

**ABORIGINAL SPIRITUALITY  
AND SYMBOLIC HEALING AT  
THE SASKATOON  
CORRECTIONAL CENTRE**

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By

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis undertakes an ethnographic examination of Aboriginal spirituality at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre (SCC). While definite therapeutic effects are documented for Aboriginal inmates participating in Aboriginal spiritual services, these therapeutic effects are not synonymous with symbolic healing as it is academically and anthropologically defined. The theoretical postulates of symbolic healing are expanded to include the need for a cultural educational component when symbolic healing is attempted within a multicultural Aboriginal population. Policy recommendations are offered to improve the overall level of Aboriginal spirituality services at SCC and, thereby, encourage the realization of symbolic healing for segments of the Aboriginal inmate population.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

PERMISSION TO USE .....	i
ABSTRACT .....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	iv
1. OVERVIEW .....	1
1.1 Research Problem .....	1
1.2 Research Setting .....	2
1.3 Methodology .....	4
1.3.1 Participant Observation .....	4
1.3.2 Semi-structured Interviewing .....	8
1.4 Analysis .....	12
1.5 Ethical Considerations .....	13
2. LITERATURE REVIEW .....	16
2.1 The Aboriginal Offender .....	16
2.2 Symbolic Healing .....	33
2.3 Indigenous Practise as Therapy .....	40
3. CURRENT SERVICES AT THE SASKATOON CORRECTIONAL CENTRE .....	50
3.1 Aboriginal Spirituality Services .....	50
3.2 Aboriginal Spirituality in a Prison Environment .....	67
4. OFFENDER PROFILE AT SCC .....	72
4.1 General Information .....	72
4.2 Past Exposure/Introduction to Aboriginal Spirituality .....	75
4.3 Offender Interpretations of Aboriginal Spirituality .....	85
5. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CULTURE AND THERAPY .....	91
5.1 Defining Culture .....	91
5.1.1 Staff Perceptions of Culture .....	93
5.1.2 Inmate Perceptions of Culture .....	99
5.2 Culturally Appropriate Therapy .....	103
5.2.1 Elder Services at SCC - Inmate Perspectives .....	103
5.2.2 Sweat Lodge Programming at SCC - Inmate Perspectives .....	118
5.3 The Value of Aboriginal Spirituality Programming - Staff Perspectives .....	137
6. SYMBOLIC HEALING AT SCC .....	146
7. PAN-INDIANISM AT SCC .....	179

8.	POLICY CONSIDERATIONS AT SCC .....	187
8.1	Sweat Lodge Policy Considerations .....	191
8.2	Elder Policy Considerations .....	196
8.3	Educational Policy Considerations .....	208
	8.3.1 Education for SCC Personnel .....	208
	8.3.2 Education for Inmates at SCC .....	216
8.4	General Policy Considerations .....	221
8.5	Policy Conclusion .....	228
8.6	Areas for Future Research .....	231
9.	CONCLUSION .....	234
9.1	Summary .....	234
9.2	Theoretical Contributions .....	242
10.	BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	245
11.	APPENDICES .....	251
11.1	Appendix A - Inmate Cultural Orientation Classification .....	252
11.2	Appendix B - Interview Schedules .....	253
	11.2.1 Schedule 1 .....	253
	11.2.2 Schedule 2 .....	255
	11.2.3 Schedule 3 .....	256
	11.2.4 Schedule 4 .....	257
	11.2.5 Staff Focus Group Questions .....	258
11.3	Appendix C - Consent Forms .....	259
	11.3.1 Staff Consent Form .....	259
	11.3.2 Inmate Consent Form .....	260

## 1.0 Overview

### 1.1 Research Problem

The goals and objectives of this research include a comprehensive, contextual understanding of the role which increased spirituality can play in the lives of Aboriginal offenders. It is hypothesized that increased awareness of, and access to culturally-appropriate spirituality services will provide a means for some Aboriginal offenders to re-affirm their identities and increase personal self-esteem through cultural education. Simultaneous therapeutic advantages will include equipping the inmates with methods to overcome personal problems (for eg. drug and alcohol addiction) and move forward in their lives through spiritual fulfilment.

Major questions to be answered include: does involvement in culturally-relevant spiritual activities provide a therapeutic outcome for the participant and, if so, how? How do Aboriginal inmates from a variety of cultural backgrounds receive therapeutic advantages from their interaction with an Elder of a cultural background different than their own? How can a corrections environment, at the provincial level, accommodate increased spirituality programming within the existing institutional framework

without compromising security or raising union objections?

## **1.2 Research Setting**

The Saskatoon Correctional Centre (SCC) houses provincial inmates serving a maximum of two years less a day. However, federal inmates can apply to do the last five years of their sentence there if there are valid reasons for the request (local family etc). The average length of stay at SCC is approx 120 days (+ or - 10 days). The facility was originally intended to house approximately 160 inmates. However, an inmate population in excess of 300 is not uncommon. The majority of the population at SCC are young, Aboriginal males with histories of incarceration and recidivism. Virtually all of them have had, or still have, problems with alcohol and/or drug abuse which are directly or indirectly related to their legal improprieties. Many of the inmates are incarcerated for relatively minor offenses such as failure to pay fines, alcohol violations, and break and enter. Many of these Aboriginal inmates find their first exposure to Aboriginal spirituality within the prison environment (see, for example, Canada 1988; Fraser 1992; Grobsmith 1989; Grobsmith and Dam 1990; James 1979; McCaskill 1985; Waldram 1993).

Numerous programs are offered to the offender at SCC. Among them are opportunities for education and the development of academic skills in the Learning Resource Centre. Other inmates have the opportunity to work in a

variety of domestic and industrial duties in the jail (cooking, cleaning, working in the wood and metal shops etc.). There remains a high level of "unemployment" among the offenders within the institution as there are not enough jobs to go around. Other "programming" includes such things as anger management, Alcoholics Anonymous, addiction education and similar programs.

This research context was chosen because the vast majority of research on offenders in Canada to date has been done at the federal level. Furthermore, from informal interaction with the inmates while teaching a Native Studies class in December 1992, they indicated to the researcher that one of their most pressing needs was increased spirituality and cultural awareness/education programming. Moreover, the provincial level of corrections services is presently well behind the federal level in its understanding and accommodation of Aboriginal spiritual services. In particular, numerous inmates and staff members have suggested that SCC lags behind other provincial institutions such as Prince Albert and Regina in its provision of Aboriginal spiritual services. Also, as the majority of inmates are young and Aboriginal, it is important to understand the impact of increased spiritual awareness in their lives and attempt to determine the therapeutic results which can occur from participation in such activities.

### **1.3 Methodology**

Generally, the researcher spent 6-8 hours at SCC per day. Occasionally longer days were necessary (for example at times in which a sweat lodge ceremony was held in the evening). The majority of full-time field work occurred throughout the period of June 1, 1993 to September 30, 1993.

As the focus of the research was both theoretical and applied, it was necessary to utilize a holistic methodological approach in order to determine not only inmate needs and perceptions, but also those of the staff and management of SCC. Understanding the relative perceptions of all segments of the research population is important for both theoretical understanding, as well as for shaping policy. The primary data gathering methods used for the different segments of the population were the same: participant observation and semi-structured key-informant interviews. Also, focus groups were used to facilitate staff participation in the data gathering process.

#### **1.3.1 Participant Observation**

This method was used from the first interaction with the research population and continued throughout the project. It provided useful analytical data, as well as laid the base for subsequent data gathering by providing an opportunity to undertake preliminary "ethnographic mapping" of the players and processes at SCC. This method allowed for an opportunity to see the daily functioning and operations

of the jail from an objective, yet involved, perspective. It allowed the researcher to attempt to understand the daily workings of SCC from the perspectives of both inmates and staff. It also made it possible to determine contradictions between what people say and what people do.

The researcher participated in the daily occurrences and happenings of the jail in a variety of contexts. He sat in on disciplinary panel hearings (which pass judgement and set punishment for illegal occurrences or breaches of protocol for inmates already doing time). The researcher participated in numerous facets of programming which are offered to offenders (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike). Some of these programs were anger management, addiction education, and Alcoholics Anonymous. The researcher was granted free access to all of the areas of the jail. As such, he was able to observe and participate in a number of areas which utilize "programming" for the majority of the day, such as the Learning Resource Centre ("classroom"), and the workshops (woodworking etc.). Also, there were numerous opportunities for informal interaction, observation, and conversation with inmates, staff and management.

There were a number of programs which were utilized predominantly by Aboriginal offenders. These included the Sacred Circle (a sharing circle held intermittently in conjunction with other self-help programming), and the sweat lodge ceremonies. Only three Sacred Circles were run

throughout the duration of the project. All were attended by the researcher. The researcher participated in approximately 10 sweats in the jail throughout the course of the research. As well, during the course of the research, a Native Program Planning Committee (NPPC) was established as an interim body to coordinate and facilitate a powwow in the centre. This was an provisional body whose mandate was confined to this single event. The researcher was included in the ongoing operations of the NPPC from a very early point in the research.

The Elder providing spiritual services throughout the majority of the research at SCC was not interviewed. Rather, extensive participant observation was undertaken in conjunction with the Elder both inside and beyond SCC. Numerous spiritual and cultural activities were undertaken in order to gain some understanding of the Elder's spiritual philosophies and practices. For example, the researcher accompanied the Elder on visits to inmates within the jail; on excursions to gather medicinal supplies beyond the jail; on visits to friends, ceremonial practitioners and adherents; and spent many hours at the Elder's home on the reserve. These experiences were essential for understanding the nature of symbolic healing. Furthermore, some useful insights were gathered relating to the differences between how this particular Elder practises Aboriginal spirituality in general, and how he practises it at SCC.

The researcher was introduced to the Elder via the Education Coordinator at SCC. The researcher offered the Elder a pouch of tobacco and requested the Elder provide his input on the proposed research. This particular Elder had had past exposure to anthropological research in a corrections environment. He was one of the resident Elders at the Regional Psychiatric Centre (RPC) when Dr. J. Waldram, Department of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan, conducted research at that institution. There were positive programming results for Aboriginal offenders which stemmed from this research. Therefore, this Elder (though originally very sceptical of academics, academic research, and its utility prior to his interaction with Dr. Waldram) became aware of the potential benefits of encouraging such research in an attempt to rectify some perceived shortcomings in Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC. Due to his past experiences with researchers and the positive outcomes of their labour, the Elder ultimately reacted very openly and frankly with the researcher. He openly told the researcher about various aspects of his traditional spiritual beliefs and welcomed the researcher's participation in spiritual and cultural undertakings both inside and beyond SCC. The researcher and his family were welcome visitors of the Elder and his family on a number of occasions.

### 1.3.2 Semi-structured interviewing

Interviews were primarily undertaken with inmates. However, certain staff who were key to the educational and programming aspects of inmate services were also interviewed. Four different interview schedules were utilized. One schedule was directed towards inmates with extensive knowledge and experience regarding Aboriginal spirituality. Another focused on inmates who lacked a strong Aboriginal spiritual background. A third interview schedule was used to address staff perceptions and concerns regarding Aboriginal spirituality at SCC. A fourth interview schedule probed the symbolism and spiritual significance of numerous articles and spiritual symbols associated with Aboriginal spirituality. These schedules are presented in appendix B. The interview format was generally casual and relaxed. The researcher allowed the respondents to take the lead in offering information. Therefore, the schedules were not precisely followed. This provided the opportunity for subjective interpretation and expression on behalf of the respondents.

In all, 37 Aboriginal offenders were interviewed regarding the role of Aboriginal spirituality services and the therapeutic benefits thereof in an incarceration environment. These respondents were obtained through "word of mouth" after the researcher had attended approximately two sweats and had informally told many inmates what he was

doing at SCC. Following an initial introduction at the sweat or in programming, inmates with whom the researcher was familiar were merely sought out in the population of SCC and asked to grant an interview. "Mushroom" sampling was also employed whereby interviewees would be asked if they could recommend anyone else who may be interested in participating in the interview procedure. Subsequently, ten of these individuals were re-interviewed regarding the symbolic meanings and spiritual significance of various symbols and objects associated with Aboriginal spirituality. These respondents were individually sought out for follow-up interviews based on the apparent knowledge of Aboriginal spirituality they displayed in the first interview.

Five staff were involved in key-informant interviews. These respondents were generally involved in educational and activity programming. Front line CW (Corrections Worker) staff were not formally interviewed. Time and cost constraints prohibited large-scale interviewing of this segment of the research population. Moreover, the theoretical focus of the research was primarily derived from the data offered by the offenders and the spiritual leader. The staff were consulted primarily for the policy aspect of the research as well as to gain some understanding of their perceptions of Aboriginal spirituality in general. Three focus groups were undertaken to include staff participation in the research. In all, 19 staff representing a wide range

of positions participated in the focus groups. No staff members who submitted to a key informant interview were involved in the focus groups. Also, those who participated in the focus groups were not individually interviewed.

Front line CW staff attitudes toward the researcher, the project, and Aboriginal spirituality ranged from being helpful, open and curious, to being sceptical, arrogant and virtually hostile. In fact, while most management and inmates were open and accepting of the researcher and his role at SCC, few front line staff members were approachable or seemed interested in interacting with the researcher. Some were blatantly hostile and considered the research a "waste of time" citing it as another example of reverse discrimination (i.e. of Aboriginal offenders getting more attention to their needs than non-Aboriginal offenders). However, there were only a few times when staff actually went out of their way to impede the researcher's progress within the institution or attempted to make the researcher uncomfortable in a given situation. While certain individuals did their best to be intimidating and, at times, openly rude, most of the staff were generally indifferent to the presence of the researcher. This is not an indictment of the SCC front line CW staff. The nature of their work socializes the majority of the staff to some degree of scepticism and caution. Furthermore, there were certain front line staff members who went out of their way to

facilitate the research and aid the researcher in obtaining access to inmates and interview areas, and facilitate safe passage throughout various areas of the jail.

All key informant interviews were tape recorded with the respondent's permission. Few offenders were concerned by this. The vast majority of inmate respondents were eager and willing to participate. They viewed the researcher as a sounding board in an environment which was seldom open to commentary or criticism, and which held little interest in their convictions. A very small number of inmates (approximately 5 overall) were originally cautious as to whether or not prison staff would have access to the tapes and transcripts. They were guaranteed the right to anonymity and confidentiality and, generally, their fears or concerns were abated. No respondents refused to answer any specific questions throughout the course of the interview, nor did any of them withdraw from the interview process once it had begun. Only a very small number of inmates (approximately 5) refused outright to participate in the research when first approached by the researcher. All staff members who were approached for a key informant interview readily agreed to the request. There was no hesitation or concerns about confidentiality expressed among those staff members who were asked to undertake the key informant interview.

Generally, few inmates were overtly hostile or overly cautious to the researcher throughout the project. The

researcher's early and strong association with the Elder helped validate him in the eyes of many Aboriginal inmates. Conversely, it may have made rapport-building with some of the front line CW staff more difficult. Rapport with the inmates was further solidified through the researcher's participation in the sweat lodge and the Native Program Planning Committee. The researcher began by building a good relationship with a small number of inmates (some of whom remembered him from the Native Studies presentation a few months earlier), and built upon this foundation by being visible and becoming involved in a number of activities. The researcher quickly became associated with the Aboriginal spirituality component of jail programming by a number of inmates. This also aided in rapport building.

#### **1.4 Analysis**

Given the small number of respondents, as well as the general nature of anthropological inquiry and analysis, qualitative data analysis was undertaken. Text-based data was categorized by editing transcripts and compartmentalizing the information therein. These categories were then analyzed for themes and content. The data sorting and matching process was aided by the use of The Ethnograph - a computer program which sorts text-based data according to codes which the researcher determines and places into the data. The information obtained from the interviews was then

theoretically analyzed according to the principles of symbolic healing.

Wherever possible, the actual words of the respondents are left entirely intact for quotations. The emotion and meaning in their words is necessary to understand the significance of the events they discuss. There are instances where it was necessary to undertake minor grammatical or syntactic editing in order to facilitate understanding.

### **1.5 Ethical Considerations**

Respondents were sought out on a voluntary basis. All those who agreed to an interview were required to sign a written consent form which was also signed by the researcher and a SCC staff member as a witness. Respondents were informed that they were under no obligation to participate in the research and that they could refuse to answer any questions or opt out of the interview/research at any time. All respondents were informed that they could provide information 'off the record' as well. All respondents were informed that they had the power of voluntary participation and withdrawal. Prior to sitting in on any programming or group activities, the researcher explained his presence to the instructor and the group and asked for their permission to attend. If a single group member had not felt comfortable with the researcher's presence he would have withdrawn immediately. Fortunately, he was never forced to withdraw.

All respondents were informed that the researcher did not have the power to enforce recommendations but that, with empirical validation and proper documentation, positive results might be possible. Interviewees were informed that there were no anticipated risks regarding their participation in the project. For example, they were told of the coding system that was employed for transcripts (see below) and of the resulting factors of anonymity and confidentiality. They were further advised that no prison officials or staff would have access to the tapes or interview transcripts. All respondents were furnished with the researcher's institutional address and phone number and were told that they could obtain a copy of the finished results should they contact the researcher with such a request.

All interviews and informal data gathered were treated confidentially. Anonymity of interviewees was maintained by not providing access to the taped interviews to anyone other than the project advisor (Dr. Waldram) and the transcriber. A complex coding system was used to link respondents to their respective tapes and interview transcripts. No names are used in this thesis.

A separate, policy-oriented report has been supplied to SCC and other interested parties. This report deals with policy issues and recommendations relevant to Aboriginal spirituality services at SCC. It is anticipated, however,

that the information in this report will be generalizable to other corrections facilities and areas of policy.

The project was filed with the Ethics Committee at the University of Saskatchewan by Dr. Waldram. The project received partial funding from the Saskatchewan Health Utilization and Research Commission to help offset research and publication costs. This grant was under the direction of Dr. Waldram.

## 2.0 Literature Review

### 2.1 The Aboriginal Offender

Numerous authors (see, for example, Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 87; McCaskill 1985: 3; Reasons 1975: 59) maintain that there have been few competent, comprehensive studies of Aboriginal offenders in Canada. Even less has been written which attempts an understanding of the variables of culture and spirituality in the incarceration process. However, given the proportion of Aboriginal people who are incarcerated (relative to non-Aboriginals, and relative to their percentage of the general population), it is obvious that Aboriginal offenders are a group which requires more attention and analysis.

Figures vary regarding the actual percentage of Aboriginal offenders in provincial and federal institutions. However, it is widely acknowledged that Aboriginal people are grossly over-represented in the prison population vis-a-vis their numbers in the general population (see Badcock 1976: 281; Bonta 1989: 49; Canada 1988: 40; Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 390, 393; James 1979: 453; Lane et al. 1978: 308; Reasons 1975: 17; Sinclair 1990: 269):

Statistics are very clear. Aboriginal people are over-represented in the jails and prisons of this country to the tune of five or six times their presence in the population nationally, and in some areas of the

country, are incarcerated over ten times their presence.

(Sinclair 1990: 269).

The greatest concentration of Native inmates is in the prairie provinces (Lane et al. 1978: 310; see also Sinclair 1990: 269). Lane et al. claim that "Native people represent the *single largest ethnic minority* in Canadian prisons, both provincial and federal" [sic] (1978: 308). Aside from the fact that Aboriginal people do not constitute a 'single ethnic minority', the sheer number of Aboriginal people housed within incarceration institutions in Canada indicates the need to understand and address the special concerns and requirements of Aboriginal people within these contexts.

Hamilton and Sinclair (1991: 86) outline some of the variables which figure in Aboriginal over-representation:

- Aboriginal accused are more likely to be denied bail.
- Aboriginal people spend more time in pre-trial detention than do non-Aboriginal people.
- Aboriginal accused are more likely to be charged with multiple offences than are non-Aboriginal accused.
- Lawyers spend less time with their Aboriginal clients than with non-Aboriginal clients.
- Aboriginal offenders are more than twice as likely as non-Aboriginal people to be incarcerated.

French suggests that "marginal Indians [sic] are those most likely to violate majority norms resulting in arrest, conviction and incarceration" (1979: 52). Given the successive failures of assimilationist policy perpetrated on Aboriginal people by the Canadian government, it is easy to see that a great many contemporary Aboriginal people feel marginalized. Therefore, this may be a significant factor in

their over-representation.

Aboriginal offenders can not be viewed as a criminologically synonymous or culturally homogenous group (McCaskill 1985: 39). The profile of the Aboriginal offender varies as much as the individuals do. However, common themes regarding Aboriginal criminality are present. McCaskill (1985: 11) points out that the majority of Aboriginal inmates are status Indians, yet this trend has been decreasing slightly over the last 20 years. Generally, the average age of the Aboriginal offender has been increasing (McCaskill 1985: 11-12), yet first-time confrontations with the law still occur at a relatively young age for many offenders. Lane et al. (1978: 313) state that over half of 315 inmates surveyed had left home and been arrested by age 16. They also suggest that the average age of the Aboriginal offender at first arrest was 14 years if living at home, and 15 years if not at home (Lane et.al 1978: 313). Generally, educational levels are relatively low (but slowly increasing) and education levels for Aboriginal offenders fall below those for non-Aboriginal offenders (see Bonta 1989: 57; McCaskill 1985: 15). Bonta (1989: 57) suggests that those people originating from reserves generally have lower education and reading levels.

Unemployment and economic instability are constant factors in the daily lives of many Aboriginal offenders. In numerous studies, the majority of Aboriginal offenders were

found to be unemployed at the time of their arrest (see Bonta 1989: 53; Lane et al.1978: 311; McCaskill 1985: 16-17). Faulkner (1989: 10) documented that Inuit offenders also suffer from economic instability. As well, family instability also characterizes the lives of many Aboriginal offenders. Many Aboriginal offenders come from a background of repeated and prolonged interaction with the Department of Social Services and/or Family Services, and histories of foster home care and institutionalization as children. Many are raised by a non-parent (for example, members of their extended family). Often, the offender had relatives or friends in jail while they were growing up. Moreover, the Aboriginal offender often witnessed a high death and suicide rate among family and friends. Lane et al. (1978: 313) point out:

The questions concerning childhood institutionalization and/or family disintegration revealed that: out of the 308 inmates who answered the questions, 242, or 79 per cent had been in either an institution or foster home while under the age of 16, and 66 inmates had been in more than one institution or foster home. 42 per cent of the Status Indians [sic] had been to a residential school, 27 per cent of all inmates had been in a reform school, 30 per cent in a foster home, and 11 percent in a Children's Aid Society facility.

McCaskill (1985: 18) concludes:

Although statistics were not consistently available for all subjects, the picture that emerges is generally one of a high degree of family instability. Specifically, the homes of Native offenders were characterized by extensive involvement with social service agencies, high incidences of single-parent families, parental problems and frequent foster home placements. For example, nearly two-thirds of the Native offenders for which data was available reported to have spent some

part of their childhood in foster homes or of being raised primarily by someone other than their parents.

Moreover, many Aboriginal inmates also lack a strong social support network both while in prison and post-release. This is due, in part, to being incarcerated a long way from their homes (Badcock 1976: 282). However, even if proximity is not a factor, there are other variables to consider. For example, Lane et al. (1978: 315) noted that only 29 per cent of responding inmates could identify someone they could have asked for assistance in their home communities. Furthermore, less than 7 per cent of the sample used by Lane et al. received any kind of assistance in their own community, and those least likely to be asked to provide such assistance were those with a professional mandate to do so (1978: 315).

Personality characteristics have been changing among Aboriginal offenders. McCaskill (1985: 69) notes that Aboriginal offenders are less passive, shy and withdrawn than in the past. Instead, Aboriginal offenders are increasingly more intelligent, sophisticated and aggressive (McCaskill 1985: 69-71). Generally, the majority of Aboriginal offenders stay together as a group while in prison (McCaskill 1985: 74).

The ongoing pattern of urbanization among Aboriginal people in general also characterizes Aboriginal offenders. McCaskill (1985: 18-19) notes, among Aboriginal offenders, a major shift to urban areas both in birthplace, and place of residence at the time of admission to a correctional

facility. Rural to urban migration has increased in recent years (McCaskill 1985: 21). Lane et al. (1978: 311) report that 54 percent of crimes committed by their sample of Aboriginal offenders took place in urban areas. Thirty percent occurred in rural areas and 16 percent occurred on reserves (Lane et al. 1978: 311). It is interesting to note that corrections operations may actually play a role in increasing urbanization among Aboriginal peoples. It was documented that Aboriginal inmates are often paroled to urban environments regardless of whether they originally resided in an urban environment or not (Badcock 1976: 282; McCaskill 1985: 23). Often, these offenders lack the economic means to get back to their rural or reserve communities, or are confined to the urban context due to parole stipulations and constraints.

Patterns of criminality have also changed among Aboriginal offenders. Generally, property offences are decreasing and "crimes against the person" are increasing (Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 87; McCaskill 1985:30-33; Lane et al. 1978: 311). Sex crimes have risen slightly from 3 percent to 7 percent of all crimes committed by the Aboriginal offenders in McCaskill's sample between 1970 and 1984 (McCaskill 1985: 34). An overall increase in violent and serious crimes was also noted for Aboriginal offenders (McCaskill 1985: 34-36). That is:

of all inmates who are incarcerated in federal institutions 53% of Native offenders [were] convicted

of "person offences" as compared to 47% of non-Native inmates whereas for the provincial system 72% of all inmates incarcerated for "person offences" are Native compared to only 28% who are non-Native.

(McCaskill 1985: 33-34).

Moreover, many of the violent crimes are committed against family members (Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 88; see also McCaskill 1985: 37-38). Generally, Aboriginal offenders are getting longer sentences for more serious crimes (McCaskill 1985: 12-13). Hamilton and Sinclair, calling on a study of "Amerindian" police crime prevention undertaken for the Solicitor General of Canada by Hyde and LaPrairie, provide a concise comparison between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal patterns of criminality:

For Aboriginal people...[there are]...more violent offences, fewer property offences, more social disorder offences, higher overall rates of crime, and a strong relationship between alcohol abuse and crime. Almost conspicuously absent were crimes for profit, such as drug trafficking, prostitution, fraud and armed robberies. Although there were more violent offences than non-Aboriginal people committed, the majority of crimes were petty offences.

(Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 88).

The role of alcohol abuse among Aboriginal offenders is one of the most striking factors associated with them as an identifiable group. McCaskill suggests "alcohol remains the biggest factor in Native criminal activity" (1985: 36), in spite of the fact that the percentage of Aboriginal offenders whose crimes involved alcohol (directly or indirectly) fell to 75 percent in 1984 from 90 percent in 1970 (McCaskill 1985: 35). Faulkner (1989) also notes that, among Inuit offenders, alcohol and/or drug addiction and

abuse played a significant role in their criminal activities. Lane et al. (1978: 311) note that out of their sample of 316 Aboriginal penitentiary inmates, only 10 percent of the offender's crimes were committed *without* the influence of drugs or alcohol. They further suggest that there is an increase in the occurrence of drug use (as opposed to alcohol) associated with urban migration (Lane et al. 1978: 311-312). They note, as well, that 49 percent of their sample had spent some time living on "skid row", while 75 percent of their sample had contacts or friends there (Lane et al. 1978: 312). Bonta suggests that drug and alcohol abuse is a good predictor of parole outcomes and subsequent criminal behaviour for Aboriginal offenders (1989: 55, 59). Hamilton and Sinclair (1991: 88) succinctly point out that alcohol abuse is not the 'cause' of Aboriginal crime; rather it is a symptom which arises from the same socio-historical conditions "which have created high Aboriginal crime rates". They argue, "It is crucial to recognize that the social condition of Aboriginal people is a direct result of the discriminatory and repressive policies that successive European and Canadian governments have directed towards Aboriginal people" (Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 92). Alcoholism among Aboriginal offenders then, like all aspects of Aboriginal culture and criminality, must be understood and analyzed in a much more holistic framework.

Hamilton and Sinclair (1991: 85) propose "the causes of Aboriginal criminal behaviour are rooted in a long history of discrimination and social inequality that has impoverished Aboriginal people and consigned them to the margins of...society". They link contemporary Aboriginal criminality to the cumulative effects of centuries of discriminatory and repressive policies by successive European and Canadian governments (Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 92). Similar sentiments are echoed by Reasons (1975: 8-9) and Waldram (1992: 168). Given this argument, corrections operations are presently dealing with the symptoms of the larger problems brought about by colonization and policies of assimilation (Lane et al. 1978: 315). Obviously, centuries of policies formulated and administered by outside agencies have done little for Aboriginal people as a whole. As such, the answers to problems of Aboriginal criminality and corrections issues must ultimately derive from Aboriginal communities (Lane et al. 1978: 315; Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 435). McCaskill maintains that "the problem of Native criminality is closely tied to the situation in the larger Native community and...a solution to the former entails an improvement in the latter" (McCaskill 1985: 65). Presently, however, McCaskill suggests that Aboriginal offenders have not profited from the general move within the Aboriginal community toward economic development, cultural revitalization and the assumption of

more power over their own affairs (McCaskill 1985: 66).

In conclusion then:

There are no doubt similarities in the backgrounds of Native and Non-Native inmates but there remain some experiences peculiar to Native people, for example the reserve and residential school experience and the consistently difficult economic, employment and social background of Canada's Native people [sic] in general.

(Lane et al. 1978: 313).

In short, similarities in the backgrounds of Aboriginal inmates and parolees "continue to be characterized by serious social and personal disorganization" (McCaskill 1985: 24), especially in the areas of alcohol abuse and family dysfunction.

As we can link Aboriginal criminality to historical and political factors, we must also analyze the place of culture in the treatment of Aboriginal offenders. James (1979: 454) suggests that culture has been recognized as an important variable in understanding Aboriginal criminality, yet it remains largely misunderstood and misinterpreted. He goes on to state that a better understanding of cultural factors affecting Aboriginal peoples (both clients and staff of corrections) could increase program effectiveness (James 1979: 453). Based on cultural factors alone, James argues, Aboriginal people would actually appear less prone to crime than their non-Aboriginal counterparts. For example, values such as a belief in sharing and non-interference are not drastically at odds with the dominant culture's judicial system. However, it is when Aboriginal people attempt to

compete and achieve in terms of the dominant society's culture that problems with the justice system emerge:

If criminality is defined as a set of antisocial values leading to a set of antisocial acts, it is clear that natives [sic] should have less theoretical potential for criminality than non-natives, based on cultural values. It is the competitiveness, haste, interference and greed characteristic of our culture that leads to the criminality of those who are induced to aspire to out materialist values but fail to achieve them by legitimate means. If it were not for the necessity to compete and achieve in terms of our culture, most natives would not appear as offenders.

(James 1979: 461).

Hamilton and Sinclair (1991: 95-96) elaborate on this concept and indicate cultural conflict and the emerging frustration as major forms of stress among Aboriginal people which, in turn, function as major variables in increasing Aboriginal criminality. Phillipson points out that there are no universal causes of crime and that it is necessary to understand the social, cultural and temporal contexts in which it occurs (1971: 33). Hamilton and Sinclair call on Ross (1987) to elaborate on the significance of culture:

Until we realize that [Aboriginal people] are not simply "primitive versions of us" but a people with a highly developed, formal, complex and wholly *foreign* set of cultural imperatives, we will continue to misinterpret their acts, misperceive their problems, and then impose mistaken and potentially harmful "remedies".

(Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 36).

Building on the concept of "potentially harmful remedies", many people have indicated that the justice system is inherently discriminatory and even racist toward Aboriginal people. As the values and imperatives under which

the justice system functions are a product of western Euro-Canadian thought, they are often at odds with, and are certainly foreign to, the thought and behaviour patterns of many Aboriginal people (see Faulkner 1989: 17). Hamilton and Sinclair (1991: 86) state:

We find that a system that seeks to provide justice on the principle that all Canadians share common values and experiences cannot help but discriminate against Aboriginal people, who come to the system with cultural values and experiences that differ substantially from those of the dominant society.

As well, Reasons (1975: 31) notes:

Since correctional institutions and their rules and policies are determined by the dominant group members (whites) based upon their culture it is inherently discriminatory. The equal application and enforcement of policies and rules based upon one culture upon members of other cultures represents a classic example of culture conflict.

This systemic discrimination is often cited as a factor in Aboriginal over-representation in correctional institutions (Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 88). Others suggest that Aboriginal offenders are less likely to get Temporary Absences, early releases, parole, or probationary sentences due to inherent limitations in the criteria for obtaining these rewards (permanent address, existing and functional social support network etc.) (see Bonta 1989: 54; Faulkner 1989: 8; French 1979: 49; Lane et al. 1978: 313).

The fact that culture is misunderstood and misinterpreted by corrections officials and staff was raised by other scholars. Reasons notes that an awareness by CSC

(Correctional Service of Canada) and parole officials that more Aboriginal people are required to work in corrections is an "official recognition of the importance of cultural differences within corrections and the need for special remedies" (1975: 47). Presently, however, corrections officials seem unsure as to what these 'remedies' might be or as to how they may operate. There is a great need to understand the cultural variables which surround criminal behaviour and the incarceration experience (as well as other facets of interaction with the justice system) (see French 1979: 58). There appears to be a latent assumption among many facets of the judiciary and corrections, as well as among some criminological researchers, that Aboriginal people constitute a culturally homogenous group. Obviously, this is not the case.

At present, the dismal state of cultural understanding exhibited by some criminological articles reviewed attests to the importance of anthropological analysis in this area. James (1979) for example, ignores the effects of acculturation on Aboriginal people and romanticizes traditional Aboriginal value systems. It is Hellon (1969) however, who displays the most obtuse 'understanding' of the variable of culture when he classifies Aboriginal cultures in their entirety as inherently psychopathic. He paradoxically claims that Aboriginal cultures have "remained static for centuries" (Hellon 1969: 77), yet suggests that

Aboriginal culture is presently 'eroding' (Hellon 1969: 77). He foolishly advocates a type of forced assimilation (i.e. "cultural transition") through education to address the issue of Native criminality (Hellon 1969: 79). Further related to misconceptions of culture is the fact that judges often make note of the fact that an offender was an "Indian", yet do not indicate how this affects sentencing (see Sinclair 1990: 280). As such, Sinclair notes that it is "surprising" (1990: 270) that cultural and ethnic variables do not receive more attention in the literature.

Obviously, culture and identity are a significant variables in how one adjusts to and functions throughout the incarceration experience. McCaskill states that being Native had implications for the institutional experience of Aboriginal offenders both in terms of self-definition and definition by others (1985: 74-5). Furthermore, Waldram has indicated that "identity issues are fairly central to the overall treatment process" (1992b: 6) of Aboriginal offenders at the Regional Psychiatric Centre (a federal facility) in Saskatoon. Cultural identity is not important for all Aboriginal inmates, but when it is it should be recognized as a special need when determining sentencing and institutional programming (including training, counselling, vocational skills, and treatment for a variety of problems) (see Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 406, 450; McCaskill 1985: 78; Sinclair 1990: 282; Waldram 1992: 166-167; Weibel-

Orlando 1989: 148). Sinclair notes that we can not assume that a lack of strong ties with an Aboriginal community means a lack of Aboriginal self-identity on the part of the offender (1990: 282-83).

Certainly, perceptions of identity and cultural affiliation are major variables. McCaskill notes that, among Aboriginal offenders:

Being an identifiable group results from both possessing common backgrounds, attitudes and interests and being treated differently (or at least perceived as being treated differently) by staff and other inmates...as long as Native people perceive themselves as members of a distinct group with common experiences and, as long as members of the dominant society continue to treat Indians as a particular group, then Native people will continue to possess a distinctive culture and identity.

(McCaskill 1985: 75; 90).

Moreover, Taft also suggests that perception is a predominant factor in how different ethnic groups interact with each other.

Taft postulates:

The internal aspect of ethnic identity involves a sense of belonging to, and of sharing the "fate" of the ethnic group, a feeling of pride, shame, depression and so on, according to the situation of the group. (Taft 1988: 157).

Certainly, then, a better understanding of the cultural variables surrounding the Aboriginal offender could better enable the corrections officials and staff to meet the needs of the Aboriginal offender and increase program effectiveness (Bonta 1989: 60; James 1979: 453; Reasons 1975: 44). While not all Aboriginal inmates will see

Aboriginal identity as a significant factor in their lives, "for the majority, their 'Nativity' is an important factor in their definition of themselves and should be recognized as a 'special' need in the development of correctional programmes" (McCaskill 1985: 78). Westermeyer and Neider (1986: 187) suggest that culturally appropriate treatment facilities and programmes may attract the best treatment candidates (i.e. those most serious and willing to try to help themselves). Though these authors are speaking of alcohol treatment programs, the results are generalizable to other self-help or therapeutic programs.

An unfortunate reality (which is the cumulative legacy of such factors as colonialism, mission schools, outlawing ceremonies, urbanization, the breakdown of extended families, and generations of familial and community dysfunction [see Canada 1988: 9]) is that many Native offenders find their first introduction to Native spiritual principles, concepts and practices within the walls of a penal institution (see, for example, Canada 1988: 5; Fraser 1992: 12; Grobsmith 1989: 144; Grobsmith and Dam 1990: 414; James 1979: 457; McCaskill 1985: 92; Waldram 1993: 353). An identification with one's Aboriginal background while incarcerated is a better option than identification with a criminal subculture (James 1979: 457). Reasons points out that "emphasis upon cultural identity contains a strong anticriminal [sic] element which points out the negative

impact upon collective efforts by doing drugs, stealing etc." (1975: 50).

McCaskill (1985: 79-80) and Waldram (1992: 18-26) have each proposed cultural profiles of Native offenders which could serve to help identify individuals (based on such attributes as language, exposure to Euro-Canadian communities and institutions, etc.) and aid in placing them in culturally-appropriate programming. Waldram provides the most succinct model. He proposes "'cultural adherence' profiles demonstrating the manner in which individuals can be categorized according to their degree of adherence to an Aboriginal versus Euro-Canadian culture" (Waldram 1992: 18). The "Traditionalist" Aboriginal offenders are characterized by their "introduction to an Aboriginal language as a first language, their continuing ability to speak and prefer that language, and a relatively low ability to communicate in English" (Waldram 1992: 22). They were also generally raised in Aboriginal communities and participated in traditional economic activities. Generally, they have "relatively little experience in a predominantly Euro-Canadian cultural milieu and will express a discomfort in this context" (Waldram 1992: 22). In short, "This individual's identity is strongly linked to his Aboriginal culture" (Waldram 1992: 23). "Transitional" offenders have a cultural adherence which is "transitional between Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian cultures" (Waldram 1992: 23). They have "extensive experience in both

Aboriginal or Euro-Canadian cultural milieux" (Waldram 1992: 23), often through foster home experience or close proximity with non-Aboriginal cultures while young. Generally, these individuals are "bicultural, yet retain a strong Aboriginal identity" (Waldram 1992: 24) due to the primary socialization experience in a predominantly Aboriginal culture. The "Assimilated" offender is characterized by a "lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, and [a] full assimilation into Euro-Canadian culture" (Waldram 1992: 24).

This understanding of cultural identity is important for our understanding of the effectiveness and efficiency of symbolic healing. For symbolic healing to occur, a common mythic world must be comprehended and exploited. Therefore, it is essential to understand the relative cultural affiliation of the healer and the patient.

## **2.2 Symbolic Healing**

For symbolic healing to occur, the healer and the patient must share a common mythic reality. The healer then explains the patient's problems in terms of this mythic reality and attaches the patient's emotions to transactional symbols within that myth. Through the manipulation of these symbols, the healer aids the patient in transacting his or her own emotions and ultimately healing themselves (see Dow: 1986). These points will be taken up in greater detail briefly.

Glik (1988: 1204) argues that spiritual healing is a form of symbolic healing and that symbolic processes play a large part in the overall healing process. At the core of symbolic healing (i.e. spiritual healing) is the manipulation of culturally appropriate symbols (Glik 1988: 1204). Moerman (1979: 60, 64) sees the manipulation of the symbolic metaphorical components of a healing system as a decisive element in its effectiveness. Kirmayer (1993: 172) argues that metaphor goes beyond analogy to transform its topic through the juxtaposition of disparate phenomena. Metaphor serves to link the mythic world to that of "bodily-givens" (which Kirmayer terms 'archetypes') and allow symbolic healing or psychotherapy to occur (see Kirmayer 1993). Moerman (1979: 62-66) further discounts the western conceptualization of mind-body dualism and suggests that these elements are intrinsically linked. Moreover, it is these links which permit the effectiveness of symbolic healing systems. As there are no fundamental boundaries between the physical and the mental, "The construction of healing symbols *is* healing" (Moerman 1979: 66)[emphasis in original].

Dow provides the most succinct synthesis of universal aspects of symbolic healing. He maintains that symbolic healing universally involves a four-stage structure:

1. The experiences of the healer and the healed are generalized with culturally-specific symbols contained in cultural myth;
2. the healer persuades the patient that the problem

- he or she is experiencing can be defined in terms of that myth;
3. the healer attaches the patients emotions to transactional symbols which are particularized from the general myth;
  4. the healer manipulates the transactional symbols to help the patient transact his or her own emotions.

(see Dow 1986).

These points require some elaboration.

As previously stated, certain psychological processes exist in which symbols affect the 'mind', which in turn affects the body, and aids in symbolic healing (Dow 1986: 59; Glik 1988: 1204; Moerman 1979: 62, 66). Dow argues that every system of symbolic healing is based on a model of experiential reality. Therefore, culturally-determined experiential truths are contained in a mythic model of reality (Dow 1986: 59). These experiential truths represent solutions to human problems. Therefore, curing occurs when the healer draws parallels between events in the mythic world and the somatic condition of the patient (Dow 1986: 60). In doing so, the healer gets the patient to accept a particularization of the general mythic world as a valid model of the patient's experiences (Dow 1986: 61). Symbolic media are particularized to the individual from the generalized mythic world (eg. sacred ideas, mythical beings/objects etc.) and these are termed 'transactional symbols' (Dow 1986: 63). These transactional symbols originate in a mythic world which has inherent value to an individual of a given culture. Therefore, these symbols are

more likely to evoke an emotional response in the patient, and aid in the process of symbolic healing (Dow 1986: 64).

In summary then:

Symbolic healing becomes possible when a particularized mythic world exists for both the therapist and the patient and when the patient accepts the power of the therapist to define the patient's relationship to it. The therapist then attaches the patient's emotions to transactional symbols and manipulates these symbols.

(Dow 1986: 66).

Other authors also note the effectiveness of symbolic healing. Jilek (1982: 132-155) suggests that the manipulation of culturally-appropriate symbols aids Salish Indian spirit dancers in effectively dealing with such issues as drug and alcohol rehabilitation:

The afflicted is said to be suffering from... "the spirit song's sickness". He is conceived of as being possessed by a wild, untamed power which could destroy him unless it is tamed and utilized as guardian spirit power. This power will benefit the patient only through initiation into spirit dancing; it is ambivalently perceived as beneficial to those who follow the traditionally prescribed "Indian ways" of dealing with it, but destructive to the resisting deviant.... [the patient's] utter destruction is inescapable unless he submits to a vicarious ritualized "death" in the ordeal of spirit dance initiation, in which he is "grabbed" and symbolically "clubbed to death", only to be resurrected ("stood up again") and born again to a new life as a "baby", after a quasi-fetal period of regression while secluded under the nursing care of "baby-sitters".

(Jilek 1982: 132; 133).

Katz (1982), documented an example of symbolic healing among the Dobe !Kung of the Kalahari desert. Here, sickness is caused by the ancestral gods trying to take one of the !Kung to their transcendental domain. The healer uses a

powerful energy substance (*num*) to combat illness (Katz 1982: 42). The healer dances to activate his or her *num* and eventually enters an emotional transcendental state of *kia* in which the healer travels to the world of the gods and argues with them over the soul of the sick and for the well-being of the !Kung community as a whole. Thus, culturally-appropriate symbols are manipulated to facilitate healing:

Through *kia*, the Kung [sic] participate in what Westerners call the "religious-spiritual" dimension. Transcending themselves, they are able to contact the realm where the gods and the spirits of dead ancestors live. Sickness is a process by which these spirits, helped by the lesser god, try to carry off the sick one into their own realm...Sent by the great god, the spirits are strong but not invincible. A struggle takes place between two groups of loving relatives, those still living and those already dead. Each group wishes to have the sick one for themselves, and neither the realm of the living nor that of the spirits is seen as bad. In their ordinary state, the Kung do not argue with the gods, such is their respect. But in *kia*, healers express the wishes of the living by entering directly into a struggle with the spirits and the lesser god.

(Katz 1982: 43).

Kemnitzer's (1976) and Powers' (1982) documentations of the Lakota *yuwipi* healing ritual can also be seen as examples of symbolic healing. In the *yuwipi* ceremony, the healer evokes the aid of Lakota spirits to assist in identifying and treating ailments. The ritual is long and complicated consisting of a number of major components. These include: fasting, the sweat lodge ceremony, the actual healing ceremony, feasting and thanksgiving. This discussion will concentrate on the actual healing component only. The healer is usually covered with a blanket and bound in a

darkened room. Songs are sung which draw the spirits to the ceremony and ask for their assistance in overcoming an individual's or group's problems. Kemnitzer states, "the spirits come into the room, communicate with and heal the participants' troubles through the mediumship of the shaman" (1976: 270). Therefore, the ceremony involves the major components of symbolic healing as the healer acts as interpreter and intermediary between the secular and sacred realms, thereby uniting these two dimensions for the well-being of the patients.

Many authors pointed to the importance of empathy between the healer and the patient to increase the effectiveness of spiritual healing. Moerman states that the decisive factor in successful spiritual healing is for the person being healed to establish a good "helping relationship" with the healer (1979: 59). Dow also argues that curing efficiency will increase as the patient believes in the curer's ability to help (1986: 60). Skultans maintains that empathy and unity within a spiritualist healing group aids in both the understanding and the therapeutic value of spiritualism (1976: 220-221). In the areas of incarceration and rehabilitation, Grobsmith and Dam (1990: 414) suggest that "Indian counsellors who may have had experience with alcohol and perhaps incarceration may be more readily received by clients because of their awareness of and sensitivity to the struggles of Native American

offenders". Aboriginal offenders at RPC stated "the single most important characteristic of the Elders...was their ability to be empathetic, to understand the patients...In many cases, the empathy of the Elders was contrasted with the perceived lack of this ability among the treatment staff" (Waldram 1993: 351). Jilek (1982: 98) and Waldram (1993: 351) point out that Elders or healers with past problems of drug and alcohol abuse and/or incarceration histories are given increased credibility in the eyes of those they are trying to heal. The inmates or addicts feel that the healer has some personal first-hand experience and understanding of their present plight and, therefore, are not offering advice without the benefit of 'being there'.

The role of culturally-conditioned transactional symbols in symbolic healing has already been established in the discussion above (See Dow 1986: 61-64; Glik 1988: 1204). Kleinman and Sung also suggest that illness and healing are culturally defined, are variable among cultures and, therefore, "social and cultural factors become major determinants of healing" (1979: 8). Therefore, healers, patients, and healing contexts can only be understood in the totality of the social and cultural environment in which they occur and "Symbolic systems of healing are most effective if culturally relevant for adherents" [sic] (Glik 1988: 1204).

### 2.3 Indigenous Practises as Therapy

Primarily, the official government perspective offered by Corrections Services Canada (CSC), is that Aboriginal spirituality is a 'religion' on par with other faiths. CSC offers the following recommendations to address the spiritual and cultural needs of Aboriginal offenders:

1. The correctional system shall make available programs which are particularly suited to serving the spiritual and cultural needs of Aboriginal offenders and, where numbers warrant, programs for the treatment, training and reintegration of Aboriginal offenders which take into account their culture and way of life.
2. Aboriginal spirituality shall be accorded the same status, protection and privileges as other religions. Native Elders, spiritual advisors and ceremonial leaders shall be recognized as having the same status, protection and privileges as religious officials of other religions, for the purposes of providing religious counselling, performing spiritual ceremonies and other related duties.
3. Where numbers warrant, correctional institutions shall provide an Aboriginal Elder with the same status, protection and privileges as an institutional Chaplain.
4. The correctional service shall recognize the spiritual rights of individual Aboriginal offenders, such as group spiritual and cultural ceremonies and ritual, including pipe ceremonies, religious fasting, sweat lodge ceremonies, potlatches, and the burning of sweetgrass, sage and cedar.

(Canada 1988: 34).

While these recommendations are comprehensive and well-intentioned, they fail to recognize the therapeutic value of participating in 'religious' activities. This is complicated by the fact that Aboriginal spirituality still has problems being recognized as equivalent to other religions (let alone therapeutic practises) (Waldram 1994). This is in spite of the fact that CSC recognizes that "many Natives have special needs surrounding Native spirituality and the observance of

ceremonies, and many Native offenders give positive reports of the Native Elder programs in CSC and other institutions" (Canada 1988: 33) (emphasis mine). This raises the question: are these 'positive reports' indicative of some kind of therapeutic advantage on behalf of the inmate? Canada infers a recognition of the therapeutic value of cultural identity and a spiritual life by linking it to treatment, training and re-integration of Aboriginal offenders as stated in point number one of the preceding page. Westermeyer and Neider (1986: 186-187) more succinctly state, however, that there is a wide-ranging need for resources which reaffirm ethnic affiliation as these can serve to alleviate alcoholism, enhance health, and ameliorate social and behavioural problems.

When attempting to determine whether Aboriginal spirituality is religion or therapy (or both), we must remember that the distinction between the sacred and the secular, and between somatic and spiritual healing, is a recent Western differentiation and is not a valid perspective in many cultures - including that of traditional North American Native culture (see, for eg., Grobsmith 1989: 135; Kleinman and Sung 1979; Sinclair 1990: 283; Skultans 1976: 190; Waldram 1994; Wood 1979: 292). Nor is a somatic\spiritual dichotomization valid when discussing symbolic healing. Therefore, participation in 'religious' (i.e. Native spirituality) ceremonials can greatly aid in

the rehabilitation and therapeutic healing (broadly defined) of many Aboriginal inmates.

The role of the sweat lodge in identity construction and reaffirmation, as well as in the treatment of alcoholism, has been documented (see Hall 1986: 170-171; Waldram 1994: 8-10; Weibel-Orlando 1989: 150). Waldram (1993: 352) further identifies the sweat lodge as an educational (i.e. cultural awareness), religious (spiritual) and therapeutic (psychological, abuse treatment etc.) undertaking. As such, sweat lodge participation can increase the inmate's ability to cope with prison life and decrease individual stress and illegal activity while in prison. This, in turn, provides a useful institutional function for corrections authorities (Waldram 1993: 354). Westermeyer and Neider documented increased cultural affiliation over a 10 year period and noted that it "was associated with better clinical outcome with regard to alcoholism, but also with depression and legal problems" (1986: 185). Therefore, the benefits of a stronger identity and cultural affiliation (through participation in spirituality programming) go far beyond immediate coping within the institution. In fact, they can radically alter the life of an individual and provide skills which can be utilized for the duration of that person's life - in some cases significantly altering past behaviour problems and, therefore, decreasing the wide-ranging burden of crime on society (see Grobsmith 1989: 144;

Jilek 1982: 10-13, 96-97, 158-159; Kemnitzer 1976: 279) (for case study examples see Hughes and Sasson 1990; Waldram 1994).

The literature, then, indicates the following benefits which result from participating in Aboriginal spirituality programs:

1. Spirituality programs provide a mechanism for coping with the stresses of prison life, reducing conflict with other inmates and staff, and opening up the individual to other prison programs.
2. Elders function as therapists in a culturally appropriate manner.
3. Participation in spirituality programming serves to treat 'culturally specific' mental health problems (such as bad medicine and dream interpretation).
4. A sense of identity can be re-affirmed or instilled in those who felt marginalized by both Euro-Canadian and Native cultures due to such factors as foster homes, mission schools, urbanization, etc.

(Adapted from Waldram 1994).

The following quotes succinctly state the benefits for the individual of participating in spirituality programming:

Time with the Elders gives tremendous potential for positive change. Even for Aboriginal offenders who have had limited prior contact with the cultural teachings, the opportunity for instruction from Elders, for participation in the sweat, longhouse ceremonies, etc., it is an important step to increased self-esteem; to hope; to contact with the wider Aboriginal community; to reconnection with their own community; and to healing.

(Fraser 1992: 12).

As an individual learns the traditional ways, he must, of necessity, change his behaviour to act in accordance with the teachings (reinforced by rituals and ceremonies). Inherent in the traditional Indian perspective as practised in everyday life is self-discipline, respect and honesty. **Therefore, Native cultural programmes have, at their core, a rehabilitative function.** They can assist the inmate in strengthening his Native identity, and in turn, provide him with a sense of belonging and positive self-image.

This process will be reinforced the more the inmate learns and practises Native cultural teachings.

(McCaskill 1985: 92)[emphasis added].

The literature suggests that Elders, medicine people and traditional people play a vital role in the success of Native spirituality programs. In the role of symbolic healing, the Elder as therapeutic practitioner may help the inmate understand, identify with, and transact symbols from the mythic world to the inmate's reality to facilitate the healing of the inmate (see Dow 1986: 61-66; Kleinman and Sung 1979: 22-24; Waldram 1993: 349-350). The Elder as a culturally appropriate therapist may help the inmates identify and discuss spiritual problems, help them cope and accept their situation, and help the inmates deal with feelings of anger, hopelessness and frustration (Hamilton and Sinclair 1991: 445; see also Waldram 1993: 350; Wood 1979: 299-300). Inmate's perceptions regarding the relative advantages and disadvantages of interacting with Elders will be discussed in further detail later in the thesis. Fraser provides a comprehensive account of the role of the Elder in a corrections environment:

The advantages of Elder visitation in the institutions is many-fold. Contact with the Elders is an incredible gift for offenders who have been socially, emotionally and economically deprived. Through the Elder, the offender can begin to grasp the cultural and spiritual teachings, which have provided continuity and consistency for more than 15,000 years. The Elder carries the historical thread of the offender as a person, provides identification of community, speaks figuratively of family, of home, and expands the offender's definition of belonging. If the discipline of teachings is followed, emotional, physical and

spiritual health is promoted.

(Fraser 1992: 12).

It has been established, in the discussion of symbolic healing, that a common mythological reality is necessary for such healing to occur. This would appear to be in contradiction, then, with the wide range of cultural backgrounds among incarcerated Aboriginal offenders in Canada. How can an Elder of a particular cultural background serve the symbolic and spiritual needs of offenders from a wide range of Aboriginal backgrounds? The answer lies in the emergence of the concept of Pan-Indianism which is accompanying the nativistic revival of Aboriginal cultural phenomenon in a variety of contexts. Jilek maintains that a Renaissance of Native ceremonials is occurring and that these have "become foci of native [sic] identity and carriers of a *pan-Indian message, serving psychosocial healing function for the individual and collective* under the direction of skilful ritualist leaders" (1982: 158) (emphasis mine).

Most offenders do not see a problem in dealing with an Elder from a cultural tradition different than their own. Instead, a general spiritual tradition common to the Plains area (particularly Northern Plains - [see James 1979: 454]) seems to be at work (see Waldram 1993: 355-356). The spiritual traditions are seen as fundamentally the same, with minor differences in procedures, while maintaining the fundamental essence of the spiritual teachings and lifeways.

"The interaction between healer and patient seems to be, in part, a search for the lowest common denominators linking their cultures and experiences, so that the therapeutic encounter has some hope of success" (Waldram 1993: 355-356).

Grobsmith (1989: 143) maintains that pan-Indianism is favoured among American inmates and that factions are downplayed to project a united front to corrections authorities. For many correctional facilities Lakota spirituality is the main model for the pan-Indian resurgence (Grobsmith 1989: 144). Hall sees the sweat lodge as a pan-Indian symbol "because its original distribution was wide and because it makes both a physically and culturally powerful impression" (1986: 171). Lane et al. suggest that Natives in Canada are united by the socio-economic conditions which are the result of colonialism (1978: 314). While certain commonalities obviously exist due to continued oppression and attempted assimilation, this argument is overly-simplistic given the wide range of socio-economic differences among Natives in different geographical areas of the country. Sinclair succinctly links pan-Indianism to spirituality by suggesting that:

...there exists in Canada a wide range of Indian cultures. *Despite the variations however, a common thread runs through each of these cultures. That thread is a common spiritual worldview; it is an attitude towards the world and our place within it.* Traditional Indian society was based on the knowledge that all things in life are related in a sacred manner and are governed by natural or cosmic laws...Proper conduct is determined by natural laws which obliterate the distinction between "sacred" and "secular" or the "laws

of nature" and the "rules of society". It is through the understanding of this reciprocal relationship between humans and nature that we are provided with the substance, both physical and spiritual, that we require to live. Human law is a reflection of natural law. All of the structures, customs, and ways of life of an Indian community grew out of this central understanding.

(Sinclair 1990: 283) [emphasis added].

While therapeutic results seem to derive from traditional approaches, a word of caution must be offered. Grobsmith and Dam (1990: 406) point out that there is a romantic appeal in promoting indigenous healing and treatment systems but that there is a lack of any real empirical data or systematic measures of the success of indigenous practices. Therefore, we are unable to determine the effectiveness of Aboriginal healing practices relative to non-Aboriginal approaches. This amounts to an unsubstantiated belief in the effectiveness of symbolic healing or a "leap of faith" (Weibel-Orlando 1989: 150). It may in fact be the individual (and his or her perceptions), rather than the treatment modality which determines the success or failure of the traditional approach (Grobsmith and Dam 1990: 407; see also Kleinman and Sung 1979: 16; Skultans 1976: 191; Waldram 1993: 360). Not all indigenous treatment practices will work for all individuals and not all individuals will be indefinitely healed - many may resume abusing or other detrimental behaviour (Jilek 1982: 99; Weibel-Orlando 1989: 151-51). However, contemporary approaches are certainly not entirely successful in treating

substance abuse and other problems, and even though Alcoholics Anonymous (for example) is not completely effective, few would doubt its general therapeutic value for combating alcoholism (Jilek 1982: 99). Therefore we need more long term, systematic and empirical analysis of the efficiency of traditional healing and treatment approaches to compare them with Western success rates. We must determine and demonstrate how and why certain therapeutic aspects of spirituality are working and attempt to enhance these aspects in spirituality programming (Waldram 1994). We must also determine which aspects may possibly be damaging to an individual's cultural identity (Waldram 1994). Waldram (1994) cautions, however, that any attempts to scientifically or empirically validate the efficiency of the therapeutic value of traditional practices will be controversial as Elders and healers dislike being either documented or assessed.

There are no 'magic bullets' in the treatment and rehabilitation of Aboriginal offenders. The sweat lodge (and other teachings/ceremonials will work for some Aboriginal offenders and not others. We need to attempt to contextually understand the complex set of personal, cultural, and cross-cultural experiences which an individual brings to treatment. These cautions are not to suggest that such studies be discarded. On the contrary, research must be continued in this area and, whenever and where-ever

methodologically and ethically possible, long-term, contextual, empirical analysis and evaluations of the results of symbolic treatment should be attempted. Grobsmith and Dam maintain that "one's spirituality regardless of religious background should be explored as a means to complement therapy" (1990: 422).

### 3.0 Current Services at the Saskatoon Correctional Centre

#### 3.1 Aboriginal Spirituality Services

The Aboriginal spirituality services offered by the Saskatoon Correctional Centre have been subjected to frequent changes in key program delivery personnel and fluctuations in the variety and frequency of services offered. The information presented herein is representative only of the Aboriginal spirituality services offered from the period of mid-April 1993 to September 30, 1993. Near the end of this time frame there was a change of Elders at SCC. As the Elder is the cornerstone of the Aboriginal spirituality services offered at SCC, the information and discussion presented hereafter is based on the spiritual services and teachings of the Elder who was originally in attendance when the research was begun. This particular Elder was no longer with SCC at the conclusion of the research. Elders are generally acquired by SCC on an annual basis via contractual agreement.

Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC is primarily confined to the provision of periodic (and at times sporadic) access to Aboriginal spiritual leaders (i.e. Elders) and the sweat lodge ceremony. Other spiritual and cultural events, such as powwows and Elders' feasts, occur

infrequently. The use of sweetgrass for daily prayer and cleansing is also available to the inmates if the inmate can obtain sweetgrass from someone on the outside, and if it is approved by the centre. Spiritual services from various Christian denominations are also offered. There are also a variety of programs which the inmates can participate in if they meet the institutional criteria for admission (for example, anger management, addiction education, upgrading). Some programs, such as addiction education, are mandatory for all inmates.

A Native Brotherhood for Aboriginal inmates is noticeably and intentionally absent at SCC. Presently, SCC staff and management feel that the Aboriginal Brotherhood is primarily a political body which attracts hostile individuals. The last Brotherhood which was functioning at SCC ended in a particularly negative manner in that many inmates were not satisfied with the direction that the Brotherhood was taking (due in large part to the fact that SCC had hired a non-Aboriginal female to oversee the Brotherhood) and certain instigators or manipulators within the inmate population apparently took over the inner-workings of the Brotherhood and re-directed it from a primarily healing and self-help group to a political organization. Numerous staff and inmates call on the riot at the Prince Albert correctional facility in 1977 and suggest that the Brotherhood in this facility at the time (the New

Native Perspective) was instrumental in starting the riot there. Therefore, they feel that a re-occurrence of such events must be avoided at all costs. The inquiry by Judge Benjamin Moore (1977) which looked into the riot, however, indicated that it was a small group of instigators which used the Brotherhood as a shield for their own illegal actions (not the Brotherhood itself) which sparked the riot and, therefore, the riot was not an "Indian uprising" (Moore 1977: 47) but "was caused by actions of a small fringe of the inmate body" (Moore 1977: 47) who happened to be Aboriginal. In fact, Moore maintains that this small group of instigators simply took advantage of a major division which existed between staff and management for months preceding the riot and used this lack of cohesiveness to their advantage. In the "general conclusions" of Moore's report, he does not mention the Brotherhood a single time. Instead, the onus for the events precipitating the riot is placed primarily on the director of the centre at the time (Moore 1977: 80-81).

A Sacred Circle is offered to a specific group of inmates who are participants in the Phoenix Program. The Phoenix Program is a residential pre-treatment education program for inmates who would like to address the problem of substance abuse in their lives. As a pre-treatment educational program, the emphasis of the Phoenix Program is on self-learning about healthy lifestyles, new ways of

thinking about oneself, appropriate and inappropriate behaviour, and clarifying values. It helps participants learn to function and express themselves in groups and aids them in gaining the skills they need to feel comfortable in an addictions treatment program following their release. Participants in the Phoenix Program undergo a variety of programming for the majority of the work day (for example, Alcoholics Anonymous, Anger Management, Childhood Sexual Abuse Seminars). All participants sign a contract to live drug and alcohol free for a period of three months. Those participating in the Phoenix Program are isolated from the rest of the general population of the jail. They are given different exercise times and are confined to one specific living unit when not in programming. The Sacred Circle runs one night a week throughout the program and is restricted only to those inmates who are involved with the Phoenix Program. As the Phoenix Program is a pre-treatment educational program, the inclusion of the Sacred Circle in the Phoenix Program indicates an implicit recognition of the potential therapeutic value of participating in Aboriginal spiritual services. All inmates (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) in the Phoenix Program are welcome to attend. The researcher was present for three Sacred Circles as the Phoenix Program was coming to an end at the beginning of the research. In these instances, only Aboriginal inmates attended the gathering. The format of the Circle is informal

and unstructured. Generally, the Elder relates stories and life experiences. These personal narratives provide implicit (and sometimes explicit) spiritual teachings and insights. The Circle, therefore, gives the participants in the program an opportunity to sit with and learn from the Elder in a relaxing and informal atmosphere.

The sweat lodge is the most apparent Aboriginal spiritual symbol in the jail. The lodge stands near the northeast wall of the exercise yard between the razor-wired concrete wall and the baseball diamond. It is a relatively unassuming structure yet it is impossible not to notice it as it stands in sharp contrast to the other buildings and objects in the exercise yard. The sweat lodge ceremony (hereafter referred to as a "sweat") was offered once every two weeks at the time of the research. More recently, SCC has been attempting to offer the ceremony weekly. Very basic and fundamental factors pertaining to the sweat (such as procuring rocks and wood) are often major obstacles to undertaking the ceremony. For example, certain SCC personnel were attempting for weeks, with no success, to get wood via the governmental infrastructure.

Only those inmates who are in the normal living units (NLU) and in the overflow dorms (i.e. regular population inmates) are eligible to attend the sweats. Sweats are not available to inmates in remand, secure or semi-secure areas of confinement (although there has been some talk of

building a sweat in remand). While Urban Camp (UC) also had a sweat lodge erected by the Elder, it was only used once. UC is a low-security placement area which acts as a transition housing facility. Inmates here work in the community during the day and return to the facility to eat, sleep, and/or attend other programs in the evening. UC functions as an institution separate from SCC. It has its own budget and is responsible for its own programming.

Any inmate (both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) from the general population of SCC who wishes to attend a sweat is welcome to do so. The inmates are not required to sign up for a sweat prior to the ceremony. Posters were sent to the living units and overflow areas by the Activities Coordinator the same day as a pending sweat, stating that a sweat was scheduled for the evening. Approximately 23 inmates were present at each sweat offered. The sweat lodge is able to accommodate larger numbers, though not particularly comfortably. The number of participants went up to 38 at the Elders' Feast and down to 13 while the final stages of the Stanley Cup Playoffs were in progress. There were two non-Aboriginal men who participated regularly in the sweat lodge. Other non-Aboriginal men would try the ceremony once and not return. The majority of the participants in the sweat were young Aboriginal men. No staff members attended a sweat in the institution throughout the course of the research.

The sweat takes place from 6:30 p.m. to approximately 8:00 p.m. on Wednesday evenings. This relatively short time frame requires the Elder to begin the ceremony immediately after the inmates are released from their living units. As such, the inmates do not have the opportunity for informal teaching, counselling, and discussion around the sweat lodge while waiting for the rocks to heat up. Beyond the incarceration environment, this time preceding the actual ceremony is often used to impart teachings to the followers, as well as to socialize and discuss what each devotee would like the others to pray for when the ceremony begins. Afternoon exercise or "yard" time for the inmates occurs from 4:15 p.m. until 5:45 p.m. While the inmates are in the yard, they are permitted to go over to the sweat lodge area (if a sweat is scheduled for that day). At other times, this area remains one of restricted access. A core group of 2 or 3 inmates (which periodically fluctuated) assisted the Elder in preparing the sweat lodge and building the fire in the afternoon prior to the ceremony. This group of aides were permitted to remove themselves from their normal institutional duties to assume this task. Yard time often afforded an opportunity for other inmates to approach the Elder and talk with him, as he was generally out tending the fire or simply relaxing by the lodge and engaging in conversation with the inmates. This informal conversation often included teachings of Aboriginal spirituality.

Usually, the teachings were implicit and informal (often derived from narratives of the Elder's life). For example, the Elder would impart stories about his past experiences fasting, sweating, Sun Dancing, or doing prison time to the inmates. These stories would usually contain a strong moral or spiritual lesson. However, the lesson was rarely specifically stated. Rather, it was up to the individual to extract the information from the narrative which was pertinent to his life at the time.

Occasionally, a more formal attempt at teaching was used such as when the Elder taught the inmates (and the researcher) how to make tobacco ties. At this time the meaning and significance of the ties was also explained. The tobacco ties are "like a rosary" in that they are used to aid the practitioner of Lakota Aboriginal spirituality in communicating prayer to the Creator. The adherent uses 16 small squares of cloth (approximately 3cm by 3cm): 4 each of the colours black, red, yellow, and white in this specific order. Each colour is representative of the four colours of humankind ("man" in the terminology of the Lakota practitioner). Also, each colour is associated with a specific direction: black represents west, red represents north, yellow represents east, and white represents south. The four colours are also associated with specific attributes. For example: black is associated with truth and honesty; red is associated with healing; yellow represents

birth, and white represents the passage to the other side (i.e. death). The spiritual practitioner places a small amount of tobacco in each square, one at a time, and says a prayer while doing so. As each square is filled, it is tied onto a string with a double half-hitch. This process is repeated until all 16 pieces of cloth are filled with tobacco and tied to the string. The completed ties are then kept in a safe and non-polluted place by the maker before being taken into the sweat lodge during the ceremony. The ties are hung on the willow frame inside the sweat lodge as the worshippers enter the lodge prior to the ceremony. The prayers in the ties are heard by the Creator throughout the ceremony. This physical manifestation of one's prayers is thought to increase the potency of the prayers when combined with the sacrifice endured in the sweat lodge. Few inmates at SCC had previous experience or familiarity with tobacco ties.

For the majority of the inmates, this informal interaction around the sweat, as well as the actual ceremony itself, afforded the most access to the Elder and to the spiritual teachings and services he offered. The sweat itself encompasses elements of learning about the principles and practises surrounding Aboriginal spirituality. The Elder always offered spiritual information and advice while the sweat was in progress. Often, the messages were in the narratives offered by the Elder. As well, the lessons were

often implicit, requiring introspection and self-analysis on the part of the inmates.

The ceremony was undertaken in the Lakota manner. The cornerstone of the Lakota sweat lodge ceremony (as practised by this particular Elder) is sacrifice. As such, the sweats were generally very hot and physically and mentally demanding. As with most Plains Aboriginal cultural groups, the sweat lasted four rounds. Adherents would sing and pray throughout the rounds. In a Lakota sweat lodge, one is not supposed to pray for oneself. Rather, you are to pray for others who need your prayers. As you are praying for many other people, many other people are also praying for you. Therefore, it is unnecessary to pray for yourself as you and your loved ones are being looked after by the Creator due to the prayers of others. The Elder stated many times that "For every prayer you give you get 10 in return." As many of the songs and prayers were in Lakota (and most of the inmates were Cree), few inmates knew the words to the prayers and songs used. Some inmates, who had had previous interaction with the Elder on the outside, were familiar with the songs and prayers and assisted in singing while in the sweat. Unlike other Elders who have worked at SCC, the Elder present at the time of the research would not take his pipe or sweetgrass into the jail to use in ceremonies. This is due to the restrictions on these sacred items which prohibit them from being near menstruating women. As such, the sweat

was run without the use of the pipe.

Inmates participating in the sweats were generally respectful of the Elder. However, there was also much more horseplay and "solid" jail-house posturing than in sweat lodge ceremonies outside of the jail. To function inside a prison environment, most inmates desperately strive to appear "solid". That is, the inmate must appear "tough" and "untouchable" to other inmates in order to avoid potential confrontations. Coinciding with this role playing is a general tendency not to let any emotions show. This is particularly true of emotions which are considered to show "weakness" such as fear, anxiety, or sorrow.

Many Aboriginal inmates tried the ceremony for the first time while at SCC. For most of the inmates, the sweat was a learning experience. Even for many inmates with past exposure to Aboriginal spirituality, the manner in which the sweats inside SCC were run was different than what they were used to (due to the Lakota method and the lack of the pipe). Many inmates would later complain about the intense (indeed searing) heat associated with the ceremony. While the paramount importance of sacrifice was indicated to the inmates by the Elder, this message seemed lost among many of the practitioners. Other inmates, though, were aware of the need to sacrifice. Most of the regular participants in the sweat indicated positive results in their lives and/or institutional experiences through their participation in the

sweat lodge ceremony.

The Elder's role at SCC bears no official job description. Generally, his role is seen by management as providing spiritual services, counselling and support to the inmate population. As well, he is required to 'officiate' at various Aboriginal cultural and spiritual activities in the jail. The researcher came to know the Elder and work closely with him from the outset of the research at SCC. The researcher and the Elder spent a great deal of time together engaged in a variety of tasks, both within and beyond SCC, and continue to do so. The Elder intensely dislikes the term "Elder". He prefers to refer to himself as a "servant" stating that he is "lower than a dog". He sees his primary purpose as running ceremonies so that he can enable others to worship. Therefore, he is somewhat of a conduit permitting others to communicate more effectively with the Creator. While intending no disrespect, however, the term "Elder" will be used throughout this thesis as a matter of convenience. Furthermore, this term is largely understood and is currently in use by most corrections services in the country. As well, most inmates also used this term in reference to this individual.

One of the Elder's main roles is to provide visits and consultation to the Aboriginal inmates at SCC. In this capacity he is acting as friend, liaison, counsellor and spiritual advisor. Often, the Elder finds himself

functioning as an educator. He provides both implicit and explicit information to staff and inmates regarding Aboriginal spiritual and cultural practices. As such, the Elder is also an important educational resource for corrections staff and officials. Furthermore, the Elder also functions as a link to the Aboriginal community. He generally knows who to access from the Aboriginal community when certain functions and/or personnel are required at SCC (the Elders' Feast, for example). Many inmates suggest that they can identify with the Elder and see him as a positive role model due to the fact that this particular Elder has done prison time in the past and has re-directed his life and healed himself through the practise of Lakota spirituality. This, then, is an unstated, yet highly significant, role for the Elder to play in a corrections environment. The Elder's roles in the Sacred Circle and the sweat lodge ceremony have already been briefly discussed.

Generally speaking, the Elder was well-received and basically respected by most of the inmates. However, certain inmates did not accept or appreciate the Elder due to such factors as the difference between the Elder's particular spiritual stance and their own, perceived differences in culture (for example Cree vs. Lakota), personality conflicts, or perceived problems with the level of the Elder's commitment. Staff opinions of the Elder varied greatly from full acceptance and respect, to sarcasm,

ignorance, suspicion and open hostility. These variables of perception and interaction will be discussed in fuller detail later.

As previously stated, one of the most fundamental principles of the Elder's spiritual perspective is the paramount importance of sacrifice. While prayer alone is beneficial, prayer accompanied by sacrifice (in the sweat lodge or while fasting, for example) is much more potent. Coinciding with the importance of sacrifice, is the necessity of earning knowledge. The Elder believes that spiritual and cultural knowledge must, to a large extent, be earned. Knowledge granted or simply given to an individual prior to that individual's sacrifice (which is undertaken to earn the privilege of obtaining that knowledge) could be potentially harmful for the individual. Those who have not sacrificed and earned a particular aspect of knowledge (for example the uses and importance of sweetgrass) are likely to interpret and use any information given to them incorrectly. In doing so, there is a great possibility that they may harm themselves or others. As such, the Elder's practise of spiritual teaching was usually casual and implied, rather than explicit, with small amounts of information imparted at any given time. It is important to "go slow" in the traditional ways and learn to absorb and understand any knowledge given to you prior to attempting to increase your level of spiritual awareness.

There is also an element of individualized learning associated with the Lakota tradition, as practised through the Elder at SCC. That is, it is up to the individual to actively seek the knowledge out; it is not something which can be "given" to an individual. The Elder states that, rather than heal those who are suffering, his role is only to point people in the right direction. Thereafter, their healing process is facilitated by the Creator and their relationship to Him via Aboriginal spirituality. Furthermore, it is up to the individual to interpret spiritual knowledge according to his own experiences and related beliefs. That is not to say that there is no guidance as to the meanings and uses of spiritual practices and beliefs. Rather, it is important for the individual to seek and understand knowledge from his or her own perspective and life experiences, which ultimately serves to shape the spiritual interpretations which one has. While one must understand the basic principles, rules of conduct, and ritual usages associated with sweetgrass (for example), it is also important to have an individualized interpretation of the significance and importance of sweetgrass based on one's own degree of sacrifice, commitment, and state of spiritual awareness. This individualized interpretation generally comes from an adherent undertaking an important spiritual enterprise such as a fast in the wilderness or the completion of a Sun Dance. Obviously, then, this necessary

element of learning is circumscribed by the environment of a correctional facility. The Elder maintains that when knowledge is earned by practitioners of Aboriginal spirituality, it is not only remembered better, but it is also afforded more respect. Moreover, this element of individualism allows the individual to choose the level of commitment to a spiritual life which best suits them at the time. For example, to follow the Lakota way, one must eventually begin to undertake fasts in the wilderness. However, the duration and frequency of such fasts are generally left up to the individual. Strong adherents to Lakota spirituality, however, generally undertake fasting annually. Related to varying levels of commitment, there are no elements of "guilt" associated with persons who, for example, withdraw from their participation in the sweat lodge after a brief initiation to the ceremony.

More than any other Elder that the researcher has had the opportunity to meet, the Elder at SCC utilized a secular approach to spirituality. The Elder openly objected to grandiose ceremonial practices (for example, pipe ceremonies before raising a tipi at SCC) stating that these types of practices held little actual value and that the practitioners incorporating such conventions into their ceremonies were merely "fancying it up". This relates to the Elder's core belief in the validity and necessity of sacrifice - "Anything else is extra". The Elder is unique in

this regard even among some of the other members of his spiritual community who worship the Lakota way on the outside. Many of his fellow spiritualists incorporate many more elements of ceremonialism in their practices than does the Elder at SCC. For example, other Lakota spiritualists will place a tobacco offering on the first five rocks to be used in the sweat lodge. The Elder at SCC, however, does not incorporate this practice.

Another important part of the Elder's philosophy relates to the point earlier that he is only a servant. As he is human, he is also necessarily imperfect. Therefore, he refuses to "bless" objects such as eagle feathers for the inmates. He says that he is incapable of blessing anything as humankind ("Man") is the most imperfect of all beings. Humans are the only species which actively destroy the natural balance of all things. They are the ultimate destroyers and, therefore, are the least "Holy" of all beings. He does not consider himself a "Holy" man (even though many of his associates on the street, and many inmates do). He actively discourages his idolization by zealots by making such suggestions as "Don't follow me or you'll end up in hell". Instead, he tells those who worship with him to follow the Grandfathers (*Tunkašila*). It is the *Tunkašila* who aid, cure, and heal people; the Elder is merely a servant of the people to enable this to occur.

### 3.2 Aboriginal Spirituality in a Prison Environment

Within an incarceration environment, certain elements of Aboriginal spirituality are severely curtailed or simply non-existent. For example, it has been noted that the resident Elder for the period of the research refused to use his pipe or sweetgrass inside the confines of the SCC. These items are central core elements in Aboriginal spirituality. Aboriginal spirituality in a prison environment, then, is a product of those practises, teachings and procedures which the Elder is willing to undertake in such an environment (based on personal, cultural, and spiritual philosophies). Furthermore, Aboriginal spirituality services on the "inside" are also dependent upon what staff members, unions, and management personnel are willing to accommodate within the institution. Security concerns and policy procedures are often restricting to the relatively unstructured and spontaneous nature of most Aboriginal spiritual undertakings. Finally, there is no agreement or consensus within the Aboriginal community as to the nature and extent of Aboriginal spiritual services which should be offered in a prison context. Some traditional people would suggest that incarceration environments are not, under any circumstances, an appropriate venue in which to practise Aboriginal spirituality. Other traditional people maintain that prisons may be one of the best places to get individuals to reflect on their past wrong-doings and foster a new sense of self

and responsibility to their families, communities, and nations. What emerged from the study at the SCC, then, was a type of Aboriginal spirituality which was adapted to the prison environment.

Some respondents commented on the fact that certain practices and procedures had to be modified when on the inside. For example, as sweetgrass was not always available for daily prayer and cleansing, tobacco would sometimes have to be substituted. In times of severe stress, many inmates want to participate in a sweat lodge ceremony or speak to an Elder. However, sweat lodge ceremonies are highly structured and scheduled in a prison environment and are not available on demand or request, as they are in the larger Aboriginal community. Furthermore, the limited time which the Elder was available to the facility, sometimes meant that those who sought his counsel or advice did not have access to him at the times when they needed it most. For example, while the resident Elder was on holidays (following which he discontinued his relationship with the SCC) an inmate had a request slip in to see him. As the Elder was away for a prolonged period, and as no interim arrangements were made by SCC to accommodate the cultural and spiritual needs of the Aboriginal inmates, this inmate was forced to wait over two months to have his request to see an Elder honoured. There would be no Christian inmates who would have to wait as long for spiritual guidance as Chaplains are readily

available and accessible in the institution.

Certainly the element of "prison culture" has some effect on Aboriginal spirituality programming (as it does all programming) in an incarceration environment:

Well with me, like I'm trying to find myself, like I'm trying to find my purpose in life and to do that I guess I've got to find God, eh, but in a place like this it's hard to do that because you're expected to be solid and if people ask you where you going and you say you're going to church they'll laugh at you and if you say you're going to the sweat they'll kind of look at you wondering is this guy shaking it rough or what?  
(Respondent 1A).

It was stated, "One thing about prison is that it makes you hard, it can make you pretty hard and cold" (Respondent 8A).

It was noted that, while incarcerated, the individual has little choice in who he associates with and, as such, tensions can easily build to the point where they become unmanageable:

This house unit that I live in this, this unit alone, there's rats [inmates who inform on other inmates] and skimmers [sex offenders] in here and I live with them...like if I didn't go to a sweat I know I wouldn't be able to live with these guys, I wouldn't be able to tolerate them...I'd be angry and it takes away my anger, the sweat takes away my anger and I'd be, I'd end up punching out a lot of these guys so that's why it just helps me, it calms me down.  
(Respondent 10F).

Certainly, the overall environment and culture of the jail impact on Aboriginal spirituality. Some respondents, however, feel that an incarceration environment is the best possible place to reflect on oneself and begin to heal oneself through Aboriginal spirituality:

Well basically it's a lot better when you're in the

correctional centre because you're not getting stoned, not getting drunk, you're just trying to get into your Native spirituality and asking for help. That's the best time to ask Him for help is when you're in jail so you can be wiser when you get out of jail.

(Respondent 17K).

I can't really say by being in jail that kept me away [from Aboriginal spirituality] because I think that it's even brought it closer to me somehow in some ways because if I was out there all the time, I don't think I would have even went to the sweat once.

(Respondent 9L).

Now [in jail] is the time to reflect on our lives. It is a time of healing for us. We have the opportunity or the wisdom to see that. How many people have that? How many people even see it? I think maybe the reason why so many people don't see it is because there are so few opportunities where the individual is going to be exposed to the faith and showing them direction...In here, is the critical point I believe. Obviously we have all strayed away from the life that we should be living by ending up in here so like I said it is a time that we can use to reflect on our life which is what the court says we are supposed to be doing.

(Respondent 8A).

In fact, one respondent claimed that coming to jail was the only way he could maintain his well-being:

For me, coming to jail, the way I look at it, coming to jail saves me from self-destruction eh? Not self-destruction from the point where I would commit suicide but when I come to jail, it always seems to take me to a point in my life where everything is just totally fucked. I am living just a totally fucking wild life eh? To the point where I am going to kill somebody or someone is going to kill me or else I am going to fucking go out in style some way. Go out and die in a car accident, drunk, you know, that's the way I see it. Living the life out there and then coming to jail, it just saves a lot of people. I think it saves them. It sobers them up for a while. It keeps them healthy, I don't know about mind wise but it saves them from self-destruction. Saves me, I'm pretty sure, that is the way I try to look at it eh?

(Respondent 6N).

The same respondent also made the point that, for many

offenders, it is relatively easy to adapt to prison culture (especially repeat offenders which many at the SCC are). This draws the question: if it is possible to adapt to (and function well within) prison culture, should it not also be possible to adapt to and incorporate an element of therapy within that culture?

#### 4.0 Offender Profile at SCC

##### 4.1 General Information

The average age of Aboriginal offenders interviewed for the research is just under 27 years. This would seem to support McCaskill's assertion (1985: 11) that Aboriginal offenders are generally increasing in age over the last 15 years, as most staff and inmates questioned placed the average age of Aboriginal offenders at approximately 22-25 years. This estimate, could, in fact, be more representative of the overall population of SCC as only a proportion of Aboriginal offenders at SCC were interviewed. The oldest respondent in the sample was 37 years old, while the youngest was just eligible for incarceration in an adult facility at the age of 18.

First Nation cultural affiliation (i.e. self-defined ethnic identity) data were sought from the respondents. Cree men made up the largest ethnic category of respondents. Twenty-five out of thirty-seven or 68% of the respondents were self-defined as Cree. Four respondents (11%) defined themselves as Sioux (two of these respondents had mixed Aboriginal cultural heritage). Three persons (8%) in the sample were Metis. Two people were self-defined as Saulteaux (5%). One individual identified himself as Chipewyan (3%)

and another indentified himself as Dene (3%). A single respondent was unsure of his Aboriginal cultural affiliation.

The degree of cultural orientation (as postulated by Waldram 1992) of the respondents was not directly probed. Rather, participant observation, information given on the individual's past life, and information granted regarding primary and secondary socialization and enculturation processes was used to infer the degree of cultural adherence of the individual (i.e. to an Aboriginal or a Euro-Canadian cultural pattern). It was difficult to apply Waldram's scheme in this context as some offenders would largely meet Waldram's criteria for classification in a specific group (for example engaging in traditional economic activities and being socialized in predominantly Aboriginal communities for a 'traditional' classification) yet lack other central identifiable traits (such as the use of an Aboriginal language as a first and preferred language).

Using Waldram's cultural adherence scheme, only one respondent could be identified as "traditional", and even this individual was rapidly becoming bicultural. This individual was a very young man with Cree as his first language. He spent most of his life in northern Saskatchewan and had relatively little experience with Southern, Euro-Canadian culture. Moreover, he was familiar with and had participated in traditional economic activities. However, he

was also the product of prolonged history of solvent and alcohol abuse and rarely participated in traditional Aboriginal spirituality services when not incarcerated.

The majority of the sample are best classified as bicultural individuals. Twenty-two respondents (59%) fit this classification. As in Waldram's scheme, these bicultural individuals have had a wide range of experiences in both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures, which followed primary enculturation and linguistic acquisition in an Aboriginal cultural framework. While Aboriginal identity (or at least a perception of this identity) remains a strong factor in the lives of these people, many of them are also a product of the "street culture" and/or the "jail culture". The majority of offenders in this category have had long histories of foster care and/or experience with residential schools. Often, they have a history of institutionalization (including incarceration at a young age) which originally brought them into contact with Euro-Canadian cultures and began the process of formulating a bicultural identity. Many of them have migrated to an urban environment after spending many of the early years of their lives in rural or reserve communities. Most of these offenders expressed great pride in their Aboriginal identity and maintain strong ties with the Aboriginal communities from which they hail.

Fourteen of the respondents (38%) can be classified as assimilated. As Waldram indicates, these offenders are

"characterized by their lack of knowledge of Aboriginal cultures, and their full assimilation into Euro-Canadian culture" (1992: 24). Many of these offenders were raised in urban contexts or in small-towns. If the latter was the case, the respondents often talked of being the "only Indians" in the community. All of these respondents have lost the ability to communicate in an Aboriginal language or simply never possessed it. While some respondents suggested that they could understand some elements of their respective traditional languages, none of them could speak these languages to the degree where they could effectively communicate. Many of them do not feel a particularly strong Aboriginal identity or an affinity to other Aboriginal people:

I grew up in Saskatoon in the city with my mom and I never grew up on the reserve. I don't speak my own language. The only language I speak is English...I could get along with Native people, but I saw myself hanging around more or less with White people, eh, cause I grew up in the city and, you know, I have more in common with other people than my own. So that's how I saw it, eh.

(Respondent 8W).

A lot of these guys are like from just right off the reserve, eh. Like I...was raised in a white community all my life, eh. So for them to...for us two to be able to be compatible, it's not something that...happens very easy.

(Respondent 12P).

#### **4.2 Past Exposure/Introduction to Aboriginal Spirituality**

Obviously, given the diversity of Aboriginal offenders, there is a great deal of variation in the role which

Aboriginal spirituality has played in the past lives of respondents. As might be expected, many of those categorized as assimilated had their first exposure to Aboriginal spirituality while incarcerated (either at SCC or at other provincial or federal institutions). In fact, this means of introduction to Aboriginal spirituality is very common among Aboriginal offenders in Canada and the United States (see Canada 1988: 5; Fraser 1992: 12; Grobsmith 1989: 144; Grobsmith and Dam 1990: 414; James 1979: 457; McCaskill 1985: 92; Waldram 1993: 349, 353). Of the fourteen offenders in the assimilated category, nine shared this pattern of introduction. Often this institutionalized introduction will result from other inmates encouraging their peers to pursue Aboriginal spirituality:

I went out and got a second opinion and once I found that second opinion, that made me realize maybe it's about time I learned who I am and where I come from, you know, instead of feeling ashamed of who I am as a Native person.

(Respondent 12T).

Well the first time that I actually became aware of traditional ways was I was incarcerated at the Regina Correctional Centre in, about '86, I guess, and I was invited to go to a sweat, but I was invited like prior to that, but never went because I was really unsure of myself and I didn't want to look like a fool, so I didn't go till finally I just to quit, to get the guys to quit bugging about going, and I went and I was hooked.

(Respondent 1D).

From childhood I was in foster homes and then I ended up in the residential school. There was no [Aboriginal] spirituality in residential school, nothing at all. Then right through, then from residential school, I was sixteen when I got out and I was in jail for my seventeenth birthday already and then I was, and that's

where I started to learn [about Aboriginal spirituality] and I still don't know much but everything pretty well that I have been taught is from jail. I went to different jails and there was nothing on the street, the only time that I would go to a sweat was when I was in jail, you know?

(Respondent 6N).

Many of the Aboriginal offenders classified as assimilated grew up on reserves or in relatively isolated Aboriginal communities. However, the access to Aboriginal spirituality was not guaranteed under such circumstances. For example, in spite of living on a reserve and speaking only Cree until the age of 10, one respondent had very little contact with Aboriginal spirituality prior to incarceration. In this instance, family members actively discouraged this respondent from pursuing Aboriginal spirituality. As such, even when opportunities presented themselves, some respondents chose not to participate in Aboriginal spirituality:

I grew up on a reserve. I talked Cree till I was 10 years old. I didn't understand English...I grew up in a Pentecostal Church environment. I didn't go to sweats. I didn't really...wasn't involved in the spirituality of Indian spirituality. I was taught that was just another way of getting people off the real religion, which was Christianity of some kind.

(Respondent 9L).

Others had access to Aboriginal spirituality at some point in their early lives, yet were dislocated from it for a variety of reasons. For some, the break-up of their parents' relationship would isolate them from Aboriginal spirituality services, as often one parent would practise Aboriginal spirituality while the other would not. For

others, migration to an urban context severed access to Aboriginal spirituality services. For those born and raised in urban contexts, opportunities to participate in Aboriginal spirituality were simply not present, or at least were not perceived as present. For one respondent, an opportunity for first exposure came while attending an Aboriginal school in the city:

It was called Native Survival [School] back then and now they call it Joe Duquette [School]. Yah I think that was my first time I went into a sweat and experienced what it was about.

(Respondent 8W).

There are similar patterns present among those labelled bicultural. However, for this group, only five of the twenty-two respondents had their first introduction to Aboriginal spirituality in an incarceration environment. For two of these respondents, their introduction was linked with a comprehensive program to deal with the needs of Aboriginal offenders:

I was in an institution in Drumheller Penitentiary. They were doing Life Skills Program over there, 3 month Native Life Skills, which was run by Four Skies Development in Calgary and I took that program and it helped me out alot. It made me realize a lot of things and from there on I started going to sweats and stuff like that. It made me feel good about myself by going to sweats.

(Respondent 1T).

The second respondent had his introduction to Aboriginal spirituality while attending a four day fast in a federal institution, which also incorporated the use of the sweat lodge and spiritual teachings by Aboriginal Elders.

Of the remaining seventeen bicultural offenders, fifteen had prolonged exposure and enculturation into Aboriginal spirituality as part of their childhood experiences:

Well, my grandfather was always telling me stories about the old days and that and how they did things and the correct way of doing things, the respectable way. So more or less grew me up, taught me respect and that. Respecting everything living so you know spirituality to me is just life in general. It was brought into me and it was brought to me as that, can't live without spirituality.

(Respondent 2A).

The absolutely profound impact that Aboriginal spirituality played in the enculturation processes of some inmates is further expressed by the following inmate. Aboriginal spirituality is seen as a enigmatic and almost undefinable principle:

[Aboriginal spirituality] defines me as a person, everything about me, spirituality is something that's a way of life with me...It's beyond worship, it's a natural thing for me. It's something that I abide by. It's like doing natural things...I was brought up in that, spiritually...I don't know, it's just there, spirituality is just there...Well, it is like getting up in the mornings. It is a natural thing.

(Respondent 7R).

Many of the bicultural Aboriginal offenders who experienced this early and prolonged introduction to Aboriginal spirituality, however, faced some events in their lives which ultimately took them away from their spiritual practices and beliefs. In one case, urban migration and alcohol abuse made it difficult for the respondent to access Aboriginal spirituality services (Respondent 10B). McCaskill

has noted a trend of increasing urbanization among Aboriginal offenders (1985: 18-23). Urbanization poses numerous problems for Aboriginal males attempting to continue their Aboriginal spiritual traditions:

When I moved into the city I lost most of my Native spirituality and that...This was a few years back, I was about 10. After when my father died. Ever since then I haven't been doing enough for Native spirituality things, like going to sweats and that, attending these ceremonies and all that. It was hard to find people that were in to that and that, mostly, cause when I started going to school I lost most of it, cause I came into the white school, and ever since then I've been trying to get back into it, I tried, and I tried people, and I tried to go to these ceremonies that they have out there but I couldn't find the people that organized them and that. I mostly lost it all, I forgot a lot of things about it, how it is...I've lost most of that part in myself...since I've moved into the city I've been getting into trouble and all that and I said to hell with it, I've lost it all.

(Respondent 10A).

For another, chronic drug abuse resulted in criminal activity which, in turn, took him away from the spiritual teachings at approximately age 15:

First we were doing sweats and learning how to control my life and then I went with my auntie and stayed in the bush for at least 3 years. I never used to see town. I used to know everything. I used to know Indian medicine, how to make Indian medicine and all that. And now, I'm [taking] too much drugs.

(Respondent 16A).

Another respondent began to drift away from Aboriginal spirituality when his existing social support network (which also functioned as his source of instruction regarding Aboriginal spirituality) was devastated by family tragedy:

My grandmother used to tell me things about her life when she was growing up with her parents and she remembers her great-grandparents and the tipi and the

thunderbird, the significance of a thunderbird, things, sweetgrass. I remember her burning the sweetgrass, and other things about spirits and stuff like that, they talked about spirits not a whole lot because I was still young. Unfortunately my father was deceased in 1972 when I was eight years old, my mother when I was ten, and my grandparents I think a half a year later. So I was sort of cut off from that, so what I do have is basically a basic, what would you say, sort of a, what I have is from childhood, just the foundations of my spirituality but I have that to build on with other people, uncles, aunts, my grandfather, other Elders.  
(Respondent 16R).

Another respondent had a strong cultural upbringing in Aboriginal spirituality, yet "drifted away" from a full immersion in his faith while in the army:

I drifted away from it for a time I was in the Army but I still had my sweetgrass, I'd still been praying, but away from sweats, Sun Dances, Grass Dances, feasts...When I quit the Army I went to live on the reserve and that's what just comes there, I do it because it's there and it helps me...it helps me lots.  
(Respondent 5D).

Still another respondent was dislocated from Aboriginal spirituality when he attended a community school. Though he stated that it was difficult to keep all of the traditional teachings and practices fully functional he maintains "I never drifted away from it, it was always in my heart" (Respondent 17K). The remaining two bicultural respondents actively chose not to participate in Aboriginal spirituality.

The lone respondent classified as 'traditional' was introduced to Aboriginal spirituality while incarcerated. While one would consider a traditional person to have prior knowledge and access to Aboriginal spiritual services, this

scenario did not present itself for the individual in question. He was raised in a northern community which was plagued by chronic alcohol and solvent abuse. He was enculturated and socialized in an environment where such abuse was commonplace and occurred virtually daily. He fits Waldram's classificatory scheme as a traditional person, however, based on such criteria as his continued preference and competence in his Aboriginal language, his primary socialization in a predominantly Aboriginal community and relatively little experience with (and discomfort from) the dominant culture. Moreover, he is very uncomfortable in large group settings and harbours a strong Aboriginal identity. It is the researcher's view that the history of solvent and alcohol abuse encountered by this respondent is directly related to his lack of Aboriginal spiritual undertakings prior to his incarceration.

Numerous respondents from all cultural adherence classifications point to a significant, life-altering event which led them to pursue the teachings and practices of Aboriginal spirituality. Eight of the twenty-two bicultural respondents noted such an event. Some of these respondents came to Aboriginal spirituality as part of a process of cultural rejuvenation. For example, merely attending a powwow, round dance or a sweat lodge for the first time led some respondents to realize how much Aboriginal culture was missing from their lives and how important it was (1D, 12Q).

Thereafter, they began to pursue Aboriginal spirituality with greater enthusiasm. For another, a spiritual retreat inside a maximum security penitentiary was the turning point which brought him to Aboriginal spirituality (3X). A third respondent became more aware of the need for Aboriginal spirituality in his life while attending an Aboriginal alcohol treatment centre (10B). At the same time, this respondent also had a dream about his dead uncle telling him to stay away from alcohol and learn to lead the "Indian life". A fourth respondent was influenced by his interaction with a well known and respected traditional Aboriginal Elder and was inspired to move towards a more spiritual lifestyle (20A).

Some view Aboriginal spirituality as assisting them in overcoming alcoholism and other personal and psychological problems. One respondent was introduced to Aboriginal spirituality as a component of a life skills program while incarcerated (1T). Another was actually encouraged by the parole board to look into Aboriginal spirituality as an alternative means of helping himself after a request for parole had been denied him (1A). Still another saw significant positive personal changes in his father-in-law which resulted after his father-in-law began participating in Aboriginal spiritual ceremonies and practices. This positive change in his father-in-law prompted him to take a more serious look at his life and the possible therapeutic

role of Aboriginal spirituality therein (10F).

Others came to participate in Aboriginal spirituality to aid them in overcoming more serious personal problems and traumas. They approached Aboriginal spirituality as a means of self-help and coping in times of significant personal stress. One respondent increased his participation in Aboriginal spirituality when his young son was dying of cancer (6N). Another witnessed his mother's murder at the hands of his father. He found that increasing the place that Aboriginal spirituality played in his life helped him learn to deal with his mother's death (7D). A third respondent turned to Aboriginal spirituality to help deal with the death of his grandmother (16A). Another respondent had simply had enough of crime and incarceration and began to participate more ardently in Aboriginal spirituality while on the inside in an attempt to overcome this (16D).

For a total of twelve (32%) of the thirty-seven inmates interviewed, a significant life event or turning point prompted them to pursue Aboriginal spirituality with greater vigour. The role of turning points in the lives of Aboriginal offenders needs further attention if we are to understand why some people choose Aboriginal spirituality as opposed to other forms of therapy and counselling. This is amply illustrated by one respondent who was awaiting just such an event in his life prior to undertaking the Aboriginal spiritual practise of fasting. This is a

significant sacrifice as the faster is generally placed in the wilderness, naked, without food or water for a period ranging from one to four days. According to the teachings of the Elder at SCC at the time of the research, one fasts to pray for one's family and one's people, as well as to seek supernatural knowledge about sacred items and practices associated with Aboriginal spirituality. This is part of the necessary process of earning knowledge:

I was waiting for a turning point in my life and then I'll start. For me there has to be a significance for me to do it, it's almost like a calling and for awhile I didn't want to commit myself, but I understand and I lived it but I didn't want to totally get into it because things in my life weren't right, whatever. Maybe could have been made right but I still wanted to live the way I was living.

(Respondent 16R).

#### **4.3 Offender Interpretations of Aboriginal Spirituality**

Obviously, if someone is going to devote time and energy to any set of practices or beliefs, these things must have significance and meaning for the adherents. Therefore, it is important to determine what kinds of meanings the Aboriginal respondents associated with Aboriginal spirituality in an attempt to place it in context. At its most base level, Aboriginal spirituality was seen as little more than culturally-appropriate religious ritual:

It's my way of praying, I tried to go to church for a lot of years and it's just not the same, it's their way of praying and they've got their own, they have their own, I don't know, I just can't put it into words how I think, the way I feel, my way of praying, like everybody has to pray sometimes and that's my way.

(Respondent 10F).

On a deeper level, many respondents see Aboriginal spirituality as essential in helping them foster some type of self-identity. As this thesis has previously indicated, many Aboriginal offenders can be classified as assimilated into Euro-Canadian culture and most other offenders have had some prolonged exposure and experience with Euro-Canadian culture to the point where they are bicultural. It can not be overemphasized that individuals in both categories often feel alienated and isolated from both culture groups. They do not fit well into Aboriginal communities due to their acculturation patterns which have resulted in internalized values and beliefs of the dominant society. As well, their criminal behaviour is often a stigma which hinders their acceptance in Aboriginal communities. They are not accepted in Euro-Canadian culture due to such processes as institutionalized racism and self-perceptions of isolation. As such, it is important that the inmates develop some kind of identity which they are comfortable with. Often, they see an Aboriginal identity developing from participating in Aboriginal spirituality services. The development of this identity provides not only a sense of belonging, but also a sense of cultural continuity and individual personal direction for many offenders. Aboriginal spirituality provides "The identity from where I come from, where my people come from" (2A):

[Aboriginal spirituality] puts you back in touch with your culture, it puts you back in touch with your own inner feelings and it basically gives you something to look forward to, something to strive for, it helps an individual to basically live a good, clean, like strong life.

(Respondent 6F).

Native spirituality is freedom for yourself. It gives you one track of mind, you know. It shows you who you are, cause I know cause I know who I am. Before I didn't. I know what I want and I know where I'm going, you know.

(Respondent 6R).

Many respondents commented on a Karma-like principle operating in Aboriginal spirituality. Simply put: one's actions come back to you. If you treat people good, good things will come to you; treat others negatively or do harmful deeds, and you can expect the same in return. Within the Aboriginal belief system, however, the repercussions of one's actions are not limited to the individual performing the deeds:

Anything that you do today, you will either pay for, I guess it is like Karma, you either pay for it in your life or until Karma comes around, comes back down, bad Karma, you will pay for it or your children or someone really close to you in your life.

(Respondent 8A).

What goes around comes around, if you do what's good for you, not just for you but what you feel is right with everything, then it all comes back to you.

(Respondent 12B).

This reciprocating principle is also in play when one is interfacing directly with one's omniscient spiritual power:

When he gives you something, the Creator, if you don't give it back to him, just like when you borrow something if you don't give it back, the next time he

will say no to you, right, like the other person. So if he gives you the present that you ask for, like pay back, like put a little tobacco and smudge and sage, put it together, bury it under the tree and then that way it heals himself too and it heals you too.

(Respondent 12Q).

Given this principle of reciprocating cause and effect, many respondents felt that Aboriginal spirituality provided a guide for action and behaviour in their lives:

It's more than just a way of praying, it's a way of living too and the way you, a way of living, the way you think that's right from wrong.

(Respondent 5D).

If one follows the proper path of actions and behaviours, many see one of the ultimate goals of Aboriginal spirituality as providing the practitioner with a sense of harmony and unity with the entire universe, as well as a sense of inner peace:

That's what it means to me - being able to connect yourself as an individual with the rest of the world around you and even with other people. Being able to be positive with everybody that you run into and trying to be as fair as you can to everybody else. And that's, I mean, spirituality, some of the people explained to me is just a sense of peace within yourself, and the grandfathers and the surroundings that are there and all your relations which are the trees, the animals, the rocks, the water and everything else. So that is what spirituality is I guess in a simple sense.

(Respondent 20A).

A variety of Aboriginal respondents also saw participation in Aboriginal spirituality as a practical means of coping with the daily stresses of life while incarcerated. This, therefore, is an extension of the trauma-reducing function discussed above:

Anything to do with spirituality is to help yourself

and to better yourself in your surroundings, you know.  
(Respondent 6R).

Native spirituality means to me is peace of my mind, help from up there either through sickness either physically or mentally and when you have troubles I'll have somebody to ask for help, talk to, burn some sweetgrass and say some Indian prayers of my own as they come to my head...that's what Native spirituality means to me.

(Respondent 5D).

It is important to note that only a single respondent indicated a political component in Aboriginal spirituality. This is particularly significant because many of the staff perceived that Aboriginal spirituality is little more than a cover-up for political undertakings (which may or may not involve illegal activities) by the Aboriginal offenders. There were repeated accusations amongst many of the staff that Aboriginal spirituality is nothing but a scam which is used by the inmates when it is politically or personally advantageous and discarded as irrelevant when it is not. While instances like this undoubtedly occur, they are not commonplace. Moreover, all programs offered in a prison environment are susceptible to the activities of insincere and unscrupulous individuals. When opportunities arise to pass contraband or visit with inmates in restricted areas, there will certainly be those who take advantage of these instances. Aboriginal spirituality programs are not immune to this, yet the data gathered indicates that the problem is not nearly as severe or prolific as many of the staff seem to think. Staff perceptions and the issue of "scamming" will

be dealt with in more detail later in the thesis.

It is obvious from the discussion presented above that Aboriginal spirituality means different things to different people. Those who see the elements of harmony and self-fulfilment are farther along a spiritual path than those who see Aboriginal spirituality as ancient ritual or an opportunity for political organization and action. Indeed, the Elder maintains that there is no room for politics where spirituality is concerned. These different perspectives are the result of a combination of a number of factors: previous spiritual and cultural background, degree and length of interaction with the resident Elder, and present personal and psychological conditions, among others. The majority of the remainder of this thesis will focus on how Aboriginal spirituality is perceived as, and functions as, therapy for Aboriginal offenders.

## 5.0 The Relationship Between Culture and Therapy

### 5.1 Defining Culture

This thesis has documented the importance of the variable of culture in understanding the lives and experiences of Aboriginal offenders. It has also stated that, for the most part, culture is a misunderstood and misinterpreted variable in most aspects of the judicial and corrections system. The variable of culture must be understood before analyzing any culture-specific practices as potential therapy. Therefore, it is important to establish how "culture" was perceived by staff and inmates at SCC.

Anthropologically, there are virtually as many definitions of culture as there are scholars. One of the earliest and still-quoted definitions of culture was proposed by Edward Tylor in the late nineteenth century. According to Tylor, culture is "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1871: 1). Lowie felt that culture was "the sum total of what an individual acquires from his society...as a legacy from the past, conveyed by formal or informal education" (1937: 3). When defining culture, it is

important to take into account the adaptive, cognitive, structural and symbolic systems of a given group of people (Keesing 1974: 74-79)

Regardless of the definition used, however, it must be remembered that culture encompasses the entirety of human social and behavioural experience. We are all creatures of culture. Culture can be thought of as learned patterns of thinking, interacting and adapting. It is shared, in part, by all members of a society and is passed from generation to generation through learning. Therefore, culture is not static. Rather, it responds to changing circumstances through adaptation. Culture, therefore, is both learned and cumulative. As a product of one's socialization process, behavioural patterns, religion, cosmological outlook, environment and material life, culture fundamentally shapes the way in which we interpret the world around us. While no two individuals share exactly the same life experiences and associated outlooks, culture over-rides individual differences due to its being shared and learned in a group context. That is, culture provides broad parameters for appropriate and inappropriate behaviour in spite of the fact that there are great intracultural (i.e minority group) and individual differences in how culture is actually interpreted and operationalized.

### 5.1.1 Staff Perceptions of Culture

How then was culture interpreted by staff members at SCC? Did they feel that culture was a relevant and important variable in their interaction with Aboriginal offenders? Many of the front line staff (i.e. guards) largely saw Aboriginal culture as irrelevant, or misunderstood its significance and importance in programming at SCC. In contrast, most of those responsible for formulating programming, as well as senior and middle management, generally viewed culture as a significant variable in understanding inmates and offering programming for them.

Perspectives offered by the guards were obtained through the focus groups, participant observation, and informal conversation. As stated, many of these staff members viewed culture as largely irrelevant:

I don't think [culture is] relevant beyond being considerate of what the other person is doing. The problem is not with knowing the culture or understanding the culture, the problem is in enforcing procedures of the institution.

(Focus group 3).

As far as interacting with inmates, I mean as far as day-to-day things, I don't see a difference whether you're dealing with a Native, a White, whatever.

(Focus group 3).

Others felt that self-identity as "Aboriginal" was a more significant factor than cultural affiliation in how inmates saw themselves. It was stated, "...people amalgamate groups [sic] for security purposes. The fact remains that the only common denominator is that they're Native" (Focus

group 1). Others indicated that there was a general assumption of homogeneity of Aboriginal cultures by some staff members. One staff member, in conversation with another noted, "Metis is also classified as Aboriginal, but yet it's so different. There's Sioux, there's Dene, but how many people understand or realize that? And that's wrong." (Focus group 1).

Some guards saw cultural differences as more significant for those inmates which were Northern residents for prolonged periods prior to incarceration. The following dialogue among staff members illustrates this point:

And I think you also see differences between Northern Natives and urban Natives, they're different cultures, different types of people.

There's a big difference just from when I worked up in Prince Albert, the Northern Natives which were much more easier to, not control, but to have contact with them. They were more listening...they didn't lip off so much back. They didn't use the racial movement against us [as they did] if they were urbanized.

Definitely more to themselves. It's harder to do an admission report on someone that's from the north as opposed to down here.

They don't open up. Well that's kind of what you were getting at too. They don't open up as easy.

But I think in that instance, a little different is they...like it's not they're choosing to open up, it's just that they just don't talk much. And the urban Native is maybe holding stuff back on purpose.

(Focus group 1).

Another staff member reiterated that unless the inmate was a Northern resident displaced in a southern, urban context while incarcerated, cultural differences were generally

insignificant (Focus group 2).

Numerous front line staff members commented that a subculture based on criminality and addictive behaviour generally over-shadowed Aboriginal cultural factors for the majority of Aboriginal offenders:

The culture I see most often, by all inmates, and this goes beyond all racial backgrounds, is the culture of the street: the drug culture, the drink culture, the crime culture. There's a pecking order according to the nature of your offence. Some people have status because they're armed robbers, and other people have no status because they're sex offenders. All of those kinds of things that go into that culture, I see as being more pervasive than any racially determined thing at all...The culture of the jail, I think, is an acultural activity, where it's nonracial. And the guys who get out of jail and tend not to come back are the ones who begin to give up the cultural mores of being in the jail. The ones who can stop playing inmate are the ones who have a chance of getting on with their lives. The ones who think playing inmate is more important than anything else, posturing for their brothers, who look at this as being the Kinsmen convention when their brothers come home, those guys are going to keep coming back, because being in jail, back in this culture gives them a sense of purpose, helps them define who they are. It's only when they give up this culture and begin to take on a larger culture do they ever stand a chance of getting out of jail.

(Staff respondent 3Q).

These sentiments were echoed by respondents in focus groups one and two. Some participants in group one saw the drug subculture as blurring cultural lines between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal offenders:

It's probably safer to say that the distinction is probably greater between people who are in here from the drug culture...[and those] who aren't. And if you're Aboriginal or White and if you're from the drug culture, it doesn't make a difference in terms of the way you react to the system...More likely you'll see differences between White and Aboriginal if they're not involved in drugs.

(Focus group 1).

Some participants in focus group three saw the "street culture" as an important variable to understand if they were to effectively interact with offenders. They felt that the street subculture, like the drug subculture discussed above, cross-cuts ethnic boundaries:

Like that was something that I think you had to understand or at least try to understand before you could deal with them, otherwise you want to just sort of lock them up and throw away the key, because it's so different compared to what most people, you know, like sort of the middle class, you know, value system.

(Focus group 2).

This comment demands the question: if street culture is worthy of some degree of understanding to effectively interact with offenders, then why is Aboriginal culture seen as largely insignificant when 59% of the sample of Aboriginal offenders at SCC were classified as bi-cultural (indicating at least a partial effect of Aboriginal culture in shaping the individual)? Why is it that understanding the drug subculture is seen as important to understanding the experiences of offenders, when the offender's overall cultural affiliation is not?

It was noted, by one staff member, that Aboriginal culture is a more significant variable for some inmates than others (as the cultural adhesion classification offered previously for Aboriginal offenders would suggest):

I think culture can be significant to some, [to] others it doesn't seem to be as important. That's a very individual...each individual case would need to be assessed because there are some people where they don't

know what their cultural differences are (so there really aren't any, even though they're Aboriginal people), and then there's other people that do.  
(Staff respondent 4P).

Some staff members, then, did see culture as an important variable in interacting with and understanding the Aboriginal offender:

Culture teaches you about your personal preferences. It teaches you about your reference group. It teaches you ways to conduct your life and your language and your history and your literature and your music and your dance and your art forms and your spirituality...The more we realize about other people's cultures, the more personal those people become that we interact with in that culture. And the more we value them because we see that is really how we express ourselves too.  
(Staff respondent 2T).

Obviously, there are different perspectives and interpretations offered by the SCC staff regarding the importance and understanding of culture. One front line staff member went so far as to state, in informal conversation, that Aboriginal people do not possess a culture. This individual's understanding of culture was incorrectly limited to art and other material undertakings and he suggested that culture originated with the Greeks and Romans. Conversation and an attempt by the researcher to educate this individual regarding the actual parameters of culture were futile. Though this was perhaps not his intent, by denying the existence of Aboriginal culture in a room full of Aboriginal people this staff member was not even granting the status of "human being" to the Aboriginal people with whom he interacts on a daily basis. Culture is

one of the variables which separates humankind from other animal species. Therefore, a culture-less being is necessarily something less than human. How could one so callously view the people one is forced to interact with daily and expect the relationship to be productive for anyone involved? While the severity of this incident is the exception, not the rule, it points to the extreme necessity of cultural sensitivity and awareness training needed by many staff at SCC. This point will be taken up later in the discussion of policy matters at SCC.

Perhaps the unwillingness to accept the reality of the significance of Aboriginal culture by many of the staff is best exemplified by the following statement made by a guard:

I took Native Studies 110 and there were...like they didn't know their own culture. So until they sort of know their culture and live their culture, there's not going to be a lot of respect and acceptance of their culture from another person, you know what I mean? Because you really have to live your culture to be viewed as a person of that culture, and I don't see them doing it consistently.

(Focus group 2).

We must therefore ask, can participation in Aboriginal spirituality services aid the Aboriginal inmate in learning about his culture and beginning to live it? Other staff members offered useful insights regarding this point. It was stated:

I think we also recognize a need that a number of Aboriginal people really have very little understanding of their own history and culture and that some of our program needs to be geared at that. I think one point of view might be, "Okay if they don't know, then it really doesn't matter so why don't they just become

part of the Canadian view and their culture has passed them by". My belief and I think a number of people in the Centre that want to do the programming believe that it is an important part of their own development and their own finding themselves and finding their ways to understand their history and their culture and feel some pride in that in a way in becoming reconciled to the rest of society...there is no doubt in my mind...[that] much of criminality or what is defined as criminality by society, by Aboriginals, comes because of a lack of understanding and a lack of feeling of identity and a lack of feeling on the part of society and I think the last five hundred years have been spent putting down the culture and the history and in order for these people to find themselves, we need to afford them the opportunity to learn more about their history and their culture and to celebrate it and to feel proud about it as a way of seeing who they are within their group and who they are in the society.

(Staff respondent 7M).

It was further reiterated that:

Personally I think that yeah, when it comes specifically to Indian culture we need to highlight [it], again because I believe that once the Indian people get more in touch with their culture they're going to get more in touch with their spirituality, the holistic approach to it and they'll become healthier living beings and then they're going to stay out of jail as a result of that. So you've got to start some place and I think that's part of the start and one area we've got to continue on.

(Staff respondent 7T).

The role of Aboriginal spirituality programming in forging an Aboriginal identity and teaching one about Aboriginal culture will be discussed shortly.

### **5.1.2 Inmate Perceptions of Culture**

Perceptions of culture as relevant variables in programming were not specifically probed for inmate respondents. However, numerous inmates in the bicultural and assimilated categories made comments regarding the

significance of culture throughout the interview process. Among the bicultural inmates, culture was most often mentioned as relevant in the context of alcohol and drug abuse treatment programs for Aboriginal offenders. A number of respondents, for example, stated that Alcoholics Anonymous was not particularly useful or effective for them unless there was a component of Aboriginal culture involved in the treatment process. The inclusion of Aboriginal teachings and practices gives these respondents a sense of self-worth and pride in their Aboriginal identities. Often the core of the Aboriginal component of these programs lies in Aboriginal spirituality:

How does a good drug and alcohol program relate to a person who lives, who comes from Sandy Bay or who comes from Green Lake and goes back to Green Lake and there is none of that stuff re-happening [i.e. occurring in the individual's home community]? I mean the stuff that is going on there is people with sweetgrass and with eagle feathers and go up and see Elders and stuff like that. If they haven't got that, that knowledge, how are they going to fit into [the community] and maintain any sobriety? Sure they go to Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and those are good but it would be good to have another tool to enhance your chances of succeeding and staying sober. And if you had these life-skills programs, if you had these alcohol and drug programs and had educational programs and if you had cultural programs that were all encompassed in a spiritual program that could be continuous, I don't know how you could go wrong.

(Respondent 20A).

It was further stated by another respondent that spirituality was one of the best ways to become more in touch with one's culture:

It [i.e. spirituality] puts you back in touch with your culture, it puts you back in touch with your own inner

feelings and it basically gives you something to look forward to, something to strive for, it helps an individual to basically live a good, clean, like strong life.

(Respondent 6F).

This same respondent also saw the dominant Euro-Canadian culture as denying Aboriginal people access to cultural and spiritual services while incarcerated. It was stated "I would say a sweat lodge and an Elder inside an institution is just the tip of the iceberg and it is sad to think that one culture would deny another culture...their ways" (Respondent 6F). This perspective that incarceration facilities are merely extensions of the Canadian government's policies directed toward the assimilation of Aboriginal people are echoed by Zellerer (1992: 255) who states "As institutions of formal social control, prisons should be viewed in light of the history of the assimilationist focus of policy and the lack of acceptance of Native spiritual and cultural ways [on behalf of the Canadian government]" [brackets added]. Under an assimilationist approach, it is argued that "the goal of rehabilitation has been to strip the convict of his previous identity and help produce a new person who would make it in society" (Reasons 1975: 27). To 'make it in society', therefore, it is latently assumed that it is necessary to assimilate the inmate into the dominant cultural milieu.

Assimilated inmates generally noted that as one's knowledge of traditional Aboriginal culture decreased, one's

problems as a person often increased. It was suggested that "When they stopped Indians from being Indians, that's when they started flubbing everything up" (Respondent 6N). It was further noted that:

Actually most young people don't know their culture, eh. Like when I was young, I didn't know it, eh, until I came in and starting learning about it, eh. Maybe if they have something like that, then the young people could see where they're coming from and then they won't...maybe they'll stay out and learn this stuff instead of coming back to jail.

(Respondent 1N).

The literature suggests that culture is a relevant variable in how the Aboriginal inmate perceives the prison environment and functions within it. Personal opinions vary among both staff and inmates regarding the relative importance of culture in the incarceration and treatment process. For inmates, the individual relevance of culture may be partially related to that person's perceptions of Aboriginal self-identity. For staff, different perspectives on the relevance of culture could be related to a number of variables including education, past experiences with different cultures, and stereotypes and prejudices regarding Aboriginal inmates and Aboriginal people in general. Of course, there are other variables for both groups as the perceptions one has regarding the relevance of culture are individually interpreted. The relevance of culture aside, the literature presented has indicated that one's self-identification as 'Aboriginal' (regardless of actual cultural affiliation) is important in identity formation for

most Aboriginal people. Therefore, we must now turn to the role which culturally-specific programming plays for Aboriginal inmates at SCC.

## **5.2 Culturally Appropriate Therapy**

### **5.2.1 Elder Services at SCC - Inmate Perspectives**

The diverse roles of spiritual leaders and Elders within the Aboriginal community at large did not escape the inmate respondents at SCC. It was stated "There are different sorts of Elders, you know, there are pipe carriers, there are healers, and then there are people who just give advice and stuff like that" (Respondent 2A). Information on acceptable or appropriate qualities for an Elder were not sought from the inmate respondents at SCC. However, a wide variety of roles for the Elder at SCC were discussed by the inmate respondents. It must be remembered that the respondents did not view the many roles of the Elder as exclusive of one another. Usually the Elder can simultaneously undertake a variety of roles and functions.

Many respondents (both bicultural and assimilated) saw the Elder's role as one of teacher and instructor in everyday life. The Elder is seen as a guide to understanding the diversity of experience and complications faced in daily existence:

That's what the Elders do, like the older people do when they tell stories...there's a lesson involved in each story, a life lesson. So what he is doing in a sense is preparing whoever he is telling the story to,

preparing them for something that he is going to be experiencing in life. So when he comes to that point in his life, where he is going to experience something, he will remember what the story had to teach him so then he can avoid whatever circumstances that may be happening.

(Respondent 6F).

An Elder gives you pretty good advice because they've lived and they've seen a lot of things and they have an understanding of a lot of things not only from their own experience, maybe from Elders before them and other people in their lives. So that way you sort of get a rich, what would you call it, a better perspective on life and spiritual things and life in general. Not so much the ceremonial part of it...to me in Native spirituality you don't necessarily go see an Elder just for ceremonial purposes, they're there for everyday living, they're there for everyday life. That's what an Elder is to me.

(Respondent 16R).

Elders are seen as teaching the "right way" of doing things. Often, this "right way" is seen as the "Indian way", or a traditional approach to life and problem solving. As such, the Elders are seen not only as teachers about life in general, but also as teachers which help bicultural and assimilated individuals to better understand aspects of their Aboriginal cultures. "Their word has a lot of power in the Native community and what it does is it gives the people a way to talk about themselves...to learn more about their culture" (Respondent 6F). Another respondent noted "I could ask him questions about the old ways...I like to know more about how our people used to live and there's really no one else to really talk about it" (Respondent 5X). Among assimilated respondents, the role of the Elder as cultural teacher was also emphasized. It was stated that the Elder

"knows what's happening about our culture...and I can actually ask if I don't understand something" (Respondent 8D). One assimilated respondent suggested that cultural teaching by the Elder was one of the most important functions the Elder could engage in "because I'm just hurting myself more culturally. I've been living in the city most of my life. It's pretty hard to understand culture" (Respondent 7D).

As the respondent begins to learn more about Aboriginal culture in general, cultural education also takes on aspects of spiritual education and guidance. It was noted, "Each Elder teaches me different things, eh, the sweetgrass, the sweats, the Sun Dance, the powwows, the Round Dance" (Respondent 10B). In this capacity, then, the Elder begins to function as spiritual advisor and guide. One inmate called the Elder at SCC his "spiritual father" (Respondent 5X). As well:

That's what an Elder's there for is spiritual guidance. And one thing about that is the men, if they have questions relating to spiritual aspects of our faith, that type of direction is given by a male Elder.  
(Respondent 8A).

It was further noted that Elders are "more or less like the priests in...our religion" (Respondent 2A). Formulating an analogy between Christian religious practitioners and Aboriginal spiritual leaders helped many bicultural respondents explain the Elder's role:

Like a priest would be giving you, what do you call it, the priest would be talking about the way he sees

things and the Elder would be doing the same thing. So in that way it's similar, it's almost alike. How the sweat...what's the purpose of the sweat and all that. He explains everything. So in that way it's similar.  
(Respondent 1T).

The Elders are people that, I wouldn't go as far as to say like a priest [because] I don't want to compare like the churches to Native religion but in some aspects it is. It all boils down to about the same thing, like you worship you know? But anyways, like in a church for instance they go and see priests, they go into confessional but in Native religion, you go and see an Elder. Like you take him a gift of tobacco and cloth and you talk to him and you ask questions.  
(Respondent 6F).

One bicultural respondent noted that the Elder can go beyond spiritual advisor to spiritual facilitator and benefactor through the use of prayer:

It is my belief that it is not appropriate to pray for yourself, that's why people go to Elders to ask them to pray for them. I think that the thing there is that you know that there is somebody else out there praying for you. When you're praying for someone, you know someone is praying for you, somewhere, some day, some time.  
(Respondent 7R).

It is noteworthy that no respondents classified as assimilated viewed the Elder's role as spiritual advisor. Many of these respondents had had prolonged, intensive exposure to Euro-Canadian patterns of worship and spiritual belief. Often, they were actively discouraged from participating in Aboriginal spirituality and were further told that Aboriginal spirituality was not "real religion" and was to be avoided.

Given the fact that Elders are generally respected and viewed positively by most inmates, many of them see the

Elder as a positive role model in their lives. One inmate respondent stated:

When I talk to an Elder, I usually ask him to share some of his past and how, how he got into Native spirituality, like what made him change his life and all that. I guess basically what they share with me I want to keep some of that so I can use it on myself as to changing my whole lifestyle around.

(Respondent 3X).

Another inmate described the experience of meeting a highly respected and well-known Elder for the first time and the consequential adjustments he made:

One specific thing that really made me recognize that I really wanted to grasp on to this thing [Aboriginal spirituality] was [meeting the Elder]. The first time I met [this Elder] I was in the Psych Centre [i.e. Correctional Services Canada Regional Psychiatric Centre in Saskatoon] and I had just been going through a real crazy time in Edmonton and they were taking me there for assessment for parole. And I met [this Elder] and I had heard of him. People had told me about him and I met him and he is a real peaceful kind of guy. He sits in front of you and I mean his presence is huge - he is not a very big person but his presence is huge. And he talks to you and you think...just to think twenty years ago this guy was sitting right where I am sitting. I wonder what happened? And he doesn't tell you his story. It just becomes apparent by talking to him, he got rid of the dope and he got rid of the alcohol and he got rid of the, you know, the whole ego thing.

(Respondent 20A).

It is interesting to note that once respondents have truly internalized some of the teachings of the Elders, they are forced to react to other people differently. As such, the Elder's spiritual guidance begins to perform an important institutional function through providing the inmate with an alternative means of coping with the stresses of incarceration as well as providing alternative modes of

patterning behaviour. Political undertakings perpetuated by the inmates have the potential to be regulated through spiritual teachings and undertakings. This same inmate describes the changes which occurred after prolonged interaction with Elders in an institutional environment:

Once the Elders started to come in, what happened was...people had to be real. I mean they couldn't be solid Joe any more, they had to be meek and mild like everybody else sitting in front of an Elder. Like I mean, you take away that "Well, I am better than you because I can talk a little quicker than you or because I can mimic a lot more people than you can or I got lot bigger guys that are backing me than are backing you". Well when the Elder came in, that took all that away. There was nothing left by being solid, particularly in brotherhood meetings. It took away that racial motivation that you had to start out with.

(Respondent 20A).

Elders, then, potentially provide methods for inmates to re-examine their ingrained patterns of institutional behaviour and begin to search for new ways to function in a prison setting. In doing so, many inmates emphatically stated that interaction with the Elder, and participation in Aboriginal spirituality services, were essential elements in coping with daily life in a prison environment:

I still grapple with the issue of control, I don't like people controlling me, I mean to sit here and watch some guard tell me when I can go to bed and when I can't go to bed and when I can go to my cell and when I can't go to my cell is hard but then you know, you kind of rationalize. Well I put myself here. But when you've spoken with the Elders, they take away all that stuff from you, where you want to be able to fight at everything that comes at you.

(Respondent 20A).

Even assimilated inmates see some benefit in talking with the Elder about problems they are having functioning

within the prison environment. One inmate related an incident about how he needed to talk with an Elder after SCC staff refused to allow him to add a visitor to his visiting list. The staff stated that the inmate had not been inside for the six months necessary to make alterations to one's original visiting list. The inmate saw this particular visitor as essential in helping him establish a base in the community and was highly agitated by SCC procedure. He felt that he was being penalized while he was attempting to better himself through his association with reliable support people in the community. His frustration in the following excerpt is obvious:

I needed someone to talk to eh, I'm glad I did it the way I went now, instead of it having some negative effects on me. Negative effects, like flipping out you know, eh? So I thought I got to talk to someone...I seen [the Elder] in the hall-way and I said..."Can I talk to you?", eh, and I was still hot cause I wanted to have something happen before I get out and that's what I'm trying to do and they're limiting me, hindering me from doing it. So I seen [the Elder] and I told him what's going on and he told me just to go about it a different way. And I appealed that decision and I'm waiting for that right now. But that's the kind of problem I went to the Elder with.

(Respondent 8D).

Another inmate echoed similar sentiments stating that interaction with an Elder "really helps to get your mind off certain things and make it a little less, less hard for you to do your time" (Respondent 2A).

Obviously, there are many things beyond an individual's control (both within and beyond the prison setting) when that individual is incarcerated. The tragic loss of a loved

one on the outside, feelings of loneliness and frustration, and separation from family can all cause feelings of anxiety and stress. Stress must be alleviated or it becomes chronic and causes problems for all involved. Interaction with Elders can serve to diffuse this stress:

There's times in here when I've wanted to talk to the Elder...because things that were bugging me and I was tense and I was having sleepless nights and angry feelings and I was stressed out and I wanted to...things were happening on the outside that I had no control of and I was frustrated and I was at the point where I wanted to belt somebody in the face. My anger was getting turned toward other inmates and it was starting to go towards staff. Like with my wife, things in my family, and I needed to talk to him. And at the time he wasn't here and I was walking around bottled up with this stuff until I did get a chance to talk to him and go to a sweat. And I told him about my problems and he gave me advice on how to deal with them and I think without that I might have come to a boiling point and things would have went really ugly.

(Respondent 16R).

For some respondents, then, the Elder acts as a form of counsellor offering advice and assistance in overcoming personal difficulties and institutional adversity. Some respondents saw the Elder's role as very similar to a Euro-Canadian styled psychologist or psychiatrist:

An Elder is somebody like a psychiatrist or something. You know, you come to him with a problem, he explains things to you and seems like he makes everything ok, you know? He's a very understanding person.

(Respondent 1T).

Other inmates saw the Elder as counsellor, but made distinctions between the Elder's approach and a Euro-Canadian approach to counselling. The Euro-Canadian approach was seen by some respondents as too structured and

controlling. The Aboriginal approach, in contrast, was perceived as putting the onus for well-being more on the individual and less on the practitioner:

There are white guide counsellors. But a real counsellor, a psychological counsellor I don't got that so I wish I got them sometimes because sometimes I need them and sometimes I avoid it and go on with my life. But...then they turn around giving me pills and stuff like that...I won't go to them because of that. I would rather talk to an Elder...they do give me a boost and I start realizing what the hell I'm trying to do...so in order, before I even screwed it up, I just really look into it and talk to an Elder and then he helps me out and sometimes I can handle it.

(Respondent 12Q).

Well they [Elders] don't really advise me to do anything. They just more or less, they just listen and let you, let you figure out your own, your own ways, what you think is best. That's what helped, that's what they do for me when I go and talk to an Elder about a problem or something. They have never told me 'do this or that', they have always more or less talked about the problem and more or less gave you, he gave you a better, a better idea of it, of the problem so you can deal with it yourself which I find is very good, to deal with it yourself rather than have someone make up your own mind for you.

(Respondent 5X).

One inmate pointed out the necessity of having both options of counselling open. For these respondents the counselling services offered by Elders, and by psychologists and psychiatrists, were both needed in different contexts. The two were perceived as working in a symbiotic relationship for the benefit of the offender:

I would say by far, for my personal choice, I would rather sit with an Elder than see a psychologist or see a psychiatrist. But on the other hand, like there are some people that are not of sound mind. In order for a person to benefit from the teachings that an Elder has available, he, the person would have to be of sound mind to begin with...So in order to properly grasp all

the things that an Elder has to offer you, you pretty well have to be a sound mind so you can remember how to practice the things he teaches you and to work it into your lifestyle so that it is basically makes you feel, gives you a feeling, (let's see what is the word I am looking for here), that everything is like tranquil.  
(Respondent 6F).

While the duality of approaches was observed to be beneficial by the above respondent, he also explicitly noted that he would prefer the services of an Elder over those of a psychologist or other counsellor. Many other respondents also noted a similar preference. It was stated that, "With an Elder I can bring out my most emotional problems, my most deepest problems, and with anybody else, the priests and that, I can't do that" (Respondent 10F). Many respondents said they felt more comfortable with an Elder than a psychologist, case worker or priest as the Elder had more of an understanding of what it meant to be Aboriginal. This perceived mutual identity with the Elder, combined with the fact that the Elder had also done time in correctional facilities and had overcome alcohol dependency, legitimized him in the eyes of many inmates. Many of the inmates felt that the Elder had a sense of "being there" (i.e. understanding the daily realities which the inmates faced in their lives):

To me I prefer an Elder if I was to choose some kind of a counsellor, I would prefer an Elder to talk to. He's easy to talk to and he understands what you're talking about and how you feel about it.

(Respondent 10A).

[I] feel better like talking to an Elder than talking to a priest. In fact, I was going to do my, one of my

AA [Alcoholics Anonymous] steps with an Elder where they say, where the AA people tell you you should do with a priest, where I'd feel more comfortable talking with another, any Elder than I would any priest.

(Respondent 5X).

The Elder was seen as "somebody that I can relate to in general, I feel comfortable with [him] and I know [he] is going to understand my point of view" (Respondent 16R). As this thesis has previously documented, perception is a very important variable in ethnic identification and a sense of belonging. One respondent stated, "my greatest trust that I have in where I will...bare my soul to another human being, is when I'm talking to a Native man" (Respondent 8A). Also:

You feel like you're talking to your own father eh? A lot of times you can't talk to your own father, but you feel like your talking to a grandpa or one of your grandparents. It makes you feel secure, like it's okay you can open up, you're talking to a Native, not a non-Native person who doesn't understand you who just goes by the book or whatever he does, like that's his way. But I know this Elder will understand me cause I'm an Indian and he's a Indian and he understands what I'm talking about or what I'm trying to say. So it helps a lot to talk to them.

(Respondent 8C).

The inmates generally do not perceive the Elder as a threat, or part of the framework of the institution or the department of corrections in general. Many of the inmates feel they can confide in the Elder with a far greater level of confidence than they can with SCC staff members. "Whatever you say to an Elder, that's just between you and him, he doesn't go blabbering it off to some other people" (Respondent 8C). There was a general feeling that one could discuss situations and feelings with the Elder which one

could not bring up with corrections staff for fear of reprisals from the SCC staff. For example:

I'd rather talk to an Elder than talk to a staff about the problems and that because they can't help you. But an Elder can probably help you and tell you what's more best for you...and it's a lot easier to talk to an Elder than it is to talk to one of the staff or guards or something because all...they're doing is telling you, "Well you don't do this", you know, and they don't give you a chance to explain yourself. Or they just bring out the charge right away...it's crazy.

(Respondent 16D).

One other inmate felt that SCC staff would not accept or understand the spiritual connection to all things which some respondents in the sample were starting to comprehend and internalize through their learning experiences regarding Aboriginal spirituality:

As a human being I can talk to anybody about my problems, but there are some things that tend to have a, to me I relate them spiritually. My relationships and stuff in my life in general, it's all geared toward spirituality, the universe, or the Great Spirit. Like why is this happening, with my wife, and how can I deal with it? Spiritually I'm having a rough time and, things like that of course the Elder is going to help, just because he understands. You talk to somebody else they might say "Oh yeah, yeah right". Some people might not see how I put something of spiritual significance to everything. Some people don't see that, they just see relationships and behaviour and it's all psychological, and stuff like that. To me anyway there's a spiritual side to everything and I need to gather my strength from that in my relationships and in my living every day. And having an Elder makes it that much better because I can identify with an Elder and he knows where I've come from. He knows I have roots, and I know his. Our psychological perspectives are the same.

(Respondent 16R).

Obviously, many inmates feel a connection to the Elder which they do not feel to other corrections staff or

contract personnel. This connection is due, in part, to the perceived Aboriginal self-identification which many Aboriginal inmates adhere to regardless of actual cultural affiliation or official Aboriginal status. The factor of empathy, therefore, can not be overlooked when offering spiritual and cultural service providers to Aboriginal inmates. This thesis has previously documented that numerous other scholars acknowledge the importance of an empathetic relationship between healer and healed (or Elder and inmate in this circumstance).

Related to the factor of empathy is the reality that many Aboriginal spiritual leaders and Elders working in the corrections environment today were, at one time or another, also incarcerated. This experience as an "ex-con" turned spiritual leader is important for many of the inmates for factors of both empathy and role modelling. The inmates can better relate to and confide in the Elder, and can also see that the possibility for change in one's life is a reality. The Elder's are often living proof of this fact. When asked if it was beneficial for the inmate to have a resident Elder with a past history of incarceration or criminal behaviour, these respondents answered:

Yah, it does yah because he's talking from experience. He's like, for example, like myself, if I really wanted, you know I've been searching for my true identity all my life almost it seems like and I found this spirituality, this sweats and stuff like that and that's how the Elders started, eh, you know and they found something they like, something they fit in with and they went by that. They followed it, and they're

passing it onto the other generation. That's how I see myself as a...like an Elder. If I keep on it, maybe I'll be an Elder some day, somewhere down the road.

(Respondent 1T).

That is always a plus because...he has experienced what some of the struggles and troubles that we go through in here [are]. That always helps because he has first-hand knowledge of it: the day-to-day struggles that we go through in here. But he can maybe give us a hand in trying to steer us in a positive direction. That is one part, I guess it would be like looking at him like a counsellor, like a social worker, that is one part of it, that's the counselling part of it, maybe, and for [the Elder] he has been through a lot of this too, and I look at him as a holy man but I try and with him, although he has been through this too, I still, like I won't speak to him the way I speak to some of the guys in here just out of my respect to him. Like he carries the pipe, he's one of our holy men and I told him this too so because of my respect for him and for what he has, I am careful how I speak to him.

(Respondent 8A).

One inmate indicated a physical healing or "doctoring" function to the Elder's role (Respondent 8C). Some mentioned that the Elder is very useful in helping the inmate deal with "bad medicine". Some inmates believed that negative things happened in their lives either as supernatural retribution for wrong-doings or because someone had placed bad medicine on them for one reason or another. These inmates see the Elder as an important functionary in overcoming the problems associated with bad medicine:

What do I go to an Elder for? Sometimes for spiritual reasons, like sometimes something's bothering me. I don't know if anything's ever bothered you, but in spirituality sometimes you can feel the spirits and you can feel their presence and stuff like that, and sometimes to me that is what an Elder is there for. Like if something's bothering you then you can go talk to an Elder. I was about fifteen and I painted, me and a friend, we painted a horse one time and I put a hand on him and some spots, some lightning on his front leg

and on the back. To me the lightning's speed and the hand could have meant I was touched in battle, different things to different people. But anyway I painted this horse with house paint. Me and my friend we thought it was a big joke, and we cut his hair and fixed up his tail and everything. And my grandfather, he got home, and he started giving me shit. And he come out and he said, "What the hell's wrong with you guys? Don't you know that you're not supposed to be painting horses like that for the thrill without a reason?" He said "You're supposed to, there's a certain way of doing things like that", he says, "Don't you know that it's wrong and you can, it's almost like...harm might come from it". So after that we tried to wash the horse and whatever and we were scared so we let him go. And after that my friend, he went home. And after that it just started like dogs barking and I started having sleepless nights and my mind started to be troubled and then it got worse. The dogs were barking all night and then I started hearing voices, stuff like that, and not too much sleep. And then about the fourth night I was hearing things outside my window and this was the summertime, and the dogs were chasing something and what not. There was a tension in the house. My grandparents would kind of look at me strange, and everybody could sort of feel it but it was not talked about. Finally on the last night, on the fourth night, I got up and I went outside and you could feel that presence almost, like the spirit, and it's almost like I'm saying to myself "What did I do wrong?" I know I did wrong. That's why this stuff is coming to me, because it's not something that you play around with and it's sort of a powerful thing. And so the next day I didn't really talk about it too much. Then I talked to my [grandfather] and I told him, "Something's wrong, I'm being bothered". And I told him "I'm hearing things". I was starting to hear drums and things in my ears, they were starting to ring and I was hearing drums. And then the next day my cousins came. It was almost like out of the blue or something and I left with them and I went back to the next reserve to my uncle's, and I told him I had to leave because something was bothering me. And then he...I told him something was bothering me, I couldn't sleep, and I was hearing voices and drums and all that. So I slept there and then the next day out of the blue he said, "Okay, come on, we're going to go". And so we went north to another reserve. And his uncle lives there. And he took me there and we went in and we talked in Cree and we ate. And then one of the younger guys, one of his younger distant relations asked me to get up and go with him. So we went and go look at the horses and what

not. And we talked, my uncle's in there talking. Then we left, and I was alright. And to this day I know there was, I know he talked to him about my problem. Maybe there was no doctoring involved or something, maybe he just you know, an exchange of words and what not. Maybe he prayed for me. But I didn't talk to the Elder directly but I talked to my own Elders and that.  
(Respondent 16R).

For the inmates at SCC then, the Aboriginal Elder fulfils a wide variety of roles. The Elder is simultaneously cultural teacher, spiritual advisor, counsellor, educator, role model, confidant, healer, and even friend. He is often a benevolent face in an environment rapt with adversity and conflict. The Elder is seen as trustworthy and sincere by most inmates. This is in stark contrast to the manner in which staff members and many outside contract personnel are perceived by the inmates. Regardless of which role the Elder assumes with a given inmate at any given time, as spiritual leader and cultural advisor, the Elder remains the cornerstone of any Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC.

#### **5.2.2 Sweat Lodge Programming at SCC - Inmate Perspectives**

There were no significant differences in how traditional, bicultural or assimilated inmates viewed the general function and benefits of participating in the sweat lodge ceremony (hereafter referred to as a "sweat"). Regardless of past cultural experiences, the act of participating in the sweat lodge had remarkably similar effects on the vast majority of respondents. General

perceptions and feelings about the sweat were relatively similar among the majority of the inmates with no identifiable patterns emerging based on cultural affiliation. Therefore, there will be no distinctions among respondents made based on cultural affiliation in the following discussion. For those who would attempt to discern such patterns, inmate code numbers are categorized by cultural affiliation in appendix A to assist in cross-referencing the data.

At its most rudimentary level, many inmates commented on the sweat as simply a means of prayer. In the Lakota way it is considered improper to pray for oneself. Rather, one is directed to pray for others such as loved ones, friends, or those who are sick and suffering. It is also important to pray that those participating in the sweat with you will have positive answers granted to their prayers. The spiritual philosophy is that, by praying for others all the time, there will be many other people praying for you at any given time. Therefore it is not necessary to pray for yourself as your spiritual needs are being looked out for by your fellow worshippers. For example, "I don't necessarily have to go to sweats for myself, maybe someone in my family is having a rough time, I can go there and pray for them" (Respondent 16R).

The fundamental principles which one prays for in the Lakota tradition are good health, happiness, and

understanding. Sometimes prayers are also offered to assist people in gaining "the help they need" to overcome problems in life. It is important to ask the Creator to grant things to the devotee "in a good and positive way", as there are many stories which emphasize that the Creator can grant prayers in a manner which the devotee never considered. For example, there is a story of a man praying for his wife (who had left him) to return. His wife returned to him, but did so in a coffin.

Many inmates saw the sweat as a major aspect in undertaking prayer:

Well I pray for everybody in the sweat. I pray that they have a clear understanding [and]...see things in a better light sort of thing and pray for health. And even people that I don't necessarily like, I will pray for them. I pray for everybody in there, except I don't ask anything of myself.

(Respondent 2A).

They pray for the white man, and people in there don't see themselves as Indians...people in there see themselves as people, just human beings - they don't look at any other human race as any other nationality, they just look at them as people.

(Respondent 17R).

You know the brothers that are sitting with you in the sweat...you pray for them and pray that they'll have the strength to be able to sit and pray for their people and that their prayers will be answered. And finally, you pray for your immediate family. Like I pray for my wife and my kids and in the end I pray for myself but I don't pray that good things will come to me, I pray that I will have good health, happiness, understanding so that I can help others.

(Respondent 20A).

Some inmates noted that the sweat could also be used to treat physical ailments and overcome sickness. The Elder is

seen as intermediary who helps the ill person gain supernatural support in the fight against illness. As well, the Elder can function as healer (as the above discussion indicated) and provide traditional remedies for many situations. Throughout the course of the research, the researcher has had numerous opportunities to hear of seemingly miraculous cures for extremely troubling ailments such as coronary heart disease and various forms of cancer:

If you're sick you attend these sweats and that, and it gives you the power to overcome that illness that you have, from attending sweats, and even taking medicine that the Elder gave you. And it really keeps you going, as long as you keep that up.

(Respondent 10A).

Within the confines of the jail, many respondents saw the sweat as offering an opportunity to form personal and social bonds in an environment which is not conducive to overt cordial behaviour due to the need to appear "solid". It was suggested that "everybody will pray for you in the sweat lodge, so it makes you really feel like you're wanted, like someone cares" (Respondent 8C). Moreover, it was indicated that the sweat is "a place where you can go and have a lot of people around you that really care about what's going on in your life" (Respondent 6F). It was stated by numerous people that individuals who sweat together feel closer to each other. The researcher's own experiences with the sweat (both within and beyond the incarceration environment) confirm these sentiments. The sweat provides a unique opportunity to get to know people on a deeply

personal, emotional, and spiritual level. There is a strong social element associated with the actual ceremony and there is often much joking and teasing among the participants preceding the actual ceremony. The following inmate best exemplifies the feeling of caring and unity which many suggest the sweat promotes:

I'm a quiet person. I just keep to myself mostly, and people just kind of stay away from me. But from after going to a sweat, you know, I've made a couple of friends, a few friends. So in that way people, it kind of brings you closer together. They look at you different in that way...Cause like I said, I'm a quiet person, you know, and people don't know how I am and sometimes a guys knows me, but he never confronts me or tells me anything. He'd like to, but he doesn't know how I am because I'm quiet. But after going to a sweat, you know, and stuff like that, he sees the kind of person I am. He judges me from that. He comes over and talks to me.

(Respondent 1T).

Perhaps one of the most important personal functions which respondents noted from the sweat was the ceremony's ability to help the inmates overcome their problems with self-esteem. Problems such as drug and alcohol abuse and criminal activity most certainly can not be fully comprehended, let alone overcome, if the individual is also battling inner problems of low self-esteem. In order to face difficulties and attempt to overcome them, the individual must feel in control of his or her life and capable of undergoing the necessary procedures to heal themselves. For some, the mere act of successfully making it through the four trying, painful rounds of the sweat was a significant accomplishment (Respondents 1T; 20A). The following

quotation indicates the importance of the sweat lodge in building self-esteem for some of the inmates:

I don't know how other people see me but I have a very low opinion of myself eh, and when I come away from a sweat, I feel real good about myself and I'm sure all my other brothers in here do the same thing. Maybe they're not quite as bad as I am but I'm sure when they walk away from a sweat they walk away with a good feeling and if we could all have that, this place would be just real good, every place would be good.

(Respondent 12B).

This building of a positive self-image was often linked to fostering a stronger Aboriginal identity. The sweat lodge was seen as an opportunity to learn how to be more "Indian" and begin to feel good about oneself as an Aboriginal person (Respondents 5D; 12Q; 16D). Many of the inmates had experienced only negative associations with their Aboriginality in the past and the sweat lodge afforded them an opportunity to feel positive about themselves as Aboriginal people. "From going to sweats and stuff like that, it made me feel like I found myself, my true identity. It made me feel good about myself" (Respondent 1T).

For many, the sweat is a powerful cleansing ritual. Indeed, the sweat lodge ceremony itself has been described, in its entirety, as "the rite of purification" (Brown 1971: 31-43). Brown notes that we "leave behind in the *Inipi* [sweat] lodge all that is impure, that we may live as the Great Spirit wishes, and that we may know something of that real world of the Spirit" (Brown 1971: 43) [brackets added]. Many inmates at SCC held this perception of the sweat. The

sweat was seen as cleansing "your system" out (Respondents 5D; 6F). Mind, body and spirit are thought to be cleansed and purified by undertaking the ceremony. For one inmate, the cleansing function of the sweat was seen as similar to the confessional in the Roman Catholic faith:

You go into a sweat and it's steaming hot and you have to be strong to take it. And the same thing, it's just like going to church in comparison. You go to church, you go to see a priest and confess your sins. You go to church and receive that communion and the same thing with the sweats. You go in there, you sacrifice and you pray and you get cleansed out. In comparison to me it's like confessing your sin, cleansing yourself.

(Respondent 1T).

Many respondents elaborate on the concept of cleansing by stating that they actually feel "reborn" when emerging from a sweat. Anything "bad" in the individual is seen as left behind in the ceremony, allowing room for "good" to take its place (Respondent 7D). "When I go to these sweats, eh, like when I come out of it, it's like I'm entering into a new life. It's very cleansing when you just come out of it" (Respondent 10B). One respondent called on Christian imagery to facilitate an understanding of this variable of the sweat lodge:

[When I] go to a sweat, to me it is like being re-born, I guess. Sometimes, I have thought that, and sometimes I have compared it to the Christian faith. And to me I guess it would be similar to the Christian faith and the practice of I guess of being re-born through Jesus Christ...Like when you go in there, and you come out a new man again. You leave all your troubles, your troubles aren't on your mind as much, your burdens are lightened. Your faith is renewed. Start life again. I guess you can't really say with a clean slate but your burdens are lessened greatly.

(Respondent 8A).

Another respondent used the manner in which one moves in the sweat as a symbol of one's rebirth in the sweat lodge. When entering a Lakota sweat, one always moves in a clock-wise (or sun-wise) manner, and one always crawls. The act of crawling shows respect and deference to the sweat, the Creator and the various other spiritual beings which are said to assist in the sweat (ancestors, animal totems etc). Those participating in the sweat sit cross-legged while in the lodge. With this in mind, one respondent saw this action as symbolic of the pattern of rebirth experienced in the sweat lodge:

You go there to be reborn again each time you go in there. It's like...you go back into a womb. You come out, you're reborn and it's up to you after how to learn to walk, crawl, stand up and walk...Yah, you come out of there reborn, just like when you're born again. Like a kid you first learn to crawl, sit up, crawl, stand up and walk. It's up to you which way you walk.  
(Respondent 7D).

Certainly, the effects of the sweat on many of the inmates is profound and penetrating. A number of inmates pointed to the immediate and pragmatic effect that the sweat had in helping them come to grips with, and in many cases overcome, feelings of frustration or negativity which they carried with them while incarcerated. One inmate mentioned that "the sweat takes away my anger and [without it]...I'd be punching out a lot of these guys so that's why it just helps me, it calms me down...if I didn't go to the sweat I'd be in [the] secure [unit] right now" (Respondent 10F). Another inmate noted that "[I] go to my sweat and have a lot

of sorrow inside me that I can't get out, and when I go in there, I can bring it out" (Respondent 8A). One respondent indicated that "you feel good and you want to say to hell with it, you just let them [i.e. SCC personnel] do what they have to do" (Respondent 17K). Another inmate stated that "After a sweat I'm more relaxed. I can take the bullshit that's going to come to me...I'm ready for it" (Respondent 2N). As such, the sweat lodge can be seen as performing an important security function within the institution by allowing an opportunity for inmates to vent pent-up feelings of frustration, anger and depression before these emotions are channelled upon others or have adverse effects upon the individual:

Like maybe somebody will say something to me, if I didn't go there it may tick me off or something but it doesn't bother me after [a sweat]. I'm able to deal with the staff and the inmates here. No problem.  
(Respondent 16R).

[The sweat] helps you mentally. It makes you feel good. When a person feels good about himself, he reflects that upon other people as well. Then if a person is mad, he goes gets somebody else mad. If he is happy, make somebody else happy. So a sweat makes you happy and you make other people happy.  
(Respondent 7R).

If I started feeling like I wanted to go take drugs, go commit a crime, drink, you know, that's when I want to go into a sweat lodge. Every time I felt like that eh, when I get those negative feelings, that's when I want to go in there and pray.  
(Respondent 8C).

One inmate related a story where the sweat lodge helped diffuse a highly volatile and potentially dangerous situation in a different incarceration facility:

A friend of mine was killed and the guy who killed him, his brother was in a penitentiary with me. And his brother came in and the guy who killed his brother was in there. And they, there was a lot of tension between them, a lot, and they've, I've seen them go to church together and they've, they couldn't walk in the church and sit. I've seen them walk in the church and come out the same old person. They go into the sweat lodge and they come out and they're best friends again. They are brothers. And that's why a sweat lodge is very important. It is the only one place that I have seen that happen.

(Respondent 5X).

The sweat was not necessarily conceived of as eliminating one's problems. Rather, it made them more manageable and put things into perspective for many inmates:

What it does, it's almost like it does away with the negative. Not entirely, but so you're able to deal with them, deal with your problems, or the negative. Could be stress, relationships, whatever, you're able to deal with it and you're able to look at it differently in a peaceful, harmonious manner. That's what I get out of the sweats...I just want to not get away from the negative but be able to deal with it and live with it without it running my life. The negative is always going to be there, but go there for the positive so I can focus on the positive and humanity, everything, and like I said, coming back into harmony.

(Respondent 16R).

One inmate compared the therapeutic effects of sweat lodge participation with that of Euro-Canadian-styled therapy:

I've been to psychologists in my past and I'm not saying that they don't work, I went to them and when I left his office I felt, I felt like something was actually lifted from my chest. When I went to the sweat lodge, I felt about, I would say maybe twice maybe three times as better than I did when I went to psychologists. So what it does for me [is] it gives me a feeling that I have never experienced doing anything else. Like I have been to churches, I have been to self-help groups, I have been to, you know, I have [been] to all kinds of programs on the street and basically I find to date, nothing, nothing that will even come close to it.

(Respondent 6F).

Some inmates indicated a number of concrete, identifiable changes they had made in their lives as a result of their exposure to, and participation in, Aboriginal spirituality. These changes indicate the general therapeutic potential of the sweat lodge:

Well the changes I have noticed so far that I have, I've learned to control my anger. I've learned to be more honest with myself and others. I've learned to forgive. I've learned to, I've learned to just be a better person with myself because I've got to wake up and look at myself each day. So it has been a strong, just over the past couple of years I've realized that I'm getting too old for this partying stuff and I just want to settle down and just go on with the way I have been living lately.

(Respondent 5X).

I have become more passive. Like over the years the way I grew up, I've known only hardship eh? Like poverty, abuse, physical [and] mental abuse and all that comes with that, eh? So I've always known whatever I got, I always had to get the hard way. And once I started learning about spirituality, I'm starting to think more of the next person. I don't...I used to just like fly off the handle, just like that, eh? Had a really bad temper, eh, but in the last few years I've just become...I don't know, finding a peace within myself I guess. I'm starting to recognize the person that I am and that I don't have to be ashamed of who I am. And I've made a few mistakes in my life, but that doesn't erase me completely because of my mistakes...I'm starting to like myself. I'm starting to like the person that I am, eh? I don't go out of my way to hurt anybody, like even just verbally...But it's made me a nicer person, I think, you know?

(Respondent 1D).

The sweat as a means to reduce the overall stress associated with living in a prison environment was noted by many inmate respondents. For some, the sweat was seen as a welcomed opportunity to temporarily "escape" from the realities of prison life (Respondent 8C):

Like when you go into the sweat, you forget that you are in jail for that hour, hour and a half, two hours. Even when you are standing around watching the rocks heat up, I mean you are no longer in prison any more, you are getting ready for a ceremony that is sacred to the people and sacred to your being. So you kind of leave everything for a little while. And especially when you are inside the sweat and you are praying and singing and doing the rites that are there...Then having to come back to my cell and think about it, I mean, it will take hold of you longer than the two hours that you are in there. It might take hold of you for a couple of days because sometimes when you are in a sweat and you are praying, good thoughts come to you and you come back and you contemplate those thoughts when you are in your cell. So it is a real release and it is a real freedom that you come to cherish.

(Respondent 20A).

I usually go to sweats just to get away from the world outside and [have] that time to be alone to pray and give thanks for what I have...No one can come and bother me in there. I can leave if I want and stay if I want. Say what I want without having anyone telling me what to say.

(Respondent 2N).

A number of inmates pointed to the sweat as a particularly useful undertaking to assist them in combatting problems with drugs and alcohol. It was noted by numerous inmates that it was highly improper and disrespectful for them to drink or do drugs for a certain number of days preceding the sweat. While estimates of appropriate periods of abstention varied, the Elder requires a four day abstention from all who pray with him outside of the correctional facility. That is not to say that those who are using or abusing substances can not attend the sweat. It is believed that the sweat was given to *all* people by the creator. There is also the awareness that people are human and, therefore, are prone to making mistakes and being

imperfect. Therefore, anyone is welcome in the sweat at any time (as long as they are not actually under the influence of anything at the time of the ceremony). However, those who are using intoxicating substances, or who have used them for four days preceding the ceremony, can not smoke the pipe during the sweat. Instead, they must pass it and say the prayer "All my relations". Those who wish to participate in a sweat are not questioned on their current patterns of alcohol or drug use. It is only in the sweat, immediately preceding the introduction of the pipe during the break between the third and fourth rounds, where the Elder explains that anyone who has been using anything "to get you high", must pass the pipe. However, as the pipe was not used at SCC by this particular Elder, this was not part of the teachings or spiritual practices at SCC. As it was considered improper to abuse substances and also participate in the sweat, some inmates went through forced abstinence for a number of days preceding and following a ceremony (Respondents 1T; 7R; 9R; 20A). Therefore, the sweat can be seen as a useful tool in combatting alcoholism and drug addiction. If inmates can be convinced to participate in the sweat the majority of them will stay away from intoxicating substances. As well, these individuals will have continual reinforcement that drug abuse and alcoholism are not acceptable forms of behaviour.

For others, the sweat is seen as an vital and integral

component in the overall process of recovery from a variety of addictions (Respondent 16D). It was stated that "this sweat is helping me out in a lot of ways to stay away from drugs and booze and stuff like that" (Respondent 1T). Another respondent indicated "if I had this once a week [i.e. a sweat], I could stay straight, stay sober" (Respondent 5X). One inmate suggested that "For me it...helps me with my sobriety...That's what I'm doing first. Once I defeat that, I know I'll be doing good after that. I never really fully accepted that I was bad. I always thought I was good" (Respondent 7D). This statement also indicates the potential of the sweat to function as a place for self-disclosure and the breaking down of inmates which is a necessary part in the acceptance and subsequent treatment of addictive, psychological, or emotional problems. Another inmate noted that going to the sweat made it easier for him to open up and talk with others about his problems (Respondent 16A). This openness was also noted by another respondent, "It helps me be more open and honest with myself and more kind to myself and other people, not that I'm a mean person but sometimes I can hurt a lot of people just by saying things" (Respondent 12B). This factor of openness was best illustrated by the following respondent:

I get some positive things there like what's happening in the institution. Like since I came into the institution, before that I was always high and I never really thought about anything anybody said. And now

that I've been sober I take things, like somebody's trying to explain things to me and now I listen. Before I would never used to listen. I would just shrug it off and think "What the hell? Who is this person trying to tell me what to do?" But now I try to understand like where people are coming from.

(Respondent 1A).

This feeling of openness can make the individual much more receptive to other institutional programming. The following respondent finally began admitting to himself that he had problems which he needed assistance with:

I'm going to take that Phoenix Program, cause the way I look at myself, I'm immature because of being in jail all this time, I never got a chance to grow, eh. I never took part in institutional programs before, except for that Life Skills in Drumheller and a few other meetings, AA meetings that I've been to. I've started to get more, searching for more information: how am I going to go about doing this to stay out? If I come up with a problem, I don't keep it in. I usually talk to somebody about it.

(Respondent 1T).

For one inmate, the perceived benefits of the sweat outweighed the restrictions surrounding his participation while abusing drugs. At the time of the research he could not bring himself to quit using drugs, nor could he remove himself from the sweat lodge as the benefits he perceived from his participation were too great. As a result, he broke with convention and continued to attend the ceremonies in spite of his persistent drug use:

Well, if I'm dirty and I go to the sweat, like I won't smoke the pipe, but I'll participate in everything else. I'll go there to physically cleanse myself. That's a big part actually, just to go there just to sweat, eh. I know if I have a good sweat, it's going to help clear up my mind, open up my heart to what's going on around me, hear what's not even being said and physically make me whole again. Like I said, when I

come out of a sweat, I'm totally...I feel like I'm a totally new person again, eh. I've been given a new start on this day. It's my option to do what I want with that opportunity, eh. So I guess that's why I go there, even though I'm dirty, the day will get a new step, eh, a new go at...like I've been fighting my addiction for years now, eh, so after each sweat that opportunity is there for me again to be able to try and kick the habit, eh.

(Respondent 1D).

Obviously, this particular individual did not completely accept the totality of symbolism associated with the ceremony. The Elder was not (to the researcher's knowledge) aware of the actions of this inmate regarding drug use. While other inmates were probably aware of this particular inmate's disparaging actions, no one (to the researcher's knowledge) attempted to prohibit this inmate from participating or attempted to educate him in the proper period of abstention and the reasons for this. This is in keeping with the onus on individual responsibility and commitment inherent in the practise of Lakota spirituality. The individual is ultimately responsible for his or her actions and the consequences thereof (secular or supernatural). It should be noted that this inmate was classified as assimilated. Therefore, this may be a variable in his lack of appreciation for the totality of the symbolism surrounding the sweat. By his own admission, he was just beginning to learn about Aboriginal spirituality and was not yet ready to fully commit to all of the principles and sanctions inherent to its practise.

Certainly, the behaviour of this inmate was an

exception to the general level of respect afforded to the sweat by those who use or abuse drugs within the institution. Some inmates mentioned that they felt that the Elders could tell if they had been using drugs and this made them uncomfortable in the sweat (Respondent 16A). The majority of inmates who use drugs stated they would choose to opt out of the ceremony if they had been using recently. They found the two practises (drug use and sweating) mutually exclusive and would not simultaneously involve themselves in both undertakings:

An Elder once told me a long time ago if you're doing alcohol or drugs don't bother the Native culture, just leave it where it is, don't mix it up with your alcohol and your self-being. So I used to neglect Native spirituality for a number of times like a period of one month or two months that I wouldn't bother it 'til I was clean.

(Respondent 17R).

If a Native person wants to learn about his ancestors, his traditional ways and spiritual ways, he's got to be clean. You know what I mean? Like no drugs and alcohol in the system. That's my belief, that's the way I work. If there's a powwow, I'll go to that, but if I go to a sweat or Elder's feast or whatever, I feel that I've got to be clean. That means no drugs, no booze, no amphetamines, whatever you know? I've got to be clear minded, cause then that way I can understand more. Where if I go [stoned], I'll be just going there to listen and [the lessons will be] going out the other ear. So that's my belief - I got to be clean before I go to these things, cause I feel that's real disrespect to the spirits, eh. That's my belief.

(Respondent 12T).

I don't go and sweat when I'm doing drugs and stuff. I stay away and then when I have been clean for a while, maybe I will go. Well, I usually will. But if I am...dirty, I stay clean and then I look forward to the next one...and then I think in my mind well if we had these more often, maybe it would be more of a reason to stay clean.

(Respondent 6N).

You need this more often just like you need drugs more often, you know...There are times, like, I feel like, you know, just picking up a joint and smoking up, eh, but then I have to hang in there, you know. I have to pray and hang in there, but we haven't had a sweat for 3 weeks now, eh, so we need that more often.

(Respondent 1T).

These last two comments draw the question, therefore: if going to sweats is incompatible with drug use, can more inmates be encouraged to see increased access to sweats as a reason to stay clean? If so, what can be done to facilitate access to the sweat for the inmates? This latter point will be taken up in the section of this thesis dealing with policy implications.

One inmate noted that, even though he was opposed to people going to the sweat after they had been using, that the matter was up to the individual:

I can't really say anything to them because it's up to them, eh? It's their decision. I can't judge them on that and it must help them since they go so regularly all the time, and they come back and they seem kind of tired, but then they seem in a better mood somehow.

(Respondent 9L).

This is, again, in keeping with the strong emphasis on individualized learning and responsibility inherent in the Lakota tradition and in much of Aboriginal spirituality in general:

I've known a few people who went to sweats in the penitentiary maybe just right after they've smoked a marijuana joint and I wouldn't say nothing to no one. I would just, I could never do that, I just wouldn't feel...because I know the spirits know. So I just, I could never see myself doing that because that sweat lodge is very sacred to me, anyway. I don't like it

but...I feel it's not up to me to say anything or do anything about it so I just pray for them that maybe one day they will understand. Because I strongly feel that going in there, that going in there high or something is showing disrespect to yourself. If you go in there and pray for your family or something and if you are high, I just don't think that your prayers will be answered. But I have known of people doing that before, but like I said I don't think I am the person to say or do anything about it.

(Respondent 5X).

For many Aboriginal inmates at SCC then, access to the sweat lodge ceremony is vital to their well-being as human beings. The sweat offers an opportunity for a means of worship which is an alternative to the dominant culture's religious practises. The ceremony also affords a means to develop social ties and bonds of friendship and caring which are usually very difficult to develop in an incarceration environment. The sweat gives the inmates the opportunity to come to terms with many of the negative events which have occurred in their lives and attempt to heal their long term psychological, emotional, and addictive problems. Moreover, it is an occasion for many inmates to foster a stronger Aboriginal identity while incarcerated (as opposed to a criminal identity). Finally, the sweat functions to reduce individual inmate stress, thereby performing an important institutional function for SCC by ameliorating or eliminating potentially dangerous situations for the staff, management, and other inmates:

When I go to a sweat...I get peace of mind, it eases my spirit and it...brings my physical body to relax. It lifts all the tension and the stress. I go there to pray for my relatives, people in my life, sometimes

people in general. And I come out of there renewed, my body feels clean, my spirit feels clean, and my mind, I feel that it cleans my mind. I come out of there with a clear mind and a clear head. I look at things more holistically, almost from a universal point of view. I come out of there spiritually renewed and physically clean and relieved of my tension and stress and I come out of there with good thoughts.

(Respondent 16R).

Of course, the sweat lodge is not a panacea for all the problems which an individual may encounter, nor is it an acceptable or appropriate means of therapy for all inmates. Its utility lies predominantly in its value as a component of an overall treatment, counselling, and education program for the inmates which so desire this particular avenue of programming. We must caution, however, that if the sweat lodge is to be truly considered as a useful therapeutic undertaking, then there should be objectively identifiable changes in the behaviour and thinking of the participants. As noted above, some inmate respondents did subjectively describe such changes. It is important, therefore, to document whether staff members discerned any positive changes in inmate behaviour resulting from their participation in Aboriginal spirituality programming.

### **5.3 The Value of Aboriginal Spirituality Programming - Staff Perspectives**

Like the variable of culture, some staff members felt that participation in Aboriginal spirituality services was highly useful and beneficial, while other staff members saw

little potential in spiritual undertakings. Unlike opinions about culture, however, staff opinions regarding the use of Aboriginal spirituality programming were not split along lines demarcating staff, programming personnel, and management. One staff member indicated that any kind of spiritual undertaking should have positive and therapeutic outcomes for the practitioners. Spiritual undertakings are considered "primarily positive because people are looking at themselves" (Staff respondent 7M), and sometimes "lots of people here act themselves into a new way of thinking" (Staff respondent 7M):

I think there is a very, very, tangible benefit for having anybody involved in a spiritual life and that is it teaches you ways of acting and behaving that are consistent with ways of believing. So those two things have to go together...I am saying Native spiritual beliefs are equally as valid as Protestantism...Roman Catholicism, or Judaism or Buddhism or whatever teaches these concepts of love and of sharing and of mutual responsibility, reciprocity.

(Staff respondent 2T).

Any form of real spiritual encounters or activities, for certain people, will have healing qualities because of your belief system in whatever that is. If it has to do with the goodness of your spirit, then how could it not? In my opinion, I can't see it as ever being harmful if it's relatively pure in terms of spirituality.

(Staff respondent 4P).

Numerous staff respondents (like their inmate counterparts) commented on the role of Aboriginal spirituality in identity formulation and fortification for Aboriginal inmates. Aboriginal spirituality was seen as an attempt by Aboriginal inmates to "get back to [their] roots"

and find "something they've missed in life" (Focus group 1). One staff respondent indicated that most of the Elders working in corrections today "have come to see that the values of their traditional society are the things that have helped them to heal themselves" (Staff respondent 3Q). As a result, the role modelling function of the Elders (for the inmates) in identity building and behaviour patterning was not overlooked by staff. One staff member spoke of the factor of role modelling in the following manner:

Usually they're [i.e. the inmates] so wrapped up in negative types of activities that they haven't been exposed to a lot of good. And [Aboriginal spirituality] may offer for some a road that they can see that they're okay and that there's some direction here, that there's a guide or a role modelling of goodness of what they can be.

(Staff respondent 4P).

It was also noted that those inmates who begin to internalize the teachings of Aboriginal spirituality can become positive role models for other inmates:

I've only met one since I've been here that actually, what I believed to be sincere or desired to get more involved in Native spirituality. Like this fellow was quite involved...I thought he was sincere. He was in my mind like a reborn Christian, but he was a reborn Native or something. Like the way he acted around the unit...he tried to portray himself as more of a role model...doing what he thought a Native should do, you know, from the traditional ways or whatever.

(Focus group 2).

Building on or fostering an Aboriginal identity was seen, by one staff member, as having direct benefits for the inmate as well as for the institution. This respondent noted that Aboriginal spirituality:

brings [Aboriginal inmates] closer to the identity that they want to have and as they ask questions and find answers the more in control you are the easier it is to be more sure of yourself and to have a relaxed behavioural pattern as opposed to not knowing what is going to happen to you, not being in control, you tend to get a little more agitated. And when it comes to the identity crisis I see a lot of these guys coming through, the more times they participate in these things the more times they can identify themselves as with a culture, relax with that, and because of that they're relaxed themselves.

(Staff respondent 7T).

This last comment seems to indicate that some staff perceive participation in Aboriginal spirituality programming as having a beneficial institutional function as it serves to alleviate inmate stress and, thus, decreases the level of institutional hostility. It was stated that those who seriously partake of the spiritual teachings will "relax...[and]...feel better about themselves. They'll feel better about the unit and where they're at" (Focus group 1). Staff members commented on the stress-reducing function of Aboriginal spirituality services:

I've talked to a few inmates who were frustrating themselves with situations that were outside their control, their wives weren't doing the right thing out on the street, their hookers weren't doing the right thing out on the street, whatever the problem was, life was not going just as they wanted it. And in many cases, in previous incarcerations they might have thrown a fit, got themselves put into semi or secure [i.e. highly secure areas of the jail which are removed from the general population], so that that would provide more control in their lives because at that point they're feeling out of control. I've talked to some inmates who were willing to hang on because they knew a sweat was coming and they could go to the sweat. And sort of some people go to the confessional and they kind of purge their, I've seen forgive me and all this kind of stuff, they were looking to the sweat as being the same kind of thing and that somehow they would be

able then to relax and kind of get back to a more stable posture for what was going on in their lives.

(Staff respondent 3Q).

On a longer term dealing with some of the guys fairly closely I know what they're like a day or two before they go into a sweat and in dealing with them a day or two after and yes I think that over a short term after, 48 hours after a sweat the guys generally are more calmer, it's hard to come up with any specifics but the general impression is that yes, it's kind of a calming effect or a mellowness or however you'd like to describe it. Again it's really hard to pinpoint.

(Staff respondent 7T).

You see less aggressiveness and more appropriate ways of asserting without being offensive. You can see some renewed determination without a person becoming aggressive about it. I see that kind of subtleness come out of Native spirituality involvements.

(Staff respondent 2T).

Perhaps the following example best illustrates, from a staff perspective, the potential for Aboriginal spirituality in diffusing potentially harmful situations at SCC:

Where I've seen Native spirituality really be a really positive thing is when we had the...it was actually a kind of a power struggle on 20th Street. A Native fellow and another fellow killed another Indian fellow down by the Barry [Hotel] there and they were inmates here, and because of that, they had an honour circle in the gym to kind of, because they were both rival gangs were kind of having a lot of tension in the jail here. So they had an honour service for the fellow that passed away...and actually that was one of the best things, because it was actually a very healing thing...They had a chance to mourn, to speak, pray and a chance to share the pipe and a chance to do a lot of those things, you know. *I think it cut the tension level in the jail tremendously, because when it was over [the Elder] sang a mourning song and you could just feel the release of emotion at that point to a large extent.* Then they called on...[another Elder] that was saying that "Vengeance is the Creator's, it's not for man to do that" and after it was over, they were inviting different rivalling groups to come to the circle and shake hands...I mean there are still repercussions from that incident on the street with guys, but it didn't happen in here. Even that kind of

settled a lot of things down. It was a really good deal...and I think it helped a lot of the guys that are fringe people that don't participate too much. Even street people, it helped them to kind of think about it, anyway. It was a positive move.

(Focus group 1) [emphasis added].

One staff member suggested that many inmates feel stress because they have been victimized most of their lives and continue to make decisions which force them to lose control over their lives and, therefore, continue to live their lives as victims in one form or another (Staff respondent 4P). This staff member sees Aboriginal spirituality as providing some sense of meaning and control over a person's life which, in turn, helps ameliorate the person's feelings of victimization. This notion of Aboriginal spirituality allowing the individual to regain control or begin to accept responsibility was remarked upon by other staff members as well:

In some cases a guy will learn some organizational skills, for example [in planning] a feast or a powwow or they invite somebody in, how does that happen? It just doesn't happen because somebody thought about it, it takes some organization and so learning how to make something happen I think is a valuable skill that is applicable to many things in life. So part of the process that I think is important is learning to work together on a common purpose, in a committee kind of condition, I think those are also skills that are useful. I think it's probably good for guys to try to work together on things like this because in many cases they haven't had anything of really compelling interest in their lives, anything that they really got excited about, that had any kind of a nourishing or positive bent to it. They often don't see themselves as people who can make a positive contribution. They've been either bought into or programmed to believe that they don't have a lot to offer. So this is a way they can begin to re-examine that.

(Staff respondent 3Q).

By assuming more responsibility and gaining a sense of accomplishment, the inmate can also increase his self-esteem (as the above quotation infers). Aboriginal inmates can begin to feel a sense of empowerment and begin to feel more control over their lives (Staff respondent 2T). It should be noted here that individual empowerment is not synonymous with political activism. Nor is the latter an inevitable outcome of the former. We are talking here of inner healing, not political organization. One staff member related an incident in which an inmate had to do some research on racism. Initially, the inmate was overwhelmed with the task, however a discussion with the Elder gave him renewed enthusiasm and commitment to the task. After discussing an issue with the Elder then, this staff member felt that inmates:

seem to appreciate more that they have some personal control here and then you see some renewed interest in the classroom, for instance. I have observed that. You have a greater willingness to take risks for leadership. I'll give you an example, [an anonymous inmate] is a good example where he had to do some things that he had never done before and part of the commission that I gave him was he had to talk with [the Elder] and he came back with some renewed confidence and he was going to do it. Even though he may not have a lot of expertise, he wanted to do it and felt imperative to do it which was quite a pronounced thing. (Staff respondent 2T).

Other possible benefits to inmates which staff perceived (due to the inmate's participation in Aboriginal spirituality programming) include offering the inmate an opportunity to address their addictions (Staff respondent

7M), and providing an "escape" from the institution (Focus group 1). It is noteworthy, however, to point out that staff see the element of escapism as an opportunity for the inmate to be "protected" from the prison environment, whereas for the inmate, the element of "escape" (a removal from the everyday monotony of prison life) was the primary consideration. Protection was not an issue raised by the inmates participating in the sweat lodge.

It is apparent then, that both inmates and some staff perceive important therapeutic benefits for inmates who are participating in Aboriginal spirituality programming. The range and degree of these benefits vary greatly among individuals (both inmate and staff). It was extremely difficult for the researcher, however, to identify any discernable changes in the inmates resulting *directly* from their participation in Aboriginal spirituality services. Any changes which were experienced by the inmates could, in fact, be the product of a wide variety of variables. For example, there are other treatment programs and facilities offered at SCC which may have had a healing or therapeutic function for the inmate. Moreover, this research lacked a baseline from which to measure the therapeutic effects of participation in Aboriginal spirituality programming. That is, there was no systematic prolonged observation of institutional functioning and inmate behaviour prior to the introduction of Aboriginal spirituality programming. This

fact is further complicated by the fact that present programming remains highly unstructured and almost haphazard. As well, the fieldwork component of the research was undertaken only for a period of approximately four months. Therefore, there was little time to identify and observe long-term changes (positive or negative) in the inmate population. This factor is exacerbated by the fact that the inmate population of SCC is highly transitory in that inmate turnover is great due to the relatively short length of sentences. Therefore, there is little opportunity for the long-term observation of particular individuals. Finally, the need for the inmates to appear "solid" in order to function relatively safely and effectively in the prison environment may overshadow any possibly observable therapeutic effects encountered by the inmates. It is important, therefore, to undertake more research in this area to determine precisely what variables are significant factors in the overall therapeutic value of Aboriginal spirituality. That there is some kind of therapeutic value inherent in indigenous spiritual practise is granted: "There can be no harm in it, for some it's going to be more beneficial than for others" (Staff respondent 4P). What the nature of this therapeutic value is, and how it relates to other therapeutic undertakings in a prison environment, is a matter for future research.

## 6.0 Symbolic Healing at SCC

The existence and functioning of symbolic healing at SCC was determined primarily by two methods. Following the initial schedule one interview (see appendix B) with 37 inmates, ten inmate respondents who were regularly involved with Aboriginal spirituality at SCC, and who appeared more knowledgeable about the meanings and significance of various cultural and spiritual items and practices than their peers, were sought out and interviewed a second time using interview schedule four (see appendix B). Inmates who were interviewed in this manner were asked to provide their interpretation of the meanings and significance of a number of items and principles necessary in the practise of Aboriginal spirituality (see schedule 4 in appendix B). For example inmates were asked to explain what the pipe represents, why it is significant, and whether the bowl and the stem had distinct symbolic associations. Informal conversation and participant observation with numerous inmates also aided in determining the general role and extent of symbolic healing at SCC.

The Elder was never formally interviewed by the researcher regarding the meaning and spiritual significance of these various items. Rather prolonged informal

interaction with the Elder (both within and beyond SCC) involving a variety of spiritual undertakings functioned as the baseline by which to compare inmate's interpretations of spiritual items. The Elder often educated the researcher on the importance of various items and principles and the spiritual significance of various undertakings while performing such functions as gathering medicine (for example, roots), picking rocks and hauling wood for the sweat, or simply enjoying a cup of coffee or a drive in the country. Obviously, there was also a great deal of spiritual education offered to the researcher while undertaking sweats with the Elder. Generally, the Elder would explain the meanings of various aspects of the ceremony and the sacred language, items, and cosmological interpretations associated with it. Therefore, through prolonged interaction with the Elder, the researcher was able to get a basic understanding of the relevance and spiritual significance of many of the sacred items and principles which are associated with the practises of Aboriginal spirituality. These interpretations gathered from the Elder were then compared with those of the Aboriginal inmates to determine whether, in fact, the inmates and the Elder were operating within the same mythic system in regards to symbolic healing.

It must be stated that the researcher's interpretation of the Elder's philosophy is necessarily incomplete and, therefore, may contain omissions or fallacies. This is a

result of the Elder's practise of only passing on information or knowledge as it is earned by those seeking it. Therefore, there is every possibility that the researcher was not fully versed in the meanings and the significance of the various factors discussed. Moreover, the knowledge that the Elder possesses is the result of years of learning and practising Aboriginal spirituality. It would be impossible for anyone to gain the same level of understanding possessed by the Elder in such a short time (i.e. four months of field research).

While there are definite therapeutic advantages associated with participation in Aboriginal spirituality programming for many Aboriginal inmates, this study uncovered relatively little evidence to indicate that symbolic healing, as it is academically defined by anthropologists and other scholars, is occurring at SCC. For symbolic healing to occur, the healer and the individual being healed must share a common mythic, and therefore symbolic, worldview. For the most part, this common cosmological outlook (among the Elder and the inmates) was not evident at SCC. Often, the inmates would lack fundamental knowledge regarding the significance of various spiritual items, practices and principles. Many inmates indicated that this lack of knowledge stems from early socialization in an urban context or prolonged exposure to a non-Native foster home or residential school environment.

Moreover, many inmates who were raised in predominantly Aboriginal communities experienced severe dysfunctionality not only in their immediate home environment, but in the community at large. Furthermore, practising Aboriginal spirituality in any form was forbidden for many years by the federal government and many individuals were forced to practise covertly and in isolation. Therefore, much knowledge and ritual was withheld from the community at large and was not widely known about, let alone disseminated. Thus, early socialization and enculturation into the principles and practices of Aboriginal spirituality were not a part of the lives of most of the respondents (as the offender sample profile offered in chapter four attests). It is not surprising, therefore, that these individuals would lack a strong foundation in the teachings of Aboriginal spirituality.

In the discussion which follows, the researcher is forced to categorize the holistic nature of the practise and principles of Aboriginal spirituality for academic analysis. That is, all the elements of Aboriginal spirituality work in concert and complement each other. Therefore, to take an item or practice out of context necessarily distorts it to a certain degree. All components of one's belief system provide central elements of belief and practice to the overall interpretation of spirituality. Therefore, the academic discussion which follows necessarily loses the

essence of some of the items and beliefs discussed.

The pipe, for example, is interpreted by the Elder as perhaps the most sacred aspect of Aboriginal spirituality. It was given to the Lakota thousands of years ago by White Buffalo Calf Woman as a gift from the Creator. The pipe is a direct line to the Creator. When one prays while smoking it, one's prayers are carried directly to the Creator with the smoke which emanates from the bowl. It is all-important and demands the respect of those participating in the practise of Aboriginal spirituality. The Lakota use only a particular kind of red rock ("pipestone") which is available in a single quarry in the United States to fashion their bowls. As the bowl is red, it is seen to represent the blood of all living creatures (human ["two-legged"] and non-human ["four-legged", "winged"] etc.). This, therefore, reminds the adherent of his or her interrelationship to and interdependence on all things containing blood. The stem is made of wood (any type of hardwood). Therefore, this represents the links the devotee has with all things that come from the earth. Thus, these two elements of which the pipe is comprised, as well as its link to the sacred, help humankind discern their interrelationships with the totality of the universe.

No inmate interviewed held the exact interpretation of the significance and meaning of the pipe as the Elder. Given that the Elder refused to use his pipe within SCC, however,

this is not surprising. One respondent said that the pipe itself contained no meaning and that smoking it was simply the same as smoking a cigarette (Respondent 5L). Another respondent felt that the bowl represented a female human while the stem represented a male. In their coming together via the pipe they unite the entire universe and "everything in the circle...like all the living things" (Respondent 3R). Some respondents knew that the pipe was used to carry prayers to the Great Spirit or Creator, yet few could expound on this concept or offer any detail (Respondents 20T, 4D, 20D, 6T). Of those who could comment at all on the significance of the colour of the bowl, no one indicated that this colour represented the blood of all living things. However, those respondents who could comment on the colour of the bowl did feel that it held particular significance for Aboriginal people yet they often had difficulty articulating this significance. For example, "Every pipe I see is brown [the actual colour is closer to what is generally termed 'Indian Red'], so it could represent the colour of our skin, the colour of us" (Respondent 20D) [brackets added]. Also:

Well it's the stone, the colour of the stone. That's what's been used for the pipe. Like it's the colour of life, Indian Red, eh? It's the colour of life and it's the kind of stone they use, that colour, that's the life, that Indian Red. Kind of maroon.

(Respondent 2X).

The following quotations are typical of the responses obtained by the researcher when probing for meanings

associated with the pipe:

The bowl is...geez, let me think back to what we were taught. I think the body and spirit, I think it is. You know, I can't really remember. I know that they do have two meanings. I mean one is made of rock and the other is made of wood and that. There's something to do with the mind and the spirit in that, particularly in the joining of the two to come and pray with. I can't tell you the exact significance and what the meaning of each is.

(Respondent 4Q).

I don't really understand the pipe all that well. I've smoked it and I understand the meaning of...it was explained to me and I understand the meaning of smoking it and the way it's handled and what not. But the actual significance of the stem and the bowl, I haven't really got into it.

(Respondent 20T).

Respondents were also asked to identify the spiritual significance of tobacco and why it is important. The Elder sees tobacco as an offering to the Creator and the Grandfathers (i.e. those who have gone before us) to aid one in having their prayers answered. It is also offered to an Elder, spiritual person, or medicine person when one is seeking some counsel or service from that person. It is the traditional way of offering remuneration when one is seeking something in return. It is also left as an offering when one takes something, such as medicine, from the natural world. By offering tobacco to the Creator, that which is taken will be replaced so that there will always be plenty. Regular tobacco differs from that used in the pipe. The tobacco used in the pipe (*kinikinik*) is made from Red Willow bark during the later winter months ("Before the first thunder"). It is considered more sacred than ordinary tobacco as it is

exclusively used in ceremonies and it requires more personal effort (and hence commitment) to obtain it.

The function and utility of tobacco was basically understood by the majority of respondents. All respondents indicated that tobacco is used as a gift or offering and can also function as payment "for services rendered" in numerous contexts. In their understanding of *kinikinik*, however, respondents differed significantly. Some respondents knew that the tobacco used for ceremonial purposes in the pipe was different, yet could not elaborate beyond this awareness (Respondents 4Q, 6T, 20D). Others had no understanding or knowledge of *kinikinik* (Respondents 2N, 3R, 5L). One respondent stated that there was no functional difference between regular tobacco and *kinikinik*, yet realized that the latter was made differently (Respondent 5Q). One respondent saw *kinikinik* as a medicinal root which was highly significant in Aboriginal culture (Respondent 2X). This variance in interpretation may be due to the fact that the respondent in this case was a Cree man with a sound background in traditional teachings in his own culture. Therefore, he may have differed in his interpretations of the uses of *kinikinik* based on cultural or linguistic factors. One respondent knew that *kinikinik* was more "organic" and "natural" as it was made out of Red Willow bark (Respondent 4D), yet did not elaborate on whether this added to its spiritual significance. The following quote

best exemplifies a comprehensive understanding of tobacco from an inmate perspective. This level of understanding was the exception rather than the norm:

Tobacco is used as an offering for giving thanks for different reasons. You know, when you take something you leave something, you put some tobacco there. Or it's a sign of respect for the Creator for giving you these things, or you give it to an Elder as a sign of respect for his advice or his medicine. You can say it has a sacred meaning in that sense. It's like...different religions have sacrifice and stuff like that, it's our different offerings, along the same lines just like ours is with tobacco. And it's given directly. Say sometimes you might want to go cut some arrows or something like that, you leave some tobacco for those arrows because you're taking some of the Creator's life and you have to put something back...[And] Kinnikinnick they make it out of, it's made out of red willow. I think it's red willow and maybe a few other things, like plants. And mainly that's what you smoke with a pipe, most traditional people would smoke that with a pipe, in the pipe. And that tobacco has a sort of special significance because it comes right from the Creator. And when you're smoking, whatever you pray, your prayers go up, go right up, directly through the pipe...because it's natural. I haven't gone out and got that, made tobacco, my own *kinikinik*, but I know there's prayer and things that go into it when you're actually in the process of obtaining it.

(Respondent 20T).

Respondents were also asked to discuss their understanding of tobacco ties. As tobacco ties have been discussed in chapter three, their meaning and significance will not be reiterated. There was virtually no understanding of the use and significance of the tobacco ties among the sample group. The ties were only introduced by the Elder to those participating in a sweat a few weeks prior to the Elder's departure from SCC. Some instruction was given to the inmates at that time as to the manufacture, use and

spiritual significance of the ties. Therefore, it is not surprising that there was little accurate knowledge about the ties demonstrated by the inmates as tobacco ties were completely beyond the realm of experience for most of these inmates prior to their interaction with the Elder. Generally, inmate perceptions of the importance and significance of tobacco ties were vague and rudimentary. The following quotes exemplify this:

Well that's the first time I came in contact with tobacco ties like that. They're prayers, the ties. When you're making the ties you're praying for your family, your friends. You're praying all the way through for help, understanding, happiness...and there's four things you pray for but you can be praying for your family and for...Like the way he explains it it's like the holy rosary prayer. Like there's the four colours and each, yellow, red and black and in that order. But when you're tying them you pray or whatever and they have different reasons.

(Respondent 20T).

There's four different colours on that tobacco ties, eh. Like there's the red...I mean start off with the...when the sun rises is the yellow, which is where it's the brightest. And the brightest is white, and it's in the south. And when the sun goes down, it's red. That's the red one. And the black one is the north which symbolizes darkness, when the sun is not out...Like when I pray, I pray in all directions to make sure they can go all over, like all directions and make sure it's being heard all over through the spirit world. You pray in the four directions. It helps you...well, it's heard all over. It's heard in all directions and the way the sun travels. Each moment of the day, the directions are helping. It's directing towards light and good, how to live, how to treat people. Good for personal well-being, personal life. Your family will be nice, no sickness and death. Help you through sickness and bad times.

(Respondent 2X).

Another inmate respondent mentioned tobacco ties as an offering to the Elder (Respondent 6T). Another suggested

they work to unite "all races" (Respondent 5Q). Another suggested that using ties merely showed a belief in spirits and a desire to learn about "Indian culture" (Respondent 5L). Yet another respondent felt that tobacco ties unite the four directions in helping to guide the individual on the right path in life (Respondent 20D). Two respondents (3R and 2N) did not offer any insights into the meaning of tobacco ties. The following quote illustrates the confusion surrounding tobacco ties in particular, but also the general overall lack of knowledge regarding Aboriginal spirituality which many inmates face:

I've always been told just to use the tobacco ties and pray with them. Like I think I mentioned before, why do they use them? Because that is the way they've been taught. I mean, a lot of people don't understand the essence of every ritual that they go through to prepare themselves to either go into the sweat, prepare themselves to pray and all these other things that they do, preparing yourself to fast. I mean, I still don't...I haven't got the clear significance as to why you have to make tobacco ties other than I know you pray with them and you pray to the four directions and you pray for whatever you're going to go into the sweat for. After the sweat, they're brought back into the fire. I guess that maybe some significance as to your sacrifice to pray, but I don't think that I know or anybody knows the significance of everything that we do.

(Respondent 4Q).

One inmate was a notable exception in his understanding of the use and meaning of tobacco ties. This is due, in the researcher's opinion, to the fact that he had known the Elder and had worshipped with him prior to his incarceration:

When you're making your tobacco ties here, you're

constantly praying, eh, and first you've got to have all the four colours: black, red, yellow and white. The four colours of the four directions for the four sacred colours of man. Everything is all related sort of thing. It's just another way of sending your offering, your prayers, and have them in the sweat and stuff like that.

(Respondent 4D).

Respondents were also asked to discuss various elements of the sweat lodge and, in particular, the meaning of the rocks used therein. As it is generally common knowledge among Aboriginal people and academics that the sweat lodge is representative of Mother Earth (i.e. of the practitioner returning to the womb), and as this idea was reiterated and documented among the inmate respondents in this sample, the various interpretations of the sweat lodge offered by the inmates will not be discussed. As the rocks used in the sweat are of paramount importance in the Lakota tradition, more attention will be placed on them in the following discussion.

The Elder believes that the rocks are alive. They are completely pure and ultimately sacred. They were the first nation on the earth (long before any other life was present) and they will be the last nation; surviving long after all other forms of life, including humankind, has vanished. The rocks see all, know all and can heal all. They are affectionately termed "Grandfathers", the "Stone people" or the "First people". It is believed that any healing or answering of prayers in the sweat lodge is due to the healing powers and supernatural properties of the rocks, for

they are the material manifestation of the Grandfathers (those already in the spirit world). The rocks sacrifice their own lives in the sweat (by being put on the fire and later offering up their power to aid devotees while in the sweat) so that the practitioners can have their prayers answered. The lessons surrounding the rocks were often reiterated by the Elder inside the sweat lodge just prior to undertaking the first round of the sweat.

Inmate respondents varied in their knowledge of the meaning of the rocks. To one, the rocks held no special or sacred meaning (Respondent 5Q). Another respondent opted not to offer any information on this topic (Respondent 4Q), while a third respondent stated that he couldn't put his understanding of the rocks into words (Respondent 5L). One respondent indicated that the rocks were placed inside the sweat in a manner representative of the four directions (Respondent 20D). While this is true of the first four rocks brought into a Lakota sweat lodge, the meaning and importance of the rocks goes far beyond this observation. Still another respondent felt that the rock's only role was that of physically and mentally testing the devotee in the sweat lodge through the heat that they produced (Respondent 6T).

Three of the remaining five respondents who were interviewed with the schedule four format noted the Elder's view that the rocks represented the Grandfathers sacrificing

themselves (Respondents 3R, 4D, 20T). Even these respondents, though, were hesitant in their interpretations of the meanings of the rocks:

It was our Grandfathers in there, sacrificing their lives, putting their lives up for, in order for us to purify our souls and stuff like that. I'm not sure. I don't know.

(Respondent 4D).

The rocks are our Grandfathers. They're the ones we pray to, eh? Like they represent the Great Spirit and by them giving off steam, they're absorbing our prayers and all that and we're sacrificing ourselves. There's really not much I know about these things, but I hope to learn a lot more about them in the future, eh.

(Respondent 3R).

Yeah, like your Grandfather, Grandfathers, your mushum. But different people say different things. Like the rocks have a special significance like your Grandfather. Like you know they're [there] to help you, they have spiritual power, like that healing power...There's power there, there's spiritual significance, it brings you that much closer to creation. They can help you. Everything has power, like in the sweat lodge those rocks there have power, healing power and significance. Like they're alive, they're alive, it's...[how] can I put it in words? They have spiritual significance anyway. Again it goes back to that direct link to Mother Earth and the spirit world. There's power there, there's power there, healing power.

(Respondent 20T).

The remaining two schedule four respondents saw the rocks, as did the Elder, as the first people or first nation on earth (Respondents 2N, 2X):

Rocks are the first people that have ever been in here. I mean on the earth and they'll be the last ones. There's a lot of spirit right in the rock, like you treat them right and they treat you right. Rock is the earth. It's been here before you and it will be here after you and still. It's everlasting life, the rock.

(Respondent 2X).

It is interesting to note that only partial elements of

the Elder's teachings regarding the rocks were internalized by the various respondents. No single respondent encompassed all the spiritual elements associated with the rocks which were elucidated by the Elder.

Inmate respondents were also asked to discuss the significance of the four directions. As previously documented, the Elder interprets each of the four directions to have a particular quality or corresponding attribute associated with it. Also, each colour is associated with a specific direction. Therefore black represents the west which, in turn, is associated with truth and honesty. Red is associated with the north and healing. Yellow is representative of the east and birth. Finally, white is associated with the south and the passage to the other side (i.e. death). There could be many more meanings attributed to the four directions. This explanation is only a cursory examination. However, it represents the extent of the author's current knowledge regarding the Elder's interpretation of the significance of the four directions.

Three of the ten schedule four respondents (2N, 5L, 5Q) provided no information on the meaning of the four directions. Furthermore, while most inmate respondents were aware that there were certain attributes and colours associated with each direction, few could elaborate on these concepts as they were understood in Lakota spirituality. It should be noted that each Aboriginal cultural group has

their own interpretations of the significance and meanings of the four directions and this fact was not lost on some of the respondents. However, for the purposes of symbolic healing, it was the Lakota interpretation of these symbols which was important in this context. For those respondents who did offer an interpretation of the significance and symbology of the four directions, few were confident in their explanations as the following quotes will indicate.

One respondent, for example, felt that the four directions represented different elements of nature:

Four directions which is north, south, east and west, it represents the rock, the trees and the water and something, what is it? The rock, the trees, the water and there's something else. There's one more thing...Air maybe...I'm not really sure eh, but that's what it represents anyway, the nature of Mother Earth. The rocks, the ground, the earth, yeah that's the last one, the earth.

(Respondent 20D).

Another respondent felt that the four directions acted as guides for people on their walk in life through the cycle of the medicine wheel:

The medicine wheel is round and the top would be north, the bottom would be south and the east and west eh? And when you start on the wheel, like they lived life on the wheel eh, like say when you were born you started on a certain point and you go to another point in another phase of your life you'd go over here and over here. And when you get older and it's time for you to go, the circle is complete. My conception is when you pray to the four directions it's just a respect for the people that have gone through the circle and have left. And what it does I think, is helps to pave the way spiritually for the people who are going through the wheel at the present time, that any time in their life that they don't run into too many problems in any one of the phases that I just described.

(Respondent 6T).

All remaining respondents knew that there were many possible attributes and colours linked to the four directions yet had difficulty in elaborating these associations. What follows are examples of the responses given when inmates were asked to explain the significance of the four directions:

Oh there's lots of meanings to them with that. What I understand is that it's like the lifeline, you know, you were born, that's the yellow. That's when you rise and the sun rises. And you go through how many stages and then you go to...the south is the prime of your life, like in the middle of your life. And then you grow older, like the red is when the sun starts to go down. It means you're getting old. And the black, which is the north and it's the last from the sun, that's when you're gone, you're dead. Like you're dead but you're not dead. Your body is dead but not your soul. That's what they mean to me. That's what I try to understand. I got to try and understand more than that about the four directions, like...I know a lot of people have different meanings to that anyway.

(Respondent 2X).

Well different tribes I guess it's different...Well nowadays the spirit world, the earth, fire and water, and that's the way I've been taught. And like the Sioux colours are white, yellow, red, and black, and I've danced powwow before and those are my colours too, for my outfit and stuff like that and ribbons and stuff like that. But the spirit world, white, the earth would be red, fire would be yellow and some people say black would be the meaning of death, like the different people it has different meanings huh? Like to me I kind of shied away from black but like some, I know in the Cree way there's, some of the Elders don't use black. Like say they'll use green. Red, yellow, green and blue. And like for the elements, for the four elements and for the four directions. And along with that comes your wisdom and your understanding and stuff. It's there but it's back in there somewhere, quite a ways back. I'm just stumped today, I'm not stumped but I don't know a heck of a lot.

(Respondent 20T).

I don't know what they are, simply put. I know that they have animal significance. They have a colour

brought to them. They have sort of a spirit brought to them, but I don't know what those are. I mean I would know, I mean if I sat and talked with somebody, they could tell me. I could probably guess, but that would be guessing.

(Respondent 4Q).

The four directions, I think the white's north. I think it represents the buffalo, then again I'm not too sure. The east, you got red. Geez, I don't know what it represents. I know south, yellow and west, white, eh? Oh, I think it has four elements like there's the spiritual awareness, mental and the body as a whole and I can't even tell you what all four of them mean because I get confused on the colours and what they represent, eh? That's one of the hard parts.

(Respondent 3R).

Well every direction's got their colour and the meaning I'm not...I've forgotten a lot. I know it's not keeping it up when I'm...being in here is sort of like a learning process again, eh?

(Respondent 4D).

Inmate respondents were also asked to discuss the significance of the circle in Aboriginal spirituality. The Elder's elaboration on the significance of the circle to the researcher has been very scanty and general. Basically, the circle is seen as indicative of the eternal cycle of all things. All things must exist in a cyclic manner: we are born, we walk through life, and we die. Seasons, migratory patterns of animals, and the cycles of the moon are all examples of the circle operating around us. The circle is also indicative of one's network of acquaintances and friends. Those who sweat together or who belong to the broader spiritual community of the Elder (the *tiyošpaye*) are considered to be within, or belong to, "the circle". This understanding of the circle, therefore, is not substantially

different from the general or stereotypical view of the place of the circle in Aboriginal culture in general.

Two inmate respondents (2N, 4Q) provided no information as to the significance of the circle. The remaining respondents shared elements of the general interpretation and significance of the circle with the Elder. For example, three of the remaining respondents (2X, 5L, 20D) identified the circle as representative of the social relationships one has. Respondent 5L felt that the circle was representative only of a healing circle wherein people try to help each other overcome personal difficulties. The circle was also interpreted by respondent 2X as people helping people:

[Within] the circle you help one person, and the other person helps the other person and [this] goes around and around...people depending on other people, eh? From one person to another, helping each other. If that doesn't happen, it's not going to work. If one person doesn't want to help, he breaks the circle. He's out of the circle...The community itself is a circle, eh? They help each other out and they teach each other the way to go through life, and help each other go through rough times, and help each other to better the world that they're in.

(Respondent 2X).

Another respondent felt that the circle was symbolic of the strength of the Aboriginal community:

What the circle is it's to keep the people strong, to keep them in a circle to keep them strong and alive...Like everything we do is in a circle. Like our ceremonies and all that. Powwows are a circle, sun dance is a circle, like the way they put their tents is in a circle, like the sweat too, the round dance is in a circle. Just to keep the people strong, to keep them together, to keep them safe inside that circle. And that's what the circle is, it's very special meaning. Try to keep that circle strong and alive. You can't let go of it because it's important that we stay inside

that circle for us Indians to be together.  
(Respondent 20D).

The remaining schedule four respondents (3R, 4D, 5Q, 6T, 20T) noted the inclusive nature of the symbolic interpretations of the circle. They, like the Elder, noted that all things were cyclic in nature and, therefore, the importance of the circle was paramount. In explaining this concept, however, many respondents were vague or superficial. The following quote illustrates the difficulties respondents had in discussing the totality of the circle:

The circle, it's never ending, it goes around and around like a cycle, everything goes in a cycle, like life in general goes in a circle. Like a person as an individual comes from the spirit world, is born, walks through life, lives experiences, different things and at the time, like...you know. You come from the earth, you come from your mother, you come from the womb. You have to go through life and you go back into the earth and back to Mother Earth. Back to your mother and back to the spirit world again. It symbolizes like a never-ending cycle of life. Through all of creation. Not, animals, water, it's...it can symbolize healing. A lot of different things, there's lots of...To me that's what it is. It symbolizes life, it symbolizes your people, it symbolizes your trials in here, from the spirit world, here, through your mother's womb here back into the womb of Mother Earth, and back to the spirit world. I guess everything goes in a circle, that's what it symbolizes to me. And... okay that's good enough.

(Respondent 20T).

As eagles and eagle feathers figure prominently in Aboriginal spirituality, inmate respondents were also asked to discuss the significance of the eagle. In Lakota spirituality, the Spotted Eagle (*Wanbli Gleška*) holds a place of particular importance. The Spotted Eagle is always

watching over the world from above and, therefore, sees and knows all. The Spotted Eagle is believed to be the door-keeper to the other world. That is, it is the Spotted Eagle who helps the souls of deceased humans find their way to the afterlife. In this regard, the person running the door of the sweat lodge is also spoken of as *Wanbli Gleška* for it is the door person who watches over those praying inside the lodge and who opens the door for the devotees between rounds. In this way, both the Spotted Eagle and the door keeper for the sweat lodge control the passage way from one reality to another. When exiting a Lakota sweat, the devotees are required to say "All my relations" (*Mitakuye oyas'in*) and "Spotted Eagle" (*Wanbli Gleška*) in recognition of the importance of the Spotted Eagle not only to the immediate ceremony, but also in everyday life.

No inmate respondents shared this exact interpretation of eagles in general or the Spotted Eagle in particular. Three schedule four respondents (2N, 5L, 5Q) had no understanding of the eagle as it pertained to Aboriginal spirituality. One schedule four respondent (4D) saw the eagle as a sacred bird and a potential animal totem which would help guide people in making important decisions throughout life. For two schedule four respondents (4Q, 20D), the eagle symbolized freedom. For some, the eagle was considered "the most powerful religious icon in Native spirituality" (Respondent 6T) in that it was seen as closest

to the Creator and is able to see and know all (2X, 4Q, 6T, 20T). The relevance and significance of the Spotted Eagle, as interpreted in Lakota spirituality, was not indicated by a single inmate respondent.

The relevance of sweetgrass, cedar and sage for schedule four respondents was also explored. In Lakota spirituality, and Aboriginal spirituality in general, these plants are considered sacred and have purification, healing, and medicinal qualities. Each of the three plants is appropriate for use in a particular context. The Elder considers sweetgrass to be the most sacred of the three substances and rarely uses it, stating that it is only for the "most sacred" undertakings. In fact, sweetgrass is considered so sacred by the Elder that he refused to supply it to inmates at SCC. Sweetgrass is not supposed to be in the vicinity of menstruating women and, as there are numerous female corrections officers the Elder would not take sweetgrass into the institution. The Elder did not, however, forbid inmates to have or use sweetgrass if the inmate could obtain sweetgrass from someone outside of the jail. When questioned directly on its applications by the researcher, the Elder replied that the researcher would have to fast in the wilderness to earn that knowledge or it could potentially harm him, for the researcher's interpretation of the uses of sweetgrass (granted as a gift from the spirit world) would not be the same as the Elder's. It is apparent

that sweetgrass is used as a purification substance by the Elder however, as the researcher and one of his children had to smudge with the smoke from burning sweetgrass prior to entering the Elder's home when they went to visit while the researcher's wife was menstruating at home. The Elder uses cedar in the majority of his purification rites (for example purifying the pipe while filling it prior to a sweat). Smoke produced by placing cedar on red hot coals is used to purify places, people, and items prior to, and sometimes during, sacred undertakings (for example during a sweat or Sun Dance). Sage is also used as a purification device, particularly during the Sun Dance.

Most often, the inmates were more familiar with sweetgrass and its use in purification and aiding daily prayer than they were with the uses of cedar or sage. Only one of the ten schedule four respondents lacked knowledge of sweetgrass, its spiritual significance, or its applications (Respondent 2N). The remaining schedule four respondents saw sweetgrass as functioning to take one's prayers to the Creator, to purify people or things prior to spiritual undertakings, to protect people from evil spiritual beings or evil in general, and as a source of spiritual retrospection.

Few inmates had any degree of knowledge regarding the significance and applications of sage and cedar. Eight of the ten schedule four respondents (2N, 2X, 3R, 4Q, 5L, 5Q,

6T, 20D) had no knowledge of the application or significance of cedar. The remaining two schedule four respondents (4D, 20T) saw cedar as functioning exactly as sweetgrass:

So we find different things to use, like sage. Some people prefer sage and some people got cedar and some people use sweetgrass. The thing is, they're all pretty well used for the same purpose of sending your prayers along with smoke, and praying for your family or whoever, your loved ones, the animals or whoever you want to pray for.

(Respondent 4D).

When discussing sage, five of the ten schedule four respondents (2N, 2X, 3R, 5L, 5Q) had no understanding of its significance. One inmate respondent noted that sage was often used by participants in a sweat lodge to help them breathe easier (6T). Participants in a sweat will sometimes hold sage in their hands and breathe through it. This is said to aid the individual in getting air in what is a trying and sometimes suffocating environment. The remaining four schedule four respondents saw sage as virtually synonymous with sweetgrass (4D, 4Q, 20D, 20T).

Finally, inmate respondents were also asked to discuss the significance of cloth in Aboriginal spirituality and, in particular, the meanings associated with different colours of cloth. Among the Lakota, cloth is generally seen as a gift or an offering to the Grandfathers or to a particular Elder for a particular service. Therefore, the role and function of cloth is very much like that of tobacco. As previously discussed, the four colours of cloth used in Lakota spirituality have meanings associated with each (see

above discussions on the significance of tobacco ties and the four directions).

Only one inmate respondent was unable to offer information as to the meaning and significance of cloth (Respondent 2N). Five schedule four respondents saw cloth as an offering or a gift for services or prayers (2X, 3R, 4D, 5L, 20D). When asked to discuss the significance of the various colours of cloth, two inmates felt that the colours had no significance (3R, 20D). Two other respondents knew that the colours of cloth corresponded with the four directions, yet could offer no meaning beyond this linkage (2X, 5Q). The remaining five schedule four respondents (4D, 4Q, 5L, 6T, 20T) knew that the colours had specific meanings or attributes attached to them, but could offer no information as to what these meanings or attributes were. It was generally understood that different colours mean different things to different people and different Aboriginal cultural groups. For example:

I have no idea what significance the colour of the cloth has. I would think that different people have different colours that are for them. Like personally my colours are red and black. I don't know, the next guy's could be blue. It just depends on what you see when you go into sweat lodges and stuff like that.

(Respondent 6T).

So each different nation has different significance to each colour, the colour of the print that you bring to the sweat or that you use to make ties. Like I told you before, I certainly couldn't tell you what each colour represents. I know that, and I don't know if it's just coincidence or if this is the way that Grandfather meant it to be, but with the Sioux nation they use the black, red, yellow and white - which are also the

colours of the people on earth. And that has a strong bearing on what the Sioux people believe the colours to be. I don't know exactly what that belief is, but I've got a few...I've been told one or two things on it. I don't know a lot, but I think it's just safe to say that the colours that are being used, the prints that are being used are just the colours that have been historically used by those peoples and represent them or have the historical significance of the people.

(Respondent 4Q).

The above information, then, indicates that effective symbolic healing, as it is academically and theoretically defined, is being hindered among the inmate population at SCC. There are potentially a variety of explanations for such an occurrence. Primarily, the structure of Aboriginal programming at SCC generally suffers from a lack of continuity. The programming alternatives offered fluctuate, as do core personnel (in particular Aboriginal Elders or spiritual leaders). It is noteworthy that the Elder's tenure at SCC was less than one full year (approximately 10 months). Furthermore, the Elder's duties at SCC only required him to be there for two days every other week. As a result, it was extremely difficult for the Elder to always see all the inmates who requested an audience with him. As the Elder feels that learning the ways of Aboriginal (i.e. Lakota) spirituality takes a lifetime, the relatively short time the Elder spent among the inmate population at SCC could certainly be a factor in the lack of effective symbolic healing at SCC. When different Elders come and go, the spiritual teachings change and the inmates are often left confused. Different Elders have different

interpretations as to the significance and appropriateness of certain practices within a prison environment. Furthermore, different Aboriginal culture groups (for example, Cree compared with Lakota) have different beliefs and practices. These differences and the resulting complications for the inmate population were not overlooked by the staff at SCC:

Now just about every Elder has a different view on their religion or on their practice. We've had so many Elders in here...I mean we've got a conglomerate of all these different views. We've got confusion amongst the Native population here, which path are they supposed to take?

(Focus Group 3).

This diversity of opinions and ritual is complicated by the fact that many of the inmates lacked a strong foundation in Aboriginal spirituality.

The personal histories of many of the offenders can not be overlooked when discussing the inefficiency of symbolic healing. As previously documented (see chapter four), many of the inmates at SCC are bicultural or Euro-Canadian in their cultural orientation. Many inmates also come from backgrounds which contain prolonged and pervasive exposure to physical, sexual, and emotional abuse. Moreover, most of the inmates interviewed have a past or current history of drug and alcohol addiction. This last factor alone could severely impede an individual from internalizing and learning virtually *anything* (let alone something as comprehensive and complex as the fundamental principles of

Aboriginal spirituality). It was stated by one staff member that, as a result of their past life experiences, many of the Aboriginal inmates at SCC lack enough self-esteem to help themselves (Staff Respondent 3Q). Many of these men have been told for years that they are failures. Consequentially, they come to believe this and feel that they are incapable of learning new things (be it Aboriginal spirituality or grade 10 mathematics). Therefore, many of them simply give up on learning and begin to function with little or no meaning attached to the majority of tasks undertaken as part of their daily routine.

There is also the factor of the "criminal subculture" which was expressed by some of the staff members at SCC (see chapter five). As previously noted, many staff feel that the criminal subculture overrides other cultural differences among offenders at SCC. It is apparent that most inmates at SCC strongly feel the need to act "solid" (i.e. impervious to emotion of any kind) and do their time without letting down the hard external shell which they develop as a response to their past life experiences and their current prison existence. As acting solid necessitates that no emotions (particularly "weak" emotions such as fear, pain, or sorrow) be displayed, this serves as a real barrier to helping people become receptive to any kind of spiritual teaching. To heal oneself, it is necessary to "bare one's soul" and confront one's inner-self with honesty and

sincerity. This is very difficult in a prison environment as such openness may be interpreted as weakness. This weakness could then potentially be exploited by other inmates or staff and, thus, could become potentially harmful to the individual. This sentiment was also noted by an inmate respondent:

People of this institution or the Native people here do not have discipline. They do not let down their guards. They do not admit that they are wrong, you know? These are some of the things that you're going to have to do before you start understanding your own culture, you know? Like all the people say I'm Native. Yah, I'm Native. This is sweetgrass and they try to explain to the other person what sweetgrass is, but actually they don't really know what the hell sweetgrass is.

(Respondent 6R).

The Elder's particular spiritual philosophy, and the associated means of practise, could also be factors in the problems with symbolic healing at SCC. As previously documented, there are certain elements of spiritual teachings which the Elder considered inappropriate in a prison environment. For example, by not bringing his pipe into SCC for use in the sweats, the inmates did not have an opportunity to learn of the Elder's philosophy pertaining to the pipe. This factor, combined with the fact that the Elder will only impart information to an individual who has earned the right to that level of knowledge, could easily restrict the amount of Aboriginal spiritual information available to an inmate at SCC. The Elder maintains that the onus is on the individual to earn knowledge of a spiritual nature. Knowledge which is unearned is potentially harmful to the

person who has it. As stated before, there is also the element of individual interpretation of the meaning and significance of various spiritual practices. Many inmates also noted this personal or individual onus on learning. One inmate noted "nobody really sat down and told me [about Aboriginal spirituality], [I] more or less just had to learn on my own" (Respondent 5X). When speaking of learning from Elders, this inmate stated that:

They have never told me "Do this or that". They have always more or less talked about the problem and more or less gave you, he gave you a better, a better idea of it, of the problem so you can deal with it yourself. Which I find is very good, to deal with it yourself, rather than have someone make up your own mind for you. Just more or less put down the facts and give you the, and just let you make up your own mind.

(Respondent 5X)..

If you want answers to one question, you have to earn that all the time. No matter what, you always have to earn it somehow or another, you know? And you always have to pay for whatever information that you want to seek, you know?...This is something that you cannot pay for. This is something that you have to earn through a lot of discipline, a lot of discipline. We're not just talking about getting up at seven in the morning, you know, we're talking about you have to sacrifice some things.

(Respondent 6R).

One staff member stated that this emphasis on individualized learning may not work adequately within a prison environment:

In any kind of programming, like I say, in a correctional institute in particular, I don't think any of that, it's not obvious, the learning is not obvious. It must be taught. And I don't know how much of that gets done in Native programs where the person has to take what's going on outside and make some sense out of it, and maybe translate that sense or transmit that sense to himself and to the world, and say yes, this is

what's happening for me, this is what I'm learning out of this, this is what makes sense to me at this point, this is what I'm confused about.

(Staff Respondent 3Q).

Given the haphazard nature of spirituality programming at SCC, the sociocultural backgrounds of the inmates, and the spiritual philosophies of this particular Elder, it is not particularly surprising that symbolic healing was not widely occurring at SCC. The above mentioned variables seem to indicate that there is the possibility that symbolic healing may be enhanced if there was a more structured educational component involved in Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC. At present, a formal educational component to Aboriginal spirituality (for example weekly meetings to discuss the medicine wheel, the sweat, or the pipe) is lacking at SCC. This is a result of a combination of existing institutional policy at SCC (no Aboriginal Brotherhood, no resources to increase programming, not enough links with the Aboriginal community), and the Elder's philosophy (knowledge must be learned through experience, therefore workshops and the like are meaningless). Regardless, the information presented above does tell us something of the nature of symbolic healing.

For symbolic healing to be effective an educational component may be necessary in some circumstances. Were the Aboriginal offenders at SCC educated in the significance and meaning of the spiritual philosophies and practices which they were subjected to, these undertakings would eventually

cease to become empty ritual and move into the realm of culturally-significant spiritual undertakings. While the Elder informally educated the inmates through sweats, story telling, counselling and conversation, there were few "formal" or highly structured opportunities for the Elder to impart spiritual and cultural information to the inmate population at SCC. In the case of inmates at SCC, a common mythic world (i.e. with that of the Elder) would have to be constructed for the majority of the inmates. This would require, at the very least, a great deal of in-depth, cultural and spiritual education. There must be meaning and significance attributed to the symbols being manipulated (by all parties involved) of symbolic healing to occur. Therefore, when the patients (i.e. the inmates or those being healed) lack fundamental knowledge regarding the meaning of symbols being manipulated, it is not surprising that symbolic healing is obstructed. This factor is also related to the need for formalized, explicit training in some capacities. This formalized training (i.e. cultural education) is particularly important when dealing with a population of Aboriginal offenders who are largely dislocated from their Aboriginal identity. Informal training sessions and haphazard meetings will not allow the inmates to internalize the lessons of the Elder to the degree where they would be useful in fostering symbolic healing. In this regard, it is also important, therefore, for the individual

being healed to be receptive to and supportive of the symbolic interpretations put forth by the healer. Therefore, there is definitely a certain amount of individual responsibility on the part of those in a symbolic healing relationship to ensure that they are dealing with subject matter which contains synonymous meanings for all involved.

## 7.0 Pan-Indianism at SCC

In attempting to determine whether or not the concept of pan-Indianism was functioning at SCC, the researcher asked inmate respondents to discuss the process of interacting with an Elder from a cultural tradition which was different than their own. As the Elder at the time was Lakota, and as most of the inmates were Cree, it is important to determine whether this forced mix of cultures had any meaningful effect on the inmates. One's access to spiritual leaders is obviously curtailed while incarcerated. Therefore, it is important to determine whether or not an Elder from a cultural tradition which differs from that of the inmate's can still perform spiritual and counselling functions which are meaningful to the recipient individual.

The data gathered from the inmate sample at SCC generally supports the concept of pan-Indianism as documented in chapter two. For the most part, Aboriginal inmate respondents at SCC saw no problem in interacting with an Elder who originated from a cultural tradition which was different than their own. Cultural differences in spiritual traditions and practices were not ignored by the inmate body. Rather, the differences in practise were seen as largely insignificant as the core elements of worship were

viewed as analogous. For example, one respondent noted that "the way they hold their ceremonies, okay, like for instance, Saulteaux and the Cree they do it different, but it is all up to the same Creator, that's what it comes down to" (Respondent 3X). As well:

I think of us all as one and as far as [the Elder] being Sioux, I have no problems with that. I can talk to him just as good as I talk to some of the Elders back home. And in fact it is just, it's just, the only thing that I find different about it is, which is just the Sioux, they have a little more...because the Cree when we have our sweats, we face a different direction and the Sioux face another direction. And they also use one, when they are tying their tobacco ties, they use one different colour and the Cree just uses three colours usually. But to me it's no, I have no, I feel it doesn't bother me or it doesn't affect my beliefs in any way. We still all believe in the same thing...[the basic fundamental teachings] are basically the same. The Sioux might put a certain amount of rocks and the Cree might put a different amount, but basically they, my experience is they all pray for the same reasons and we all have basically the same beliefs once we go into that sweat or once we smoke the pipe. And basically I don't see any differences.

(Respondent 5X).

Within Aboriginal spirituality, some inmates saw the pipe as one of the central elements which united worshippers under the banner of pan-Indianism:

Basically we all have the same foundation to build on and the main foundation for our faith is the pipe, that rock, and we all have the same thing there. The same with the sweat lodge, we all have the same. The only thing different in the faith was maybe the construction of the sweat lodge might be, might vary a little bit. The direction it faces might change with the different tribes. But the main basis for our faith is the pipe and that's something that is all the same...That is something that is universal. That's the foundation.

(Respondent 8A).

All Native people we all pray the same way, similar ways, different languages but it is all based on the

same thing. Like we've all got the pipe, sweetgrass, sage. Everything. We all pray to creation, life. Everything is pretty well the same. All the sacred colours are the same, everything's the same. Colours, directions, everything is pretty well the same. Just different languages more or less. No real big difference between Sioux and Cree, whatever you have, Blackfoot and everything else. Pretty well based on the same things, same beliefs. We all have our different stories that we tell and stuff like that but everything is related.

(Respondent 2A).

While not indicating the pipe, another respondent noted that there are other principles which unite the various Aboriginal spiritual beliefs:

Our spirituality is pretty well based on the fundamentals, all of us indigenous people basically have the same fundamental beliefs in the four directions and the sweetgrass or sage or cedar or tobacco.

(Respondent 16R).

Some respondents noted that all spiritual undertakings (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal) basically attempted to perform the same function in helping the individual to foster a stronger relationship with a higher power through inner-awareness and spiritual awakening. As such, not only was a core of pan-Indianism illustrated, but Aboriginal spirituality is not, at its essence, seen as different than any other form of worship:

I don't really know the Cree traditions and I don't know the Sioux traditions, but then [the Elder] said one day that everyone is created equal and everybody's brothers. So, I don't know how it is in the, like to be a Catholic or to be a Jew. I don't know what the difference is. But in every religion there is a Higher Up and that's what I'm trying to find, so I don't really find it a problem.

(Respondent 1A).

A common theme I guess would be spirituality. Even though it's practised a little differently it's all one big thing in the end. There's one main point behind it and that's your Creator. So I don't find a problem with it, the way I practise any of it. I'm part Cree, part French so, even being part French, I got a little bit of it in me and I know what's happening there. I grew up in it, the White way I guess, and there's part of me that's Native and I gotta find that too. I gotta know about that too. It all boils down to knowing your Creator I guess. That's behind spirituality in every culture and I don't find a problem with it in the way I practise it. I can practise it any way. So I'm pretty open with that, cause that's the idea behind it isn't it?

(Respondent 8D).

Ultimately, spirituality was seen by one inmate respondent as an internal phenomenon. Therefore, the path one takes to enlightenment is of little significance:

Spirituality is an internal thing. It is not an external thing. It is only external in the sense that you have to learn to live with everything around you. But it is internal in the sense that it has to make you feel good and you have to feel good about what you are doing. Because when you do that, it comes out. I mean it comes from the inside, it fans itself.

(Respondent 20A).

A number of other quotes further illustrate that a strong sentiment of pan-Indianism is present among much of the Aboriginal inmate body at SCC. One offender offered an analogy to help illustrate how he saw pan-Indianism functioning as it related to Aboriginal spirituality:

It's all for the same reason. It's like you can use a pen or you can use a pencil, it doesn't matter. You're going to write with it or draw with it, whatever, it's still going to mark. It's the same thing. Or it's just like, say you're going to use toothpaste, you use Colgate or Crest or what have you. It's all going to do the same, right?

(Respondent 12B).

The thing about spirituality [is] it has no boundaries.

It has no Cree, it has no Sioux, it has no Ojibwa, it has no White people. It just has people. Because you see, spirituality isn't about "I'm a Catholic", "I'm a Baptist", "I'm a Mennonite", "I'm a Sioux Spiritual Leader", "I'm a Cree Spiritual Leader", it just has "I belong on earth and I'm willing to respect everything that's around me, I'm willing to respect the earth and I'm willing to respect these ways that have been given to me by my grand-fathers". Like I don't have a problem with Catholics, I don't have a problem with any kind of missionary as long as he is living within his means and he is not forcing his means on to me and he is willing to understand my way and willing to accept that my way is just as right as his way. There is no right and wrong ways, there are only ways.

(Respondent 20A).

As well, when asked about learning from Elders from different cultures, one inmate replied:

It doesn't matter what nation a person is from. Like an Elder is an Elder, the way I see it. He can be a Cree Elder, a Blackfoot Elder, or he can be you know whatever. That don't mean nothing. It's what he has upstairs, what he knows, what he's experienced in his life, what he has to teach is what's important. Like it doesn't matter what nation a person comes from, it is the teachings he has to offer, his experiences, his thoughts. Those are the key elements, you know. And I would say that it doesn't matter where they come from, their origin is unimportant.

(Respondent 6F).

Like I don't think it makes any difference of what nationality the Elder is. Like, that is not even a major factor...you are still dealing with the same thing, like the same Creator and it's all within you. It's all what you believe, it's what you make of it.

(Respondent 17R).

Only three inmates throughout the course of the research indicated that there were problems in interacting with an Elder from a different cultural group other than their own. This, however, was not seen as an insurmountable barrier. Indeed, the inmates were generally glad to have the opportunity to be able to interact with any Elder. When

concerns originated, they were generally expressed as minor feelings of discomfort rather than insurmountable dichotomous philosophies and practices which would result in their abstention from ceremonial undertakings or counsel from the Elder while incarcerated. For example, some inmates expressed that they felt "weird" in the sweat due to its divergence from their past experience (Respondent 2N, for example). The following quote illustrates how one inmate felt uncomfortable while undertaking a sweat inside SCC which was different than the way to which he was accustomed:

I don't understand the sweats in here, eh, the ones we had. `Cause in the usual sweats when the Indian people leave the sweat, when we used to have them, it was sort of different the way we did ours, eh? At the start of the sweat they got the usual tobacco in the fire to pray a little bit, eh, but then you go into the...actually the guy that's leading the sweat has to sit...like the sweat's round, eh, the doors here [i.e. the front of the lodge]. The man that's leading the sweat is supposed to sit over here [the back of the lodge]. That's what I was taught, eh? And when you go in, you're supposed to go in counter clockwise, eh, well this way, eh? Start sitting from like this, eh, like that. And this sweat is kind of different, eh? You can just go anyway you like and the man that's leading it sits anywhere.

(Respondent 10B).

This quote is also a telling example of the lack of symbolic healing at SCC. While undertaking a Lakota sweat, devotees can *not* move in any direction that they like (they must always move clock wise). Nor can the person leading the sweat (male or female) sit anywhere they like. The person leading the Lakota sweat always sits beside the door of the lodge with the door to his or her immediate left. Therefore,

they are the first to enter, as well as the first to exit the lodge.

Another inmate indicated that he felt some confusion after the Elder who was present at SCC at the beginning of the research was replaced. The incoming Elder ran his ceremonies the Cree way and, as a result, this inmate experienced some disorientation as he had been worshipping the Lakota way for some time:

I guess I'm a bit confused because I've been following the Lakota way for the past two years, eh, and now I'm getting into this Cree way...like it's sort of new to me and yet it's....in my nationality, like my culture eh, like tribes, eh? Like I started with a different Elder from a different tribe, eh, and now I'm going back to my own tribe and it's sort of different, eh, from what I started learning with the Lakota Elder, eh...I felt a little different when I went to his first sweat, eh...Like it's a big difference and it'll take me probably a while to get used to this again because I've been following the Lakota way for so many years. But I'm not going to confuse myself as to which way I'm going to take, eh? I'll just let my instinct take me whatever I feel comfortable with.

(Respondent 3R).

In general, then, there appears to be an acceptance for the *theoretical* concept of pan-Indianism among the sample of Aboriginal inmates interviewed at SCC. For the most part, differences among the various Aboriginal cultural and spiritual traditions were not seen as highly significant. A common denominator of the individual seeking the Creator overshadowed differences among all types of worship (Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal). However, pan-Indianism as an operational and identifiable phenomenon is not present at SCC. For pan-Indianism to be operational at SCC, inmates

from a variety of Aboriginal cultures would become more "Lakota-like" in their understanding and interpretation of Aboriginal spirituality. Numerous Aboriginal spiritual and cultural ideologies would become amalgamated under the single banner of Lakota spirituality. However, as very few of the inmate respondents had any functional knowledge of their own Aboriginal spiritual or cultural traditions prior to entering SCC, it is not surprising that it would be difficult for these informants to identify what differences and similarities exist among their own spiritual traditions, and those of Lakota spirituality. Therefore, it is impossible for these respondents to identify how these differences may be ameliorated or amalgamated through the formation of a pan-Indian ideology. In spite of this fact, the inmate respondents seemed to recognize the potential for the emergence of a pan-Indian ideology fostered through Aboriginal spirituality.

This general acceptance of the concept of pan-Indianism combined with the general therapeutic value which some Aboriginal inmates reported resulting from their participation in Aboriginal spiritual undertakings, seems to suggest that symbolic healing could ultimately be a reality at SCC if there was increased continuity and cohesiveness of programming at SCC, combined with increased levels of commitment from all parties involved.

## 8.0 Policy Considerations at SCC

The former Department of Social Services (DOSS) in the Province of Saskatchewan, in a discussion paper on corrections policy in the province, submits that the primary functions of a corrections operation are two-fold:

The first involves the *short-term control* and care of persons convicted of criminal behaviour and considered an immediate threat to the well-being, safety or security of society. The second involves the *rehabilitation* of offenders and the *prevention* of future crimes particularly by removing or reducing the threat of further criminal acts by offenders after correctional controls are removed.

(DOSS 1975: 7) [emphasis in original].

Given the therapeutic outcomes of participating in Aboriginal spirituality programming for some Aboriginal inmates at SCC, it is possible that symbolic healing may be enhanced or encouraged through refocussing current Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC. This enhancement of the symbolic healing component has the potential to facilitate the second initiative of corrections facilities in the province. That is, rehabilitation of the offender, and the subsequent protection of society following the removal of the controls and constraints of the corrections environment, may ultimately be enhanced.

Saskatchewan Justice specifically states that "Native offenders and native [sic] members of society will continue

to demand improved, more relevant Corrections programming for native offenders" (1989: 2). This is certainly true of the Aboriginal inmate sample at SCC. The DOSS also proposes that "The offender should be assured of reasonable access to rehabilitative or specialized treatment, training, and support services available to the ordinary citizen in the community" (DOSS 1975: 8-9). Moreover, DOSS specifically notes the impact of culture on the incarceration experience for Metis and Aboriginal persons:

While social, economic and cultural characteristics of persons of Indian [sic] or Metis origin have some qualities in common with any socially and economically disadvantaged group, *they are sufficiently unique to necessitate special emphasis in the areas of preventative and rehabilitative programming.*

(DOSS 1975: 43) [emphasis added].

Therefore, DOSS further states that special emphasis should be given to directions in educational, vocational, and rehabilitative programming which recognizes and results from "the different social, economic and cultural background of persons of Indian [sic] or Metis origin" (DOSS 1975: 44). Finally, DOSS remarks that:

The correctional system and its individual components should be sufficiently flexible to permit appropriate adaptation of programming to meet the changing needs of offender populations, changing standards of service and changing patterns in the utilization of services by the community.

(DOSS 1975: 9).

Therefore, it is obvious that there is *theoretical* support for the inclusion and expansion of Aboriginal spirituality programming from the Saskatchewan Department of

Corrections. The special needs of Aboriginal offenders are recognized at both the federal and provincial levels of corrections policy formulation (See Canada 1988 and 1989; DOSS 1975). That Aboriginal offenders are a special group with particular cultural considerations is granted by various levels of government and corrections officials. As well, the government of Saskatchewan explicitly states that it should be open and flexible regarding its programming needs for offenders.

Recommendations pertaining to Aboriginal spirituality programming policy were sought from all respondents (inmate or SCC staff) who participated in the key-informant interviews. As well, comments on policy were solicited from the participants in all three staff focus groups. Numerous opportunities to gain unique insights on policy and procedure matters were also fostered through participant observation. What follows goes beyond a "wish-list" and includes pragmatic considerations for increasing the therapeutic effectiveness of Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC, and therefore the potential for symbolic healing.

The following recommendations appear in no specific order. Therefore, these recommendations should initially be read in their entirety. Certain sections of these policy considerations are obviously more useful or important to specific individuals than are others. However, as many

facets of the recommendations overlap, it is necessary to gain a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the nature and intent of the recommendations which follow. Therefore, the researcher advises a complete overview of these recommendations prior to isolating areas which may be of personal interest to the reader.

It should also be remembered that these recommendations are based on empirical research much more than personal opinion. However, they are the work of a single individual (i.e. the researcher) as they appear here in summary form. As such, they are based on an outsider's point of view who may not fully comprehend the subtle inner workings of the correctional system's bureaucracy. These recommendations are intended as much for introspection as immediate action as some undoubtedly require long-term structural and attitudinal change. Others, however, are immediately feasible. It is the opinion of the researcher that any policy changes must meet with the spiritual philosophy and practices of the resident Elder at SCC at the time of policy formulation and implementation. Any policy changes must also take the perspectives of the staff of SCC into consideration. The staff can make or break policy at the implementation level and their input is vital to make any policy changes functional. Finally, one must remember that the service population in this context consists largely of Aboriginal inmates. Therefore, their input into the policy

process must also be sought and acted upon.

### **8.1 Sweat Lodge Policy Considerations**

For the inmates at SCC the main concerns surrounding the current practises of the sweat lodge involve access to the ceremony. For the majority of Aboriginal inmates interviewed, the sweat occurred far too infrequently. The vast majority of inmates requested that the sweat be held at least once a week. At the time of this writing, SCC is attempting to provide sweats to the inmates on a weekly basis. At the time of the data gathering (as reported in chapter three) sweats were only offered once every two weeks. Many inmate respondents would like to see sweats offered twice a week. They suggest that this would aid them in staying drug-free as they would abstain from using any form of intoxicant for a period of four days prior to, and immediately following, a sweat:

You need this [i.e. the sweat] more often just like you need drugs more often, you know?...There are times, like, I feel like, you know, just picking up a joint and smoking up, eh? But then I have to hang in there, you know? I have to pray and hang in there. But we haven't had a sweat for three weeks now, eh, so we need that more often.

(Respondent 1T).

It [the sweat] has to be continued and it has to be the same way, it has to match the way that we use drugs and the way that we do those things. It has to be evened right out to that so it's from say one extreme to the other. That's, because it is not going to be just like, "Okay Sunday's man, Sunday's you are going to be a saint and Sunday's it is time to be an Indian and then the rest of the week you are just going to be that incarcerated criminal that you are". And that's what,

the way I look at it, is for me to ever straighten out it is going to have to be from extreme to the next or for it to end. Other than that, I've never heard of anybody taking it easy now, going slow, never.

(Respondent 6N).

The latter quote indicates that some inmates see the sweat as an alternative to drug use. While this substitution of time usage is not "recovery", it could be a necessary phase in the overall recovery process for some. For recovery to occur, the individual must abstain from the substances which he or she is abusing long enough to begin to think and act coherently and rationally. Thus, increased participation in the sweat may provide a means of abstaining from drug use for many inmates and this, in turn, may be the first step in the life-long process of full recovery. As well, educational lessons that drug and alcohol abuse are inconsistent with following a lifestyle centred around Aboriginal spirituality will be reinforced.

Some inmates also expressed the need for more sweats due to the large number of men who regularly turned out for the ceremonies. The researcher talked informally with some inmates who eschewed participation in the sweat due to the large number of people who turned out for the ceremony. The researcher has been inside the sweat at SCC when there were approximately 25 people present. With such a large number of participants present, undertaking the ceremony is very cramped and uncomfortable. Increasing the frequency of sweat lodge ceremonies at SCC would ameliorate this problem.

Related to this is the fact that many inmates who wanted to participate in the sweat had conflicting appointments at the time the sweat was offered. For example, some inmates who were eligible for temporary absences would participate in programming offered on the street. Other inmates had long-awaited visits on the night of the sweat. Those inmates who truly do feel that they gain therapeutic results from the sweat lodge should not be forced to choose between another program which they find beneficial, or a visit from a friend or loved one.

**Recommendation 1:**

**Sweat lodge programming at SCC should continue to be offered on Wednesday evenings on a weekly basis. The sweat should also be expanded to include a ceremony on either Saturday or Sunday. The weekend time slot would allow inmates who were unable to attend on Wednesday the chance to participate.**

Offering the alternative ceremony on the weekend would ensure that it does not conflict with the majority of SCC programming or work placements for most inmates (although it could continue to conflict with visits). The increased access would potentially aid in the sweat's therapeutic value, allow for more comprehensive instruction by the Elder as to the significance and utility of the ceremony, and offer options to inmates.

Increasing the frequency of the sweat would also, however, put more constraints on the staff and resources of SCC. It is the responsibility of the management of SCC to ensure that adequate resources are made available and to

ensure that staff are present for the ceremony without short-staffing some other segment of institutional operations and, thereby, leaving staff potentially vulnerable or over-extended. The personal safety of the staff members must not, under any circumstances, be compromised.

**Recommendation 2:**

**Sweat lodge programming should be expanded to the Urban Camp facility.**

A sweat lodge is already present on the site yet was only used once between August of 1993 and the present (March 1994). As Urban Camp operates on its own budget, this is not the responsibility of SCC. However, many inmates who begin to participate in Aboriginal spirituality services while at SCC lose access to these services once they are no longer incarcerated therein. Therefore, Urban Camp could act as a transitory link between the prison environment of SCC and the lack of restraints on the street, as many inmates move from incarceration at SCC to placement in Urban Camp prior to either a complete or conditional release. Due to the relatively low level of security and ease of access, Urban Camp is a prime location to encourage the participation of volunteers from the Aboriginal community to come in to the facility and sweat with inmates who are soon to be released back into the larger community. By helping the inmates forge links with persons in the community who are practising Aboriginal spirituality, a regular Urban Camp sweat could be

instrumental in aiding some inmates in continuing a lifestyle centred on the principles of Aboriginal spirituality following their release.

**Recommendation 3:**

**Inmates in remand, secure, and semi-secure, whenever possible, should have access to the sweat lodge ceremony.**

Individuals whose behaviour warrants their placement in highly secure areas are obviously the most in need of therapeutic practices. However, they are also those inmates who are the most restricted in their access to **any** programs and services offered by SCC. Obviously, these inmates potentially pose a significant risk to staff and other inmates. Therefore, their participation in the ceremony could possibly be separate from the participation of the rest of the inmate population (i.e. scheduled at a different time). As well, the participation of those inmates in highly secure areas should be allowed only after they have had an audience with the Elder and the Elder feels confident that their participation in the ceremony would benefit them and is the result of a sincere desire to participate.

Most inmates interviewed neglected the idea of a sweat lodge being built in the concrete compounds surrounding the exercise yards in the highly secure areas (as has been proposed by some corrections officials). These areas were seen as incompatible with the "natural" emphasis placed on Aboriginal spirituality. However, given the constraints

placed on Aboriginal spirituality in a prison environment, the option of a sweat in these areas may be more workable for SCC personnel than transporting high-risk inmates to and from the yard to sweat. As the number of inmates in secure areas of the jail who would like to participate in the sweat would in all likelihood be relatively small, however, transporting the inmates may not be as significant a physical barrier as many staff seem to believe. There will remain, however, an ideological barrier on behalf of many of the staff who work in these areas which would be more difficult to overcome. Many of the staff who work in these areas are necessarily concerned with matters of security. Moreover, most of these individuals emphasize the punitive side of corrections practise much more than the rehabilitative. As such, entrenched ideologies will be far more difficult to modify than existing SCC procedure.

## **8.2 Elder Policy Considerations**

The primary concern for inmates regarding Elder services at SCC was identical to that of the sweat; the majority of inmate respondents at SCC saw present access to an Elder as completely inadequate and many of them reported very long waits in attempting to contact an Elder for counselling or spiritual guidance. For example, the researcher noted that an inmate's request to see an Elder went unanswered for a period of over two months. In all

fairness to SCC, the Elder was on holidays at this time and terminated his relationship with SCC after completing his holidays (thereby leaving the facility without an Elder for a prolonged period). Regardless, this is little consolation to an individual who requires spiritual counselling or moral support. This thesis has previously documented that many Aboriginal inmates do not feel that they can communicate with SCC staff or disclose personal problems to them in the same manner that they can with the Elder. This episode begs the question, therefore, are Aboriginal inmates who request the specific counselling services of an Elder being given the same opportunities for counselling and self-help as those who seek such services from other avenues?

Access to Elders was seen as a significant problem for a large number of inmates, regardless of whether the Elder was on holidays at the time or not. Even when the Elder was employed in his regular capacity at SCC, numerous inmates noted difficulties in accessing him when they needed to do so. For example, one inmate noted:

I put in a request to see him two weeks ago and I still haven't seen him. I don't know if he got my request or not. I wish he was here today, it would be great.

(Respondent 8C).

The fact that the Elder was often simply too busy to see everyone who wanted a visit did not escape the inmates. The inmates generally saw the Elder as over-extended when at SCC due to the short time that he was there. The inmate respondents also blamed SCC for not providing the resources

necessary to employ the Elder for more weekly hours, or to expand existing Elders' services to include more Elders.

[The Elder] coming to talk to us is good in a way but he cannot come in here once a week and expect to talk to everybody and do any good. Like sitting one-on-one [with an inmate] for five minutes is not going to happen.

(Respondent 6F).

I like to see an Elder on a weekly basis, maybe two times a week would be great. It seems like our Elders here they don't, the system puts them in a position where they're expected to read and write. In other words, act like a liaison officer, which is inappropriate. They're not here to come to the correctional center and do paperwork and talk on the phone and stuff like that, they're here just for one specific reason and that's to do pipe ceremonies or talk to you or do sweats. They're only here for that purpose.

(Respondent 8C).

Some inmates felt that the only time they could access the Elder was during the sweat. This was not adequate to address personal issues given the large number of inmates seeking interaction with the Elder at these times. Furthermore, it has already been documented that the sweat is only on for approximately one and a half hours (most of which is taken up by the actual ceremony), thus leaving very little, if any, time for personal interaction and counselling:

The only time we get to talk to [the Elder] is when we're out there in the sweats and there's quite a bunch of people out there. It's kind of hard to talk to him in private. That would be a good thing for this institution to have.

(Respondent 4E).

Every time I go to a sweat I'll sit down and try to talk to the Elder. But sometimes it's just impossible, eh? There's too many guys.

(Respondent 1D).

A further concern for some of the Aboriginal inmates was the lack of continuity surrounding Aboriginal programming in general and Elder's services in particular.

Since 1990, no 1992, 92 till now. Beginning of 92 to now, four different Elders, you know? And a fifth one, she was here for a while.

(Respondent 6R).

There is a perception among some of the inmates that some SCC staff are partially responsible for the turn-over of Elders at SCC:

They kept switching Elders, eh, because the Elders didn't like what the staff were doing to their bags and that. Because you can't touch that stuff [sacred spiritual items], eh? Only the Elders can. And the guards would go through it, eh, touching all their stuff and that and they'd get mad. You know, that's disrespectful.

(Respondent 1N).

Obviously, Elder access is a significant area of concern for many Aboriginal inmates at SCC. It appears that this problem is not soon to be abated as an SCC staff member has informed the researcher that, at the time of this writing, Elder's services at SCC are confined to sweat lodge ceremonies and exclude personal, one-on-one counselling (though this is set to change as the internal steering committee becomes increasingly functional).

**Recommendation 4:**

**Elder's services at SCC should be expanded immediately to allow for a full-time, in-house Elder to improve accessibility and continuity. Current Elder's services should be expanded to include one-on-one counselling for those inmates who desire it.**

The placement of a full-time, in-house Elder should not pose a significant fiscal problem for SCC as other provincial correctional centres in the province (for example, Prince Albert Correctional Centre) provide this service on the same operating budget granted to SCC. Economically, it is simply a matter of reallocation of resources and prioritization of funding. The need for regular Elder's services was not overlooked by some of the staff. "I think that's the most important thing is to have his [i.e. the Elder's] presence here on a more regular basis" (Staff respondent 4P). Furthermore, "if we had the Elder here five days a week, every week, he could do a lot more one on one counselling" (Staff respondent 7T).

**Recommendation 5:**

**More than one Elder should be granted tenure at SCC.**

At the very least, there should be two Elders who are available to provide services for SCC. A multiplicity of Elders allows for differences in personal opinions, cultural perspectives, and spiritual and ideological concepts and practices to be addressed. When dealing with something as personal and intimate as one's spirituality, it is vital that one feels a strong personal relationship with one's spiritual mentor. For example, one staff member reported an instance where an inmate would not sweat with a past Elder because that Elder was from a cultural orientation different than his own (Focus group 1). Providing more than one Elder

means that potential personality conflicts between particular inmates and a single Elder may be ameliorated. Furthermore, multiple Elders would mean that more inmates can be counselled and educated. Moreover, multiple Elders would reduce stress on a single Elder. Most Elders have many commitments within the Aboriginal community at large and, as a result, their time and abilities are often taxed to the extreme. Providing multiple Elders, however, also means a multiplicity of spiritual opinions. The basic spiritual philosophy used by the senior Elder should be the foundation for any policy considerations at SCC. Therefore, the Elders must be tolerant to the spiritual practices and ideologies of their counterparts.

**Recommendation 6:**

**An Aboriginal Liaison Officer should be hired by SCC to coordinate Aboriginal programming at SCC in conjunction with the management, staff, the resident Elder, and the inmates.**

Most traditional Elders do not feel particularly comfortable doing paper work, making phone calls and coordinating enterprises in the jail. Furthermore, these activities take up a great deal of their time (which could better be spent counselling or educating inmates). Therefore, it is essential for SCC to have an Aboriginal Liaison Officer to help coordinate Aboriginal programming. This position should ideally be held by an Aboriginal male who at least understands (if not actively practises) Aboriginal spirituality. This understanding should be

practical and based on experience (and not just academic). Moreover, this position should be held by an individual who has had a past history of involvement in drug and alcohol abuse and/or incarceration but who is now well into the recovery process. These qualities would help the individual to develop an empathetic relationship with the inmate population. Furthermore, such an individual could serve as a powerful positive role model for many Aboriginal inmates. This position should be filled by someone who is not currently a staff member at SCC so as to ameliorate conceptualizations on the part of the inmates that the liaison is unapproachable or merely "part of the system". If possible the position should be funded by an external agency so that the position is seen by all parties as objective. Union and staff concerns regarding the hiring of external personnel must be addressed.

The fulfilment of such a position at SCC could potentially do a great deal to ameliorate problems with the continuity and cohesiveness of Aboriginal programming. Numerous staff members also noted that lack of continuity in Aboriginal programming was a problem for them:

You get an Elder who most staff don't know because they've been flipped over so many times. He comes to the front and says "I'm the Elder" and a lot of people [say] "So?" It's like "I haven't seen you, I don't know you from Adam", and then there's already this real negative attitude.

(Focus group 2).

Like we've had them [i.e. Elders] and they change so often, that you just think you get to know one person's

name and you realize we don't have one and then somebody new is around. So they're not very visible.  
(Focus group 3).

Ok, now just about every Elder has a different view on their religion or on their practice. We've had so many Elders in here...I mean we've got a conglomerate [sic] of all these different views. We've got confusion amongst the Native population here, which path are they supposed to take.

(Focus group 3).

Therefore, greater continuity and structure could also make the work of the staff at SCC much less stressful and uncertain when dealing with the Elder.

It is apparent that many guards feel alienated and threatened by the presence of some Elders and the manner in which they operate within SCC. It was stated that most Elders "certainly don't go out of their way to spend any time with the staff" (Focus group 2). Furthermore, it was stated that it is "really hard to respect them [i.e. the Elders] for their lack of respect [perceived by the staff]" (Focus group 2). It should be emphasized that the researcher witnessed very few guards ever attempt to approach the Elder, for any purpose, throughout the course of the research. The guards generally fail to see that the manner in which they interact with the Elder could be a major factor in why the Elder does not "go out of his way" to interact with staff. Other comments indicate how many of the front line staff perceive their relationship with the Elder:

Well I think I know perhaps one way that you could maybe measure the success of the Native spiritual program and it's by the quality of the Elders who have been coming. Over the 10 years that I've been here,

there have been some absolutely horrid ones who, once they got through the front doors, they should have been made to stay...Serious past records...These are teachers of these people and they should have been in jail themselves. Their behaviour was atrocious, you know, they're rude, they're crude...just very low quality. If these are the religious leaders, then boy, we're in real trouble.

(Focus group 3).

Like watching the Elders in the jail here, like some of them will have meals with the rest of the staff and all that and the rest of them will just totally avoid the place. I see that as a problem. Like what kind of an example are these inmates getting from watching their Elders if they can't eat a meal with the other staff.

(Focus group 1).

Many of the staff feel that the Elders who have worked in the centre in the past do not understand nor respect the policies and procedures which are necessary in a prison environment. It was suggested that most Elders have "no inkling of why security is so important" (Focus group 2). As such, many of the front line staff suggested that it was important for the Elder to be educated regarding such matters:

What we're talking about here is the Elder's relationship and respect for institutions of any sort, and specifically this one. Our problems, as I see it, (and this problem is not unique to the Elders, I mean to a varying degree, we've had these problems with various other chaplains). The problem is not really the spiritual dimension, the problem is the practical ways in which you set up the programs and the structures. And what I hear them saying is if there's confusion, it doesn't help this institution. It is not helpful to our jobs to have confusion and conflicts.

(Focus group 3).

Well I think if it [Aboriginal spirituality programming] got a little bit more organized and ran it first and foremost as a jail...first as a jail and then you have the programs like that. "No I'm sorry Mr. Elder, this is the rules here. First and foremost we're

a jail. I understand the Native spirituality, I understand what you want to do, but first and foremost this is a jail. Yes I want you to get these guys help and all, but this is a jail."

(Focus group 1).

It may sound very minuscule or even petty, but like when I see an Elder walking out to a union crew or wherever he's going, and we have individuals from various units going out to dump the garbage and they're having a little meeting out there spontaneously, I begin to wonder about this Elder as a role model. Like I mean I don't mind them saying "Hello" or something or "Yah, I'll come and visit you". But then to have a little meeting out there by the garbage dump, I mean, you know, doesn't exactly indicate to me that this guy respects this institution or what the procedures are.

(Focus group 3).

Finally the following example illustrates the frustration that some staff members feel in dealing with an Elder:

Some Elders don't have a grasp of security and concerns and/or discipline policies of the centre. We had a guy just smash up his cell, smash up a day room. We had him locked down and 20 minutes later the Elder's coming down there and saying "Oh let him out, it's time for our meeting". And he's demanding this guy come out. But if you say "No", you're depriving him of his spiritual counsel.

(Focus group 3).

**Recommendation 7:**

**Elders and staff should be encouraged to interact and communicate in a variety of contexts. The relationship should be a collaborative one with each party attempting to communicate and educate one another in a variety of areas.**

Elders could possibly be encouraged to interact with staff by providing them with informal opportunities for conversation (for example an informal orientation when a new Elder enters the facility to introduce him or her to the front line, normal living unit staff):

I think what would help in a lot of cases is to improve

communication with an Elder as staff, you know, if they do come and sit in your office. Very seldom will they come in and sit in the office with you also. They come in, they'll go see an inmate in his room or something and fair enough. I mean, you're not going to chase him down, but I think what would help, and this is a major criticism of our training which I've been angry about for a number of years, is they don't give us training on Native culture. Their attempt at it was a joke.

(Focus group 2).

Increased communication among staff members and the Elders could definitely have the potential for more effective case management of inmates. Ongoing, iterative communication would not only allow each party to understand the respective opinions and objectives of the other, it would also allow for interactive cross-cultural education. Furthermore, it would allow staff members to begin to understand some of the principles associated with Aboriginal spirituality. This, in turn, would allow staff to determine with some certainty when an inmate's requests or demands were conducive to the practise of Aboriginal spirituality.

For example:

I think the staff, if they were more educated on Native spirituality, the person that you're dealing with wouldn't be so scamable [sic]. He sees us as very ignorant and know nothing, even though we do know something. Like yourself, being white, he figures he can scam the Native spirituality by you. But because you know it, you can stop halfway through it.

(Focus group 1).

I wish that we had some way of talking to some of the Elders. I'd really like to talk to them about some of these guys that they're supposedly involved with and dealing with their behaviour. I ask him "Well why is this guy behaving like this if he's involved with [spirituality]...maybe he's just proud of his culture and his heritage, why does he behave the way he does?" I think I've talked to one Elder two years ago. Some of

their behaviour could be referred to as violence and by violence, I mean, lack of cooperation, not being able to follow simple conventions.

(Focus group 3).

That's why I think sometimes if there's good communication between the Elder and the staff, it sometimes is appropriate to, you for example mention if somebody who is having thoughts of suicide or something like that and you know. Like for example the chaplains usually if there's something fairly serious, they like to at least keep the staff somewhat informed. I don't feel that same level of communication between the Elder and the staff, especially, you know, when it is something fairly serious that might be happening with the inmate.

(Focus group 3).

#### **Recommendation 8:**

**The role (i.e. job description) of the Elder at SCC should be specifically defined. If the Elder is seen to be an integral part in the case management of individual inmates, steps should be made to incorporate the Elder into case management.**

All subsequent policy matters pertaining to Aboriginal spirituality hinge on the role definition of the Elder as well as the individual spiritual ideology incorporated by the Elder. While many Elders will find difficulty in dealing with paperwork most Elders could provide useful insights into the case management of inmates. Problems of confidentiality (re. inmate disclosure to the Elders) must be addressed. While concerns regarding confidentiality and anonymity can not be overlooked, they should not be seen as prohibitive. Other professions (such as psychiatrists and lawyers) also have to keep concerns of client confidentiality at the forefront, yet still interface with numerous other parties on their client's behalf. Elders should play a consultant role, more than an administrative one, in this capacity.

### **Recommendation 9:**

**Staff should be informed of in-coming Elders and any modifications in existing policy. Moreover, staff should have a definite role to play in formulating and implementing policy and should be consulted at all levels of planning and implementation.**

Circulated memos will not suffice in this context. There is a great need for an on-going, personal transference of information. Often, staff feel "left in the dark" and powerless when it comes to policy matters at SCC. They feel that their livelihood and personal safety is threatened. Steps must be taken by all parties involved to ensure that on-going, iterative communication and mediation occurs at all levels of policy.

If the Elders are going to come in, they are going to stay for a while. Maybe they could set up something for the staff and say "This is what I plan to do. These are my goals" and work with the staff.

(Focus group 3).

### **8.3 Educational Policy Considerations**

#### **8.3.1 Education for SCC Personnel**

Obviously, many guards feel suspicion toward the Elders who have worked at SCC. One guard, for example, when discussing Elders stated "Don't ever give them any responsibility or you'll get burned" (Focus group 3). Often, this suspicion can be attributed to a lack of knowledge about Aboriginal spiritual undertakings, and the role of the Elder, on the part of the guards. For example, it was noted by one guard that ignorance "puts a wedge in between the we/them [i.e. non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal people] as well as between your staff and the inmates because we don't have

any knowledge of what they're doing" (Focus group 1). It was stated that "you wouldn't be as suspicious if you had a better understanding" (Focus group 2). Also:

Ignorance will also create a barrier because you don't know what to ask him [i.e. the Elder] or you don't want to look stupid. You don't want to come across as being prejudice or you don't even know, like you don't have enough of a basis to say "Tell me more". You know? "I heard about this, can you tell me what this means or when we took this up in class, was this something that, you know, you do". But if you really want to find out what he's doing, you have to have a little bit of a basis of knowledge yourself. And I think it's unfortunate that they haven't done that here, especially in Saskatchewan. I mean, we have a, what is it, an 80% [incarcerated population] or somewhere in there Native.

(Focus group 2).

There are numerous examples of ignorance regarding Aboriginal cultural and spiritual practices and beliefs exhibited by some staff at SCC. One guard noted that many of his colleagues at SCC had no real knowledge of contemporary reserve life. "Go ask somebody what they think is on a reserve. I've heard people that say tipis and the whole bit...and these people were serious. So again, people don't know" (Focus group 1). Another guard noted that it is often difficult to determine if sweetgrass was being burned in the inmate's living units to cover up the smell of smoking marijuana (Focus group 2). It was informally reported to the researcher by a number of inmate and staff respondents that one guard went so far as to open the sweat lodge during the actual ceremony to undertake a count. This is a glaring account of cultural insensitivity and blatant disrespect for Aboriginal spiritual practices. Commenting on this occurrence, a staff member indicated:

A staff makes an independent decision, and they've got to do the count, [so] they do the count. They're doing their job so you can't fault them for that. What you can fault them for is not having the cultural sensitivity. And if they'd never been told or provided with the information as to why it shouldn't occur I guess you can't blame them. So staff education is of paramount importance to let these things [i.e. Aboriginal spirituality programming] occur because they can quickly mess up a program.

(Staff respondent 7T).

Another guard indicated that she was very offended by the fact that an Elder would not introduce himself to her after she had already offered her name. After an explanation by the researcher's advisor that it was common for traditional people to not offer their names to people they do not know, this guard was not only appeased, but enlightened.

**Recommendation 10:**

**Comprehensive, on-going cross-cultural training should be available to all staff members and management. This should have special emphasis on Aboriginal cultures present in Saskatchewan. As well, particular attention should be given to those cultural and spiritual concepts and practices which are relevant in a correctional setting.**

There is a great need to educate staff and management on the function and significance of spiritual items and undertakings (for example, the use of sweetgrass, why Elders will not give out their names and refuse to have their sacred belongings searched, taboos regarding menstruating women). For example there are instances where staff are faced with difficulties in dealing with people entering the institution:

The only problem I have with the Native spiritual programming that goes on here is what I do with...during a search, the handling of the sweet grass

and searching the sweat lodge and those kinds of things. I'm not sure whether I should be doing it or not or if I have access to it. So those are my concerns in terms of the programming...We have offended Native leaders and the people in a search. I mean they would say "Well, would you search a chaplain if he came in?" And we go "Yah, we do." One time an Elder came in with this medicine guy. The staff made them open up all the medicine bags and look inside them and the Elder was very offended because he felt that we were intruding. And I personally have been offended because somebody came in and dropped off sweetgrass one day and wouldn't leave it with me because they didn't want a woman to touch it. And that personally offended me, because I'm the only person here that can do this for you today, and this is how it's going to come in here - with me. I'm not going to go running around looking for a man to accept this for you. I'll do it or you can't bring it in. So that offended me.

(Focus group 1).

[When an Elder enters the institution] do we give them a tag? There's no two-way communication there [between management and staff regarding procedure]. We were told when someone comes in the institution, you do this [give a tag] depending like if they're a business visit or to visit an inmate. But that middle ground with an Elder, we don't know. And you don't want to be disrespectful, but you also don't want to not do your job.

(Focus group 2).

Another guard describes an occurrence where a guard misunderstood the use of sage (which the staff misinterpret as sweetgrass) by an Aboriginal inmate and subsequently confiscated it.

He [the inmate] was doing his ceremony, but the inmate that was doing it, the staff was extremely suspicious of the behaviour. And so we took the sweetgrass, and I mean there was all hell to pay because this Native did know a lot about his own spirituality and culture and his rights. The Ombudsman...never mind. And there was hell to pay for that. But when a staff is extremely suspicious, what are you supposed to do? You make a decision, you have to call it.

(Focus group 2).

The inmate involved in this occurrence also has a version of what transpired:

There's got to be a lot of education done towards the staff, like the staff are quite ignorant to quite a few things. Like, for instance, I got charged one time for burning sage in the overflow dorm one time by I don't know, some rookie. He comes up and I'm smudging myself in right plain view of everybody and he tries to grab my, I had a little piece of tin foil I was using with my sage. And I grabbed his hand just before he touched it, and I told him "Just wait until I am done and then you can look at it". And like when he came up, he said, "What have you got there?" That's all he said eh, and I just grabbed his hand, threw it away and told him not to do that, have a little respect. I stood up to him, you know, I said "You're not touching that until I'm done with it, then you can inspect all you want". Then a couple of other guys stood up and said, "Don't do that, he's praying right now, have a little respect". So he went back in the office and he came back out, I said "Here's the stuff" and he gave me a charge receipt saying I refused a direct order. He wrote on the charge that I refused to let him see what was there and that he had asked to see what it was and, you know, I didn't really do much. I couldn't really do much for the charge. Like once the charge is laid they had to do something to me, like the little kangaroo court. They had to screw me up or something...I got five days held over my head [i.e. lost five days of early release time]. I phoned outside, I phoned the Ombudsman, [and a judge] that sits on some kind of board and that's all. I don't know if they phoned in or what they did. I think [the judge] had made a note of it to bring it up at the next meeting that they had. Whatever committee [the judge] was on. I forget now but I told [the judge] that I definitely wanted it brought up. Because it is not right for people, boneheads like that come charging a person just because they have been praying and because they don't understand the prayer, you know? That should be required in the CW's [Corrections Workers], the staff or whatever they're called. They should all be made aware of what we use to pray with, what grasses and herbs or whatever you know. Just education, there needs to be a lot of education in the spirituality.

(Respondent 2A).

Obviously, there remains a great deal of confusion among some of the staff regarding the proper procedures for dealing with potentially touchy cross-cultural situation. This is in spite of the fact that management feels that staff members "have been given fairly clear direction in

terms of treating these items with respect" (Staff respondent 7M). Obviously, there are problems in communication and perspective between management and staff regarding Aboriginal spiritual items and the appropriate procedure. Many staff feel that this lack of communication is compounded by management not possessing enough knowledge about Aboriginal issues themselves:

There's no Natives within senior management and the truth is that they [i.e. managers] don't understand the culture and they don't understand anything. They just read the book and they go "Oh", you know or "No this is it." You know, there's no managers out there, I'm sorry, with balls if they're to say "This is the way it's got to be done and the staff need to know this, management need to know this."

(Focus group 1).

It's like a disease. If you get a couple of people confused, they confuse more people and so on and so on and so on. We get confused. We don't know what they're doing. Management for sure don't know what they're doing, otherwise they wouldn't allow this to happen.

(Focus group 3).

Presently, many staff feel that the level of cross-cultural education which Corrections Saskatchewan offers employees is completely inadequate:

As for education we had three hours of Native awareness with the staff. Like that's nothing and what did we learn? We learned, you know, about the history of the Natives and how they came to this land and what happened. That has nothing to do with the institution or what's going on here.

(Focus group 3).

Some inmate respondents also noted that some staff lacked cross-cultural awareness and sensitivity regarding Aboriginal people and emphasized the need for education:

I feel there should be some kind of mandatory thing that they [i.e. staff members] have to take. Some sort of mandatory programming for them to take to better understand...[some]...situations in Native spirituality

that they are going to face. [For example] what they are going to come up against when they do checks on certain rooms and that, you know, and not be so ignorant about it, you know? I don't know there's got to be more awareness because a lot of inmates are going to be Native and I believe they will for a while to come.

(Respondent 2A).

While many staff members indicated a desire to learn more about Aboriginal spirituality, others failed to see the utility in this undertaking:

I'm not really sure how totally understanding the different rituals might assist us in doing our job in one way better or another. And the same goes that if I was Native, I don't know if I would be able to assist in any way that I wouldn't be able to assist now in professionally doing my corrections job, ok? And so, you know, I think that knowledge is good and I've gone to additional seminars and things like that, but I'm just not sure that always that type of things has direct appreciable consequences from it.

(Focus group 3).

I don't think it's a question of learning more about their culture at all. To me it's no different than any other chaplain. You want to run a program, let me know and make sure that the program doesn't conflict with other procedures, other programs.

(Focus group 3).

Comments by some guards illustrate a severe lack of tolerance. Indeed, the intolerance inherent in the following statement borders on absurdity:

How many thousands of types of religion and worships and traditions are there in the world today; are all of them relevant? You guys can tell me that older religious cultures we've had in North and Central America had human sacrifices. Are we going to have that at a correctional centre because we've got a couple of Incas in here? Can we meet the needs of every group of people or are the people going to have to meet the needs of the correctional centre? Can we do both? I don't know. I think today doing both hasn't turned out very positively for me at least.

(Focus group 3).

Comprehensive education for staff and management at

SCC, therefore, is a must. This should include general cross-cultural awareness and tolerance components as well as special emphasis on the Plains and Woodland Aboriginal cultures which are largely represented at SCC. In particular, any such training should focus on information which is relevant to persons employed within correctional services. Special emphasis should be given to practices and issues which the staff will have to face on an ongoing basis. The need for such training has not escaped some respondents at SCC:

I wouldn't want to call it racism but rather, not clearly understanding it [i.e. cultural diversity], not putting it in perspective, that causes some of them a problem. So we have started on that and that's very early beginnings and we would like to do that in two ways: One is talking specifically about aboriginal culture and history and the other one is a part of a whole education about value and diversity rather than kind of anti-racism, approaching it from a positive point of view.

(Staff respondent 7M).

Given the large percentage of Aboriginal inmates in all correctional facilities in the province, this undertaking would only seem logical. Ignorance (resulting from miscommunication) causes difficulties for all parties involved. However, some staff members' opposition to such training should be respected. Primarily, the training could be optional (yet encouraged) for all current staff, yet should be mandatory for all incoming staff. Obviously, cross-cultural education will not, in and of itself, change long-term, highly-ingrained patterns of thought and action which many guards at SCC are accustomed to. It can, however, begin the process of allowing and encouraging some staff members

to think and act in a manner more conducive to cross-cultural awareness:

Once we educate them [i.e. the staff] they'll come on line and say "Okay, maybe I don't like the idea and it's extra work and there's extra security risk that we're taking but the long term effects are going to be positive and the trade off is going to be good." They'll do that. Once they have the information to make those decisions then they'll come around. But again, that's the next biggest obstacle is to get the staff to come on line. Again we're not going to get the staff to totally believe in what we're doing, we're not going to get the staff to totally understand what we're doing, what we have to do is to get them to accept what we're doing and that is a big major task.

(Staff respondent 7T).

### **8.3.2 Education for Inmates at SCC**

Inmates and staff alike noted the need for comprehensive, extensive education for Aboriginal inmates at SCC. Most respondents saw the need for comprehensive cultural, historical, and spiritual education. Staff respondents indicated that many Aboriginal inmates lack a sound understanding of Aboriginal culture. Therefore, for spiritual undertakings to be meaningful and productive, the individual must develop some sense of self (individually and culturally) through the process of education. For example:

[Aboriginal inmates must] be able to fit themselves into [a] historical sort of perspective. I think that's a large part of it because they have nothing to go on right now, outside the colour of their skin and what they've been told, you know, where you came from, what reserve you came from. Beyond that, I don't think they know a lot of their culture. And I think they need to do that and I think you can only get that through an education system.

(Focus group 2).

A number of Aboriginal people really have very little understanding of their own history and culture and [therefore] some of our program needs to be geared at that. I think one point of view might be, "Okay if they don't know, then it really doesn't matter so why don't

they just become part of the Canadian view and their culture has passed them by". My belief and I think a number of people in the Centre that want to do the programming believe that it is an important part of their own development and their own finding themselves and finding their ways to understand their history and their culture and feel some pride in that in a way in becoming reconciled to the rest of society.

(Staff respondent 7M).

A large number of inmate respondents indicated that they felt the need to increase their knowledge about Aboriginal culture in general, and spirituality in particular. It was noted that "there is more to culture than the religious aspect" (Respondent 6F). One must understand the intricacies of the interrelationships of various aspects of culture for spiritual practices and ideologies to have meaning. Cultural education was seen as putting one more in touch with their "roots" and assisting them in defining their identity:

What we should have is more education about it [i.e. Aboriginal spirituality and culture], because a lot of people don't realize their roots. And I think it's important to know your roots, your identity, so you can establish something with yourself and understand it, and be more comfortable with yourself.

(Respondent 8D).

What I wouldn't mind looking at is like trying to get some kind of a program, a history program or something like to be able to teach the guys how it is, how it works, and how it became and all that. Like a history program, to the present time eh, [to establish] the big picture. And once they understand all that then maybe they can carry on with it; attend the ceremonies, attend the programs. You'll be able to look at [your] goals.

(Respondent 10A).

Like a lot of people that come in here are urban Indians. Like they've been shocked. Shocked in childhood and put in residential schools and from residential schools to the cities. And it's a whole process like to assimilate us and instead it's alienating us. But [we need] things to help us get back

and identify with ourselves.

(Respondent 16R).

For another inmate, increased education would bring increased involvement and commitment to Aboriginal spirituality programming from the Aboriginal inmates:

A lot of guys are ignorant about this program, this spirituality. They don't know, eh, they don't understand. If we have meetings and an Elder to explain it, a lot of guys would be more interested in it eh? Like for myself when I first heard of it, I was interested. I wanted to find out more and more and more and I think it would be a good idea to have an Elder explain things like that at the meetings.

(Respondent 1T).

Another inmate respondent felt that learning about the principles and practices surrounding Aboriginal spirituality could eventually work to ameliorate barriers between staff and inmates:

[We could use] a learning centre of Indian people, eh? Like get some people, like Indian people to come in here and teach the Indian ways to the people who forgot what they are and what they're missing out on, eh? The learning centre could be a very, very positive step towards the guards being in a good way with the inmates, eh? It could achieve it, if only they could try it, eh, like try it for a little while. Have somebody sit in there, like one of the guards, eh, maybe the Director, the Deputy Director, A.D.D. [Assistant Deputy Director], sit in there. Because I think if they tried that, eh, the Indian people behind the bars could be happier about that, eh, and the Indians wouldn't be giving guards so much trouble and all that, eh. When they get out, eh, they could be ready for the outside. Go to the Indian ways.

(Respondent 10B).

Indeed, if one truly internalizes some of the principles associated with Aboriginal spirituality (for example, truth, honesty, respect for all life), then the outcome hypothesized by this particular individual could, in fact, materialize. Should guards or management sit in on such

meetings, most inmates indicated that they would interpret such interest as respect for their beliefs and practices. If the inmates perceive increasing respect from the staff (for the inmate's spiritual beliefs), it is logical that some inmates will begin to show more respect for the staff.

**Recommendation 11:**

**Comprehensive and ongoing historical, cultural, and spiritual educational programming should be available for those Aboriginal inmates which so desire it. This programming should deal specifically with matters and concerns of interest (both historical and contemporary) to Aboriginal inmates.**

Currently, SCC offers intermittent opportunities for inmates to participate in seminars dealing with Aboriginal issues (historical and contemporary). Guest speakers are brought into SCC one night per week (for a few weeks each year) to discuss issues relevant to Aboriginal peoples. Inmates attend on a voluntary basis. What is proposed in this recommendation is ongoing, comprehensive educational programming which would require a more structured approach and a well-developed curriculum (perhaps a modified version of Native Studies 110 courses at the university level). There is a need to have a historical understanding to help Aboriginal inmates understand the realities of Aboriginal peoples in historical and contemporary contexts. There is a great need for comprehensive and ongoing cultural education to aid inmates in developing a sense of identity and pride. Understanding the significance of cultural imperatives would provide meaning and significance to spiritual undertakings. This, in turn, could potentially turn moot ritual into a

meaningful undertaking directed towards personal development (thus increasing the potential for symbolic healing).

Participation in the program should be voluntary. As many elements discussed in the curriculum would necessarily involve principles of Aboriginal spirituality (given the holistic approach to learning within Aboriginal culture) forced participation would be unconstitutional given the right to religious freedom. On a more pragmatic level, forced participation in programming (particularly in a prison environment) can often cause a backlash among those forced to participate (thus undermining the learning process for all involved).

Classes could potentially be held once per week with the aid of a well-developed curriculum. Elder involvement should be maximized. The Elder is a useful teacher regarding traditional, historical, and spiritual matters. Further, the Elder is a major resource person acting as a bridge to the Aboriginal community. Involvement from the larger Aboriginal community should be encouraged in order to gain useful resources and personnel. The classes should ultimately be run in conjunction with the spiritual undertakings in the jail. For example, inmates who want to participate in the sweat could now have an opportunity to first learn about the significance of the ceremony, its functions, the meanings of the rocks used therein, and the necessary abstention from substance abuse prior to undertaking the ceremony. Thus, the actual sweat would be much more meaningful to the participants. As well, the class could operate as a forum

for inmates more experienced in Aboriginal culture and spirituality to share with their peers.

Potential areas of curriculum identified by inmate respondents include such topics as the uses of spiritual items (for example, sweetgrass, sweats, sage, cedar) and the significance of various spiritual and cultural undertakings (for example, powwows, Sun Dances, fasting or vision quests). The use of oral history and "story telling" was noted by many inmates as important as an alternative form of learning. Some inmates are also interested in discussing contemporary issues such as the care of Aboriginal children in foster homes, the role of residential schools in undermining Aboriginal culture, the disproportional suicide rate among Aboriginal people, and workshops on racism. Numerous inmates noted a desire for Cree language instruction classes.

A highly structured educational undertaking could aid the Elder and SCC staff in determining who is more sincere and knowledgeable regarding Aboriginal spirituality. In turn, this could lend Aboriginal spirituality programming more credibility in the eyes of some staff who are opposed to increasing such programming.

#### **8.4 General Policy Considerations**

##### **Recommendation 12:**

**The internal steering committee established at SCC should continue to address concerns and questions regarding Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC. Problems in the structure and function of the steering committee should be addressed and ameliorated with due**

**haste.**

On August 12, 1993 the researcher was present at a meeting with senior and middle management which approved of the formation of a steering committee comprised of Aboriginal inmates, Aboriginal community representatives, SCC management, SCC staff and the resident Elder at SCC. The committee, therefore, is intended to have face-to-face representation from all levels of SCC personnel, Aboriginal inmates, and some facets of the general Aboriginal community. As such, potential areas of concern or conflict could be identified and discussion could be undertaken on particularly contentious issues as all parties are directly involved in the process. The committee's proposed mandate is as follows:

1. For the development and implementation of programs or functions which will enhance the opportunity for inmates and staff to learn and practise the cultural and spiritual ways of traditional Aboriginal society.
2. To identify and solicit resources available in the larger community of Saskatoon and area which will supplement Aboriginal programs and functions in the Saskatoon Correctional Centre.  
(SCC memorandum).

At the time of this writing (some ten months later), this committee has finally become partially operational. SCC maintains that there were problems in coordinating the committee and bringing in the representation from the Aboriginal community organizations. While this is true, this fact alone should not have prohibited the formation of the committee as an internal body (until members of the Aboriginal community at large can be persuaded to attend).

The exceedingly long period between gaining approval for the steering committee and bringing it to fruition was a cause for concern. SCC personnel maintained that all future Aboriginal programming at SCC hinges on the successful functioning of the steering committee. Since the committee was not fully functioning, all future programming was largely put on hold. For example, there were no counselling services available from Elders until the steering committee was in place, as the committee is responsible for identifying the criteria they want in an Elder, and will aid the centre in hiring a permanent Elder for the facility. In the interim, those seeking one-on-one counselling from an Elder were forced to do without.

Currently only one representative (non-Aboriginal) from the larger community has attended a steering committee meeting. While the representation of the Aboriginal community on the steering committee is essential in the long run, it is not imperative to have such representation immediately. There are many internal concerns which could be addressed by the steering committee while attempting to increase the involvement of the larger Aboriginal community in the affairs of the centre. For example, SCC could take advantage of the Elder currently providing services to begin to offer cross-cultural education to staff, management, and inmates. As well, staff members could also capitalize on opportunities to air concerns to management and inmates regarding current and proposed policy issues related to Aboriginal spirituality programming.

The steering committee also suffered for a prolonged period of time from a lack of representation from the Aboriginal inmate population. Initially, there was a single, non-Aboriginal inmate sitting on the committee. This individual represented the inmate committee at SCC (a body which addresses concerns for all inmates and is not limited to matters of particular importance to Aboriginal inmates). As the steering committee is intended, in part, to address the spiritual and cultural concerns of the Aboriginal inmate population, the lack of representation of Aboriginal inmates on the committee was a cause for great concern. Again, problems in coordination and continuity for the steering committee, as well as the rapidly fluctuating inmate population (i.e. a high turnover of inmates made it difficult to find a 'reliable' representative), were cited as reasons for not immediately including a representative from the Aboriginal inmate population. By not including Aboriginal inmates in the steering committee process, however, it is easy to question the sincerity of SCC regarding their desire for Aboriginal inmate representation on the committee, as well as their commitment to Aboriginal programming in general. Recently, however, at least one Aboriginal inmate has been included in the committee.

**Recommendation 13:**

**A self-help group or "healing circle" should be established immediately for Aboriginal offenders at SCC.**

This group would function to provide inmates with an opportunity to share their life and healing experiences, as

well as provide an opportunity for those seeking personal and spiritual growth to pursue it. It would further enable those inmates who are making progress in their personal lives to mix with other inmates and function as positive role models. The group would focus on self-help and healing based on the principles and practices inherent in Aboriginal spirituality. As such, it would also function as an important educational undertaking. Therefore, the group should include teachings by various Aboriginal Elders, addictions counsellors, sexual and physical abuse counsellors, and life-skills counsellors. All programs should incorporate a strong Aboriginal emphasis. Participation in the program should be voluntary (perhaps one night per week) and should be open to Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal inmates alike. The following quote offers some inmate insight into the program:

We need role models and people like a counsellor, [a] liaison, [and] people coming in from different Indian organizations that have made it or are successful. Maybe to come in and sit in on our meeting, not just to talk about things we're trying to get happening [inside], [but] to talk about their success and their spirituality. And that's important.

(Respondent 16R).

The group should be monitored by the Elder and/or the Aboriginal Liaison officer at all times so as to avoid concerns by SCC staff and management that the group would develop political overtones. The emphasis of the group must remain, at all times, spiritual and personal awareness. There should be no political underpinnings allowed to surface in the group ("political" concerns, i.e. matters of

policy for Aboriginal inmates, should be addressed within the mandate of the steering committee).

The pragmatic concerns regarding the formation of this group should be minimal. In effect, the proposed healing circle is merely an expansion of the "Sacred Circle" as it is currently used in the Phoenix Program (see chapter three). In this instance, however, the program would be made available to a far wider range of inmates and would be more comprehensive and prolonged in nature.

**Recommendation 14:**

**Inmates should have the opportunity to increase their involvement in the duties associated with practising Aboriginal spirituality.**

Those inmates who are eligible for temporary absences (TA's) should be allowed to accompany the Elder on errands associated with the practise of Aboriginal spirituality. As most education regarding Aboriginal spirituality is informal, inmates could have the opportunity to learn a great deal about Aboriginal spirituality by aiding the Elder with such tasks as gathering rocks for the sweat, building a sweat lodge, or aiding the Elder in community service work. As well, concerted efforts should be made by SCC to allow inmates who are eligible for TA's to go into the community to attend Aboriginal spiritual functions (such as sweats, give-aways, or pipe ceremonies). These activities would allow the inmate to develop links to those who are practising Aboriginal spirituality in the larger community. Furthermore, it would allow the inmates to become more involved in the learning process and, potentially, give them

a sense of accomplishment, self-worth and pride in the undertaking. Increased education will also aid in symbolic healing and, potentially, behaviour modification. This practise is also conducive with the emphasis on self-learning and individual commitment inherent in Aboriginal spirituality.

As the researcher accompanied the Elder and an urban camp inmate on just such an errand in the past, this recommendation could also be accomplished by merely expanding existing SCC policy. Inmates eligible for a TA could apply for this privilege. The Elder should work with SCC officials to evaluate applicants based on such criteria as potential risk to the community, and the applicant's knowledge and sincerity regarding Aboriginal spirituality.

**Recommendation 15:**

**There should be an overall, general expansion of the Aboriginal spirituality services offered at SCC.**

The current weekly sweats and periodic cultural functions (for example powwows, round dances and feasts) represent a sound beginning for Aboriginal spirituality programming at SCC. However, for symbolic healing to have any possibility of occurring, services need to be expanded greatly. As well, all Aboriginal spirituality programming needs to be far more comprehensive, and coordinated. Inmates waiting months to see an Elder for counsel is simply not acceptable. Furthermore, it is in contradiction to DOSS's assertion that the offender should have reasonable access to treatment and counselling options which are available to him

in the larger community (DOSS 1975: 8-9).

### **8.5 Policy Conclusion**

While there is some support for the expansion of Aboriginal spirituality services at SCC, and while the management and certain staff portray a politically-correct, liberal openness to increasing and improving Aboriginal spirituality programming, there appears to be a lack of true commitment on behalf of SCC to do just that. Fiscal problems are often cited when programming or policy issues are raised. While this is a legitimate response to some degree, other provincial correctional institutions (Prince Albert for example) are providing a much broader range of services than are available at SCC. Moreover, relatively minor issues are left unchecked by SCC for prolonged periods. For example, when the researcher first began his orientation to SCC in April of 1993, there was an unfinished powwow drum at the institution. To date, the drum remains unfinished (and, therefore, unused by the inmates) in spite of the fact that the skins to cover it have been procured and all that remains is to assemble it and make it operational. The official reason for not having the drum operational is that the Elder must first bless it. However, as previously stated, all future Aboriginal spirituality policy issues are on hold (the permanent Elder included) until the steering committee is functional. As such, the Elder currently at SCC has not been asked to bless the drum in the interim. Consequently, many inmates who can sing powwow, or who would

like to learn, have had no opportunity to use the drum in spite of the fact that it has been on the premises for over one year.

No policy initiatives will be successful without complete commitment from SCC management and staff. In particular, the staff implementing the programming alternatives must be willing to take chances and be seen by their peers as outsiders or instigators. Therefore, the key personnel who are responsible for such programming must illustrate a great deal of commitment to proposed policy initiatives and must not be concerned with being rebuffed by other staff or intolerant inmates.

Many staff have great suspicion (and very little knowledge) regarding Aboriginal spiritual issues. As such, staff members who are associated with such issues are also viewed with some scepticism and trepidation by some other segments of the staff. To help ameliorate such concerns, staff should be consulted and included in all areas of policy decision making. That being said, however, it must be remembered that the services are being offered for the betterment and healing of Aboriginal inmates (not the staff). Therefore, staff should not have the ability to completely undermine potential policy initiatives based on lack of knowledge or union concerns. Rather, common ground should be sought on all issues. Staff are an integral component to any policy formulation and implementation. They must be educated and brought on line with programming changes. While staff members can not be forced to agree with

new programming initiatives, education may help them accept the need for such programming and become more tolerant of it. The hiring of more Aboriginal staff should definitely be encouraged.

All Aboriginal programming suffers from a lack of coordination and cohesiveness. This could easily be ameliorated (if not eliminated) with the hiring of a competent Aboriginal Liaison and the immediate establishment of a functional steering committee body as discussed above. As well, there should be concerted efforts by SCC to establish positive links with various segments of the larger Aboriginal community in Saskatoon and surrounding area. This process will take years to develop. Therefore, it is imperative that the steering committee begin to function immediately. As the links with the Aboriginal community develop, this community may prove a vital resource area for Aboriginal policy and programming initiatives at SCC. Lack of continuity and cohesion results in confusion amongst staff, management and inmates. Furthermore, it does little to validate Aboriginal programming for any of the parties involved. If the various levels of corrections are truly dedicated to the rehabilitation of offenders (as opposed to mere warehousing), then it is essential that some of these policy initiatives be carried out. To ignore the spiritual and cultural needs of Aboriginal offenders who find solace in spiritual and cultural undertakings sentences these individuals to a life of recidivism and lack of personal growth. "The consequence of ignoring Native America[n]

prisoners' needs is the ultimate return of most Indian inmates to incarceration" (Grobsmith 1992: 6-7).

#### **8.6 Areas for Future Research**

There is a need for comprehensive, longitudinal research with all levels of corrections workers, managers, and administrators to identify potential courses of action (and potential barriers) to foster and implement programming alternatives. For example: how does the present discord between staff and management at SCC affect potential policy initiatives? The quotes offered above, as well as participant observation indicated that many staff have very little trust or faith in the management at SCC. How then, does the frustration of the staff affect their decisions to implement policy initiatives formulated by management?

There is also a need to research how Aboriginal spirituality might best be accommodated in a prison setting from the perspective of the larger Aboriginal community. Some Elders are supportive of spiritual initiatives in a prison environment, while others are not. Is there any degree of consensus on what is and is not appropriate (spiritually) in a prison environment? If consensus can be found, is there a means to standardize spirituality services for correctional facilities? Alternatively, is standardization necessary?

There is also a need to establish a long term measurement of the impact of Aboriginal spirituality on the lives of individual inmates. Why do some inmates become

healed while others do not? What other treatment variables and modalities affect the overall therapeutic value of Aboriginal spirituality? Do assimilated, bi-cultural and traditional Aboriginal inmates respond to effective symbolic healing differently? If we can analyze the process of symbolic healing occurring within a prison environment, this will also allow an examination of the process by which a pan-Indian ideology is formulated and would greatly increase academic knowledge regarding this previously undefined phenomenon.

There is also the need to examine the extent or the role of cultural education as a prerequisite to successful symbolic healing given the wide-ranging, world-wide effects of acculturation. Most acculturation in recent centuries has brought about an increase in the acceptance of the culture of the dominant, Western European cultural milieu. How has this acculturative process impacted the efficacy of symbolic healing? What can be done to counter the effects of acculturation?

There must also be some analysis given to Aboriginal offenders who leave incarceration facilities. Do these individuals pursue the teachings and practices of Aboriginal spirituality on the "outside"? How do they access Aboriginal spirituality services on the street (particularly in an urban context)? What difficulties do they encounter in the daily lives which cause them to turn to, or turn from, Aboriginal spirituality? How does Aboriginal spirituality fit into the overall process of recovery, healing, and

adjustment of Aboriginal offenders who are no longer incarcerated? How does increased attention to spirituality in the daily lives of Aboriginal offenders affect their families (while the offender is on the street and while he is incarcerated).

The process of the formation of a pan-Indian ideology (and associated practise) needs to be analyzed. While the literature takes the reality of pan-Indianism as a given, no one has yet to determine the core elements of Aboriginal spiritual philosophy which provide the foundation for pan-Indianism. Moreover, the process by which an ideology and practise surrounding pan-Indianism materializes has not been documented.

Finally, there needs to be a comprehensive overview of the impact and significance of Aboriginal spirituality for female Aboriginal offenders. Does spirituality function in essentially the same way for female as it does for male Aboriginal offenders? How does the incarceration experience for women differ from that of men generally? What kind of exposure have contemporary, young Aboriginal women had to Aboriginal spirituality?

## 9.0 Conclusion

### 9.1 Summary

The sample of Aboriginal offenders at SCC averaged 27 years in age. The majority of those interviewed were of Cree descent (68%) with Sioux persons making up the next single largest category of respondents (11%). Most inmates in the sample were bicultural (59%) in that they encountered early socialization in a predominantly Aboriginal cultural milieu, yet also had a great deal of exposure to, and experience in, Western Euro-Canadian culture. A large portion of the inmate sample was classified as assimilated (38%), having been culturally shaped to the Euro-Canadian cultural milieu. Only a single inmate respondent from SCC could be classified as culturally 'traditional' and this classification was based largely on the exclusive use of an Aboriginal language for the majority of the inmate's life, as well as his lack of exposure to Euro-Canadian cultures.

Few Aboriginal inmate respondents had prolonged or intense exposure to Aboriginal spirituality in their lives prior to coming into a prison environment. For many Aboriginal inmates in the sample at SCC, their first exposure to Aboriginal spirituality occurred while incarcerated. Past exposure to Aboriginal spirituality was

limited for Aboriginal offenders at SCC for a variety of reasons including (but not limited to): dysfunctional family and community environments; discouragement by family members from participating in such undertakings; chronic drug or alcohol abuse; and residential school or foster home experiences. Many inmates (32%) point to a significant, life-altering or traumatic event which led them to become more interested in pursuing the teachings and practices of Aboriginal spirituality. Others come to know about Aboriginal spirituality as a means of cultural rejuvenation and education. Still others come to know about Aboriginal spirituality for the first time while they are attempting to combat issues of drug and alcohol abuse. For Aboriginal offenders, then, Aboriginal spirituality is interpreted as providing some form of Aboriginal identity. Others see it as a means of coping with the stresses of life (both within and beyond an incarceration environment), as well as providing a practical means to help overcome addictive behaviours.

Aboriginal offenders at SCC note a variety of positive, therapeutic functions performed by Elders at SCC. Elder roles and functions often overlap. Many see Elders as teachers and guides. They teach about Aboriginal values, cultural and spiritual traditions, and lifestyles. They guide the inmate through the complications these individuals face in daily life. Some inmates see the Elders as providing direction on the "right way" [i.e. the "Indian way"] to do

things. Elders can go beyond being spiritual teachers and guides to actual spiritual benefactors by actively praying for the inmates or ridding them of problems associated with "bad medicine". Others see the Elder as a positive role model in their lives. They see the Elder as providing a direction in life which they themselves might pursue as they travel on the road to recovery and self-healing. Some inmates compare the Elder with a Euro-Canadian psychologist, psychiatrist, or priest. Often, interaction with Elders provides a means for the inmate to vent chronic stress. This, therefore, helps defuse potentially harmful or dangerous situations within the prison environment. As such, interaction with Elders can have a very positive and important institutional function for prison programming. Elders are uniquely qualified to give advice and counsel to some Aboriginal inmates due to the fact that the inmates generally see them as less threatening and more empathetic than SCC staff or contracted professionals (for example, psychiatrists).

Many Aboriginal inmates in the sample at SCC see the sweat as a means to offer prayers to the Creator for their loved ones and families. Others see the sweat as a place to treat physical ailments. Some Aboriginal inmates see the sweat as a means to foster social relationships and build bonds with other inmates within the confines of the prison environment. Numerous inmates noted the utility of the sweat

lodge in assisting in fostering a more positive self-identity as Aboriginal and, subsequently, increasing one's self-esteem and receptiveness to other institutional programming. Many noted that the sweat was a powerful cleansing ritual which made them feel "reborn" and gave them a renewed opportunity to start healing themselves. Some inmates see the sweat as a temporary opportunity to "escape" from the confines and daily routine of the prison environment. Many inmates noted that the sweat helps them deal with and overcome feelings of frustration and negativity that they carried with them while incarcerated. The sweat then, like consultation with the Elders, helps some inmates diffuse potentially harmful emotions and serves an important security function for the institution. Numerous inmates indicated that the sweat was a powerful tool in helping them combat drug and alcohol addiction. Most inmates undertook forced abstinence from intoxicants prior to, and immediately following, a sweat.

Many staff members also identify Aboriginal spirituality services as having a valuable role to play in institutional programming. Some staff see spiritual undertakings as helping the inmate begin to reshape ingrained (and often detrimental) patterns of thinking. Participation in spiritual practices is also seen as giving the individual a sense of accomplishment. Numerous staff members also note the function of reinforcing an Aboriginal

identity for some inmates and, therefore, helping to undermine the inmate's identification with the criminal subculture present in prisons. The stress-reducing function of Aboriginal spirituality undertakings was not overlooked by the staff. Some staff note that participation in Aboriginal spirituality services greatly reduces stress and potentially harmful situations among some Aboriginal inmates.

That there is some positive, therapeutic outcome for many Aboriginal inmates deriving from their participation in Aboriginal spirituality programs is granted. However, there are also a number of other variables which could influence the healing and recovery process for Aboriginal inmates (for example other treatment programs such as addictions education and life-skills training). Thus, the interplay between these various treatment modalities requires further research.

In spite of the therapeutic value of Aboriginal spirituality practices at SCC, the evidence suggests that symbolic healing, as it is academically and anthropologically defined and understood, is being hindered at SCC. Most inmate respondents are not familiar enough with the meanings of the symbols associated with Lakota spirituality in particular, and Aboriginal spirituality in general, for these symbols to have significant impact in the healing process. For symbolic healing to occur, the healer

and the individual being healed must share a common mythic, and therefore symbolic, world view. For the most part, this common cosmological outlook (among the Elder and the inmates) is not evident at SCC. Often, the inmates lack fundamental knowledge regarding the significance of various spiritual items, practices and principles. Many inmates indicated that this lack of knowledge stems from early socialization in an urban context or prolonged exposure to a non-Native foster home or residential school environment. Moreover, many inmates who were raised in predominantly Aboriginal communities experienced severe dysfunctionality not only in their immediate home environment, but in the community at large. Furthermore, practising Aboriginal spirituality in any form was actively discouraged for many years by the federal government and many individuals were forced to practise covertly and in isolation. Therefore, much knowledge and ritual was withheld from the community at large and was not widely known about, let alone disseminated. Thus, early socialization and enculturation into the principles and practices of Aboriginal spirituality were not a part of the lives of most of the respondents. It is not surprising, therefore, that these individuals would lack a strong foundation in the teachings of Aboriginal spirituality.

While there is some general acceptance for the concept of pan-Indianism at SCC, there is no evidence that the

concept is actually operational and identifiable. That is, though the majority of inmates do not perceive difficulties in interacting with and learning from an Elder of a different culture, a pan-Indian philosophy and practise is not materializing among the inmate sample population. The sample population at SCC lacks, for the most part, the basic foundation of knowledge regarding Aboriginal spiritual practices necessary to identify whether a pan-Indian philosophy and practise is materializing at SCC. For pan-Indianism to materialize, the inmates must modify their internalized beliefs regarding Aboriginal spirituality to become more in sync with the belief system of Lakota spirituality. The majority of inmates in the sample at SCC simply do not have the level of knowledge regarding Aboriginal spirituality necessary to academically examine the process of the formation of a pan-Indian philosophy. However, as the vast majority of the inmate sample population holds very ill-defined (if any) spiritual beliefs, they can be seen as being ultimately more receptive and open to the teachings of Elders from a different culture. Therefore, if cultural and spiritual programming was more comprehensive, with greater emphasis placed on education, there is a strong possibility that one could record and analyze the formation of a pan-Indian ideology.

This thesis has documented that, for the most part, the concept of culture is misunderstood by the majority of staff

(particularly guards) at SCC. As well, few staff members exhibit adequate knowledge regarding Aboriginal culture in general. Moreover, the Aboriginal spirituality services present at SCC at the current time are misguided and inadequate. Given the large proportions of Aboriginal people incarcerated in Saskatchewan, this lack of basic knowledge and understanding is unacceptable. Numerous policy recommendations are provided in an attempt to ameliorate this situation. The most fundamental policy issues are the need for more comprehensive, continual, and cohesive cultural and spiritual programming for Aboriginal inmates. Key personnel are going to have to be recruited and trained. Resources are going to have to be reallocated. Concerted efforts are required by SCC to foster stronger links with the Aboriginal community to encourage the provision of guidance and resources from that community to the Aboriginal inmates at SCC. Staff is going to have to be consulted, educated and brought on-board as much as possible. There is a need for a general, comprehensive overview of the policy process within the prison environment. How is policy formulated, reshaped, and implemented by key personnel at the various levels of corrections? Knowledge in this area would aid in understanding the policy process within the corrections environment and would provide pragmatic information on how policy could be modified with the least possible repercussions or backlash from staff, management,

or inmates.

## **9.2 Theoretical Contributions**

The analysis of symbolic healing at SCC provides some interesting insights into the role of cultural education as a pre-requisite for symbolic healing to occur. The literature to date assumes absolute cultural homogeneity among the healer and the patients in a symbolic healing relationship. Therefore, symbolic healing ignores varying degrees of cultural orientation (on the part of the patient) to the healer's cultural milieu. Therefore, when dealing with a multicultural population or environment (such as a prison setting with a wide range of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal cultures represented) there is a need for cultural education if symbolic healing is to occur.

The common mythic base required for successful symbolic healing was not present at SCC for a number of reasons. Primarily, most inmate respondents lacked the necessary knowledge regarding Aboriginal spirituality and its associated symbols to profit from their relationship with the healer (re. symbolic healing). This lack of knowledge necessitates that a cultural education component be present for symbolic healing to occur in a multicultural environment. This cultural education component was impeded in the prison environment for a number of reasons: the relatively short sentences for the majority of inmates; lack

of time available for individual counselling and teaching for inmates by an Elder; lack of a coordinated educational program to provide spiritual and cultural knowledge to those Aboriginal inmates who so desire it; the importance and emphasis placed on individual learning and commitment inherent in Aboriginal spirituality in general and Lakota spirituality in particular; and the Elder's philosophy that knowledge must be earned as opposed to simply given or taught, and the prohibitive barriers which the prison environment places on this process (for example, inmates can not go fasting in the wilderness or participate in a Sun Dance).

However, the general philosophical and theoretical acceptance by the inmate sample population of the concept of pan-Indianism at SCC indicates that inmates are potentially receptive to the fostering of symbolic healing at SCC. As there are few inmates opposed to learning from and worshipping with an Elder from a different cultural tradition than their own, the concept of pan-Indianism could be exploited to bring the multicultural Aboriginal population of inmates at SCC on line with a single Aboriginal spiritual and cultural tradition. Once educated in the significance and the meanings of these symbols associated with this cultural tradition, the process of symbolic healing could be nurtured. If those Aboriginal inmates seeking counsel and healing through the practises of

Aboriginal spirituality can be taught to accept and practise a single path to self-fulfilment through Aboriginal spirituality, and if SCC facilitates the necessary policy initiatives to encourage this, then the potential for symbolic healing at SCC appears great. Therefore, by combining the concepts of pan-Indianism and symbolic healing, the latter has much more potential to fundamentally alter the lives of individual inmates at SCC. It is incumbent upon the management of SCC to ensure that those seeking such a path are afforded the opportunity with due haste.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

**11.1 Inmate Cultural Orientation Classification**

Traditional Inmate: 9R.

Bicultural Inmates: 1T, 2A, 3W, 3X, 5D, 5X, 6F, 7R, 8A, 8C, 10A, 10B, 10F, 12B, 12P, 12Q, 16A, 16D, 16R, 17K, 17R, 20A.

Assimilated Inmates: 1A, 1D, 1N, 2N, 4E, 6N, 6R, 7D, 8D, 8W, 9T, 9L, 12T, 17D.

## APPENDIX B

### 11.2 Interview Schedules

#### 11.2.1 Schedule 1

1. Age
2. - First Nation Affiliation - (i.e. cultural affiliation)  
- Background information (general life history)
3. What do you know about Native spirituality? What does it mean to you? Is it different from Christian worship (and, if so, how)?
4. - When were you introduced to Native spirituality? Where (under what circumstances - prison, street, reserve)?  
- Incarceration history as it relates to individual participation in available Native spirituality programming. Did you opt in and out of spirituality programming? Why? How did prison spirituality help you on the street and what problems did you have keeping up with it (i.e. attention to the revolving door syndrome).  
- If you were into Native spirituality before (eg. in childhood, youth, other institution) what took you away from it so that you ended up in jail?  
- Was there a single life event or a particular point in your life which prompted you to become more spiritual or was it a slow, developing change?
5. When do you need to see an Elder (specific instances)? Do you interact with them regularly? What do they give you?
6. When do you need to participate in a sweat and what does it do for you (specifics)?
7. What other ceremonies are important to you? Why?
8. What are your personal goals pertaining to your involvement with Native spirituality (specifics)? What does it do for you? How does it help you?
9. What is your own spiritual cultural tradition? How does it fit with that of the Elder's - (i.e. is there cultural incompatibility?)  
If incompatibility exists, how do you reconcile this - for eg. Can a Lakota help a Cree understand and use Native Spirituality? **Key elements of Pan-Indianism.**

10. What is available for Native Spirituality programming now at SCC?
11. What is needed for Native Spirituality programming at SCC?
12. - What do other inmates say to you and how do they treat you once you begin to get more involved in spirituality?  
- Do others perceive you as getting things that they do not (perks, 'clicking up') through your involvement in Native spirituality ?
13. - Do you know people who are into drugs and alcohol and are still involved in Native spirituality (eg. using sweetgrass, going to sweats etc.). If so, how do you feel about that?  
- Have drugs and alcohol (and/or criminal activity) played a role in keeping you away from Native spirituality?  
- Will/do you have to change and distance yourself from your old buddies (scorn, no more dope - opt in and out of spirituality if want to keep using dope etc.)?
14. What do you think the staff members and guards of the correctional centre think of spirituality programming for Native offenders?
15. Did/will you utilize Native Spirituality on the outside? How do you access these services?

### 11.2.2 Schedule 2

For respondents with very limited previous experiences with Aboriginal Spirituality

1. Age
2. - First National Affiliation (cultural affiliation)  
- Background information (general life history - personal and spiritual).
3. Past exposure to Native spirituality - where, when, to what degree (eg. was it around in **childhood**; previous **institutional experience** and avail. programming - what was avail., did they participate and why or why not).
4. - Have you ever interacted with an Elder? What capacities?  
- Have you ever sweated? When, where, for what reasons, relate relevant experiences - what did you think of it?
5. - Have drugs and alcohol (and/or criminal activity) played a role in keeping you away from Native spirituality?  
- Will you have to change and distance yourself from your old buddies (scorn, no more dope - opt in and out of spirituality if want to keep using dope etc.)?
6. - Would you like to become more involved in Native spirituality? If so, under what conditions (i.e. perception of ideal circumstances).  
- If so, what are your personal goals pertaining to your desired involvement with Native spirituality (specifics)? What might it do for you? How might it help you?  
- If you have never been involved, or do not want to become involved, why?
7. Did/will you utilize Native Spirituality on the outside? How do you access these services?

### 11.2.3 Schedule 3

#### For Staff Interviews

1. Age
2. - Position at SCC (relevant degrees/employ. experience)  
- length of time at SCC (or in corrections/related fields in general)
3. - What are your general perceptions on Native spirituality?  
- What do you think it is (i.e. constituent elements)?  
- What, if anything, do you think that it does for the inmates?
4. Have you ever noticed any changes in inmates before and after their participation in Native spirituality programming (eg. after sweating, interaction with Elder etc.)? Specific examples.
5. - Is participation in Native spirituality programming beneficial?  
- Does it reduce inmate stress?  
- Does it make inmates easier to deal with?
6. - Is participation in Native spirituality programming harmful?  
- Does it increase politicization (or militancy) among Aboriginal inmates?  
- Does it negatively affect individuals who may be further marginalized from their Aboriginal identity (give powwow dancing eg. to explain)?
7. Generally, does culture matter in regards to inmate programming? (i.e. are cultural differences significant variables in inmate needs/wants, and in how staff interacts with inmates)?
8. Examples of emerging trends to elicit possible concerns or barriers. **Trends** (preliminary, not empirically validated): comprehensive cultural, historical, and spiritual education; self-help group/healing circle; 1 sweat/week; 2 Elders - increased access; Cree language instruction. These are not inclusive - merely examples.

#### 11.2.4 Schedule 4

What are the meanings of:

1. tobacco (reg. and sacred *kinikinik*, tobacco ties)
2. pipe (stem, bowl, united)
3. sweat lodge (rocks, willows, water, fire, steam [i.e. air])
4. four directions
5. circle
6. Eagle (Eagle feathers)
7. sweetgrass (cedar, sage)
8. cloth (different colours and significance)

### 11.2.5 Staff Focus Group Questions

1. Are there any differences between Aboriginal offenders and other offenders? Are their problems the same, or different? What are their problems?
2. So Aboriginal offenders have different correctional "needs"?
3. To what extent must correctional staff understand that Aboriginal offender's "culture" in order to effectively help that individual?
4. What knowledge of and exposure to Aboriginal spirituality have you had?
5. Is Aboriginal spirituality the same as Christian religions?
6. Can Aboriginal spirituality heal or help change offenders? Any anecdotes of case examples of this?
7. Any cases where Aboriginal spirituality was a scam (for example, inmates caught using sweetgrass to cover the smell of marijuana)?
8. How do you reconcile the fact that some offenders are serious about spirituality and some are not?
9. What problems do you see in the current Aboriginal programs (including security concerns, union concerns re: staffing and other responsibilities, conflicts with collective agreements)?
10. What are the most important qualities in an Elder?
11. Can an Elder be a part of case management for inmates?

## APPENDIX C

### 11.3 Consent Forms

#### 11.3.1 Staff Consent Form

The purpose of this research is to examine the therapeutic value of inmate participation in Aboriginal spirituality and awareness programs. The research is under the direction of Dr. Jim Waldram, Dept. of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan. He can be reached at 966-6208.

The research will involve an interview in which a variety of questions will be asked regarding your perceptions of Aboriginal spirituality programming and its effects on individuals. Your answers will be tape recorded. We hope that you will answer completely and honestly, yet you may choose not to answer certain questions. We request that you do not use the names of inmates or other staff members in your responses. Your participation in this research is entirely voluntary. You may stop the interview at any time.

The interview will last approximately one to one and one-half hours. We may ask you to participate in a follow up interview.

No names will be used in the interview and a coding system will be used so that your comments can not be linked to you. Your comments will remain anonymous. No other staff or inmates will have access to the tapes or transcripts. All quotes in the final draft will remain anonymous and will be reported in such a manner that comments can not be linked to any specific individual.

The final results of the research will be provided to the Saskatoon Correctional Centre, other correctional centres and officials, and interested people throughout the country. We will also make the report of the research available to you, if you wish.

We must obtain your signature on this form, which indicates that you fully understand what is being asked of you, and that you agree to participate in this study. A copy of the form will be provided to you if you wish.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read this consent form and I agree to participate in the research project as described.

### 11.3.2 Inmate Consent Form

The purpose of this research is to examine how participation in Aboriginal spirituality and awareness programs can benefit individuals. The research is under the direction of Dr. Jim Waldram, Dept. of Native Studies, University of Saskatchewan. He can be reached at 966-6208.

The research will involve an interview in which we will ask you a variety of questions and tape-record your answers. We hope that you will answer honestly and completely, but you may choose not to answer certain questions. We will not ask you specific questions about criminal activities, and request that you do not offer such information. We will also request that you do not mention the names of any other inmates, friends or associates. You may also stop the interview at any time.

The interview will last approximately one to one and one-half hours. We may ask you to participate in a follow-up interview.

No names will be used in the interview and a coding system will be used so that your comments can not be linked to you. Your comments will be anonymous. No prison staff will have access to the tapes or transcripts.

Your involvement in this research project will have no effect on the length of your sentence at this institution.

The final results of the research will be provided to the Saskatoon Correctional Centre, other correctional centres and officials, and interested people throughout the country. We will also make the report of the research available to you, if you wish.

We must obtain your signature on this form, which indicates that you fully understand what is being asked of you, and that you agree to participate in this study. A copy of the form will be provided to you.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ have read, or have had read to me this consent form, and I agree to participate in the research project as described.