

[and these, most of them were young boys, some young girls, mostly boys, come in off the reserve]

m-hm

[and you ask them a question and the first things is <I shrink down and pretend to pull a hat over my eyes>]

Yeah.

[you know, and they just <makes a "clamming up" kind of gesture>]

Right, yeah

[like close off]

u-huh
[you know, and, like you can get them to answer.]

Right, yeah

[Usually they say yes or no. They don't want to talk a lot]

m-hm

[you know, but they don't know me either]

mm

[so most of the assessments being done are by people that they don't know]

<long silence>

Now I had shared a little about where I am coming from – some of my training and how assessments tend to get done from a mainstream point of view. I have to admit that this is much more than I ever would have spoken in a regular interview about my own perspective or training. It felt odd – like I was monopolizing the conversation. After all, from a mainstream perspective, information about the person who is supposed to be the primary interviewer was not very important. The flow of information was one-way: client to psychologist. I remember the previous interviewee telling me about the hierarchical relationship that exists between therapist and client in mainstream practice. Interviewee number 6 and I were breaking down that hierarchy and I had the feeling that he was learning about me as much as I was learning about him. We were more on the same level. The conversation turned back to him:

[So it would be different if they knew the person.]

Not really know the person but a means of establishing a communication link or whatever

[m-hm, so just getting to know the person's situation. So you work now with <I say the program he works in>.]

m-hm

[So you see a lot of people.]

I don't know, for some reason on my part, when I talk to people, most of them, but not all, they're really frustrated or uptight, and I kinda, I don't know, maybe it's part of my journalism or something, but I get to be a good listener or whatever
<he laughs> you know, before responding to people, yeah <he pauses>. This assessment you're talking about, dealing with just about anything here?

He was drawing on his own experience as a professional journalist to talk about how to do an assessment. This was intriguing because he was drawing a parallel between journalistic interviewing and mental health assessment. However, he was not talking about mainstream journalistic interviewing. My husband had done quite a bit of work in journalism over the last several years, and I knew that his style of interviewing was much closer to my 'psychological' style than to what this interviewee was describing as his style. My husband would be much more concerned with a smooth, focused interview that stayed on one topic and was completed in a finite period of time so that he could meet his article deadline. Of course, the manner in which my husband and I interviewed for our respective disciplines would differ markedly. From an academic perspective, I was seeing mental health assessment as a very particular way of finding out information about someone that differed from the methods used by other disciplines. However, I am not certain that this interviewee was making this kind of a distinction in the method that a First Nations person would use, no matter what the end-purpose of the interview was. The manner in which people spoke to each other was the same and only things like crisis would likely change the rapidity of the interview's pace and time course. I asked him a little more about the program assessments that he and the staff in his area had done:

[... You said you guys did a <program area> assessment.]

Yeah

[And so you talked to people from all over and]

Well, we had 4 people go, actually, ... I don't know, we had this one guy working for our band doing an assessment and the kind of questions he was asking were, I don't know, some of them were getting too personal or whatever. Maybe that's another area that, I don't know, it seems like some of the questions were invading the person's life, or <he pauses>

[Too close to private things?]

Yeah

<long pause>
[It's pretty hard sometimes, like if you're, you know like, maybe ICFS workers, like they are working with people]

m-hm

[who have real personal problems]

right

[like with their families or whatever, and they have to have a way of assessing the problem]

m-hm

[you know, right now they're just getting trained with that medical model, right, and so they're looking for a way to do things]

m-hm

[uh, that's different than that, like that's what we're trying to change. It's so hard, cause, you know]

right

[you're dealing with people's personal stuff but then you gotta do it in a way that's, that doesn't scare them off]

m-hm

[you know, or offend them]

Yeah

[you know, and mental health people will just come in and ask the questions]

m-hm

[or whatever and maybe not get the answers <laughs> I've thought of that sometimes, are you really getting the answers?]

Right.

[That takes some time, eh, though? To sit down with people and]

Yeah

[that would take some time to do that]

m-hm. Like some people, like what you say, they offer you a cup of coffee

[m-hm]
and some people get offended if you refuse or something, if you tell them if you're really in a hurry you gotta leave and stuff like that <laughs> you know

[Yeah]

Yeah

Cups of coffee were not usually part of mainstream assessments, and the assessments were not usually done in people's homes, although sometimes they were.

[You just stay around for a while . . . . yeah that's right cause ICFS workers, you know]

m-hm

[if something happens and then they're]

Yeah

[gone]

Yeah

[It must be hard for older people to, to see that, eh? to . . . ]

<pause>

[I'm thinking of my grandmother]

m-hm

[you know, if I go see her . . . like sometimes I'm in a hurry, you know]

Right

[and I'm like in there and out of there]

m-hm

[and . . . thinking of her, like she's always pulling out the cookies or]

Right

[whatever, tea <we laugh> setting the table, and I'm saying 'I have to go, I have to go']

Right, right, yeah

[and she's pouring the tea <I laugh>]

Yeah

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[I'm saying I have to leave, and she's pouring the milk <we laugh>, and she wants me to stay, and I'm always running out]

m-hmm . . .

[Boy that sure is different than what psychologists do, cause that's in that person's home too]

m-hm

[cause, you know, when I've seen people they've come to my office, and they wait in the waiting room]

m-hm

[till you see them, and then a secretary or somebody calls them, and they sit there in your, like, I mean, like this. <I indicate the office we're sitting in.>]

m-hm

[and <sighs> you ask them questions, and they fill out papers]

m-hm

[and they leave]

Now, uh, what kind of a, how would you call that type of a routine or

[Professional]

Yeah.

[I think, professional]

Like, now, to use that type of a thing to go on to a reserve wouldn't work.

Although we were talking about assessment, I was aware that we were talking more about mainstream assessment practices. I tried to shift the focus back to more of a First Nations perspective, and he followed where I was going, trying to give me what he thought I might be wanting.

[Like, well, do you speak Cree?]

Yeah

[Is there a word in Cree for that way of just talking to people or, you know, cause <I pause> we think of that]

Right

[professional thing]
Yeah.

[which isn't working, you know. Is there a word for this other thing here?]

mm . . . there might not be a word, but generally what we do is use a word making reference that you need . . . I don't know. Usually what they say is giving advice or counselling. What we say is 'e-guh-ge-see-e-mut'

[e-guh-ge-see-e-mut]

Like giving advice or counselling. Makes reference to that, yeah . . .

It depends on the person also, I guess <he pauses> some, I don't know, some people are really <he pauses> they don't look at the person's feelings or whoever the person is, or, mm - just the way they act, their questions, or, you know what I'm trying to get at - I don't know how to say <he pauses> like I said, they're the dominant force, and the person they're talking to is the victim or whatever

[The person asking the questions is like in charge.]

Yeah

[Like controlling what's happening.]

m-hm

<pause> maybe it's not the person. Maybe it's just the way the person asks the questions or <he pauses>

In a very gentle way, he was pointing out to me the problem with my own style in this interview. Really, he was leading me by following what I was saying. I could feel my need to direct the flow of the conversation towards the information that I needed much faster than the pace of our relationship would tolerate. I kept trying to get at the information that I felt that I needed - his view of assessment and his perspective. However, I was struggling with his way of communicating which seemed too indirect. I realized that what was transpiring between the two of us was what transpired between First Nations and non-First Nations regularly - their methodologies did not match. Recognizing this dilemma, I resorted to discussing it with him.

[Well, I was trained like that]

m-hm
[You know, and I, like, you can probably hear it sometimes when I, even if I'm just listening, cause you're psychologists trained to take control of the interview]

m-hm

[You know, you're trained to say, okay, this is what you have to find out, and this is what you have to know, and this is the questions, and this is how you should ask them, you know, and this is how you should sit, like I've got [I laugh and demonstrates a professional seating stance.]]

No, no, no, no

[This is more comfortable [I laugh and relax my posture a bit.]]

Well you usually get the odd person, I don't know, . . . maybe it's the person inside him, or some people are really [he pauses], I don't know what word should I use [He sighs and pauses]. I don't know, like, they kinda put themselves the higher, a higher pedestal than the person they're talking to or something, and that kind of puts a person off

[like they're more important]

Yeah, right

<long pause>

[Well that's really hard]

m-hm

[like the whole, like a hospital, right]

Right

[or a clinic, like the whole clinic is set up like that]

m-hm

[you know, like it's all really important and]

Right, right, yeah

[it's like, you know, phones and computers and offices]

m-hm

[like]

Our interview was turning into more of a conversation between the two of us, with each of us sharing thoughts and reflections on the difficulties people had in communicating during a mainstream assessment and the impact of that scenario on a First Nations person:
Well that's what I'm saying, like, you take a person from a reserve and put him into an environment like that. They kind of put themselves into a protective shield or whatever you call it <laughs>, you know.

[Yeah . . . I had a young boy one time, he came from a northern reserve]

m-hm

[that boy -- and I remember-- cause, you know, a lot of young kids, they've been in the cities]

Right

[They, you know, city kids are different. They know]

m-hm

[like the offices and stuff. They're used to that a little bit more]

Right, yeah, yeah

[but this boy was]

m-hm

[very uncomfortable, really uncomfortable, and . . . you know, he even said that to me, at one point, finally, he said, 'I've never even been in the city,' you know.]

No, I just remember they were having problems up in that youth center in <a city>.

[m-hm, m-hm]

and what you call that <names a person>, he mentioned as soon as they switched staff or something, staff from their own people, them young kids kind of opened up. I don't know. <laughs>

[To First Nations]

Yeah

[They were more comfortable?]

Yeah <he pauses>

We talked for a while longer, mostly chatting about a variety of topics and just visiting.

Gradually, the topic turned back towards program issues and Child Welfare. He said:

cause I know I've got a nephew, they were trying to adopt a kid that was given to them by the mother. Now they're, they're . . . running into roadblocks with Social Services . . . . Now what that reminds me -- there is used to be one woman
in <names a city>. She looked after, I think it was four or five foster kids. She wasn't rich.

[m-hm]

Now, if an Indian person on the reserve were to adopt, even adopt one kid, they mention it's like they're living in, pro-, what do you call, providy, or

[in poverty?]

Yeah

[like, no money?]

Yeah <he pauses>

[so, it's like different rules for different people?]

m-hm ... like most people on the reserve will be satisfied with what they have ... . now, once you leave the reserve, live in the city, you're assessed on the type of house you have or how many vehicles you have, where you live, how you dress, you know <laugh>

[Yeah]

Yeah

[What kind of job you have.]

m-hm

[How many jobs you've had.]

m-hm, cause I remember when we first moved in, my wife and I each had a car and we each drove leased vehicles,

[m-hm]

and, actually, it looked like we had four cars

[m-hm]

Boy, you people are rich! <laughs>

[Rich guy! Four cars!]

<he laughs> I don't know, maybe assessment <he pauses> should be <pauses> sensitized or sensitivity or, I don't know what you call it. It's like looking at the individual, I don't know, as a human being, or whatever <laughs>. Yeah.

[I've heard that before]

m-hm
[when people say that the assessment has to look at a person like a person]
m-hm

[you know, that the way that assessments are done now doesn’t treat people like people somehow?]
Right, right, yeah, yeah.
[You know, like it treats them like looking at money and clothes and jobs?]
m-hm

[but not at people, you know]
m-hm

[So like, more First Nations way would be to look at the people – not how much money they]
Yeah, right.
[have or how many cars]
m-hm

[they have or whatever. It doesn’t matter]
m-hm

[it can still be . . . a good home]
Right.
[Like with your nephew there.]
m-hm

[you know]
Like the old people used to say, once you get to have grandchildren it’s like having, like you’re rich, not in the sense of having money but in, I don’t know how would you put it, <he pauses> you’re rich in life or human value. <he pauses> And some say, . . . when you get to reach a certain age where you get to have white hair, they kind of put you in a certain level or, I don’t know, I don’t know, what I’d call it, certain plateau or, I don’t know whether it’s the life cycle or <he pauses> they look on life as from a humanistic way, view, or, and not as a material, you know what I’m trying to

[I think so, yeah, they <I pause> the younger people are more like working and]
m-hm

[raising families and older people are more]
Well, I think it's starting to change, like the young people are going for material values more than human, like they don't seem to care about their own, the other person, they're more or less interested in looking out for themselves.

[You know I'm getting there pretty fast <i laugh and point to some of my own white hair>]

I get my wife mad. She's forever dying her hair.

[Is she? <i laugh>]

We talked and joked for a while about grey hair and Elders, and we talked about our families and people we knew. Then I commented on how mainstream assessment is very different from the spiritual and emotional richness that Elders have.

Yeah <he pauses> cause I know Social Service used to say that the <he pauses> seemed to be a different if you live on a reserve or live in an urban center. If you are identified as living on the reserve, you're poor.

[mm]

But ask the person that lives on the reserve, like, they're content with what they have . . . .

Like, for a person to live in an urban center, . . . . they have to . . . . have a certain level of income, and, if they have a real low income, then they're classified as being poor. They live in the - what do you call that - poverty line . . . . I don't know, what would you call it, classification . . . . So, and actually what they do is they take the kid from the reserve, turn around, and put him in the urban center <laughs> . . . . Usually the person on the reserve is on assistance, having not enough income to, I don't know what do they usually call it, like not being able to provide the necessities of life or whatever. . . . like, living on the reserve, we weren't rich but, yet, we had three square meals, you know. We were content toward life, you know, but living in the city, depends whether you want to have a steak meal or whatever you call it <He laughs> . . . . Like the home, it might not be fancy but they have a roof over their head, you know.

[Yeah, so it's all, like, necessities, like, judged by a city standard . . .

<i long pause>

[That's, that's really interesting . . . .cause it's almost like it's the money that's judged as a necessity]

Right.

[not the family]

Yeah, m-hm.

[That's not good <i pause>. Some homes there's a lot of problems, though, too]
Eh?
[Some homes there's a lot of problems]

m-hm

[You know, but then those kids get taken off into the city?]

But I think family life has changed on the reserve. Like I came from a broken family, I ended up being raised by my oldest sister. Now if a family breaks up . . . maybe the kids, what you call it, institutionalized and being cared for by the extended family

[Instead of by sisters and brothers]

Yeah, yeah

[A lot of kids go to foster care]

m-hm . . . like, my oldest sister is — they weren't rich. They still have three square meals a day.

[mm]

<laughs>

[Yeah, you weren't unhappy]

No.

[it's a hard thing]

m-hm . . . which reminds me, this one family . . . their mother got disabled, and the mother wanted to come home, but nobody was willing to take care of her . . . except the one daughter. I think she was the second oldest. So what happened was, I think she had another sister, two of them, younger, so they wanted to take turns, but, I guess when the oldest wanted somebody else to take over they kind of backed out, so she ended up looking after her mother by herself <laughs>. She even mentioned she had to chase her sister to PA. She was playing bingo <laughs> yeah, so that's starting to disappear.

[Families looking after]

Yeah

[their own]

Like it was automatic, nobody <he pauses>, I don't know what would you call it, unwritten rule or whatever <laughs>

[Yeah, that's just how it was.]

Yeah.
We went over to the coffee room together, and I got him a coffee. Then I left. By the time the conversation had ended, I was feeling a lot more comfortable, and we had laughed quite a bit together. Our “interview” had started out more formally, but I had to let go of some of my accustomed interviewer role in order to have the conversation proceed. I did a lot of things in this interview that I would not have done ordinarily, but I did these things only because he had given me some guidance about how to proceed. I had learned about the process of an interview from him not because he had been telling me how to interview but because he had been showing me. He had taken me through the process of establishing some relationship in a way that is necessary to initiate an assessment process. Once this relationship was opened up, I could return and get to know him more — find out more specific information that I was seeking from him. Having spoken with me once before and established some relationship with me, it would be easier for him, and for me, to speak again. He had given me information about himself, and I had given him information about myself. He had given me a bit of a First Nations perspective on the problems with assessment and he had also shown me that he understands the mainstream medical model and social work processes. He had established himself as a professional journalist but had guided me in a real First Nations way of communicating that I had not experienced before. In many ways, our boundaries were established with each other, and each of us knew that we would speak from the experience and responsibilities relating to those boundaries. For example, I knew that he would use mainstream terms at times, but that he had his own idea of what those terms meant, in line with everything he was tied to — all people and everything he was related to from within his boundaries and responsibilities as a First Nations person.

I, on the other hand, had just had my boundaries expanded. Instead of being limited by my role as a mainstream interviewer, my boundaries were expanded to include a First Nations method for interviewing. Now I had some knowledge and respect for that
method and my boundaries were extended to maintain responsibility for not violating that
method and knowledge that was shown and entrusted to me.

In having my boundaries extended, however, I had, from a mainstream
perspective, violated the normal restrictions of a professional interview. First of all, I had
joked a fair amount and laughed a bit here and there, but from a First Nations perspective
we really had not laughed nearly enough. From a mainstream perspective, I had made the
mistake of talking too much and of referring to myself in personal ways. I shared
information about myself (e.g., health issues, my grandmother). In addition, we had
spent long stretches of what mainstream might call ‘unproductive’ time either in silence or
just chatting and visiting with each other. From a First Nations perspective, I should have
been much more relaxed about the whole interaction and not so worried about sharing
personal information or using up too much time. By mainstream standards, this probably
did not really look like a professional Psychology research interview at all. However, it
was a pretty good first try at building the kind of relationship that good service delivery is
made of in First Nations country. I was shown a lot about interviewing technique and
method from a First Nations person who referred to himself as a journalist but who was
teaching much more than journalistic interviewing. He was teaching me about the First
Nations communication style upon which all First Nations interviewing was based. I
came away from the interview feeling like I had accomplished more than just “getting
information.” I did not learn everything I had come to learn from this interviewee on that
day, but there was always another day to come back if I decided to do so. However, on
this day, I came away feeling good, like we had made a connection with each other, not
just gotten some questions answered. We had laughed and talked, and it felt good. At the
end, when we got some coffee, I wanted to stay and talk more – just to talk – but I didn’t.

We broke a lot of mainstream rules in our talk together. Our conversation, really,
was a two-way street. Ordinarily, psychologists do not share personal information with a
client or research participant. If a psychologist decided to share personal information, it
would happen very sparingly and strategically. It would be thought out carefully in advance. Joking might be seen, in many cases, to be inappropriate because psychological assessment and therapy are serious matters. A little light humor might be tolerated or even appreciated in a psychology office, but not too much. Also, psychological assessments and therapy sessions generally are quite focused on tasks and progress, and they are very time-limited in nature. Not a lot of time is spent in chatting or “visiting.” Appointments are booked according to scheduled time expectations, and the whole process seems just a little on the side of “austere.” In addition, a lot of up-front information and explanations have to occur before any assessment can proceed with a psychologist. The manner in which psychological assessments are done is completely different than what had gone on between this First Nations man and myself during our visit together. With this First Nations man, I had learned more about the “approach” to take in assessing a person of this heritage.

Talking with this man was harder for me than talking with any of the other five people with whom I had discussed assessment. The easiest person for me to talk to was the second man, the one who spoke to me mostly about mainstream issues and “partnerships” with the provincial system. I realize now that the second interviewee had spoken to me in the most acculturated way, and it was that person who was easiest for a mainstream research or assessor to hold a conversation with. The degree of difficulty that I had in a conversation seemed related to the degree to which the person spoke from a First Nations perspective and style. Interviewees number four and five spoke a lot about First Nations concepts, process, technique, and standards, but they did not follow the same process of conversation that the sixth interviewee did. What became clearer to me was that there was an interaction occurring between (1) what I had asked to discuss with the person, (2) the manner in which I initiated the conversation, (3) the level of acculturation and mainstream colonization of both people in the conversation, and (4) the ability of both

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people to put aside their mainstream training and speak from as well as hear a First Nations perspective.

Some of the earlier interviewees, particularly the first three, spoke more to my mainstream understanding, not because they did not know their First Nations heritage – they did know. However, perhaps my mainstream training and culture brought out a response, need, or desire in them to speak in a mainstream way. There are several possible reasons for this. First of all, I was asking about mainstream assessment, so they talked about mainstream from a mainstream perspective. Second, they were trained in mainstream academia, so perhaps they wanted to speak with me as a colleague – have me see them as an educated colleague and have other First Nations see them as having special status, garnered because I had consulted them on a matter. Or, perhaps they could not see past their own colonized thinking to bring themselves to talk positively and openly about their First Nations heritage and worldview. What I do see, especially after experiencing what I have experienced and talking it all over with the project team, is that the information that people tell you might always be affected by all of the following:

- how they see you
- how they think you might see them
- what they want and need
- what they think you need
- how much they adhere to mainstream mainstream or colonized ways of thinking
- what their view of standards and process are in assessment
- how much they trust you
- how you see them
- how you want them to see you
- what you want and need
- what you think they need
- how much you adhere to or colonized ways of thinking
- what your view of standards and process are in assessment
- how much you need to be in control

These plus an infinite number of other invisible variables act as barriers to communication between colonized and mainstream people. Just when you think, as a mainstream researcher, that you are really communicating with a First Nations person, at that moment you must ask yourself if you are really getting a First Nations perspective at all or if the
person you are talking to is speaking with their colonized voice from a colonized perspective.

The easier it is to talk with each other the more likely it is that the First Nations person is allowing you to go on with your mainstream approach to things. Possibly the First Nations person will tell you what they think you want to hear, and you will go off and make what you will of what they say. However, they will go off knowing that you only heard what you wanted to hear and not the real story of how they live and how they see the world. To really understand a First Nation person’s worldview, you have to take a real step over to their side. I could not have received the guidance of interviewee number six if I had not first learned what I had learned from observing Indian-White relations and from listening to the first five interviewees. I could not have received his guidance if I had not taken steps to examine myself and what my worldview was. My mind simply would not have been open to understanding what had really happened between the two of us, and my boundaries would not have been expanded in a way that I would have understood. However, now that I understood more about this way of communicating, I also had the responsibility of respecting and not misusing what I had learned, and that was a bigger task than the process of learning, itself.
CHAPTER 13: Knowing Myself

_I am fully aware of the fact, that what is native and sacred to us, is strange and incomprehensible to them._

- Ukrainian newspaper correspondent, 1902

During the writing of this dissertation, I kept making distinctions between colonized and mainstream people. However, I could honestly say that I did not feel like a member of either group - neither mainstream, nor colonized. I knew that I could walk freely among mainstream society, recognized as a White person, but I also knew that segments of White society were unknown to me because I had never been admitted to them. I felt that I could really identify with the types of discrimination that I was learning about from First Nations people, but I kept telling myself that this must be an illusion. When I set out to do this project with Collin and Sandra, I was not prepared to examine my own role as a Psychology professional in relation to First Nations people, nor was I prepared to examine my personal role as a member of Canadian society. Nonetheless, the level of identification that I experienced, at times, caught me off guard, and I kept wondering about why some of the themes I was hearing sounded so familiar and vital.

It occurred to me that every work of research was essentially a representation of the researcher creating the work: The typical mainstream researcher has the initial motivation to do the work. The researcher chooses the variables, decides on the hypotheses, tests the participants, interprets the data, and transmits the findings. The participants have little or nothing to say about the final conclusions that are made. For
example, when I performed my master’s thesis research, I generated all aspects of it, and I made the conclusions. I remember wondering, while I analyzed the data and wrote up the results, what the youths whom I interviewed would think about what I was writing of them. True, I was reporting group data results; however, I was, nonetheless, making generalizations about a group of individuals which would have an impact on how others would see them in the future. This type of process has the potential of reinterpreting their past and setting up future interpretations of the group being studied.

Therefore, in doing this project, I felt that I had to be very careful about what I wrote so as not to misrepresent anyone, but I also knew that the writing and the interpretations would be my own and would not necessarily represent a “First Nations worldview” or any particular First Nations people. In fact, the project really was more about Psychology and how psychologists might cope, professionally and personally, with people from a very different culture. The question becomes, who is the psychologist under study? The answer inevitably was “me.” The project was about the impact of culture on psychological assessment, but it also was about the impact of Psychology and the impact of First Nations on me. Three cultures were interacting all throughout the work – First Nations culture, the culture of Psychology, and the culture of myself.

In the first part of this work, I wrote about Psychology. In the second part, I wrote about talks with a few First Nations people. Now it was time to write about what I was adding to this complicated cultural mix. I knew that, ultimately, I really could only speak for myself and my own experiences working with a group of First Nations people. I could only write what I observed, what I came away with, and what I learned and understood about others and about myself during the project. Anything else would be a lie. The dissertation, itself, could not be a representation of “First Nations people” or the "First Nations community.” It was a product of my interaction with those people and that community. It was also a reflexive, non-linear process of experiencing and then re-experiencing everything in new ways. The reflexivity of this learning process caused me
to reflect upon myself and my relationship to First Nations, Psychology, and mainstream Canadian society. This process of self-examination and self-learning became imperative, and it was urged by Colin and Dr. Katz right from the start. However, the experience was very difficult to write about because it was like trying to describe a three-dimensional object with only two dimensions. I was limited to a linear, written process, but the experiences, myself, my First Nations friends and colleagues, my worldview and their worldview were all alive and existing in multiple space-time dimensions. Somehow, I remain unconvinced that this writing really was capturing the totality and richness of the experience. However, I continued to try.

Back in 1993, when I had first expressed an interest in working with First Nations people to Dr. Katz, he had asked me why I thought I was the right person to do that work. Later, Collin would tell me that I have to know who I am. He also told me that he did not want to know what I had read: He wanted to know what I knew and who I was. There is no appropriate chronology, really, when discussing how my learning proceeded on this matter because I was constantly thinking, reflecting, looking back, and moving forward simultaneously. However, in speaking for myself and who I am, I knew that I had to be clear about the cultural, historical, social, and psychological background from which I come in order to know how that might interact with the cultures of First Nations and Psychology. What were my assumptions and biases? What was my motivation for doing this work in the first place, and where did that motivation come from?

I was changing during the process of doing this research. Of course, I was learning new things and hearing new, powerful perspectives. However, I also knew that I was not necessarily changing into something new. In fact, I felt like I was changing into something old and familiar but with a renewed strength and vigor that had not been there before. The realization that I was being personally affected by the project came most acutely when I realized, cognitively and experientially, that First Nations people really did have a valid alternative worldview and heritage that was very different from that of
mainstream Psychology and Canadian society. To bring back some of how I felt at that moment, I will quote myself:

I felt like a veil had been lifted from my eyes when, without any warning, I realized one day that First Nations people do not compartmentalize the human psyche the way that psychologists do. In the mainstream, we are always talking about “aspects” of people or “components.” We fragment everything, as if we could somehow isolate different parts of the human spirit or mind. I began to find that it was this process of compartmentalization that allowed me to do mainstream work as a psychologist. I thought I could look at different aspects of people without bringing to bear my own worldview, the one that included spirituality, for example. I thought I could take an objective stance without sacrificing who I am and how I was raised. *I realized that in order to do the work of a mainstream psychologist, I had to suppress, block off, or lock up some of my own beliefs and worldview about human existence and take on other views. This realization sunk into me, frightening and liberating all at once* (p. 206, my emphasis).

The realization was frightening because I do not believe it is healthy to have to suppress your worldview in order to do your work. The realization was liberating because I realized that I did not have to suppress my worldview in order to do my work. I accepted that I could think in my own worldview, I could understand people and relationships in that worldview without resorting to the kind of internalized oppression that resulted in me telling myself that my own worldview was wrong or inferior to mainstream. However, what was my worldview?

In order to really ascertain what values I, personally, was bringing to my work and the practice of Psychology, I needed to think back to what felt like the ancient history of my pre-university-education days, all the way back to my childhood and upbringing.
I am the grand-daughter of first-generation immigrants to Canada, although one of my grandparents was born in Canada shortly after her parents arrived in this country, making her technically a second-generation Canadian. However, given the closeness in lifestyle of those early settlers to a first-generation way of life, she lived, until her twenties, as if she were first-generation.

If someone asks me what my heritage or ethnic identity or nationality is, I will say Ukrainian, although this is not necessarily what my grandparents or parents might have said:

It's a long story, and yet it's simple. Ukraine is a very poor rich country – rich in location, climate, soil, natural resources, and people, to overabundance. But because of these riches, throughout her history, Ukraine has been at the mercy of its greedy neighbours. When one considers how long the Ukrainian people have existed as an entity, the years of independence [before 1991] were very few indeed. National identity/ethnic origin and citizenship are two totally different things. Even in this century, your parents or grandparents, while being Ukrainian by nationality or ethnic origin, could have been citizens of Russia, Poland, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Austria, or Germany. This does not mean that they changed nationality, if by "nationality" you understand ethnic origin or national identity. They just changed citizenship. Remnants of colonialism and foreign occupations are evident in the Ukrainian language. "Za Avstriyi" and za Pol'shchi" mean during [the time of] Austria and during [the time of] Poland — i.e., under the rule of Austria and Poland. "Za nimtsiv" or "za Rossiyi" means during the wartime occupations of the Germans and of the Russians. Also used was "za bol'shevykiv" — during [the time of] the Bolsheviks.

The colonists and occupiers came, stayed, and left. The people, and the land, stayed the same — Ukrainian — as they had always been. I remember an old
wise woman commenting on this topic, patiently explaining again and again: "Just because a kitten is born in the barn, that doesn't make it a calf" (Tracz, 1998). In trying to define who I am, I was immediately confronted with the realities of the historically pervasive oppression and colonization of my own ancestors and relations. I delved deeper into the historical identity of Ukrainians to find out who they were. Of course, I knew the history of my own extended (and extensive) family, but I did not know the history other than the fact that Ukraine was a nation at one time shortly after the first world war. It seemed like a short history for the people to be claiming so much culture, so I wondered just "how long the Ukrainian people have existed as an entity" (Tracz, 1998). To find this information out, I looked at a wide variety of sources. The following excerpt from the introduction to the United States of America's Library of Congress East European collection describes very well one popular conception of who Ukrainians were—a people who did not have an identifiable ethnic existence prior to World War I (Yasinksy, 1997):

Before World War I Ukraine for all practical purposes did not exist in the Library of Congress as an East European nation with its own territory, people, and linguistic, cultural, historical, and political identity. The Ukrainian lands were under the political and administrative control of Russia, Austria-Hungary, and Romania. Thus in the 19th and early 20th centuries Ukrainian materials were treated as "Russian", "Austro-Hungarian" or "Romanian" in the Library's collections. For example, the Ruska chytanka dla nyzhshoi gimnazii, a Ukrainian Reader for Lower Classes of High School, published in Vienna in 1852, was catalogued as Russian. There were no specialists in the Library in 1870, when the book was acquired, to explain that in Austria-Hungary the term "ruskyi" was used instead of Ukrainian or Ruthenian (the official Austria-Hungarian name of that time) to

3 "Nationality" is used synonymously with "ethnic identity," which are both different from "citizenship" which refers to the country in which you hold official citizen status.
denote a language spoken in Austrian-ruled Galicia, Bukovyna and Carpatho-Ukraine.

Locating materials relating to Ukraine can be difficult, owing to the turbulent history of the country and the confusing terminology sometimes used. [Non-Ukrainian] authors often use the term "Russia" in cases that do not concern Russia proper but rather present-day Ukraine. They very often use the term "Russia" or "Russian" to designate the Medieval Kiev state which was called "Rus" but situated on the territory of present-day Ukraine. In addition, the terms "Russia" and "Russian," when used in reference to a political rather than an ethnic entity, were used for all territories of the pre-revolutionary Russian Empire in the period from Peter the Great to the Revolution of 1917. These factors explain why one can find a wealth of material concerning Ukraine and Ukrainians under the headings or titles "Russia" and "Russian". Finally, because parts of Ukraine belonged at various times to Austria-Hungary and later to Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Hungary, much material concerning Ukraine and Ukrainians can be found under the headings "Austria-Hungary," "Poland," "Czechoslovakia," "Rumania," and "Hungary" in works on these countries. Material also can be found under headings such as "Galicia," and information concerning Carpatho-Ukraine can be found under the headings and titles "Carpathia," "Carpatho-Ruthenia," or "Carpatho-Russia" used various non-Ukrainian publications (Yasinsky, 1997).

The Library of Congress’s explanation for the scope of its Ukrainian collection is a very good representation for how many people and scholars view the Ukrainian people. It is true that Ukraine was not a nation in the modern sense of ‘a country with citizens and a constitution’ prior to World War I. Additional confusion in identity arose from the many different nations that politically conquered Ukrainian lands over the centuries, including the Russians. Hrushevsky (1984) delineated the fact that Ukrainian identity and history
frequently and wrongly is confused with Russian identity and history, thus in the annals of historians, “the history of the Ukrainian-Rus nationality . . . remains without a beginning” (p. 358). Magoscsi (1996) also made similar arguments; however, the history, identity, and locale of Ukrainian culture continues to be confused. Even a recent edition of National Geographic magazine identified the Ukrainian steppes as the Russian steppes in discussing the origins of the Indo-European language.

However, the fact that the Ukraine was not identified by other people as Ukrainian does not mean that the Ukrainian people did not exist. The ongoing dilemma over who Ukrainians are occurred even in Canada after the Ukrainian people had begun to immigrate to this country in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Ukrainian people originally thought of themselves more by the region from which they came. Therefore, when Canada undertook a national census in 1921, it turned out that there were only 63,788 ‘Ukrainians,’ but also 107,456 Austrians; 100,064 Russians; 24,456 Galicians; 16,861 Ruthenians; and 1,616 Ukrainian-Bukovinians (Перел переписом, Західні вісти, 1931). The people from these regions recognized for the 1931 census that, because they shared a common language and heritage (despite dialectical differences in their language) it was more beneficial to refer to themselves as Ukrainians in Canada, amongst all the other nations that existed in this country, than to maintain their regional identities. In the Western United States, however, people tended to call themselves Ruthenian, although I am not entirely certain about why this is the case. Nonetheless, quite a few Ukrainian churches exist in Western Canada and very few Ruthenian churches, whereas in the Western United States quite a few Ruthenian churches exist, and fewer Ukrainian ones. The ‘Ruthenian’ and ‘Ukrainian’ people, however, share the same heritage but united themselves under different names.

Part of the problem in understanding who Ukrainians are comes from the word “ukraine,” itself. The word “ukraine” originally meant “borderlands” that stretched between “the Asiatic East and “civilised” Europe” (Mirchuk, 1949, p. 1). Later it referred
to the Cossack state which developed in response to invasion from Eastern Asiatic peoples. Gradually, the word took on more political meaning.

National consciousness increased as a consequence of oppression by Russians and Poles, in spite of whose resistance the name “Ukraine” as a special term for the Ukrainian territory spread quickly, thus emphasising the fact that there is a difference between the Ukrainians and their neighbors in the spheres of language, race, culture, national feeling and policy. In Tsarist Russian the name “Ukraine” was the symbol of the Ukrainian people’s struggle for independence. It was therefore abolished and replaced by “Little Russia,” a term very much hated by Ukrainians.

In addition to the name “Ukrayina” Ukrainians originally used the term “Rus” to designate the political entity of the Kyiv empire to which at that time the territory of Ukraine belonged. Originally “Rus” applied solely to the southern parts of Eastern Europe, whilst the northern parts were called Muscovy. Tsar Peter the Great extended this name to the whole empire and entered it into official European nomenclature. In Peter’s state, “Rus”-Ukraine was called “Little Russia” to indicate that this part of the realm was not one with the former Muscovite territory which got the name “Great Russia.”

Before the First World War Austria had introduced “Ruthenian, Ruthenian” from Latin “Rethenus” as official name for the Ukrainians in Galicia. (Mirchuk, p. 2; see also Pritsak & Reshetar, Jr, 1963).

“Galicia” or “Halychyna” was the name that Franz Josef of the Austro-Hungarian Empire gave to the ethnic territories of Ukrainians (Mirchuk, 1949):

But not before the 20th century was some order brought into the chaos of “Ukrainian – Little Russian – Ruthenian.” The USSR officially acknowledged the name “Ukraine, Ukrainian” and the “Ukrainian Soviet Republic” has succeeded in keeping its ground at least nominally in the world-wide family of nations (p. 2).
For others in the world, it was settled that the "borderlands" would be called Ukraine. However, the people living within those lands had other names for themselves. To refer to themselves collectively, the people would say "наші люди," meaning our people. Did they need another name? In the context of world politics, the people also referred to themselves by different names, partly relating to their regional culture and partly to their geography. Some examples are Poltava, Bukovina, Kolomyia, and Lemkivshchina. In modern terms, these regions would be like provinces of whatever larger country they belonged to at the time. For example, Bukovina is a geographical/ethnic region like a province. However, Bukovina has also had the status of a country in its own right, as it was later annexed to Galicia, after which it was considered a sub-region of Galicia under Austro-Hungarian rule. However, in Ukrainian, the people were referred to as Bukovintsyi, no matter what political status the region had bestowed upon it by later external regimes and no matter how much they were referred to as "bohunks" when they came to Canada.

However, the "borderland" people existed long before the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1993, the Ukrainian Museum in New York City hosted an archeological exhibit from Ukraine of the most ancient people inhabiting the borderlands, entitled "Ukraine – Images from 5000 to 4000 B.C.: Treasures of the Trypillian Culture." The museum exhibit contained more than 160 archeological items and was described as follows (The Ukrainian weekly, 1993):

The Trypillian culture received its name from the village of Trypillia on the Dnipro River in Ukraine, where the first discovery of this ancient civilization was made 100 years ago. The excavated treasures, in the forms of artifacts and remains of settlements, date the civilization to the Neolithic era. Archaeologists divide the Trypillian culture chronologically into three periods - early, middle and late. The Trypillian culture traces its origin to regions of the Eastern Mediterranean and the Balkans, from where the earliest forms of agriculture and livestock breeding spread throughout Neolithic Europe. The territory of contemporary Ukraine witnessed the synthesis of various ancient cultures, both sedentary and nomadic, and from this blend emerged the Trypillian culture.

As early as 5,000 B.C. the Trypillians lived in the central region west of the Dnister River, as well as around the southern part of the River Buh. Gradually, these tribes settled the lands of the upper Dnister River, Volhynia, the central
region bordering the Dnipro River and some areas of the Left Bank region. More than 2,000 settlements have been found near rivers and other water sources, and they consisted of living areas and burial mounds.

Trypillians built their villages in a circle formation, enclosing a large central area which, during the early period of the culture, served as a herding pen for domesticated livestock. Later periods saw large community buildings built on this common ground, which was also used for cult rituals, dances and games. This circular arrangement, similar to the African "kraal," also provided for a better defense of the settlement. A typical dwelling in such a settlement was a rectangular structure supported by stout wooden posts and covered with clay. It had somewhat elongated proportions, with several living quarters, which housed two to three families. In addition to these houses, archaeologists excavated many pit dwellings as well as some clay models of two-storied houses which may have been either domestic structures, cult temples or cremation platforms. The clay models are finely detailed, showing the construction of the buildings as well as their interiors.

An average community of the Trypillian culture was made up of several hundred people. In the Middle Trypillian period these communities were much larger, utilizing extensive land areas and supporting a populations of over 10,000. Most dwellings, which also contained storage areas and workshops, were two-storied and built against each other to form a fortification wall.

The excavations also unearthed thousands of charred dwellings in the center of which were found pottery, clay statuettes, grain, human and animal bones. Based on current theory, it is believed that the Trypillians adhered to a unique cycle of existence; they would build a settlement to be used for 60-80 years, burn it and leave it as an offering to the dead and then move on to create another settlement. This practice, known also in older civilizations, demanded an extremely well coordinated, centrally organized society.

The main occupations of the Trypillian people were agriculture and cattle breeding. They harvested wheat, barley, millet and flax. Although metal (copper) was already known, their everyday tools were still made of stone.

Trypillian pottery is the culture's most identifiable trademark. The elegance of the forms and the polychrome designs indicate a high level of sophistication in the process of clay preparation, firing and decoration. Pottery was made by hand without the use of a potter's wheel. At first, three colors of paint were used for the designs - white, red and black, while later, at the end of the middle period of the Trypillian culture, black predominated. Variations in the styles of ornamentation can be attributed to specific pottery-making centers.

On some pieces of pottery, the impressions of woven textiles were found. The imprints, sometimes very fine, indicate a very highly developed weaving technology and the availability of linen clothing.

The ancient people's concept and understanding of life and of the universe was governed by mythological beliefs, and this was reflected in everything they created; nothing was inconsequential, random or negligible, everything had a meaning and purpose. The designs they used on their pottery reflected in symbolic patterns and stylized pictures their concept of life, nature, the spiritual world and the universe.

Archaeological excavations also yielded thousands of anthropomorphic clay statuettes which, scholars believe, played an important role in various cult rites and rituals, especially those associated with the sun, spring and fertility. Most common are statuettes of the female form. Other, zoomorphic, statuettes, were of wild or domestic animals, among them the bear, bull and ram, which were held in high esteem by the Trypillians.

The Trypillian culture yields the first tangible record of ancient prehistory on the territory of contemporary Ukraine. Overall, the Trypillians played an
important role in the development of European civilization, and together with all the other peoples who lived on these lands for thousands of years, contributed greatly to the evolution of Ukrainian culture.

Daikiw O'Neill (1998) wrote:

Trypillian culture (Trypill'ska kultura) is the Ukrainian name given to a Neolithic population whose culture which once flourished on the ethnically Ukrainian territories of present-day Ukraine, Moldova, and the northeast area of Romania. A parallel name is Cucuteni culture. Both these names derive from the villages where artifacts of this culture were first discovered in Ukraine and in Romania, respectively. The Trypillia site is near Kyiv (Kiev), the capital of Ukraine, and the Cucuteni site is near Iasi in Romania, near the Moldovian border. . . . The Trypillian population's primordial deity was female, and their culture developed rich and complex artistic symbols rooted in their religious beliefs based on the Great Goddess and her various aspects as Giver-of-Life, Wielder of Death, and Regeneratrix. . . . Trypillian culture had a matriarchal clan order. Women did agricultural work, headed households, manufactured pottery, textiles and clothing and had a leading role in society. Men hunted, kept domestic animals, and prepared tools of flint, stone and bone.

Artifacts of this culture consist most notably of terra cotta pottery, bichrome & trichrome painted using predominately black, red, and white mineral-based paints. The quality of the Trypillian ceramic production surpassed all contemporary creations of Old Europe. . . .

Female forms and figurines (many painted or incised, some with fertile-field symbols), as well as various animals and zoomorphic vessels, sleighs, all scale modeled in terra cotta or clay, have also been found. The finer, more elaborate forms (figurines, pots, jars, bowls, amphorae, and two-bowed joined vessels) were ornamented with painted or incised lines, spirals and egg-shaped motifs, and other shapes and/or line elements . . . . There were also articles of everyday use such as spindle whorls and loom weights, and everyday gray pottery made of undecorated clay mixed with sand and small broken shells.

Interestingly, impressions of plain evenweave cloth . . . and pattern-woven textiles have been found on the bottoms of some Trypillian pottery, showing they had been set to air-dry on that woven cloth before being fired. These lands are known to grow flax (linen) and hemp since time immemorial. This workaday use of evenweave fabric, the clay spindle whorls and loom weights all indicate that this population was agrarian, with well-developed textile crafts of spinning, weaving, and very likely needlework, which was used to join cloth and make clothing. . . . symbols that are found on the artifacts of Trypilia and those associated with the Great Goddess have persisted into the present in most Ukrainian folk arts, especially those of pysanky (Ukrainian Easter eggs) and textile arts. . . .

Trypillian culture was predated by other tribal cultures extending back to 15,000 B.C. (James & Thorpe, 1994). Early inventions of the peoples inhabiting these lands included horseback riding, cartography, and early Scythian forms of bow-making (James & Thorpe, 1994). Some historians have argued that the modern Greek culture did not stem from the Hellenic people but from Slavic people who migrated to present-day Greece in
the 6th century A.D. (Hutchinson, 1994). These generations of people gave rise to later
generations that, over time, invented other things, such as Bandura’s social learning
theory. Bandura’s family settled in the same area of Alberta that my mother’s family
settled in when they came to this country. A ‘bandura’ is a Ukrainian string instrument
and is pronounced ‘bun-DOO-ra’ (with a rolled ‘r’ sound). Of course, the people living
in the original Trypillian lands came into contact with other tribes and nations over the
generations, such as Tartars and Ottoman Turks. The point, however, is that the lands of
the Ukraine were always inhabited by a people and that threads of cultural and linguistic
consistency persisted over the ages.

For example, linguists have been studying the roots of the Indo-European
languages. Beard (1995), a linguist at Bucknell University, wrote:

About 6,000 years ago a tribe of people living in the Eurasian Plain north of the
Dnepr River in what is now the Ukraine, spoke a language from which virtually all
the languages of present-day Europe and India developed. It is commonly
referred to as ‘Indo-European’. As the original tribe expanded, various segments
of it moved farther and farther away from the central parent language, developing
their own dialects. Without TV to keep everyone in contact, eventually those
dialects changed so much that they became different languages.

In Ukrainian, the river being referred to is called the “Dnipro.” When one of my relatives
came to Canada, he built himself a house along the North Saskatchewan river and said,
“this is my Dnipro.” Therefore, when scholars and other people talk about Ukraine as
being only 100 years old, surely they must be referring to the modern, political
manifestation and organization of the region, because the people, themselves, have existed
on the land for thousands of generations. I do not quote these segments of historical
writing to present a comprehensive history of the Ukrainian people. I merely want to
demonstrate that the heritage of these people is much older than 100 years.
Over thousands of generations, a particular national character and values developed amongst the people. Scholars have synthesized the type of personality that characterized these borderland people:

The cultural influences at work for thousands of years since the Secondary Stone Age in Ukrainian territory have naturally left their traces: though the contribution of each has varied, they have combined to shape the spirit of the Ukrainian as we see it in all his actions and thoughts, in his whole conduct of life, or, to put it in general terms, in his view of the world. And when we pause to seek the basis of the specifically Ukrainian view of the world, our consciousness is suddenly flooded with the certainty that the spiritual life of the entire nation has its deepest source in an intimate relation to the soil, to Mother Earth.

The Ukrainians are a people of peasants. There is no question of that. This means that the population of these areas has always been in close touch with the soil . . . . This orientation of the inner man holds not only for one class, but for the entire nation; for the intelligentsia of to-day, the intellectual leaders of the people, have, in the main, sprung from the peasantry . . . . The entire Ukrainian nation is today deeply rooted in its native soil, a circumstance which it regards as its most effective weapon, with the help of which it has managed not only to cling to the land given it by Fate . . . . It is self-evident that such an intimate connection with the soil for almost a thousand years makes itself felt in the spirit of the Ukrainian people.

The Ukrainian view of the world is based very definitely on idealism. The actions and resolutions of the Ukrainian are based not on an objective reality as it confronts us, but on an ideal "reality" which contains many elements derived from imagination and fancy.

. . . their whole intellectual life, their ethical standards and legal code, and still more their actual conduct, are all based on the individual; and to restrict the rights of the individual even in the interests of the community, is always resented as an encroachment on the freedom of the will . . . . society, in the Ukrainian "громада," is a voluntary union of individuals who, for the moment, are willing to work together for common aims, but who reserve the right to leave the union or even to attack it with every means in their power if they find that it is threatening their personal freedom or when personal interest is greater than the interest of the community.

A certain modesty with regard to the limits of human knowledge is characteristic for Ukrainian philosophers. These limits are the result of the fact that human reason and its capacity of knowing the world hide another, more profound, function of the human spirit on which reason is based and which provides it with possibilities of development. . . . rationalist views are a concession to the spirit of the times and are perhaps more in the nature of a mask which hides the emotion they are loath to admit than the decisive factor in their psychic make-up.

The supremacy of feeling and the predominance of love provide us with a further element in the Ukrainian view of the world, namely the deep feeling for religion which is in the main component in all Slav spiritual life. Many scholars of the last century emphasize the supremacy of feeling and the all-important part played by religion as the main characteristics of the spiritual life not only of the modern Slavs, but also of their ancestors, whether remote or recent. Attempts have been made to differentiate the historical peculiarity of the Slavs from that of Romance peoples, in particular from the French, and the Germanic nations. Compared with the political French and the philosophical Teutons, the Slavs are,
in the widest sense, the religious race. . . . The Ukrainian is never orthodox in his religious life; he does not cling at all to forms, to externals; rather does he endeavour always to comprehend the essence of a creed or belief. . . . As a result of his over-individual nature, the Ukrainian is all too ready to utilize every opportunity of arguing with his opponent, but religious feeling is too deeply rooted and compels too much respect for the opinions of others for him to make diverging beliefs an object of strife. . . . God did not reveal His truth to the Christ and Hebrews alone, but also the pagans, just as morality cannot be regarded as the monopoly of the Christian world, since it had many eminent champions among the nations of the ancient world. In the province of religion the Ukrainian demands universality, respect for every genuine religious feeling, tolerance of the convictions of others, but not orthodoxy and not the forfeiture of valuable content for the sake of mere form.

The attitude of Ukrainian people is fundamentally based in a sense of individualism; therefore, it might be tempting to draw comparisons between the Ukrainian and the Western European mindset. However, the Ukrainian sense of individualism is tempered by a “live and let live” attitude and a sense of interdependence, rather than a drive for conquest and colonization. A typical Ukrainian would not say “I’m and individual, and I’m right so do what I say.” A typical Ukrainian would moreso say, “This is my way and that’s your way. If I don’t like what you’re doing, I’ll just do my own thing. If you don’t like what I’m doing, well, you’re entitled to your own way of life too (“як так, то так”). Either way, I’ll probably argue with you just for the fun of arguing. Since we’re both individuals, we might both be right. But one thing is for sure: No one knows more than God because God is every where and fills all things, and not one of us is any better than any other. Each will have a turn to stand alone before God.

This latter attitude would change and, in some Ukrainian people, become annihilated altogether with the onset of Bolshevism and the Soviet Socialist regime just after the start of the 20th century. The development of national citizenship in Eastern Europe, largely tied to the secular salvation ideology of the Soviet Union changed regional ethnicity into forced national citizenship through the process of soviet collectivization and russification of non-Russian ethnic territories (Hutchinson, 1994). The mindsets of pre and post-Soviet Ukrainians were very different from each other in many ways. For other
people, the Ukrainian mindset would also be changed by assimilation into North American post-industrial society and the onset of logical positivistic scientism. Still others, particularly those in the Ukrainian diaspora, tried to maintain a Ukrainian identity by becoming bi-cultural and learning how to live both as Ukrainians in an “invisible minority” culture and as anglo-speaking Canadians who blended into the masses of other White people in Canada working for the same economic and political goals. I belong to this latter group, and I share in the heritage of the pre-soviet Ukrainians. It is that громада (“group”) which I now discuss. Adding to the prototype of Ukrainian personality, Czubatyj (1947, p. 150) wrote:

In connection with their individualism and love of liberty, the Ukrainians also possess the sense of self-respect, as well as respect for others. It is the custom of any Ukrainian to show his esteem towards other persons, even children, regardless of his social status: he will not allow himself to be insulted, and likewise will not allow others to be offended. Therefore the entire life of a Ukrainian, more or less like that of the Chinese, is filled with ceremonialism toward both intimate friends and strangers. A guest is welcomed quite effusively and the host endeavors to make his sojourn with him as pleasant as possible. The guest is seated in the most comfortable place, off which the master of the house must by all means personally wipe the dust. A Ukrainian, even of lowly origin, never uses trivial or ribald words; and if he is forced to utter some word which is not too elegant, in order to emphasize some unavoidable thought, he begs to be excused several times for having to resort to such an expression.

However, the regionalism and hospitality of the Ukrainian people left them vulnerable to invasion by more aggressive and conquest-oriented people, forcing the Ukrainians to deal with oppression and colonization for generation upon generation (Mirschuk, 1947). Therefore, when they had an opportunity to live in a new land and be
free from oppression, some of them left for Canada. They came predominantly to Western Canada as people from various regions of their homeland, and they brought with them a sense of their regional identities. In some ways, I wonder if their sense of regionalism helped to forge the sense of regional identity that characterizes Western Canada to this day.

The Shandros were one family that came from Ukraine to Canada settled northeast of Edmonton close to where my maternal relatives settled. This family shares the same values that were shared by my family and by many families who arrived here in Canada. Recently, The Shandro family undertook to interview and videotape elderly family members about their lives as immigrants to this new land. Like many other Ukrainian families, when the Shandros came to this land, they brought with them their families, material goods, their worldview, and their values. The following are excerpts from the Shandro family historical video that have been chronologically organized to form a story of their lives that reflects their fundamental worldview and values. After each excerpt, the name of the person making the statement will be indicated along with a word or two that are intended to reflect the value that the excerpt is meant to illustrate:

Father came just prior to age 18 when he would have been conscripted into Franz Joseph's army — came to Canada and never saw his family again (John Shandro, individualism, family).

They were set for an adventure to a promised land (Irene Hohol, optimism, freedom from oppression).

The biggest selling point for all the people that had come from the province of Bukovina at that time was the fact that for 10 dollars, they could get 160 acres of land — for a 10 dollar bill. They boarded the ship at Hamburg, Germany, on the S. S. Brazilia, and it took them approximately about two weeks to cross the Atlantic ocean. They arrived at Halifax in May of 1899, and they took the rail from Halifax to Calgary. And at that time, the railway system had come up to the south side or south part of Edmonton, which is called Strathcona at the time, and that is where they landed. My understanding is that when they came to the end of the steel, the rail end, they decided to cross the North Saskatchewan river by ferry at what is presently called Walterdale or a more prominent marker is the 105 street bridge. I understand that they purchased a team of horses and a wagon and they put all their worldly goods on this particular wagon and horse or with the horses and they took the south Victoria trail to find their new homeland (Nicholas H. Shandro, concept of homeland, family unity, practicality).

My father came to Canada in 1920, a young man of 20 years. He was very interested in Canada because of the instability that was occurring in the old country.
in the Ukraine, the wars, the level of corruption. I can recall my mother talking about when they were immigrating to Canada, one of the last hurdles was to board the ship for Canada and at the very last minute, apparently, one of the officers there decided that my father, who was a healthy man, had apparently some health problem, and, therefore, the only way out of it was to pay a bribe. . . . And likewise, my mother. She came over a year later with her family. She had convinced grandfather that life in Canada would be much better than it was in the Ukraine. There was no future there, and, with some reluctance, the family sold out their few acres of land and bought the ticket over to Canada. . . . After 1927, a year or so later, both my grandfather and grandmother [in the old country] were moved to Siberia under situations where my father didn’t know why they moved over there, and within two years they were no longer alive. The suspicion was they had starved to death. He could never ascertain what the reason for the deaths were. (Nick Shandro, freedom from oppression/corruption, family unity, extended family).

Most of the people, including my grandfather and my great uncle, they were farmers, men of the land, and I might also add that when they did come, they brought just about everything but the kitchen sink, which included homemade implements for farming. As an example, grinding stones to make flour, that was brought over with them. They brought over with them walking plows that were home made. They brought over their own seeds, both for farming and for gardening. . . . They brought just about everything but the kitchen sink when they came (Nicholas H. Shandro, self-sufficiency, preparedness, extended family, land).

They had brought with them their knowledge of various ways of doing things and its interesting where they took on this wilderness and used the natural materials that were available there and built homes and made a living. The homes they built and the various things they did reflected their basic heritage which they brought with them – this very strong material culture that they had which they brought with them and which was then expressed in everything they did (Roman Fodchuk, heritage, culture, self-sufficiency).

Like my mother said, what we had in the house, they picked it up and brought it. There was a big cradle for bread kneading, now you use a dish – that was cradle, like a cradle – homemade. And they brought spoons and bowls, wooden ones, and they brought some pots, as far as I can remember they were like clay pots. They brought what they made on the looms there. My mother packed everything in that trunk . . . (Lena Fedorak, self-sufficiency, preparedness).

To realize these dreams in the land of promise, the Shandro pioneers were not afraid to face the unknown. They came with the faith of their parents and church, and religious traditions were very important in their lives. All of these people were linked by a common language and a deep and abiding faith in the Orthodox religion (Pearl Porter, courage, faith, traditions, Ukrainian language).

Around Edmonton, there was not enough bush to suit them. Trees was what they were looking for as there had been a shortage of them in the old country. They were attracted to bush because the trees would provide them with logs for their buildings and fuel for heat (Anna Navalkowsky, self-sufficiency, preparedness, survival).
My grandfather served in the army. He was a mayor in [his home village in the old country], and, you know, a mayor there was more than just working with a council. He had a quasi judicial type of job. He settled arguments. It didn't have to go to court there. He settled arguments among the people and so on. He was what they called a 'veet'. . . . He decided he would get land that was black at least to the depth of a spade. And they got as far as Whitford, which was at the edge of the settlement at this time and he spoke to a Mr. Whitford and a Mr. Borwick — they were Metis and they had learned a few words in Ukrainian — so he spoke to them and they told him there was land north and a bit east that he might like. So, that's why he travelled from Whitford and he led the group to that valley, the Shandro valley. I don't know what they called the valley, but anyway, he led them there at the base of what they called Eagle Tail Hill and the lands were pretty fat there. (Andy J. Shandro, community harmony, land).

They had to build a house — there were seven of them, 5 children, so they and grandma and the older children worked together right with grandpa and grandpa's two brothers who came with him with their families. They helped together to build the different places. It was community work, as such, from that time on, and they had their farms just a mile apart, and they worked together (Pearl Landsman, interdependence, community, family unity, extended family).

My father and mother worked hard. There was no division of labor. Whatever needed to be done they worked at, and they were very compatible. I do not remember my parents arguing. They seemed to talk things out and they did it, and the values they instilled in us at an early age I think have stayed with us through our life, throughout our life. . . . There was no one person who did everything; it was the group person. They had building bees, we had feather tearing bees and, of course, you know, with all these daughters you really had to prepare dowries (Irene Hobol, hard work, mutuality/cooperation, harmony, community, interdependence).

The dowries was probably, I would say, a complete set of bedding and, that is, the pillows were very important, and they were goose down pillows, usually, and beautifully made. The comforters were carded wool, and they were always the very best and beautifully made, and these were set aside for the daughters for their dowries (Ruth Grant, practicality, craftsmanship, art/beauty).

Also in those days they'd get together if somebody was building some building or something, the local, the neighbors would get together and form a working bee and help one another. Those days that was very common, to help one another (John Shandro, interdependence).

When I was five, I lost my mother. That left us without a mother. Shortly after our home burned down and we were housed in what would be called a garage today — but it was more or less a machine shed — and it was late fall, so grandmother came one day and in her democrat packed us all up and took us to her home. Now, at that time, she had six children at home of her own, and she took six of us to her home, and we lived with her for quite a long time before we were able to get back to a home of our own. And these would be my memories of that family. Grandfather was boss, but grandmother actually ran the organization. She was a tremendous organizer. We all had jobs to do. I wasn't of school age, so I wasn't able, I didn't go with the children to school, so I was home. My job was to clear the table after each meal. The bread crumbs and anything on the table was tossed out to the birds. Nothing was wasted, and then the dishes were washed.
and put back on the table for the next meal. Now that was seating 12 to 14 people for each meal (Ruth Grant, interdependence, matriarchal, equality in roles, practicality, thriftiness, extended family).

During the depression days, or after the first world war, there were a lot of people coming in and during the winter they didn't have any work. And they congregated in the summer kitchen out in there and there were about seven of them. And grandmother Shandro, they didn't pay any rent or anything, Grandmother Shandro made sure that they all had food and everything. That was the concern for their fellow beings in those days (Nick Zazula, interdependence, equality).

We knew that if we didn't see our cousins during the year, we'd be sure to see them all on this occasion [Easter Monday] at grandma and grandpa Nikon and Anna Shandro's place. So it really, it was a way where we really were close knit and we were united, and that bond of unity and the like has carried on down to this day (Eve Scraba, extended family, family unity).

In those days, my mother and father would go and visit one uncle and auntie and then next Sunday somebody else, and that's how it was. We did a lot of visiting. Now since the t.v. is on, there's no visiting. So, holiday or Sunday was for visiting on each other (Lena Fedorak, extended family).

After their physical needs were met, their spiritual needs had to be met equally, and the reason for that was they had a genuine deep desire for spiritual worship in a church of their faith (Anna Navalkowsky, survival, faith, spirituality/worship/prayer).

She [mother] was very faithful in the heavenly father, used to preach us to pray and to believe in the power of the heavenly father, you know, she used to, she gave even examples how prayer had helped her at many, many times (Pearl Strynadka, spirituality/worship/prayer).

They had great faith, being Orthodox faith. They had great faith in guidance, in premonitions, in just their feelings. They get feelings if it's the right thing to do or not the thing to do. But they were very brave and with bravery -- very intuitive too, in that way -- and that's why they were able to progress. So, of course, their belief in God and things they felt they were guided to come here, so they knew that they were protected. There's a faith there that carries a person across this body of waters. I know that in my own life (Pearl Landsman, faith, mysticism, courage, personal experience).

I believe strongly in the good Lord. We were raised by the church, sang in the choir. I was an altar boy, and I also helped the minister many a time and I wasn't, it was a pleasure doing it, and after all was done, there was always a little bit of extra wine left in the 'tumba' which the preacher shared with me (Paul Shandro, faith, humor).

... and I asked him, I said, now why do they have so many 'господи помилуй,' you know, 'Lord have mercy,' [in the liturgy] and Dad said, 'We need it.' (Andy J. Shandro, faith, humility).

The sound of the church bells relayed messages to the people of the district. If they heard the slow chiming of the bells, they knew that somebody had passed
away. I recall that, cause I was in the district at that time (Pearl Porter, community, personal experience).

I also recall we had the church bells. There was a certain bell at the Shandro church that would send the sound to break up the clouds when there was a thunderstorm coming, and a hail storm was about to get there. I had to ring and the clouds would break up, in many cases the clouds just broke up and disappeared and we didn't get the storm (Paul Shandro, community, faith),

Now the children in the school in the district, then were getting to be older. There was a number of them growing up and so far none of them were being educated, and my grandfather, Nikon Shandro, was one of the few who could read and write in the Ukrainian language, and he felt that education in the new country was very important. He went to Edmonton. He got Andy Shandro to go with him as a interpreter, and they met with Frank Oliver, who was a publisher of the Edmonton Bulletin at the time. This was in 1904, and they approached him to see what could be done about having a school district started in their area. How they chose the site right in the midst of their district so that all the children wouldn't have that long a distance to walk. So they chose the site, the school was built, and everything was in preparation for this new teacher. Now when he came, he didn't know a word of Ukrainian and there wasn't a child who knew a word of English, so there they sat looking at each other the first day. And there were 39 pupils. Now my father, William, was one. He was 10 years old at the time, and he was one of the pupils in the first class (Anna Navalkowsky, Canadian education, literacy, self-sufficiency).

They had a very powerful instrument placed in their hands by Canada, which they hadn't the opportunity in the old country, and that was education. The children went to school to study and learn with the blessings of their parents, and they learned the ways and language of Canada, and they advanced rapidly. They advanced so rapidly that their parents were finally afraid that they would lose their identity because, well even in our home, we spoke so much English that our parents used to complain, 'Why don't you speak a bit of Ukrainian?' but, you see, Ukrainian was forbidden in the schools because they were supposed to speak English, and you'd get strapped if you spoke Ukrainian. The children had no trouble with that. They could speak English all, you know, and they did so well and they took to education, well, like ducks to water (Andy J. Shandro, Canadian education, Ukrainian identity, Ukrainian language, progress/advancement).

My first year of teaching was about 14 miles north on the north side of the river. Fourteen miles north of my home, our home. Lilyfield School in Downing, Alberta. There, I had four grades, and I had 54 pupils, and out of 54, there were eight in grade one who didn't know a word of English, so you can imagine how much progress we could make (Pearl Porter, progress/advancement).

Summer vacation meant Ukrainian lesson time, and, of course, under the tutorship of Reverend Semenoff, we went to the church manse and there he taught us how to read and write in Ukrainian (Irene Hohol, Ukrainian language, literacy).

And people were happy, the people were basically happy people — it doesn't matter what tribulations they had, they were happy people. That was one way to be able to survive. And everybody sang and everybody danced. And their songs were songs of the country, of the people and they brought those to Canada with
them (Pearl Landsman, happiness, survival, music/song/dance, community, heritage).

Mother was a vibrant, hospitable person. She was very kind, cheerful, open-minded, with a good sense of humor (Irene Hohol, happiness, humor).

And if we have начінка [nachinka, a basic food] and if we have голупці [holupci, a basic food], what else do you want? (Lena Fedorak, simplicity).

Today we recognize that some of those values are falling away, and it is sad to a degree because it was a very rich heritage that we inherited, and we can't kind of seem to bring it back. And it is sad in a way. Life goes on. [OFF SCREEN: "But that is progress Nick, so times are changing"] (Nick Zazula, Ukrainian identity, heritage, progress/advancement)

Long time ago, the church was full. There was a lot of people in the area. In fact, when I was just a little boy, I recall that many times it was packed, many times it was packed inside and there was a crowd outside. Nowadays, it's a different story. It's not only here. I think all the churches are that way, especially out in the country. The people just aren't there anymore (John Shandro, faith, community).

Agriculturists are talking that in the future we are going to see 10 000 acre farmers. So what that does is, you see now 2 000, 3 000, 5 000 acre farmers. You get to 10,000 acres will be an average farm. Our area, you're gonna have one farmer here and one farmer there. There will not be the people in this area to support a thing like this. That is what they're envisioning, and we're trying to hold onto the past but we cannot. We gotta let go, but the memories will be there forever (Nick Zazula, community, heritage).

I think the major values was to live a clean life, be honest, work hard, and you'll be successful. They felt that in this new country it was important to be honest, to pay your way. They never looked for any sort of handouts. You had to make it on your own and the way to make it on your own was hard work (Nick Shandro, honesty, hard work, success, self-sufficiency).

I really am very proud of my parents because they were very artistic and rich in all. I'm very thankful to them, that, you know, they taught us something for your life and children, from our children and the grandchildren and so on. So that's what it was (Rose Daneluk, heritage, art/beauty, generations, extended family).

The following is a summary of the values gleaned from the Shandro family interview excerpts, which are the same values that I grew up with as a child:

- faith
- mysticism
- courage
- personal experience
- humor
- humility
- community
- Canadian education
- literacy
- self-sufficiency
- Ukrainian identity
- Ukrainian language
- progress/advancement
- happiness
- survival
music/song/dance  heritage  culture
humor  simplicity  success
hard work  honesty  art/beauty
generations  extended family  craftsmanship
practicality  interdependence  community harmony
equality in roles  thriftiness  family unity
spirituality/worship/prayer  freedom from oppression  optimism
concept of homeland  freedom from corruption  land
preparedness  courage  traditions
mutuality/cooperation

I am not claiming that all Ukrainian families were perfect and lived by these values, not experiencing any disharmony or other negative interactions. Every family in every heritage has its share of strife, hardship, and evil. Every family has members who walk off the main path of the culture or who are not successful at the overall aims of the people sharing a common heritage. However, a group may maintain its values to the best of its ability to uphold them. Although the Ukrainian people came with their values intact, interaction with the Anglo-Saxon community in Canada tested those values and changed how Ukrainian people saw themselves. When the Ukrainians arrived, they were noticeably different from the Anglo-Saxons, not just in some of their values, but in their apparel, and in almost every other aspect of their lives. ‘Difference’ became a source of contention, derision, and even fear amongst the non-Ukrainians.

One example of how Ukrainian people were noticeably different from other people around them was in how they built their homes. House building and the establishment of a home was a very special, important, and sacred duty for a family. When Ukrainians first arrived in Canada, they had to spend quite a bit of time preparing a site for living, so they made do with earthen homes until they could erect the type of home that they were accustomed to in the old country:
The men were faced with several very difficult tasks. They had to build some kind of a dwelling, arrange for provision of food, and obtain power and equipment to make the homestead a viable, productive unit. Since they had no money, they depended on what nature had provided for them.

Once a suitable homestead was selected, the men started to work. A hole, large enough for a dwelling, was dug into the side of the hill. Next, the poles were set up to form some sort of a roof, which was then covered with long grass, and sod over the grass, to a thickness of two to three feet. This was called a home and in many cases, two or three families crowded into this one-room sod hovel (Gutiw, 1988, p. 38).

As some families did not bring or did not own the extent of material goods that the Shandro family had been able to bring to Canada, furnishings had to be constructed:

The furnishings were crude and all homemade out of local seasoned poplars that had been cut earlier, peeled of bark, seasoned, split and dressed to board-like appearance, from which stools, benches, tables were made, and large bowls hewn out of large tree trunks. These wooden bowls, called netsky, were used when making up a large batch of dough for bread. Large spoons, mashers and washboards were all hand made. A large continental clay oven called piets [ni9] was put up for baking. It also provided some heat and children slept on it [on a bed above it], as it was always warm. For bedding, they used cured hay stuffed into hand sewn mattress cases of jute or linen. Sugar and flour bags were used for sheets and pillow cases. This mattress stuffing was changed several times a year or as needed. Hardships and poverty were experienced by every pioneer, as they were penniless and work or jobs were not available locally. . . . But these pioneer people were courageous. Their hopes were high, their determination was strong, and they kept carrying on. . . .
The housing that followed the sod hovel was very similar to what they had been used to and had known in the old country. It was natural for them to use the same building techniques. It was practical at the time. The house gave a maximum of space and comfort for the investment and served them many years. It is estimated that these houses were always built to an insulation factor of R60 standard. The walls were at least ten inches thick, which provided for a house that was warm for winter and cool for summer (Gutiw, 1988).

The Ukrainian people had a particular way of building homes that had been done for generations:

The construction of a settlers permanent home was the first clear opportunity for cultural expression in the new land. The generations of experience in building, folk design and vernacular embellishment showed in the Ukrainian character of these homes, despite the fact that the settlers were accustomed to a warmer homeland having an ecosystem of hardwoods, such as beeches and walnuts. The Prairies were covered with the northern boreal coniferous and deciduous woodlands. The frostfree period was only ninety days. Tall, straight poplars provided logs for the walls of most prairie dwellings. Heavier logs of spruce, brought in from a distance, were usually used as foundation pieces. Spruce was found along river valleys and larger streams. Birch, willow, wild cherries and saskatoons provided the harder woods for fashioning various tools and the spikes and pins that held the beams together. Floors were rough-sawn planks of black poplar, a resinous timber cured and hardened into a serviceable surface that withstood wear, fungus and ground rot. Differences in appearance of individual homes were primarily variations of ornamentation. All houses were strongly expressive of the Galician or Bukovynian folk architectural tradition.

The common practice of orienting the facade southward distinguished Ukrainian farmsteads from those of many of the other European and Anglo-Saxon settlers. This practice served to collect heat and light from the sun, to protect the entrance from cold north and northwesterly winds, and to fulfill religious traditions. The home was designed such that the largest room had its end wall facing the east. On or against this wall were placed the religious icons, family portraits and other treasures brought from the homeland.

Houses were rectangular and, reflecting the structural nature of the building materials, had small openings some without frames, for windows. Most of the early dwellings had one door only. Where window glass was unavailable, cloth was hung to cover the openings as a protection against insects and weather. Many window sills were of sufficient depth to hold a selection of carefully tended house plants. All the first homes were a single storey and had a steeply pitched roof, providing a wide eave overhanging a porch on the south side. Although built of logs, the Ukrainian dwelling took on a sculptured, plastic look with the addition of multiple coats of mud plaster and lime whitewash, all capped with a massive roof of thatch.

The corner stones are dug deep into the earth, for the braces, and he measures the size of the building with a rope, judging the length and width according to the length of the tree poles. When these underpin logs are "tied"
together, work is held up until he carves out a cross of the southeast end. On this, the owner places three silver pieces of money, dried flowers and vegetation from the Thanksgiving Basket which was blessed in church in autumn and seeds from the cones of the wood used. They sprinkle everything with Holy, Blessed Water as they repeat the Lord’s Prayer, then begin the next round of logs from this corner and build the house in the v'zrub pattern, that is, cutting in logs to fit and extend from the corner of the house. Another pattern of building is where corners are strengthened by oak posts dug into the ground and between these posts rails are inserted, with sawed ends (squared ends) fitted into (clefts) spaces between posts. In each of these methods inch diameter wooden nails hold [t]wo logs in place; these nails are carefully inserted into a drill-bored hole in each log. For doors and windows openings are gauged and framed and holes are bored for the wooden nails.

Traditional customs such as these along with the natural resources at hand constituted the basics for building practices among early Ukrainian settlers in Canada (Fodchuk, 1999).

While the Ukrainian people were going about their business setting up homes and trying to survive, the Anglo-Saxon people, who were already settled in Canada, had very negative reactions to these newcomers. Viewing the Ukrainian communities and people from the “outside” and oblivious to the careful craftsmanship and beautiful customs of the people, the non-Ukrainians wrote things such as the following about them:

These ‘strangers within our gates,’ of various nationalities, naturally tended to herd together and to live much as they had done in their old homes across the sea. They dwelt in mud shacks, where pigs, chickens, and children seemed to be all mixed up together. This raised a problem in some people’s minds. Would they become Canadians? Could they? Time is answering that question, as the older folk have been building real houses to replace the little shacks, as the young people have been learning to speak English, and all have more prosperity and freedom than they ever had before (Burt, 1931, pp. 254-256).

Not only was their citizenship questioned from the outset, but Ukrainians were seen as outright enemies to the British Crown during the first world war. Despite the British Crown having declared Ruthenian (Ukrainian) people in Canada to be friends of Britain and despite the Ukrainian community, itself, citing loyalty to Canada, the Canadian government actually interned at least 8,000 Ukrainians in 24 different internment camps across Canada during and immediately after World War I (Isajiw & Makuch, 1994;
Kordan & Melnycky, ; Carter, 1998). My grandfather was not interned, but he always carried with him – until the day he died – a small card that stated he was a naturalized Canadian because of the fear internment, detainment, or deportation was always present. Ukrainians have pressed for an official apology for the internment of their relatives, but the Canadian government has declined the request.

Reacting to the presence of the new immigrants in Canada, an Anglican minister wrote the following sermon, which was published in a Canadian newspaper after the war:

If the nation is to do its proper work in the world, if it is to exercise the influence for which God has given it the talents, then we must insist on being a homogeneous people with a unity of language and loyalty. We must be welded into a body, and that body must be Anglo-Saxon and elements which cannot assimilate ought not be admitted into this country in its formative period. Of the thousands that are being poured into this Western country at the present time, of all sorts, kinds and conditions, languages, characters and loyalties of every sort, and nothing has the government taken to explain to this mixture, before they let them come here, that English is our language and British is our loyalty. . . . The sin to which Christ so frequently denounces is the sin of doing nothing, to let things go as they are going. To let a vast population go on increasing and multiplying with no restraining, regenerating influences until it becomes unmanageable -- this neglect, this indifference, this indolence and want of forethought is bound to react on this nation in the days to come with frightful consequences. To neglect the moral condition of our more and more mixed population is national suicide. It is not too late now, but it may easily be too late ten years from now as things are going in this Western land. Three things stand out as plum lines to test our building -- language, loyalty and character. . . . The old Crusaders were dead and gone. Were there no walls of the new Jerusalem

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today for which devotion and vigilance was needed. The war cry of the crusade must be Christ and Our Country. Whether it was realized or not, the building of the walls in this, our new Jerusalem, was going on with great stupidity, the material was being poured in in abundance and the walls were going up, such as they were. It was only necessary to contemplate that this western country was only begun 20 years ago and would be completed in 20 years more to understand how important the three considerations of language, loyalty, and character were in the national life (Sermon from the Saskatoon Phoenix, 1924; my emphasis).

This sermon reflects the concerns of the Anglo-Saxon community about the Ukrainian immigrants. The United Farm Workers of America had similar concerns:

We understand that practically all the new settlers coming here are brought in by the Canadian Colonization Company and are from Central and Southern Europe. We very strongly object to such large numbers of these people coming into our district with practically no Anglo-Saxons. Last year there were over thirty families and this year we understand double that number will come to the Craigmyre-Hanna district. Kindly let us know if there is no way to arrange that at least an equal number of Anglo-Saxons be sent with them to this district as we are unable to assimilate so many of foreign extraction and they will soon dominate our district which is not the desire of those of us who wish to make permanent homes here and which is surely not the desire of our Government (as quoted in Luciuk & Hryniuk, 1991).

The Ku-Klux-Klan (KKK) became involved in this new “Ukrainian problem.” For example, in Saskatchewan the KKK had approximately 40,000 members, and they attempted to restrict immigration of “non-preferred Europeans as Ukrainians” (Gregorovich, 1998). “The ridiculous posturings of the KKK were directed against the uncontrolled influx of garlic-smelling, Catholic immigrants from Eastern Europe; Ukrainians, as the largest such group, were . . . a prime target of attack” (Luciuk &
Hryniuk, 1991). Even the Canadian Pacific Railway, which at first had brought over and employed thousands of young, single males from Ukraine, made distinctions between immigrants from “preferred” countries like the British Isles and immigrants from “non-preferred” countries like Ukraine (Luciuk & Hryniuk, 1991).

In response to pressure from these and other groups and persons in Canada, the federal government changed its immigration policies, once the better portions of western territory lands had been homesteaded and railway tracks had been laid by Ukrainian, Chinese, and other ethnic laborers:

[After the land was homesteaded and the railway lines laid] . . . Eastern Canadians woke up, as never before, to realise that they had a great heritage in this western country. The old drain to the United States dried up, and a new stream poured west. From town and country, they came to make new homes and greater fortunes in this larger land . . . Now the Canadian government multiplied its immigration offices in the British Isles, and told the people there of the unlimited opportunities in this “land of open doors.” Thus a new stream arose and poured into this country.

By the 1930’s, immigration from Eastern Europe was virtually over until after the second world war (Luciuk & Hryniuk, 1991). The Ukrainians were not trusted from the outset of their arrival in Canada, and they were seen as ‘lower’ moral beings than Anglo-Saxon people (Kaye & Swyripa, 1982):

The Ukrainian immigrant was highly visible with his strange speech, unusual peasant garb, unfamiliar customs, and concentration in ethnically exclusive bloc settlements. He encountered much hostility and suspicion from Anglo-Celtic Canada, which feared his “questionable” moral standards, “authoritarian and ritualistic” religion, and simple way of life. One Presbyterian minister warned in 1913:
The close relations into which we are brought with these people who are now degraded and vicious ought to force us to do them good in self-defence. Either we must raise them or they will lower us. Negative attitudes led to labelling all East Europeans as “Galicians,” a term that rapidly acquired derogatory connotations, second only to “bohunk” . . . . The bitterness engendered by this initial contact between two widely divergent cultures and outlooks often persisted for decades in the memories of the Ukrainian pioneers (p. 44).

However, not just the bitterness persisted; so did the discrimination (Cummins, 1985):

The prevailing attitude toward ethnic diversity in Canada in the first half of the twentieth century has been termed “Anglo-conformity.” It was assumed that all ethnic groups would give up their language and culture and become assimilated into the dominant British culture. . . . Surveys of the views of Canadian educators in the early part of the century . . . . emphasized the desirability of rapid assimilation and the necessity to eradicate the first language of students so as to facilitate the learning of English and the acquisition of ‘Canadian’ values. . . . Overtly racist attitudes about the superiority of certain groups (specifically, northern Europeans) over others (notably, southern Europeans and Asians) were evident among many North American educators . . . [who] tended to associate ‘low’ social or racial origins with ‘low’ morals and habits and to prescribe hard work as an effective antidote (pp. 78-79).

The discrimination against Ukrainian children, particularly in schools and in urban areas, was horrible, and many adult Ukrainians, today, do not want to discuss and will not acknowledge these very painful aspects of their childhood. Living in the Ukrainian community, the children mainly experienced acceptance of who they were and their identities. However, encounters with the mainstream, dominant culture led many to feel
that they were inferior. Poor economic conditions as well as the harshness of the new land led some people into despondency, alcoholism, and suicide.

The discrimination that children encountered in the mainstream school system persisted into my childhood. For example, children who belonged to the Orthodox or Eastern Catholic churches were ostracized in religion classes and during religious celebrations. I had the experience of being silenced, relegated to the back of a Roman Catholic church so that I could not participate in the events going on, and told that I was not really of the true faith. I also had the experience of being teased and rejected by non-Ukrainian children and was "rounded up and herded" (or so it felt) through the halls of my school with all the other Ukrainian children to have special religion lessons a few times a year with a priest from our community. Other children would laugh at the way we were marched through the halls on these occasions. I always found the lessons odd, as we had weekly contact with our own church and religious community, so the lessons seemed unnecessary. In addition, the "lessons" were so superficial compared with the way in which our faith was integrated with our worldview, which is based in mysticism and ancient practices stemming from pre-Christian times. The differences between the Western and Eastern churches, both Orthodox and Catholic, have still to be grasped by many Canadians. Many people think, for example, that one Catholic church exists in the world. This is not so. The Eastern Catholic churches have a different worldview, philosophy, and ceremony than the Western-based church, but share a common heritage and practice with Orthodox churches:

... they were members of the Greek (Byzantine) Catholic Church (also called Uniate) and the Russian Orthodox Church, both of which were totally unfamiliar to native born Americans. Their clergy were not required to be celibate. It was indeed a difficult thing for Americans to comprehend. Even the Roman Catholic bishops in the United States [and Canada], in some cases, refused to believe that Catholic priests could be married! As you might imagine, this caused many an
unpleasant incident when Eastern Rite Catholic priests came to America and presented themselves to the local Roman Catholic bishop as per the custom. In some cases, communications between the two sides were strained to the point that Roman Catholic bishops refused to grant facilities to the Greek Catholic priests. These priests often were insulted and angry because they were refused permission to exercise their religious rituals which were allowed by the Holy See and many converted to Orthodoxy along with their congregation. This "conversion" required no change in their religious rituals (Peters, 1996).

We were a different people, and our differences were not valued by Anglo-Saxons when we arrived in this country. The impact of discrimination on the psychology of the Ukrainian community has not been widely investigated in an empirical way, but it has been widely felt. Later generations of Ukrainians who came after World War II and during this past decade did not experience the same degree of hatred and assimilative pressure that those early families did. However, Luciuk (Calgary, November 14, 1999) spoke about his own child presently having concerns about being Ukrainian in Canada and has claimed that “there is still a persistent Ukraining-phobia” as well as “glass ceilings” for Ukrainians employed in current Canadian institutions, such as academia and government bureaucracy.

As a result, some people have chosen to assimilate rather than continue to maintain their Ukrainian identities. I recall a conversation I had with the mother of a boy who was in my daughter’s school class one year. The family was Ukrainian, and I made the mistake of talking about a Ukrainian festival that was coming up soon at the church. Since her children attended the Catholic school, I had assumed they were attending the Ukrainian Catholic church. She said to me, “Oh, we go to the Roman Catholic church. I can’t stand all that Ukrainian stuff – crossing ourselves three times and saying all those ‘Lord have mercies.’ But we still do the perogies [Пироги] and eggs [Писанки].” I remember feeling very sad that our spiritual heritage and worldview had been reduced to such a crass
description and then dismissed altogether. Here was one of our own, nahii, putting us
down just like the non-Ukrainians on the schoolyard had done years before. It was the
power of assimilation to make people reject who they are and, in some cases, even feel
ashamed and hate who they are, wanting to be “more English than the English.” It is what
I call the “immigrant syndrome,” and it stems from the internalization of oppression, the
alienation and rejection of self-identity. It is the same power of assimilation that made
parents refuse to teach children their own heritage languages. Ukrainian accents were
laughed at, so even the language was not taught so that children would fit in better with
mainstream society. Assimilation, at least economic assimilation without the mark of a
foreign accent, was the goal. I say ‘economic’ assimilation because my family, for
example, was not trying to make me forget my Ukrainian heritage, but obtaining an
education and a good job was paramount for survival in Canadian society. In the poetic
words of Taras Shevchenko (as quoted in Woyczenko, 1916):

    Learn and study, my dear brothers,
    Think and read forever,
    Get from others what is useful,
    But your own remember (p. 21).

Ukrainians wanted to fit in when they came to Canada, but they also wanted to maintain
their own sense of self-determination and identity. For example, the following was
written in a Ukrainian newspaper in 1916 (as quoted in Woyczenko, 1916):

    . . . We wish to know and speak our language, but not only our own. English is
    our first language here, and our own is native to us and a sacred one. . . Our only
desire is to be co-citizens of Canada and good ones at that, industrious and loyal . .
    . true Canadians together with the other peoples who came here, but we want to be
    equal with the equal . . . We do not intend to retain all the customs and traditions
    which we have brought with us from the Old Country; some of them will have to
    be modified and adapted to meet the needs and circumstances here . . . But give us
freedom in this field as our traditions and beliefs are matters of intimate concern . . . with the passage of time, we ourselves shall know what should be retained for our needs here . . . (p. 21).

Eventually, Ukrainians would realize that their very identities would have to be modified to meet the needs and circumstances in Canada. I grew up hearing stories about Ukrainians who shortened their names when they went to work because any 'mile-long' Ukrainian name was sure to be recognized and the person then treated as a second-class citizen. Others translated their names into English. For example some translated 'Мудрий' into 'Smart.' Others translated 'Ближнiй' into 'White' and so on. My name could have easily ended up being “Soldier” rather than Zolner. When I got married, some people commented that my husband’s name sounded very ‘English’ — nobody would know it was Ukrainian. However, I use my own name – most people think that it is German, anyway. Even my first name was affected. When I was born, my parents wanted to name me ‘Beth.’ However, my mother’s Ukrainian doctor warned her not to do so because all the old people would call me ‘Bet’ because the ‘th’ diphthong does not exist in Ukrainian. So, they named me ‘Theresa’ – with a ‘th’ that is silent, although this is not why they picked the name.

Looking back on my life, I would say that I likely had a good dose of the immigrant syndrome. I was set up from the beginning needing to beat the odds stacked against me because I came from Ukrainian immigrant people. When I entered university, I had the intent of obtaining a degree in Psychology. After my first year of studies, I submitted an application to join the Psychology Honors program for the start of second year. However, I also was invited to join the English Department’s Honors program. I wanted to continue in Psychology, but to be invited to join the English Department – well this was a real coup for the daughter of Ukrainian immigrants, wasn’t it? Nobody would be able to say that my English was not adequate if I went through that program. I eventually obtained a Master’s degree in English, only to return to Psychology at a later
time. I remember thinking, while I was studying English, “Why are we all so preoccupied with the literature of that small island on the other side of the Atlantic ocean?” It really was a mystery to me, since I could have studied Ukrainian literature or the literature of some other country altogether. However, it never dawned on me, at the time, that there might have been other types of pressures at work — the types of pressures and values that stem from being raised in the colonies of England, where English language and literature was of primary importance.

Of course, I learned a lot from my English education. The humanities, in general, are good. I came away with strong writing skills and excellent training in textual and qualitative analysis. I also came away with a first-class knowledge of the English — history, grammar, rhetoric — all of it. After I graduated, I never felt insecure about my English, and I certainly never suffered the burden of having a Ukrainian accent.

Despite my immersion in a Ukrainian-language-rich environment as a child, my understanding of Ukrainian was very sketchy. However, once I began to learn that language as an adult, a whole, familiar and essential world opened up again to me. Ukrainian was the language of my primary identity. Being blocked from using that language by my own parents’ good intentions meant that I was cut off from that identity and immersed into the mainstream. Reconnecting with that language meant reconnecting with myself and the worldview in which I was raised. It made me understand where I came from and where I belonged — culturally, spiritually, emotionally, and interpersonally. I could grow out from there, but I first had to understand where my roots were. Once I started learning Ukrainian as an adult, I could even produce phrases and words that I had learned as a child from simple memory. Along with those phrases and words came memories, feelings, emotions, and knowledge that had been suppressed along with the Ukrainian language in me. The English language and mainstream thinking had hardened over that world, but I was breaking through that coating and accessing what I had needed to suppress before, in order to fit into Canadian society. Now I can walk in both worlds,
and I am bi-cultural, but I never again will suppress my identity in order to gain acceptance by another person's cultural measure.

Of course, people can go too far in their attempts to reconnect. Sometimes, in an attempt to protect our own identities, we can hurt others, even other members of our own communities. I will use my elementary grade school as an example. That school has undergone a complete change since I attended there. The school is now a Ukrainian bilingual educational institution, and the bilingual program is of paramount importance there these days. My nieces attended that school, like their father and their aunts before them. However, my nieces do not speak Ukrainian and they are, in fact, half Irish-descendant Newfoundlanders, due to their mother's heritage. They frequently complained that they felt ostracized in the school for not being in the Ukrainian bilingual program, and they felt like most of the resources in the school were going towards the Ukrainian children. For example, the children in the Ukrainian program got to have a Christmas concert, but children who were not in the Ukrainian program were not allowed to participate in the concert, and they were not allowed to have one in English. To me, it seemed like and example of reverse discrimination in the very school where I had first felt the sting of discrimination myself.

Then, in a moment of pure irony, an odd event happened. My mother went to the school to pick up the girls one day. She parked alongside the school with other parents' cars in an open-parking area on the street. Suddenly, a woman came up to her car and started pounding on the passenger-side hood, shouting at her loudly and angrily, "Get out! This is for the Ukrainian children's bus! Get out! Get out!" Astonished, my mother asked her what was wrong. The woman continued to order my mother out, but just then the girls came out of the school, so my mother and her granddaughters all left together. My mother was astonished at being so rudely accosted by a Ukrainian woman, not to mention the fact that she, too, was picking up Ukrainian children. I told my mother that she should have addressed the woman in Ukrainian and told her that her car was a
Ukrainian bus too! My mother said she felt like addressing the woman in Ukrainian:

"Пані, шо ти зворила?" (Madam, have you gone crazy?). However, she did not speak to the woman in Ukrainian, and the woman would never know how she had offended my mother.

Another example of complications that arise out of reactions to assimilation occurred recently in Detroit (The Detroit News, Wednesday, September 3, 1997 – Hawke Fracassa). In an attempt to provide banking service to people of Ukrainian heritage in both the English and Ukrainian languages, Ukrainian people have organized Credit Unions all over North America. To belong to a Ukrainian Credit Union, you must be of Ukrainian heritage. If you are not of Ukrainian heritage but would like to join, your membership must be sponsored in by a person of Ukrainian heritage. Not all Ukrainian organizations are like this. For example, the Ukrainian Professional and Business Associations in Canada do not require a person to be of Ukrainian heritage in order to join. However, in Detroit, people of non-Ukrainian heritage have been objecting to the very existence of Ukrainian Credit Unions, claiming that all people should be able to receive services at the Ukrainian Credit Union without sponsorship.

When people attempt to preserve their heritage in part by offering services in the language of that heritage and then are accused of discrimination and of not treating everybody equally, then we know that prejudice truly exists in society. In a democracy people do not have to be the same to be entitled to equal treatment: Equal treatment in a democracy exists despite people in the society being different from each other and needing different things. To demand total cultural conformity is the job of totalitarian regimes, not democracies.

In reflecting upon my own experiences growing up, on the values I held, and on the worldview that we had, I realize now that the one experience of my life that facilitated and enabled me to appreciate alternative worldviews was the fact that I had grown up in a worldview that was very alternative to the mainstream. When I entered Clinical
Psychology, I encountered assumptions and values about people and families that were, at times, quite alien to me. For example, I had to adjust myself to valuing the importance— even necessity— of the nuclear family as the primary concept of family. Prior to entering Psychology, I understood what a nuclear family was, but I did not value it like other people might have. However, in performing psychological assessments, the nuclear family became the focus of the assessment at the expense of understanding the entire family history and system, which was usually left to a ‘systems approach’ in social work. A systems approach might capture the structure and history of the family, but it would not capture what those people valued and what their worldview was. For me, Clinical Psychology was a form of resocialization into a mainstream, professional worldview.

During the process of this resocialization, I did not lose my primary identity, but it did become very difficult to maintain both. By the time I was at the Ph.D. level I tended to think about people in the world in very individual, secular, and humanistic ways, rather than in the more holistic perspective of my upbringing that included spirituality and the need for interdependence. The Ukrainian worldview that I grew up with leaves room for the physical and the metaphysical, but Psychology was slowly overriding my emphasis on the metaphysical. Contact with First Nations people awoke my sense of an alternative worldview, and for this I am grateful to them.

If you have a worldview that is not the same as mainstream, it is easier to accept the fact that alternative worldviews exist and are valid. In addition, I had experienced discrimination, which helped me to recognize it better when I saw it again. For example, when I first started working with First Nations people in Saskatchewan, I had the pleasant experience of attending a local pow-wow. My husband and I did not have a car at the time, so we had taken a cab to the event. As my husband, daughter, and I left the pow-wow later that evening, we flagged down a cab that had just dropped off some people at the pow-wow and asked the driver if he could take a return fare. He agreed, but said that we had to wait for a minute. It was winter, so I thought we would wait in the cab.
However, he locked us out of the cab and made us stand in the cold while he ran into the building for a few minutes, possibly to use the bathroom. When he returned, he let us into the cab. Then he muttered something about ‘damn drunken Indians.’ I questioned what he had said, and he retorted, ‘Can’t you see all those drunks there?’ I informed him that the pow-wow had been alcohol-free. He did not reply and then drove us home.

His prejudice was apparent in what he had said, but it was also apparent in what he had done. I had never been locked out of a cab before – the incident left me feeling confused until I realized later that this cab driver had come to the pow-wow with some preconceived notions about what First Nations people and pow-wows are all about. I suppose he locked us out of the cab so that we would not steal it. Racism and discrimination are subtle, but they exist and are both experienced and felt by First Nations people on a regular basis.

Ukrainians, on the other hand, have been economically accepted into Canadian society. Eventually, they were seen as regular white Christians and were assimilated. Now Ukrainians looking for restitution from the Canadian government for World War I internment actions battle other Ukrainians who work for the Canadian government in official positions. Most Ukrainians will not talk about the early discrimination they experienced, and some will say that there was not discrimination at all – either because they choose to deny it or because they really do not know their own history. However, one thing is clear: Ukrainians came to Canada with the intent of fitting in to Canadian society while retaining as much of their cultural identity that they could. They were brought over to advance the economy of the country, and they were accepted into that economy as equal trading partners. They were not necessarily accepted socially, but they were accepted economically. Therefore, they were allowed to financially prosper and then build their own institutions and facilities in Canada. First Nations people were never accepted economically in Canada – they needed passes just to leave their reserves, and few were allowed to trade their goods with non-First Nations people. And therein lies one of
the fundamental differences between immigrants and First Nations in Canada – immigrants were allowed to prosper and were given freedom to move about the country and worship as they pleased; First Nations were not.
CHAPTER 14: Achieving Balance

"Every wasichu is doing it for himself. He just doesn't always know why."

- Kent Nerburn, 1994

Discussion

I came into this research project with a genuine interest in First Nations. However, what I did not realize until much later in the project is that I really came into it as much for myself as for them. I had always felt that heritage was important because heritage was one of the chisel points that shaped my own existence. I recognized the importance of heritage in the lives of First Nations people as well, but I really did not know why heritage was important. Now I realize that heritage is primary identity, and nobody should be demeaned for being who they are. I had come full in the face of racism, its very fact and existence and had learned how subtle yet how powerful it is. To be racist is to deny that a First Nations person's worldview and life has intrinsic value. To be racist is to presuppose that a First Nations person needs you to help them. To be racist is to deny the right to First Nations psychological and community self-determination. To be racist is to deny that First Nations have a Psychology of their own, complete with its own philosophy, assumptions, techniques, methods, and future. I had wanted to learn about the impact of Psychology on First Nations people, and I did learn about it - about the relationship between assessment and colonization. I also learned about the real knowledge and real strength of a people who had been living under oppression for 500 years. However, I also learned about the impact of Psychology and colonization on myself and how easy it is for people to hurt each other
when they really do not make an attempt to understand themselves or the people with whom they are living or working.

Assessment is colonization when it measures people against standards and values that the people do not share and then criticizes them for not sharing those standards and values. It is like a fish criticizing a bird for not living in water, the way of life that the fish values and judges to be best above all other ways. If all the fish could drag all the birds into the water, some birds would find a way to cope, possibly by coming up to the surface periodically for air, but many birds would die from the supposed altruism of the fish. Assessment has far-reaching consequences, affecting the education, living arrangements, self-esteem, and confidence of the people being assessed. An assessment is a judgment of a person’s self and way of life, and it can result in the person being told directly or through another authority, such as a mainstream court or child welfare agency, that they must change their way of life. Of course, if the person being assessed is, for example, abusing a child, there is no doubt that they must change. However, more than mainstream psychologists and social workers can assess abuse. First Nations people also can assess abuse and can see that an abusive person needs to change. In fact, the manner in which a First Nations assessment is done and the manner in which treatment might be carried out is also a form of resocialization, but it is a resocialization into a healthy and balanced First Nations worldview, not a recolonization into mainstream.

To prevent recolonizing First Nations people through the practice of mainstream assessment, psychologists really have two choices: (1) Stop assessing First Nations people, or (2) take a step over to their worldview as I have done and then be willing to learn about them and about yourself and your own role in this colonial society. Rationalization of your job and your role as a psychologist must be replaced by careful thought and real understanding of First Nations people and the psychology of oppression. However, psychologists will not be able to use mainstream research and clinical methods to do this learning. Mainstream methods put a mainstream filter in front of everything. To
take a step over, you have to drop the filter and see with your own eyes. It is not enough
even to read this dissertation: You have to do it yourself. Then you will be able to speak
about what you know and not what you read.

Coming to the end of this research project, I finally saw that Psychology is but one
way of understanding people in the world. Psychology invents itself through its own
research and terminology, but it cannot claim ownership to primary knowledge about First
Nations families, child rearing, attachment, marriages, or other human relations that have
existed in the First Nations heritage and worldview since time immemorial. For example,
psychologists cannot even begin to talk about how to parent a First Nations child without
really understanding how kinship relationships and parenting in a First Nations family
successfully operate. It is easy to pick on and study families that have been torn apart by
the assimilative horrors of the residential school era. When families that are struggling to
exist are studied, they, of course, might seem dysfunctional. However, intact, healthy
families also exist in First Nations country, who stand as models for the rest of their
families. To offer struggling First Nations families mainstream therapy at a time when they
are just coming out of the residential school era is very dangerous because it means
exposing them to mainstream values that will supplant First Nations values, with the
resulting effect of recolonizing the families at a time when they are most vulnerable. In
addition, mainstream therapies, such as parenting skills classes, cannot offer the
comprehensive worldview that oppressed people require in order to achieve balance and
wellness in their lives and in the lives of their children and future generations.

This research taught me that we must not assume that ‘we know’ and that ‘they do
not know.’ We must be more judicious and less arrogant than that. Every psychologist
who treats a First Nations adult or child must come to terms with the fact that when you
work with a person from a First Nations culture, you will not know when you are making
a mistake in terms of assumptions, values, interpretation of clinical information, or
therapeutic approach. Part of being a good clinician means knowing when a technique,
approach, or interpretation will be wrong. However, if you do not really understand what a client is telling you, or if you think that you understand because you have filled the gaps in your understanding with your own concepts and assumptions, then you will be “merely projecting onto them psychological assumptions we have constructed about ourselves” and working with a paradigm that will “constitute so limiting a grid that we never get past its criteria” (Rosen, 1995). For a mainstream clinician, working with a First Nations person will be like working in a dark desert: You will not know what is around you, you will not know what to head for, you will not know when you have made a step in the wrong direction, and you will not know where you are.

In addition, every psychologist who works with a First Nations adult or child must come to terms with the fact of their colonization and oppression and the impact of those terrible forces on them. Every First Nations person in this land is colonized, but every First Nations person struggles with that colonization in different ways. You will not know, upon talking in a mainstream way to a First Nations person, how that person has dealt with their own colonization. Does the First Nations person reject you, reject him or herself, want to be White, mistrust you, want to impress you, tolerate you, lie to you, hate him or herself, hate you, manipulate you, or accept you as part of all nations? Does that person follow closely to the modern manifestation of his or her own heritage, or does that person pretend to know about a First Nations worldview? Does that person really understand a First Nations worldview but pretend that he or she does not, to protect that worldview from being appropriated by you? All of these are points to consider as well as a thousand more.

Thinking back on the comments of the six interviewees and on the interaction that went on between them and me, I can see the process that I went through in order to learn more about First Nations people. The process was difficult, frustrating, challenging, rewarding, and fundamentally human. I had to be willing to let go of my own worldviews a little – that of a Ukrainian daughter, mother, spouse and that of a psychology graduate
student— in order to see their worldview. What I saw were some similarities to my own worldview and some differences. The main difference, however, is that everything exists and can be understood within an First Nations worldview. However, mainstream Psychology cannot accommodate all things in the same way. Psychologists really only talk about some aspects of people’s lives. For example, why don’t psychologists regularly ask about spirituality and then include that in a bio-psycho-social-spiritual view of the person? Why does the DSM not include a metaphysical axis for diagnosis? Of course, this would be impossible because Psychology has fragmented itself away from metaphysics and philosophy in its quest to be a science. However, as psychologists, we run the risk of worshipping science and ourselves as arbiters of our own existence. We place ourselves above all of history and claim expertise in the human psyche, while we systematically fragment that psyche and narrow it down to manageable parts like Perception and Defense Mechanisms. We even socialize psychologists to compartmentalize their own psyches in order to do the business of Psychology, creating an unhealthy, imbalanced perspective on people. Psychologists must recognize that they are people first and psychologists second, and Psychology must be able to accommodate people in all their various differences without seeking the fantasy of a universal, superior or higher-order psyche. Must we conform and be the same to co-exist? This type of goal smacks of facism. Universal regularities exist amongst people—we are fundamentally one nation—but we must be very careful that we are not simply reaching in and picking out only those glass beads that conform to our own narrow wishes and desires rather than seeing the reality of the perfect and remarkable diversity of human existence. We must live and let live, and we must learn to recognize and celebrate difference. However, to do so, we must learn who we are, as individuals with our own heritages, in order to be able to recognize and respect what really is different from us.

All psychologists must come to terms with their own heritages and the values systems in which they were raised in order to be able to recognize the difference of others
and, possibly, the difference of Psychology from how they were raised. Asking psychologists to adopt the values of the mainstream profession of Psychology means asking those psychologists to conform to a particular worldview and a culture—the worldview and culture of mainstream Psychology, which predominantly espouses a secular humanist philosophy and an atheist religious orientation. All of us need to bring Psychology into the world, to grow it up to face the realities of different cultures and heritages. We need to bring it off its own little island and save it from an insularity that will only force a form of inbred dogmatism that can only do psychologists and their clients grave harm. We need to follow our own ethical code and respect the dignity of others within their own knowledge systems and worldviews.

Once I had spent extended time with First Nations people, I began to wonder whether mainstream Psychology could take the same small step over to their worldview that I had. In the fall of 1998, I moved out of the province of Saskatchewan to complete a year-long Clinical Psychology internship, which was a requirement for my doctoral degree. I interned in a mainstream child healthcare institution. Coming to the internship after having worked with First Nations full-time for the previous three years was a true culture shock. If I ever doubted that there really was a mainstream, all of my doubts were removed. I was confronted with the reality that mainstream health care professionals, psychologists included, would not even acknowledge that a First Nations worldview existed. Some of them thought that First Nations culture was wiped out. Others seemed to resent First Nations, and still others were stuck on stereotyped views, such as “Indian time.” I was also struck by the lack of humor in everything and how seriously we took ourselves in our work. Naturally, the threat of liable makes people pretty serious, but did we really have all the answers? What we needed, for certain, was a good dose of humility first. Then we could start learning about First Nations. There was humor, but some of it was off-color. I remember asking one psychologist about whether a First Nations child had been self-mutilating (slashing himself up). The psychologist laughed and replied that
the child had not, but then followed the comment up with, "Did you think he'd been carving totems or eagles into his arm?" Maybe he thought that was funny, but I did not. I really felt like giving up on the knowledge and gains I had made in the previous years. In fact, I did not want to even see any First Nations children because I knew I would have to follow the mainstream on the internship and in this institution, which seemed deaf and immutable to any other assessment or treatment perspectives.

Yet, I also now realize that I can work my own clinical practice competently with the knowledge and respect that I have for a First Nations worldview. I would never offer First Nations treatment methods because I do not have the training to do so, but I could go a lot further in understanding and empathizing with a First Nations person than I ever could before. I could still offer only mainstream treatments, knowing that if First Nations people want First Nations treatments, they have to go to First Nations traditional practitioners. However, I have something to offer of my own, which is a unique perspective that stood on a point between three cultures — First Nations, Ukrainian, and psychological — as well as an experience in taking a small step over to the First Nations side, and that is what I have to share with anyone who cares to share it.

Project Limitations

Of course, my perspective and this entire project has many flaws and limitations. First of all, this project really amounts to nothing more than my own heuristic observations and interpretations of the process that I underwent with a small group of First Nations people. Everything that I have said in this dissertation likely will be new for the discipline of Psychology, but it certainly will not be new to First Nations. I might have added something to the Psychological literature, but I have not added to their knowledge. They have shared with me. Also, I do not pretend to speak for First Nations people, nor for Ukrainians, nor for psychologists. I merely speak for myself and what I have experienced. The people who graciously agreed to share their words with me helped me to learn and to see things in a different way. However, what they said in their interviews was not all they
had to say, nor is it all they would ever say. Even now, they could say things in a different way that would add to or alter how they saw things back then during the interviews. Life is a process of learning, and people are always changing. However there is a core of truth that First Nations peoples live by. That core is ever-present, but it manifests itself differently through people and across eras through different traditions that can change over time. Although people change, the worldview remains the same, and it carries people through life.

Directions for Future Research

The direction that any reader or researcher takes after having read this dissertation will depend upon what that person took away from the manuscript in line with what their personal values and goals are. After reading the document, some First Nations peoples might want to develop their own assessment methodologies that are consistent with and supportive of their worldview. Some First Nations peoples might want to take seriously the fact that their worldview includes a psychology that is very different from mainstream and that could be documented and applied to the modern circumstances and situations that First Nations peoples find themselves living in today. Others might read this manuscript and then share it amongst colleagues and relatives to discuss what they, personally, have taken away from it. It is possible that open discussion of the issues raised in this manuscript is the next best step forward. Certainly, work continues to be done in the area of First Nations assessment development, as described in the Preface to this dissertation.

After reading the document, some psychologists might be struck by the decidedly non-experimental approach to the issue of culture and assessment. These psychologists, likely entrenched in the field of Cross-cultural Psychology rather than Cultural Psychology, might call for more experimental research that examines the etic aspects of culture and assessment with different population samples, clearly operationalized psychological variables, and purer methodologies, such as Segall, Dasen, Berry, and Poortinga (1999) recently championed. They will want to see the universals in human behavior that they
think tie us together as human beings. However, what these researchers fail to see is that ‘difference’ is what binds us. Difference celebrated is what leads to harmony. Universals and sameness is not harmony because harmony, itself, implies the existence of difference. Cross-cultural Psychology searches for the monotone; Cultural Psychology searches for the harmony. I do not believe that searching for universal behaviors will enlighten future knowledge about cultures. People are biologically similar and have a limited range of physiological actions that they can perform. Searching for universal behavioral categories, such as Segall, Dasen, Berry, and Poortinga (1999) propose will give rise to limited information that remains at a superficial behavioral level.

I suggest that psychologists turn away from the search for universal behavioral categories across cultures and instead devote their efforts to developing deep knowledge of culture — knowledge of their own cultures and the cultures in which they plan to work and about which they plan to write. Use of qualitative and indigenous methodologies, which have been marginalized in the past by mainstream researchers (Banyard & Miller, 1998), allows for genuine new learning. Learning based on pre-conceived, planned comparisons that derive from past research certainly builds on existing constructs in Psychology; however, it also reifies its own perspective and history by limiting researchers from going beyond themselves, their colleagues, and their own history to learn about peoples and things entirely different from themselves. Therefore, the best direction for future research in the area of Cultural Psychology is to go beyond where we are now by letting go of our need for prediction and control, trusting that indigenous peoples have a knowledge and worldview that is valid, valuable, necessary, and completely different from our own. We must learn from them if we are going to learn about them.

My recommended direction for future research grows out of my own experience and learning as represented, in part, by this manuscript. What I gained most from this research project was a respect for First Nations peoples. I am confident that they have a perspective, method, and technique for handling all of life’s problems and achieving
balance within and between peoples. How else could they have survived for the past 500 years? Humans do not survive colonization, oppression, forced assimilation, disease, pestilence, and massacre by accident. They must have a strength, a will, and a Creator to do so. In addition, they have to have specific methods that are culturally consistent and balanced off amongst the different relationships and everything else to which all people and things are tied.

What I also gained from this project was a respect for myself and for my own heritage and identity. In recognizing the primary importance of First Nations peoples identities, I also recognized the importance of my own identity to myself, my work, my family, and my community. For me, understanding my own heritage and identity means having a firm foundation from which to learn to live harmoniously with other peoples.

First Nations peoples offer the rest of us a real and ancient model for living in harmony on this land. They were the first truly multicultural society in North America. Now when I think of multiculturalism, I think first of the plurality of nations that existed in Canada before any white person stepped onto its beautiful shores. In the way that they helped me to reconnect with myself and heal over the ugliness and discrimination that I grew up with, they can help us all. Instead of trying to classify and colonize them through legislation, assessment, or therapy, we should try to learn from them about the realities of survival and living with balance. Within their worldview, there is room for everyone, all nations, and all worldviews. We should focus on the health of First Nations peoples, not their pathology, and seek out the balance that exists in their worldview, for from balance comes harmony.
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Appendix I

Glossary of Terms

Many words are often used in Psychology whose meanings are often taken for granted. So that the following discussion will not perpetuate misunderstandings, it is best to identify how certain words will be used by defining them from the outset. Arguments and disagreements about the meaning of the following words may always occur; however, the following definitions are a reflection of how the words are meant to be understood in the context of this study.

CULTURE

Originally, culture meant "to grow or cultivate something," in the way that you might grow or cultivate food or bacteria in a certain environment (place and time). Therefore, culture originally implied the bringing up of something in a certain type of surrounding.

Gradually, culture came to be used in a different way, as well. The new use of the word, which developed in the 17th century, meant to train or refine the mind, tastes, or manners through some type of education, to become more intellectual, to become "cultured." The implication in this new use of the word is that, through education, a person's "level" of culture or upbringing is raised to a more intellectual level or in an intellectual environment.

When referring to a person's "culture," the original meaning "to bring up in a certain environment" is most relevant, especially because culture for people includes both physical (in the world) and social (amongst people) environments. However, the meaning
of "culture" has shifted slightly, perhaps due to people's tendencies to move to different locations or be overtaken by different warring or colonizing groups.

When people move or are colonized they keep with them their old ways of bringing up their children. The old ways might be considered the heritage of that people. However, a person who has moved or who is colonized may live in a different physical environment or among people who have a different heritage than they do. In such circumstances, culture refers to how one would bring up a child in line with the old ways, or the heritage, of the people. There is a complication in defining culture this way, as some people might argue that culture refers to how the immediate physical and social environment around a person tells that person to live. However, other people place a greater emphasis on culture as a reflection of ancestral heritage. Culture also could include a combination of current living circumstances and one's heritage.

HERITAGE

The totality of all information that comes from a group of people's past. Heritage usually reflects old knowledge or ways of living that are carried forward by generations of people through the daily living of their traditions and culture.

TRADITION

"Tradition" refers to the ways that the heritage of a people are practiced or acted out. These practices may include customs, institutions, forms of dress, ways of speaking, laws, songs, legends, stories or other things. They reflect a cultural heritage, which can be handed down from generation to generation. Unfortunately, many people refer to traditions as if they were immutable and never changing. Used in this way, the word "tradition" tends to fix a culture in time and implies that people currently living an be either traditional (following the culture as it was determined and set down in the past) or not.

However, ways of practicing heritage are not "traditional" simply because they were
performed by some past generation of people who passed them along to a future
generation. For something to be a tradition, it must be valued as important in the present
time and some people must want to continue it. A tradition is
an idea which expresses a value judgment. A certain way of acting
is regarded as right; a certain order or arrangement is held desirable.
The maintenance [practice] of the tradition is the assertion of this judgment
(Seligman, 1935, p. 63).

A tradition comes from the past and is reaffirmed as important and relevant, valuable and
precious, to a people in the present. Seligman pointed out that a tradition can foster a
sense of nationalism or galvanize a community spirit.

WESTERN THOUGHT

Western thought is the heritage of Western culture. When people talk about
Western thought, they're referring to a broad history of philosophical, political, religious,
scientific, and artistic ideas and material that generally came out of European countries,
especially Western European countries. These countries are, geographically, in the
Western Hemisphere of the world, specifically in Western Europe and North America.
When people say Western thought, they often mean Western European and North
American ways of understanding the world. The concept of Western thought usually does
not include ideas from Eastern Europe, African, or Asia. It also does not include ideas
from Indigenous peoples who inhabit North America.

Western thought has its origins in the early Greek and Roman empires. The ideas
formed in these ancient cultures were carried forward through history by various scholars
and priests across the European continent and over to North America via European
settlers. The history of documented (written) Western thought dates back more than 2,500
years. It is not possible to summarize the history of that information in a brief paragraph.
Western thought is not a static or unchanging entity or thing. It has different periods or
times that reflect different ways of seeing the world and the relationship of people, animals, and things in it.

WESTERN CHURCH

When people talk about the Western Church (sometimes called the Latin Church), they usually mean the Christian church that used Latin as its original language of prayer and has its roots in the ancient (political) Roman Empire. Originally, that church was the Roman Catholic church, but since the 18th century, many churches have split off from the Catholic church to follow their own doctrines. Most Western Churches now use English as the language of prayer.

The Western Church is distinguished from the Eastern or Greek Church, which has its roots in Eastern thought and in the Eastern (political) Empire. This can be confusing, because Greece is typically thought of as a country whose philosophers sowed the seeds of Western thought, but the Eastern or Greek church originates in Constantinople and used Greek rather than Latin as its original language of prayer.

In modern times, many Eastern churches use the language pertaining to the ethnicity of the people as the language of prayer (e.g., Russian, Ukrainian, Greek, etc.). Eastern Churches based in North America often incorporate English into their prayers as well, as many of the children of ethnic groups in North America have lost their original languages and only speak English.

ETHNICITY

Ethnicity refers to where a group of people comes from. Ethnicity refers to the common, historical geographical point of origin for a group of people, which may or may not continue to exist in the present due to changes of national borders as the result of wars or other circumstances. Ethnicity is not the same as race. While different racial groups may be found within a particular ethnicity, some ethnicities may be more tolerant of racial
variation than others. Some people, who do not want to be linked to their ancestral point of origin (for whatever reason), declare that their ethnicity is their current country of residence.
Whites, Natives 'too much apart,' minister says

By Murray Mandryk
LeaderStar News
and SP Staff

REGINA — The overwhelmingly negative response to Natives by Saskatchewan people, as revealed in a recent poll, reflects a white-Native community "too much apart," says Aboriginal Affairs Minister Berny Wiens.

More interaction of whites and Natives in the workplace along with emphasizing Indian success stories may help combat the problem, Wiens said.

But with a meagre six per cent of the Saskatchewan civil service of Native descent, Wiens acknowledged Thursday even his own provincial government should be doing more.

The aboriginal affairs minister was responding to a poll conducted last December for the Federation of Saskatchewan Indian Nations (FSIN). It surveyed 1,004 residents of the province on their attitudes towards Indians.

Asked by CanWest Opinion to give their "top of mind" response to the word Indian, about 40 per cent offered highly negative words like "free-loader," "cry babies," "greedy," "welfare," "lazy," "get a job," "alcoholic" and "bums."

Another 40 per cent gave a response that was not "as boldly negative," according to an FSIN official. Only 20 per cent offered responses that would be classified as understanding the situation of Natives.

Asked if the survey results suggest Saskatchewan people are racist by nature, Wiens chose his words carefully.

"I think attitudes are formed by experiences," Wiens told reporters.

Unfortunately, the only time much of white Saskatchewan experiences Natives is through their portrayal in daily newspapers or television, he said. Such portrayals tend to focus on Natives' struggles with government or Natives in conflict with the law.

"I think it's a reflection of the fact that we are too much apart," said Wiens.

One possible way to combat such stereotypes would be to see more focus on Indian success stories in business and education, he said.

Another idea would be to emphasize greater interaction in the workplace and elsewhere, Wiens said.

The FSIN has only provided an overview of the survey and not the details. It was conducted between Nov. 26 and Dec. 4, and is considered accurate to within plus or minus 3.2 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

The chair of Saskatoon's race relations committee said he was not surprised by the findings.

"We behave in a negative and deprecatory attitude toward aboriginal people simply because they're aboriginal people. We don't know them one-to-one. We don't really understand their issues but we speak disparagingly about them as a matter of fact," said Ivan Wilson.

People need to get to know each other, Wilson said.

Sociology professor Michael Gertler of the University of Saskatchewan said Canadians "are in deep denial" of the fact they are a racist society.

Unlike the United States, Canada does not have a well-known history of slavery and military action against Natives, although these things did take place in Canada, too, Gertler said.

People are also in denial about the poverty many Natives experience, he said.

"They don't understand the cumulative impact of being targeted. It forms you. It deforms you. The messages are not subtle," he said.

Bands’ demands rile West

Off reserve rights issue makes petroleum industry edgy

BRYANT AVERY
JOURNAL BUSINESS WRITER
Edmonton

Three Cree bands are “stepping across the line” when they demand fees for access to public lands, Alberta Energy Minister Steve West warned Tuesday.

The issue of access to public — not reserve — lands has been percolating for weeks, especially in areas that Woodland, Loon River and Whitefish Lake bands in the Slave Lake region consider traditional hunting areas.

West said a large exploration firm contacted him Tuesday to report it had been asked to pay an access fee of $3,000 per well, plus payments for pipeline routes and seismic activity. The company declined to pay and has ceased exploration.

Those demands contradict an understanding reached on Jan. 14 between the province and the combined Cree group, the Kee Tas Kee Now Tribal Council, West said.

“Anyone can stand up and say since my ancestors have lived near this land, we have traditional rights to it,” West said. “I don’t know how you can say that.

“We’ll send the strongest message.”
Spokesperson Jeff Chalifoux said the tribal council will issue a statement on Thursday.

The issue of off-reserve rights goes back more than a century, said David Luff, vice-president of operations for the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. “It’s a clarification of those rights the First Nations are striving to achieve. They are using a lever to get to the Crown. We want the issues addressed.”

In British Columbia, the government reached agreements with seven bands in 1997. The government provides money to First Nations groups in northeast B.C. to review oil and gas proposals prior to development.

Luff said CAPP’s priority is to work with the tribal council, but the council members have been reluctant.

CAPP’s corporate members — 170 firms accounting for 80 per cent of Canadian oil and gas production — have had to delay decisions about some winter drilling projects, Luff said.

“The window of opportunity is very short and winter drilling programs could be lost.”

David Savage, who chairs a lands committee for the Small Explorers and Producers Association of Canada, said demands on SEAPAC’s 450 companies are growing. “It is becoming an increasing concern. Companies are reluctant to talk about it because that opens them up to further demands.”

Savage said SEAPAC companies are edgy: “There’s a question what rules we are going by.”

As for aboriginal demands for work contracts, West said they must bid for jobs like anyone else.
FATALITY INQUIRY

Child seizure order served before shooting

DARYL SLADE
CALGARY HERALD
TSULLITINA RESERVE

Two social workers served Connie Jacobs with a notice to apprehend her four children about half an hour before she and her oldest son Ty died in an armed confrontation with police last March 22.

The notice, delivered by Connie Bish and Lorraine Duguay under the Child Welfare Act following a complaint from Emergency Medical Services, stated the guardian of the children (Connie Jacobs) is unable or unwilling to provide the children with the necessities of life.

The one-page document was found lying on a desk a few steps from where the 37-year-old mother and her nine-year-old son were found in a pool of blood near the front doorway of the Jacobs home. It was later seized by RCMP Cpl. Doug Morrison.

Connie Jacobs was found to have a blood-alcohol level of 0.39, nearly four times the legal driving limit of 0.08.

Morrison, since retired, told a fatality inquiry Tuesday he took the document and dozens of other exhibits shortly after he entered the home about 11 a.m.

Gary Teeling and Will Willer, lawyers for Bish, Duguay and tribal police Const. Tommy Dodginghorse, said the complaint that led to the order to apprehend Jacobs' four children was made that day.

It was registered about 3 p.m. by EMS personnel, who had taken Connie Jacobs' husband Hardy to hospital as a result of a domestic dispute.

Hardy Jacobs' name was not on the order, although he was a guardian.

The apprehension order also was intended to remove Jacobs' two grandchildren from 19-year-old daughter Yolanda Lambert — Clarissa, 4, and Precious, seven months. But their names were not on the form because the social workers did not know they were there at the time, and they were not normal residents of the home.

"In an emergency situation, where (social workers) have to attend as quickly as possible, they conduct an investigation," said Teeling.

"If there's evidence to them the children are in jeopardy and should be apprehended, they do a brief notice of apprehension — 48 hours."

Willer said in such a situation, professional workers arrive "hoping for the best, but expecting the worst."

There has been no evidence at the inquiry that the social workers attempted to first call a judge to obtain an apprehension order before they went to the home.

Although the document says "the child was apprehended at 6:45 p.m." and "is now being cared for by a social welfare director," the social workers were unable to execute the apprehension.

They and Dodginghorse fled and called the RCMP after Connie Jacobs allegedly took the children to the basement and returned to threaten the social workers and officer with a .303 rifle.

Okotoks RCMP Const. Dave Voller attempted to persuade Jacobs to drop the weapon, but she allegedly refused to do so, and about 7:35 p.m. fired a shot in Voller's direction.

Court heard the officer again told her to drop the rifle. After she appeared to be attempting to reload, he returned fire with his 12-gauge shotgun, unknowingly striking and killing the woman and her son with pellets.

RCMP Emergency Response Team members were called to the scene, but made no attempt to enter the residence until it was determined Connie Jacobs was dead and there was no danger to anyone else.

The five children, including Jacobs' other three sons — ages four, two and four months — were removed by ERT members shortly after police entered the house.

Morrison said there was no plan to use Hardy Jacobs as a negotiator because there was a strong smell of alcohol on his breath, and it was apparent he had been drinking that day.

The inquiry continues today.

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"Our elders are very concerned about the relationship with the RCMP and the aboriginal communities."

— Marilyn Buffalo, Native Women Association of Canada
A Chief's Perspective

Much has been said over the past month about First Nations issues mostly from the media, Provincial and Federal politicians, bureaucrats, interest groups, and Band members. What is missing is the perspective of First Nation leadership.

As a Chief of a First Nation, people ask me why I have not responded to the many issues about First Nations highlighted in the media — one of the major reasons is that these issues belong to the Indian community and must be dealt with at the community level — that is where they must be dealt with, not in the newspapers.

However, there are two issues that as a Chief I wish to openly comment. Treaties, Self-Government, accountability and the democratic process, the recent FSIN survey and finally reserve real life issues.

As a leader of the Yellow Quill First Nation, I do not wish to speak for other First Nations or leaders. I will speak to these issues based on my 12 years as a Band Councilor and as the Chief of Yellow Quill for 9 years.

I believe as a leader, one of my foremost tasks is the promotion and protection of Treaties and how their implementation affects my people. The spirit and intent has driven many comments and it is clear to me that most individuals do not understand what the Treaties really are, and how they define the relationship of First Nations with all other governments in Canada.

The Treaties clearly state that Treaty Indian people have the right to Education, Health, Housing, Fishing, and Trapping. The support for agriculture and economic development. Therefore, my religion and all my brothers and sisters. One of this sharing our non-Indian neighbors have derived untold wealth, in agriculture, minerals, mining, oil. We were provided with small blocks of land called reserves.

The view that Treaty Indians reap many benefits as "FREE" is false. When the Treaties were signed they were signed Nation to Nation, thereby recognizing First Nations as Nations. (By definition, Treaties can only be signed Nation to Nation.) The answer to groups or anybody that advocates abolishing Treaty Rights will always be NO.

One of the things we didn't give up is the right to govern ourselves. Before settlers arrived, we had structures in place for our people including Justice and Education systems. We are now working hard to re-establishing these structures in our community. A key element in re-establishing these structures in a Band Constitution that will deal with many issues including leadership, conflict of interest and band indebtedness.

We want to control our own destiny — governments should step aside (particularly Government Departments like DIAND). It has been common practice of government to evolve programs to our First Nation governments. I believe we must use the evolve (capacity building at the Band) then concentrate on devolution. DIAND's pledge to partnership, to me, supports evolution and I am pleased with their new approach.

The word 'accountability' seems to be the new buzzword. When bureaucracy and interest groups openly lecture me through the media, I wonder where or who is accountable for misdirected individuals who feel they have the right to make decisions and assumptions on my behalf.

Here are some accountability issues. I would like to comment on:

- Indian people were not allowed to vote until 1960 in federal elections. If my member's who live off reserve could vote in elections for Chief and Council until the Yellow Quill First Nation had an elected Indian Act to allow them to vote.
- First Nations following the Indian Act still do not allow off reserve members to vote. This is significant in the accountability process since more than half of most First Nation members live off reserve.
- Who is accountable for the cultural genocide that occurred when our people were put in residential schools. The Federal Government is now providing $300.0 million dollars for the healing process. Many of our people have been devastated by sexual, emotional and physical abuse. How do you put a price on losing your children?
- Who is accountable for the persecution of Indian people who were forced from practicing their cultural and religion beliefs?
- Who is accountable for the families of Indian Veterans that fought in two World Wars and gave their lives for their country?
- Who is accountable for the veterans that survived, and were promised land that they never received?
- Who is accountable for the expropriation of lands from Indian people by Indian agents?
- Who is accountable for the impacts on my family when they were not allowed to leave the reserves without permits or required permits to butcher their own cattle to feed their families?
- Who is accountable for the assimilation policies of government that had a "melting pot" impact that almost us lose our identity as Indian people?
- Who is accountable for the children who were taken from their families and lost forever?

Indian people have endured many things in the last 150 years and the worst accountability will not solve these. We cannot undo or rectify the past. We
Indian people have endured many wrongs in the last 150 years and the want accountability will not solve these issues. We cannot undo or rewrite the past. We are now productive members of society; however, it is ironic that governments and some members of the non-Indian society preach accountability to us.

No matter where I am as a leader or a Band member, I am proud of Indian heritage, my community and most of all my Band members who have endured much and still survive as a distinct and proud people.

There has been much said in the media about the recent FSIN survey. I am going to respond to a story that happened quite a few years ago with a member of my community. This person was born in Yellow Quill, his father was a Treaty Indian, his mother was from another First Nation. The story was told to me by my father that at an early age this person was taken away and raised by a Catholic priest. It is still unclear of how he lost his status as a Band member but he did. He fought in the First World War and was wounded. He returned to Yellow Quill but was never accepted back. I always thought that this was a great injustice that was done to a war hero. He ended up building a cabin along the reserve boundary on the road allowance—his name is Henry Harrison and he died in the thirties without a home.

The point to this story is that there is discrimination and racism in all societies (non-Indian and Indian), however mutual respect and respecting each other's jurisdictions and differences is something that as a society we must strive for.

Survey results interpreted for other than factual reasons can mislead and misrepresent opinions that can hinder development.

There has been much said about the financial debt of First Nations. I will only comment on my Band’s debt which is approximately $6 million dollars and we are in co-management (a professional approved by DIAND is helping us manage our Band’s affairs). It is important however, to define the nature of the debt. The actual Band deficit is approximately $0.0 which is not unreasonable for a Band with a $6 million dollar annual budget. However, we have embarked on Economic Development projects that added to our deficit. These projects created employment and training for many of my Band members that have lead to full time employment. We have made mistakes, people have taken advantage of my business ignorance, however I have learned a lot and will continue to learn and we will pay our debt.

However I do have an issue, when the Federal government with nearly a $6 million dollar deficit, is concerned about my program delivery as a Canadian I am concerned about their program delivery.

The media has portrayed leaders as individuals that spend excessive amounts of money and hide financial information from the membership. In all the years that I have been a leader, I have not reduced anyone that required or requested financial information, however like any other government system there are individuals that have other agendas. I will not debate with these individuals through the media.

Yes, as a Chief I make a salary (approximately $0.00) which is paltry at the Band’s audit. Most of the money I make goes to meet the requirements of my job as a leader. In any given week I attend 10-15 meetings — meetings that concern the development of my community. Most of my earnings are shared with Band members, a fact that people who do not live on a reserve tend to understand.

As a Chief I do not have access to back up systems that other non-Indian bureaucrats and politicians have (lawyers, accountants, etc.). I must defend my actions alone. I do not have secret Bank Accounts, a briefcase full of money or real estate in my name. Any economic initiatives that we seek are not for my personal gain or benefit.

We are striving for self-reliance and self-determination through partnerships, joint ventures and wholly owned Band companies. We have purchased real estate in Saskatoon (First Nations Bank Buildings) that is serving a basis for our Development Corporation which I hope will develop in a large corporate organization.

I spoke of Treaties earlier — welfare is not a Treaty Right and I strive to get my people trained and employed. The Economic Development initiatives that we have undertaken are just scratching the surface of addressing our employment issues. However, I must comment that financial institutions and the business community are the ones that are providing us the support to enter into projects, not government grant programs. I appreciate the co-operation of the banks and the business community. I am also extremely proud of the many professional Indians that have gone on and worked in the workforce in Judges, Lawyers, Bankers, Teachers, Doctors, etc. Those are role models that we can take pride in.

Community issues, my community suffers all the ills of any community with chronic unemployment, alcoholism, drugs, and health problems all of which I have experienced. As a community we have to heal and I sincerely hope that our critics can respect my position as a leader.

Before the Treaties were signed, First Nations chose their representatives through their own democratic process in their own way as a nation. Those leaders were on behalf of their First Nation as government leaders as equals. The point is — that is where the empowerment of First Nations lie — leaders must represent their communities in the media.

In my view, people who bring community issues to the media are "Headlining H lurkers" who have their own agenda.

We are proud people, let us work through our many issues but more importantly — let us work together as partners to improve our lives.
Stolen children

Neglected now dead

By the time he nailed a board between two birch trees and hanged himself from it, Raymond Cardinal lived in 23 foster homes in his 17 years. He wrote a suicide note to his brother Charles: "Keep trying. Things are bound to get better."

They could scarcely have gotten worse.

A bird in a cage

Jean Chretien and his wife had the noblest of intentions when they adopted an 8-month-old Inuit boy. Michel became part of a grand social experiment that had alarming results — a lost generation of people torn between two cultures.

Bala Everson
Secretary-Treasurer
Winnipeg

In late January 1910, Jean Chrétien made a fateful decision. The premier of British Columbia and a key player in the Natives Development Commission composed a letter to his friend, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, that was not a version of a thin report. It said: "The work of building a world of promise for Indians meant to do so was not as easy as he had expected. Such was the sad lesson learned by others before. The problem of the present age is to find solutions that are better than the ones that led to the problems of the past."

In the 1930s, Chief Brian's daughter, Alice, was born in a mission. In the 1950s, she was raised in a residential school. Alice and Jean met in the 1970s, and their relationship led to the establishment of the Jean Chrétien Foundation for Education and Research. Alice's life was a testament to the resiliency of Indigenous peoples and the importance of education.

In 1977, Michael Dufresne, then eight, was born in the Cowichan First Nation. His mother, Laura, was a member of the Cowichan First Nation. Michael's father, Martin, was a member of the Cowichan First Nation. Michael's family was one of the many affected by the residential school system in Canada. Michael's grandfather, Jean, was a member of the Cowichan First Nation. Jean was a leader in the Canadian political scene and worked extensively to promote the rights of Indigenous peoples.

In 1986, Michael attended the Residential School Health and Wellness Program in Cowichan. He was the first student to participate in the program. Michael's experience with the residential school system was traumatic and had a significant impact on his life. Michael's family was supportive and helped him through the difficult times. Michael's story is one of resilience and determination, and his teachings continue to inspire others to fight for justice and equality for all.

In 1992, the Cowichan First Nation became the first nation in Canada to receive compensation for the effects of residential schools. Michael's family was one of the beneficiaries. Michael's story is one of hope and possibility, and his teachings continue to inspire others to fight for justice and equality for all.
SON

Continued from P1

"I. take measures to help children in crisis, not for the better world." -deep in the off-white world of the scene.

The two main figures in the scene are Michael and his daughter, who are both struggling with their own issues.

Michael's daughter, who is named Jennifer, is a young girl who is struggling with her identity and her place in the world.

Jennifer's mother, who is named Jane, is a social worker who is trying to help Jennifer.

The scene takes place in a residential area, where the two main figures are living.

Michael is a middle-aged man who is struggling with his own identity and his past.

He is a former police officer who is now working for a private security firm.

Jennifer is a young girl who is struggling with her own identity and her place in the world.

She is a student at a local high school and is trying to figure out who she is.

The scene ends with Michael and Jennifer talking about their plans for the future and the challenges they will face.

Michael is hopeful about the future and believes that Jennifer will be able to find her place in the world.

Jennifer is more cautious and is afraid of the future, but she is also determined to make something of herself.

The scene ends with Michael and Jennifer hugging and saying goodbye.

"Who knows what the future holds," Michael says as he hugs Jennifer.

"I'll be there for you," Jennifer says as she returns the hug.

And the scene ends with Michael and Jennifer facing their challenges together.
A page with text that is too small to be read naturally.